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Rosa Is an Angel Now

Epitaphs from
Crawford County,
Pennsylvania

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*Bent an Angel low at even
Placed a wreath upon her brow
Bore her fluttering spirit homeward
Rosa is an Angel now.*

—ROSALTA M. KENDALL
LINESVILLE CEMETERY

INTRODUCTION

... An epitaph is not a proud Writing shut up for the studious; it is exposed to all, to the wise and the most ignorant; it is condescending, perspicuous, and lovingly solicits regard; its story and admonitions are brief, that the thoughtless, the busy, and indolent, may not be deterred, nor the impatient tired; the stooping old Man cons the engraven record like a second horn-book; — the Child is proud that he can read it — and the Stranger is introduced by its meditation to the company of a Friend; it is concerning all, and for all: — in the Churchyard it is open to the day; the sun looks down upon the stone, and the rains of Heaven beat against it.¹

—William Wordsworth

THE praise that Wordsworth bestows upon epitaphs no doubt rings strangely in the ears of most twentieth-century readers. Today, epitaph literature is treated as little more than a curiosity: since people rarely go to cemeteries to read epitaphs for themselves they are known only through epitaph books which usually quote only the exceptionally bizarre, humorous, or shocking examples — hardly ones which are “concerning all, and for all.” The more typical epitaph, of which this collection contains over 900 different examples, is seldom appreciated even though these were the type that were accepted and widely used in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and the type which even such a literary great as Wordsworth admired.

Not only are the more ordinary epitaphs themselves overlooked (and we use the word ordinary in its best sense), but the cultural context from which these epitaphs have arisen has been largely ignored as well. This is not to say, of course, that epitaphs cannot be appreciated as an individual verse or statement. Indeed, one can learn much this way about the attitudes that a particular individual or his survivors held. But, at the same time, it must be realized that epitaphs were not written in a vacuum and that without knowing their context in the nineteenth century, one cannot really understand why epitaphs occurred as they did, where they did, when they did.

The epitaphs of this collection are taken from only one county —

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1 William Wordsworth, “Upon Epitaphs,” in Ernest Rhye and Lloyd Vaughan, eds., *Essays: A Century of English Essays* (London & Toronto, 1921), 309.

Crawford County — in northwestern Pennsylvania and constitute, to the best of our knowledge, all of the readable epitaphs in that county.² In confining ourselves to this one county, we have attempted to present a complete and accurate case study: a collection of all the epitaphs from a limited area, rather than a selection from a larger area. Through such an approach, we hoped not only to gain a wider perspective on the diversity and character of epitaph writing of the past two centuries but also to more closely relate the social, economic, and religious context from which these epitaphs arose. We wanted, in a word, to discover why epitaphs were meaningful to the people of their time and to see what influenced epitaph tone and content.

It is a complex problem. Even the purpose of the epitaph was by no means the same: some were to console, or express bereavement, while others were to memorialize or list facts about the deceased, while still others were designed to teach the reader a lesson, or to admonish him. But aside from *what* was said, it is just as important to see the complexity of *how* sentiments were expressed: what religion, for example, does the epitaph reflect?; what attitudes towards death?; what influence of social class or educational level can be seen?; what is the physical setting of the epitaph?; why is the graveyard where it is, and how does it affect the epitaphs?; and what is important about the sculptural aspects of the tombstones? Of course, one cannot begin to describe all the subtle variations these questions present, but we do hope to form an image — a perspective on the epitaph tradition, its rise and flowering in the nineteenth century, and its fall in the twentieth.

When a person died in the nineteenth century, an elaborate series of rituals and traditions were set into motion, the tone of which was peculiar to that era. Just prior to death there may have been an emotional deathbed scene, in which friends and relatives, young and old, would surround the dying person — praying and crying.³ After death, there would usually be a graphic obituary which made praiseworthy comments on that person's life and telling in detail how, when, and where the person died. At home, there would be visiting hours to

2 This collection contains all readable stones in 330 different cemeteries, although duplicates have been removed and only the earliest or completest of any one kind is printed here. We cannot claim perfection, though, and apologize if there have been epitaphs overlooked or misread. Of the 330 cemeteries, we have been personally to 226; 104 others have been visited and found to contain no epitaphs. The only cemeteries omitted are the sixteen we could not locate.

3 Philippe Aries, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore and London, 1974), 59-60.

view the body of the deceased. Neighbors might even dig the grave.⁴ Funeral attendance was considered to be a virtue, and funerals were elaborate and almost always well attended.⁵ A procession followed the casket to the cemetery for the burial service. Mourning cards, with inspirational poetry, and memorial books, containing poetry as well as sermons and letters from friends and relatives, were frequently distributed. A tombstone memorial, often with an epitaph, would be carved, and regular visitation to the cemetery would usually follow until the survivors, too, "passed on."

Of all of these rituals, it is interesting to note, only epitaphs are still exposed today for all to see, as they were in their own day. In this light, epitaphs are not some trivial phenomena, but rather can serve as an instructive reflection upon American life.

1. THE SETTING

The graveyard

Epitaphs could never have appeared in the abundance that they did had it not been for the importance the graveyard itself played in nineteenth-century society. Closely tied to a church, to a family, or to a small community, cemeteries then generally served a much larger purpose than merely being a repository for the dead.

The graveyard next to or near the church (see Illustrations one, two, three) was, for example, an extension of the church itself.⁶ Its practical purpose was, of course, as a "final resting place" usually reserved solely for members of the congregation and no others. But, as a constant and vivid reminder of the mortality of man and of the necessity for preparing for the afterlife, the church cemetery also served to strengthen the lessons the church itself was trying to teach. As Alfred Nevin, a Presbyterian, praised in 1847:

A graveyard is always a solemn and interesting spot, whether we find it in the heart of a bustling and noisy city, where the present too much overpowers both the past and the future, or in the deep bosom of the country, where unbroken stillness reigns around, subduing the heart for the touching but wholesome lesson

4 Francis C. Waid, *A Historical Sketch of Francis C. Waid*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1886-92), 2: 184.

5 In 1890, Francis C. Waid heard the town undertaker whisper to a friend, "F. C. Waid attends nearly as many funerals as I do, as I generally see him present." Mr. Waid thanked him for the compliment. Waid, 2: 331. He also proudly wrote that his home town, Blooming Valley, "[was] noted for the large numbers it turns out on funeral occasions." Waid, 2: 275-76.

6 O. K. Armstrong and Marjorie M. Armstrong, *The Indomitable Baptists* (New York, 1967), 105.

which it ought to learn as the eye is fixed on the resting place of the dead.⁷

It cannot be disputed that the graphic image of death which the church graveyard presented was theologically useful, but it is also true that the graveyard was just as much a place for sentimental gatherings as it was for "instructive" meditation. It was, in fact, almost ritual to stroll through the cemetery to remember and venerate deceased friends and relatives: by erecting monuments and visiting them regularly, the dead could be kept alive in mind even though they had departed in body. As an important extension of the church, there was much concern for the visual appearance of the church cemetery. Congregations kept the church cemeteries neat and orderly, with trimmed grass and well-kept stones as a symbol "of the affection that is cherished for the mortal remains which they contain, and to make them attractive as places of profitable meditation."⁸ What better place to record some pious admonition or loving thought than amidst these pleasant surroundings where one's friends and relations congregate twice each week?

Not all churches had graveyards in conjunction with them, however, and if that was the case, burial had to take place either in a private family cemetery or, if they had been organized, in a public town graveyard. Family cemeteries (see Illustrations four, five, six) were almost always near the homestead and contained relatives and, sometimes, neighbors. More private than a churchyard, the site for the family cemetery was usually located on some isolated portion of the farm. Picturesque spots on high ground, overlooking a stream, shaded by trees, were the most popular, but often all that was available, or chosen, was flat land in the middle of a field or between fencerows. Burying one's relatives at home near the fields where they worked, rather than in some public or church cemetery, seems to again fulfill the desire to keep the dead alive in memory. This time, however, the dead were actually kept at home so that friends and family could visit them as often as they wished, showing that a strong sense of continuity between generations existed in death just as it had in life.

As areas expanded in population, the localized nature of society with its focus on church and family began to break down. In terms of cemeteries, this growth resulted in the emergence of the town graveyard where many families of many religions were buried (with the

7 Alfred Nevin, *Churches of the Valley or An Historical Sketch of the Old Presbyterian Congregations of Cumberland and Franklin Counties in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1852), 61.

8 *Ibid.*, 62.

exception of Catholics and Jews who, to this day, still bury their dead separately from the Protestants). In smaller communities, it was not uncommon for a church cemetery or a family cemetery (see Illustration seven) to be simply taken over for this purpose. In the larger towns, however, whole new cemeteries under the direction of public corporations were created on the outskirts of the settled areas.

To make them appealing, these new cemeteries promised perpetual care, something less possible in smaller graveyards which were frequently being abandoned, if not destroyed, as families splintered and churches consolidated or closed. An observer in 1889, for example, mentioned a neighbor buried in a town cemetery even though "his parents sleep their last sleep on the farm he owned."⁹

Also to make them appealing, the new town cemeteries, with such picturesque names as Greendale (in Meadville) and Woodlawn (in Titusville), were professionally designed to look like parks with curvilinear streets, wooded knolls, and shaded ponds. (See Illustrations eight, nine, ten, eleven.) John Reynolds described Greendale Cemetery at its dedication in 1853:

That these grounds are appropriately beautiful for the design to which they are now consecrated is universally admitted. The diversified surface of upland and glen, the native forest; its variety; the everflowing brook; and its steep hill-sides, with their somber shades, are naturally picturesque, and susceptible of artificial embellishment by walks and carriage drives. Secluded from the busy world, here will be a calm retreat, where the living may walk among the graves and profitably commune with and meditate upon death.¹⁰

Due to their picturesque settings, these cemeteries were still not only places to bury and forget; indeed, they were popular as a "calm retreat," particularly on a Sunday afternoon since one could go there, enjoy oneself, and still not break the Sabbath. People would picnic, stroll, watch children play, socialize, and, in short, do all the things done in parks today.

The tradition of visiting the graves of departed friends and relatives and thereby reviving their memories was not lost in these cemeteries, at least not at first. It was just not as convenient as it had been when burial took place in the churchyard or on the family farm. The cemetery was subdivided into plots of different sizes, the plots then being sold (at varying prices depending upon the amenities of

⁹ Waid, 2: 159.

¹⁰ John Reynolds, "Address Delivered at the Dedication of Greendale Cemetery, August 31, 1853," *Works of John Reynolds* (Crawford County Historical Society Library, Meadville, Pa.), 1.

the land) to a family for its perpetual use. People would then visit family plots, as Philippe Aries notes, just like "one would go to a relative's home, full of memories."¹¹ Cemeteries had become like miniature cities and, indeed, were sometimes referred to as "cities of the dead." One account of cemetery visitation comes from Francis C. Waid of Blooming Valley, Pennsylvania, who wrote in his diary of his cemetery visits and how he would wander from plot to plot reading and copying inscriptions. For example, on May 22, 1883, he wrote:

We took the opportunity of a Sunday afternoon to visit Greendale Cemetery . . . Many of my relatives and friends are buried in this beautiful City of the Dead and as my wife and I sauntered through it and read so many familiar names on tombstones, I could not resist copying a few.¹²

Cemeteries were not only important because they contained friends and relatives, however, but because they were a source of community pride and prestige. At another point in Mr. Waid's diary, for example, he writes that, "After seeing the living of Dayton, with its population of 55,000, why not visit the silent city of the dead where, it is said, already rest nearly 14,000, and there learn a lesson?"¹³ The dead are as important as the living. Cemeteries, likewise, are as vital to community stability and prestige as churches and schools, as John Reynolds related at the dedication of Greendale Cemetery:

Our character for refinement and taste are very fairly estimated by our public works: the intelligent stranger receives a more impressive consciousness of the virtues of a people by a visit to their churches, schools, and burial places than by any other transient visitation. Where these are chaste in their building, ornament, and design, where neatness and order are conspicuous in the disposition of their grounds, and where shade and ornamental trees are by a common consent and love of the beautiful, protected from injury — he will feel assured that in that community law and order, based upon religious principles, reign supreme; that with such people his person and property are safe.¹⁴

Since cemeteries were such important places to visit, it is hardly a coincidence that epitaphs flourished in the churchyard, the family homestead, and in the town graveyard. Often these epitaphs reflected church doctrines, especially in the churchyard, but they also served as an additional means of keeping the memories of the dead alive. In any case, one reason for their existence is quite easily explained — epitaphs are meant to be read, and people who were visiting the cemetery were there to read them.

