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# A Conditions Assessment and Preservation Guidelines for Second Presbyterian Church's Graveyard Charleston, South Carolina

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A Conditions Assessment and Preservation Guidelines for Second Presbyterian Church's  
Graveyard  
Charleston, South Carolina

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Schools of  
Clemson University and the College of Charleston

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Historic Preservation

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by  
William Preston Hamilton  
May 2008

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of the world the commemoration of the dead has taken many manifestations and forms. Monuments range from burial mounds and tombs to wall memorials and grave slabs. The earliest surviving architectural remains in nearly every culture are the remains of memorials to the dead which can often shed light on the lifestyles of humans from prehistoric times. Beginning in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century American graveyards began to exhibit many of the characteristics of modern burial grounds, such as individual burial pits and family grave plots. This practice was no different at Second Presbyterian Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina.

Located at 342 Meeting Street in Charleston, South Carolina, Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard has been left somewhat unattended, which has led it into an accelerated state of deterioration. The graveyard<sup>1</sup> has had some maintenance, however, it has not been satisfactory. This is a situation where a preservation plan would greatly aid the church in caring for its graveyard. This thesis will provide guidelines in the preservation of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.

The preservation plan is divided into three parts: The first is a brief history of Second Presbyterian Church and its congregation, the second provides preservation guidelines for appropriate repairs to the graveyard, and the third part is a conditions assessment of the grave markers found within the graveyard.

This project is a practical plan for the members of Second Presbyterian Church. However, it should be noted that in all preservation situations professionals should be consulted before proceeding with work.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this project the use of the word "graveyard" will refer to a space that is associated with a church which is used to bury the deceased associated with that particular church.

This effort to help preserve Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard includes photographing all extant markers, in addition to the creation of a plan of the graveyard that is linked alpha-numerically with a list of those individuals buried there. Preservation guidelines were also created for the graveyard in order to provide those individuals in charge of preservation efforts with a starting point. In addition, each grave marker was systematically catalogued in a conditions assessment which includes the physical condition of each marker and its inscription, if legible. This project was developed as a tool for Second Presbyterian Church that can be altered in the future to suit the changes that occur in and around the church's graveyard.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

A number of individuals have offered their advice and encouragement during the course of this project's compilation. Foremost among these has been Mrs. Nancy Bryant along with the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church, whose time and effort have been extremely beneficial to this project. I have benefited from my advisor Jonathan Poston, as well as my readers Frances Ford and Robert Russell. They have all offered their support throughout the time I have spent diligently trying to finish this thesis. And finally, I owe a lasting debt of gratitude to my parents, who instilled in me the work ethic it took to complete such a daunting task.

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## CHAPTER 1

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND ITS CONGREGATION

Nearly two-hundred and seventy years ago, twelve Scottish families established the First Presbyterian Church in Charles Town, South Carolina.<sup>2</sup> This church, now commonly known as First Scots Presbyterian Church, was founded by dissenting Presbyterians who had previously worshipped at the White Meeting House.

In 1809 the Reverend Andrew Flinn was called to gather the first congregation for a second Presbyterian church in Charleston.<sup>3</sup> The church was built for \$100,000 and was dedicated on April 3, 1811.<sup>4</sup> Constructed at the corner of Meeting and Charlotte Streets, the church's graveyard was incorporated around the northern and eastern portions of the sanctuary shortly after the 1811 completion. Today, the graveyard comprises nearly the entire area allotted for it, as well as new space on the immediate southern side of the church adjacent to the sanctuary.

The property for the church was obtained from the Wragg family, whose name was given to the area in Charleston known as Wraggborough. Several prominent families have been, and still are, a part of the congregation at Second Presbyterian Church, notably the Smyths<sup>5</sup>, the Adgers, and the Robinsons. The Smyth family included several significant individuals who made names for themselves while in Charleston. This family originally immigrated to the United States from near the city of Belfast in Northern

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<sup>2</sup> Lilly, Edward Guerrant. Beyond The Burning Bush. Charleston, SC: Garnier and Company, 1971. p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> A man by the name of Thomas Smith, who was originally from Indiana, chose to attend Seminary at Princeton University. While at Princeton, Smith chose to change his last name to Smyth. During the latter part of the 1850s several of Thomas Smyth's relatives moved to Charleston, later adding the letter "e" to the end of their last name changing it to Smythe. There are both Smythes and Smyths in Charleston and in Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.

Ireland. Notable family members include Thomas Smyth, the second minister of the church and an author, his son Ellison Adger Smyth who was an industrialist, and James Adger Smythe who was a progressive mayor in Charleston during the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 1.1** – Second Presbyterian Church Circa 1811.<sup>7</sup>

Another prominent family associated with Second Presbyterian Church, the Adgers, also emigrated from Northern Ireland. The Adger family includes several well-known members, however, one in particular is worth highlighting. James Adger was a prominent shipping merchant in Charleston in the 1830s. He later became one of the wealthiest individuals in the city, after overseeing one of the most substantial mercantile

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<sup>6</sup> Poston Jonathan H. The Buildings of Charleston. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. p. 611.

