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“WE SHALL MEET BEYOND THE RIVER”:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEATHSCAPE OF BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA

By

Ashley J. Barnett

A DISSERTATION

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Lincoln, Nebraska

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“WE SHALL MEET BEYOND THE RIVER”:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEATHSCAPE OF BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA

Ashley J. Barnett, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: David J. Wishart

Gravestone studies have traditionally focused on the East Coast, particularly the Northeast, because of the long Euro-American settlement history in that region and because of a landmark 1966 study produced by Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz which focused on this region. Significantly less attention has been paid to the interior of the continent, particularly the Great Plains. This study analyzes the temporal variations in gravestone iconography and inscriptions to determine major cultural shifts that took place in Brownville, Nebraska, from the town’s founding in 1854 to the present. 1,224 gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery were recorded and analyzed for the presence of 104 iconographic motifs and 103 textual variables. Special attention is paid to variations in inscriptions and iconography with gender, as well as to spatial variation in gravestone location with race. Unlike previous studies, which focus primarily upon iconography, this dissertation provides an in-depth exploration of the language that appears on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery. Four iconographic phases and three or four textual phases were identified for this cemetery, and both the iconographic and temporal phases showed significant temporal overlap. The onset of each phase was shown to correspond temporally to a significant shift in the social

settings of Brownville. Major changes in concepts of gender and theology in Brownville were identified and explanations are offered for these shifts. African-American and Native American interments in Walnut Grove proved difficult to identify, suggesting the concept of subaltern invisibility may influence the material culture of this cemetery. This study shows that, while the material culture of Walnut Grove Cemetery was not effective for identifying the diversity of Brownville, it can be used to identify major shifts in theological thought, periods of social upheaval, and concepts of gender in this Nebraska river town.

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For Trevor

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Geographic cemetery studies were relatively popular in the 1960s and 1970s, but that popularity was rather short-lived, and the field has not grown significantly in the last few decades. Though groundbreaking studies have been few, this does not mean that the field is ‘dead,’ but rather that much room exists to expand upon the existing literature. Few major studies of Central Plains cemeteries have been conducted. Significantly more attention has been focused on cemeteries of the northeastern United States, which may serve as a foundation for comparison with Brownville. This study aims to fill the gaps in cemetery studies by approaching the subject from a geographic perspective, considering not only the landscape, but also the historical and geographic influences that shaped a particular cemetery—Walnut Grove Cemetery in Brownville, Nebraska.

Brownville was founded in 1854 by Richard Brown, following the passage of the Nebraska-Kansas Act. Originally from Tennessee, Brown reportedly crossed the Missouri River in a canoe on August 29, 1854. Shortly thereafter, he built a claim cabin and settled in the town with his family and soon “organized a town company that staked out 320 acres as allowed under the Federal Townsites Act” (Hassler 2004:1). The town quickly grew to become an important port on the Missouri River.

Eventually, however, Brownville lost the seat of Nemaha County to Auburn (in 1885) and the railroad failed, leaving the town to decline. While Nebraska’s population continued to grow rapidly, Brownville’s population peaked in 1880 and by 1890 was steadily declining (Kennedy 2001:14). The decline continued well into the twentieth century. The town never fully disappeared, though, and in 1970 the town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Brownville is a village with fewer than

150 residents. The town caters to visitors interested in early Nebraska history and the visual and performing arts. The residents, though, are far outnumbered by the hundreds of individuals who are interred in the town's cemetery. Walnut Grove Cemetery was established in 1864 and currently occupies approximately five acres atop a hill north of Main Street (Brownville Visitor Center:3). An intensive search for information about this cemetery left me nearly empty-handed. It appears that no one has conducted an intensive study of Walnut Grove Cemetery. Since Brownville is one of the first permanent Euro-American settlements in Nebraska, the cemetery is certainly worthy of study. Furthermore, since Brownville's relative location (near the slave state, Missouri, and the "Half-Breed Tract" in Nemaha County) led to a level of racial diversity not seen in many other parts of Nebraska, this adds to the value of studying the cemetery.

This dissertation aims to more fully document the cemetery, and to use the information collected to develop insights into the changing culture of this early Nebraska town. By studying the symbols and wording present on the gravestones of the Brownville cemetery, this dissertation strives to decipher the particular ideologies concerning life, death, dying, and theology which influenced the population of Brownville from the earliest times to the present. By examining the gravestones and exploring these ideologies, evidence of Brownville's accepted and experienced gender roles, as well as the ways in which these roles changed, will be illuminated. The study also analyzes how iconography and wording vary not only with gender, but also with race. This raises an additional question: was the Brownville cemetery racially segregated? If it was, what does this suggest about the relative racial diversity and social climate of early Brownville?

Brownville had a relatively large African-American population throughout its early history, most likely due to its location across the river from Missouri, a slave state. The relative diversity of Brownville may have been simply the result of the town's location, but perhaps it was also influenced by the culture of Brownville. Patrick Kennedy (2001:17) has noted that there was not a separate section for African-Americans within Walnut Grove Cemetery, and that burial records do not list race. Brownville was home to two predominately black churches (a black Baptist church and an African Methodist Episcopal [AME] church) at various times in its past. However, there is also evidence that a few blacks attended predominately white churches (Kennedy 2001:17).

