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'Blessed Are They That Mourn': Expressions of Grief in South Central Kentucky, 1870-1910

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Expressions of Grief in South Central
Kentucky, 1870-1910

by Sue Lynn Stone

During the nineteenth century, Americans were gradually changing their funeral and burial practices in an effort to soften death's harshness. In large northern communities, the professionalization of undertaking services and the opening of community cemeteries on the outskirts of population centers occurred prior to the Civil War.[1] But in rural areas such as south central Kentucky, changes in burial customs transpired primarily between 1870 and 1910. While adapting the etiquette described in period literature, south central Kentuckians sought to establish expressions of grief which would testify to their traditional values of family, community, and religion and enable them to survive the frequent losses of loved ones.

Between 1870 and 1910, south central Kentucky was a predominantly agrarian area with developing industries in its county seats. As was common throughout the United States, area residents frequently experienced the loss of friends and loved ones by death. In 1910, the Kentucky State Board of Health recorded the following statistics on death's frequency in the area:[2]

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[1]For a description of one northern community's burial customs, see Stephen J. Vicchio, "Baltimore's Burial Practices, Mortuary Art and Notions of Grief and Bereavement, 1780-1900," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 81 (1986): 134-48. A good monograph on nineteenth-century American funeral customs is James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia, 1980).

[2]"Biennial Report, 1910 and 1911," *Bulletin of the State Board of Health* (Frankfort, 1912), II, 190-92, 199, 208-9, 235-36, 244-45, 258-59, 263-64. The period 1870-1910 was chosen for examination because it was a period of transition to the utilization of professional services and to avoid wartime grief.
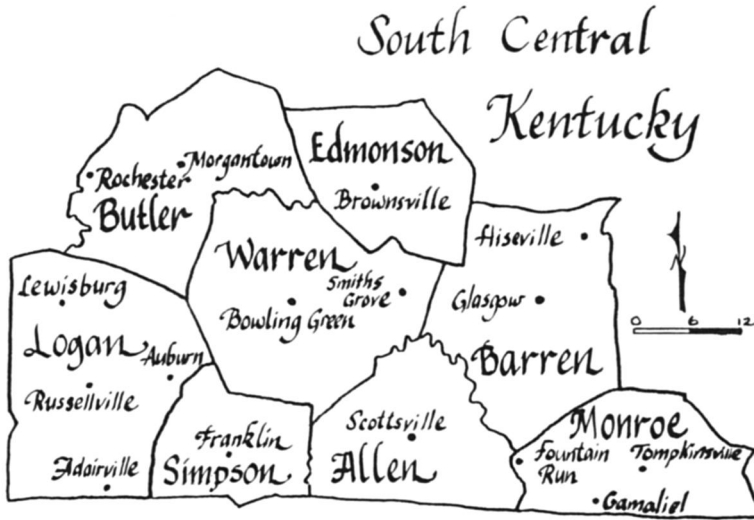
South Central Kentucky Counties	Mid-Year Population Estimated (1910-11)	Total Deaths (Stillborns Excluded)	Total Deaths Due to Prevent- able Diseases per 100
Allen	14,908	206	47.1
Barren	25,550	343	43.0
Butler	15,795	138	37.0
Edmonson	10,517	87	29.1
Logan	24,854	342	44.7
Monroe	13,736	183	47.0
Simpson	11,441	154	47.4
Warren	30,653	432	42.1

Known causes of death included consumption (tuberculosis), pneumonia, typhoid fever, cholera, and yellow fever. But a large percentage of the deaths were not diagnosed. The *Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health in Kentucky, 1879* enumerated the following numbers of unknown causes of death that year among the white population in south central Kentucky: Allen County, 14 of 40; Barren County, 19 of 118; Butler County, 26 of 106; Edmonson County, 21 of 58; Logan County, 14 of 85; Monroe County, 11 of 55; Simpson County, 7 of 41; and Warren County, 40 of 206.[3]

Children's mortality rates were particularly high. The 1880 census revealed that one of every four south central Kentuckians who died in the census year was under the age of five.[4] On November 24, 1874, George Browder, a Logan County Methodist minister, while writing in his journal that four of John Holsen's children had died of diptheria within six weeks, commented: "It was sad to see 4 little fresh graves side-by-side & the only surviv-

[3]*Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health in Kentucky, 1879* (Frankfort, 1880), II, 2, 5-6, 16, 29, 63, 71, 90, 97; Department of Interior, Office of the Census, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States. . . From the Original Returns of the Ninth Census: 1870*, 3 vols. (Washington, 1872), 2, pt. 1:80-83; *ibid., Tenth Census of the United States: 1880*, 22 vols. (Washington, 1883-88), 11, pt. 1A: 186-201; *ibid., Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890. Report on Vital and Social Statistics*, 25 vols. (Washington, 1894-96), 22, pt. 3: 154-61; *ibid., Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900. Vital Statistics*, 10 vols. (Washington, 1901-02), 4, pt. 2: 54-59; "Biennial Report, 1910 and 1911," *Bulletin of the State Board of Health*. Additional information on the causes of death in Warren County can be found in the Warren County, Kentucky, Burial Permits, 1877-1913, Manuscript Division, Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University (hereafter cited as MSS-KyL).

[4]*Tenth Census of the United States: 1880*, 12, pt. 2A: 60-65.

South Central Kentucky

A hand-drawn map of South Central Kentucky showing counties and towns: Butler (Rochester, Morgantown), Edmonson (Brownsville), Warren (Smiths Grove, Bowling Green), Hiseville, Glasgow, Barren, Logan (Lewisburg, Auburn, Russellville), Simpson (Adairville, Franklin), Allen (Scottsville), Monroe (Fountain Run, Tompkinsville, Gamaliel)

ing child at home sick.''[5] The percentage of children's tombstones in area graveyards provides the most graphic evidence of death's frequency among the young.

