

Enjoy your experience at these outdoor museums, where every stone has a story to share.

**Fairfax County Cemetery Preservation Association, Inc**  
**[www.honorfairfaxcemeteries.org](http://www.honorfairfaxcemeteries.org)**

**Taking Photos of Gravestones**

**What to carry with you**

extra batteries and memory card; cell phone;  
water for drinking and spraying; bug repellent;  
small brush or broom to remove debris

**What to wear**

hat, gloves, long pants, sturdy shoes

**Etiquette**

1. Park your car in a designated and safe place.
2. If you are visiting a cemetery in a residential setting, try to introduce yourself to neighbors.
3. Be familiar with the state laws governing visits to cemeteries, in case you are questioned.
4. If your visit coincides with a funeral, be courteous to the attendees.
5. In order to enhance the inscription, do not use any product on the stone except for water.
6. Spraying water on the stone may temporarily darken the inscription. Spray lightly. If you dampen the stone too much, you will need to wait a while before you can take a photograph.
7. To clean away dirt, spray the stone and then use a soft brush, a natural sponge or a cotton cloth. Caution: Marble stone tends to "sugar." Even a soft brush could produce sugaring,.
8. Prior to leaving, make sure that nothing was left on the marker, for example a bit of sponge.
9. If you move flowers or memorials to take pictures, be sure to replace them.
10. Remove twigs and leaves from the front of markers, before you take a photo.  
DO NOT try to pull lichen, as that may cause damage to the stone.

**Shooting the Picture**

1. Morning light is optimal as many graves were buried to face east.
2. Use a digital camera with a zoom lens.
3. Take pictures from many angles and distances. Zoom in on the inscription and then also focus on the entire stone.

4. Knee level shots are difficult, but very effective. Consider using a tripod to steady the camera.
5. Take pictures of the entire cemetery to help determine location.
6. Prior to shooting pictures, check your position to see if you are casting a shadow on the marker. Also look to see if the marker is casting a shadow which you may not want. Sometimes cloudy days are the best for picture taking.
7. Shiny surfaces on markers reflect. Situate yourself so that your reflection does not become part of the photo.
8. Shiny surfaces you bring can help enhance the inscriptions -- mirror, heavy aluminum foil
8. Zoom in on special symbols or details of the gravestone.
9. Preview your photos before you move on.

## **Please**

1. **Don't . . .** Use any substance on a stone. No Chalk, No Shaving Cream, No Charcoal, etc
2. **Don't . . .** Do a paper pencil rubbing before you know the state's laws governing this practice.
3. **Don't . . .** Power wash a stone
4. **Don't . . .** Try to permanently upright a stone. Leave that to professionals.
5. **Don't . . .** Lose your footing. Exposed tree roots, animal holes and uneven ground are frequently found in cemeteries.
6. **Don't . . .** Expose yourself to ticks or poison ivy.

## **Before you leave . . .**

Police the area to see that you are leaving it in the same condition as when you arrived

## **Documentation**

1. Take photos of nearby markers, panoramic shots of the cemetery, and cemetery gate or sign.
2. Share your photos on find a grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/>
3. Do not sell your photos without permission from the descendants.