

HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERY DESIGNATION GUIDELINES



Historic cemeteries are among our most valuable cultural resources. They are also, unfortunately, vulnerable to loss and destruction. They are increasingly threatened by development, natural deterioration, neglect, vandalism and even misguided preservation efforts. Those cemeteries that are highly endangered could potentially be lost forever, along with the history they represent.

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is the state agency for historic preservation, responsible for identifying, protecting and interpreting our historic resources. The THC works with interested citizens, county historical commissions and heritage groups to preserve our historic resources, including cemeteries. These designation guidelines include instructions explaining the criteria, research methods and documentation necessary to apply for a Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) designation.

PROCESS FOR HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERY (HTC) DESIGNATION

- Applicant researches the history of the cemetery, fills out the Request for Designation, and provides photographs and a map of the cemetery (see instructions).
- Applicant submits all of the above to the appropriate county historical commission (CHC) for review and approval.
- Following county approval, the packet is forwarded to the Texas Historical Commission (THC), along with a \$25 processing fee.
- THC staff reviews materials; additional information and/or clarification may be requested.
- Upon verification of information and documentation, THC notifies surrounding landowners of pending designation and offers opportunity for comment.
- Following a comment period, THC develops an Affidavit of Designation for Cemetery Purposes with map and mails a copy to the applicant.
- Applicant files the affidavit with the county clerk for recording in deed records.
- Applicant secures a copy of the recorded affidavit, complete with filing date, volume and page, and forwards it to the THC.
- Upon receipt of the affidavit, the THC sends a signed Historic Texas Cemetery certificate to the applicant.



THC

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

In order to be considered for Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) designation, a cemetery must be at least 50 years old, and its history must be documented. For the purposes of the Historic Texas Cemetery program, the THC defines an eligible cemetery as a secure burial place of human remains. Collections or scatterings of ashes, unless associated with a columbarium within an established graveyard, do not constitute a cemetery eligible for the HTC designation.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING HTC REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION

STEP 1. REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION FORM

Read directions and fill out the form completely; do not leave any sections blank.

STEP 2. PHOTOGRAPHS

Submit recent high-quality black and white photographs of the historic cemetery. Please do not send digital images, instant/Polaroid photos or photocopies; photographic prints are required. Preferred sizes are 4" x 6" or 5" x 7". Send loose photos; do not mount the photographs or place them in any kind of binding or plastic sleeves. The number of photographs necessary to adequately document the site will depend upon the size of the cemetery. Overall views of the site, as well as representative views of the entrance, all characteristic features and interesting or important gravestones should be included. Label all photographs in pencil or with an archival pen to denote the photographer's name, date of the photograph, name of the cemetery, and direction and description of view. Or, number each photograph and provide a typewritten log with the required information.

Numbered directional arrows may be placed on a site plan to indicate the views shown in the photographs. See detail of a sample site plan, opposite. Good quality copies of historic photographs are also helpful. This photographic information will become a permanent record of the context and condition of the cemetery at the time of designation.

This image of a gravesite in Caldwell County is an example of the type of high-quality black and white photos required for Historic Texas Cemetery applications.

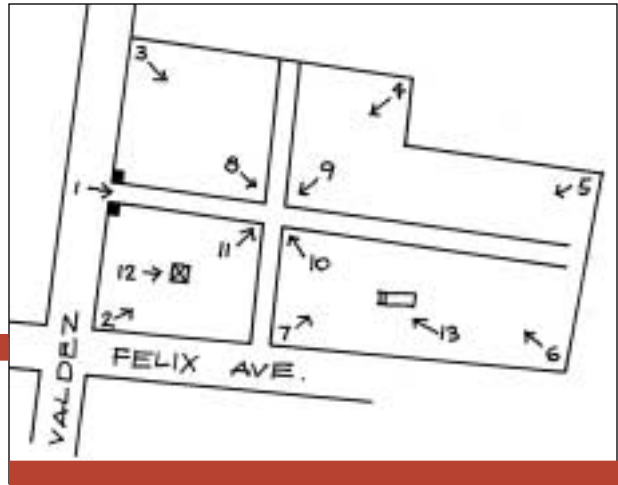
STEP 3. MAPS

Submit a map of the cemetery and surrounding property. Ideally, the best documentation would be a survey map by a professional surveyor. If such a survey is not available, other documentation such as county appraisal district maps, plat maps, archival documents, historical maps and aerial photographs may be used to establish the existence and location of the cemetery. In most cases, the county appraisal district will have a map showing the cemetery and surrounding land. Please clearly denote road names or numbers, access routes to the cemetery, names of surrounding landowners and major landmarks including associated buildings such as churches, schools, tabernacles, etc. Legal boundaries should be delineated and include the full extent of the cemetery. Existing fences may not necessarily indicate the exact boundaries; burials may be located outside the fenced perimeter. Please also submit a county or city map showing the location of the cemetery. See sample appraisal district map, below.

