

APPENDIX:
THE ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL
OF VISITING CADES COVE CEMETERIES

A book about the cemeteries of Cades Cove is an invitation to visit those cemeteries in a way that gives them a visibility and a recognition they may not have previously had. Those driving Loop Road in the cove are invited to pull into one of the churches, enter its sanctuary, and walk the grounds around its graveyard. This underscores our responsibility to reiterate National Park Service (NPS) regulations for cemetery visitors within the park. They are simple. Visit the cemeteries with the reverence, dignity, and respect you would exercise visiting the burial places of relatives and friends. You are visiting burial places of those who have family and relatives somewhere, many in communities nearby, and on any given day, as we found doing our research, family descendants come to pay their respects.

Cemeteries have the protocol and a self-imposed “shushing” effect on visitors. They are stereotypically characterized as “feminine” in their qualities, but the intent is understood. Cemeteries are quiet, peaceful, serene, calming, nurturing (spiritually and emotionally), a manifestation of Mother Earth, the womb to which we all return (Warner 1959); in their stillness, they seem 10 degrees cooler. While in the field, we witnessed the demurring effects of cemeteries on visitors. We heard car

doors closing and visitors talking as they approached, but by the time they arrived at the cemetery, they were whispering in muffled tones. Most recognized the cemetery as a “sacred place” (see Palmer 2009, 2017) and offered their respects accordingly. We observed the same behaviors when we appeared to be tourists ourselves. We witnessed inter-generational lessons of respect being imparted from parent to child. The cemetery, as cultural landscape, presented a context for teaching and learning. The necessity and grief of visiting a cemetery can obfuscate the teaching/learning opportunity, but visiting a cemetery on vacation or conducting research, without emotional investment, recasts cemeteries as potential object lesson and subject matter, more than repositories of the deceased.

Another protocol is one may not stray from established paths around cemeteries. Our data was collected with a U.S. Department of the Interior, NPS research permit (Study#: GRSM-01120; Permit#: GRSM-2012-SCI-1120), exercising research practices that respected, protected, and ensured the integrity of the graves and their stones, initially as artifacts, but ultimately as the final resting places of Cades Cove residents.

There are other reasons why visitors are asked not to enter restricted cemeteries in the national park, reasons for their own safety. Ground collapse occurs in old cemeteries, posing risks of sprained and broken ankles and legs, and gravestones become unstable over time, sometimes toppling with the slightest touch or disturbance. Finally, historic cemeteries, such as those in national parks, are often not maintained with the frequency of active, contemporary cemeteries, and may harbor poison ivy, ticks, chiggers, snakes, and other vectors. Remaining on paths at the perimeters of cemeteries protect the historical integrity of the cultural landscape and the well-being of visitors (see Image [A.1](#)).

Cemeteries are as much a part of the cultural landscape as balds and knobs are a part of the natural landscape and, like landscape everywhere, are exposed to the elements that wear and erode them. Recognizing this, our field research was non-invasive and unobtrusive. We never touched gravestones and never knowingly walked on graves. We conducted much of this research using secondary sources—books, records, documents, and internet sources detailing grave and burial records. However, discrepancies in those records and commitment to the scientific method warranted direct observation (necessitating the NPS research permit). We took photographs, and collected Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of individual graves (and entire cemeteries), though we never



Image A.1 Part of the Missionary Baptist Cemetery, with a reminder to stay on the trail

made physical contact with gravestones. Our techniques for reading eroded, nearly illegible stones included light refraction (reflecting light back onto a gravestone for light/shadow contrast) and digital enhancement of photographs in a computer lab. Techniques such as gravestone rubbings are too abrasive, too chemically caustic, and violate the ethics of gravestone studies (AGS), as well as NPS protocols.

A U.S. Department of Interior, NPS research permit is predicated on the scholarly and scientific value of the proposal and its potential for advancing knowledge and insight. The research application highlights scientific inquiry in the National Park System. Myriad educational programs and research opportunities that advance knowledge in the fields of geology, geography, botany, biology, archaeology, paleontology, history, and the social sciences are part of the national park system. National parks have science and education directors and staff, and research directors and staff, affording opportunities for learning and teaching. From a visitor and public perspective, national parks are regarded for their awe, wonder, vistas, and tourism, but their scientific and educational components make them institutions of learning.

