

Adopt-A-Cemetery Guidelines

A Community Service of the Washington County Genealogical Society

About the Project:

Adopt-A-Cemetery was created by the Washington County Genealogical Society (WCGS) to provide a uniform procedure for the identification, preservation, protection, and maintenance of those cemeteries in the county that

- have been abandoned, or
- are not currently under the care of an association or other group, or
- are neglected by an association or other group due to lack of funds, physical labor, or disinterest.

This Project will provide information needed for an organization or individual(s) to clean, restore and preserve a cemetery using an Adopt-A-Cemetery plan.

Adopt-A-Cemetery was recognized by the Washington County Commissioners Court on _____ as being the authorized representative of the county to preserve, protect, and maintain abandoned or neglected cemeteries.

Washington County is the birthplace of Texas and has many settlers from Austin's Old 300 who are buried here, some with markers and some with no markers. Washington County is also the place where many immigrants from Germany, Poland, and other European countries settled in later years. Restoring and preserving their burial places will show them the respect they deserve.

Protection Through Laws and Ordinances:

All procedures for cleaning, restoring and protecting cemeteries will follow the rules and guidelines of the Texas Health & Safety Code, Sections 711-715, and the Texas Historical Commission.

Support Provided by the Adopt-A-Cemetery Organization:

- Identify cemeteries
 - Those that need major cleaning prior to preservation
 - Those that have been cleaned but need to be maintained.
- Review the procedure for designation as a Texas Historic Cemetery in order to provide the information requested, such as condition of cemetery. Drawing and photographs may need to be made prior to work being started.
- Identify organizations to approach about adopting a cemetery. Possibilities are Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church groups, Lions Club, Rotary Club, high school groups, neighborhood groups and businesses.
- Help the Adopting Organization make a plan for the cleaning and maintenance according to each individual cemetery's needs and to teach them the knowledge they need to assure that they will not be harming any of the burials.

- Seek permission for the Adopting Organization to enter the cemetery if the cemetery is on private property or the road to the cemetery goes through private property and act as coordinator between the Adopting Organization and the landowner. However, if the Adopting Organization includes descendants of those buried in the cemetery, we will encourage the descendents to contact the landowner.
- Conduct media coverage to inform the public of our program and provide assistance in carrying out the overall plan.

Liability:

Adopt-A-Cemetery, the landowner, and the Adopting Organization understand that all activity within the cemetery is strictly on a volunteer basis and that none of the above named parties are liable for any injuries incurred while working in the cemetery. Any equipment used by the Adopting Organization is their responsibility.

Safety Precautions for Volunteers:

All Adopting Organizations shall conduct safety meetings with the volunteers to discuss the possible dangers of cleaning a cemetery, such as insect bites, snakebites, poison ivy, etc.

Contact Information:

Phone: 979.633.4848

Email: bluebonnetgenealogy@gmail.com

Adopt-A-Cemetery Rules and Regulations:

I. Requirements:

1. All Adopting Organizations must sign an Adopt-A-Cemetery Agreement.
2. Adopt-A-Cemetery has final approval on all cemeteries adopted.
3. Adopting Organizations must perform a general restoration/clean-up on a schedule approved by Adopt-A-Cemetery. Schedules may vary according to each cemetery.
4. The Adopting Organization shall notify Adopt-A-Cemetery when it wishes to be released from this Agreement.

II. Items furnished by Adopt-A-Cemetery:

1. Preliminary procedures for cleaning cemeteries.
2. Assistance as deemed necessary.
3. A sign acknowledging Cemetery Name and Adopting Organization after first cleanup is completed.
4. No tools for the purpose of cleaning any cemetery will be provided unless those tools will be used by the Adopt-A-Cemetery representative.

III. Adopting Organization:

1. Commercial organizations cannot display any product I.D., address, or phone number.
2. All organizations must be approved for the Adopt-A-Cemetery program.
3. Organization must complete Adopt-A-Cemetery Status Report and forward to Adopt-A-Cemetery semi-annually.