¹¹ Aries, 72.

¹² Waid, 1: 171.

¹³ Ibid., 2: 61.

¹⁴ John Reynolds, *Works of John Reynolds*, 10.

By 1900, however, and certainly by World War I, two important changes occurred which took their toll on the usage of epitaphs. One of these changes was the actual growth of town cemeteries. In the early days, the Greendales and the Woodlawns were still small, but as they grew — and they grew rapidly — a family plot would no longer have an intimate setting but would be surrounded by acres of unfamiliar names. Friends, in different plots, were distantly scattered, discouraging those reminiscing strolls when people most often read epitaphs. Though there are surely other contributing causes to the decline of epitaphs, this growth away from cemeteries which are small and central to church, family, or community to those which are too large to be related to any of these social groups has undoubtedly had its effect.

The second and more dramatic change came in traditional social mores: death went from being openly discussed and a part of life, to a taboo to be hidden and avoided. Part of the reason for this change was because death was taken out of the home and put into hospitals and nursing homes, and once out of sight, it was out of mind as well. The rituals associated with a death in the family — preparing for the funeral, digging the grave — were similarly taken out of the hands of friends and relatives and institutionalized. Now, “funeral directors” operating from “funeral homes” and cemeteries controlled by public corporations perform those functions, thereby isolating the community from the physical facts of death. Coupled with this change in institutions was a change in attitude as well. Philippe Aries’s hypothesis that there is an easily bridged transition from memorializing an individual, to death assuming a more “distant and dramatic” form, “full of tension,” is not at all farfetched.¹⁵ In any case, as death became taboo, so did cemetery visiting and, since few people were there to read them, epitaphs too fell from usage.

The effect these changes in social mores have had upon twentieth-century cemeteries is clear. First of all, little creativity has been used in expanding older cemeteries, and usually additions are only flat fields with regular rows of stones. (See Illustration twelve.) Beyond this, however, there emerged a new type of cemetery geared to society’s wish to hide death. Disguised under the name of “memorial gardens,” these new cemeteries usually have vast acreages of epitaphless plaques, flush with the ground so there are no vertical stones to serve as reminders of death. (See Illustrations thirteen, fourteen.) Like the pic-

¹⁵ Aries, 106.

turesque cemeteries of the nineteenth century, the memorial gardens have appealing names (such as "Roselawn" in Meadville) and are also vaguely reminiscent of parks. But the similarity surely ends here. The memorial garden is usually divided into smaller subareas with platitudinous names (such as "Babyland," "Garden of Prayer," and "Private Estates"), and there may be one statuary piece in that subarea; memorial gardens also, unlike earlier cemeteries, often contain a public mausoleum and provision for cremation. The greatest break with the past comes, however, because these are profit-making enterprises and ones, it might be added, that have been successful in marketing their product. Indeed, the transition from cemeteries which are central to life to ones which try to hide the very fact of death seems complete.

The gravestones

Visiting cemeteries seemed to have a twofold purpose — one spiritual and one esthetic. The esthetic concern includes the appreciation of the landscaping and the setting, described above, but goes beyond to include the sculpture and architecture which gives the cemetery further ornamentation. Cemeteries abound with art and scarcely a stone, whether it has an epitaph or not, does not bear the mark of a sculptor. Many, it is true, are small works with only a basic design, but others are larger and more ornate. Some have high relief or full-round sculpture in marble or bronze, and some display the craft of the architect as well as the sculptor. Styles, too, are diverse. The neo-classical style is most commonly associated with nineteenth-century cemeteries, but Gothic tracery, Romanesque arches, and Victorian superabundance also appear on a large number of stones.

Like all art, there are periods when certain styles are dominant, and the art of tombstone carving is no exception, having three basic stages. The first stage was the "Sandstone Period," about from 1800 to 1840. In those days of poor transportation, carvers had only the native grey or grey-brown sandstone to work with. The stone is soft and easy to carve, yet is fine grained, so detail is possible. It could not be carved into high relief without breaking and it decays quickly. The decay, however, is erratic, and many examples remain to illustrate the early carver's art.

The wealthy usually had horizontal "table-top" stones, about $2\frac{1}{2}' \times 6'$ in size. Generally, these have no ornament except lettering, although one example is supported by stone balusters. The vertical "headstone" type served for others in the community, except for the

poor who placed only rough unlettered stones over their graves. These carved headstones ranged from one foot to four feet in height and from one foot to three feet in width and were sometimes accompanied by footstones.

Usually design was confined to the tops of the stones, leaving the carver a rather confined area in which to work. The stones almost always had a large semicircle on the middle of the top, flanked by two smaller semicircles or "ears." The design occupied the center semicircle, with the rest of the area filled with drapery, full- or half-sunbursts, and other motifs popular in the architecture of the period. The central design was most commonly the classical willow and urn motif, which originated in England as an adjunct of the Adam style, spread to New England in the 1770s, and reached Meadville by 1800. It was a motif general enough to go with all the epitaphs that might be at the base yet was still symbolic of death. The more obvious skull-and-crossbones designs characteristic of New England had, however, gone out of fashion by the time Crawford County was settled — several cherubs its only vestiges (Illustration fifteen).

Carving, like epitaph writing, was a dynamic art. At first, the carvings attempted naturalism, and there are examples of carved leaves with minutely incised veining, roses with every petal detailed (Illustration sixteen), and birds with every feather (Illustration seventeen). Later, carvings moved away from depiction to representation, the object changing from pictorial accuracy to a pleasing and unified design. The urns, trees, and shrubbery became flamboyant, or stylized, covered with decorative spots or grooves, and combined with sunbursts, often the stylized successor to the earlier rose (Illustration eighteen). Finally, the geometric triumphed, and the urn and willow gave way to an abstract design. The whole surface of one abstract stone (except for an urn in the center) is a field of circles and radiating lines (Illustration nineteen), and another is entirely geometric (Illustration twenty).

This was the general trend from naturalism to abstraction, but there was, nonetheless, much variety, for there were at least eight carvers in the French Creek Valley region, the earliest area of settlement in the county. Carvers in this period were local men, often stonemasons, who carved gravestones when needed. Four have left us their names. John Birth (d. c. 1830) is documented as the earliest carver in Meadville.¹⁶ He left no signed examples, but it seems safe to assume

16 John Earle Reynolds, *In French Creek Valley* (Meadville, 1938), 103.

that he carved the earliest stones in Greendale Cemetery in Meadville. They are plain, ornamented only by his skillfully carved Roman letters.

James M. Reid (d. 1848) was a very prolific carver and left numerous signed examples. He had two recognizable periods of his career. In the example dated 1814, he produced very refined stones with the conventional willow and urn enlivened by grooves and distorted sunbursts (Illustration eighteen). All of these were unsigned. His later style (roughly 1829 to 1841) is much less distinctive, since he dropped most of his grooving and used flat, stereotyped urns and drapery, though he retained his flowing script. Most of these later examples are signed, however, by the carver. Though Reid lived in Saegertown, his works are found in most of the old cemeteries in French Creek Valley from Cochranton in the south to Venango in the north. Two other carvers have left one signed example each and do not seem to have produced much in this area. E. Evans's example is at Woodcockboro, and the work is not exceptional. J. Jack's in Quigley Cemetery, west of Meadville, is plain except for his skillfully executed script letters.

There are at least four anonymous carvers. One has left four examples dated from 1813-1822 and seems to have worked mainly around Meadville (3 are in Greendale and 1 in Brown Hill Cemetery to the west). His hallmarks are flamboyant shapes for the stones and fanciful, exaggerated shapes for the urns and willows carved on them.

Another, and more prolific, carver seems to have worked around Meadville and southwards (his stones are mainly in Greendale and in Conneaut Cemetery north of Cochranton). His stones are dated between 1812 and 1835, and, like Reid, he seems to have gone through two stages in his work. His early period was very naturalistic (Illustrations sixteen, seventeen), but then in the late 1820s, he became increasingly more abstract and geometrical (Illustrations nineteen, twenty).

A third carver was at work in the 1830s, again mainly around Meadville. Many of his stones are without ornament, but his classic lettering is distinctive (Illustration fifteen). Beyond these, there may have been one or more additional anonymous carvers who were responsible for some stones which cannot at the moment be attributed to one of the above carvers; some of these stones are topped by a daisy in a circle, some with scrolls, but others have no unifying characteristics.

By about 1830, marble stones began to appear, initiating the "Marble Period" of 1830 to 1890. The increased use of marble was

probably due to its increased availability, since the building of the canals in the 1820s made the importation of goods much quicker, easier, and less expensive. At any rate, marble had supplanted local stone by 1850. The earliest marble stones were usually very plain, with no decoration other than the inscription. Before 1850, stones took on some aspects of Greek Revival architecture, with stylized trees and acanthus (Illustration twenty-one), pilasters, scrolls, and pediments. In the 1850s and 1860s, carvers exploited the full potential of marble in high relief — lush garlands of fruit, flowers, or ivy (Illustration twenty-two), the scrolls and drapery of the then-current neobaroque (Illustrations twenty-three, twenty-four), the crockets and tracery of the Gothic Revival (Illustrations twenty-five, twenty-six), or the clasped or upward pointing hands (Illustration twenty-seven), the angels and lambs of religious inspiration (Illustration twenty-three). Larger monuments even had statues, usually angels, carrying wreaths or pointing heavenward.

Hand carving was expensive though, and after the Civil War industrialization led to more simple, machine-made tombstones. Machines would cut the marble and flatten the surfaces, leaving only incised lines and scrollwork to be done by hand. The incised decoration was often intricate (Illustration twenty-eight), but the planar surfaces of these stones cannot compare with earlier round carving.

Unfortunately, well-preserved examples of any of these styles are rare, since marble wears even worse than sandstone. Usually, only in heavily wooded graveyards, where the trees have provided shelter, do marble stones retain their full, original ornamentation.

Carvers' names are more plentiful from the Marble Period than from the preceding Sandstone Period, no doubt due to the fact that carvers were now businessmen. What better advertising than to sign each work, and have one's name repeated in every cemetery? Carvers probably still had other occupations, since the demand for stones was not that high, and they were still mainly local craftsmen. Examples of work outside a 10-mile radius of their shops are rare, although occasionally some were imported from the outside, a development which has come into full-flowering today.¹⁷

17 One of the earliest marble carvers was D.M.R. or D.H.K. (due to wear, the initials are uncertain) of Meadville. Others whose work appears in Crawford County are: Lawton & Wilkin, Pittsburgh; M. O'Brien, Erie; J. & J. Hay, Meadville; Arnold & Logan, Meadville; Chapman & Co., Turnersville; Thomas J. Cole, Titusville; D. C. Reed, Greenville; J. Bracton; R. Pelton & Son, Erie; Mead & Johnson, Frenchtown; Sherman & Root, Cambridgeboro; J. Densmore, Blooming Valley; Alex Beggs, Allegheny City; Alex. C. Johnson, Cochranon; S. Nixon;

For a brief time around the turn of the century, cast white metal was used for some monuments instead of stone. It was an ideal medium, because the metal could be cast with sharp and minute detail and thus suited the tastes of the time. Usually these monuments consisted of a frame with fancy details onto which were bolted plates with the lettering or motifs, such as crosses, wreaths, or sheaves of wheat. This method permitted both mass-production of the frames and plates and variety in the finished products, depending upon the combination of pieces. The taste for stone evidently prevailed, however, and these metal markers are relatively scarce (see Illustration twenty-nine).¹⁸

Lastly, there came the "Granite Period" which began about 1870 and has endured to the present. Granite is much harder and much more lasting than marble or sandstone but also harder to carve, so designs are much like the later marble examples — machine-cut flat surfaces with incised ornament. The twentieth century with its higher costs has witnessed a diminution of everything — size, ornament, and even lettering. Decoration is at a minimum and so is lettering, since the charge for that has reached \$1.50 a letter.¹⁹ Under such circumstances, small wonder epitaphs are little used.

This period witnessed a change from the local carver of the nineteenth century to the dealer of the twentieth. Now stones are mass-produced, and the local dealer does only the lettering. This way, design across the country is fairly standard.²⁰

Mausoleums

Closely related to tombstones, and exhibiting much the same stages as gravestone carving, mausoleums reflect the plain beginnings, the increasing elaborateness, and finally the machine-made simplicity of the present. They began their development later, however, appearing only after the Civil War when increasing prosperity supplied the necessary wealth. The first mausoleums were stuccoed brick, but soon they came to be built of granite, the stone used for the grave-stones of the day. The most outstanding examples of these are in

and Shelley & Co. J. & J. Hay were particularly prolific with large headstones. The others' stones were smaller and simpler.