<sup>7</sup> Print courtesy of Second Presbyterian Church. Date of publishing and artist are unknown.

and merchant banking operations in the country, along with his business partner, Alexander Brown of Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>8</sup>

A final prolific family that has been a substantial part of Second Presbyterian Church, the Robinsons, occupy several plots scattered throughout Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. The Robinson family, also of Scots-Irish decent, had members who came to Charleston in addition to several other cities. The illustrious merchant and builder John Robinson, who built six homes on Judith Street in Charleston<sup>9</sup>, can be found in Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard along with twenty-nine of his family members.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Edgar, Walter, ed. The South Carolina Encyclopedia. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006. p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Poston Jonathan H. The Buildings of Charleston. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. pp. 608-610.

<sup>10</sup> While other prominent families exist within the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church, these families were chosen for this project because of the abundance of individuals in the families buried in the church's graveyard.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DEVELOPING A PRESERVATION PLAN**

Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard is of great value to its congregation. It contains various important archaeological and historic features, not all of which are visible. When attempting to preserve this graveyard, preservation guidelines will be useful. The guidelines presented in this project are a way of offering advice on the routine maintenance of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.

#### **Incorporated Materials**

Over the years Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard has been subject to vandalism, neglect, the eroding effects of pollution and various environmental factors, as well as individuals that are uninformed as to the correct ways of cleaning and repairing grave markers. It is vital that individuals are educated in the correct ways of maintaining this historic graveyard in order to prevent problems similar to those abovementioned from occurring.

To properly evaluate the problems associated with this graveyard it is necessary to identify the materials that were used in the construction of the various grave markers. There is a definite timeline for which the various grave marker materials became popular in the low country of South Carolina. Most individuals constructed grave markers from wood because of the fact that they did not have the means to purchase an expensive stone marker from England or New England. Stone grave markers functioned as status symbols for those who could afford them. Having a grave marker at all was seen as a symbol of wealth in Charleston. Different wooden markers are known as railings,

headboards, and footboards. Because they are easily subject to decay, there are few wooden grave markers left in Charleston.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 1.2** – Example of wooden headboards at St. James’ Church. West Ashley, South Carolina

With regard to stone markers, there were many different forms and materials used for graves throughout Charleston. However, the lack of stone found in the low country led those individuals who had the means to do so to rely on New England and English stone for grave markers. During the 1750s and 1760s, many individuals were importing stone from areas in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.<sup>12</sup>

Slate and sandstone were the favored materials for grave markers in and around Charleston during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As time moved on these stones became more expensive and hard to come by in the low country because of their

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<sup>11</sup> Little, M. Ruth. Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. pp. 4-7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-4.

popularity and cost. Marble and granite became common materials used for producing grave markers for the wealthy in Charleston during the nineteenth century. Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard includes mostly markers created from marble and granite. Marbles and granites were, and are still, popular with those individuals who have the means to acquire them.<sup>13</sup>

### Carvers

Numerous carvers such as John Stevens and John Bull of Newport, Henry Emmes and William Codner of Boston, and Gabriel Allen of Providence shipped their grave stones to Charleston from the 1740s to the 1780s. However, the most extravagantly carved grave stones came from England and Scotland. At Second Presbyterian Church, the majority of the grave markers can be attributed to the firm of W.T. White who worked in Charleston.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 1.3 & 1.4** – An example of two headstones at Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard carved by W.T. White.

### Problems

While there are numerous tangible problems to deal with inside Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, there are additional dilemmas stemming from these

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp.48-61.

<sup>14</sup> Poston, Jonathan H. *A Conditions Assessment of St. Michael's Church Graveyard*. Historic Charleston Foundation, 1997. pp. 42-45.

problems that need to be resolved. One of these problems involves the inscriptions on grave markers. Many of the inscriptions which indicate when important events occurred have been worn away by harmful environmental factors.

This graveyard records the lives of those people that are buried in it. It, as well as others, may serve as a type of museum displaying the various art forms incorporated in different grave markers. These markers are invaluable artifacts that can be used to educate individuals in the future as to the important historical aspects of people buried in this graveyard.

Aesthetics plays a major role in whether or not people visit Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. Another one of the main problems in regard to this graveyard is its lack of maintenance. The lack of maintenance, sunlight, and a proper landscape plan do not add to the graveyard's aesthetic appeal. Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard should be developed as an attractive area with attractive monuments that honor those individuals buried within it.

The Second Presbyterian Church graveyard lacks the ground cover necessary to prevent grave markers from becoming discolored and darkened by dirt and debris. Ground cover not only prevents dirt and debris from collecting on markers, but it adds to the appearance of graveyards as well. Several attractive species of ground cover plants are discussed in the section regarding the implementation of a landscape plan.

### **The Preservation Plan**

In order to prevent various issues from occurring, or reoccurring, it is necessary for the individuals in charge of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard to develop a

master plan. This section attempts to explain the necessary measures that must be implemented to preserve, protect, or rehabilitate Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.

Those individuals involved in rehabilitating the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church can begin work as soon as they are aware of several important aspects. Prior to beginning the physical work on the graveyard, it is necessary to gather information pertaining to the following aspects: Legal jurisdiction, owners of the property, state and local ordinances governing the graveyard, security measures, prior documentation, availability of volunteers, the amount of work that will be required to restore the graveyard appropriately, available restoration firms that have prior knowledge and experience in this field, a landscape plan, promoting the interest of the congregation in the graveyard's maintenance, and, finally, the cost of the plan and how to go about securing funds for the work might be the most important aspect of the entire process.<sup>15</sup>

In the case of Second Presbyterian Church, the property is owned by the church, while maintenance measures are carried out through private contractors whose maintenance plans are approved by a church committee. In Charleston, many of these measures must be approved by either The Board of Architectural Review or The Board of Zoning Appeals-Site Design, prior to being implemented.<sup>16</sup>

### **Laws and Ordinances**

There are several state ordinances that protect graveyards in South Carolina. SC Code 16-17-600 prohibits the destruction of graves or graveyards. It protects all facets of

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<sup>15</sup> South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History. South Carolina's Historic Graveyards: A Preservation Handbook. Columbia: South Carolina, 1997. pp.13-22.