Educational programs are conducted at visitors' centers and educational facilities, and somewhere in that park, teams of scientists are

conducting research which possibly could not be conducted anywhere else in the world. Most of that research is sponsored by universities, private grants, or gratis by the scientists. Hence, the research that you might occasionally witness, or the research that is being conducted out of sight and over that next ridge, is almost always being sponsored and supported, contributing to the quality of experience, interpretation, and appreciation that visitors have. Intellectual and disciplinary curiosity motivated us to begin this research in 2012 and ultimately enticed us into a six-year, long-distance study.

Drive into Cades Cove to visit and reflect on some of the cemeteries, just as visitors visit and reflect on other features of the cultural and natural landscapes (e.g., Becky Cable's house and Abrams Falls). Both types of landscape were part of the historic fabric of the Cades Cove community, and both types of landscape were ingrained into the residents who lived there one hundred years ago and more. This cultural landscape was part of those residents' daily stocks of knowledge, with the place names suggested by their familiarity with the natural landscape (Coggins 1999). They heard the faint thunder of Abrams Falls and felt the cool air of Gregory's Cave exhaling on a summer's day, the same (experiential) sensations that visitors derive. All that is missing are the residents of Cades Cove to greet visitors as they approach their homesteads. This research, though drawing from the deceased, allows us to reconstruct and appreciate Cades Cove as a living community. After all, those interred in the cemeteries first lived in the community, and cemeteries are, themselves, products and constructions of the living and not the dead. The living created the cemeteries, decided their locations, dug the graves, ordered and placed the stones, and commissioned the inscriptions. Hence, there is no irony in cemeteries as informants of living communities from the past.

Any focus on cemeteries, particularly the notion of visiting cemeteries, invokes references to *dark tourism* (also known as black tourism or grief tourism), tourism to sites associated with death and tragedy. As some departure, thanatourism (from the Greek, *thanatos* for the personification of death) refers to peaceful death. Taphophiles, those with an inordinate fascination or interest in cemeteries, often plan vacations around visiting specific cemeteries or gravestones. Dark tourism or thanatourism is not so much a destination or location as it is an approach and mindset of the visitors. That is, dark tourism is the product of the site's management of its social construction and the constructed intent of the visitor. A single physical site can be the focus and intent of dark tourism or

heritage tourism (tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location, more the context of Cades Cove cemeteries; see Banaszkiwicz 2018; Light 2017; Sather-Wagstaff 2018 for an elaboration of dark tourism and thanatourism). There has been little empirical research on dark and heritage tourism, but visiting cemeteries is not a strange or macabre avocation in context.

Sociologists and anthropologists often visit the burials of Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Franz Boaz, Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and other early founding figures. Musicians often visit the graves of composers interred in Green-Wood Cemetery of Brooklyn; so many musicians and composers are interred there that “Concerts in the Cemetery” are hosted by the cemetery administration. Cemeteries in New Orleans (among them, Saint Louis #1, #2, #3, Metairie, and more) have been tourist destinations for decades. The cemeteries of Charleston, South Carolina, support a robust guided-tour industry, sometimes clichéd by ghost tours and other times reliant upon presenting a factual, historical, educational program on burial and gravestone traditions of the colonial and early South.

Cemeteries are rich archives of life patterns in the context of heritage tourism, disclosing insight into the cultural heritage of the area. In that regard and quest, one “... will find no better place of study than the cemetery – no more instructive teaching than monumental inscriptions. The brief language of the dead will teach ... more than the longest discourse of the living” (Martineau 1989, 113). Cemeteries (and gravestones) offer an encapsulation of community. Gravestones, read year by year or decade by decade, offer the socio-demographics of community members, and read together, they are collectively regarded as a single social group. Multiple cemeteries, representing neighborhoods of a single community, like the cemeteries of Cades Cove, offer a greater compilation to represent and delineate a community that is no more.

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