18 These monuments do not seem to be local productions. The only signed example is marked "Monumental Bronze Co., Bridgeport, Ct."

19 This is the charge for the smallest lettering; in addition, there is a minimum \$28 fee for the labor. This would bring the cost of an average four-line epitaph to more than \$200.

20 Some of the earlier granite carvers signed their names (W. T. Frazier of Conneautville was particularly active in the period 1870-1890), but after the turn of the century, signed work decreased. Yet, being a product more of a machine than man, surely nothing is more worthy of anonymity than much of the work of today.

Titusville, built by the fortunes made from the oil boom. These elegant mausoleums are miniature temples — Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian — complete with bronze doors and gates (see Illustrations nine, thirty). Associated with these are the only examples of bronze statuary in the county. One of these statues, *The Driller*, done in 1901 for the tomb of Edwin Drake, is the work of a sculptor of national repute — Charles Henry Niehaus. This costly and important work is placed in a large architectural setting, more akin to a mausoleum than to a simple carved tombstone, and serves as the community's belated gift to the founder of its prosperity, who himself had died in poverty twenty years earlier (see Illustration thirty-one).

2. THE ORIGINS OF THE EPITAPHS

Once people had decided that they wanted an epitaph to be carved, they then obviously had to face the question of how to write, or choose, a specific verse or phrase. The solutions found are not always predictable, but they do seem to fall into a few basic categories. Though some people preferred to write an original verse, others preferred to copy a quotation or reuse a standard epitaph, while still others chose to use a combination of original and copied verse.

Some epitaphs, of course, are indisputably original, simply by virtue of their unique content — a family history, a personal note on the life or death of the individual, or his last words. Such epitaphs have an immediacy which is sometimes compelling and mysterious but altogether human. Their appeal to readers is no doubt a natural one, stemming from a curiosity to know more than just what lies on the surface. A few examples follow:

Pensioned at 96 Dollars per, year

—FANNIE HAMILTON (1800-1895)
OLD COUNTY HOME CEMETERY

In flight his Horses ran
No one was near to see the deed
No human hand could save
His mangled body from the grave

—JOSEPH HUTCHISON (1810?-1854)
HUTCHISON CEMETERY

Howell Powell (1804-1873)

born near Utica N.Y. March 11th 1804

died at his home "Shadeland" Feb. 11th 1873

He sought the welfare of others, rather than
their praise

He was the fourth child of Watkin and Rebecca Adams Powell, who, with Watkin's father also named Watkin emigrated near Brecknock Wales to near Utica in 1801

His mother who was daughter of Howell Adams of Wales died in 1814 aged years, and was buried at Utica, N.Y. beside the elder Watkin who died in 1802, aged 89 years.

His father there married Mrs. Sarah Morris Nicholas in 1815. They, with their families, in 1816 came to "Shadeland," Spring Tp., Crawford Co., Pa., where they both died Sept. 1850, aged 77 and 69 years.

He married Sarah Beatty, fourth child of Joseph and Suzannah-Lintner Beatty, of Vernon Tp., Crawford Co., Pa., April 11th, 1833, And resided at "Shadeland" until his death.

—SPRING CEMETERY

Charles Huyghue, 1886
who died on
the cars Oct. 1, 1886
on his way from
New Mexico U.S.
to friends in Canada
MISUNDERSTOOD

—GREENDALE CEMETERY

"John, work?
Yes, I love to
work, but this
fever is burning
me up."

—SARAPH MORRIS (1859-1899)
MAPLE GROVE CEMETERY
(See Illustration thirty-two)

Eseck Randolph, 1767?-1854
Who lived 87 (?) yrs.
Without a Lawsuit
died Sept. 9, 1854
Without an Enemy.

—GREENDALE CEMETERY

Other epitaphs raise no question of originality due to their distinctive literary style. One such epitaph is that of Maxwell Anderson

(1888-1959), Pulitzer Prize winning playwright:

Children of dust astray among the stars
 Children of earth adrift upon the night
 What is there in our darkness or our light
 To linger in prose or claim a singing breath
 Save the curt history of life isled in death

—ANDERSON CEMETERY

Just as there are examples of unique and original work, there are, on the other extreme, many epitaphs which the deceased or his survivors clearly chose from some other source. Considering the importance that religion played in nineteenth-century life, it is not surprising that one of the most commonly quoted sources for epitaphs was the Bible. As will be seen later, the tone and content of the type of verse selected usually varied according to religious sect, though a few did seem to be universally popular. The great number of deaths of children in the nineteenth century, for example, is sadly made evident by the vast numbers of the use of this verse:

Suffer little children to come unto me,
 For such is the Kingdom of Heaven. [Mark 10:14]

Also very widely used was the declaration that,

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. [Rev. 14:13]

If a person did not turn to the Bible for an appropriate religious verse, he could turn instead to the next most frequently used church text — the hymnal or, in the case of the Presbyterians, the psalmbook. Sometimes epitaphs were chosen from songs appropriate for a funeral but that need not always be the case. The first example below is from a Presbyterian psalmbook,²¹ while the latter originated from a Methodist hymnal.²²

Thou art gone to the grave, but
 twere wrong to deplore thee
 when GOD was thy ransom, thy
 guardian and guide:
 He gave thee and took thee &

²¹ *Psalms and Hymns adapted to Social, Private, and Public Worship in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1843), selection No. 635.

²² *The Epworth Hymnal* (New York, 1885), Hymn No. 280.

South Shenango Presbyterian Church (built 1879) and adjoining cemetery. An example of the close relationship of church and graveyard in the nineteenth century.



1

2

South Shenango Cemetery, showing mainly stones of the early marble period.





View of the South Shenango Cemetery and Presbyterian church.

3

4

Shelmadine Springs Cemetery, a small rural cemetery near the family farm.





Snyder Cemetery, another small family cemetery. An example of all too typical neglect.

5

6

View in the Snyder Cemetery, a small, abandoned family cemetery.





View of Mt. Blair Cemetery. This was a small family cemetery located on a high knoll which gradually expanded downhill as a few other families came to be buried there.

7

8

View in the center of Woodlawn Cemetery, Titusville, showing its picturesque landscaping.





Fertig mausoleum (1902) with McKinney mausoleum (1897) behind, Woodlawn Cemetery, Titusville.

9

10

Gates of Greendale Cemetery, Meadville. It is the earliest large community cemetery in the county, its site chosen for, and maintained, in its park-like appearance.





View of one of the drives in Greendale Cemetery

11

12

View of Linesville Cemetery. This shows mainly the twentieth-century part of the cemetery, with acres of stones in relatively monotonous straight rows.





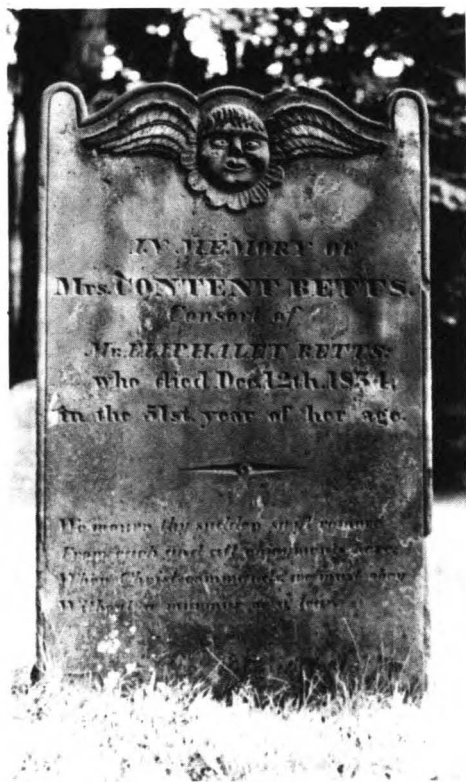
View of Roselawn Memorial Gardens in Meadville, with mausoleum in the background. Memorial gardens have no upright stones, substituting instead bronze or stone plaques, flush with the ground. Bouquets of flowers in vases dot the expanses of grass.

13

14

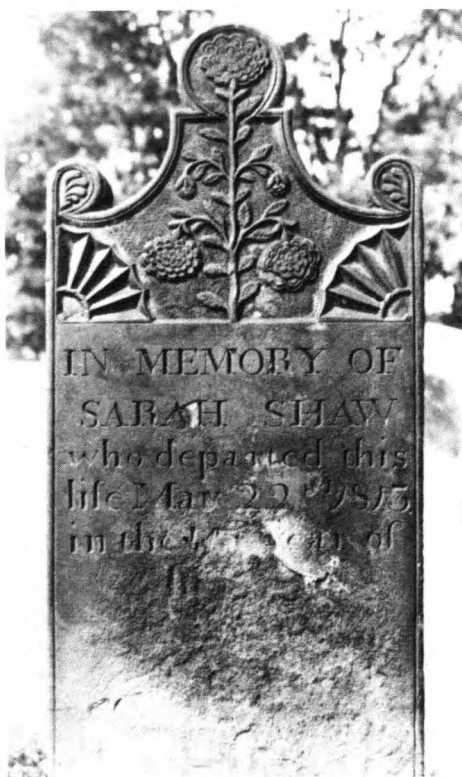
Roselawn Memorial Gardens showing a central, solitary statuary piece.





15

Content Betts stone, Greendale Cemetery. A cherub, the local reflection of the winged-skull motif popular in New England, where Mrs. Betts was born. By an anonymous carver. (1834)



16

Sarah Shaw stone, Conneaut Cemetery. An example of early naturalistic sandstone carving. By an anonymous carver. (1813)

Andrew Gibson stone, Conneaut Cemetery. An example of naturalistic carving. By the carver of illustrations sixteen and nineteen. (1828)

17



18



James Long stone, Peiffer Cemetery. An unsigned work by J. M. Reid, in his earlier style.



19

Timothy Hill stone, Greendale Cemetery. An example of geometric sandstone carving. A later work by the carver of the Sarah Shaw stone. (1833)

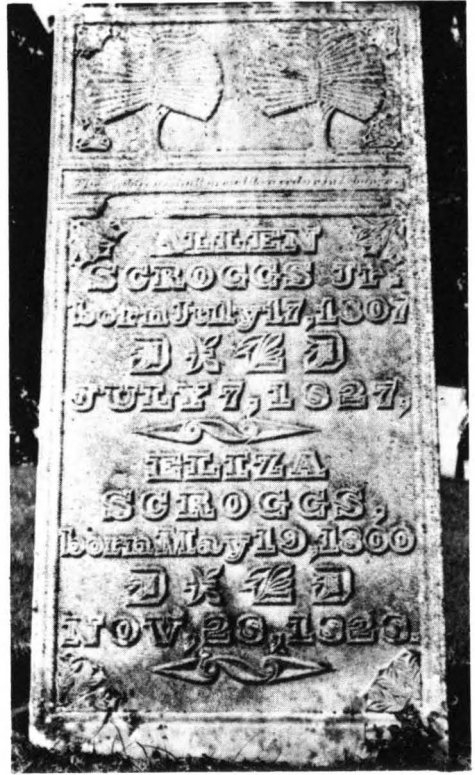


20

Eliza and James Kennedy stone, Conneaut Cemetery. An example of totally geometric ornamentation. (c. 1830)

Allen and Eliza Scroggs stone,
 Conneaut Cemetery. A very
 early marble stone, with an un-
 usual amount of ornamentation.
 (1828)

21



22

Lucy Morris stone, Maple Grove
 Cemetery. An example of Vic-
 torian high relief carving, imi-
 tating ivy, and a fringed drape,
 (1869)

Abraham Gregory stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. An example of the elaborate neo-baroque of the Victorian era. (1869)



23

24



Nancy Harrison stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. A Victorian stone with some high-relief carving of drapery and some incised ornament. (c. 1865)

James Morris stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. A more ornate stone with Gothic-revival overtones. (1863)

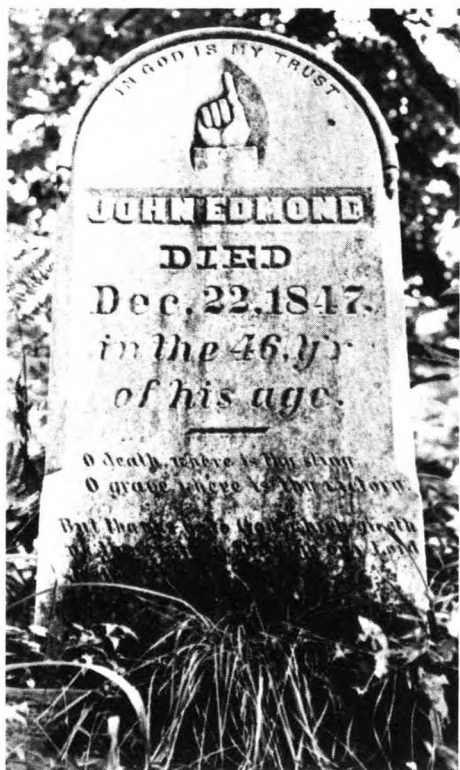
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26