With death so common and its causes so often unknown, area residents needed significant ways to express their grief in order to accept the omnipresence of death. Most expressions were firmly based in religious belief. As historian Anne Firor Scott has stated:

> There is little doubt that religious faith served an important function at a time when many children and adults died for no apparent reason. A firm belief that death was a manifestation of God's will made it easier to bear what otherwise would have been an intolerable burden.[6]

A condolence letter received by John E. Younglove of Bowling Green following the death of a family member confirms Scott's conclusion: ''Your faithful religious nature, though, will sustain you, I know, through this as it has so bravely done in the past. . . .''[7]

[5]George Browder Journal, November 24, 1874, Browder Collection, MSS-KyL. This manuscript is a photocopy of the original volumes in the possession of the Browder family, Olmstead, Logan County, Ky.

[6]Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970), 13.

[7]Lilly Hughes Lucas to John E. Younglove, May 4, 1897, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, MSS-KyL. Mrs. Lucas had just learned of Younglove's wife's infirmity. This news, added to the number of recent family deaths, had prompted the letter.

Through the preaching of sermons and the singing of hymns, south central Kentuckians affirmed that their Christian faith could equip them to withstand bereavements. The songbooks used in the area had topical sections on death, burial, and Heaven. Denominational hymnals shared common themes of the calm acceptance of death and the reunion with loved ones in Heaven.[8] These motifs are echoed in the descriptions of death experiences which area residents recorded in correspondence, journals, and obituaries. Often elaborately worded, the accounts emphasized the persons in attendance, the actions which took place, and the last words of the dying person.

The description of death contained in the obituary of Mrs. John Houchen of Turnhole on Green River, Edmonson County, stated: "She died in perfect submission to her Maker's will, leaving evidence of her happy welcome 'beyond the river'. . . ."[9] John Cooney Cosby wrote an account of a death at his Allen Springs, Allen County, home: ". . . how thrilling and unearthly must that song have binn [sic] when she was fully over and met both her Grandmas in the elecian [sic] field of light and glory."[10] Accounts of sudden deaths could only detail the last events of the person's life; certainly no obituaries speculated on the eternal judgment received by hardened sinners.

After stating how individuals made every effort to be present at the death of a loved one, the writer of "the Last Words of the Dying" stressed the emphasis which late Victorians placed on the deceased's final words: "Yes, dying words are those most sought after and cherished by the human heart. Amid all the cares and disappointments that may surround us in life, we never can forget the last faint whisperings of the dying."[11]

Physical necessities, community expectations, and etiquette

[8]For a detailed description of the importance of hymns and consolation literature in late nineteenth-century society, see Ann Douglas, "Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1880," in David E. Stannard, Death in America (Philadelphia, 1975), 49-68; Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York, 1977), 200-226, 234.

[9]Glasgow Weekly Times, March 28, 1878.

[10]John Cooney Cosby to Matilda P. Smock, March 25, 1876, John Cooney Cosby Collection, MSS-KyL.

[11]Glasgow Weekly Times, March 9, 1876. For an account of a brother's rushing to a deathbed, see Graham Wilkes to Essie Alexander, September 23, 1899, Alexander Family Papers, MSS-KyL.

impelled south central Kentuckians to follow basic rituals in preparation for the burial of a loved one. Once death occurred, a family member or friend would make the necessary arrangements. Acting as the family's messenger, he or she would contact the coffin maker, the printer, the minister, and any distant relatives by telegraph. In the late 1800s, area undertakers were increasing the types of services they provided to bereaved families. In a pattern common throughout the profession, most local men had begun undertaking as a part of a cabinet-making/furniture business or a livery stable.[12] Even late in the nineteenth century, the majority only assumed the duties of building the coffin (usually based on measurements of the body's length and width delivered by the messenger), bringing the coffin to the home on the day of the funeral, placing the body in the coffin for final viewing, closing the coffin, and conveying it to the site of burial in a horse-drawn spring wagon or hearse.[13]

Of primary importance was the type of receptacle into which the body would be placed. The account books of Gerard Undertaking Establishment of Bowling Green document the increasing attention given to the appearance of the casket. In the early 1870s, the use of cloth-covered coffins, ornamented caskets, and metallic burial cases increased steadily; before the turn of the century, many individuals chose white, black cloth-draped, "plush," or metal-lined caskets.[14] The importance placed on these types

[12]A listing of the known undertakers in south central Kentucky between 1870 and 1910 is found in Sue Lynn Stone Arnold, "Expressions of Grief in South Central Kentucky, 1870-1910" (Master's thesis, Western Kentucky University, 1983).

[13]Dwight C. Smith, "History of Horse Drawn Hearse," Artifact Files, Kentucky Museum, Western Kentucky University; Martha Alma Yokley Emberton, daughter of Tompkinsville undertaker John W. Yokley, Jr., to author, March 25, 1983; author's interview with John Baker, Tompkinsville funeral director, February 19, 1983; Farrell, *Inventing American Death*, 147-48; William McClellan, *That Last Boat in the Evening: A Profile of Rochester, Skilesville and the Mud River Country* (n.p., 1976), 58. The interviews utilized by this study are basically of two source types: first, eyewitness accounts by persons who lived in the period; and second, indirect primary accounts by descendants who recounted the information they were told directly.

