

What's The Buzz About BillionGraves?

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What is BillionGraves?

BillionGraves is a volunteer-oriented family history database for records and images from the world's cemeteries, all tagged with GPS locations. The goal of the site is to collect images, data, and other information that may not exist in any other place. Volunteers play vital role in the success of the site, by adding information, locations, and digital images quickly and easily with the help of apps and online tech tools.

Guide for Users

- Registration Process
- Search by Person or Cemetery
- Utilize additional tools & resources
- Notification Updates (registration required)
- Request Boards

Registration Process

You do not need to register with BillionGraves to search for headstones or cemeteries on the site. However, if you would like to transcribe, collect photographs, or use the other tools and resources, registration is required.

To register you will need:

- ✦ User name
- ✦ E-Mail Address
- ✦ Password

Searching by Person

A last name is the only information required for a search. You have the option to include:

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| First Name | Last Name *(required) | |
| Birth Year | Death Year | Year Range |
| Country | State | County |

Searching by Cemetery

You have the option to search for a cemetery by name or you can view cemeteries by:

Country

State

County

Additionally a **Cemetery Map** feature is also available. This is a great tool if you want to view all cemeteries in a geographic area, but may not know the name of a precise location. You can scroll in or out, and pan across the screen to find a location. Sites are identified by four bubble types:



Recognized BillionGraves Cemetery
No photos or index available



Recognized BillionGraves Cemetery
Photos & information (may not indexed)



Recognized BillionGraves Cemetery
Location has 1000+ Images



Recognized BillionGraves Cemetery
Location has less than 20 Images

By left clicking on each bubble will give detailed information on the cemetery including:

Location

Number of Graves/Images

Website (if any)

Contributor Name

Additional Information

Directions

Upgrade Your Account

The yellow **Upgrade** tab at the top of your dashboard page provides an opportunity to add features to your account. Some upgrades can be earned by uploading or transcribing headstones, while others must be purchased via this tab.

By choosing to upgrade your BillionGraves account, you will have access to the following services:



30 Record Watches

Get notified automatically as new records matching your search criteria are added.



Virtual Walkthrough

Virtually walk through a cemetery! Access additional information by seeing who is buried where.



Save Your Favorites

Categorize and organize all your favorite BillionGraves records.

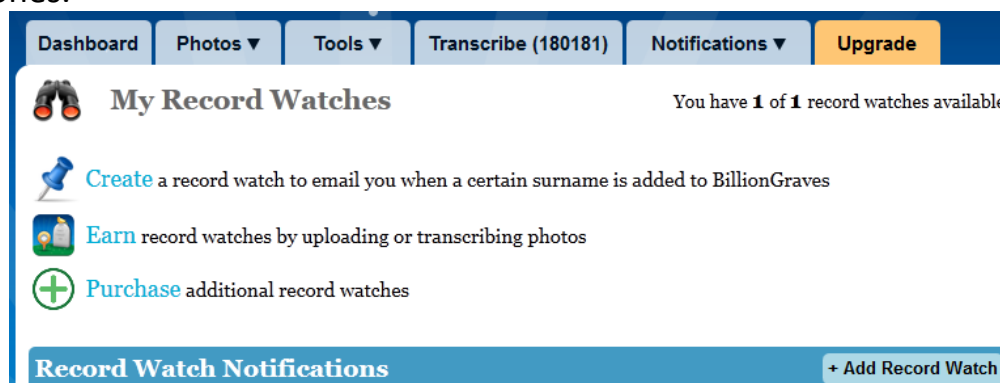
Note: BillionGraves Plus is an optional service. It is NOT required to upload pictures, transcribe or search for records.

The 30 Record Watches are a great way to be notified of new additions to the website. Whether the need for 30 notifications is essential for research is entirely up to the user.


