

Volunteer with BillionGraves!

Are you looking for meaningful ways to volunteer? Here are two great ideas from BillionGraves that will help others find their ancestors and grow their family tree.

Idea #1: Take Photos of Gravestones

What is BillionGraves?

If headstones could talk, they would have a lot of stories to tell. But they can't, so BillionGraves is the next best thing.

BillionGraves is the world's largest GPS-linked cemetery data resource. As volunteers take photos with the BillionGraves app, each gravestone is automatically marked with a GPS location. The data is then transcribed by volunteers, plotted on cemetery maps, made available on the [BillionGraves website](#) for free for millions of families around the globe for generations to come.

The GPS-marked cemetery maps not only allow families to find their ancestor's gravestones, but they also allow future volunteers to see exactly what has already been photographed.

Click [HERE](#) to watch a video about BillionGraves.

Getting Started

Download the BillionGraves app to your smartphone from your app store. It's free.

Create an account on the app or on the [BillionGraves](#) website.

Open the BillionGraves app as soon as you arrive at the cemetery since the GPS feature will work best if the app has about 5 minutes to connect before you begin taking photos, especially if you are taking photos in a remote area.

At the cemetery, check the bottom of your screen to see if the name of the cemetery matches your current location. If the wrong cemetery name is listed, tap on it, and then select the correct cemetery name.

From the main screen of the app, click on "take pictures" to begin taking photos in your local cemetery. The GPS coordinates will be recorded automatically.

Go up and down the rows, taking pictures of each gravestone until you have completed an entire section or the entire cemetery. Keep moving at a quick pace. If you take 1 photo every 15 seconds you will have taken almost 250 photos in an hour!

If you are working with another person, leap-frog over each other's rows until you have completed a section.

When you are finished, connect to Wi-Fi and tap on the "X" in the corner of your screen.

When the orange button that says "upload" appears, tap on it to submit your gravestone photos.

Repeat! :)

Photo-taking Tips

Try to keep your feet out of the photos.

Stand to the side to avoid casting a shadow.

Remove weeds, grass, or other debris that may block gravestone information.

Be sure the names and dates are inside the photo frame.

Linking Photos with the BillionGraves App

If a gravestone has data on more than one side (for example, parents on one side and children on the other side) there is a way to link them together. Just click on the chain icon in the corner of your screen between each photo that you would like to link (front side, chain icon, backside).

You can use this linking feature for obelisks that have data on four sides. You can also use it to link a large gravestone with a family surname on it to nearby smaller gravestones with the family member's first names on them.

Find Cemeteries to Document

Click [HERE](#) to find a cemetery to document.

Click on the cemetery you are interested in. A map will appear.

The orange dots on the map indicate where GPS-linked photos have already been taken. If there are areas with gravestones that have no orange dots, then your service is needed to photograph that section of the cemetery.

If you happen to duplicate any of the gravestone photos that have already been taken, don't worry about it because they will be easily merged during the transcription process.

Upload Your Photos

When you are finished taking photos for the day, you can upload your photos right at the cemetery if you have unlimited data. Or you can wait until you connect to Wi-Fi to upload them.

From the main screen of the app, tap on "Photos". An orange button that says "upload" will appear. Tap on it.

Option to Transcribe

After you tap the orange upload button a pop-up will appear that says, "Would you like to transcribe your own images?" You can select "yes" or "no".

If you select "yes," you will have 14 days to transcribe the names and dates from your own images using the BillionGraves website before they are released to the public queue.

If you select "no," then other volunteers will transcribe the data from your photos.

Finish Uploading

The number of photos you took will start to go down. Leave the app open until all the photos upload. If the upload is interrupted by a phone call or other event, the app may stop. To restart the uploading process, just tap "cancel" and then tap "upload" again. Your photos will be sent to the BillionGraves database to help families find their ancestors and bless generations to come!

Contacting the Cemetery Manager

It is polite to let the cemetery manager know you will be documenting graves if one is available (some cemeteries have been abandoned). If the cemetery you plan to document is on private property, ask permission. Other than that, you do not need to contact anyone when you arrive at the location. You can simply download the app and start taking photos!

Idea #2) Transcribe Gravestone Names & Dates

As photos are uploaded, they need to be transcribed so people can find the records with a digital search. You can transcribe the photos you have taken yourself or photos that have been taken by others.

Transcribing headstone records is easy. Just type the names, dates, and other information you see on pictures of gravestones onto a simple form on BillionGraves' website. You can help preserve history and make cemeteries all over the world searchable from the comfort of your own home!

You can get started at your own convenience by going to billiongraves.com/transcribe on your computer.

Create a BillionGraves account. It's free.

- Fill out the form with first names, family names, birth, and death dates.
 - Maiden names can be added by clicking "Advanced Mode".
 - If there is more than one individual, click "Add Person".
 - Click "Save" when finished.
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2nd Pass Transcriptions

Or you could help with quality control by doing 2nd Pass Transcriptions. Click [HERE](#) to view a video about how to do 2nd Pass Transcriptions.

To select your transcription type (1st Pass, 2nd Pass, or both) you can go to the gear icon for settings on the transcription page at billiongraves.com/transcribe

Verification for Service

If you need verification for your community service hours, send an email to Support@BillionGraves.com. Include your name, county, cemetery, and the email address that you use to login to BillionGraves.

For more information about community service hours, click [HERE](#).

Questions?

If you have explored these resources and still have questions or need help, send us an email at Volunteer@BillionGraves.com. We will be happy to help you!

Thanks a Billion!