African-Americans were not the only racial minorities who historically lived in Brownville. The town is located near a former reserve called the "Half-Breed Tract," where individuals of mixed native and white ancestry were permitted to purchase land after 1830, particularly those individuals descended from the Otoe-Missourias, Omahas, Iowas, Santees, and Yanktons (Waters 2004:573) (Figure 1.1). The reserve was not successful in providing a long-term solution for these individuals, many of whom felt unwelcomed in both indigenous and Euro-American settlements. White settlers quickly moved into the area after 1854, often obtaining the land by questionable means. An indigenous presence, however, remained present in the area for several decades after Brownville was established, and several families continue to trace their ancestry to these early residents of the "Half-Breed Tract."



Figure 1.1: The “Half-Breed Tract” Historical Marker along Highway 136 between Auburn and Brownville.

Review of the Literature

Relatively little research is being done on necrogeography, and the study of deathscapes certainly does not boast the largest body of literature within the field of

geography. In fact, a keyword search of the program 2009 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) revealed only two presentations involving cemetery research (one of which was by this author). However, there is a substantial body of work that suggests significant contributions to the subfield may be possible in the future. Much of the research involving cemeteries is highly interdisciplinary, drawing from the fields of anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, and feminist and gender studies, to name just a few. As a result, any survey of the literature involving deathscapes and necrogeography necessitates looking outside of the field of geography in order to highlight the complex nature of cemeteries as meaning-filled places.

This review considers a sampling of articles produced by geographers and non-geographers alike. All of the papers are geographic in scope, which makes them useful when considering deathscapes and necrogeography. Throughout the review, the gaps in the body of literature should become evident: issues of class have been touched upon but remain significantly under-considered; substantial work needs to be conducted in order to elucidate the relationships between the cultural materials (i.e. gravestone forms, images, and inscriptions, cemetery arrangements, and more) and the cultures that produced them; and more attention could be paid to variations in deathscapes across time and space. This literature review serves to illustrate the gaps in the literature, some of which this dissertation will help to fill.

In what has become one of the foremost articles about American historical archaeology, Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz (1966) offered tremendous insight into the study of cemeteries. The article has become one of the most prominent works (especially in its reincarnation as chapter four in Deetz's now-classic book *In Small*

Things Forgotten) that illustrates how changes in ideology come to be represented in material culture. The article focuses on gravestones from New England cemeteries, which in many instances provide several hundred years' worth of graves. Dethlefsen and Deetz argued that the temporal and spatial variations in gravestone design serve as significant sources of information about past ideologies, particularly those concerning death, dying, and grieving.

Dethlefsen and Deetz laid out a basic methodology for studying cemeteries and grave markers. They noted that, in many instances, significant historical documentation exists about stone carvers, which can provide considerable information about their cultural influences (including conventional ideas about death common to their lifetimes). Dethlefsen and Deetz used examples of carvers from several New England communities to show how the morphology of gravestones in this region shifted throughout the early colonial period from an emphasis on the grave simply as a resting place for the body to the Victorian emphasis on the grief of survivors, the memory of the decedent, and the destination of the soul. The article serves as an example of variations in not only gravestones, but also in ideology, throughout time and space.

James A. Hijiya (1983) outlined six basic, yet overlapping, style periods of American gravestones: the Plain Style (1640-1710), Death's Head (1670-1770), Angel (1740-1820), Urn and/or Willow (1780-1850), Monumentalism (1840-1920), and the Modern Plain Style (1900-2001). Hijiya outlined these classifications for cemeteries in the eastern United States, particularly the northeast. As a result, they do not perfectly or sufficiently describe mortuary patterns in ideology in Brownville. They are, however, still useful. Until the Great Migration of blacks from the South in the early-to-mid twentieth

century, immigration and migration patterns across the United States generally followed an east-to-west trend. Because American migrants tended to move from the northeast and mid-Atlantic states westward, without diverting too far to the south (a trend which was reinforced by the Homestead Act's exclusion of Confederate soldiers), Hijiya's classifications are likely applicable, with modifications, to the Great Plains at slightly later dates (due to cultural lag from the coast due to distance and time necessary for migration; see Deetz and Dethlefsen, 1965).

Wilbur Zelinsky (1994) studied the proliferation of cemeteries throughout the United States at the orthoquadrangle level in an attempt to identify "broad national patterns or the deeper intellectual issues implicit in death-related phenomena" (30). He used USGS topographic maps to identify and map the proliferation of cemeteries throughout the country and in this way identified several anomalies in the national density and distribution of burial places. While Zelinsky acknowledged that topographic maps do not necessarily record all possible burial grounds, he accepted that they include a representative sample of American cemeteries. One of the first details that Zelinsky noticed was the sheer number of burial sites in the United States compared to Europe or Australia. As a result, he proposed that some yet-to-be-identified cultural phenomenon (or phenomena) has (or have) led to these high figures. He failed to question, however, whether these high numbers may be also related to mapping strategies employed by USGS cartographers, as not all burial grounds are recorded on topographic maps.