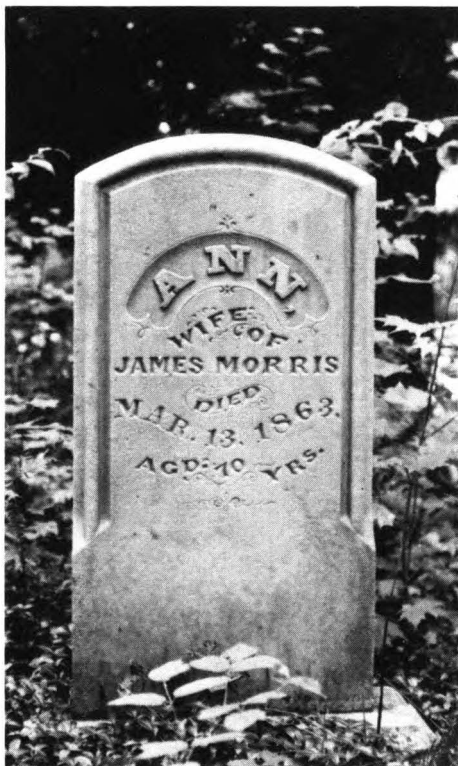


Abram Grindrod monument, Greendale Cemetery. A good example of the use of the Gothic-revival style of architecture for gravestones. (c. 1865)



27

John Edmond stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. A fairly early, simple marble stone, with a common motif: the upward pointing hand. (1847)



28

Ann Morris stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. A stone showing the ornamentation that came into use around the Civil War. The stone's surface is flat, with the scrolled ornament and lettering incised. (1863)

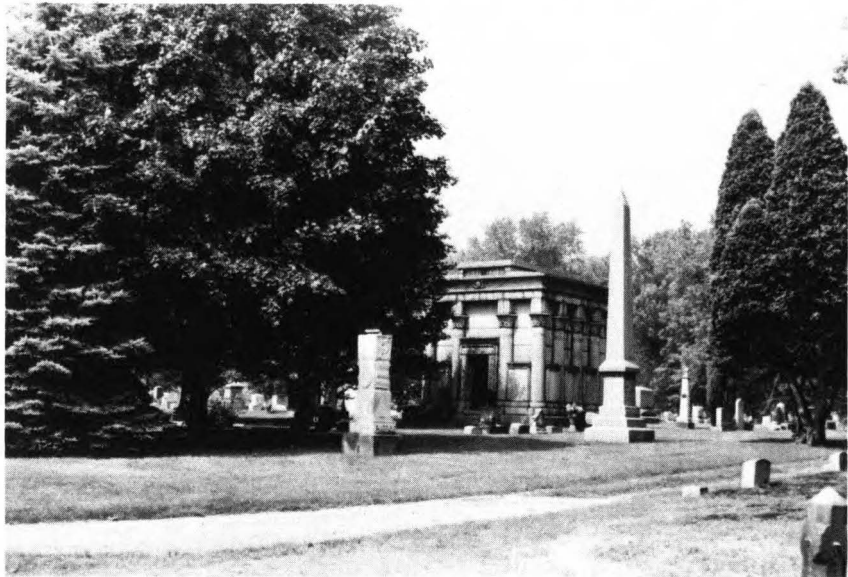
Cast metal monument,
Conneaut Center Cemetery. (1904)

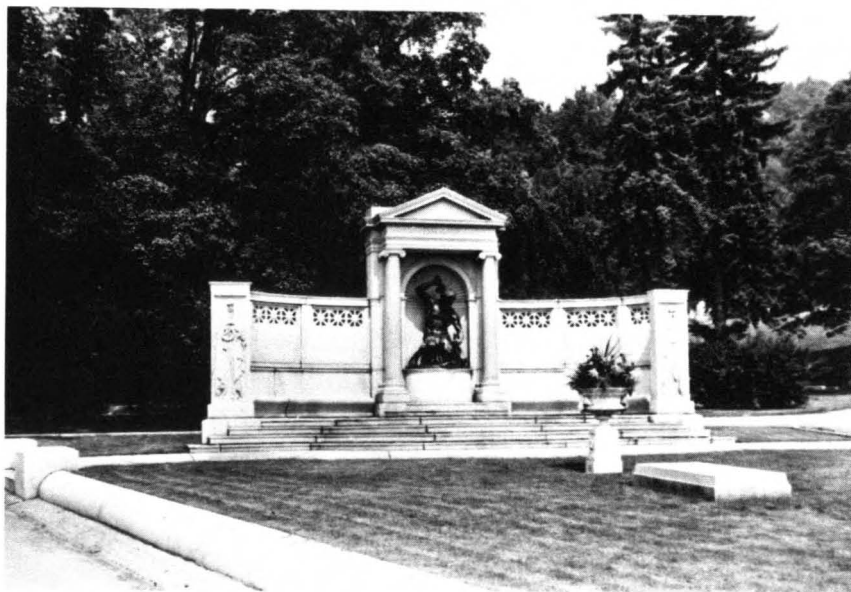
29



30

View in Woodlawn Cemetery, Titusville, showing the Barnsdall mausoleum, an example of the Egyptian-revival style.





Edwin L. Drake monument, Woodlawn Cemetery, Titusville. It is probably the most elaborate memorial in the county, combining architecture, bronze statuary, and landscaping. (1901)

31



32

Sarah Morris stone, Maple Grove Cemetery. A late, but still elaborate stone, with a puzzling epitaph. (1899)

soon will reclaim thee
Where death has no sting since
the SAVIOUR hath died.

—ARCHIBALD McNEIL (1790-1844)
MT. BLAIR CEMETERY

Jesus loves me he will stay
Close beside me all the way
If I love him when I die
He will take me home on high.

—ALBERT C. BROWN (1861-1875)
WATSON RUN CEMETERY

Other epitaphs simply quote prominent authors, such as Thomas Gray and Rudyard Kipling:

"Lo, where this stone in silence weeps,
A friend, a husband, and a father sleeps,
A heart within whose sacred cell
The peaceful virtues all did dwell." [Gray]

—REV. TIMOTHY ALDEN (1771-1839)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

"Enough work to do and
Strength enough to do the work."—Kipling

—GLENN R. TAPPER (1949-1971)
VENANGO CEMETERY

Although many people obviously located quotations for themselves, there were several published epitaph collections that could have been used as well. Appearing in numbers around 1860, these books may simply have been the property of a minister or stonemason: when a person wished an epitaph, it was chosen from the catalogue. Some authors, such as Alpheus Cary of Boston, Massachusetts, were hopeful that, by showing sophisticated examples of epitaphs, they could improve what they perceived to be as the generally poor literary quality of most "tombstone literature."²³ Other epitaph collectors were less optimistic about being able to improve epitaph writing, however. G. Mogridge, for example, wanted only to provide "greater variety" and epitaphs more applicable to the deceased. "To be practically and generally useful," he wrote, his book "is adapted to different degrees of intelligence. Originality and taste, however desirable, affect, com-

²³ Alpheus Cary, *A Collection of Epitaphs Suitable for Monumental Inscriptions from Approved Authors* (Boston, 1865).

paratively, but a few, while the many are more accessible to the plainer precepts of piety and morality.”²⁴ Though it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell how wide a circulation these epitaph collections actually attained, the following three examples from the work of Alpheus Cary are among the ones which also appear in this collection.

Go to the grave in all thy glorious prime,
In full activity of zeal and power
A Christian cannot die before his time
The lords appointment is the servants hour. [Montgomery]
—HERBERT F. WAID (1865-1886)
HATCH CEMETERY

How blest the righteous when he died
When sinks his happy soul to rest
How mildly beamed his closing eyes
How gently heaved his expiring breast. [Mrs. Barbauld]
—JOHN WORMALD (1821-1878)
CONNEAUTVILLE CEMETERY

Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
Death came with friendly care
The opening buds to heaven conveyed
And bade them blossom there. [Coleridge]
—CLYMANTIA & MARGARET CLOSE (1849)
EVERGREEN CEMETERY

Just as such an epitaph manual accounts for many of the nineteenth-century epitaphs in this collection, an anthology printed in 1947 by the American Monument Association for its customers accounts for many of the twentieth-century inspirational epitaphs.²⁵ Two examples from this anthology, which are found in Greendale Cemetery, are:

Warm summer sun, shine kindly here ;
Warm southern wind, blow softly here ;
Green sod above, Lie light, lie light ;
Good night, dear heart,
Good night, good night.
—P. HENRY UTECH (1871-1929)

An angel visited the green earth
and took a flower away.
—RALPH E. HAINES (1951-1956)

²⁴ G. Mogridge, *The Churchyard Lyrist* (London, 1883), iii.

²⁵ *Memorial Symbolism, Epitaphs, and Design Types* (Boston, 1947).

Among the large group of nonoriginal epitaphs whose source cannot be traced to the Bible, a hymnal, or to some other book as those above, are those epitaphs which are so frequently repeated that they can be found in almost any larger graveyard. These epitaphs may have been passed by common usage, like any folk literary verse, once they achieved popularity. Some of these commonly used epitaphs, which are hardly exclusive to any one part of Crawford County, are:

Reader, stop as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I,
As I am now, so you must be,
Prepare for death, and follow me.

Sleep on sweet babe and take thy rest
God called thee home, he thought it best.

Dearest (brother) thou hast left us
Here thy loss we deeply feel
But tis God that can bereft us
He can all our sorrows heal.

Children dear assemble here
A mother's grave to see
Not long ago I dwelled with you
But soon you'll dwell with me.

Less obvious examples of unoriginal epitaphs, which appear more than once in the county, indicate that these may have come from a standardized book or were generally known:

An honest man is the noblest work of God.
[all examples in Greendale Cemetery]

Budded on earth to bloom in heaven.

How desolate our home
Bereft of thee, dear mother
In earth's thorny paths
How long thy feet have trod!
To find at last this peaceful rest
Safe in the arms of God.

(Joseph) dear farewell we miss thee
Your absense gives us pain

But in heaven we hope to meet thee
Our loss is infinite gain.

Between what are definitely original epitaphs and what are definitely not, is a large "gray area" of epitaphs which cannot be attributed either way. This is where most of the epitaphs lie. Some were partially copied, for example, but then varied, amended, and adapted to fit the needs of the individual. For instance, John Benjamin Siverling's epitaph reads:

Relentless death's unerring dart
Alas! has peirc'd his youthful heart
But yet we hope that he is blest
By Jesus Christ, and now at rest.

—JOHN BENJAMIN SIVERLING (1809-1830)
VENANGO CEMETERY

Another epitaph of the same year uses the same first two lines but changes the latter two to fit the life of John Matthias Flach:

Relentless death's unerring dart
Has pierc'd the aged veteran's heart
He while alive did firm maintain
The liberty he helped to gain
under great *Washington*

—JOHN MATTHIAS FLACH (1752-1830)
PEIFFER CEMETERY

Some alterations, however, are not as great. For example, Sadie Roche's epitaph in 1875 reads:

Sadie was too sweet a bud
To blossom in this sinful world
So God has taken her above
To dwell with his immortal love.

—SADIE ROCHE (1867-1875)
COCHRANTON CEMETERY

The epitaph of Maggie Wyman, in the same cemetery, uses the same poem, but changes the last line to, "To bloom among immortal flowers," which disrupts what little rhyme scheme there was, although the meaning remains constant.

A great number of epitaphs exhibit less-significant modification and only incorporate certain catch phrases and metaphors into a more or less original scheme. Such phrases permit a surprisingly wide range

of solutions. For example, the metaphor "angel band" appears in three different settings:

God needed one more Angel child,
Amidst his shining band
And so he bent with loving smile,
And clasped our Martha's hand.

—MARTHA M. WILSON (1886-1890)
BLOOMING VALLEY CEMETERY

Tread softly for an angel band
Doth guard the precious dust
And we can safely leave our boy
Our darling, in their trust.

—EDGAR A. AINSWORTH (1847-1866)
ROSE HILL CEMETERY

My Father Mother kindred dear
Grieve not for me nor shed a tear
Thy darlings with her saviour now
Bright glory rests upon her brow
A harp she holds within her hand
And waits for you to join her band.