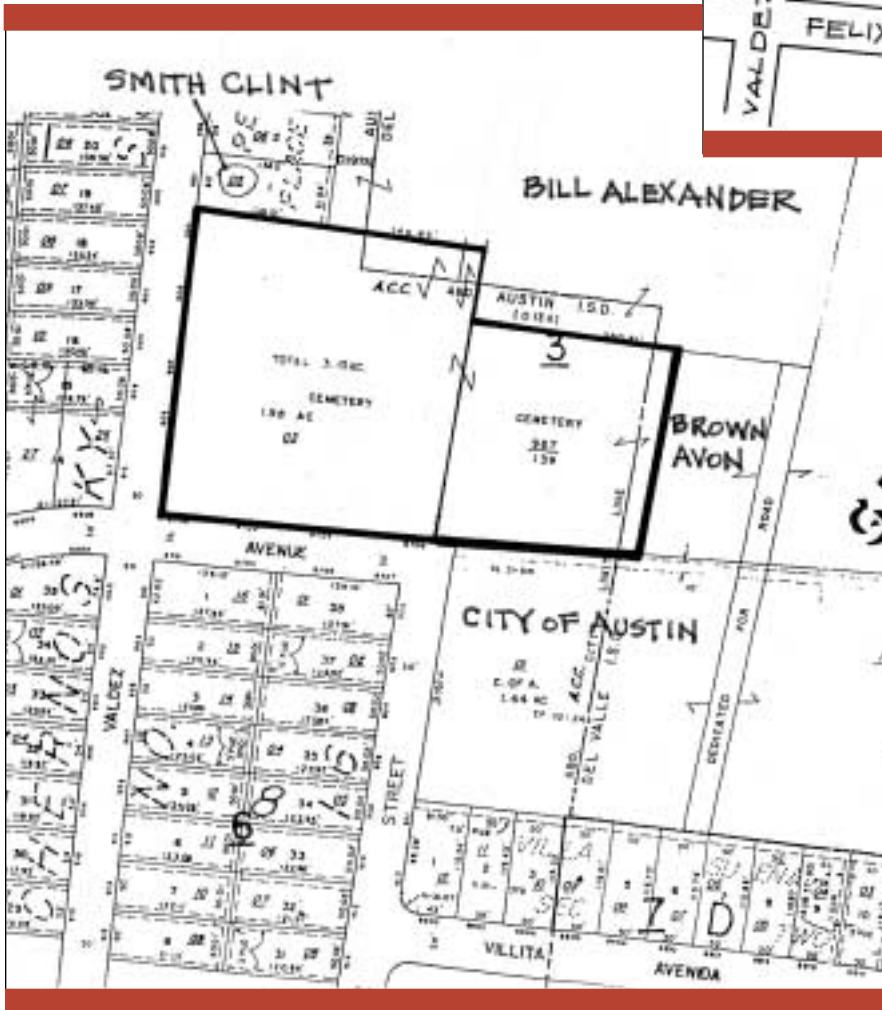
SITE 4. SITE PLAN

Submit an annotated site plan of the cemetery to document photographs as well as record important features. Include such elements as fencing, landscaping, prominent gravestones, flagpoles, memorials, structures, entryways, roads and paths.

All of this required information will be used by THC staff to develop the Affidavit of Designation for Cemetery Purposes and accompanying exhibits for filing with the county clerk.



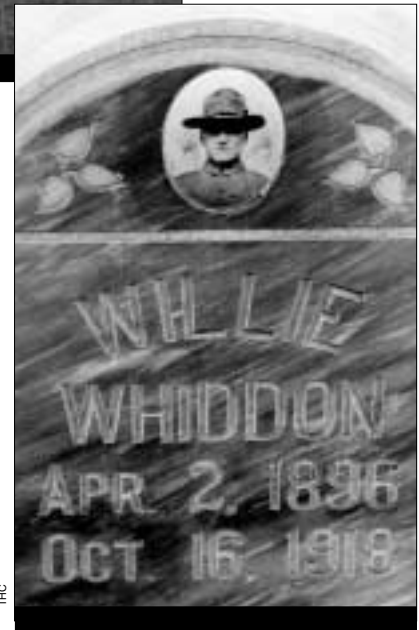
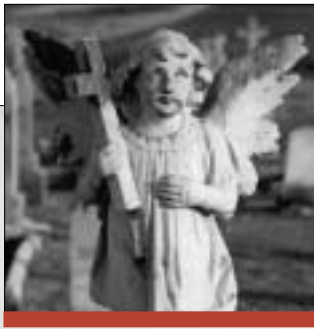
Above: Example of a cemetery site plan showing corresponding numbers and directions of photographs.



Left: Location of a cemetery outlined on a county tax appraisal district map. The owners of the surrounding property are clearly identified.

Survey maps, county appraisal district maps, plat maps, archival documents, historical maps and aerial photographs may be used to establish the existence and location of the cemetery.

COUNTY TAX APPRAISAL DISTRICT MAP



Historic cemeteries that are highly endangered could potentially be lost forever, along with the history they represent.

Submit Historic Texas Cemetery designation applications or related requests to:

History Programs Division, Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276

Phone: 512/463-5853, Fax: 512/475-3122
Email: history@thc.state.tx.us

*Shown above, top inset: Detail of sculpture in a Central Texas cemetery
Middle photo: Urban burial ground, Bexar County
Bottom inset: Tombstone for a World War I soldier, West Texas*

Please note: The HTC designation program is separate from the Official Texas Historical Marker program. The HTC designation does not constitute an application or approval for a historical marker, shown below, although it is a prerequisite. For more information on how to apply for a marker for a cemetery, see Official Texas Historical Markers Guidelines or check the THC web site (www.thc.state.tx.us) under "Markers and Designations."



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TX 78711-2276
PHONE: 512/463-5853 • FAX 512/475-3122
www.thc.state.tx.us

Historic Texas Cemetery Policies are codified in Rules of the Texas Historical Commission, Texas Government Code Chapter 442.