Zelinsky identified several spatial anomalies on his resulting map. Most striking to him was the stark difference in the densities of cemeteries between the western and eastern portions of the United States, with the 100th Meridian serving as a general

dividing line, as a result of the variations in population densities between these two halves of the United States. In the eastern half of the U.S., Zelinsky identified a strong density of cemeteries in large metropolitan areas (which he expected due to early European settlement and high population concentrations). More striking to him, though, was the density of cemeteries in the Upland South. Zelinsky pondered what other cultural factors may have influenced this unexpected density, speculating that difficulties in transportation over rougher terrain, ethnic heterogeneity, and economic and legal factors influencing land use (such as the preference to use low, flat land as farmland and various zoning restrictions among states or urban areas) may all have impacted the development and location of cemeteries within the eastern U.S.

In the coastal south and southeast, Zelinsky also noted a surprisingly low density of cemeteries, which he found perplexing. He had anticipated that the higher population densities and longer Euro-American and African-American settlement of the region would have led to a rather dense concentration of cemeteries (with the exception of places such as southern Florida, which was settled by Euro-Americans much later), but this appears not to be true. Zelinsky concluded that contemporary models were unable to fully explain the differences that appeared on his map, but he never doubted the possibility of predicting such information via a model. As a result of Zelinsky's broad spatial focus, the resulting article appears to provide only introductory information, at best, concerning cemetery landscapes in the United States. The overly broad nature of this article, and Zelinsky's failure to draw significant conclusions about the causes of variation in cemetery densities, suggests that, at this point in the study of necrogeography, perhaps it would be beneficial to focus study on smaller subregions

within the United States, rather than attempting to draw overly-broad conclusion about burial practices throughout the entire country.

Richard Francaviglia (1971:501) has studied cemeteries as “total landscapes,”—that is, landscapes with both spatial and architectural elements—which generally reflect urban patterns common to the same time periods. While this study is dated, it serves as a solid introduction to older examples of necrogeography. Francaviglia noted that cemeteries “serve both functional and emotional purposes” and thus reflect not only the characteristics of architecture, design, and use of space, but also the religious ideologies of the time in which they were created and used. Francaviglia had two main goals for the study. First, he wanted to characterize the spatial and temporal variations of the cemeteries. Secondly, Francaviglia hoped to describe the evolving landscapes of his case study cemeteries from 1870 to 1970. Francaviglia investigated five cemeteries in the southern portion of Oregon’s Willamette Valley, a region characterized by significant ethnic homogeneity but little religious uniformity. Much of the immigration to this area originated from the Upland South and the lower Midwest, rather than from a particular foreign country. Furthermore, the sending regions were not necessarily associated with one dominant religious group.

Francaviglia classified the monuments present in the five cemeteries into nine main stylistic categories and plotted their temporal distributions in a chart quite similar to the ‘battleship curves’ used in historical archaeology (for an example, see Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966). He noted the general absence of cross-shaped markers and attributed this to the low percentage of Catholics who lived in the region during the time frame. In comparing the temporal and stylistic distributions of the grave markers in these five

cemeteries to studies of cemeteries in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Francaviglia noted some slight differences (which he did not significantly elaborate). He hypothesized that these differences may have been the result of cultural diffusion and the resulting temporal lag. While he acknowledged that many of the grave markers present were commercially available throughout the United States, he also recognized that “some areas lag in acceptance, and some stones remain in style longer in some places than others” (504). The author noted the basic temporal characteristics of the gravestones and concluded that the “height and ornateness” of markers increased after the Civil War, then decreased again after 1905 (505).

Francaviglia noted that class and race also clearly influenced the layouts and landscapes of cemeteries in this examination. “[D]ifferent property values” of plots existed, as did racial segregation (506). Wealthier individuals and families often had access to more ‘desirable’ parts of the cemeteries (though Francaviglia did not significantly elaborate what constitutes a more desirable location), while African-Americans were frequently relegated to the less desirable locations or even to the edges of less desirable areas. The author further noted that older portions of the cemeteries were more likely to be neglected or in decline. He attributed this to the same reasons that central cities declined, though he ignored other social and environmental explanations (such as the possibility that the occupants of those graves no longer had family members living in the area to care for the graves, or that weathering and general age had weakened the stones and made them less readable). In general, Francaviglia pointed out some important issues of inquiry, though the article certainly would have benefitted from considerable elaboration of the themes he introduced. His focus on the temporal

distributions of gravestone styles and his, albeit brief, examination of the roles that class and race play in the spatial layouts of cemeteries are the most applicable facets of Francaviglia's text for this dissertation. Though Brownville has always been a small town, class distinctions existed, particularly when one considers the number of early politicians and prominent business people who resided in the town. Consequently, Francaviglia's insights into class are therefore important when considering other cemeteries (Richardson 1968:114-115).

In 1999, Lily Kong provided a literature review of the academic writings concerning deathscapes. Beyond this, however, Kong made a strong case for the geographic study of cemeteries via a multi-disciplinary approach, something she viewed as necessary in light of the complex nature of cemeteries. Kong called for geographers to reach out to the fields of history, feminist studies, archaeology, anthropology, political science, and much more in order to develop in-depth insights into cemeteries while applying contemporary research methodologies developed within the subfield of cultural geography.