[14]"John C. Gerard Account Book, vol. 2, 1856-78"; "John C. Gerard Account Book, vol. 3, 1869-78"; "Frank C. Gerard & Brother Account Book, 1879-90"; "Gerard and Gerard Account Book, 1908-23," Gerard Collection, MSS-KyL. Between 1870 and 1910, the Gerard Undertaking Establishment bore various company names. For clarity, the title "Gerard Undertaking Establishment" or simply the "Gerards" will be used throughout this article. These account books are photocopies of the originals in possession of Gerard-Bradley Funeral Chapel, Bowling Green.

of caskets plainly indicates the growing concern for the preser-
vation of the body and the beautification of the receptacle in
which the loved one would be interred. The change in the recep-
tacle's name from "coffin" (that is, a box in which a corpse would
be buried) to "casket" (a chest or box in which jewels or some-
thing precious is kept) reflected the Victorians' changing attitude
toward death.[15]

In the larger communities, undertakers offered much more
than the casket. Between 1870 and 1910, the Gerard Undertak-
ing Establishment added to its services, including funeral notices
(beginning in 1870), burial shrouds or clothing (1876), hacks
(1882), embalming (1883), pall bearers' wagons (1887), flowers
(1888), telegrams (1889), pall bearers' gloves (1889), and grave
linings (1909).[16] In Glasgow, Hatcher and Willoughby Furniture
Dealers and Undertakers' records listed quite similar services. Fif-
teen years before telegrams were noted in the Gerard accounts,
James H. Dashwood of Franklin advertised the sending of tele-
grams in the local newspaper.[17] Thus, when these undertakers
were contracted, the person making the necessary arrangements
might have fulfilled all of his responsibilities.

Provided the undertaker did not assume this duty, the fam-
ily's messenger would notify relatives within traveling distance
by sending telegrams and contact family members and friends
by hand-delivering funeral invitations. Printed at a local news-
paper office, the funeral invitation was a small piece of fine note
paper, single folded lengthwise to produce a card of approxi-
mately 4½ " x 7 " or 5 " x 8 ". Most notes were bordered by a
quarter-inch of black ink. Where printing services were not
available, a hand-written invitation explaining the location, time,
and date of the service, the minister presiding, and the place of
interment could be taken from home to home or the informa-
tion could be delivered verbally. Etiquette manuals of the period

[15]Farrell, *Inventing American Death*, 169, 171-72; Glen William Davidson, "Basic
Images of Death in America: An Historical Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate
School and University Center, 1964), 158. For additional information on this changing
attitude and its expression in the Gerard Account Books, see Sue Lynn Stone Arnold,
"The Gerard Undertaking Establishment, 1870-1910," unpublished paper in Stone Col-
lection, MSS-KyL.

[16]Gerard Account Books, Gerard Collection.

[17]Hatcher & Willoughby, "Book A: 1900-1910" and "Book B: 1910-," in posses-
sion of Hatcher and Saddler Funeral Home, Glasgow; Franklin *Patriot*, June 20, 1874.

condemned the failure to attend a funeral to which a person had been invited as a breach of decorum.[18]

The messenger visited the minister to confirm his availability to perform the service and to allow him adequate time to prepare for the funeral. In many deathbed accounts, the dying individual gave the minister or another individual in attendance instructions for his funeral, including his choice of hymns and the scriptural text for the sermon.

In preparing the body for viewing and burial, one or more close friends or relatives of the same sex as the deceased washed and dressed the body, laid it on a cooling board (often improvised by use of a plank and two chairs) in order to lower the body's temperature, and watched for any signs of life. Two tests commonly administered to insure that death had occurred were holding a mirror to the patient's nostrils or placing a feather on one nostril to check for breathing. In Barren County, Hubert Houchens recalled that a silver watch was placed under the body's back for a short period of time; if the watch was warm or moist when removed, the individual was still alive.[19]

Until rigor mortis set in, a cloth was tied around the deceased's head to close the mouth, and coins were placed on the eyes to hold them closed. To delay the decay of the corpse prior to burial, a cloth containing camphor often was used to preserve the face and a saucer of salt was set on the chest; during extremely hot summers, the body could be placed on ice. Even

[18]John H. Young, *Our Deportment or the Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society* (Detroit, 1884), 297. Etiquette manuals used in completing this study are known to have been in the possession of south central Kentuckians during the period from 1870 to 1910. Collections of funeral invitations are located at the Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University; Simpson County Historical Society Ephemera File, Goodnight Memorial Library, Franklin; and in the private collections of John W. Clark and Mrs. Jack Stengill, Russellville; Tom Moody and Mrs. Paul Garrett, Franklin; and Mildred Collier, Bowling Green. A few south central Kentucky funeral invitations have been reproduced in county histories. See Mrs. James Beach, Sr., and James Henry Snider, *Franklin and Simpson County: A Picture of Progress, 1819-1975* (Tompkinsville, Ky., 1976), 945; Cecil E. Goode and Woodford L. Gardner, Jr., eds., *Barren County Heritage: A Pictorial History of Barren County, Kentucky* (Bowling Green, 1980), 16. No funeral invitations have been located from Allen, Butler, Edmonson, or Monroe counties, possibly due to the lack of printers and newspapers.

[19]Author's interviews with Dwight C. Smith, July 27, 1983; Ronnie D. Bryant (Monroe County native), June 20, 1983; and Hubert Houchens (Barren County native), July 29, 1983. Extant records indicate very few cases of embalming in south central Kentucky prior to 1910.

with these precautions taken, burial was necessary within forty-eight hours.

Friends and neighbors began visitation as soon as preparations were complete. In tribute to the deceased, they brought flowers gathered from their gardens or purchased from florists. Victorian literature deemed hyacinths, roses, sweet peas, and snowballs among the flowers which symbolized sympathy and death. A knowledge of these connotations might influence which in-season flowers that friends placed in a vase, jar, or earthen crock and brought to the house of bereavement.[20] In order to watch the body for life signs and to protect it from disturbance by cats or rodents, community members usually "sat up" with the deceased until time for the burial. While the participants showed their love and respect by their presence, the wake was also a social gathering for the community.