—NETTIE McENTIRE (1860-1862)
ADSIT CEMETERY

Other types of phrases are numerous, as well, and flower imagery is particularly popular. "Budded on earth to bloom in heaven" is the old standard, but the deceased are also described as "sweet buds of beauty," "tenderest lily," "earliest rose," "too sweet a bud to blossom in this sinful world," "youthful bloom," "that lovely flower which bloomed and cheered my heart," "sweet flower that scents the morn," "a sweet and fadeless flower," and so on. Many phrases seem to be regional. Only in the southwestern part of the county, for instance, did epitaphs speak of "in endless day," "Meet me my friends in endless day," "To sing God's praise in endless day," "she shines in endless day."²⁶ Throughout the county, certain adjectives were also popular and appear repeatedly: sweet, darling, tenderest, tenderhearted, lovely, kind, heavenly, peaceful, gently, happy, bright, dearest, blessed, pure. On the more negative side, mouldering, sinful, silent, and gloomy are frequent, but these words are much less common than their more positive counterparts.

Despite their common descriptive phrases, there is, nonetheless,

²⁶ See the epitaphs of Betsey Betts and John H. Royal, State Line Cemetery, and Clara M. G. Pease, Turnersville Cemetery.

Cousin Clara, Dec. 8, 1891
 When in my grave I lonely sleep
 And the willows ore me weep,
 Tis then dear friend and not before
 That I shall think of thee no more
 Nannie³⁰

Original poems about death also appear, less unexpectedly, in memorial books which compiled letters, sermons, and poetry about the deceased.³¹ They also appear on memorial death notices that were sent to distant friends and relatives. One card for Mrs. Nellie Thomas, for example, states that, "Her loss is mourned by all who had the happiness of knowing her, and by none more sincerely than by the writer of these lines," and this poem follows:

"Asleep in Jesus!" oh! eternal peace
 And rest so longed for by her weary soul,
 Awaiting patiently the blest release
 That leads the spirit to its heavenly goal.
 Oh! blessed sleep, life's feverish struggle o'er,
 How sweet, to feel thy soothing touch, and know
 That there is no awakening evermore
 Of the bruised spirit to earth's joy or woe.
 Oh life eternal! promised to those given
 Who, patiently God's work on earth pursue:
 How sure we are 'tis her reward in heaven,
 Who, ever to her faith in Him was true.
 Mary J. Conklin (1885)³²

Epitaphs, like poems about death, occur in many other places besides on tombstones. Memorial cards, which were very commonly distributed at the funeral or mailed later, often contained an epitaph, if not two or three. Epitaphs also appear in obituaries, usually as a concluding note; the obituary for Prudence Drake (died April 27, 1861) is among the many examples which can be found:

For her indeed, no heart can weep
 Nor wish to raise her from her sleep

30 Autograph Album of Mrs. Clara J. Johnston Mitchell of Cochran, Pa. (private collection).

31 See one example of a memorial book: *In Memory of Kate Leora Compton* (Meadville, n.d.).

32 Private collection.

She sleeps in Jesus, the kind friend
Of all who love Him to the end.³³

With such usage, both inside and outside the graveyard, it is not surprising that people knew some epitaphs well enough to recite them. Mrs. Elizabeth Alden (1779-1820), buried in Greendale Cemetery, recited on her deathbed this comforting verse which is often used as an epitaph:

Jesus come make my dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are
While on his breast I lean my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there.³⁴

The apparent familiarity and popularity that death poetry and epitaphs had makes it seem unlikely that the epitaphs in this collection are copied in their entirety and reinforces the conclusion that most of the epitaphs in the "gray area" were original productions.

However, even if some of these epitaphs were simply chosen, they still reveal something of the "chooser," just as an original epitaph reveals something about its composer. Francis Waid tells us of his brother who, before his death, requested the standard epitaph, "Behold young man as you pass by / as you are now so once was I / etc.,"³⁵ showing that even the most common of epitaphs has its roots in individual taste.

3. RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

It is helpful to know who wrote the epitaphs and where they came from, but that, in itself, does not explain why people wrote or chose them as they did. Probably one of the strongest influences on the writers was religion: in the nineteenth century it was a vital factor in life and can scarcely be overemphasized. Religion then did not mean an occasional Sunday church attendance as it often does today, but something that was lived. The Sabbath meant Sunday School, both morning and evening services, as well as Bible reading in the home, and there was another service on Wednesday evenings besides daily family devotions.

33 "Death in Randolph Township, April 27th, Mrs. Prudence Drake in the 75th Year of her Age" in *Crawford Journal* (Apr. 30, 1861).

34 Timothy Alden, "Memoir of Elizabeth Shepherd Alden" in *An Account of the Sundry Missions Performed Among the Senecas and Munsees* (New York, 1827), 178.

35 Waid, 1: 14-15.

Since all denominations believed in an afterlife, religion was a natural comfort at times of death in the family. One epitaph explained the interrelationship of life, death, and religion this way :

Tis relection that must give
Sweetest pleasure while we live
Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die
After death, its joys shall be
Lasting, as eternity.

—ELIZA BYERS (1814-1846)
QUIGLEY CEMETERY

The bereaved could console themselves in their loss by the thought that the deceased was in Heaven or would rise again. Not only did people need this consolation, but they needed it more often than today, for death was more common. Scarcely a family had children who all survived childhood, and many had aged parents or relatives living with them. Death was more obvious, too ; people died in the home surrounded by their families, not in distant hospitals or nursing homes.

Even after the funeral, there were reminders of death. When people visited the graves of their family, they were reminded of it afresh, and most epitaphs expressed religious sentiments in order to comfort them. However, different religious groups had differing beliefs concerning life and death which leave their own particular marks on the epitaphs of their adherents at least until the late nineteenth century when denominational lines began to blur. Because religion so shaped the epitaphs, a few words on each denomination are appropriate.³⁶

Presbyterians

The Presbyterians were the first denomination in the county, organizing their first church in 1800.³⁷ As a result of their long history of persecution, they were a particularly strict sect, clinging tenaciously to all parts of their creed.³⁸ Their zeal is admirable, but strictness led

³⁶ See Appendix (in Part 3) for a list of cemeteries identified by denomination.

³⁷ The discussion of the Presbyterians also includes the Congregationalists, since they are virtually identical except in church government and co-operated with the Presbyterians in the West in the first third of the nineteenth century.

³⁸ James J. Brownson, "Educational History," in *Centenary Memorial of the Planting and Growth of Presbyterianism in Western Pennsylvania and Parts Adjacent* (Pittsburgh, 1876), 69-70.

to schisms each time the church faced new problems, so there were numerous Presbyterian churches — the Associate or Seceder Presbyterians, two groups of Reformed or Covenanter Presbyterians, the Associate Reformed Presbyterians, as well as the regular Presbyterians, who split into the Old and New Schools from 1837 to 1870.

Doctrinally, they were Calvinists. Their main points of difference from other sects were their beliefs in predestination and election. Both are concepts related to the idea of an all-powerful God. Since God is all-powerful, nothing could happen without His planning and direction; so, therefore, all things must be predestined by God to occur. This means that each man's salvation or damnation is already fixed, and he can do nothing about it. This is the doctrine of election; those chosen for salvation being called the elect.

Man was believed innately evil, as was everything connected with his earthly life. This world was a drab, unhappy place, full of suffering, and useful only in preparing one's self for the next world. True happiness was only with God, and there the elect would be rewarded for their misfortunes here.

These doctrines were intricate, so it is no accident that the Presbyterian faith was an intellectual rather than an emotional one. Their services were plain and dispassionate, and their sermons were mainly doctrinal, although by no means were the graphic descriptions of the terrors of Hell omitted. Yet these were not included to bring on the orgies of repentance and conversion, as in the more revivalistic or evangelistic sects; they were just other stern reminders of the need for preparation for death, which was a constant theme.

Due to this emphasis on doctrine, the Presbyterians insisted on an educated ministry from the first, the only major sect to do so. They were much interested in lay education as well, since they felt the complicated logic and scriptural basis of Calvinism made "the education both of the ministry and the people . . . not an incident but a fundamental necessity."³⁹ It is true that, in the early days of the Great Revival of 1800, Presbyterians took part in the revivals and were almost as guilty of excess and theological looseness as any. However, as a Methodist admitted, ". . . in time the congregations of that persuasion [Presbyterian] made it plain that they wanted an educated ministry and religion with a measure of intellectual content. They got what they wanted, but many on the frontier did not want closely rea-

39 Charles Wright Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil* (New York, 1971), 79.

soned theology.”⁴⁰

The Presbyterians of Crawford County seem to fit the above patterns generally. There were most varieties, from the strictest Covenanters to the more liberal New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists, but there were no departures from the standard Calvinist theology.⁴¹ As a Unitarian remarked, the populace of the area was markedly conservative in religion and “strong in its allegiance to the faith of Calvin and Knox.” Indeed, this area was, and is still, one of the most Presbyterian in the nation, having less than 3 percent of the national population but more than 8 percent of all Presbyterians.⁴²

As they were typical in theology locally, they were typical in erudition, too. Presbyterians founded the Meadville Academy and Allegheny College, published a theological and antiquarian magazine, and five of their number were elected to the prestigious American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Massachusetts, by 1820.⁴³ Being so numerous a sect and counting many of the educated and influential of the early community as members, it is not surprising that the Presbyterians left their mark on the epitaphs of the county.

They are generally faithful to their stern heritage, and many strike the reader as very gloomy and morbid at first glance:

This languishing Head is at rest
Its thinking and aching are o'er
This quiet immoveable Breast
Is heav'd by affliction no more ;
This heart is no longer the seat
Of trouble and torturing pain,
It ceases to flutter and beat
It never shall flutter again.

—AGNESS HULINGS (1763-1814)
CONNEAUT CEMETERY

But the epitaph's purpose is to console — the reader is assured that Agness is now at rest from the tribulations of this awful world, though

40 The evangelical, non-Calvinistic split-off, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, had only one congregation in the county, and it lasted only two years. Robert C. Brown, *History of Crawford County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1885), 392.

41 Earl Morse Wilbur, *A Historical Sketch of the Independent Congregational Church, Meadville, Pennsylvania 1825-1900* (Meadville, 1902), 4.

42 Wallace Guy Smeltzer, *Methodism on the Headwaters of the Ohio* (Nashville, 1951), 26.

43 John Reynolds, *The Writings of John Reynolds*, 125-26.

the pain and vanity of life is stressed, in keeping with the Presbyterian view of the cosmos. One can see education in the choice of language as well.

This epitaph is admonitory, fitting the Presbyterian view that one should be reminded frequently of one's mortality :

Stop serious friend a moment view this stone
While you wander social or alone
Lock'd in the house of death you must lie
Prepare to meet thy God, Oh learn to die

—CHARLES COCHRAN (1754-1829)
CONNEAUT CEMETERY

A later example shows how several themes could be interwoven — the pain of life, the terror of death, and the consoling assurance that the deceased is safe :

Though horrors dread the silent Grave surround,
And Death converts the body into clay :
Yet to the souls who living hope have found
They are the portal to immortal day :
And in that day there is abiding bliss
That pays for every sorrow borne in this.

—NANCY HANNA DAVIS (1814-1841)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

Death is depicted with all its grimness — another unsaid admonition to be ready. The body is relegated to clay as only an object of this world; but the soul, untainted by the world, is in Heaven, the only place of immortality and truly "abiding bliss." Consolation comes in the last line, the place of most emphasis, and the reader is assured that the deceased will be compensated for her sufferings on earth.

The strictest sect of Presbyterians — the Reformed or Covenanters — usually preferred Biblical verses as epitaphs. Such is not surprising, for all Presbyterians long refused to sing hymns, because they were composed by men and tainted by this world, so sang the Psalms instead. This one chooses a Bible verse that conveys the usual admonitions :

Therefore be ye also ready : for in
such an hour as ye think not the Son
of man cometh. Matt. XXIV :11

—JOSEPH STEWART (1798-1869)
COVENANTER CEMETERY

Other Presbyterian groups used Bible verses, though not as often as the Covenanters. Some even quoted their psalmbook from which they sang every week in church:

The storm is changed into a calm
at His commandment and will
So that the waves which rag'd below
now quiet are and still
Then are they glad because at rest
and quiet now they be
So to the haven he them brings
which they desired to see. [Ps. 107:29-30]

—EMILY M. KEE (1832-1870)
ROCKY GLEN CEMETERY

But, in spite of the stern character of most Biblical quotations, even the Covenanters could be consoling:

Blessed are the pure in heart for they
shall see God. Matt. 5.6
Her Children arise up and call her blessed
Her Husband also and praiseth her. Prov. 32.28

—FRANCES S. POLLOCK (1820-1888)
COVENANTER CEMETERY

Here the epitaph is still strictly Biblical, but it shows a warm feeling for the deceased. It is a compromise with the anti-eulogy tradition of the church which held that man, vile as he was, was not worthy of praise. This epitaph praises Frances, but for her saintly qualities, not for her worldly attributes — probably the highest compliment that could be paid was the assurance that she should see God.

