



**Chicora Foundation, Inc.**  
 PO Box 8664, Columbia, SC 29202

September 2009



# Monumental Issues

## High Priority Treatments at South View Cemetery Completed

### Inside this issue:

- High Priority Treatments at South View Cemetery Completed **1**
- Developing Landscape Maintenance Plans **2**
- New AGS Column **2**
- Simple Trick for Creating New Portland Cement Sockets **2**

### Upcoming Talks & Workshops

- Charleston, WV, September 21-23, 2009, NPI Cemetery Preservation 3-day Workshop
- Nashville, TN, October 19-21, NCPTT National Cemetery Conference—Chicora is giving a paper on landscape maintenance
- For more information, visit [http://www.chicora.org/preservation\\_workshops.htm](http://www.chicora.org/preservation_workshops.htm)
- To schedule a workshop in your community call us at 803-787-6910. We have 1-3 day programs.

Chicora completed a preservation assessment for Atlanta's South View Cemetery in June 2008 and a stone-by-stone assessment in November 2008. We were asked to return this summer and conduct conservation treatments on a series of high priority stones.

Stones are generally assigned a high priority because the monument is either a threat to itself or the public. Examples are stones that are unstable and may collapse hurting cemetery visitors. Or they may be stones that should additional collapse occur, the cost of treatment will dramatically escalate.

Either way, high priority stones are those we recommend treating within a year of the assessment. At South View this included a number of stones, but a series of 11 were selected for

immediate conservation treatments.

Most of these monuments were large obelisks or pedestal tombs that were unstable. In some cases the treatments, while critical for the safety of visitors, left the stone looking very much as it did before. All the work was hidden — for example, the placement of stainless steel pins to ensure that the monument would not topple.

Some, however, were more complex, like the Upshaw monument shown here. Not only was the base sunk and tilted, but the upper portions of the pedestal tomb were at risk of falling — and potentially harming anyone standing nearby.

If the base fell it would also

### After Resetting



likely break the shaft — dramatically increasing repair costs.

So, using a 1-ton tripod and a lot of careful planning, it was possible to disassemble the monument, use a diamond core drill to remove an existing ferrous pin, and install 316 stainless steel pins to ensure the monument should not suffer the same fate in the future.

South View is doing a great job at implementing recommendations from the recent preservation assessment and the repair of stones like this makes a dramatic improvement in the cemetery landscape!



**Before Treatment**

## Developing Landscape Maintenance Plans

Most cemeteries don't have a landscape maintenance plan — but most could benefit tremendously if they did.

The traditional approach seems to be mow once a week during growing season, trim trees reactively (after a storm, for example), prune shrubs if there are complaints

— and that's about it.

Of course, the truth is that is about all the staff is trained to do and that is all the budget

allows. The end result, however, is a deteriorated landscape that appears old, ignored, and poorly cared-for. In addition, that level of maintenance ultimately results in damage and deterioration to the stones and other cemetery features, like fences.

A better approach is to develop long-range maintenance plans that implement best practices. A critical first step, of course, is

deciding what level of appearance is acceptable. How manicured must the grass be? How green? How many weeds are acceptable?

Let Chicora work with you to develop an appropriate plan.



**These photos show two extremes of cemetery care. Have you developed a plan for your cemetery landscape?**



**Look for the Conservation Talk columns in the AGS Quarterly newsletter!**

## Chicora's Director Authors New Column for Association for Gravestone Studies Newsletter

Founded in 1977, the Association for Gravestone Studies is a leader in promoting education, preservation, interpretation, and conservation. In 2009 the Association began running a column by Chicora's Director, Dr. Michael Trinkley, in its quarterly newsletter, the *AGS Quarterly*, called "Conservation Talk."

The column has thus far addressed lichen and their impact on stone, and the issue of Portland cement use in cemeteries (as you can imagine, we discourage its use, recommending instead either lime putty or natural hydraulic lime).

Future columns will cover a variety of issues ranging from landscape maintenance and

how it can foster — or hinder — stone preservation to the use of so-called "simple epoxy" repairs.

Each column is designed to be an easy read, while still providing sound and reliable conservation advice. If you have a specific question for Dr. Trinkley write the AGS or Chicora.

## Simple Trick for Creating New Portland Cement Sockets

You're probably familiar with the instructions on how to create a new socket for a stone. If not, the [Chicora website](#) has instructions.

One of the most time consuming aspects of this technique, however, is building an insert that is about a 1/4-inch wider and thicker than the stone (allowing room for mortar to

hold the stone upright). The old approach — shown on our website — is to create a wood form. This requires a lot of work — and a lot of time.

We recently saw a new — and frankly much better — method. Instead of wood, use polyethylene planks.

These can be easily carved or shaped to fit using a sharp

knife, or even a hand saw. They can be easily removed from the Portland cement. And they are inexpensive.

If you're interested in trying, you can probably find a local firm carrying foam planks in your city. Otherwise, Google "polyethylene foam planks." They come in widths from 1" to 3" in various sheet sizes.