<sup>16</sup> City of Charleston: The Official Website of The City. 2 Feb 2008.  
<http://www.charlestoncity.info/lists/?lid=25>



a graveyard, and if broken the penalty is no more than two thousand dollars, or up to five years in the state prison, or both depending on the discretion of the court.<sup>17</sup> SC Code 27-43-10 requires any individual(s) attempting to move the graves in a graveyard to contact the relatives of the deceased thirty days prior to doing so.<sup>18</sup> SC Code 27-43-20 requires the graves to be moved to a plot that is mutually agreed upon by the relatives of the deceased and the governing body of the county in which the graves are being moved, or a board of three members appointed by the county, the relatives, and the third member being appointed by the previous two groups.<sup>19</sup>

An additional law in South Carolina governing the protection of graveyards can be found under SC Code 6-1-35. It authorizes counties and municipalities to preserve and protect any graveyard which has been abandoned within its jurisdiction. These counties and municipalities are obligated to expend public funds and labor to help preserve the graveyards that have been abandoned.<sup>20</sup> While these statutes may not have any current bearing on Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, it is important to note them to prevent, or help to resolve, problems in the future. Violators of these statutes can be fined up to five thousand dollars, can face jail time up to ten years, and may be sentenced to perform community service.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 helps to protect graveyards that have been listed under the National Register of Historic Places. This protection only applies if federal funds, or licenses, are involved.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> SC Code Ann. § 16-17-600 (Law Co-op. 2005).

<sup>18</sup> SC Code Ann. § 27-43-10 (Law Co-op. 2005).

<sup>19</sup> SC Code Ann. § 27-43-20 (Law Co-op. 2005).

<sup>20</sup> SC Code Ann. § 6-1-35 (Law Co-op. 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Pub. L. 89-665. 15 Oct. 1966.

## **Security**

A brick retaining wall and a fence that is locked after dark are the only security measures incorporated by the church to protect the Second Presbyterian Church graveyard from vandals. There are no lights within the graveyard, or any other preventative measures that are used to protect it.

## **Prior Surveys**

Prior to the present project, there was a rough attempt at cataloging the grave markers during the 1970s, however, no further attempt has been made following that one. During the 1970s attempt a simple survey was completed of the extant markers. There was no conditions assessment or preservation guidelines to go along with that survey.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are available to help improve the state of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, however, they lack the professional guidance that is needed to help rehabilitate it. The importance of professional help in this type of preservation project is vital in the efforts at protecting Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. Not only will a professional have the knowledge to revitalize the graveyard, but he or she will most likely be able to enlighten those individuals in charge of the graveyard's maintenance as to how to keep it from moving back into a state of disrepair. The education factor incorporated into this project may be the most important one of all.

## **Restoration Professionals**

In order to properly restore a grave marker it takes someone who is aware of the importance of not only the area where the grave is located, but the physical nature and fragility of the materials that were used to make it. It is vital that the historical fabric of

the markers, and the graveyard as a whole, be maintained when beginning a preservation project of this nature.<sup>23</sup>

### **Problems with the Landscape**

The area where the graveyard is located at Second Presbyterian Church is in need of a maintenance plan. Volunteers may be helpful in this area with regard to raking leaves, cleaning up trash, or removing limbs from trees in order to provide more sunlight. The church will find it necessary to hire a professional landscaping firm to help maintain grass, shrubs, and the trees found throughout the graveyard. In particular, the trees found in the northeastern portion of the graveyard are in need of maintenance.<sup>24</sup> This maintenance should include trimming limbs, and possibly removing any trees that totally block parts of the graveyard from receiving sunlight.<sup>25</sup>

### **Beginning Stages of a Preservation Plan**

In order to create a successful preservation plan the necessary measures must be adequately implemented to successfully preserve a graveyard. Once again, these aspects include legal jurisdiction, owners of the property, state and local ordinances governing the graveyard, security measures, prior documentation, availability of volunteers, the amount of work that will be required to restore the graveyard appropriately, available restoration firms that have prior knowledge and experience in this field, a landscape plan,

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<sup>23</sup> Most often in Charleston, the contractors working on a project near a graveyard will help to maintain the graveyard itself. Also, there are several stone masons involved with the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston that have valuable knowledge pertaining to stone restoration and repair. Notable companies in the United States that provide stone restoration services include Conservation Solutions, The Historical Stone Restoration Company, and Chicora Foundation Inc.

<sup>24</sup> This portion of the graveyard includes sections A2, B2, C2, D2, E2, F2, and the lower portions of A3, B3, C3, D3, E3, and F3 that are found on the graveyard plan included with the project.

<sup>25</sup> The Charleston ordinance regarding tree preservation and protection can be found under Development online at <http://www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?pid=19955&sid=40> under Development Standards.

promoting the interest of the congregation in the graveyard's maintenance, and finally, the cost of the plan and how to go about securing funds for the work.

