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Monumental Issues

Work Completed for NPS at Kings Mountain National Military Park

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Upcoming Talks & Workshops

- San Francisco, CA , September 28-30, 2010, NPI Cemetery Preservation 3-day Workshop.
- For more information, visit http://www.chicora.org/preservation_workshops.htm
- To schedule a workshop in your community call us at 803-787-6910. We have 1-3 days programs.

Chicora's conservation team was retained by the National Park Service to make repairs at the Howser Cemetery in Kings Mountain National Military Park. Four broken stones were repaired using blind pinning and other stones were cleaned to allow the inscriptions to be read more easily.

Kings Mountain is best known as the first patriot victory after the fall of Charleston, SC in May 1780 and the battle was the turning point in the American Revolution. The Howser Cemetery, while on park property, is not part of the battleground. It is, however, an important site for the park.

The cemetery is the family burial ground for Henry Howser, a Revolutionary War veteran and a stone mason (his stone house is still standing nearby).

Three of the stones were repaired using blind pinning — a technique in which the stone is carefully matched and holes are drilled for the insertion of stainless steel or fiberglass pins, set in epoxy, to mend the breaks.

the illustration here you can see how much the stone has lightened in only a matter of few days. With D/2 the stone continues to lighten for several weeks. It also helps the stone resist new biological growth for up to a year.

This is another example of how the National Park Service is helping preserve our Nation's history. Without this sort of intervention the Howser family cemetery would gradually deteriorate until little, if anything, was left for future generations. NPS, however, is working to ensure that the property is cared for and well protected.

To get directions to Kings Mountain, see www.nps.gov/kimo/index.htm



Henry Howser's stone after repair

Once repaired areas of loss in the stone are infilled with a repair material such as Jahn that matches the physical properties of the stone being repaired.

After repair the stones were washed with Cathedral Stone's D/2 Biological Solution — designed to kill biologicals without harming the stone. In

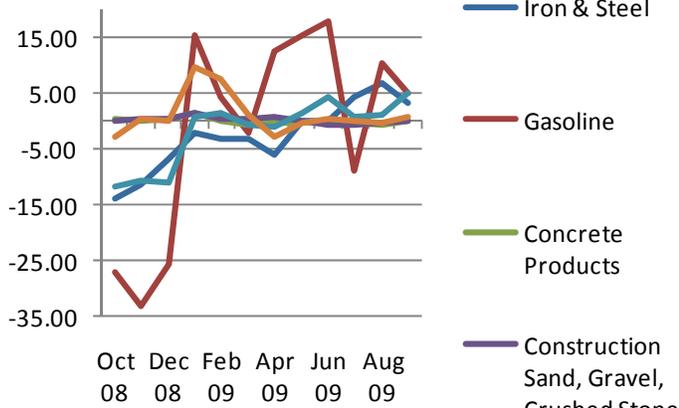


Henry Howser's 1842 stone before treatment.



John Howser's stone after cleaning to allow easy reading of the 176 year old inscription

Cost of Conservation



to increase slightly. The best way to explain this cost — even during this very poor economy — is to point out how the materials we use in conservation are themselves increasing in cost. The chart to the left shows the Producer Price Index for several commodities.

The producer price index program of the US Dept of Labor measures the average change over time in the selling prices received by domestic producers for their output. This chart

details the month-to-month percentage change in selling prices for three items that are part of the conservation process.

We won't spend a lot of time with the chart, except to point out to readers that about March and April 2009 many prices began a gradual increase. They aren't steady, but overall prices charged for conservation supplies are increasing — and this means that the cost of performing the work is also increasing.



Typical wood headboard from the early 20th century suffering from weathering, decay, and even fire.

We were recently asked why conservation costs have begun

Treating Wood Cemetery Objects

Wood markers were once very common in cemeteries across the US. Today relatively few wood markers are found, especially here in the southeast.

Their enemies include weathering, moisture, mold, lichen, fungus, insects, fire. Mechanical damage, and theft. Unfortunately there is often little that can be done to preserve these unique markers

Unfortunately there is no “silver bullet” — partly because wood is being affected by such a broad range of factors that

there is no one solution. For example, while paint might be able to reduce UV damage or water uptake, paints causes its own range of problems — and can't prevent moisture from wicking into the wood from below grade.

Even water repellents and similar “preservatives” aren't particularly effective since they are surface treatments. Deterioration, however, takes place within the wood — where these preservatives can't reach.

Borate rods inserted in the end

grain or a lateral face that is below the ground provide some protection, especially from insects and fungi.

Replacement, while never the first choice, may also be an appropriate consideration. Such replacements must, however, match the original as closely as possible.

An excellent report on this topic can be downloaded from www.ncptt.nps.gov/wooden-artifacts-in-cemeteries-a-reference-manual-2007-10/



New Information on VA Military Markers

In case you weren't aware there have been some important changes in VA headstones. Perhaps the most critical news is effective July 1, 2009 only a decedent's next of kin or authorized representative may apply for a headstone. For more information on this change see www.cem.va.gov/hm/hmqa.asp.

While not as recent, it is also important to Understand that there now two marble recessed-shield headstones available. The “XA” style is 12” wide, 3” thick, and 42” high. The “XB” style is 13” wide, 3” thick and 42” high. Historic cemeteries should pick the one that most

closely matches existing stones.

Finally, remember that when a VA stone is replaced, the original stone must be destroyed. This means breaking it into gravel sized fragments. Then the fragments may be buried with the setting of the new stone.