The Virtual Walkthrough feature is particularly useful. The Virtual Walkthrough allows users to select a specific headstone in a cemetery, while plotting the distance and location of neighboring headstones in the area. Saving Your Favorites provides a place to save specific headstones to a list or to a collection name of your choosing. Headstones selected as a favorite can be found under the 'Tools' tab at the top of the page.


Notification Updates


BillionGraves offers users a notification feature for specific searches. Notifications can be purchased outright or earned by uploading/transcribing headstones.




Dashboard Photos Tools Transcribe (180181) Notifications Upgrade

 **My Record Watches** You have 1 of 1 record watches available

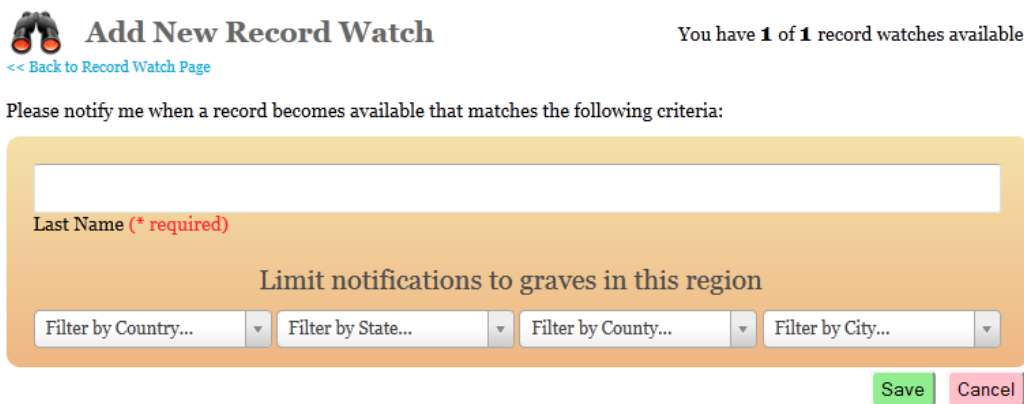
 **Create** a record watch to email you when a certain surname is added to BillionGraves


 **Earn** record watches by uploading or transcribing photos

 **Purchase** additional record watches

Record Watch Notifications + Add Record Watch

Notifications can be limited and/or combined by name, country, state, county, or city.



 **Add New Record Watch** You have 1 of 1 record watches available

[<< Back to Record Watch Page](#)

Please notify me when a record becomes available that matches the following criteria:

Last Name (* required)

Limit notifications to graves in this region

Filter by Country... Filter by State... Filter by County... Filter by City...

Save Cancel

Request Board

The Request Board can be used to ask other BillionGraves users to photograph specific headstones in a particular cemetery. When a request is created by you, BillionGraves users will be notified that a request is available in their area. E-mails are sent when a request is accepted and when it is completed. Requests can be deleted or edited at any time by the requesting user.

Requests Board is located under the 'Tools' Tab Requests can be made by registered users in any cemetery whether transcribed or not transcribed.

Guide for Transcribers

- Registration
- Transcription Interface & Inputting Records
- Goals and Features
- Overcoming Transcription Issues
- Tips and Resources

Transcription Interface and Inputting Records

BillionGraves offers marker transcriptions from all over the world. BillionGraves requests the following information to be filled out as fully and accurately as possible:

General Information

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Prefix(if any) | First Name | Last Name |
| Birth Month/Day/Year | Death Month/Day/Year | |
| Country | State | County |

Additional Information

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Maiden Name | Marriage Month/Day/Year | Suffix | Family Search ID |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|

Military Information

Stones may contain information for one or more individual. In this instance, left click on the "Add Individual" tab on the bottom left of the transcription area. There is also an "Add Description" tab where additional information can be inputted. Information in the "Add Description" tab may include stone descriptions, military service information, family details, or a note regarding the condition of the stone.

Selective Transcription

Transcription projects can be customized to by country or individual cemetery. At bottom of the transcription page, there are two links which will change your transcription location settings:

All Countries – Change the transcription country to any of the others listed. The United States is listed at the top, and other countries are listed in alphabetical order.

