

# GRAVESTONE EPIITAPHHS

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Webster's dictionary describes epitaph as "an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there ... a brief statement commemorating or epitomizing a deceased person or something past."

Such statements were particularly popular during the 18th and 19th centuries. They were sometimes very personal, sometimes witty or even sometimes comical assessments of the deceased.

Orleans County cemeteries are not without their share of these memorial tributes. It is most likely, however, to find epitaphs on older soft marble monuments. Because of erosion, many of these loving inscriptions are now illegible.

The most typical epitaphs in our area are usually saccharin in nature, being either Biblical quotations or quasi religious statements. Readily found examples of this 19th century type are: "God is Love," "At Rest," "At Home With Jesus," "Gone Home," "Gone But Not Forgotten," "Sleeping in the Arms of Jesus," "Asleep in Jesus," "Precious in the Sight of the Lord is the Death of His Saints" and finally, this one from a child's grave, "He shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom."

legible. Here are two which are written as though the person in the grave were speaking.

The first is from the tombstone of Elijah Brown who died in 1805. His is the oldest marked grave in the county and is located at the old Brown cemetery at the Bridges. Mr. Brown seemingly speaks as follows:

"Behold and see as you pass by

As you are now so once was I  
As I am now soon you will be  
Prepare to die and follow me."

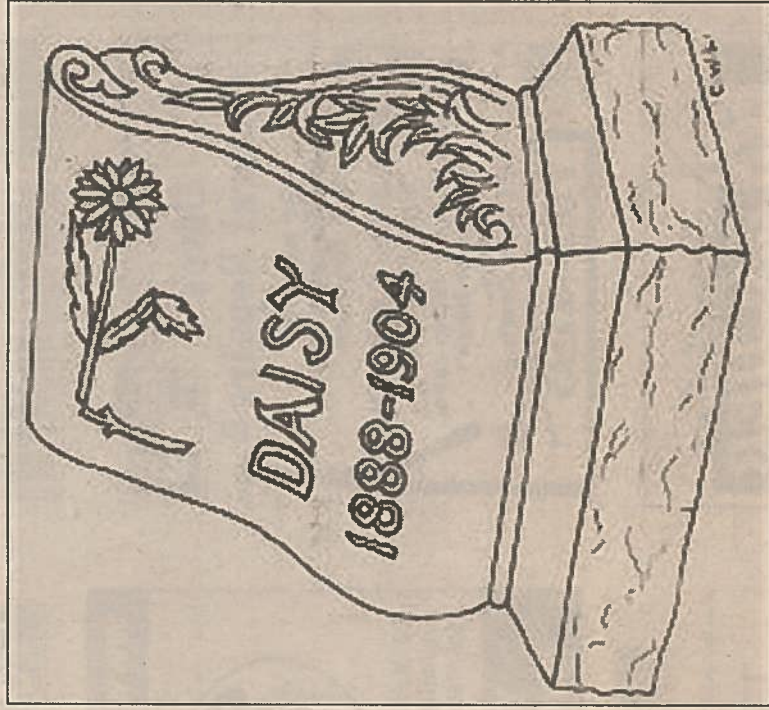
On the tombstone of Zebulon Rice who died May 11, 1884 aged 91 years is to be found this epitaph at Beechwood Cemetery: "Depart my friends dty up your tears, Here I must lie till Christ appears." Mr. Rice must have figured the second coming of Christ was going to take awhile.

Perhaps the most personalized and best epitaph to be found in our county is in Mt. Albion Cemetery. The stone contains the following information:

Juliette E. wife of Milton Dunning Daughter of J&H Wing — Died Feb. 8, 1856 ages 19 yrs. 1 mo. & 6 ds. In very small letters at the base of the monument is this epitaph:

"A weeping husband carved his wife this stone.  
A month a six days he called her his own.  
Then in her bridal robe they

through October.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Moving along from the more typical ones to ones which show more imagination, we find this epitaph on the tombstone of Emily O'Dell Ferguson 1835-1903 in West Kendall cemetery which is as follows: "Sleep Mother dear, and take thy rest. God called thee home. He thought it best." On a nearby tombstone this information and epitaph: Clarissa, wife of Stephen Jenks

died May 9, 1875 ages 73 yrs., 8 mo. And 19 da's. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor and their works do follow them."

Another monument has simply: Herman C. Chuchra 1858-1900. "He has done what he could."

It is of course, harder to find more imaginative and personalized epitaphs which are still

laid her here.  
So loved and so loving, so kind and so dear.

Her soul all devoted to Jesus before  
She spread her bright wings and to heaven did Soar."

Another personalized monument at Mt. Albion is a very small heart-shaped stone which simply states: "My Little Mother Mary J. Reed".

Perhaps some of the most imaginative statements to be found in our cemeteries are visual. How well we know that a picture is often worth a thousand words. Such a monument is pictured here. This unique and one-of-a-kind visual statement marks the grave of Daisy Bentham in Hillside Cemetery at Holley. Making use of her name and age in the monument's epitaph is an illustration of a broken daisy symbolizing a young life cut short.

Along with these kind of public statements found in local cemeteries people often had home memorials for the deceased. An exhibit entitled Design for Death, which shows various examples of Victorian Home Mourning Art, is currently on display at the Cobblestone Museum in Childs. Fall hours for this display, which is open free to the public, are from 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays now through October.