4. If Adopting Organization fails to perform satisfactorily to Adopt-A-Cemetery Rules and Regulations, it will be removed from the program.

IV. Safety:

1. Adopt-A-Cemetery will advise and assist with safety as deemed necessary.
2. The Adopting Organization will:
 - a. Car-pool to cemeteries if possible to keep vehicles to a minimum.
 - b. Park vehicles clear of roadway.
 - c. Keep work groups to a manageable size.
 - d. Provide close supervision of youth groups.
 - e. Leave in place any hazardous materials.
 - f. Stay clear of construction areas.
 - g. Hold safety meeting with group prior to clean-up.
 - h. Refrain from working during inclement weather or hours of darkness.
 - i. Be aware of possible contact with poisonous plants, stinging insects, fire ants and snakes.
 - j. Consider all known allergies before participants are allowed to take part in clean-up.
 - k. Prohibit alcoholic beverages.
 - l. Know you are working in a possible hazardous environment and act accordingly.

Procedures for Cleaning a Cemetery:

1. The Adopting Organization must complete and submit an Adopt-A-Cemetery Agreement thirty (30) days in advance of intentions by any non-descendant person or group planning a restoration/clean-up of a cemetery. This will allow Adopt-A-Cemetery and the Adopting Organization time to organize the procedures listed below.
2. Adopt-A-Cemetery will determine the owner/guardian of the cemetery and contact that person(s) for written permission to clean up the cemetery. Adopt-A-Cemetery will also contact any landowner whose property must be entered in order to reach the cemetery.
3. There will be two options for adopting the cemetery:
 - a. If the Adopting Organization does not feel that they are able to do the heavy clean-up, Adopt-A-Cemetery will hire a contractor for that purpose, allowing the Adopting Organization to perform the lighter clean-up work, as funds are available.
 - b. The Adopting Organization may choose to perform all of the clean-up work.
4. After Adopt-A-Cemetery has reviewed the Agreement, the Adopting Organization and Adopt-A-Cemetery will schedule an on-site meeting to discuss the procedures of the actual clean-up plan. A copy of the procedures will be given to the Adopting Organization. These methods will be adhered to as they are in accordance with state law and Texas Historical Commission guidelines
5. Adopt-A-Cemetery will define the burial boundaries, limitation of clean-up, unusual features such as fieldstone marked graves, brick-lined borders, depressions, trees

and brush which may be cleared. The manner in which the trees and undergrowth may be disposed will also be clarified.

6. After acceptance of the cemetery clean-up plan, the Adopting Organization will submit a schedule indicating the estimated start and completion dates to Adopt-A-Cemetery.
7. Upon review and approval of the plan by Adopt-A-Cemetery, the project may proceed.
8. Adopt-A-Cemetery will assist, inspect and provide direction for the project.
9. Adopt-A-Cemetery will assist the Adopting Organization in making application to the Texas Historical Commission for the cemetery to be designated as a Texas Historic Cemetery.
10. Adopt-A-Cemetery will have a representative on-site on the first work day. After that, Adopt-A-Cemetery will periodically check to see that work is being done according to plan. On completion of the clean-up, Adopt-A-Cemetery will conduct a final inspection to insure the area is improved, well-marked and no graves or gravesites have been damaged.
11. The Adopting Organization should submit a written report outlining the project and may include a history of the cemetery and the persons interred therein if desired. This report will become part of Adopt-A-Cemetery's permanent cemetery file that will become a reference source.
12. Upon final approval, Adopt-A-Cemetery will provide the adopting cemetery with official recognition from Adopt-A-Cemetery for their part in returning the cemetery to its original state of dignity.

