

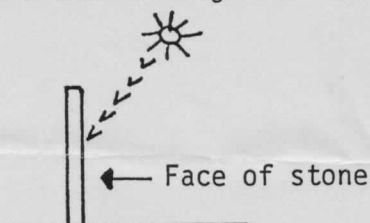


THE ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVESTONE STUDIES

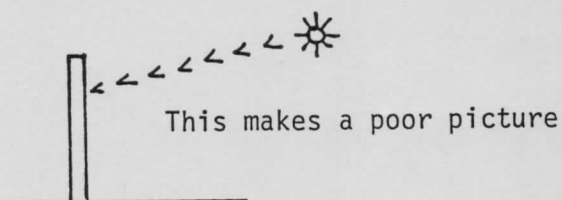
MAKING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS OF GRAVESTONES

by Daniel Farber

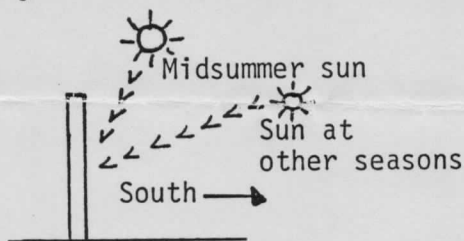
Photographs of gravestones should be made only in bright sunlight. Hazy and cloudy conditions produce inferior pictures. The sunlight should fall across the face of the stone at a raking angle, that is, from the side or top, at an angle of no more than 30 degrees.



If the sun is in front of the stone, instead of to the side or top, the details of the stone's design will not show prominently.



The sunlight strikes any one stone at this favorable angle for a period of about one and one-half hours each day, so the photographer must know when to be there. In most New England burying grounds the stones face West, so that they are in position for photography at about 12:30 to 1:30 PM standard time. Stones that face North are lighted by the sun in late afternoon in midsummer, and are in shade at all other times of the year. Stones that face South are in favorable position all day in midsummer, but are lighted from the front at all other seasons.



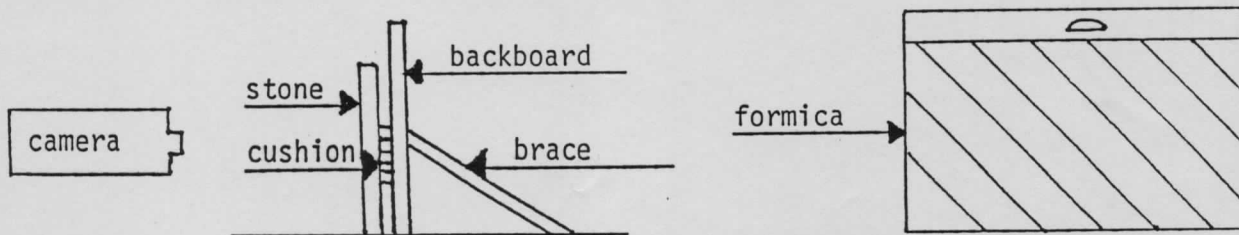
Dependence on the position of the sun can be avoided by the use of a mirror. Sears Roebuck sells a 20"x60" float-glass door mirror for less than \$25 which is tall enough to light most stones. If you are interested in photographing only a portion of the gravestone, a smaller mirror, perhaps one from your home, is sufficient. To prevent breakage the mirror should be framed. The frame can be made of plain pieces of lumber--framing with picture frame by a custom framer is expensive. The frame should cover the bevels of the Sears mirror, otherwise they will produce difficult lighting effects. The mirror can be used to light any shaded stone, provided the mirror is in bright sunlight. For stones shaded by trees, etc., the mirror can be positioned as far away as 100 feet.

For best results, plate glass mirror should be used.

Good pictures can be made with a 35 mm. camera. For black-and-white Tri-X can be used at 1/250 or 1/500 second. For color Ektachrome ASA 200 can be used at 1/250. At these speeds a tripod is not necessary. To make closeup details a +1 portra lens, costing about \$5, can be attached to the front of the camera lens.

The camera should be positioned so that the sides of the stone are seen parallel with the sides of the viewer. If the camera is pointed upward or downward the picture of the stones will be distorted. The camera should be positioned close enough to the stone so that it fills the whole picture. Bird-dung should be washed off with brush and water. Wire brush will damage the stone and should not be used.

Irrelevant and disagreeable objects in the background can be eliminated by the use of a backboard. Formica in any medium color is suitable. Gray should be avoided, as it will tend to merge with the color of the stone. The formica should be mounted on $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood. The plywood should be enough wider than the formica on one side so that a hand-hole can be cut into it. The backboard should be cut as large as will fit through your car door, and as wide as your car will accommodate. For a shop to make this board, look under "Kitchen Counters" in the yellow pages of the phone book.



If you have a companion, he/she can hold the backboard in place. If alone, it is wedged in place with a light angle iron 48" long. A cushion is placed between stone and board to prevent scratching of the board. Stains and scratches can be removed from the board with furniture polish. A piece of urethane foam can be used as the cushion, and be secured from the scrap pile of an upholstery shop, probably at no cost.

Pictures cannot be made when snow is on the ground. Reflection of the sunlight from the snow destroys the raking effect on the face of the stone.

PLEASE NOTE that all of the above information applies to only the DOCUMENTATION of gravestones. For artistic photography there are no rules, other than your own taste and judgment.

USE OF LIGHT METER--If a hand meter is used, it should be brought close to the stone while reading, so that only the stone and none of the background is included. If your camera is equipped with a meter, while making the reading the camera should be brought close to the stone in the same way.