Kong outlined some of the basic (and primarily, though not exclusively, geographic) literature involving cemeteries, deathscapes, and the geography of religion. She noted several areas of inquiry, including the following: space as a contested domain between the sacred and the secular; class, gender, and race; nation and nature; multiplicity of meaning; and centrality of place. As contested domains, Kong explained that cemeteries as sacred places may come into conflict with the secular, particularly regarding ideas of land use. For example, in a different geographic context, the anthropologist Bollig (1997) described the Nigerian government's desire to place a

hydroelectric dam in an area that would impact a cemetery, resulting in conflict between the local population and the government. Kong argued that the idea of space as a contested domain could be carried further to consider “contestations between different constructions of sacredness” (which had not been thoroughly explored at the time of her article’s publication), as well as “contestations between races, classes, and genders” (which have been explored in some cases) (Kong 1999:4). The article provides a brief exploration of works regarding the issues of gender, class, and race in cemeteries, though the issue of class appears significantly underdeveloped in this context. Kong’s outline of the literature involving nation and nature, while short, does offer some basic insights into this avenue of research. She noted that federal policies have influenced not only where people are buried, but also how, and that the language used on monuments can be both politically charged and divisive, yet simultaneously unifying. She concluded by emphasizing the multiple layers of meanings which compose deathscapes (like any landscape) and the importance of cemeteries as places, particularly for the living.

While Levine’s 1986 article does not focus specifically on cemeteries, deathscapes, or necrogeography, it does serve as an example of a call to use material culture in order to gain insights into social phenomena. Levine calls for cultural geographers (in this case, geographers of religion) to abandon the over-simplistic description of landscape phenomena in exchange for an historical materialist perspective which, he argued, will lead to much deeper illumination of cultural processes. The article illustrates some of the major shifts that took place within cultural geography during the 1970s and 1980s, which have stimulated many cultural geographers to create deeper, more multifaceted interpretation of cultural phenomena. Though not particularly *en vogue*

in geography, deathscapes provide places for geographers to study changes in past (and even contemporary) ideologies concerning death, dying, life, and grief. Simultaneously functional (as places for disposing the dead) and sacred (for example, as places where transitional rituals take place), cemeteries are symbolically-loaded landscapes that reflect the cultures which produced them.

American cultural geography and its tradition of landscape studies date back to Carl Sauer and his publication “The Morphology of Landscape” (*University of California Publications in Geography* 2, p 19-54, 1925). Sauer, influenced heavily by cultural anthropology and the earlier German philosophers Ratzel and Herder, developed a form of cultural geography which focused on human transformation of the physical environment (Leighly 1976:342, McDowell 1994:148-150, Mitchell 2000:26). Sauer developed a fascination with the material expressions of cultures, most particularly their landscapes, viewing landscape as the visible physical evidence of culture’s intersection with nature (Price and Lewis 1993:3). By interpreting a landscape, Sauer felt one could gain insight into the specific culture which produced that landscape (Leighly 1976:340). Sauer aimed not merely to describe landscapes and the material evidence within them but, rather, in “The Morphology of Landscape,” developed a complex “objective” methodology to “characterize how...associations of facts came to be,” in which culture, and not the environment, became “the primary agent of change” (Mitchell 2000:27-28).

Sauer’s influence spread to the numerous students he supervised at the University of California-Berkeley from the 1920s to the 1970s. He supervised more than thirty-five PhD dissertations, and many of his students (including Wilbur Zelinsky, John Leighly, Marvin Mikesell, Leslie Hewes and many more) went on to become influential

geographers in their own rights (Johnston et al 1994:33). Several became his colleagues at Berkeley, and Sauer and his students came to comprise what is now referred to as the 'Berkeley School.' Led by Sauer, these geographers shared interests in "landscape creation as a representation of culture" and followed Sauer's emphasis on studies of the evolution of the cultural landscape (Johnston et al 1994:33). The members of the Berkeley School were largely concerned with culture history and past landscapes, though some individuals, including Sauer, were additionally interested in how current and future cultures would impact the landscape in years to come. Sauer, and the Berkeley School in general, were responsible for the development of a very specific form of cultural geography, one which emphasized the historical, "took cultural relativism as a starting point," and was interested most particularly in the ways that human cultures transformed the natural world to create cultural landscapes or culture regions (Mitchell 2000:26). The group became the foremost school of thought in cultural geography throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century.

The Berkeley School has not been exempt from criticism. Many adherents of the 'New Cultural Geography' have argued that the heirs of Sauer's tradition have been exceptionally vague and overly concerned with the material remains of culture (rather than with the "inner workings of culture") (Price and Lewis 1933:3, Wagner and Mikesell 1962). While Sauer did focus on the visual aspects of landscape and culture, in "The Morphology of Landscape," he aimed not merely to describe landscapes and the material evidence within them, but also developed a complex methodology for determining the ways in which the various facets of landscape came to exist. Others (such as James Duncan and A. Pred) have argued that passive methods of fieldwork (such as

“unmediated observation,” and archival studies, paired with a general lack of interviews or “participant observation”) were simplistic (Price and Lewis 1993:3). Additionally, several of Sauer’s students have been stringently critiqued for their “superorganic” theorization of culture. Many have reified or attributed agency to culture “rather than [attributing agency] to...individuals or...groups” (Jackson 1989:14).

