

Catholic Cemeteries Can Help Genealogy Research Efforts

▲ by Mike Nelson

(CNS) – As interest in genealogical research increases, some Catholics have found that their relatives' final earthly addresses can be helpful, even valuable resources.

"Catholic cemeteries represent a living archive of our faith community," said Richard Peterson, director of Associated Catholic Cemeteries in the Archdiocese of Seattle, and treasurer of the Catholic Cemetery Conference.

"We're fortunate to have these resting places for those who built our faith communities," he said. "It offers a valuable link to those of us who serve the church today, and so it makes sense that people want to know more about their past. And assisting people in their genealogical research is part of the mission and ministry of Catholic cemetery staff."

But he and other cemetery officials acknowledged that this increased interest in family history research has required diocesan offices and individual Catholic

cemeteries to institute policies designed to assist the inquiring researchers, but also to protect historic records and limited resources.

Moreover, those seeking information on Grandma Jones or Great Uncle Pete should be advised that the process may not be as rapid as they would hope, nor will it likely yield much more information than the date of burial and gravesite location.

"Cemetery records were never set up with the expectation that they would also provide extensive data for genealogical research," the Archdiocese of Chicago's Catholic Cemeteries Office points out on its website.

Thus, while some burial records may contain additional sacramental information, perhaps even a newspaper obituary attached, those are exceptions.

"If we can locate the site, we can provide a copy of the original burial record," said Luanne Baron, records office manager for the Catholic Cemeteries Association of



Photo © Catholic News Service/Gregory A. Shemitz

▲ Peter J. Ryan, director of cemeteries for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., looks through lot cards at Holy Rood Cemetery in Westbury, N.Y. The cards contain burial records of the deceased interred at the cemetery.

Boston, which oversees 25 cemeteries in the archdiocese.

"That record would include the name of the deceased, date of burial, the exact gravesite number and location, and possibly other information – like the date of death, or the person's age at the time of death."

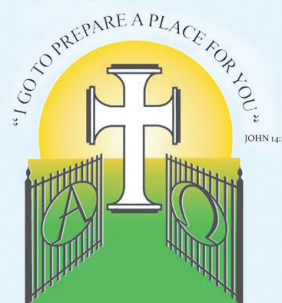
For those who inquire, Catholic Cemeteries of Boston provides the

deceased's gravesite location at no charge. For additional information, a nominal fee is requested with the proviso that it will be returned if a search is unsuccessful.

But that sort of research takes staff time, Baron said, "and genealogical research is not our first priority."

► See Page 7A

Over 150 years
cemetery
experience.



CATHOLIC
CEMETERIES

I am interested in:

- ☐ St. John (Middle Village)
- ☐ Mount St. Mary (Flushing)
- ☐ Holy Cross (Brooklyn)
- ☐ St. Charles/Resurrection (Farmingdale)

Our Cemeteries provide families with a sacred and permanent caring place for the cremated body of a loved one.



Indoor/Outdoor
Niches starting
at \$950 or
\$36 a month*

*Installment terms with no finance charges for pre-need purchases.

wwwccbklyn.org

As indicated, please call or send me my FREE informational packet. I understand that no cemetery representative will ever visit my home.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Best Time to call _____ Email _____

Please mail to:

St. John Cemetery
80-01 Metropolitan Avenue
Middle Village, NY 11379
(718) 894-4888