The funeral took place at the home of the deceased or a relative, at the church, or, in later years, at the undertaker's funeral parlor. Services typically consisted of the singing of hymns, a eulogy, the reading of scripture, and a sermon. George Browder's funeral sermons fell into two categories: first, sermons of comfort and instruction (Lamentations 3:33-35; Psalms 23:4; II Samuel 2:15-23; Psalms 116:15; Luke 24:43; II Timothy 4:7); and second, sermons for the conversion of those in attendance (James 4:14; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12). The sermons of comfort and instruction used the resurrection of believers to aid the family in its acceptance of the physical separation of death, whereas the sermons of conversion were intended to bring to the unsaved a belief in Christ which would enable them to be reunited with the loved one in Heaven. Not only was the public display of emotion at funerals accepted, it was expected by minister and community alike. The Reverend Mr. Browder's journal recorded many incidents in which he felt his sermons had touched his audience deeply.[21]

The burial ceremony gave the community the opportunity to demonstrate its sense of loss and appreciation of the fallen member. In Morgantown, public offices and stores closed dur-

[20]Available sources verify very few greenhouses and florists in south central Kentucky during the period. See Arnold, "Expressions of Grief," 32-33.

[21]George Browder Journal, July 8, November 26, 1873, December 19, 1882, March 13, July 7, 1883, Browder Collection.

ing the service, while the church bells and the town fire bell tolled "to show respect for the deceased." Custom also dictated the order of the procession from the funeral site to the graveyard: ministers, flower girls (who carried the flowers to the place of interment), honorary pall bearers, active pall bearers, horse-drawn hearse bearing the deceased, family (in order of closeness), and, finally, friends. Concerning the graveside rites, retired Butler County undertaker Dwight C. Smith stated:

> The grave was usually dug by friends or neighbors, and the pall bearers were expected to fill the grave. . . . no one left the grave until it was properly filled. There was also singing and scripture reading at the grave so this made a second service usually. After the grave had been properly filled and all due respect paid to the family of the deceased, the people adjourned, or were dismissed.[22]

Fraternal orders often conducted services with their own rituals. To many area residents, the size of a funeral denoted the deceased's importance to the community.

Grief expression following the burial included several written forms. Newspapers provided a means of public expression through obituary notices, cards of thanks, and resolutions of respect. Ranging in length from one sentence in an area news section to a full column on the front page, the obituary testified to the community's loss. The writer, often a minister, physician, or close friend, usually penned inspired accounts of heavenly deathbed visions, the peace which overcame the patient, and physical details of the departure. Family members were consoled with advice such as that given in a Smiths Grove *Times* memorial to an Edmonson County woman: "Don't grieve, but do as she bid you, prepare to meet her in that bright celestial home."[23]

Many obituaries concluded with a poem. When one-year-old Carmen Dotson died in Little Bend, Butler County, in January 1906, a neighbor included these lines of poetry:

> Put away the dresses,
> That our darling used to wear,
> She will need them on earth never,
> She has climbed the golden stairs.[24]

The obituaries elicited emotional responses by their graphic depic-

[22]Smith, "History of Hearse."
[23]Smiths Grove *Times*, June [?] 1909, clipping in possession of Vivian Foe, Bowling Green.
[24]Morgantown *Green River Republican*, January 11, 1906.

tions of glorious arrivals and reunions in Heaven. In a letter to the editor of the Bowling Green *Times-Journal*, the reader of one such account stated that the obituary to four-year-old Jake Moulder

> . . . brought tears to my eyes; it carried me back forty-three years ago when the angels came to my home and took little Sarah Lizzie on their pinions to Heaven. . . . I imagine she was one of that throng to meet little Jake and welcome him home.[25]

Other common images utilized by memorialists were the coming of the death angel, the Victorian analogy of sleep, and the euphemistic expression for the death process, "passing away." Harsher images depicting death spoke of falling victim to the "dread monster," to "that fell destroyer — consumption," or to the "grim reaper." In 1875, the Glasgow *Weekly Times* personified death as having an "icy touch" which stilled lives.[26]

Along with the obituaries, area newspapers published resolutions of respect written by church organizations, fraternal orders, and professional associations. After expressing their loss and sympathy for the family, the resolutions often listed the newspapers and individuals that would receive copies of the document for publication or as a memento. Also for newspaper publication, a bereaved family could write a card of thanks to express its appreciation for the community's deeds of kindness during the illness and death of its loved one.

Letters to family and friends announcing the death, condolence letters, memorial poetry, and journal entries recorded more personal writings on grief experiences. Whenever possible, the bereaved used mourning stationery for correspondence. Bordered by a quarter-inch of black ink on envelopes and paper, mourning stationery served as a visual symbol of the correspondents' inward grief. If time and knowledge permitted, letters announcing a death detailed the length of illness and the deathbed experience. By recording "the particulars," the letters manifested the comfort south central Kentuckians found in knowledge that the person had not suffered greatly but had been expectantly awaiting his experience in the afterlife. Upon receipt

    [25]Bowling Green *Times-Journal*, October [?] 1906, clipping in possession of Lorene Cosby, Alvaton, Warren County.

    [26]Glasgow *Weekly Times*, June 18, 1874, February 25, April 4, 1875; Russellville *Ledger*, March 2, 1892; Bowling Green *Messenger*, December 21, 1910.

of a death message, the writing of a condolence letter was deemed necessary to demonstrate sympathy to the immediate family. Condolence letters not only stated a desire to share the loss and words of comfort, but also to direct the survivors to depend upon their belief in God and His ultimate wisdom. Another common theme in these communications was the use of the experience to remind family members to affirm their own salvation in order that reunion in Heaven would be possible.

Memorial poetry, both copied from literature and composed by area residents, provided another mode of expression. Whether shared with others in gift or in newspapers or kept privately in scrapbooks, these elegies and odes gave the writers and readers opportunities to explore their personal thoughts concerning the death.

