

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Be Kind to Cemeteries

Tips for respectfully visiting burying grounds

1) Are Any Cemeteries Off Limits?

- a) Most are fine to visit during the day regardless of a lack of signage, but some small, old burying grounds are on private property. Make sure you get permission before traipsing through someone's backyard.

2) Can I Touch Tombstones?

- a) Even if you think a stone is solid enough to stand it, it's best not to touch old ones, especially. Sometimes the surfaces are wearing away, or their bases are not as secure as they look!

3) Should I Lean or Sit on Tombstones?

- a) Not only is it unsafe for you and the stone, it's also pretty disrespectful to the person whose memory the marker hopes to preserve.

4) Are Cemeteries Dangerous?

- a) Perhaps! Keep an eye open for trash or broken glass, poison ivy, low-profile stones, holes dug by animals, and other wild things that might make a cemetery their home. Ghosts, however defamed in popular media, cannot hurt you.

5) Can I Walk My Dog in a Cemetery?

- a) Most cemeteries have a no-dog policy, but even if there's no sign, that doesn't mean it's ok to use it as a dumping ground. Also, your beloved pooch could accidentally damage the stones by knocking into them (or peeing on them!).

6) Don't Litter in Cemeteries

- a) You're not a jerk so we don't have to tell you this, right?

7) I Want to Clean a Tombstone...

- a) Great! Call a professional or do a ton of research, first. Many cleaners and scrubbers are not good for any stones, let alone delicate older ones. Water and a soft brush are usually good. Depending on the cemetery, it might also be a good idea to get permission, first.

8) Watch Your Step!

- a) Most cemeteries have a dawn-to-dusk rule, but even if there isn't one posted, that doesn't mean it's a good idea. There are far more low-lying, broken-off, and erratically placed stones in cemeteries to trip over during the day, let alone at night!

9) Is It Ok To Visit A Cemetery If I'm Not A Mourner?

- a) Absolutely! In any given cemetery, there are memorials that no longer get any visitors at all.
- b) Be respectful, calm, and mindful of others as you wander the grounds.
- c) Take a slow stroll and read the names aloud. They love that.
- d) Admire the architecture! Old tombstones have varied and interesting styles of construction and engraving details.
- e) Take pictures—some cemeteries have great old trees, iron fencing, and other details that make great subjects. Early morning and late afternoon are good for light, but if you are looking to record the epitaphs, a cloudy day works best.
- f) Reconnect with the past. History is the best. Take it from us.