Wilbur Zelinsky came to be particularly well-known for his superorganic theorization of culture (Duncan 1980:191-197). In *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (1973), Zelinsky significantly expanded the superorganic concept of culture, stating that “culture is...something of and beyond the participating members” and “[its] totality is palpably greater than the sum of its parts...with a structure, set of processes, and momentum of its own” (Zelinsky 1973:40-41). Duncan (1980) has criticized this position for attributing agency to culture while not attributing agency to humans, either as individuals or as groups. One can clearly trace Sauer’s superorganic concept of culture back to the anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie (for an example, see Kroeber 1917) (Price and Lewis 1993:2, Solot 1986:510-511). It is important to note, however, that Marie Price and Martin Lewis (1993:10) suggested that Sauer did actually acknowledge individual agency “so long as it was not accorded an unduly elevated status.”

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Berkeley School began diversifying its faculty and perspectives. Several faculty members who significantly opposed Sauer’s perspectives joined the department, and some new faculty and graduate students endeavored to incorporate aspects of Sauer’s tradition into the ‘New Cultural Geography’ that had begun developing in the late 1970s (Price and Lewis 1993:8). By the 1960s, however, the

dominant paradigm of geography was the positivist perspective of geography as the science of space.

The political and social settings of the late 1960s and early 1970s stimulated change within the field. The Vietnam War spurred a push towards radical geography, as some realized that positivism served to shore up the status quo and paid no attention to inequality. Furthermore, the early 1970s brought economic hard times and disenchantment with progress for many, including human geographers. Some researchers began to understand that models were not actually solving many of the world's social problems. American cultural and historical geographers, particularly, had in many instances been marginalized by positivism, which they did not view as a satisfactory paradigm.

Their reaction against positivism led to the emergence of a new form of American geography: humanistic geography. Individuals such as Yi-Fu Tuan and D. W. Meinig came to the forefront of a very American kind of humanistic geography, one which was not as influenced by the political criteria that drove British social geographers working around the same time. Tuan, for example, viewed humanistic geography as a liberation, which could add the human experience to scientific geography; he did not suggest that scientific geography should be thrown out, but rather that humanistic geography could serve as an addition that would enrich the field as a whole (see Tuan 1976). For cemetery studies, this multi-paradigmatic trend means that a greater variety of methods for analyzing gravestones exist. For example, rather than relying solely upon quantitative analysis of the data on gravestones, studies of race, gender, status, class, and more can contribute to the analysis of a population represented in a cemetery.

From this point on, no one perspective has fully dominated the field. Sauer's tradition was never fully abandoned, however, and as a result superorganic conceptions of culture commonly persisted, at least through the end of the 1980s. Many humanistic geographers began emphasizing the plurality of experiences and thus helped to broaden the scope of cultural geography. Meinig, for example, came to understand landscapes as complex, variable places which convey multiple forms of information to the individuals who experience it (Meinig 1979). Around the same time, major developments were taking place in British cultural geography as well. The development of the New Cultural Geography in the UK ultimately spread to the United States, introducing postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives to American cultural geography. As a result of these major developments, cultural geography in the US is no longer solely dominated by Sauer. While Sauer's influence remains, especially in his attention to the local and the landscape, cemetery studies can benefit from this broadening of perspectives by investigating the experiences of subaltern populations. Examining the ways in which changes in landscape reflect varying concepts of race, gender, and class enriches geographers' knowledge about the communities that modified those landscapes.

The ways geographers investigate the local has changed. Landscapes are generally no longer viewed as the simple, unified places that Sauer described. Additionally, cultural geography emphasizes more than just the visible impacts of humans on landscapes, but also investigates 'invisible' impacts of power, class, race, and more on the people who create landscapes. Contemporary cultural geographers, such as Don Mitchell (2000:144), often view landscapes as places where the "social reproduction of society" occurs. Landscape serves not only as a "stage," where the social reproduction

of society takes place, but also as a “text” with material culture which conveys information about culture (Mitchell 2000:144). Landscape is, thus, political and inextricably linked to the people who create and modify it. This approach is particularly useful for cemetery studies, allowing researchers to read and interpret the spatial variations across deathscapes and throughout time.

Although the literature provides valuable insights into the cultural and geographic interpretation of cemeteries and their landscapes, much of the literature is dated, and very little pertains specifically to the Great Plains. While one may take this to mean that necrogeography is dead (!), one may also argue that it indicates considerable work to be done within the subfield. As a result, cemeteries offer cultural geographers places of study which unite function and symbolism, ideology (of varying forms) and practice, politics and religion. Though the body of literature is not expansive, it simply suggests potential for an undeveloped subfield within geography.

Research Methods

All legible markers present in Walnut Grove Cemetery at the time of data collection were included in this study. Because the cemetery is still in use, new burials continue to take place, and the landscape continues to evolve. While a number of older gravestones have significantly degraded due to weathering, the majority of the stones are legible. Several volunteers comprised the field crews which assisted with data collection in the field (Figures 1.2-1.5). Field work was conducted on several occasions between autumn 2008 and summer 2011. Crew members included Mark Barnett, Jenny Becic, Joana Chan, Drew LaBounty, Katherine Lamie, Albert LeBeau III, Brandy Lively, and

Kelly Smith. The field crews recorded the form, iconography, and wording of each stone (both in writing and through photographs), as well the spatial layout of the stones (via a geographic positioning system). This information was then entered into an Excel database for further analysis. This included basic statistical analysis detailing the temporal distribution of words, phrases, and images for all of the gravestones, as well as for how these characteristics varied by gender.