Determining which laws and regulations apply in a given situation is vital in any attempt at graveyard preservation. The various statutes mentioned in the previous section provide relevant information about what, and what not, to do when dealing with historic graveyards. One should always consult a professional in the field of preservation law when attempting to make changes to a historic graveyard. Although the laws protecting graveyards in South Carolina are fairly weak, they do act as a safeguard against vandalism.<sup>26</sup>

### **Recommendations for Security Measures**

There are several security measures that should be carried out by Second Presbyterian Church. The first involves creating regulations to prevent any accidents from occurring in, or around, the graveyard. These regulations should include guidelines explaining the hours that the graveyard will be opened to visitors. They should prevent children from being unsupervised in an attempt to keep them from playing on grave markers. These regulations should limit the cleaning of gravestones and they should prohibit gravestone rubbings by non-professionals. In addition, they should include a section which prevents loitering.

Furthermore, the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church includes a retaining wall around the graveyard's perimeter. If an individual were to scale this wall and enter

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<sup>26</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. p.13. This source provides preservation recommendations on a world-wide basis.

the graveyard he or she would easily be unnoticed at night. A motion detection system would likely prevent such problems from ever occurring.<sup>27</sup>

Another important security measure involves the local police. They provide important information pertaining to the security and protection of a graveyard. It may be beneficial to ask them about different ways in which to protect a graveyard. It may also be helpful to ask them to send an officer around the graveyard at various times to discourage individuals from entering after hours. Not only will this help to protect the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church, but seeing a patrol car around the premises will deter intruders as well.

### **Current Preservation Guidelines**

This project includes documentation of existing grave markers as well as a map that illustrates where the various markers are situated throughout the graveyard. In addition to the map, a conditions assessment is included that provides information pertaining to the condition of each extant marker found within the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church. A spreadsheet has also been added that incorporates an alphabetical list of individuals buried in the graveyard. It is linked with the map alpha-numerically in order to provide individuals with a way to locate people buried in the graveyard.

### **How to Incorporate Volunteers**

The need for volunteers will be vital to restore and preserve the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church. Several creative ideas have come forth to increase the availability of volunteers for this kind of graveyard project. Volunteer assistance will be beneficial towards establishing funds, providing important labor in the graveyard, as well as providing constructive criticism that will move the preservation plan in the right

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<sup>27</sup> Strangstad, Lynette. A Graveyard Preservation Primer. California: AltaMira Press, 1988. p.18.

direction. Several tasks which volunteers may take upon themselves include raking leaves, picking up trash, pulling weeds, and recruiting other volunteers to help with the church's graveyard preservation efforts.

Careful coordination will be necessary during the organization of volunteers. A coordinator, or a group of coordinators, will be useful to establish this volunteer effort. This coordinator, or group of coordinators, should be educated and have previous experience in graveyard preservation. The coordinator at Second Presbyterian Church should be involved in setting the timeframe for volunteers to help, delegating tasks to individuals, as well as enlightening the volunteers as to the importance of such as project. If volunteers will be working alongside professionals it will be necessary to enlighten the volunteers as to whom they will be working with, as well as those tasks they should, and should not, take upon themselves.<sup>28</sup>

An additional important task for coordinators involves setting up training sessions for volunteers that will be involved in actual hands-on preservation work. These sessions will provide invaluable information for individuals working on Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. They will also allow them to use what they have learned in other graveyard preservation projects they might be involved with in the future.

Another vital aspect of graveyard restoration and preservation pertains to public awareness and education. Making the members of Second Presbyterian Church aware of the importance of their graveyard is one of the essential aspects of preserving it. Once an individual becomes aware of the importance of this historic graveyard, he or she will more than likely feel the need to educate others as to its significance. This usually leads

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<sup>28</sup> South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History. South Carolina's Historic Graveyards: A Preservation Handbook. Columbia, South Carolina, 1997. p.21.

to more volunteers becoming aware of the need to preserve this graveyard.<sup>29</sup> Making the church's congregation aware of the importance of this early graveyard is vital to its longevity. Once individuals are educated and made aware of the importance of this graveyard, more volunteers will begin to help to preserve it.

One way to get volunteers involved is to organize a congregation work day specifically for the cleaning of the graveyard. This day should be solely directed towards everyday landscape maintenance. Activities such as pulling weeds, lawn mowing, cleaning up trash, as well as tree and shrub trimming are a few necessary maintenance measures that should be included in the day's activities.

In addition, incorporating a lunch, or dinner, following the work day is another way to attract volunteers for the cleanup day. Incentives are always helpful in situations such as these. They provide a way to attract volunteers while educating them as to the proper cleaning techniques associated with graveyard preservation.

While volunteers are always helpful in preserving historic graveyards, the work of professionals cannot be taken for granted. Local stone, or gravestone, preservation groups will likely be available in and around cities of historic importance. They are a crucial aspect of the preservation of historic graveyards.<sup>30</sup>

### **Recommendations for the Landscape**

The landscape of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard is fairly simple, as were other similar graveyard landscapes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the very least, graveyards of this size should have their trees and shrubs trimmed in order to maintain an adequate appearance for visitors. Dead trees and small plants should be

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.20-21.

<sup>30</sup> See note 22 on page 11.

removed. Their removal will reduce the risk of harm to individuals visiting the graveyard while adding to its aesthetic appeal.<sup>31</sup>

To properly maintain Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, it will be necessary to hire labor that is educated in the ways of preserving a historic graveyard's landscape. Once again, volunteers are always helpful in this area of graveyard preservation. Even if all they do is collect trash or rake leaves, they are still providing a service that would involve spending more money on a landscaping crew.

