Common Stone Types

There are several types of stone found in cemeteries & graveyards in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- **Marble:** The most common, and softest, material used in the province, white marble was typically imported from the east coast of the USA, beginning in the early 19th century. It is soft and granular, and weathers easily.
- **Sandstone:** Easy to carve, sandstone is a sedimentary rock made from the compression of tiny particles. In NL, sandstone is locally sourced and a tan colour, and has been used since at least the early 19th century for gravestones.
- **Limestone:** Limestone is a sedimentary rock with high calcium-carbonate content. In NL, limestone is a grey-blue colour and gravestones made from limestone were imported from the British Isles in the 18th century.
- **Slate:** Both locally sourced or imported from New England, slate is a very hard and long-wearing metamorphic stone made of thin layers of compressed mudstone. It often shows little weathering. Slate has been used for gravestones in NL since the 17th century, and most field stones in NL are made from a local slate.
- **Granite:** Extremely durable, granite comes in a multitude of colours. Used for gravestones and monuments since the mid-late 19th century in Canada, it is the standard material used for gravestones today.

Trail of the Caribou

Trail of the Caribou Research Group's Mission is to raise awareness of the accomplishments and sacrifices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in military conflicts and peacekeeping missions. The objectives of TCRG are:

"To promote the study, documentation, and awareness of the accomplishments of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who served in military conflicts and peacekeeping missions"

"To identify, visit, document and help preserve the gravesites and memorials at home and abroad of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who served in military conflicts and peacekeeping missions"

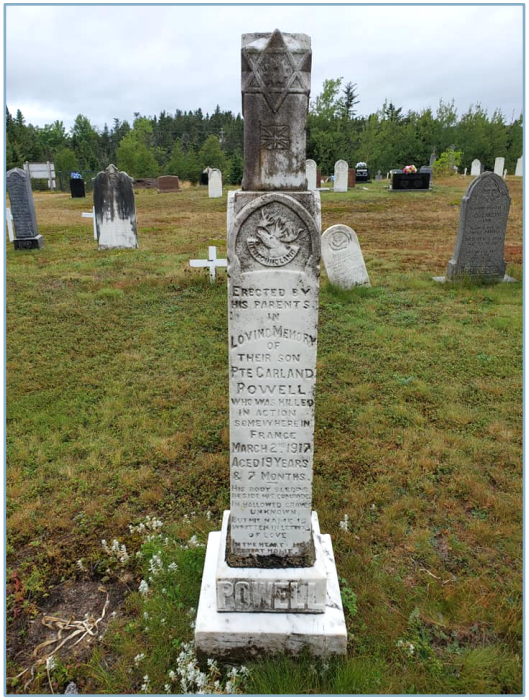
"To undertake activities to promote greater public awareness of the deeds and sacrifices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who served in military conflicts and peacekeeping missions, and their important role in the history of our province and country."

All TCRG initiatives are founded on values of fellowship, inclusion and respect.

Black Cat Cemetery Preservation

Black Cat Cemetery Preservation specializes in the conservation and preservation of historic gravestones and cemeteries.

Contact Us:
blackcatpreservation@gmail.com



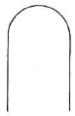
Basic Gravestone Care & Recording

Created by Black Cat Cemetery Preservation for The Trail of the Caribou Research Group

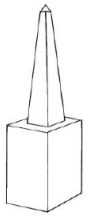
Types of Gravestones

There are many different types of grave markers found in Newfoundland and Labrador. Below are a few examples of the major types of grave markers that you might see in historic cemeteries, with images from the Burial Ground Memorial Form (DEBS, Harold Mytum 2022).

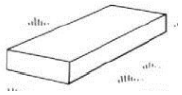
- **Headstone:** Simple upright markers, set into a key (base) or directly into the ground.



- **Pillar / Obelisk Marker:** Made of several pieces of stone, with a stone obelisk, pillar, or other ornament on top.



- **Ledger:** A flat piece of stone laying directly on the ground, covering the grave shaft.



- **Field Stone:** Small, irregular shaped stones, typically with no inscription, used to mark a grave. They can be square, rounded, or natural shaped.

- **Memorials:** These markers do not have remains buried beneath, as the veteran is buried elsewhere, typically where they died. Veterans who died overseas are also often named on gravestones to relatives. Many cemeteries have a communal cenotaph to commemorate all soldiers killed and buried elsewhere, erected by a parish or community. They can come in many shapes and sizes and are typically made from stone. These are not the same as community War Memorials.

Caring for Historic Gravestones

Thank you for your investment in your local heritage! Volunteers like you are vital for maintaining our Province's historic cemeteries and burial grounds.

"Always make sure you have permission before starting any work in a historic cemetery or burial ground!"

Materials

For gravestone cleaning, you will need the following materials:

- Soft, natural or plastic bristle brushes
- Gloves
- Water in a spray bottle or hand pump
- D/2 Biological Solutions, a conservation safe, Ph-neutral, stone cleaner

Gravestone Cleaning 'Must Nots'

Historic gravestones are fragile. Please use the following tips to keep them safe.

- Do not use wire brushes. They will scrape pieces of the stone off the surface.
- Do not take rubbings of gravestones. The pressure causes the stone to weather quickly.
- Do not use household soaps, bleach, or other cleaners that are not conservation safe. They deposit acids and salts into the stone which expand and cause it to break.
- Do not use powders to try and read the gravestone. They sit in the pores of the stone & expand, cracking the surface.
- Do not paint the gravestones. Paint traps moisture inside the stone, causing it to weather and break quicker than it should.



How to Clean a Gravestone

1. If the gravestone is laying on the ground, start by gently brushing debris such as dirt, sticks, and rocks off the stone so they don't scratch the surface;
2. Next, saturate the stone with water. Once it is wet, you can carefully remove moss with your fingers or the brush;
3. Gently scrub the stone using your soft brush, using more water as needed to rinse and keep the stone wet. This will take off most of the dirt and grime on the surface of the gravestone;
4. If you need more cleaning power, spray a 1:1 mixture of water and D/2 Biological Solution onto the surface of the stone. Gently scrub to activate the product (note, the stone will appear orange/pink while the product is cleaning, but it is not dying the stone);
5. You don't need to scrub very hard to clean with D/2, as it is absorbed in the stone and continues to clean for months after application. Rinse the stone to see a difference immediately but return in a few months to see how clean it becomes!
6. Viola! Cleaning a gravestone is easy. Please don't scrub soft stones if they are crumbling.