Upper Valley Epitaphs

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Why Epitaphs?

- One sentence
- Verbal folklore
- Cultural Values
- Role of Religion
How we collected our folklore

1. Parse through graveyards for epitaphs
2. Record those that we find, including data on the dead person
3. Take a picture
4. Perform cursory background check on dead person/family
   a. Usually, not much information was available
5. Record in collection
Social Context

● Predominately Christian
● Upper Valley
● Wealthy Families - Hitchcock, Bissell, others
Cultural Context

- Families used rocks and sticks to mark their deceased loved ones graves when they buried them
- Tombstones became popular in the 1600s
- Epitaphs and art on tombstones became popular in the 1800s
Cultural Context (continued)

- Tombstones/Grave Markings are a form of Superstition

2 types

- Prevents dead from rising (unnatural death/vampires)
- Put a symbol on a grave to reflect afterlife beliefs

Shift during 19th Century

Prevent dead from Rising → Memorial

(Superstition) → ( Tradition + Ritual)
Notable Findings - The Cobb Family

- Samuel Cobb (1822-1895)
- His 3 successive wives
  - Almira W. Ripley
  - Luella C. Hutchinson
  - Caroline E. Davis
- 2 other family members
  - Relationship unknown
“And what doth the lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy god.”

“With an infant enriched in her arms, he buried you in sorrow and hope.”

“She made the home happy.”
Notable Findings - Nancy Bissell

“Nee Nina Wempe”
Notable Findings - The Campbell Family

- Rev. Gabriel Campbell (1838-1923)
- His wife, Louise McMahon Campbell (1844-1927)
- Their 5 children
  - Anne Louise (1866 – 1867)
  - Robert Argyle (1873 – 1897)
  - Harriet Lee (1870 – 1901)
  - Elizabeth (1879 – 1901)
  - and Edith Celeste (1877 – 1933)

“God’s love is perfect, His will is best.”