Several landscaping issues come to mind in the present day regarding the physical state of the area where the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church is located. Some problems are caused by tree roots causing graves to heave from the ground. On some occasions this type of problem can be resolved by removing the roots that are causing the problem, while other occasions involve the removal of entire trees. Often times, tree removal cannot be avoided during an attempt to preserve a historic graveyard.<sup>32</sup>

An additional way to resolve this problem involves removing trees that are known to grow large, with damaging roots before they begin to cause problems, or planting trees that do not grow to a size that will cause problems.<sup>33</sup>

What are known as ground covers may also be useful in a graveyard such as Second Presbyterian's. These ground covers are simply plants and shrubs that need little maintenance. The best places for ground covers are within grave plots surrounded by a coping. These plantings provide protection for grave markers, while improving the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.30-34.

<sup>32</sup> Several markers that have begun to heave in the graveyard include numbers 1 and 2 in section 4E as well as numbers 5 and 6 found in section 4F on the graveyard plan provided. There are other markers that are heaving, however, these are four notable examples which are in a severe state of disrepair.

<sup>33</sup> Strangstad, Lynette. A Graveyard Preservation Primer. California: AltaMira Press, 1988. pp.53-56.



aesthetics of a graveyard.<sup>34</sup> Some extremely attractive ground covers that bloom at different periods of the year include creeping phlox, periwinkle, sedum, and grasses such as monkey grass.<sup>35</sup> Other ground covers with funerary significance include acacia, which represents the material of the Ark of the Covenant, as well as death and rebirth, lilies which are considered to be the Virgin's flower, in addition to Roses which signify completion and the achievement of perfection.<sup>36</sup>

The preparation of a landscape plan should be undertaken by a professional landscape architect. This is not a project that should be undertaken by volunteers. If the funds are not available, it will be necessary to wait until they are to begin this part of the graveyard's restoration.

The plan of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard now includes several attractive species of plants and trees that simply need to be better maintained. If any trees or shrubs are dead, it will be necessary to remove them, replant new ones, or, in some instances it may be viable to consider leaving the space open.

If attempting to restore this graveyard to what it was originally, exhaustive research must be done to find what plants and trees were originally used in the landscape plan and how they were situated in the graveyard. With regard to Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, its restoration will be difficult. This means it will become difficult when attempting to make changes to the present graveyard in an effort to make it appear as it did when it was first created. It will be extremely difficult to do this because of the fact that several hundred more graves have been added where trees and shrubs were once

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001.

located. In the case of the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church, it will most likely be easier to preserve what is currently there.<sup>37</sup>

The following principles should be strictly followed while working on a landscape plan in a graveyard such as the one at Second Presbyterian Church:

- All aspects of the plan should retain and preserve the historic fabric of the graveyard.
- Do not remove or damage materials or features found within the graveyard that help to characterize it. Always help to preserve these features.
- If possible, always repair historic aspects of the graveyard that are damaged.
- Use the gentlest means possible when working around grave markers.
- Always assume that there are unmarked graves when working in a graveyard.

A professional landscape architect who has experience working with historic graveyards will always take the previous notions into consideration when working on a graveyard with historic significance.

### **Recommendations for Funding**

South Carolina authorizes municipalities and counties to use public funds to help preserve graveyards, however, there are only a few graveyards in the state who receive these funds.<sup>38</sup> For the most part, funding for graveyard preservation projects comes from the church's congregation. Obtaining funds from members of the church will involve some creative thinking on the part of the individuals in charge of the project. One suggestion for funding involves setting a monetary goal and challenging the congregation to take the initiative to obtain that goal by a specific date. Monetary challenges similar in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History. South Carolina's Historic Graveyards: A Preservation Handbook. Columbia, South Carolina, 1997. p.29.

nature have been successful in other churches in Charleston including the Congregational Church, St. Philip's Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, and the Unitarian Church.

## CHAPTER 3

### PHYSICAL REPAIR OF MONUMENTS AND GRAVE MARKERS

#### Preservation Consultants and Contractors

Before beginning the actual repair of the physical aspects of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, it is important to consult a professional in the field of graveyard preservation, and to conduct a conditions assessment. These individuals include stone conservators, iron workers, masons, and graveyard preservation consultants, among others.<sup>39</sup> In general, when searching for professionals in the field of graveyard preservation, it is necessary to hire people who have proven experience and a valid resumé.

When hiring a professional graveyard conservator, always check their references as well as any previous work they have completed. Make sure they are aware of the importance of the area and materials in question. Professionals should always compile a report of their work, and know that they do not have all of the answers to everything in their field. If the funds allow it, hiring multiple professionals to act as a team in the preservation effort is the best way to go about preserving a graveyard. Whether or not the church decides to hire one person or multiple individuals, it will be necessary to compile a list of the various aspects of the graveyard that need to be repaired. This will serve as a starting point for preservationists.<sup>40</sup>

#### Cleaning Grave Markers

One of the most important parts of graveyard preservation and conservation at Second Presbyterian Church involves simply cleaning the markers. In most instances this

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<sup>39</sup> Strangstad, Lynette. A Graveyard Preservation Primer. California: AltaMira Press, 1988. p. 56-60.

