

Bethinking of Old Orleans

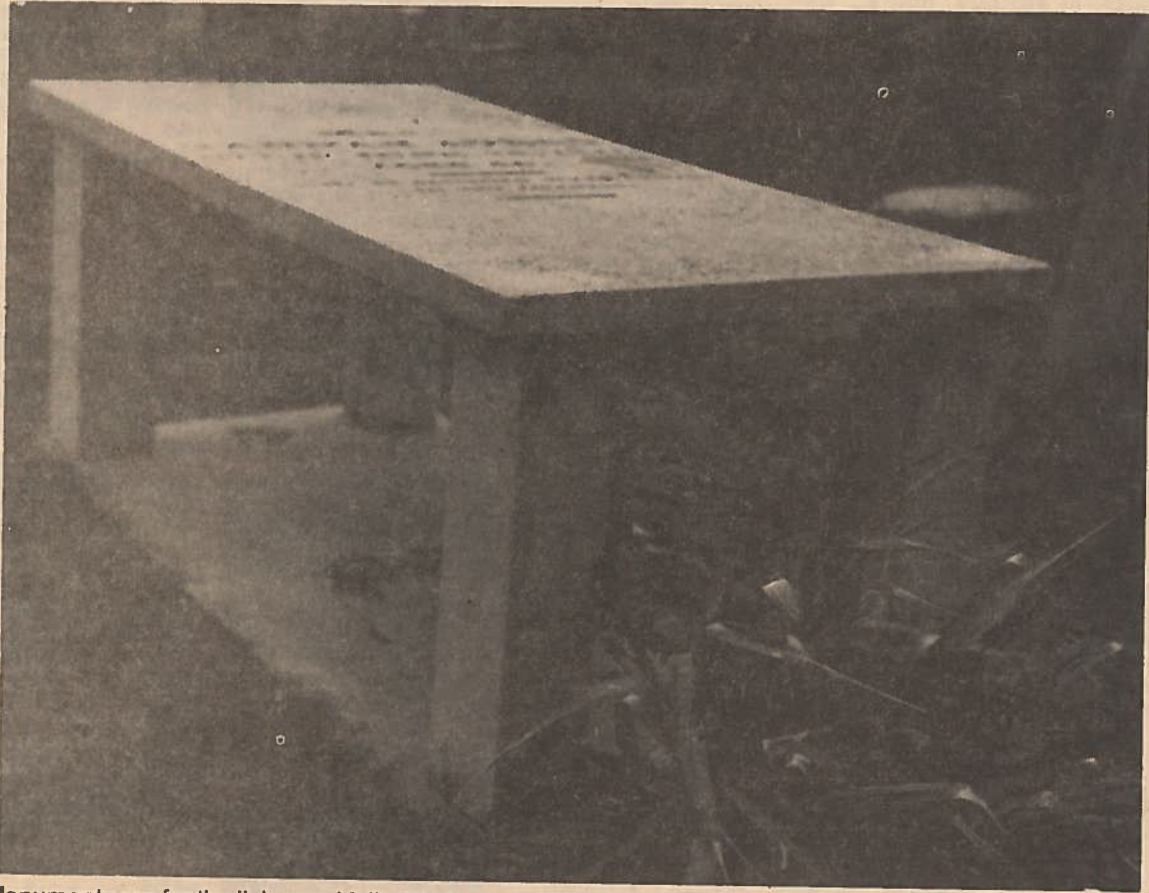
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Mt. Albion Tour Will Note CEMETERY ETIQUETTE



Monuments are for the living and fail of their purpose if they do not inspire reverence, faith and hope. An inspiring epitaph, perpetuated in stone, will carry its message down through the ages; it fulfills the true mission of a memorial.

--American Monument Association Inc.

Rain or shine, a tour of Mt. Albion Cemetery will be held on Saturday, June 1 at 2:00 p.m. beginning at the cemetery chapel located on Route 31 east of Albion. This event is being sponsored by the Friends of Mt. Albion Cemetery with yours truly leading the guided walking tour. This tour will highlight the western part of Mt. Albion and end at the tower. In October, Neil Johnson, the Village of Albion Historian and I will jointly conduct a tour of the eastern portion of the cemetery, mentioning early settlers at their gravesites.

Merrill-Grinnell Funeral Homes, Inc. have loaned for display, an antique casket and brass bier which will be on display in the cemetery chapel. A \$10.00 cash prize will be awarded to whomever first finds the designated symbol of the day.

Now let us focus on the photo contained herein which depicts a table-tomb. Monuments of this nature are often found in English and American churchyards of the Georgian period. To my knowledge, there are only two of them in Orleans County, this one at Mt. Albion and a similar one at Knowlesville. No doubt, they had their origin in the sarcophagi of antiquity, but beyond that they demand proper cemetery etiquette. You ask, how so? In effect, a monument placed like this over a grave becomes in itself a barricade. In other words, you cannot walk across, or set foot on a grave.

Years ago it was certainly considered improper and showed disrespect to walk over a gravesite. Our Puritan and Victorian ancestors were well apprised of how to behave on sacred turf. Often there was a smaller foot stone as a companion to the headstone to mark the opposite end of the grave. Hence, you knew exactly where the body was laid to rest. This brings up another point of interest. Until the mid-19th century we find that most burials were placed with the head of the body to the west and the feet to the east. This was so that with the second coming of Christ the dead would rise up to face Him who would come out of the east. From John Chapter 14, verse 3, we find: "And when I have gone and have prepared a place for

you, I will come again and take you to Myself so that where I am, you also will be."

In our photo here, we are looking at the foot or east end of the grave. The inscription on the table top denotes:

Mrs. Hannah Avery
Died June 30, 1845
Age 60

I Shall Be Satisfied when I Awake
In Thy Likeness

Certainly a fitting epitaph for one who must have believed in the words Jesus as noted above from St. John.

To continue now with graveside etiquette, I find that most old headstones have the inscriptions on them facing west. This was so you could approach the burial site, step up or kneel directly in front of the stone without being on the grave to read the information. Unfortunately, with the prevailing westerly winds in this region, we have seen many old marble headstones suffer greatly from erosion.

Finally, I would point out something else about our picture. Note the Yucca plant in the foreground, which is not an uncommon planting in old cemeteries. One reason for this is the fact that it stays green the year round. Green is the color of spring and therefore, symbolizes the triumph of spring over winter, or life over death. It means hope of the future which is why many old cemeteries frequently have evergreens and other plants which are always green. In the case of the Yucca plant, it sends up a woody stalk which has many white blossoms suggesting purity, innocence and light.

"In view of them He was transfigured:
His face shone like the sun and His
clothes became white as the light."
—Math. 17:2

More History Events

June 1-7:30 p.m. Organ Program by Wade Gidley at Cobblestone Church, in Childs.

June 2-2:30 p.m. "Meet Grover Cleveland", St. Mary's RC Church Parish Hall, 215 Eagle St., Medina.

7:30-Slide Show of Fred Holt's Photos, Part I 1925-40 at Pullman Church, Albion.

June 7-7:30 p.m.-Part II Fred Holt's Photos 1924-40, Pullman Church, Albion.