Some Presbyterians were not quite so scrupulous in avoiding personal eulogies, however. The wealthy, particularly, with their larger headstones or still larger table-top stones, had room for lengthy epitaphs, and the temptation to eulogize was strong:

WITH a mind chaste and intelligent
a benevolent heart, and refined sensibility
she was eminently the tender and affectionate
wife, the fond parent, the sincere friend, and
the interesting companion. She has left as
consolation to those who loved her, the
recollection of her amiable life, and of
her lively trust in the favour of God.

Attracted by this memorial, may her

dear little children, in their riper years,
whilst they shed the tear of affection on
her grave, earnestly strive to emulate her
virtues.

The tyrant Death! had wing'd his dart in vain
Could virtue's charms have sav'd her from the tomb
'Twas Heav'n's decree, the conflict to sustain
And smiles on death: presag'd her happy doom.

—ANN MORRISON (1792-1822)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

In spite of the eulogy, though, her faith in God is considered her crowning attribute, and the reference to predestination at the end of the poem should be noted. This is a well-composed epitaph — the verse may be somewhat stilted but the prose bears an elegance which indicates education.

The height of erudition, though, is the epitaph of Mrs. Timothy Alden, in the New England tradition, where many, especially the clergy, had Latin epitaphs. The last lines are again admonitory, but in a particularly gentle fashion:

Sic transit gloria mundi

Hic jacet Elizabetha Shepherd Alden

peraeestimabilis conjux Timothei Alden Praesidis Coll. Alleg.

que nata est apud Marblehead 30 Jan. 1779

denataque apud Meadville 3 Ap. 1820

Hic etiam reliquae nepotis et neptis

[*So passes the glory of the world*

Here lies Elizabeth Shepherd Alden

Most estimable wife of Timothy Alden, President of Allegheny College

Born at Marblehead Jan. 30, 1779 and died at Meadville Apr. 3, 1820

Here also are the remains of a grandson and granddaughter]

Dear Children

So live that, sinking in your last long sleep

Calm, you may smile, when all around you weep.

—ELIZABETH ALDEN (1779-1820)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

These are only a few examples; one can find many others in the pages which follow, but they are sufficient to show these nineteenth-century Presbyterian beliefs in the vanity of this world and the necessity of preparation for the next, and their sober, simple, but educated manner.

Methodists

Having detailed all this about the Presbyterians and their theology, description of the Methodists is easy, because they are often exactly the opposite. The Methodists arrived a bit later than the Presbyterians — around 1805 — but grew to be the largest religious group in the county.

Theologically, Methodists were much more easygoing than the Presbyterians. They were Arminian, heresy in the eyes of the Calvinists,⁴⁴ for they did not believe in election but that every man could be saved if he led a life pleasing to God. Methodism was a religion of emotion, which did not rely on logic as in Calvinism but relied instead on the loving aspects of God. They believed a loving God would not damn a man who was converted and repented of his sins, and this every man could do, not just the elect. They also believed that man was not naturally wicked, as the Calvinists did, but that he was simply astray.

The Methodists, then, were a more lenient sect, and the idea that a man had worth and could control his own destinies appealed to the independent-minded pioneers. Methodist services had their appeal too. The often isolated frontiersman wanted companionship and warmth and that was what the Methodists gave him.⁴⁵ Methodism stressed personal and emotional belief and used hymns and music to reinforce this atmosphere. Conversion was much stressed, since it meant gaining the way to salvation, and it was usually a traumatic experience. Further excitement was provided by periodic revival services several days in length, full of hysteria and theatricality, warnings of hell fire, and appeals to convert.⁴⁶

Since faith was the mainstay of Methodism, rather than elaborate theology, it was not important for the ministers to be educated. In 1834, one still needed only a knowledge of grammar, the Bible, and Wesley's sermons to be admitted to preach on trial.⁴⁷ This intellectual simplicity was reinforced by the considerable lay leadership in the services and by the emphasis on personal experience. They "made up in color what they lacked in content,"⁴⁸ and Methodism spread widely and quickly among the unlettered but receptive settlers.

44 William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture 1765-1840* (New York, 1952), 145.

45 Charles Ferguson, 79.

46 Samuel Gregg, *The History of Methodism within the Bounds of the Erie Annual Conference*, 2 vols. (New York, 1865), 1: 231.

47 Smeltzer, 367.

48 Charles Ferguson, 79.

The Methodists of Crawford County fit the general Methodist patterns, for they had more congregations than any other sect. From what scant evidence there is, the early local Methodists seem to have been typical on the educational level as well. One preacher in Meadville, Rev. Thomas Benn, was described as "rather deficient in intelligence" but was successful, nonetheless, for "he was a great singer and could pray well."⁴⁹ In 1833, the Methodists did, however, assume control of Allegheny College and began turning out more educated ministers.⁵⁰ Because the Methodists were the largest denomination in the county, their epitaphs can be found most everywhere. They reflect Methodist beliefs and so have a definite plain, common-sense flavor:

Only Sleeping
 She's not dead, the child of our affection
 But gone unto that school
 Where she no longer needs our protection
 And Christ himself doth rate.

—MARY E. TAYLOR (1867-1884)
 NEW RICHMOND CEMETERY

Methodists, unlike the stern, admonitory Calvinists, do not point to the reality or inevitability of death. Here it is glossed over in order to console the reader. Mary is only sleeping, or, in a more earthly image, gone to school, where she will be safe and happy.

The physical aspects of death are seldom mentioned. In some verses, death is hardly noticeable, heavily beclouded by metaphors:

When I shall reach that happy place
 And be forever blest
 When shall I see my Father's face
 And in his bosom rest.

—SUSANNA KENT (1801-1883)
 FREY CEMETERY

An early example is a bit less rosy than some others, although not nearly as glum as Presbyterian ones:

Parents and friends I bid adieu
 Full hard it was to part with you

⁴⁹ Gregg, 2: 27.

⁵⁰ It was said as late as 1889, though, that "professions of faith were rather more important than scholarship" at Allegheny, and that the faculty were incompetent retired ministers and superannuated missionaries. Frederic C. Howe, *The Confessions of a Reformer* (Chicago, 1967), 15. For a fairer estimation, see Ida M. Tarbell, *All in the Day's Work* (New York, 1939), 37-48.

But nature designed it so to be
When you look at this remember me.

—MILTON AYERS (1833-1858)
GARWOOD CEMETERY

This comes about as close to being admonitory as any, but note that "parting" is just a design of nature, not a universal plan of God. The emphasis is much more personal — the pain of parting with this particular individual is stressed rather than general mortality. The last line asks the reader to remember the deceased. A Presbyterian considered the individual important only as an example in an admonitory lesson rather than as a person, but the Methodists were much more sentimental.

An epitaph, of lower quality, is this one:

Now her earthly toils are ended
She's laid her armor down
And gone home to dwell with Jesus
And wear a starry crown.

—SARAH ROYAL (1811-1861)
STATE LINE CEMETERY

There are quite a number of metaphors, not at all connected. In the first line, she was a laborer, and in the second, a warrior, and one has to assume from the hint at the end that she had died. In the third line, she has gone home to dwell with Jesus, showing that the Methodists felt a much more personal connection with God than did the Presbyterians, who kept a respectful distance. The last line changes the image again, and she is crowned, assumedly for her virtues. The epitaph rhymes, but it is a jumble of emotional phrases with no particular unified meaning. Many are like this, and occasionally some do not even have rhyme or meter:

Our Father is gone and we are left
The loss of him to mourn
But we hope to meet with him
With Christ before God's throne

—JUDA MORSE (1829-1901)
EAST TROY CEMETERY

The Methodists were not without more elegant epitaphs, however. As the century progressed, more people became more educated due to the rise of public schools, and Methodists were no exception. The following is one example from this later period, a quotation from

Longfellow containing a classical allusion:

There is no Death:
 What seems so is transition
 This life of mortal breath
 Is but a suburb of the life Elysian
 Whose portal is called death.

—JOSEPH & MARY SMITH (c. 1891)
 SMITH CEMETERY (E. Mead Twp.)

And, as the Presbyterians used their psalmbooks, so the Methodists used their hymnbooks as epitaph sources:

I'm Going Home
 Rock of ages cleft for me
 Let me hide myself in thee

—SIBYL F. HUMES (1857-1874)
 NORTH RICHMOND CEMETERY

These examples, like those of the Presbyterians, are just a few of a very large and diverse group and cannot begin to show all variations. But, again, they suggest the general trends of Methodist epitaphs — they are simple, but personal and sentimental. To counteract feelings of grief, they often gloss over the physical fact of death and hide it beneath soothing metaphors.

Baptists

Baptists were the third major Protestant group, arriving about the same time as the Methodists, around 1805. Generalization about them is more difficult than with most others, since they were fiercely independent groups, each congregation having few, if any, connections with any other congregation. This led naturally to substantial variations in theology, even though they all considered themselves good Baptists. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics that marked most Baptist churches.

Most were mildly Calvinistic, viewing the Methodists' Arminianism with as much alarm as the Presbyterians, though there were large numbers of Arminian "Free Will" Baptists. But it was here that the similarities with the Presbyterians ended. The Baptists, like the Methodists, had a very simple, personal theology and emphasized a life-changing experience, a conversion. What Calvinism they had faded on the frontier due to its unpopularity, until they had about the

same popular, personal, evangelical, and emotional religious beliefs as the Methodists.

Their ministers were farmer-preachers, simply one of their number who was a good speaker and had a license to preach. Such men obviously could not be scholars, and their other occupations kept them from devoting time to superintending schools as the Presbyterian ministers did. However, the Baptist system did have its advantages. There were no problems getting preachers to the pioneers — they usually migrated west with their congregations in search of more and better farm land, and if they did not, a replacement could be appointed from within the congregation.

With this emotional faith so popular on the frontier and the ease of supplying farmer-preachers, the Baptists, like the Methodists, experienced rapid growth and soon became a major sect. In Crawford County, they were third largest in number of congregations.

Despite their abundance, however, Baptist epitaphs show very few common characteristics, probably due to the extreme independence of each congregation. Some of the earlier epitaphs show their mild Calvinistic background, being rather admonitory:

Our days are as the grass
Our glory like the morning flowers

—ELIZABETH STEBBINS (1775-1855)
CARMEL-FREEMAN CEMETERY

But just thirteen years later, an epitaph like this appears in the same cemetery:

Here I lie in silent slumber
While my spirit hath gone to rest
(With) my children (seven) in number
Meet me there among the blest.

—JULIA A. FREEMAN (1822-1868)
CARMEL-FREEMAN CEMETERY

Gone are the Calvinistic sternness and stoic attitude toward life and their frankness about death, and in their places are the metaphor of sleep for death and the assurance of Heaven often found in Methodist epitaphs. This shift from Calvinism towards the popular and evangelical seems more complete in this epitaph from another cemetery used by the same congregation:

How our broken (hearts have) missed her
Since in parting last we kissed her

Loving daughter, gentle sister
 Frankie dear to Heaven has flown.

—FRANKIE K. BENNETT (1853-1866)
 CARMEL CEMETERY

Here are the characteristics of the non-Calvinistic epitaph — no admonitions, no descriptions of the hardness of life or of the physical reality of death. Instead, there is a disconnected combination of lines with a poignant, hopeful tone, and yet this is from the same congregation that had seemed Calvinistic less than fifteen years before.

Other congregations seem to have varied in their Calvinism, too. An 1860 example seems to have Methodist overtones:

Here sleeps beneath this marble slab
 A youthful mother and her babe
 Who died in Christ, who was her trust
 To raise her from the sleeping dust.

—ELEN M. SMITH (1833-1860)
 SHREVE RIDGE CEMETERY

But two years later, there is an epitaph in the same cemetery that is as stern as any Presbyterian could have desired:

All you that pass and read my name
 Who sleeps beneath the sod
 You too must turn to dust again
 Prepare to meet thy God

—JOHN P. SEBRINS (1833-1862)

Even in this cemetery, though, the movement seemed to be away from Calvinism, in spite of some wavering like this in the transition period. This seems to have been the trend generally: rather than having a doctrinal characteristic, Baptist epitaphs seem to be characterized by a shift in doctrine; the firmness of Calvinism dissolving in the onslaught of popular evangelism.

