

# **USGenWeb Tombstone Inscription Project**

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# Why we do it...

## ***THE RECORDING OF A CEMETERY*** by Thelma Greene Reagan

Today we walked where others walked on a lonely, windswept hill;  
Today we talked where other cried for Loved Ones whose lives are stilled.

Today our hearts were touched by graves of tiny babies;  
Snatched from the arms of loving kin, in the heartbreak of the ages.

Today we saw where the grandparents lay in the last sleep of their time;  
Lying under the trees and clouds – their beds kissed by the sun and wind.

Today we wondered about an unmarked spot; who lies beneath this hollowed ground?  
Was it a babe, child, young or old? No indication could be found.

Today we saw where Mom and Dad lay. We had been here once before  
On a day we'd all like to forget, but will remember forever more.

Today we recorded for kith and kin the graves of ancestors past;  
To be preserved for generations hence, a record we hope will last.

Cherish it, my friend; preserve it, my friend, for stones sometimes crumble to dust  
And generations of folks yet to come will be grateful for your trust.

# Before you start...

Find out who has legal jurisdiction over the cemetery property and get permission to be on the grounds recording the data.

If the cemetery is abandoned, attempt to find out who owns the land the cemetery is on and obtain permission from the legal owners to be on the property. The Cemetery Office, Church Office, etc. might have a copy of the plat of the cemetery and copies of interment records.

Check your library for any previous transcription work done on the cemetery. This will come in vary handy if some of the stones are no longer legible.

# Planning your cemetery visit

- Obtain accurate directions
- Dress for the weather, bring gloves and wear sturdy shoes
- Don't forget the sunscreen & insect repellent



# Pack along your tools

- Several sharpened pencils
- Quadrille paper and a sturdy clipboard
- Digital camera
- Small plastic tote with a center handle
- Small can of non-acidic shaving cream for sensitive skin
- Several gallons of water
- Small shower squeegee
- Small mirror
- New soft bristled toothbrush
- Small box of aluminum foil



# Let's Get Started!

## Albemarle County, VA - Watts Cemetery

The cemetery is located on Rt 700 on Preddy's Creek, just slightly NW of Stoney Point. A railroad track runs along the creek and the cemetery is in a yard on the east side of the track.



- Record the name of your cemetery
- Record directions and any special features about where the cemetery is located or situated on the property

# We've arrived...

- If you have a plat of the cemetery, follow it to make sure you don't miss any stones. Alternatively, sketch a grid of the cemetery, using blocks on your quadrille paper to represent each grave. Number each block.
- Begin recording the data from the stones, using an additional sheet of quadrille paper, numbering the entries to correspond to the numbered blocks drawn on your paper grid.
- Record the information on the tombstone **exactly** as it appears. Copy it word for word, line for line. Keep the spelling and punctuation, as it appears on the stone. Resist the temptation to make corrections.
- Record all information on the stone, including any epitaphs that may be carved there.

# A sample grid to record tombstones

Lucy Clarkson	Born Oct 10 1774	Died April 24, 1840	
Richard D Sims	Born Nov 25, 1778	Died May 15, 1862	
Mrs. C.A. Watts		Died Dec 7, 1858	Age 37 years
Lucy Ann Watts	Born 1818	Died 1885	
James Dillard Watts	Born 1801	Died 1865	
John Wesley Watts	Born April 22, 1840	Died June 3, 1863	
Cornelia A. Watts			Wife of Mr W Watts
Jennie Burnley	Oct 1, 1850	May 3, 1923	Wife of Lucian Clark Watts
Lucian Clark Watts	May 10, 1853	Feb 13, 1947	Son of James Dillard and Lucy Ann Simms Watts

# Record the information

## Front view:

Wendy Harbin Rader

May 13, 1954

Feb 1, 1989

RADER

Joan Priest

Dec 3, 1927

Howard M.

Mar 20, 1925

## Back view:

We love you momma.

David and Elizabeth

RADER

Parents of Deborah,  
Wendy and Matthew



# What about those hard-to-read tombstones?



- Attempt to visualize the writing first, use your mirror to capture additional light
- Consider using your soft toothbrush to softly clean the face of the stone
- Consider making a rubbing using pencil & paper or aluminum foil
- Consider using your shaving cream & squeegee – and then use plenty of clean water to wash it off completely

# Formatting the Data

- Record your data using a computer, if at all possible.
- Begin your file with the cemetery name, town, county and state.
- Give directions to the cemetery, using street and road names, route numbers and landmarks, if applicable.
- Don't forget to include your name and contact info at the top of the file.
- Include any interesting historical data on the cemetery, if known - date established, background info, etc.
- Enter the tombstone inscriptions just as you wrote them down.
- If you have additional genealogical information for the individuals that might be of interest, include that in a separate comments column.

USGenWeb Project Archives uses only ASCII Text file format.  
If possible, please save the files in this format.

# Submit your work



- Click on <http://genrerecords.org/vafiles/cemetery.html> to send your written work
- Transcribe your work into the form provided
- Access <http://www.usgwarchives.net/va/vastones/vastones.htm> to submit your photos

**Information for this presentation was  
liberally used from the following website:**

<http://usgwtombstones.org>

For more information,  
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