

RIP GUARDIAN PROGRAM

Cemeteries are important keys to Texas' past. They are reminders of settlement patterns and reveal information about historic events, religion, lifestyles and genealogy. Unfortunately, historic cemeteries are subject to long-term deterioration from natural forces such as weathering, uncontrolled vegetation, development pressures, vandalism and theft. Today, historic cemeteries are most threatened by indifference. Circumstances can change quickly — a cemetery considered maintained and safe can quickly become neglected and endangered. Our best course of action is to foster a strong sense of stewardship for our historic burial places.

WHAT WE DO

RIP is commonly found carved on gravestones, bidding the deceased an earthly wish for eternal rest in peace. RIP is also the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) cemetery survey initiative: Record, Investigate, Protect. The THC's RIP Guardian program helps local volunteer groups take charge of neglected historic cemeteries across Texas by providing education, consultation and assistance to preserve these important cultural resources.

THROUGH A LOCAL PROGRAM COMMUNITIES WILL:

- Identify unknown and neglected cemeteries and unmarked graves and boundaries
- Increase community involvement in maintaining and preserving historic cemeteries



Top: statuary in Athens City Cemetery, Henderson County; Vandalized and weathered grave markers in Sneed Cemetery, Travis County.

(over)

- Develop master plans to preserve historic cemeteries
- Obtain Historic Texas Cemetery designations
- Preserve and sensitively maintain local historic cemeteries
- Encourage protection of historic cemeteries and heighten awareness of their significance through preservation education
- Promote community culture and heritage

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A strong RIP Guardian program must have local support. Volunteer groups and associations, civic leaders/organizations and business owners, families, individuals and local elected officials should be included for a united group effort. To be eligible, a cemetery must either be designated as a Historic Texas Cemetery or be determined by the THC to qualify as an eligible property under the criteria for designation.

Local RIP Guardian programs will coordinate a minimum of two cleaning projects for the adopted site each year, based on need. Once local programs have recruited volunteers, sponsors and supplies for cleanings, the THC will provide training, educational and promotional materials and will seek sponsors for basic supplies.

JOIN THE RIP GUARDIAN PROGRAM

The RIP Guardian program offers local volunteers the opportunity to participate and help preserve Texas history in a unique way. RIP Guardians will directly enhance the power of historic preservation in their communities.

Successful applicants will have a broad-based volunteer group in place at the time of application. There will be opportunities for volunteers to get their hands dirty, help feed the crowd, promote the good work being done and support a strong preservation effort that will help educate the community. Volunteers should represent a wide range of stakeholders and be willing to secure commitments to promote and support the program's activities. A minimum two-year commitment is required.

Applications for the RIP Guardian program are required; there is no deadline.

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