

Filming and Photography in Historic Cemeteries

Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries

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Overview

The Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries (OCHC) has created a number of position papers to convey their opinion of best practices on various topics related to historic cemeteries. The following addresses filming and photography in historic cemeteries and may apply to all cemeteries, more generally.

Cemetery Managers, Managing Agencies, and Preservationists

If your cemetery has not had any problems or concerns with unauthorized filming or photography, consider yourself fortunate, as this is becoming more of a problem as attitudes change and social and electronic media continues to grow and expand.

With our ever changing world and the constant introduction of new forms of instant media and communication gadgets, cemeteries may no longer be the final resting places they once were. They and the gravesites contained within their grounds are finding their way on to websites, face book and other social media sites. In the majority of these cases, it is without the knowledge or permission of the owner or caretaker of the gravesite, or the cemetery owner.

While the intentions of some of those taking photos may be good, others are not and can be quite upsetting to the families of loved ones who discover the pictures on line, sometimes for sale. The fact remains that these gravesites are private property and owned by someone. Cemeteries, whether public or private, have certain rights to control what happens on that land. Even when the land is publicly owned and dedicated to a public purpose, such as a park, the landowner is absolutely entitled to impose time, place and manner restrictions as to what can and can t be done on the land.

While laws have failed to keep up with dealing with problems resulting from modern day social media practices and it may be difficult to enforce filming and photography in our cemeteries, it all starts with your cemetery having rules, regulations and a policy in place addressing the subject. This, along with the other rules and regulations for your cemetery, need to be posted and available for all to see and be made aware of.

If your cemetery does not already have a policy in place regarding this subject, you may want to consider doing so. Some examples of policies already in place at other cemeteries may assist you in developing a policy for your cemetery. They are as follows:

[Coal Creek Memorial Cemetery](#)—Louisville, Colorado

Filming and photography for use in a movie, book, newspaper, magazine, television news, paranormal research, Internet or other electronic media are not permitted on Cemetery grounds.

Metro Cemeteries—Portland, Oregon

Use discretion when filming or photographing the landscape and graves. Commercial filming, photography or videography requires a special use permit. You are not allowed to...take videos or photos of people visiting a gravesite or at a gravesite service without their permission.

Woodlawn Cemetery Everett, Massachusetts Photographing funerals is prohibited. Commercial photographs and movie making are not permitted except by special permission from the cemetery.

Green-Wood Cemetery Brooklyn, New York Photography is permitted. Please ask for a copy of our Photography Policy at our main entrance. Professional photography, including use of light, stands or other equipment, as well as publishing of any photographs taken at Green-Wood, requires written consent of The Green-Wood Cemetery. Filming and videotaping are strictly prohibited without advance permission and require written consent of The Green-Wood Cemetery.

Glenwood Cemetery- Houston, Texas Photography for private (not commercial) use is permitted so long as it does not interfere with the quiet enjoyment of the cemetery by other visitors. Photography in available light is preferred, although flash cameras may be used. External light sources not integral to the camera may not be used. Photography of burials is permitted only with the express permission of the person authorizing the burial, and such permission should be made know to the Glenwood office in advance of the burial. Photography for commercial use is prohibited, except with the written permission of the Executive Director. Requests should be submitted to the Glenwood office.

Brookwood Cemetery Woking, Surrey, England Interestingly the cemetery has had restrictions on photography since its opening in 1854. We do not permit any photographs to be taken in the cemetery unless you have a photographic permit issued by the Cemetery Office. These permits prohibit the posting of photographs on the internet. If you wish to do this you will need to apply for further permission from the Cemetery Office. All requests for photography must be made in writing to the Cemetery Office and permits will be issued at our discretion. There is a suggested donation of 10 pounds, payable to the Brookwood Cemetery Restoration Fund.

These are just a few examples that may assist you in getting a conversation started with your cemetery group or organization as to the possible need for putting a policy in place for your cemetery.

In the meantime, should unauthorized pictures be found on the Internet or other electronic media, a letter to the person or organization responsible, asking that they be removed and what action will be taken if they are not, will in most cases help resolve the matter. Get the support of your Cemetery Commission, Mayor and City Council, Police Department and if possible, members of the family or families whose gravesites may have been photographed. Be sure to copy them all in on the letter as it will make your letter that much more credible, stronger and hopefully more meaningful.

Filmmakers and Photographers

Summary

The OCHC supports responsible, respectful and sensitive preservation and educational photography and filming in our historic cemeteries, and encourages those wanting to do so, to check with the cemetery owners with regard to the rules and regulations before proceeding.

Information and Additonal Resources

For information, advising, and additional resources, please contact [Kuri Gill](#), Grants and Outreach Coordinator for Oregon Heritage and Program Coordinator for the OCHC, or one of the OCHC Commissioners.

References