

Grant/Cooperative Agreement
P17AP00235

Principal Investigator:

Charlene Porsild

Project Team:

Ellen Baumler, PhD

Ethan Ryan

Timothy Urbaniak, PhD

Kelly Dixon, PhD

Adela Morris

Crystal Alegria

Kimberly Hogberg -

NorthbyNorthwest Digital

Integrating technology for Montana's historic cemeteries and sacred sites

The Montana History Foundation

November 21, 2018

1750 N. Washington Street
Helena, MT 59601

info@mthistory.org

(406) 449-3770

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Methods and/or Materials	4
Results and Discussion	5
Conclusions	6
Acknowledgements	6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana History Foundation (MHF) hosted a three-day historic Cemetery Preservation Technology Workshop from June 21-23, 2018. Seventy-three people attended this workshop. Thirteen speakers presented information on a wide variety of cemetery preservation technologies.

The workshop was split into one full-day classroom segment and two demonstration and field trip days. June 21, 2018 consisted of six plenary classroom sessions that focused on: historic cemeteries in Montana; specific applications of RTI, Photogrammetry, GPR, GIS, and GPS; Canine Forensics; research and documentation; technology and burial practices; preserving monuments and headstones; forensic archaeology; and contemporary issues in historic cemeteries.

The second day of the workshop was held in a local cemetery and featured demonstrations of all the technologies detailed in the classroom sessions the previous day. Demonstrations included: cemetery botany; drone photography; monument repair; GPR, GIS, and RTI. That evening, local historian Dr. Ellen Baumler led a walking tour highlighting Helena's most haunted sites.

On the third and final day, four field trip options were available: a full-day workshop with the canine forensic team and a GPS/GIS team at a ghost town cemetery; a half-day bus tour to six local historic cemeteries; a half-day in-depth tour at contemporary after-life businesses in Helena; and an afternoon hands-on workshop using GPR at another local historic cemetery.

During this three-day workshop, NorthbyNorthwest Digital Productions filmed the demonstrations, interviewed the principals, and then created a short film on cemetery preservation technologies. This training video is available via our website at www.mthistory.org/cemetery-preservation.

This webpage also hosts reference materials freely available to the general public. The material includes: all presentations and handouts provided during the workshop; contact information for preservation technology experts; descriptions of cemetery preservation methods; and, the workshop program. MHF will continue to promote, update, and share these materials with partners and organizations throughout the state and region.

A Preservation Technology and Training grant from the National Park Service was instrumental to the success of this project. Due to this workshop, historic cemetery coalitions, associations, and community organizations throughout Montana possess the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions on preserving and restoring their local cemeteries.

INTRODUCTION

The Montana History Foundation (MHF) is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that leverages funds to support projects and make grants for preservation and interpretation of Montanan history. We offer a grant program that places over \$125,000 directly into community organizations every year to save and preserve cultural resources across the state. Since 2012, we have granted over \$700,000 directly to communities in the areas of historic preservation, oral history, collections and artifacts, and education and outreach.

In 2016 we introduced a new area of emphasis in our grant program on historic cemeteries and sacred sites, and so far we have funded eight community-based cemetery and sacred site preservation projects. We also sponsored monument restoration and preservation workshops in two communities (one central, one western) to provide site-specific training for community members.

Through conversation with community groups and individual researchers on cemetery preservation projects, MHF staff noticed a distinct need for training and education about the technologies available for preservation. Local cemetery boards are often composed of committed, but untrained individuals who want to help but have no idea where to start. A need for cross-training and dissemination of information was apparent.

To meet this need, the Montana History Foundation received a \$25,380 grant from the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training for the “Integrating Technology for Montana’s Historic Cemeteries and Sacred Sites” workshop project.

MHF brought together cemetery preservation experts, technological experts, historical researchers, students, historic preservation professionals, genealogists, local community members and other volunteers and non-specialists for a three-day workshop focused on cemetery preservation. The workshop and demonstrations were documented by NorthbyNorthwest; a short film was produced. This video and accompanying workshop materials are available on our website at www.mthistory.org/cemetery-preservation/.

METHODS AND/OR MATERIALS

The “Integrating technology for Montana’s Historic Cemeteries and Sacred Sites” project resulted in two materials: a short training video on cemetery preservation technologies and an accompanying website.

