



Tomb Care at St. John's Historic Cemetery

Family members and others wish to know what the recommended methods are for repairing and cleaning family tombs. Most structures in the Cemetery show mold or are covered with lichens, for example, many old brick tombs are missing bricks or have problems with the mortar between bricks, and a number of tombs have sunk or settled, or even cracked into parts.

The major general advice: ***Do no harm.***

Every tomb is different: The materials used are brick, marble, sandstone, or granite—or some combination of them. The different materials react differently to chemicals, but most are sensitive to modern chemical cleaners, like bleach, and are easily damaged by them. And the use of hard, metal scrapers, sanders, and other such devices to clean tombs will cause damage. Pressure washing is also harmful, as it will wear stone or brick and aggravate already worn or damaged surfaces.

So – what can one do?

A first step in preparation is assessment of the tomb – what materials were used in the tomb and headstone and tablet or other marker, and what condition they are in. What kinds of plant growth are there on the tomb? All plants, including mold, react on and cause damage to tombs. Are there other problems, such as crumbling mortar, broken bricks, or cracked tablets?

A second step is some research to know what to use to clean the tomb and how to use it. There are increasing sources of information, thanks to internet availability. We are recommending the following website and the links it contains: www.gravestonecleaner.com. It will show you about a company named Cemetery Preservation Supply LLC, which markets an excellent cleaning product called D/2 (recently used in the Cemetery to clean several tombs). The site also has some useful, current advice on what to do with different types of tombs and even links to videos demonstrating techniques.

A third step may be contacting a qualified repair person, especially if the tomb is structurally in bad shape. St. John's Episcopal Church has used a few such people lately, and the information is at the church office, 985-447-2910. The current Cemetery Warden is David Cassard, who also has information. His contact number is 985-414-3295.