All Cemeteries – Focus transcription on one specific cemetery. Cemeteries are listed by name in in alphabetical order, along with their location information, and the number of images pending transcription.

Goals and Features

BillionGraves offers free notifications for transcription submission. Transcriptions are computed per name submitted, so multi-family headstones generate a lot of transcriptions! Transcriptions are made available online as soon as they are completed, which means you will see instant results for your work. It's important to transcribe countries or cemeteries which appeal to you, and if you are fluent in another language, try transcribing markers from foreign country. If you're participating in a BillionGraves Photo and Transcription project, be prepared to transcribe photos of your field collection as soon as possible. The project will be fresh in your mind for the transcription portion of the work.

Overcoming Transcription Issues

In every cemetery or photo collection project, there are stones which defy transcription. This could be due to the quality of the actual stone, or due to equipment error. Transcribers can send these images back to BillionGraves using the 'Report Image' feature. Photos can be pulled from the transcription queue for a number of reasons:

- ✳ Photo is Blurry or Unreadable
- ✳ Headstone is Unreadable
- ✳ Photo is not a Headstone
- ✳ No Information To Transcribe
- ✳ Non-Latin Characters (Arabic, Chinese, etc)
- ✳ Other

Remember: No one will think badly of you for reporting an image!

Troubleshooting Headstones

Not every marker is clearly legible for transcription. There are several computer software tools you can use to make headstones easier to read. If you have Microsoft Word, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Photoshop Elements, or another photo restoration software, try using these tools to 'clean up' the image.

This is not about photo correction as much as making the text in the photo workable enough to transcribe the information for each marker.

In Microsoft Word, you can make headstones readable by applying the following filters to an image:

Sharpen Recolor Color Saturation Color Tone Increase/Decrease Size

These filters can be found in the 'Format' area of your Microsoft Word Program. Copy and paste the marker you wish to transcribe. Left click on the center of the image, and a 'Format' area will appear in the tab area at the top of the document. In the 'Format' area, you will find options for:

- ✦ **Corrections – Sharpen, Soften, Adjust Contrast**
- ✦ **Color – Adjusts Colors, Tone, Color Saturation**
- ✦ More Variations – Offers stunning yellow highlighter color

Use a combination of these filters and features to make a headstone legible. Think of it as high-tech tools for cemetery CSI.

Tips and Resources

Billion Graves Transcription Help:

<http://www.billiongraves.com/pages/help/howtotranscribe.php>

Pic Monkey Free Online Photo Editing - www.picmonkey.com

GCF Learn Free has a great series on editing photos in Microsoft Word

<http://www.youtube.com/user/gcflearnfree>

Guide for Photo Contributors

- Registration
- Adding a Cemetery
- Technological Checklist

- Getting your App
- Preparing for Your Trip to the Field
- Technological Issues & Troubleshooting

Adding a Cemetery

If you don't see it, list it! Any registered BillionGraves user can add a burial location by left clicking on the 'Tools' tab. Adding a cemetery location helps casual users, transcribers, and photo contributors in locating places which may need to be added to the site.

To "Add a Cemetery" you will need to submit the following information:

Cemetery Name **GPS Coordinates*** **Cemetery Address***

You do not have to know the location's GPS Coordinates, as this information will be supplied by the site via Google Earth. If you're trying to list an older cemetery which has no fixed address, using a rough address as 'West Houghton Lake Road and M66' will work. You can move the pin on the map to reflect the exact location of the cemetery, and Google Earth will provide the remainder of the information.

If you have any additional information about the cemetery, such as signage, parking instructions, or record access information, include it in the 'Additional Information' box. BillionGraves will send an e-mail when the cemetery has been submitted and arbitrated. It will then appear on the BillionGraves map as a location in need of photo collection.