One can see a lower level of education in their epitaphs. The Baptists could be admonitory and quote the Bible like the Presbyterians, but their non-Biblical epitaphs generally show less sophistication. Their later non-Calvinistic epitaphs are equally simple (like that of Frankie Bennett above) and are indistinguishable from those of the Methodists, displaying the characteristics of that sect which were outlined earlier.

German Protestants

These — the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists — were the major English-speaking sects. However, one must not forget the German-speaking religions. Germans were a major ethnic group in Crawford County, as throughout the Midwest, coming in large numbers from eastern Pennsylvania or Europe between 1800 and 1880. Often they had beliefs similar to those of the churches outlined above but were separated by the language barrier.

The largest sect of these were the Evangelical and United Brethren churches. They had very similar beliefs and are today merged with the Methodist Church. Even in the nineteenth century, however, they were much like the Methodists, emphasizing the personal and emotional in religion, and eschewing formalism. Like the Methodists, too, they felt education was relatively unimportant, which led to a very simple tone in their epitaphs:

O happy bond that seals my vow
To Him who merits all my love
Let cheerful anthems fill his hours
While to his sacred throne I move.

—CATHARINE WHEELING (1813-1881)
DECKARDS CEMETERY

The above example is typical, most of their epitaphs being similar to those of the Methodists and later Baptist ones. One congregation evidently was a bit sterner than the others, however, and their epitaphs are more gloomy:

Weep not for me my children dear
I am not dead but sleeping here
My death you know my grave you see
Prepare yourselves to follow me.

—WILSON GEHR (1834-1883)
GEHRTON CEMETERY

This different tone can be explained in the same way as the variations among the Baptists — the Evangelical and United Brethren congregations were also extremely independent. However, the epitaphs of this one congregation were the only departures from the general, light quality of the epitaphs of this sect, which resemble the Methodists' in every other respect.

Just as the Methodists had their counterparts among the German element in the United Brethren, the Presbyterians had theirs in the

German Reformed Church and the very similar Lutheran Church. The German Reformed were Calvinists and so show the stern plainness of the Presbyterians. Their epitaphs show the full grimness of death, the hardness of life, and the hope of resurrection. And, like the Presbyterians, their epitaphs are often Biblical. Much the same may be said of Lutherans. Though they were not Calvinists, they still had a strict Reformation heritage, their services were formal rather than emotional, and their epitaphs are similarly grim.

Both groups had an educated ministry, though often not as polished as that of the Presbyterians, since there were few good German colleges in this country. Judging from his epitaph (which includes a quotation from Alexander Pope) however, this local pastor seems to have been an equal of the Presbyterians. Indeed, he was a tutor to noble families in Germany and was prevented from becoming a professor at Allegheny College only by his death:⁵¹

Pastor of four German Lutheran Congregations
a native of Buckeburg in the Circle of Westphalia
who with his family came to America in 1810
And who left this mortal scene in the 46th
year of his age
Amiable in life
diligent and faithful in the service
of his Lord and Master
his loss to the world was much lamented
by strangers honor'd and by strangers mourned
(Des) Gerechten wird nimmer mehr vergessen
[The just will never more be forgotten]

—REV. CHARLES WILLIAM COLSON (1770-1816)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

Otherwise, the epitaphs of the Lutherans and German Reformed are virtually the same as those of the Presbyterians. This Reformed one is Biblical and reserved:

This sickness is not
unto death but for the glory
of God that the Son of God
might be glorified thereby.

—PETER STOYER (1824-1887)
REFORMED CEMETERY

51 Russell J. Ferguson, "A Cultural Oasis in Western Pennsylvania," *WPHM* 19 (Dec. 1936): 274.

The Lutherans, though the milder of the two groups, could still be equally grim in their epitaphs:

My body sure did die
To death I fell a prey
Now in the silent grave I lie,
Returning to my *clay*.

—JACOB BROBST (1796-1835)
PEIFFER CEMETERY

Again, as with the Methodists and the United Brethren, there may be some minor differences, but in general, the epitaphs of both the German Reformed and Lutherans resemble those of the Presbyterians in message, source, and tone.

Unitarians

In the Protestant tradition, but with fundamental differences, were the Unitarians. Their religion was an intellectual one and was considered very liberal in its day. The Unitarians discarded the Calvinistic ideas of the depravity of man and predestination and used rationalism and textual criticism of the Bible. Though they remained a very Biblically-based religion throughout the nineteenth century, they did not emphasize a specific afterlife but stressed good works and social concerns in the present. Their ministers were highly educated in the Calvinist tradition, since Unitarianism had begun as a liberal movement in the Calvinistic churches of New England. Unitarians were never numerous and had only one church in the county but were important because many of the upper class of Meadville were members.

An example of their Biblical base and Calvinist background is the epitaph of Frances Shippen Huidekoper:

Her children arise up
And call her blessed.

—FRANCES S. HUIDEKOPER (1818-1897)
UNITARIAN CHURCH

This quotation is the same one used in the epitaph of Frances Pollock, one of the Covenanter Presbyterians, the strictest of Calvinists. The epitaph is reserved like a Calvinist one, but it is not admonitory and shows a tendency towards eulogy that the Calvinists long resisted.

Since the Unitarians believed man was not wicked and stressed doing good, it is natural that praise of worldly attributes and accomplishments appears in their epitaphs, something Calvinists rarely included in theirs:

Treasurer of the Meadville Theological School
A Man of Fearless Rectitude
Sensitive Chivalrous Upright

—EDGAR HUIDEKOPER (1812-1862)
UNITARIAN CHURCH

A final example combines both a Biblical quotation and the praise of worldly attainment:

Vigorous of Nature
Loving Righteousness
Ready to Every Good Work
Surely my Judgement is with the Lord
and my Work is with my God.

—ELIZABETH G. HUIDEKOPER (1819-1908)
UNITARIAN CHURCH

Again the careful choice of a Biblical quotation and a sophisticated eulogy are reminiscent of Calvinistic epitaphs but there the similarity ends. There is no mention of death or exhortation to prepare for it. The tone and message are different; the epitaph is a eulogy of the deceased, and even the quotation refers to good works, thus making it distinctively different from Presbyterian epitaphs.

Roman Catholics

The last major religious group in the county was the Roman Catholic, which embraced the French, Italian, and Polish, besides English and German elements of the population. In tone and dogma, the Catholic religion is fundamentally different from Protestant denominations. Their services then were formal and in Latin, and the congregation participated by repeating memorized responses at the correct times. The emphasis was on performance of ritual, rather than on conversion. There was no need to preach dogmatic sermons, since Catholic dogma is not deduced from scripture as in Protestant churches but comes from church tradition. As beliefs thus shifted, most epitaphs began to resemble those epitaphs which had characterized only the Methodists earlier in the century.

Catholic epitaphs, though comparatively scarce, are very simple and often repetitive. Like their services, their epitaphs are formal, seemingly repeated ritualistically as an expected response. Their educational level was not generally high, and this probably contributed to their epitaphs' uncomplicated nature. For example, there are endless examples of this epitaph:

O Herr! lass ihn ruhen
in Frieden
[Oh Lord! let him rest
in peace]

—ANTON ALBAUGH (1844-1867)
ST. AGATHA'S CEMETERY

It occurs in all languages, too. In a Protestant and English nation, foreigners and Catholics were often suspect, so those bearing this double stigma formed very tightly closed communities and began to use English only very late.

Another common theme is a request for prayers for the dead, since Catholics, unlike Protestants, believe they are helpful to the deceased. These requests, too, are infinitely repeated and even included by altering a familiar Protestant epitaph:

My —s friends as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now so you must be
Remember death and pray for me.
A few short years on earth he spent
Till God for him an angel sent
Then our dear Brother closed his eyes
To wake to glory beyond the skies.
May he rest in peace. Amen

—JOHN HERRING (1859-1873)
ST. PHILIP'S CEMETERY

Note also that the prayer for peace is thrown in as if it were a necessity, although it bears no relation to the rest of the epitaph.

Another belief peculiar to Roman Catholics, and often mentioned in their epitaphs, is the cult of the Virgin Mary:

This was a pure and sinless child
A child of Mary undefiled.

—MARY DOUBLE (1808-1816)
IMMACULATE CEMETERY (Rome Twp.)

Their Latin epitaphs are catch phrases, similar to phrases used in the Catholic mass, rather than a full eulogy :

In solo Deo salus
[There is well-being only in God.]

—GEORGE CUSTY (1871-1884)
ST. BRIGID'S CEMETERY

A few Catholic epitaphs lack these distinguishing touches and resemble those of their Protestant neighbors, but these are found only very occasionally :

Though early called away
By him who being gave
Enshrined in many hearts
Long shall thy memory live

—MARY ANN MAGIRL (1847-1854)
ST. JAMES CEMETERY

Spiritualists

A final sect which has distinguishable epitaphs is the Spiritualist. Spiritualism was a nineteenth-century fad religion. They did not believe in death but rather that one passes from earth to the spirit world, where he continues to exist and can still communicate with the living. Though there was only one Spiritualist church in Crawford County, their adherents were widely scattered. Only two epitaphs are documented as Spiritualist, but there are others that seem suspiciously close. As one can see, there is no death, just "transition" from one world to another, so there is no occasion for grief :

Our Mother
We mourn not her happy transition
From earth to spirit life.

—PHYLLIDA GASTON (1807-1878)
BARBER CEMETERY

Others

The preceding are not all the religions of Crawford County ; there were a number of others, some influential and some not. Unfortunately, none of these have distinguishable epitaphs, so it is impossible to generalize about these other religions. There are some that have left no epitaphs: the Amish and the Quakers. Others have left epitaphs, but too few from which to note any identifying character-

istics. These include the Jewish, Disciples of Christ, Adventists, Menonites, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalians, and Universalists.

* * *

Now that these broad outlines of religion have been sketched, a few qualifications must be added. First of all, as generalizations, the outlines above will not be accurate in every case, though they ought to provide fairly accurate rules of thumb for identifying epitaphs by religion. More importantly, it must be kept in mind that there are variations through time within the epitaphs of each denomination, reflecting general religious trends. By 1890, though still strong, the hold of religion on people's minds had begun to wane. Religion itself was not really lost, but the denominational differences and consciousness began to blur. Gone were the days of bitter denunciation of the beliefs of other sects. The Calvinists dropped their doctrines of election and predestination (the Calvinistic Baptists gradually and the Presbyterians in 1906) and allowed music in their services. Most other churches gave in to popular demand as well, and Protestantism as a whole came to hold approximately the same beliefs as the Methodists. In 1890, Francis Waid, a devout Methodist, often came to Meadville and attended the Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopal, Baptist, and even Unitarian churches, and frequently expressed hearty approval of each sermon he heard. Such a thing would not have been possible even forty years before.

This decay of the independence of each religion was a significant cause of the decline of epitaph literature itself. Since most epitaphs were sincere statements of religious faith, it is not surprising that, as denominations became more alike, epitaphs no longer held the importance they formerly did. They were a reminder of strong faith that was geared mainly to the mentality and society of the nineteenth century and not, necessarily, to that of the twentieth.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

Though religion is the major factor affecting epitaph writing, there are also secular influences which are important in determining epitaph content and style. Of these worldly influences, most seem related to differences of social class, reflecting both the opportunities (and limitations of opportunities) available to different classes, as well as the variety of general conditions under which different groups lived. Unfortunately, epitaph writing does not cross all class lines simply

because carving an epitaph was expensive, and most of the lower classes could not afford such an extravagance. In spite of this fact that epitaphs do not reflect a complete cross section of society, however, clear contrasts still do exist between the middle and upper classes at least, who have left a prolific number of examples.

Prior to the industrialization which began around the time of the Civil War, land and education served as the main determinants of class. Thus, at the top of the social ladder were the landed gentry and the educated professionals, mainly doctors and lawyers.⁵² Due to their status and security, their move to the frontier had been certainly less taxing than it had been for the struggling pioneers. While the latter tended to lose their religion in the fight for survival, the elite kept their traditions, here mainly Presbyterian.⁵³ They started an academy early, in 1807, and Allegheny College in 1815. Even in 1816, Timothy Alden, president of Allegheny and epitaph collector himself,⁵⁴ could proudly write of Meadville (where most of the upper-class people lived), "Of gentlemen of liberal education there is an uncommon proportion, considering the population of the place and comparing it with most others equally new."⁵⁵ Such a development can be traced primarily to Presbyterian influence, and Meadville seemed to rapidly become a widely recognized cultural center.⁵⁶

Though Presbyterianism remained strong in the upper classes, some did become estranged from its theology. They did not, however, renege on their belief in the necessity of education, so most of the elite who left the Presbyterian Church went not to the more emotional religions but to the Unitarian Church. The Unitarians, founded and maintained by the "devoted earnestness and material support" of the wealthiest family in the community,⁵⁷ were as equally demanding intellectually as the Presbyterians and were the founders of the Meadville Theological School in 1844, a noted institution which moved to Chicago in 1926.