<sup>40</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. p.49.

can become a tricky situation. It may be necessary to clean a gravestone in order to reveal certain characteristics such as lettering, or an ornate carving detail that is hidden behind a layer of dirt and grime. An older monument's appearance gives it what some may refer to as "character." By cleaning it so well that it appears to be a new stone the historic character of a marker may be lost in the process. It is essential to use proper methods when cleaning grave markers. Improper methods can result in irreparable damage to a marker.<sup>41</sup>

More often than not, most discoloration and staining comes from environmental factors such as wind, rain, trees, lichens, as well as pollution created by humans. Once again, cleaning grave markers should only be handled by professionals. In addition to environmental factors, there are several cleaning agents that can cause permanent damage to grave markers.<sup>42</sup> If there is any question that a marker might be further damaged by cleaning, preservationists should leave it alone. It's better to have a dirty historic grave marker than to have no historic grave marker at all.

Water should be used when first attempting to clean grave markers. In many cases stone grave markers may be cleaned by using a soft bristled brush to scrub the marker with an application of non-ionic water and a cleaning agent, such as a limestone or marble cleaner.<sup>43</sup> In other instances, it may be necessary to incorporate a different cleaning product. There are several companies that provide appropriate cleaning

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<sup>41</sup> Weaver, Martin E. with F.G. Matero. Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials. Revised ed. New York: Preservation Press, 1997. p. 88-91.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Prosoco is a national manufacturer of products that clean, protect and maintain concrete, brick and stone. The company's products and services are designed to improve the appearance and performance of architectural masonry. Its headquarters are located in Lawrence, Kansas. Other information may be found online at <http://www.prosoco.com/>

materials for grave markers and stone monuments.<sup>44</sup> Prior to applying any cleaning solution to a stone marker it is essential that a professional examine the marker under consideration so as not to damage it.

In addition, poultices, or leaching packs may be applied to the surface of markers in order to rid them of any dirt and grime that other products could not remove. Poultices are applied over the area being cleaned as a thick paste. They work by leaching moisture from stones. The moisture from the wet poultice is first absorbed into the stone. Next, as the poultice dries the moisture, along with any particles that might have stained the stone, is leached out of it. Once the poultice has been left to dry for a prolonged amount of time it is removed and the stain usually comes with it.<sup>45</sup>

When cleaning grave markers it is essential to avoid acid based cleaners on marble and limestone. In most cases, water and a non-ionic soap is the best method of removing most dirt and grime. Never sandblast any stone surface in an attempt to clean it. Power washing with a high level of pressure should be avoided as well.

Avoid cleaning any marker that seems unstable. A marker may be deemed unstable if its base is in such a state of deterioration that it is prone to collapse, or if its surface has delaminated or eroded to a point where its structural integrity and aesthetic appearance has been compromised. In addition, metal cleaning tools should not be used when cleaning stone grave markers. They can cause abrasive damage to the stone that will need to be repaired.

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<sup>44</sup> Three other companies website's include [www.conservationresources.com](http://www.conservationresources.com), [www.jahnmortars.com](http://www.jahnmortars.com), and [www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)

<sup>45</sup> Weaver, Martin E. with F.G. Matero. Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials. Revised ed. New York: Preservation Press, 1997. pp.164-165.

There are products available that are known as penetrants that should be avoided. These are not cleaning products. They block water from entering a stone and trap other detrimental particles inside. These include dirt particles and moisture that may cause further damage, especially in colder climates where freezing occurs. The moisture freezes within the stone and causes it to crack. Most penetrants are not effective as water barriers and can produce damaging consequences over prolonged periods of time.

Finally, most old grave markers have a historic fabric that can be altered if they are cleaned too often. The historic fabric of a grave marker includes its physical form and the materials used to construct it, along with the period it was created. One should avoid cleaning these markers unless it is absolutely necessary in order to protect the historic fabric.<sup>46</sup> It is always recommended to test a cleaning product on a stone prior to using it. This will prevent unwanted results later in the preservation process.<sup>47</sup>

### **Resetting and Repairing Grave Markers**

Another aspect of graveyard preservation at Second Presbyterian Church involves resetting markers that have fallen, and repairing broken and cracked markers. In the case of a marker that has tilted or fallen, there are several aspects that must be considered prior to resetting it. First, one must understand that some stones are more liable to break, fall, or crack than others. For instance, granite is the hardest and most stable stone found in the graveyard at Second Presbyterian Church, while marble is the weakest and most unstable of the stones used in the graveyard. One must understand the consequences of

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<sup>46</sup> It is difficult to generalize how many stones are in need of cleaning within Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. The lack of ground cover and maintenance has resulted in the majority of them becoming stained and discolored by environmental elements.

<sup>47</sup>Strangstad, Lynette. A Graveyard Preservation Primer. California: AltaMira Press, 1988. pp. 58-63.

resetting an unstable stone. All early grave markers are prone to fall or break and should be treated with great care.<sup>48</sup>

There are several cases in Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard where whole markers, or pieces of markers, have fallen and need to be reset or repaired but they are missing. This problem can often be resolved by probing. This technique involves inserting a probe, such as an iron dowel, into the ground in order to locate buried grave markers, or fragments of markers. Care must be taken in this operation so that buried grave markers are not cracked, or broken by the probe.<sup>49</sup>

For repairs to larger monuments it is best to consult a professional conservator. These conservators have been educated as to the effects of various adhesives and epoxies used in the repair of larger monuments. There is a difference between the two. Adhesives are used to reconnect broken pieces of stone. Epoxies are used to repair broken stone. In most cases a modern product may be necessary in order to repair a grave marker. These products include consolidants used to strengthen weathering stone, or restoration mortars that are incorporated to replace a section of stone that has been lost over time.<sup>50</sup> They have to be mixed according to precise measurements in order to be effective. This is yet another instance where a professional is crucial in the repair of a historic grave marker. He, or she, will have the experience and knowledge to provide the most successful and accurate repair of a marker.

