



Teachers' Guide to Riverside Cemetery

Cemeteries are great places for doing history, but they also have other applications for teaching. The following is a list of ideas and activities centered around Riverside Cemetery, Moline, Illinois, and particularly the book, *Echoes from Riverside Cemetery, Moline, Illinois*. Some ideas and activities are best suited to a field trip to the cemetery, but others can be adapted to classroom activities using *Echoes from Riverside Cemetery* alone.

Visiting the Cemetery:

When visiting Riverside Cemetery with groups of people, it is a good idea to check first with the superintendent, not only as a courtesy, but also to insure that your visit does not disrupt ordinary work in the cemetery, a funeral in progress, or to find out if there are any special rules of the cemetery, especially private ones. Be aware that vandalism is a problem in some cemeteries and groups of students can be a concern for some superintendents.

Cemeteries are special places and must be treated with respect at all times. Visitors should be respectful of others visiting gravesites as well as the monuments themselves. No sitting or standing on any monument is permitted. Noises should be kept to a minimum level. Also, Teachers should be mindful that some gravesites are difficult, even dangerous, to reach and that some remote terraces should remain off limits to students. All visitors should take care not to mar or damage the tombstones in any way, and care should be taken so as not to dislodge the stones from their bases.

Using the Book:

The *Echoes from Riverside Cemetery* book is user-friendly. The stories of the people featured in the book are arranged alphabetically, and a list of them, with short descriptions, is on pages 29-31. Maps showing where they are buried at Riverside are on pages 243 and 244. A comprehensive index, including names of people, places, and organizations mentioned in the book, begins on page 251.

Suggested goals:

To celebrate and learn to appreciate the contribution of individuals or groups of people involved with the founding and development of Moline.

To study, in-depth, the life of one particular person.

To learn the importance of cemeteries as places where memories of the past are preserved.

General Ideas and activities:

What do you see, smell, hear, or feel in a cemetery?

Discuss what makes Riverside cemetery an interesting place to visit.

List three images you find on gravestones. What do they mean?

What is an epitaph? Find and record three epitaphs.

Discuss what epitaphs mean and what you might wish to have carved on your grave.

Discuss what kinds of information can be gained from a tombstone or grave marker.

Find a gravestone that provides information about a person's profession.

Art:

Draw the design or take photos or rubbings. (At Riverside, rubbings are permitted, but please be respectful. Remember, this is someone's final resting place).

Many grave markers have unusual designs. Draw or photograph three unusual markers. Design your own gravestone.

Discuss shapes of grave markers and any unusual designs. Do these designs have meaning? Symbolism is an important aspect of burial practices.

Geography:

Draw a map of part of Riverside Cemetery. Using the map, create a cemetery walk of your own.

Many people buried in Riverside Cemetery lived in other places before coming to Moline. Select three or four people and map their movements from their place of birth to Moline.

Select two or three people and discuss why they came to Moline. What special features attracted them to the area?

Calculate how many burials can be made in an acre of ground.

Language Arts:

Learn about obituaries and read some published a local newspaper.

Choose a person and write an obituary for that person. Include the dates of birth and death and any survivors, if known.

Conduct more research, using newspapers or other outside sources to write an in-depth story about that person.

Write your own obituary. In doing so, you can imagine that you died at this point in your life, or at a later time (such as age 30, 50, or 80).

Use the narratives in *Echoes From Riverside Cemetery* for classroom readings.

Science:

Riverside monuments are made of a variety of materials. Identify these. What causes some stones to be worn and illegible and others not? What materials survive the years of weathering best?

Some burials are above ground in mausoleums. Why were some people buried above ground and others below?

Riverside cemetery features many terraces. Are these terraces natural or man-made? Discuss how these might have been constructed and how the natural landscape has changed with the man-made construction.

Many varieties of trees have been planted at Riverside. Identify as many different species as you can.

Mathematics:

The Lower Cemetery is the older of the two burial places in Riverside Cemetery. What are the earliest dates you can find?

Some grave markers in the Lower Cemetery give the age at time of death in years, months, and days. Using the death date on those stones and the age of the person at the time of death, calculate the year and month when a person was born.

At Riverside, the Lower cemetery is older than the Upper part of the cemetery. Using the dates on the grave markers, what is the earliest burial you can find? Select seven or eight persons in the Lower Cemetery and calculate the age of death for each. Select a similar number in the Upper Cemetery and do the same thing. Is there a difference?

The most common cemetery markers are made in rectangles, but other shapes are represented, too. What geometric shapes can you find?

Local History/Social Science:

Riverside is filled with names of the earliest founders and developers of Moline. Using the history of Riverside Cemetery in Echoes from Riverside Cemetery, discuss the differences between the upper and lower cemeteries. Broaden the discussion of cemetery types to discuss other cemeteries found throughout the Quad Cities, i.e. Chippiannock in Rock Island, Oakdale in Davenport, Memorial Gardens in Moline, Pioneer and Old Settlers Cemetery near Black Hawk State Park in Rock Island.

Find out if there are any famous, or infamous, persons buried in Riverside Cemetery. Do they have any unusual stories? What did they contribute to Moline?

For Black History Month, for instance, the life of former slave Annie Ritchie could be used as a subject for discussion.

Some cemeteries have special areas where there veterans, lodges, paupers, or children are buried. Build a project around these areas, using photographs, drawings, readings, or maps.