The upper classes could well afford epitaphs, and although not all

52 Solon J. and Elizabeth Hawthorne Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, 1939), 349.

53 Ibid., 133.

54 He was the author of a collection of epitaphs entitled *Collection of American Epitaphs and Inscriptions with Occasional Notes* (Vol. 1, New York: Whiting & Watson, 1812; Vols. 2-5, New York: n.p., 1814).

55 Timothy Alden, "Notes on Meadville," *Alleghany Magazine* (June-Nov. 1817), 1: 12, 295.

56 See Russell Ferguson, 269-80.

57 Wilbur, 4. The family was that of Harm Jan Huidekoper, local agent of the Holland Land Company.

had them, those that did give further evidence of a higher level of education and are sophisticated examples of this form of literature at its best. In addition to being more literarily significant, the epitaphs of the upper classes also reflect the comforts of a higher social position. In spite of the anti-eulogy tradition of the Presbyterians, for example, there are several examples of long eulogies, suggesting at least some tie with more worldly things. Moreover, most of the epitaphs of this class lack the description of the grimness of life, which was widespread in the epitaphs of the less fortunate. Four examples which illustrate the qualities of the upper-class epitaph follow :

Faithful in the discharge of those domestic duties
 which constitute the real ornament
 of her sex
 Pious in the adoration of her
 Redeemer
 And charitable in the true spirit
 of his holy religion
 Her faith strengthened her in the
 Assurance of a happy
 Immortality
 Endeared to her relatives
 She lived respected
 And died regretted

—CATHARINE HERRIOT (1783-1808)
 GREENDALE CEMETERY

To guileless innocence death has no Terrors
 Through the passage from a Night of woe
 To a bright day of everlasting bliss.

—SARAH COLHOON HASLET (1806-1810)
 GREENDALE CEMETERY

To soundest prudence, life's unerring guide,
 To love sincere, religion void of pride;
 To friendship perfect in female mind,
 Which I can never home again to find,
 To mirth the balm of care from light airs free
 To steadfast truth, unweried industry,
 To every charm & grace comprized in you
 Companion, Friend, a long & last adieu.

—SUSSANNA HILL (1799-1821)
 GREENDALE CEMETERY

In memory of the domestick worth and professional merit of Nathan Tyler Attorney at Law

Oh death, all eloquent! you only prove
what dust we doat on, when it is man
we love. For this corruptible must put
on incorruption, and this mortal must
put on Immortality.

—ATTY. NATHAN TYLER (1803-1833)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

Epitaphs of the same elegance are scarcer in rural areas, but there are some which also show the same positive correlation between the educational level, religion, and the sophistication of the epitaph:

Born in Ireland in 1836
Migrated to her Brother in 1851
Graduated At Westminster in 1860
Married in April 1862
Died Oct. 6, 1865
Among her papers was found the
following written the day she
graduated with college honors
"Be it mine to raise the lowly
to befriend the friendless to
remember the forgotten to restore
the caring to dry the tears of the
mourners or mingle my tears with theirs."
The above sentence tells the daily history of
her meek and gentle life.

—ELLEN McKEE GAMBLE (1836-1865)
SOUTH SHENANGO CEMETERY

Epitaph writing was hardly confined to the upper classes, however, and as it crossed into the middle classes, the tone and literary sophistication of the writing also shifts. Some of the differences can be attributed, of course, to differences in religion; though all the major religions crossed class lines, those beneath the elite usually preferred the more emotional religions, such as Methodism. But the epitaphs also change, because these people were not as highly educated as the elite class and, moreover, were much more affected by the facts of life of their existence than those more financially independent.

In terms of educational level, first, there are several vital facts. Although people prior to the twentieth century were generally not highly educated, they were still not totally uneducated either. This is clearly important for the survival of epitaph writing: if people had been illiterate, they could not even read epitaphs, much less write them.

Indeed, most people did go to school. In fact, by 1861, 67 percent of the population attended, and this rose to 82 percent in 1880.⁵⁸ Though minimal in the early days, education was accepted, except by a few, and the level and quality of that education continued to improve throughout the century. During the heyday of the epitaphs, though, this improvement is not as noticeable, since most of the people who died then had been educated in the earlier days of public schools. Their level of education allowed them to write epitaphs but in a style which was more provincial than the epitaphs of the elite. To quote only two:

Rest for the toiling hand
Rest for the anxious brow
Rest for the weary way sore feet
Rest from all labors now.

—LOUESSA MARKER (1813-1886)
BLOOMING VALLEY CEMETERY

Sleep on dear son take thy rest
God took you when he seen best

—JOHN WILLIAM VICKERS (1849-1870)
ADSIT CEMETERY

As well as not being as highly educated as the upper classes, those beneath the elite were also much more tied to the realities of existence. Pioneer life was hard; working from dawn till dusk every day, and the Sabbath was a necessity just to stay alive. Epitaphs illustrate this dramatically, since people often viewed the afterlife as a release from this suffering, as the following two examples illustrate:

Mother thou hast gone and left us
Gone and left us all in tears
Gone from deep and long suffering
Gone from pain the most distressing.

—FLORENCE HUTCHISON (1810-1892)
HUTCHISON CEMETERY

Dear little one thy pains are ended
Thou hast found a better home
Thy songs are now with angels blest
Where no death nor sorrows come.

—LESTER SALONAS BACKLEY (1850-1853)
SOUTHSIDE CEMETERY

58 John W. Ray, *A History of Western Pennsylvania* (published by the author, 1941), 322.

Another important influence affecting the tone and content of the epitaphs of all classes was that of family ties. Often several generations lived and worked together, and in times of hardship, bonds probably were even closer. In spite of the faith in an afterlife these families may have professed, many epitaphs reveal the bitterness that has resulted from a family tie that has been broken:

In deaths cold arms lies sleeping here
A tender parent, a companion dear
In love she lived, in peace she died
Her life was asked, but was denied.

—MELISSA G. CHAFFEE (1844-1881)
MT. HOPE CEMETERY

One by one earth's ties are broken
As we see our love decay
And the hopes so fondly cherished
Brighten but to pass away.

—REUBEN T. CUTSHALL (1863-1890)
PLEASANT CEMETERY

With the Civil War and subsequent industrial revolution came social upheaval and a weakening of the foundations of agricultural social organization. Education improved, and more people could hope to improve their status. Industrialization brought the most spectacular social change, though. In Crawford County, Titusville rose to national prominence with the drilling of the first oil well there in 1859 and the oil boom it triggered. With industrial prosperity came a new class: the self-made men who arose to join the professionals and the wealthy landowners as the influential of the community — in a society now based on money rather than on land.

The impact this dramatic social change had on epitaph writing is clear. Before the Civil War, references to worldly things like occupation were scarce. Usually they were straightforward, such as the deceased being a minister for a certain number of years:

Rev. Daniel McLean Died June 3rd 1855
in the 84th year of his age,
& the 56th year of his ministry, having been pastor
of the associate congregation of Shenango 54 years

—S. SHENANGO CEMETERY

Only a few formed their entire epitaph around their occupation, and then it was in a religious context. This one was a sailor:

[anchor with word "Hope"]
 How sweet to stand when tempest tear the
 Main on the firm cliff and mark the
 Seamans toil not that anothers danger
 Soothes the soul, but from
 Such toil how sweet
 to feel secure.

—BENJAMIN WHEATTALL (1815-1845)
 MAPLE GROVE CEMETERY

With industrialization, however, a new style of eulogy arose, which praised the self-made man for his own worth and made little or no mention of the afterlife. The epitome of this type of epitaph is that of Colonel Drake, who discovered oil at Titusville:

Colonel E. L. Drake
 Born at Greenville, N.Y. Mch. 29 MDCCCXIX
 Died at Bethlehem, Pa. Nov. 8 MDCCCLXXX
 Founder of the Petroleum Industry
 The friend of Man
 Called by Circumstances
 To the Solution of a great mining Problem
 He triumphantly vindicated American skill
 And near this Spot
 Laid the Foundation of an Industry
 That has Enriched the State
 Benefited Mankind
 Stimulated the Mechanical Arts
 Enlarged the Pharmacopoeia
 And has attained world proportions
 He sought for himself
 Not Wealth nor Social Distinction
 Content to let others follow where he led
 At the Threshold of his Fame he retired
 To end his days in quieter pursuits
 His highest ambition
 Was the Successful Accomplishment of his Task
 His noble Victory the Conquest of the Rock
 Bequeathing to Posterity
 The fruits of his labor and industry
 His last days
 Oppressed by ills — to want no stranger
 He died in comparative obscurity
 This Monument is erected by
 Henry H. Rogers
 In grateful Recognition and Remembrance
 His remains were removed from Bethlehem, Pa.

to this spot Sept. 2, 1902

—EDWIN L. & LAURA DOWD DRAKE (c. 1901)
WOODLAWN CEMETERY (Titusville)
(Illustration thirty-one)

Other more contemporary examples of such epitaphs are those of the founder of a large zipper factory, the owner of an electrical store, and a high school band director, respectively :

“There is Romance
and Inspiration
in Achievement”

—LEWIS WALKER (c. 1938)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

(crest) Celeritas Virtus Fidelitas
[Swiftness, Goodness, Loyalty]
Businessman and electric utility pioneer

—HARLEY DeF. CARPENTER (1884-1960)
GREENDALE CEMETERY



—PAUL & BONITA INGLEFIELD (c. 1961)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

Another significant change in the period after the Civil War was the great new influx of immigrants. These, unlike most before the war, were mainly non-English speaking and came from southern or eastern Europe. Though there were German- and French-speaking settlers before 1860, Crawford County seems to have broadened its spectrum of nationalities considerably after then, and epitaphs can be found which are written in Swedish, Polish, Italian, Serbian, Slavic, Armenian, Hebrew, and Russian, as well as German and French. These “foreign” epitaphs, despite the language differences, are often like those of their English-speaking neighbors, as the following comparison illustrates :

L'inconsolabile marito en segno di eterna
affeto questa pietra poso

[The inconsolable husband places this
stone as a mark of eternal affection]

—D'AMICO M. GIORDANO (1895-1928)
ST. BRIGID'S CEMETERY

H. J. & Rebecca Huidekoper his disconsolate
Parents, have erected this Stone to the
memory of their departed Child.

—FREDERICK WOLTERS HUIDEKOPER (1806-1812)
GREENDALE CEMETERY

There is no mistake that the epitaphs of Crawford County are a reflection of its social, economic, and religious realities. Just as each person has a unique character, so the epitaphs of this county are likewise unique and could never be exactly duplicated elsewhere. And yet, the epitaphs and the county can hardly be divorced from the remainder of the country. True, the county is more attached to the rural life than other counties in Pennsylvania, at least, and it was more strongly Presbyterian than would be average. But, at the same time, Crawford County had the localized churches, families, and communities that were common to the era, and the society, religion, and culture adapted to the frontier and postfrontier environment. Its cemetery art may have been original works by single artists, but the trends it followed were not unlike trends in other areas. And, finally, the great diversity from period to period, graveyard to graveyard, and religion to religion, is certainly not a peculiarity of Crawford County. Go to almost any graveyard in any place and you will find the same wealth of attitudes toward life and death, man and God, that we did. In this study, we have tried to begin to place epitaphs in perspective, to sort out their complexities, and to treat them not as just another ornament but as an instructive reflection of American life. But perhaps it is time for us to stop. We have given the framework; now let the epitaphs speak for themselves.

[*To be continued*]

IN COMMEMORATION

GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

FROM

MR. JOHN G. BUCHANAN

MR. WALTER A. HEISLER

GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF

MRS. JOHN J. (ELSIE B.) HEARD

FROM

MRS. ROBERT CHRISTIE

MR. ROBERT J. DODDS, JR.

MR. WALTER A. HEISLER

REED, SMITH, SHAW & McCLAY

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IN MEMORY OF

ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

FROM

MRS. AGNES L. STARRETT

MR. C. V. STARRETT

IN MEMORY OF

JOHN W. HARPSTER

FROM

MR. C. V. STARRETT