**How NOT to Clean a Tombstone for Find-A-Grave**

Here is a sad bit of news: A man is suspected of damaging several historic graves with a wire brush recently at the New Providence Presbyterian Church on Stoney Point Road in Surgoinsville, Tennessee. He apparently used a wire brush to make the engravings on the tombstones easier to read. Now here is the worst part: he was "cleaning" the tombstones so that he could take pictures to be posted on Find-A-Grave.com!

Aaaarrrggghhh!

On July 15, church committee member Bill Davidson reported to the Surgoinsville Police Department that several tombstones had been "scrubbed" — possibly with a wire brush — causing damage to the old stones. The dark stain that builds up on tombstones over time was scrubbed clean in streaks over the engravings, and in some cases the engravings were rubbed almost smooth — to the point that the words are no longer legible. Davidson stated that some of the damaged tombstones date back to the 1700s, and some belong to Civil War veterans.

The church didn't give anyone permission to go onto cemetery property and scrub any stones, Davidson added.

Here is the ironic part: the culprit was easy to find. Police did some checking on Google and located recently posted photos of the damaged tombstones at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com/). The culprit's user name was clearly shown on each photo.

You can read more about this tragedy in the Kingsport Times-News at <http://goo.gl/7EfPGl>.

**If you are in a cemetery, please do not touch any tombstone, much less historic ones, unless you know what you are doing.** You can find dozens of articles online that describe what to do and what not to do. Start at <https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=tombstone+care>.

I can recommend the Association for Gravestone Studies web site at [https://www.gravestonestudies.org](https://www.gravestonestudies.org/) as an excellent resource although some of the other sites may also be very good. Do you have comments, questions, or corrections to this article? If so, please post your words at the end of [this article](http://blog.eogn.com/2014/08/01/how-not-to-clean-a-tombstone-for-find-a-grave/) in the Standard Edition newsletter’s web site where everyone can benefit from your words. You might also want to read comments posted by others there.