All too often an amateur preservationist attempts to make a repair by using an unnecessary product or repair method which often results in extensive damages to a historically significant grave marker. In any cleaning or repair situation, it is always

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp.63-71.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. pp.71-72.

<sup>50</sup> Prosoco. 1 Feb 2008. <<http://www.prosoco.com/>>.



important to realize that the goal of this type of preservation effort is to keep the markers intact. If there is no viable way to repair, or clean, a stone without harming it, it is best to make an attempt to protect it until professional preservationists come to a suitable solution.<sup>51</sup>

### **Repair of Retaining Walls and Iron Fencing**

Retaining walls present several specific problems to preservationists. In the case of the one around Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, the ground that is being retained is putting pressure on the wall, causing it to lean dangerously over the adjacent sidewalk around the graveyard's southern and eastern sides. The wall's movement is most likely being caused by an increase in volume and height of the soil within the graveyard due to more individuals being buried in it.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the ground was also affected when dirt was removed from the southern side of the graveyard to be used for sand bags during the Civil War.<sup>53</sup>

A difference in ground level over a number of years means that the wall has to perform not only as a retaining wall, but as a structural retaining wall. It was not built originally to withstand these structural forces. The wall around this graveyard will need additional support in the future to strengthen it to a point that will hold it up against the growing pressure of the soil.<sup>54</sup>

Structural repair of this wall will likely require digging. One should be cautioned never to use heavy equipment in a historic graveyard such as the one at Second

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<sup>51</sup> Weaver, Martin E. with F.G. Matero. Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials. Revised ed. New York: Preservation Press, 1997. pp.88-90.

<sup>52</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. pp.69-70.

<sup>53</sup> "History of Second Presbyterian Church." Second Presbyterian Church. 15 February 2008. <<http://www.secondpresbyterianchurch.org/content.asp?catID=10052>>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Presbyterian Church. When digging in a historic landscape prior research should be done so that any unmarked graves and possible buried markers are not damaged during the process. Prior to beginning this type of effort, the individual(s) in charge of the project must take into account the burial of previous graves near where the retaining wall stands. In some instances, it may be necessary to dismantle a retaining wall and totally rebuild it.

In these cases great care should also be taken to reuse pieces of the original wall. When constructing the new wall those in charge of the project should grid it prior to dismantling it. Creating a grid involves numbering the various parts of the wall as it is deconstructed so that it can be put back together correctly. In addition, photographs from the past and present should be used to reconstruct the wall accurately. In Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard there are several grave markers that lie near the retaining wall. These markers must be carefully removed and set aside prior to beginning construction so as not to damage them.

Water penetration is an issue with retaining walls as well. If water has entered a brick retaining wall, similar to the one found at Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, the mortar must be thoroughly tested to verify that it is stable. If it is found that the mortar is not sound, it may be necessary to repoint it.<sup>55</sup> Repointing involves removing old mortar between bricks and reapplying a sound mortar mix.

One final aspect that must be taken into account when working on a retaining wall involves taking measures to prevent debris from damaging adjacent markers, or features that lie outside of the graveyard.<sup>56</sup> This may simply involve covering the markers, or it may involve removing them until work on the wall has been completed. All markers

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<sup>55</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. pp.60-64.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pp.69-70

should be protected when making repairs to the retaining wall at Second Presbyterian church. However, those that are in an area prone to accidental damage can be found fifteen to twenty feet from the wall on the southern and western sides of the graveyard.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to retaining walls, Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard includes iron fences separating various burial plots. Many of these iron fences are in such a state of disrepair that they may need to be replaced. This can be accomplished through replication. However, this should only be done with prior documentation and with the permission of the individuals who have family members buried within one of the plots that incorporates an iron fence. In some instances, the ironwork can be repaired, and should be if at all possible. Where there is significant iron work still standing, a professional iron conservator with previous experience should be hired to work on what is extant.<sup>58</sup>

In general, iron work in graveyards is an area of conservation which entails specialization that goes well beyond the scope of this project. When dealing with iron conservation in Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard one would do well to consult an individual who specializes in this particular area of graveyard conservation.<sup>59</sup>

In general, when one is considering making an effort to clean or repair any part of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard that individual should take into account what they are cleaning or repairing. Is what he or she wants to clean part of the patina and historic fabric of the graveyard, or is it simply biological growth or another factor that is

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<sup>57</sup> Graves and grave markers which may have to be temporarily removed include those found in column A in addition to rows 1, 2, and 3 on the graveyard plan provided.

<sup>58</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. pp.70.

<sup>59</sup> Several iron conservation companies include the American Fence & Supply Co., Tennessee Fabricating Co., and the Architectural Iron Co.

negatively affecting parts of the graveyard? In most cases, a professional graveyard conservator will be able to distinguish between the patina and biological growth. In Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard a non-ionic soap and water may be used to clean most biological growth, while other repairs will require more time and effort.

Many individuals involved in graveyard preservation find that determining whether or not to clean or repair specific features in a graveyard is the most difficult part of graveyard preservation. In Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard a conservator would need to examine the specific aspects of the graveyard in order to determine what he or she will, or will not, need to clean or repair. This is a conservators job and only he or she should make this decision so that the historic fabric of the graveyard can be kept intact.