Figure 1.2: Field crew member Jenny Becic records the gravestone of Jonathan Masters, a Mexican War Veteran, in Walnut Grove Cemetery, June 2011.



Figure 1.3: Field crew member Mark Barnett records the gravestone of John and Martha Pearce in Walnut Grove Cemetery, February 2012.



Figure 1.4: Field crew member Joana Chan records the gravestones of the McPherson family in Walnut Grove Cemetery, July 2011.



Figure 1.5: Field Crew member Brandy Lively records the gravestone of Theodore Hill in Walnut Grove Cemetery, June 2011.

The analysis of the stones focuses on the iconography (that is, the meaning[s] conveyed by images engraved upon the stones) and the choice of words (including, but not limited to epitaphs) engraved on the stones. Battleship curves were created for all of these factors to illustrate temporal changes. The study includes further research about the individuals interred in the cemetery, focusing on causes of death, gender (and, thus, possible gender roles as indicated by the information conveyed on the gravestones), and race (when this is possible to determine).

Three basic controls exist for this project. Time serves as the most obvious control, since the gravestones included in the sample all have dates inscribed upon them. This removes speculation concerning dates from the sample and creates a temporal framework in which to observe stylistic changes. Place also serves as a control, as this study will focus on one cemetery rather than multiple cemeteries. Thus, variation between cemeteries is not a factor in the analysis. The stone carver, Charles Neidhart, and his approximately four or five apprentices or employees, are the third control for this study (Cutler 1882:“Nemaha County,” Part 10, Par. 2). As Dethlefsen and Deetz noted, historical documents about the stone carver (which are readily available in this case) can provide considerable information about the carver’s cultural influences (including his education, training, upbringing, source materials, business methods, and more). Lynn Rainville (1999:575) has argued that carvers exert significant influence over their customers’ choices. Carvers (often liberally) modified designs based on their own capabilities and styles, regardless of the purchaser’s desires. Taken together, these three controls will assist the author in determining what the factors were which actually influenced the changes observed on the gravestones and within the cemetery.

The dissertation begins with an exploration of the changes in mortality rates, life expectancy, and typical causes of death for the United States as a whole throughout time, with special attention focused on Nebraska and, when possible, Nemaha County. The research then focuses on a broad analysis of the changes in iconography identified on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, identifying temporal trends and offering insights into the causes of those changes. Next, attention turns to the wording inscribed on the gravestones, both epitaphs and shorter modifying phrases such as ‘mother of’ or ‘son of.’

Chapter five explores concepts of gender and race as exemplified by the patterns identified in chapters three and four, with the addition of a GIS spatial analysis of race in the cemetery. The final chapter combines all of the research and analysis to outline major cultural trends and shifts that took place in Brownville, as witnessed by the material culture of Walnut Grove Cemetery. Chapter six situates this current research within the larger body of existing literature and then concludes with recommendations for further research, both in Brownville and beyond.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGES IN MORTALITY IN BROWNVILLE THROUGH TIME

It is impossible to study gravestones without speaking of death. A community's experiences with death, whether it is a common experience or rare, influence the way the citizens perceive death which, in turn, influences the material culture of cemeteries. Early in American history, death rates were very high among the very young, and relatively few infants survived until adulthood. Over time, advances in the understanding of diseases and health, as well as about ways to treat and prevent illness, led to greater survival rates. Consequently, as time passes, a population's reactions toward death evolve, and these shifts are reflected in gravestones (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966:506). Because these alterations in perceptions of death vary across time, exploring the variations in life expectancies and common causes of death for the residents of Brownville from the 1850s to the present offers insight into the population's changing attitudes toward death.

This chapter begins by exploring the changes in mortality rates for the United States at the national scale, and then focuses on Nebraska and Brownville in particular. Because there is no single, uniform source of data for such a study, this chapter utilizes various data sources and measurements. The measurements include crude mortality rates, age specific death rates, and infant mortality rates. The crude mortality rate, also called the crude death rate, is the ratio of total number of deaths to the total population, usually expressed as the number of deaths per 1,000 population per year. The age-specific death rate is the annual number of deaths among persons in an age group divided by the population of persons in the same age group also expressed as the annual number of deaths per 1,000 population. Infant mortality rate is simply the annual number of deaths

of infants under the age of one, expressed as a factor of 1,000. All of these statistical calculations are employed here to gain insight into the changes that have characterized the mortality rates of the national and state populations, which provides further insight into the changing population of Brownville from its early years as a booming river town to the present quiet village it has become.

United States National Mortality Trends

Federal mortality statistical reports did not include all states in the reports until well into the twentieth century, and Nebraska was not included in the tallies until 1920 (Linder and Grove 1943:97). While national mortality statistics can be misleading because of this, there are no other ways to investigate the changes in causes of death and age at death across the United States throughout time, because additional data simply do not exist (McKinlay and McKinlay 1977:410-411). As a result, any investigation into changes in death rates, life expectancies, and causes of death likely oversimplifies the topic. For a study such as this, however, these data are all that are available for providing a general overview into the changing lives and deaths of the United States' population.

