

## **CEMETERY SIGNS**

Every historic cemetery needs on-site signage

A simple sign can be a very effective tool for protecting and preserving a historic cemetery. Many of the most common preservation challenges can be addressed by helping people who care about a cemetery connect with one another more easily. Each cemetery organization should discuss what type of information is most appropriate for their particular site. Here are a few considerations:

### **The Name of the Cemetery**

It might sound obvious, but this piece of information often is overlooked and can lead to all sorts of confusion. You might also include any “also known as” names.

### **Contact Information**

Ideally this is a phone number for someone with authority over the cemetery. A phone number is best because it allows a visitor to immediately report anything that looks amiss. A regularly monitored email address, website, or Facebook page are other good options.

### **Dates of Meetings or Scheduled Clean-Ups**

Make it easy for people to get involved by letting them know when their help is needed.

### **A Physical and/or Mailing Address**

A physical address (a 9-1-1 address) can be important if there’s ever a medical or other emergency in the cemetery that necessitates dispatching first responders. A mailing address is handy for visitors who want to make a donation towards the cemetery’s upkeep.

### **Visitation Hours**

Posting these gives warning to vandals that inappropriate nighttime activity will not be tolerated and gives law enforcement officials an opportunity to enforce cemetery policies.

### **Rules**

Per Texas Health and Safety Code Sec. 711.031, cemetery organizations are authorized to adopt and enforce rules pertaining to a wide variety of activities, but those rules must be made available. For the most part, people want to do the right thing, but they cannot be expected to follow rules that they do not know exist in the first place.

### **Updates about Special Projects**

Promote the cemetery’s preservation goals and how close they are to being met. This is essential for raising the community’s awareness of preservation and protection efforts, as well as for promoting the significance of a historic cemetery.

### **A Word of Caution!**

In many small communities it’s easy to think that everyone knows exactly who to contact about the local cemetery. It’s true—the people who live there might know just who to go to with a question about the cemetery. Consider, though, that descendants of those buried in the cemetery may now be spread out all over the country, or even the world, and they may have no local ties or contacts at all. When they come to visit the grave of an ancestor and decide they want to become more involved in the site’s management or make a donation for its upkeep, a sign posted at the cemetery can help them make those connections. **If it’s**

**too hard to track down that information, they may just stop trying.** Make it easy for potential supporters to get involved.

Signs should be easy to read with a clear message, but do not have to be fancy. A neat, hand-painted sign can convey the needed information, as well as alert vandals to the fact that the cemetery is looked after. Make sure to regularly maintain any signage; faded or damaged signs give the signal that caretakers do not visit regularly.

Keep the historic setting of the cemetery in mind when designing and placing the sign. The sign should be readily visible, but shouldn't distract from the historic character or overwhelm the view. Consider the scale; bigger isn't always better.

For more information, please visit [www.thc.texas.gov/cemetery](http://www.thc.texas.gov/cemetery).