Onsite Procedure for Cemetery Clean-Up and Restoration:

1. There is to be absolutely NO subsurface disturbance at any time within the established boundaries and buffers of the cemetery without the approval of Adopt-A-Cemetery.
2. There is to be absolutely NO disturbance of any stones whether they are carved headstones or fieldstones, or any borders unless directed by and under the supervision of Adopt-A-Cemetery.
3. Small trees designated for removal will be marked by Adopt-A-Cemetery. This will be done at the first on-site meeting between the parties and be thoroughly explained, understood and agreed upon by all parties. If the area is so overgrown that it is not possible to mark these, then the Adopt-A-Cemetery representative attending the first session of clean-up will make that decision.
4. Methods for removing obnoxious weeds and shrubs will be shown to the clean-up group by Adopt-A-Cemetery. The climbing vines and those with runners will be snapped into short sections and carefully pulled. Long runners will not be pulled as they can upset a fieldstone or border.
5. Repairs and/or refurbishing of any fencing used to border a cemetery may be done only upon approval of Adopt-A-Cemetery. No repair, removal, replacement or addition of fences or other means of enclosure will be allowed unless agreement has been reached and permission to proceed has been given by Adopt-A-Cemetery.
6. Graves should be flagged during the first cleanup.

7. Please maintain an attitude of respect for those persons who are buried in these cemeteries. Do not sit on headstones or leave paper, food, or any other trash scattered.
8. The following tools, supplies and equipment WILL be acceptable for use in the cleaning procedure:
 - a. Leaf blowers
 - b. Axes
 - c. Chain Saws
 - d. Leaf Rakes
 - e. Lopping Shears
 - f. Hand Trimmers, such as rose trimmers
 - g. Plastic Bags
 - h. Hoes, for light work in removing overgrowth.
9. The following tools and equipment WILL NOT be acceptable in any way for the cleaning procedures, except under the supervision of Adopt-A-Cemetery.
 - a. Tractors or Heavy Equipment
 - b. Rototillers
 - c. Trowels, Shovels, or Digging Apparatus of any sort
 - d. Steel Tooth Rakes

Suggestions:

Do take time to read the inscription on the headstones, record the information from the stones and describe the style (square, rectangle, obelisk, octagon, etc) and material they are constructed from (granite, marble, agate, cement, fieldstone, brick, wood, etc.) if you so choose. Research the names on the Internet and also in the local history and genealogical books available at our local library. Read about the burial customs used during the time of their demise. Adopt-A-Cemetery will greatly appreciate copies of any reports of information gathered. This information will be put on file with the official documentation concerning the cemetery.

Adopt-A-Cemetery Agreement

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- WHEREAS: Adopt-A-Cemetery and _____ recognize the need and desirability of maintaining family and community cemeteries; and
- WHEREAS: Adopt-A-Cemetery has been established for interested parties to contribute toward the effort of perpetual maintenance of these cemeteries; and
- WHEREAS: The above named parties are aware of the potential hazardous work to be performed; and
- WHEREAS: The said parties agree to abide by the Adopt-A-Cemetery rules and regulations attached; and
- WHEREAS: The said parties understand that Adopt-A-Cemetery agrees to cooperate in the development and implementation of the project, but cannot assume any liability with respect thereto; and
- WHEREAS: This adoption agreement relieves the property owners(s) from all liability pertaining to volunteer clean-up efforts; and
- WHEREAS: The property owner(s) shall provide daylight ingress and egress to the cemetery to permit the adopting group/individual to maintain the burial ground; and
- THEREFORE; Adopt-A-Cemetery recognizes

as the Adopting Organization/Individual for the below named cemetery

_____.

FURTHERMORE: _____

accepts the responsibility of following the rules, regulations and procedures set out in the Adopt-A-Cemetery Guidelines.

SIGNED: _____

Adopting Organization Leader & Position

This, the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Adopt-A-Cemetery Representative

This, the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Adopt-A-Cemetery Status Report

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Date: _____

Cemetery Name: _____

Organization/Volunteer: _____

Number of Burials: _____ Number of Participants _____

Hours Involved: _____

Date of Next Scheduled Activity: _____

Number of Attachments/Photos Enclosed: _____

Signature & Position: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please return within one week after workday to:

WCGS Adopt-A-Cemetery
2211 Day Street
Suite 105
Brenham, TX 77833