

success stories



Industry: Municipal Government

Application: Cemetery Records

Location: Marshfield, MA

Docufree Solutions: CemeteryFind Cloud-Based Records Management Software, Interactive Geographical Mapping & Lot Navigation, Autofill Deed & Purchase Agreements

Town of Marshfield, MA

Docufree Brings Peace of Mind to Cemetery Department

Many cemeteries today are dealing with a critical challenge: They are running out of room. Unfortunately, more burial space for expansion is hard to secure in light of booming urban expansion and stricter zoning regulations. As is the case with Marshfield, Mass., a 350-year-old town, 30 miles south of Boston on the Cape Cod Bay, being locked in on one side by the Atlantic Ocean only exacerbates the problem.

The issue of cemetery expansion was a priority when the Town of Marshfield hired Dan Bowen as the new Assistant Superintendent of Business Administration.

"The team from Docufree really seemed to understand our problem and was able to demonstrate that they knew what they were doing. They explained how they would come in and, basically, do everything for us. I was sold because I didn't want to devote staff time to do anything. The scanning of the paper records alone was a cumbersome, monumental task in and unto itself."

Dan Bowen, Assistant Superintendent of Business Administration, Town of Marshfield

"Our seven cemeteries spread across town were filling up pretty quickly," Bowen said. "The Board of Public Works requested an audit of our cemetery records to verify available lots. The problem I faced was how to accurately and quickly review a storage safe full of thousands of documents dating back multiple decades. The Town had an inkling that it might be running out of space, but didn't know the exact inventory situation. As a result, we had to place a moratorium on selling lots for about a half a year."

The records, originally kept in a walk-in safe at Town Hall and using a filing process loosely based on the Dewey Decimal system, amounted to thousands of pieces of paper between the multiple maps for each cemetery, deed and burial cards along with copies of the actual deeds.

"It was a functioning process for the staff who had worked there," Bowen said. "However, if somebody came in off the street, looking for a grave of a deceased

relative or friend, it was quite a clumsy process to locate the information he or she needed—and even more cumbersome if someone was interested in purchasing a cemetery lot."

As an example for a cemetery lot purchase, staff would have to go and research the maps to see what was available, then go back to the individual and discuss what lots were in the area for them. The individual would then fill out a form and write the Town a check. From that, staff would create a deed card with all the individual's information placed in a range and lot file for tracking. And, if the individual passed and there was a burial, then staff would create a burial card. Each and every record is kept in perpetuity.

At the time, the Board Chairman, being a technology proponent, wanted to see all the records digitized and easily available on computers. "That's what really drove us to get started with a digital records management platform," said Bowen.



Bowen estimates that with the cemetery records-management solution, his Department has seen a 30-percent decrease in administrative time and a 10-percent reduction in errors.

Document Scanning, Cemetery Mapping & Cloud-Based Records

Once the decision was made to move on from paper-based cemetery information and records, Bowen interviewed several technology vendors to help with the digital transformation, and ultimately selected Docufree.

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The majority of the project was done once the documents were digitized. Immediately thereafter, Bowen and his staff were able to review records, cross-checking

questionable lots, and then rectifying them in the system. Whether it was Bowen, the cemetery foreman or the administrative clerk, they all now had immediate access and insight into the same cemetery information, getting a real-time overview of which lots were being used and which ones were available.

The Cemetery Department has used a combination of solutions in its digitization journey. The scanned documents were uploaded and are stored in Docufree's CemeteryFind, a cloud-based records management platform that incorporates interactive mapping and navigation to lots. Additionally, the Department takes advantage of the auto-population service for deed forms, as well as the purchase agreements.

"The digitization project required very little involvement from our IT department," said Bowen. "The Docufree team was very collaborative and hands-on with our IT department, when needed—addressing any questions or concerns quickly."