Prior to the twentieth century, reliable data about mortality rates are difficult to obtain, and it was not until the 1930s that such data were recorded for the entire United States (Preston and Haines 1984:272). As a result, analysis of nineteenth century mortality statistics relies upon a healthy dose of estimation and speculation. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, overall mortality rates in urban areas of the United States appear to have been very high (Condran and Crimmins-Gardner 1978:27). Mortality rates likely declined throughout the country from its inception, albeit not continually, nor at the

same rate or evenly across space (Kunitz 1984:559). Mortality rates were fairly stable in the United States from the beginning of the nineteenth century until just prior to the Civil War, likely the result of the overall rural nature of the American population up to that point (Kunitz 1984:565).

The rural nature of the American population prior to the Civil War resulted in considerably slow transmission rates for diseases that usually spread quickly in crowded areas (Kunitz 1984:568-569). Diseases like dysentery and malarial diseases provided the greatest threats during this period (Kunitz 1984: 559, 568-569). After the Civil War, immigration rates increased rapidly, increasing urban populations and raising the threat of communicable diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis that required higher population densities to effectively spread (Kunitz 1984:569). Even so, by the 1870s or 1880s, mortality rates began to decline, influenced by the beginnings of public health movements (including smallpox inoculations that began in the first decades of the century), which could effectively limit the exposure to pathogens (Kunitz 1984:577). Increased resistance to infectious diseases may have also influenced the decreases in mortality rates throughout the country. Furthermore, increased diagnoses of diseases may have made it appear that more individuals were surviving specific diseases, such as typhoid (Kunitz 1984:578). Unnamed diseases, or the so-called “pneumonia-diarrhea complex,” were the greatest threats to infants and young children during this period, making the first few years of life the most deadly, and resulting in overall statistically-short life expectancies.

Using census data, Samuel H. Preston and Michael R. Haines (1984:276) estimated that child mortality may have declined significantly between 1880 and 1900,

though they offered no explanation for what may have caused this decrease. Gretchen A. Condran and Eileen Crimmins-Gardner (1978:28) suggested that improved standards of living, including access to better nutrition, combined with new public health practices, particularly in urban areas, led to decreased overall mortality rates. From the Civil War until World War I, both urban and rural mortality rates declined considerably (Kunitz 1984:559). If infant and child mortality rates decreased during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, it is not too great a leap to accept that life expectancy, overall, increased during the same period.

Condran and Crimmins-Gardner (1978:33) have argued that the greatest declines in mortality rates stemmed from decreases in deaths caused by infectious diseases and parasites. Decreases in the occurrence of diarrheal diseases, as well as typhoid, tuberculosis (consumption), and diphtheria led to significant decreases in deaths around the turn of the twentieth century. This decline may have been influenced by improved sanitation in urban areas as well as greater access to clean water and food and by medical advances developed to stop the transmission of diseases in areas of high population density. The development and widespread acceptance of germ theory led to more effective treatments, while inoculations and the development of avoidance strategies helped prevent the spread of diseases (Kunitz 1984:579).

In the United States, life spans steadily increased throughout the twentieth century (Dorn 1940:32). Developments in sanitation, including access to clean food and water, as well as education about safe food handling and hygiene practices, resulted in fewer persons contracting bacterial and parasitic diseases, such as enteritis, that claimed large numbers of lives, particularly among the young. Additionally, expanded medical

knowledge about the causes of disease and the development of medicines to treat, and vaccines to prevent, diseases resulted in greater survival rates. Harold F. Dorn (1940:32) noted that the average American life expectancy in 1900 was just 49 years but, by 1935, life expectancy had reached 61 years. Declining infant mortality was, according to Dorn, one of the primary causes of this significant change. Infant mortality rates decreased at astonishing, nearly-exponential rates during this forty year period. For example, infant mortality decreased eleven percent during between 1921 and 1929, and 22 percent from 1930 to 1938 (Dorn 1940:33). The Middle West was the region with the lowest infant mortality rates recorded in 1930, though that designation was shared with the Northeastern states towards the end of the decade (Dorn 1940:33-34). In general, southern states had higher infant mortality rates than northern states. While data for Nebraska are not available prior to 1920, Nebraska's location in the Central Plains, on the edge of the Middle Western region, suggests that Nebraska likely had infant mortality rates that were also steadily decreasing throughout the 1930s. Overall, infant mortality decreased more than twenty percent during the 1930s, even though it was a decade of economic hardship and climatic reversals. Similarly, the rates of death for children under the age of fifteen decreased at about the same rate as infants, or even at a slightly faster rate for the same period.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the leading cause of death by infectious disease for persons between the ages of five and forty-four was tuberculosis (Armstrong, et al 1999:63). In 1918, the influenza pandemic caused mortality rates to jump, not only among the very young, but also among young adults (Morens and Fauci 2007:1020) (Figure 2.1). This trend, however, does not seem to be reflected in