Technological Checklist

In order to collect photos for BillionGraves, you will need the following Smart Phones or Devices:

iPhone **iPad*** **Android Smartphone** **Android Tablet***

Smart Phones and tablets must have 3G internet connectivity and data plan. A tablet or iPad with wifi will allow you to transcribe, but not capture headstone photographs and GPS information.

In the 'Participate' tab at the top of the website, you will find links and guides which will prepare you for a field project. These guides include app downloading,

smart device user guides, and information packets. These guides are free and can be downloaded, printed, and distributed to groups for field projects.

Getting Your App

Visit your device's app store to download the BillionGraves App. If you have having difficulty downloading or using the app, you can contact BillionGraves by phone at 1(435) 571-0272, by Skype ID: appletime.support, or by e-mail: support@billiongraves.com.

Preparing for Your Trip to the Field

When preparing for a BillionGraves cemetery collection trip, it is important to ensure all technical equipment is in place several days beforehand. BillionGraves support will be able to assist you with any issues, so allow yourself some time to contact the site and correct any issues accordingly.

Remember to:

- ✨ Test your device, download the app, and ensure both are working properly.
- ✨ Charge all cell phones and smart phone devices
- ✨ Purchase and outfit all devices with protective cases
- ✨ Encourage other attendees to do the same
- ✨ Contact BillionGraves with any technical issues

Undertaking a Field Project

Getting Motivated

Recruiting your Volunteers

Methods for Groups and Individuals

Submitting Your Work

Getting Motivated

The early bird gets the worm, and the early morning light makes for better BillionGraves photographs. Early morning and early evening light is considered the 'golden hours' when ideal lighting conditions make for great photographs. Try to avoid harsher light conditions from 11 am onward (depending on the time of year) as more sunlight can wash out your images, making them harder to transcribe online.

Recruiting Volunteers

Bring your friends or organize a group to survey a cemetery. More people armed with smartphones and devices reduce the photo collection time and can make for a jovial environment. Work alone, in pairs, or in a group. Invite local service groups and organizations to assist you with your survey. Scout Troops and National Honor Societies are always looking for service hours. Contact your local scout council and high school to recruit assistance from these organizations.

Methods for Groups and Individuals

Conduct a survey in a manner you feel most comfortable. Don't forget to send all groups out with a small note pad and pen to transcribe any hard-to-read stones during the photo collection process. If you can't read a transcription on your smart phone device, chances are a transcriber will have a difficult time transcribing it as well.

Organize your photo collection survey to divide or sweep a cemetery by area, plot, row, or region. Be methodical, and consult any additional cemetery plot maps when necessary. Plan for weather conditions, and plan additional rain dates to make up for a visit scrapped due to incimate weather.

Submitting Your Work

Make plans to upload your photo survey collection quickly. In the Menu area of the BillionGraves App, tap the photos you wish to submit, followed by the 'Upload' button. That's it! You're finished! As you've visited the site and may have notes regarding the markers you've recorded, use these notes to begin the transcription process online at BillionGraves.com. Once you've uploaded the photos, the project will be available in the cemetery transcription area we read about earlier.

Sharing your Submissions

Blog or journal your cemetery projects with interesting titles and antidotes. Highlight any famous or infamous characters, unusual markers, or unusual names from the cemetery. Tie in any holiday, local history, or local events to your posting. Writing a blog about the types of Civil War markers or veterans in a cemetery is a great topic for the sequential of the war or will fit well with Veteran's Day or Memorial Day.

Submit a write-up of your visit to a local newspaper or historical/genealogical society. If you are submitting an article to the newspaper, enclose a two-three photographs of your group at work or of the interesting markers you recorded.

Reach out to local groups and organizations such as Churches, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, or Lions Club to share your work with a presentation. Create a presentation using Microsoft Powerpoint. Use pictures, historical notes, and stories to enhance your presentation. Any copies of cemetery plat maps or burial registries are also of great interest as well. These groups could assist you in the future with another cemetery project and partner with the preservation of other local historical and heritage sites.