## CHAPTER 4

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO GRAVEYARD

#### PRESERVATION

##### Relocation of Grave Markers

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in some cases it may be necessary to relocate a grave marker when working in graveyard. In the case of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard, the retaining wall on the eastern and western sides of the area lies very close to several graves. If it is to be repaired these graves may have to be unearthed and removed temporarily so they are not present during reconstruction.

One of the most important questions to consider prior to beginning work on the preservation Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard regards the relocation of grave markers, and graves themselves. In general, graves and grave markers should be left in their original location whenever possible.<sup>60</sup> However, it may be necessary to relocate a marker or a grave in order to extend its long-term survival.

Many answers to questions regarding the preservation, or relocation, of graves and grave markers at Second Presbyterian Church involve comprehensive, and complex, answers which include many subjective view points coming from various individuals in the field of graveyard preservation. One of these ideas involves the relocation of grave markers. When considering their relocation, one must take into account alternatives so as not to detrimentally affect the grave's and the marker's historic fabric.

One alternative professionals might agree with is leaving a marker as is, which may result in further degradation to the marker from various environmental elements and

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<sup>60</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. p.64-66.

pollutants. Another idea involves covering the marker, which may be effective at combating the environment, however, it will most likely take away from the marker's aesthetic appeal. In addition, if a marker is in such a state of deterioration that individuals are no longer able to read its inscription, it might be viable to create a new marker and place it adjacent to the historic one.<sup>61</sup> This is, obviously, not a practical solution if there is no prior documentation of the marker and its inscription. However, if there is an inscription on the marker that is still legible it might be viable to hire a professional stone conservator to make an attempt at cleaning or repairing the marker.<sup>62</sup>

The relocation of a grave marker should be a last resort to any prior alternatives. When taking into account the relocation of grave markers, preservationists must consider the individual the marker is commemorating in addition to those family members of the deceased individual whose marker is being moved.<sup>63</sup> They must consider the new location for the marker. Is it necessary to place it indoors? If so, is it appropriate to have the marker placed in a part of the church, or, perhaps, in a museum? These are only a few of the essential questions that must be considered prior to moving a grave marker.<sup>64</sup>

### **Replication of Grave Markers<sup>65</sup>**

An additional consideration that should be taken into account involves the replication of grave markers in Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.<sup>66</sup> Replicas provide a way for visitors to view a marker as it originally appeared. While some preservationists feel they detract from the original marker's historic fabric, replicas are an

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Strangstad, Lynette. A Graveyard Preservation Primer. California: AltaMira Press, 1988. pp.86-93.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The section of chapter 2 entitled "Laws and Ordinances" highlights various rules that must be taken into account when delving into graveyard preservation. These laws must be strictly adhered to when attempting to successfully, and appropriately, relocate a grave marker.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.90-91

appropriate means to portray a grave marker that is no longer extant. To appropriately replicate a missing marker the necessary documentation must exist. This might include photographs, drawings, or possible written descriptions. Only when the prior documentary evidence exists, should one attempt to create a replica of a missing grave marker. In the case of Second Presbyterian Church, thorough documentation has not been completed since the graveyard has been created, so replication would be difficult.<sup>67</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The previously mentioned graveyard preservation considerations cannot be taken lightly in one's efforts at preserving Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. Preservationists and conservators frequently find themselves in conflict with individuals who have a connection with an individual buried in a graveyard. It is essential to keep in mind how important these places are to those individuals related to the deceased. Preservationists and conservators must seriously take into account their actions and any possible results which may arise from the decisions they make while working in historic graveyards.<sup>68</sup> The present standards that are applied to graveyard preservation are far reaching and will only become more exacting in the future as graveyard preservation evolves and becomes more complex.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Historic Scotland Foundation. Guide For Practitioners: Conservation of Historic Graveyards. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2001. pp.60-61.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A is a list of laws applicable to Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard. Appendix B consists of a spreadsheet and a survey of individuals that are buried in the Second Presbyterian Church graveyard. The spreadsheet identifies individual's names and page numbers where they can be located in the survey. The page numbers of the survey begin at 1 and end at 717. The survey is included in the DVD at the back of this project along with the plan of Second Presbyterian Church's graveyard.



## APPENDIX A

### South Carolina Laws Relevant to Second Presbyterian Church's Graveyard<sup>69</sup>

- SC Code of Laws, Section 16-17-600 – *Destruction or desecration of human remains or repositories thereof; liability of crematory operators; penalties.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 27-43-10, 27-43-20, 27-43-30, 27-43-40 – *Notice of proposed removal; due care required.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 6-1-35 – *Preservation and protection of cemeteries.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-20 - *Procedure authorized if no requests for disposition of bodies received.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-30 *Petition to judge upon disagreement as to disposition of bodies.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-40 *Rule to show cause.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-50 *Service of rule to show cause.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-60 *Hearing; final order.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 49-9-70 *Removal of bodies; supervision; expense.*
- SC Code of Laws, Section 6-1-35 *Preservation and Protection of Cemeteries.*

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<sup>69</sup> “SC Cemetery Law.” Chicora Foundation, Inc. 2 Feb. 2008.  
<[http://www.chicora.org/sc\\_cemetery\\_law.htm](http://www.chicora.org/sc_cemetery_law.htm)>.

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