For some family members, the recording of their emotions in a journal allowed an emotional release not to be found in other expressions. In their diaries, these south central Kentuckians could set down the questions, anxieties, and personal tributes which might not be deemed appropriate to voice publicly. A minister could turn to the privacy of his journal to reveal those questions which a death brought to his mind. After the death of his nine-month-old son, Franklin pastor Thomas Mitchell Goodnight wrote: "We have had a hard struggle to be able to feel right about this matter. We try to say Thy will be ours, if it be Thy will; we do not know what to say. . . ."[27] Luther Carpenter of Oakland, Warren County, meticulously chronicled his four-year-old son's illness and concluded that every possible remedy was tried to prevent his fatality.[28]

During the late Victorian era, south central Kentuckians used numerous types of mementoes to perpetuate and share the memory of their deceased loved ones, both within their homes and with other family members and friends. The most difficult Victorian expression of grief to interpret to a late twentieth-century reader is the use of mourning photography. Although George Eastman's Kodak camera invented in 1888 had made photography more accessible to the general public, most rural

[27]Thomas Mitchell Goodnight Journal, 1870 entry, Isaac Goodnight Collection, MSS-KyL.

[28]Luther Carpenter Journal, September 25, 1876, Mildred Hardcastle Collection, MSS-KyL.

Mary Myrtie (Carver) Berry posed beside the coffin of her twenty-two-year-old brother, Clarence L. Carver. "Her painful facial expression is notable; in some respects she is more the object for study than Clarence." Photograph in possession of R. Terry Houchen of Glasgow.

Kentuckians still relied on the professional photographers of the larger communities in each county and, therefore, had only a few pictures made. Mourning photographic subjects included the deceased alone, the survivors, both the deceased and the bereaved family and friends, the funeral procession, and the gravesite.

Particularly in the case of a deceased child, no visual remembrance might exist without the postmortem photograph. Nora O'Connell of Russellville wrote in her scrapbook that, after her infant brother died, "his mother always regretted having no picture of him and for years cherished a photo which she thought he resembled."[29] In 1908, three images were preserved from the funeral of twenty-two-year-old Clarence L. Carver of the Tracy community, Barren County. In the photograph of his sister with the deceased in a casket propped against the church wall, her painful facial expression is notable; in some respects she is more the object for study than Clarence. The photographer also made group portraits with the coffin: one of the family and the other including all in attendance at the funeral. In the latter, the focus of attention is not simply on the deceased in the coffin, but also on the two women kneeling at either side of him.[30]

Photographs or paintings of the deceased family member were often displayed in a place of honor within the home. For example, after the death of seven-month-old Oren Doyel of Edmonson County in 1908, his parents hung a portrait of him in their sitting room. In a few cases, these pictures were placed in the settings of family photographs so that the deceased might be included in the documentation of the family circle. Around 1900, the Wilson family near Stony Point, Allen County, included in their family photograph the portrait of a young boy who had died.[31]

Other families chose to memorialize the funeral procession

[29]Nora C. O'Connell Scrapbook, in possession of Mrs. Jack Stengill, Russellville.

[30]Author's interview with R. Terry Houchen, June 1, 1983; Mrs. Russell Houchen to author, March 30, 1987; Eva Doe Peden, *Barren County, Kentucky Cemetery Records* (Glasgow, Ky., 1976), 8; photograph of deceased with mother and photocopy of family photograph, in Houchen's possession; photocopy of entire funeral party photograph, in possession of Nancy Bush, Glasgow.

[31]Artifact Files, Kentucky Museum, Western Kentucky University; author's interview with Mary Jo Cook, August 4, 1983; Wilson photograph, in Mrs. Cook's possession. The Doyel painting has been displayed in "Growing Up Victorian," an exhibit at the Kentucky Museum, Bowling Green.

Silas Jonathan Stone, Paul Wood Stone, and their widowed mother, Josephine (Goodrum) Stone, at the gravesite of their father, the Reverend J. Wood Stone, in Fairview Cemetery, Bowling Green.

rather than to make a group portrait at the funeral. Two Monroe County photographs depict turn-of-the-century funeral processions. These pictures indicated the deceased's importance to his community by recording the identities and number of mourners present and the elaborateness of the funeral hearse.[32]

When the Reverend J. Wood Stone died in Bowling Green in 1904, his mother returned to Texas the day following the funeral. Stone's widow and two sons later posed beside Stone's monument in Fairview Cemetery for a photograph, which they sent to Emily Wood Stone so she could see the pulpit-style monument erected in her son's memory. In 1901, the photograph of the gravesite of Isaac Herschel Goodnight in Franklin's Green Lawn Cemetery documented the flowers given in his memory.[33]

[32]Lucy Albright, *Fountain Run: Yesterday and Today* (Fountain Run, Ky., [1954]), 20; Tompkinsville photograph, in possession of Ronnie D. Bryant, Lexington, Ky.

[33]Emily Wood Stone to James Clay Stone, July 5, 1904, Stone Collection; Stone monument photograph in author's collection; photograph of Isaac Herschel Goodnight's grave, Simpson County Historical Society Photograph Collection, Goodnight Memorial Library, Franklin.

Another type of memento often found in south central Kentucky photograph albums was the memorial card. Such cards usually were printed in gold ink on a 4½ ″ x 6½ ″ piece of black or white cardboard. Along with funeral imagery, which might include a Bible, a dove, a scroll, and/or angels, the card stated "In Loving Remembrance of," the deceased's name, date of death, and age. Each card included a verse. Frequently used was the poem:

> 'Tis hard to break the tender cord
> When love has bound the heart,
> 'Tis hard, so hard to speak the words,
> Must we forever part?
> Dearest loved one, we have laid thee
> In the peaceful grave's embrace,
> But thy memory will be cherished
> Till we see thy heavenly face.[34]

The cards were sent to various family members and close friends. In Halfway, Allen County, Elder W. L. Harris printed a special style of "memorial card" in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The cover of these 4 ⅞ ″ x 8 ″ white paper pamphlets resembled a standard black memorial card, but the space inside allowed one or two obituaries to be printed.[35]

Closely resembling the mass-produced memorial cards, chromolithographs, commonly referred to as "memorial pictures," were hung in the family's home. Usually measuring 14″ x 26″, these pictures were richly embellished with funeral imagery. One type had a dove and a flower-wreathed monument into which an appropriate symbol of the buyer's choice was inserted. Another picture contained a monument with a cross and angels descending from the heavens. Both chromolithographs had openings for the insertion of the deceased's name and dates and a poem. In a Monroe County home, a memorial picture still hangs which

[34]Several memorial cards can be found in the Funeral Items Box, Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University; the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection; and the author's collection. Examples of these cards have been located in Allen, Logan, Simpson, and Warren counties.