The website is hosted by the Montana History Foundation and can be found at mthistory.org/cemetery-preservation. It provides an overview of the three-day workshop, biographies on all workshop presenters, a photo gallery, and in-depth documentation on all technologies covered in the workshop. These documents are also linked to additional resources including presentations, contact information, and related publications. The website is intended as a resource guide for workshop attendees and communities throughout Montana and reflects the methodologies covered in the workshop.

The professionally-produced training video is also available on this website. We will share it with partner organizations to increase its viewership. This video features short interviews with the experts from the workshop, highlights their technologies and techniques, and captures the field work accomplished during days two and three of the workshop.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Montana cemeteries, like those across the country, provide a lasting reminder of earlier generations but are often in a state of neglect and disrepair. Before this project commenced, no preservation training tools were available in Montana to teach non-specialists how to determine which of the many new technologies might be appropriate and/or affordable for local cemetery preservation projects.

This workshop provided training and information to local community members, genealogists, academic researchers, and historic preservation professionals about how to use innovative technology to preserve historic cemeteries. The resulting training video demonstrates this integrated use of technology featuring local sites with unique Montana topographical, geological, and even zoological characteristics. The video and additional materials developed for the workshop are available on the web and will be promoted to local, regional and national organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Association for State and Local History, Society for Historical Archaeology, and others.

Seventy-three people attended the Cemetery Preservation Technology Workshop from June 21-23, 2018. Representatives from communities across Montana came to listen, learn, and engage with preservation technologies. Missoula, Neihart, Clancy, Whitehall, and Potomac are just a few communities represented.

Evaluations indicated the workshop's overwhelming success. Two evaluations were conducted; the first captured responses on the classroom sessions. The second evaluation captured responses to the hands-on demonstrations and field trips. Ninety-nine percent of Day 1 respondents rated the overall quality of each session as "Very Good" or "Good", with sixty-six percent rating it at the highest level. One-hundred percent of applicants rated their experience at the hands-on portion of the workshop as "Very Good" or "Good". Responses to the quality and usefulness of individual demonstrations on the second day also followed this trend. Of the eight demonstrations, seven demonstrations were rated as "Very Good" or "Good" by 100% of respondents. The one exception was the Cemetery Botany session, which 22% of respondents indicated was "Poor" or "Very Poor". Write-in comments also indicated high levels of satisfaction with individual sessions and the overall workshop. Suggested improvements largely fell into logistics commentary (for example, more vegetarian lunch options; additional chairs; better weather). A few respondents indicated a desire for more handouts, which are now available on our website. Another suggestion included breaking the classroom day with outdoor activities and vice versa. Feedback from evaluations will be incorporated into additional seminars and workshops offered by MHF.

MHF plans to disseminate the video and accompanying website more widely and will continuously update materials per suggestions from stakeholders. Currently, the website and video are available to the public. Starting in spring of 2019, MHF will actively share it with partner organizations via the spring meeting of the Museums Association of Montana, the fall History Conference hosted by the Montana Historical Society, and the 2020 Montana Preservation Alliance Road Show conference. The Foundation will actively seek evaluations and critiques.

CONCLUSIONS

The workshop, and resulting produced materials, was a huge success. MHF anticipates increased interest in our “Historic Cemeteries and Sacred Sites” category of annual grant funding. We also anticipate that access to the knowledge and toolkit this grant provided will enable local communities to better preserve and restore their historic cemeteries.

The innovation in this project was the integration of cutting-edge and innovative methods to resolve preservation problems in cemeteries and sacred sites. This project met the knowledge needs articulated to MHF from community groups and individual researchers about cemetery preservation and available technologies.

Our “Integrating Technology for Montana’s Historic Cemeteries and Sacred Sites” project brought together community members, technology experts, and researchers for a three-day workshop. The knowledge garnered and shared during this workshop will continue to beneficially impact Montana. Caretakers of local historic cemeteries now have training resources available for their use, and as a result, the rich legacy of Montana’s past will continue to be preserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Montana History Foundation gratefully acknowledges the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training’s support. Without this grant, the workshop and its outcomes could not have been accomplished.

Your support has also been acknowledged per grant guidelines on all materials associated with this project.