The Docufree solutions and customer support seamlessly and easily worked in tandem to help Marshfield's Cemetery Department:

- Scan all paper records to create a back-up; and index burial and lot cards as well as all large-format paper maps;
- Transform static, unstructured information in customer spreadsheets and on burial cards into dynamic

interactive records easily accessible via a web browser;

- Each (static) section map was digitally converted to one complete electronic Computer Aided Design (CAD) file per cemetery, with Lot ID attributes added and linked to an aerial photo for an interactive map system. Color coding was incorporated to show which lots were available and which had been sold;
- As new burials and Lot Owners are added, they're linked to existing Lots and locations that would instantly appear on the interactive digital map;
- Lot Owner information entered in CemeteryFind auto-populates both Deed and Purchase Agreement forms; and
- 24/7 public access via the web allows users to search for burial locations of loved ones.

"We're pretty efficient now," said Bowen. "We're able to confidently report to the Board by giving them cemetery updates all across town. We don't have a lot of issues that need to be addressed by the Board now."

Administration Time Decreased By 30 Percent

Bowen estimates that with the cemetery records-management solution, his Department has seen a 30-percent decrease in administrative time and a 10-percent reduction in errors.

"The whole process of selling a cemetery

“All the solutions working together have allowed the Town of Marshfield’s Cemetery Department to operate at more than 90-percent efficiency now.”

lot prior to our digitization project was very, very tedious,” said Bowen. “Take the call, locate the paper map, get the ladder to reach the shelf where it’s stored, make sure you have the right map, walk it over to the trailer, open the map to review it and call the person back to discuss options—and hope the map you have is accurate.”

The Town of Marshfield is back selling lots again with a much more accurate view into availability. Additionally, the Town started providing residents with the ability to sell back lots that they no longer have a use for, allowing the Department to instantly change lots from “sold” to “available” once the paperwork was complete.

Over the course of eight years, Docufree’s solutions have delivered these results for the Town of Marshfield:

- Provided anytime-anywhere access to the same data at all cemeteries and Town Hall;
- Eliminated redundancy of entering owner information onto three different documents;
- Reduced staff time used for historical and ancestral research with newly created online public access to data;
- Allowed for reports on sales by date, available lots and veteran lots to be created instantly;
- Created interactive, visual maps that allow the public to find available lots, ultimately helping the town with lot sales; and

- Developed mapping navigation features that show the public how to find a burial location.

Bowen can’t say enough about the outcomes that Docufree was able to deliver. “All the solutions working together have allowed the Town of Marshfield’s Cemetery Department to operate at more than 90-percent efficiency now.”

About The Town of Marshfield

The Town of Marshfield is located in Southeastern Massachusetts in Plymouth County. A coastal community 30 miles from Boston, Marshfield has a yearly population of about 25,000 people which grows to about 40,000 in the summer months. The town’s rich history of over 350 years dates back to the pre-revolutionary war era and is best known as the home of Daniel Webster from 1832 until his death in 1852. While a resident he was a very important national political figure and was known as “the Farmer of Marshfield”.

Marshfield is 31.70 square miles in area, and contains 28.50 square miles of land and 3.25 square miles of water. The town has a traditional New England government structure with a three-member board of selectmen, an administrator and an open town meeting. Among the basic services provided to residents are public safety, schools, water and sewer, trash removal, recreation, public library and senior center. The town’s water and sewer and trash operations are managed through enterprise funds.

The Cemeteries, Trees and Greens Department employs 10 full-time staff responsible for maintaining over 135 acres of town-owned land, parks and cemeteries and 32 athletic fields.
www.marshfield-ma.gov

About Docufree

Docufree is a business process services provider of large-volume document scanning, cloud-based document management, and intelligent process automation. Since 1999, Docufree has securely managed and modernized how people and the systems they use every day interact with data and each other, driving measurable outcomes for both clients and their customers—from providing an on-ramp to digital transformation to automated invoice processing, human resources and customer communications.