[35]Louise Horton, *In The Hills of the Pennyroyal: A History of Allen County From 1815 to 1880* (Austin, Texas, 1975), 126; Mrs. Mildred Lyles and Mrs. Jewel Watkins, compilers, *History of Mt. Union Association of General Baptists, 1876-1961* (n.p., 1961), 25-28; memorial card of Mrs. Nancy E. Meredith, 1889, author's collection; memorial card of Miss Adda F. Tabor, 1890, in possession of Laurita Sledge, Alvaton, Warren County.

Harvey Isenberg purchased in memory of his father (d. 1868), mother (d. 1876), infant brother (d. 1871), and sister (d. 1891).[36] Other memorial wall hangings in the area included a floral wreath and hair wreaths.

Late Victorians also used hair taken from the deceased loved one in memorial jewelry. Other pieces of memorial jewelry owned by area residents included jet beads and photographic brooches. Etiquette manuals of the period regulated the wearing of feminine mourning attire and memorial jewelry. As both articles were the public symbols of internal bereavement, the guides published during the period gave rules on the appropriate length and types of mourning to be followed by family members.

Although it is doubtful that the majority of local residents could afford the expensive clothing and time of seclusion prescribed by the manuals, they made efforts to adapt the etiquette to their circumstances. Simpson County native Lucy J. Harris detailed the attire of a widow as follows: first, a solid black dress, a heavy mourning veil, and black-bordered handkerchiefs; after a few months, a little white ruche was placed on the top of the collar; then a white collar; and, finally, a black-and-white dress.[37]

But mourning dress became a way of life for some persons. Writing to a cousin on February 28, 1901, Katharine Meador Covington of Bowling Green declared: "I have been wearing mourning going on 21 years. — put it on for my father and have never gotten out of it."[38] Evidence that mourning did restrict the wearer's social life is found in the September 7, 1872, issue of Franklin's *Little Patriot*. Under the heading "Colloquialism," this news item appeared: ". . . the lady dressed in black is Miss Salmons. . . . Draped in deep mourning as you see is the reason she was not at the 'Hop' last night and is an answer to the many enquiries and regrets express[ed] on account of her absence."[39] While the women of the region were expected to put on mourning, the men seem to have been exempt, with the occasional excep-

[36]Author's interview with Mr. and Mrs. Cliva J. Isenberg, May 31, 1983; memorial picture in their possession.

[37]Lucy Harris, speech, Simpson County Historical Society, March 3, 1970, tape on deposit at Goodnight Memorial Library, Franklin.

[38]Katharine Meador Covington to Elizabeth Bettersworth, February 28, 1901, Katharine M. Covington Collection, MSS-KyL.

[39]Franklin *Little Patriot*, September 7, 1872.

"Photographs or paintings of the deceased family member were often displayed in a place of honor within the home. Around 1900, the Wilson family near Stony Point, Allen County, included in their family photograph the portrait of a young boy who had died."

tion of a black arm band.

The most permanent expression of grief at the death of a loved one could be rendered at the gravesite. During the nineteenth century, Americans were changing their perceptions of the most appropriate place to inter the remains. The rural cemetery movement advocated the location of burial grounds on the edge of population centers as opposed to the church and town graveyards that quickly became overcrowded. James J. Farrell depicted the movement as evolving in two phases in the more urban areas: (1) the "rural" or "garden" cemetery of 1830-55; and (2) the "lawn" or "park" cemetery of 1855-1920. Books entitled *God's Acre Beautiful* (1880) and *The Modern Park Cemetery* (1912) were part of a body of literature which stressed the role of the cemetery as a place to commune with God, nature, and the deceased family and friends.[40]

[40]Farrell, *Inventing American Death*, 99-145. See also Howard Evarts Weed, *Modern Park Cemeteries* (Chicago, 1912), and W. Robinson, *God's Acre Beautiful or The Cemeteries of the Future* (New York, 1880).

Preferring the "rural" cemetery with its elaborate monu-
ments and family plots to the later "park" cemetery, which placed
the markers at ground level, south central Kentuckians established
cemeteries a short distance from their populated areas, usually
on a hilltop or rolling piece of land. Even the adoption of the
word "cemetery" ("a resting place, or place of sleep, for the
dead") reflected their attempt to soften death's harshness.

In the cemeteries, many family plots were set apart by
wrought-iron fences and gates. Because they identified the
gravesite as the setting for the continued expression of bereave-
ment, family members and friends frequently visited the graves
of their loved ones. Knowing that she would never view a par-
ticular gravesite, Rebecca Gray of Sugar Grove, Butler County,
still wanted to know its location, writing: "I shall never see the
place with my natural eyes but in my imagination I will visit it
often."[41] To many individuals, a sense of the deceased's con-
tinued presence remained at the grave. On July 12, 1907, Mary
Chapman McElroy of Bowling Green wrote her sister: "I used
to hate to come away and leave his grave because his body seemed
so alone but now there are others all around and that part of
the cemetery has been greatly improved."[42]

South central Kentuckians cared for the gravesites out of
respect for the deceased. The observation of "Decoration Day"
on the thirtieth of May insured that proper attention was paid
to burial grounds. In Monroe County, the day's ceremonies
included a morning and afternoon sermon, dinner on the ceme-
tery's grounds, decoration of the graves, a "singing" of religious
songs, and often entertainment by special musical groups.[43]

The tombstone was the most permanent memorial that could
be erected for a loved one. The selection of the grave marker
was limited by cost and availability. Several skilled craftsmen in
the area produced stones. Thomas O'Connell, owner of Russell-
ville's Kentucky Marble Works, fashioned elaborate angels,
crosses, and other statues. According to his account book, O'Con-
nell sold a set of children's tombstones for $15 in 1881, a monu-

[41]Rebecca Gray to niece, December 13, 1876, in Tim Ferguson and Dorothy Olinger
Range, eds., "Ferguson-Hay: Letters From Kentucky Kin" (typescript, 1970), 57-58 (copy
in Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University).
[42]Mary Chapman McElroy to Sallie Knott, July 12, 1907, Knott Collection, MSS-KyL.
[43]Bryant interview.

