CEMETERY INVENTORY GUIDELINES

These words of advice may be helpful for groups who wish to construct inventories of their local cemetery gravestones.

- Capitalize surnames.
- Copy the stones in order of location.
- Keep names on the same lot together.
- Note any military or lodge markers and symbols of any kind on stone and marker.
- Copy the inscriptions just as given on the stone.
- Do not abbreviate; the typist will create standards later.
- Map a plan to copy the cemetery first.
- Go left to right in each row, front to back by rows; don't reverse directions.
- Number each marker consecutively in a row.
- Note special sections for paupers, military, babies, etc.
- If lot markers are present, note this with the number.
- Don't leave blanks. Copy the letters you can see.
- Copy foreign stones as they are; don't guess at the translation.
- Someone should proof the work in the field.
- Use a dark pen and print.
- Note historical evidence of vacated cemeteries in your book (deeds, hearsay, etc.).
- Check illegible stones when the sunlight is different; splash water on them and flash photograph at an angle; try pointing sunlight at the stone with a mirror.
- Use chalk, shaving cream, rubbings, and other physical reading techniques only if absolutely necessary, as the chemicals may further damage the stone.
- Use a metal probe to check on sunken stones; they may be a foot or more down and a shovel will be needed.
- Put a last name when copying footstones which list just a first name; the typist cannot guess on the position of the stones later.
- Type inscriptions on a computer, not a typewriter.
- Use a word processor, not a database; the latter is too restrictive.
- Map the location of each marker on a grid outline if you really want to spend some time on the project.
- Carry insect repellent.
- Use a sturdy, spiral bound notebook; loose pages blow away.
- List directions to relocate each cemetery; take a GPS reading if you have the equipment.
- Underline or question mark any difficult letters/numbers that could be something else.
- Put [sic] copy correct after any strange items found on the stone that are indeed as read.
- Put items not on the stone in parentheses.
- Include references for such items that the compiler has added from other sources.
- Note if the stone is broken.

- Identify any unusual stone or those that have fantastic carvings or symbolism.
- Identify the carver and location if named; often a couple inches under the ground surface line.
- Copy the pile of stones in the back of the cemetery.
- Copy all footstones and one-name markers.
- Make a notation if the cemetery is fenced, has stone posts; is it well-cared for?
- Write the month and year out rather than using shortcuts – is 4-3-86 April 3, 1886 or 4 March 1986?
- When making interpretations, be aware of other dating systems such as those used by the Quakers.
- Check all sides of a stone.
- Note any metal funeral home markers.
- Copy entire verses if you can read them; a descendant will cherish this.
- Include an every-name index to your cemetery; this can be in a database or indexing program.
- Write the cemetery name, the date copied, and the volunteer name in your notebook so that you get credit when the book is completed.
- Get more than one printing quote, and consider copy centers if a small run.
- Use Smythe-sewn case binding, acid free paper, if you are going with a hardbound book.
- Always check with the cemetery caretaker, township clerk, village administrator, or church secretary and archives to see if burial records and lot maps exist. Another one-third will be there without stones.
- Promote the project before completion to allow the public to respond with stories of relatives buried without stones or with incomplete or inaccurate markers.
- Delegate the workload or you may not finish the project.

This checklist was provided by the Huron County Chapter OGS and was used with their permission.