"Particularly in the case of a deceased child, no visual remembrance might exist without the postmortem photograph." Memorial photograph of unidentified child, ca. 1880.

ment for a woman and child for $75 that same year, a set of tombstones and a vase for $62 in 1887, a statue monument for $140 in 1882, a barré granite monument for $350 in 1889, and a cross granite monument for $390 in 1901. J. M. Frie, proprietor of the Glasgow Marble Works, advertised Italian marble gravestones at a cost between $8 and $30, depending upon height, width, and thickness of the stone.[44] Other families purchased stones from Louisville, Kentucky; New Albany, Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Nashville and Clarksville, Tennessee. In 1902 and 1908, the Sears-Roebuck & Company catalogues offered monuments by mail order. In some cases, family members marked graves by use of field stones, teaching their children the significance of each stone.

Although not everyone could afford to purchase monuments, those persons who did used the tombstones to show the location of the graves and as memorials. Each marker identified the place where the remains of the deceased had been laid by name and

[44]"Account Book (1877-1920) of Thomas O'Connell," 106, 110, 126, 134, 186, in possession of Mrs. Jack Stengill, Russellville; Glasgow *Weekly Times*, May 21, 1884, February 10, June 16, September 15, 1886, May 1, 1887. A listing of known south central Kentucky tombstone makers can be found in Arnold, "Expressions of Grief."

"The tombstone was the most permanent memorial that could be erected for a loved one." Thomas O'Connell fashioned this portrayal of a boy and a lamb for the grave of Spencer C. Long (1876-79) in Maple Grove Cemetery, Russellville. Photograph by T. Cleveland Arnold, Jr. (1983).

dates, and often included an inscription telling the relationship of the deceased to other family members. Area residents selected epitaphs, iconographs, and statues that paid tribute to the deceased or were intended to comfort the survivors.

The themes used on south central Kentucky tombstones fall into the following categories: first, tributes to the deceased; second, the departure; third, depictions of Heaven; and, finally, ultimate trust in God's wisdom. Some families valued a description of their loved one's consistent Christianity as the best memorial that could be recorded on the stone. Area residents also found merit in friendliness, honesty, piety, affection, obedience, courage, bravery, and gentleness as character traits for commemoration on monuments.

According to many epitaphs, the individual's influence extended beyond his grave. Of John R. Eberman of Russellville, the tribute was inscribed: "Not on this perishing stone, but in the book of life and in the hearts of thy afflicted friends is thy worth recorded."[45] In Fountain Run, Monroe County, William Y. Shive's monument stressed the continued presence of the deceased through the memory of others: "Although he sleeps, his memory doth live and cheering comfort to his mourners give."[46]

Iconography also expressed the qualities and interests of the deceased. Rose wreaths, hewn trees, and broken roses denoted virtue and beauty. Bibles and crosses identified those persons for whom the Christian faith was a central focus. Gideon insignias, the fraternal order of the Odd Fellows' emblems, and Modern Woodmen of America hewn trees marked the graves of members of those societies. A few examples of occupational symbolism can be found in area cemeteries, including a writer's quill, a cabinetmaker's workbench and tools, and a band member's trumpet. To preserve the memory of their physical appearance, a lifelike statue of Ella Carden of Glasgow and a bust of Auburn's Daisy Davidson were placed at their graves.[47]

Departure iconography and epitaphs echoed the importance that these late Victorians placed on a peaceful death experience. The obelisk marking the graves of Shelby and Elizabeth Follis in Scottsville cemetery gave his parting words: "Behold I come quickly." Her final statement uttered some five years later was:

[45]John R. Eberman, 1844-1900, Riverview Cemetery, Morgantown.

[46]William Y. Shive, 1836-77, Fountain Run Public Cemetery, Monroe County.

[47]Lucy Douglas Tate, 1829-99, city cemetery, Scottsville; Rufus M. Hurt, 1865-99, Nat G. Hurt, 1870-99, and Daisy Davidson, 1875-95, city cemetery, Auburn, Logan County; Ella Carden, 1853-91, Odd Fellows' Cemetery, Glasgow.

"The Morning cometh."[48] Many south central Kentuckians used
"Gone Home," "Gone But Not Forgotten," "Gone too soon,"
and "Gone Ye Blessed" either alone or in combination with other
epitaphs and iconography to express their loss and the loved one's
gain.

Common symbols of departure were the finger pointing
heavenward, God's hand pulling a link from the family chain
of life, clasped hands, Heaven's open gates, and Heaven's man-
sions. Preferring to depict his departure visually rather than write
of it, the family of A. Karr, who was buried in the Sulfur Springs
Cemetery of Simpson County in 1871, erected a simple slab with
an iconograph of a butterfly and an empty cocoon.[49]

Many epitaphs revealed the survivors' difficulty in accept-
ing death. While testifying to their sense of loss, those persons
erecting stones with this type of inscription also sought to express
their ultimate dependence on God. A familiar verse was: "It was
hard indeed to part with thee, But Christ's strong arm supported
me." In some cases, the epitaph read as if the deceased sought
to answer the sorrow of the survivors. On the tombstone of nine-
month-old Elza H. Cooper of Butler County was written, "Weep
not, father and mother, for me, for I am waiting in glory for
thee."[50]

One of the most common period epitaphs of comfort was
used in the Brownsville cemetery and the Holly Springs Cemetery
of Edmonson County. Worded according to the family members
who remained, the verse read:

> Farewell dear husband my life is past
> My love was yours while life did last
> After me no sorrow take
> But love our children for my sake.[51]

Perhaps the most heartbreaking symbol for a child's death
was empty shoes and stockings. Other iconographs on children's

[48]Shelby B. Follis, 1815-95, and Elizabeth W. Follis, 1824-1900, city cemetery,
Scottsville.

[49]A. Karr, 1797-1871, Sulfur Springs Church Cemetery, Simpson County.

[50]Elza H. Cooper, December 1880 - September 1881, Union Church Cemetery, Butler
County.

[51]Elizabeth Lindsey, 1865-98, Holly Spring Cemetery, Edmonson County; John D.
Houchin, d. 1873 at age 86, Mary D. Barlow, 1867-83, and Mary P. Reed, 1855-88, city
cemetery, Brownsville.

tombstones included lambs, doves, flowers, and cherubs. Willow trees along with the draping of vases, columns, and monuments, frequently used on adults' tombstones, symbolized the sorrow caused by the departure. Angelic statues erected on a few sites served as visual comforters.

As in other grief expressions, late Victorians frequently preferred to soften the blow of separation by substituting the analogy of sleep on their tombstones. Common to all eight counties was the epitaph: "He is not dead but sleepeth!!" A Bowling Green gravesite was made to resemble a bed in that it not only had a headstone and a smaller footstone but side enclosures as well. Of P. E. Mastin, it was written: "Here is one who is sleeping in faith and love."[52]

Through written word and symbol on their monuments, south central Kentuckians represented Heaven as a place of rest, the dwelling place of God, a kingdom resplendent with robes, crowns, and mansions, and the place of eventual reunion with the dead. The family of Asher Wood of Bowling Green expressed the latter sentiment on his monument, stating: "Tis sweet, as year by year we lose friends out of sight, in faith to muse how grows in paradise our store."[53]

Closely akin to the theme of Heaven as a place of reunion was the theme of trust in God. In a period of frequent unexplainable deaths, area residents found comfort in using permanent memorials to testify to their faith in the omniscience of God. As Heaven was a better place, they should not mourn their loved ones. Instead, the family and friends called upon their religious faith for assistance in their grieving process. Carved into a monument produced by J. W. Dearing of Glasgow was a female mourner, the symbol of inconsolable grief, holding to a cross and the inscription "Simply To Thy Cross I Cling."[54] Biblical passages and hymn excerpts used in epitaphs exalted the mourners. Through the theme of trust in God, the families stated the core of the Victorian attitude toward death: a person should be able to accept death despite personal desire and the failure to understand its purpose.

[52]Philander Stubbins [infant], Fairview Cemetery, Bowling Green; P. E. Mastin, 1861-94, Sandy Creek Church Cemetery, Butler County.

[53]Asher Lucien Wood, 1849-82, Fairview Cemetery, Bowling Green.

[54]Mariam McQuown, 1833-87, Odd Fellows' Cemetery, Glasgow.
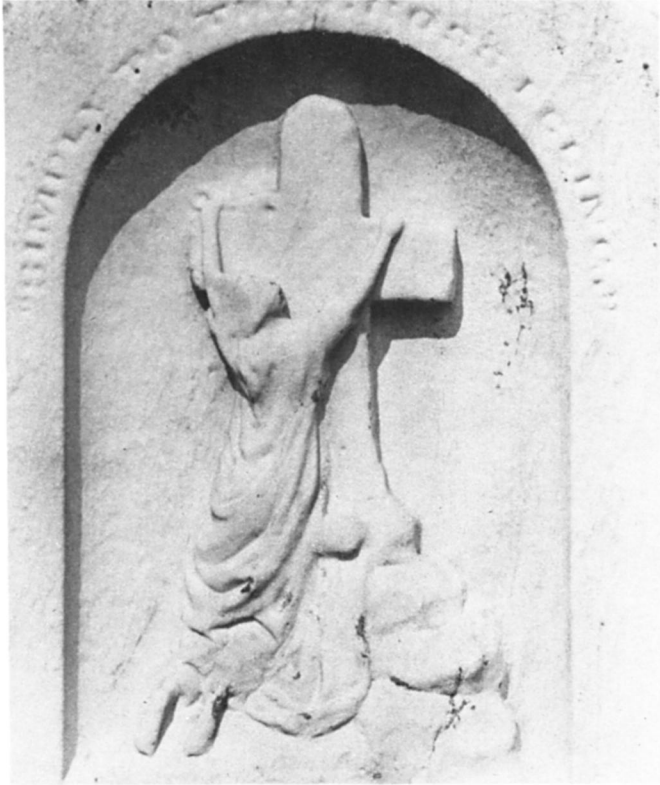
"Simply To Thy Cross I Cling" iconograph (detail), on the monument of Mariam McQuown (1833-87), in Odd Fellows' Cemetery, Glasgow. Photograph by T. Cleveland Arnold, Jr. (1983).

Through the adaptation of accepted Victorian expressions of grief, south central Kentuckians found meaningful ways to testify to significant experiences of loss due to the deaths of their contemporaries. In almost every instance, area residents incorporated into these expressions the themes of peaceful departure, the existence of a blissful Heaven where the deceased awaited reunion with the survivors, and the mourner's ultimate dependence on God's omniscience. Acceptance of these beliefs, which were echoed in the hymns and popular literature of the period, allowed the bereaved family and friends to accept death as they experienced it between 1870 and 1910. Throughout the mourning process, south central Kentuckians gave evidence of their traditional values of family, community, and religion.