Brownville. While the number of deaths did increase in Brownville in 1918, the young do not appear to have been disproportionately affected. National mortality rates for persons over the age of sixty-four were lower than one might expect for such a widespread and deadly illness. The reasons for this lower-than-expected mortality for persons over age sixty-four are unknown, though some research suggests that individuals who were exposed to and survived the 1847 influenza pandemic may have developed immunity which decreased mortality rates during the 1918 pandemic (Morens and Fauci 2007:1019). The dramatic rise in mortality for persons aged five to twenty-four and twenty-five to forty-four was highly unusual, as usually the very young and the very old are most susceptible to such diseases (Armstrong, et al 1999:63; “Pandemic Flu History” n.d.). The reasons for this anomaly remain unknown and continue to be debated, but evidence suggests that young adults may have succumbed to the illness because of strong immune system reactions which may have resulted “in enhanced tissue damage,” leading to death (Morens and Fauci 2007:1019). Additionally, individuals between the ages of twenty and forty may have not been exposed to similar influenza strains during their lifetimes, resulting in little immunity for persons in this cohort (Morens and Fauci 2007:1022).

Changes in Crude Infectious Disease Mortality Rates from 1900 to 1996

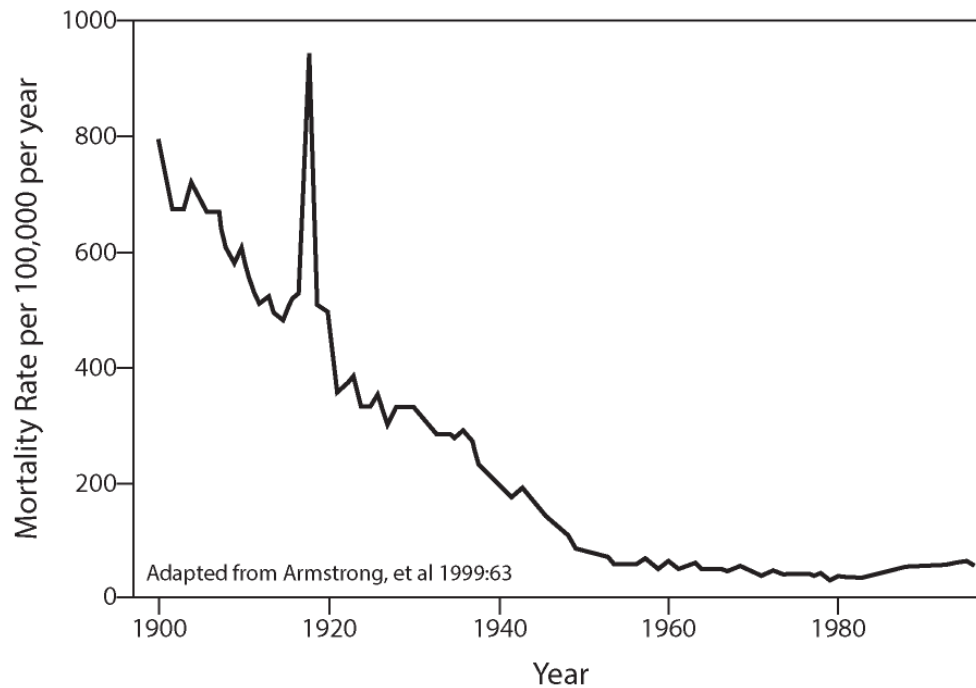


Figure 2.1: Changes in United States crude infectious disease mortality rates from 1900 to 1996. Note the spike in the 1918 from the influenza pandemic. (Source: Armstrong, et al 1999:63)

Mortality as a result of typhoid fever, dysentery, diphtheria, pertussis, and measles all declined significantly between 1900 and 1950 (Armstrong, et al 1999:64). Deaths from polio, however, decreased slightly between 1900 and 1940, then increased until 1955, after which the polio vaccine became widely employed (Armstrong, et al 1999:64). Deaths from syphilis rose from 1900 to 1920, stabilized for about the next twenty years, then dropped sharply after 1940 because of the introduction of penicillin as a treatment (Armstrong, et al 1999:64).

In the decade or so leading up to the Great Depression, mortality rates fluctuated sporadically and were generally somewhat lower during periods of recession (Granados, Diez Roux, and Portes 2009:17290). Though it is tempting to think of the 1930s as a decade of economic stagnation, the economy actually fluctuated continually, with periods of sluggishness interspersed with more productive episodes. As the economy expanded in the mid-1930s, mortality rates actually increased slightly (see below). The only major cause of death that increased during the Great Depression (1929-1939) was, not surprisingly, suicide, which crested along with unemployment, though it remained a relatively infrequent cause of death (Granados, et al 2009:17291).

A new cause of death, automobile accidents, increased with the expansion of automobile use in the 1920s, dipped notably in 1932, only to rise again in the middle of the decade before decreasing in frequency during the 1938 recession (Granados, Diez Roux, and Portes 2009:17292). Even infant mortality and deaths from tuberculosis decreased during the worst of the depression (though deaths from tuberculosis fluctuated notably during the 1920s) (Granados, Diez Roux, and Portes 2009:17292). Thus, while one might expect mortality rates to increase during periods of economic stress, when nutrition may have declined because of lowered economic standings, the opposite was true in the United States during the Great Depression and the related recessions (Granados, Diez Roux, and Portes 2009:17292).

While the reasons for this seemingly-counterintuitive pattern have not been identified with certainty, several hypotheses exist. Recessions may cause downturns in health that lag several years behind the actual recession, though Tapia Granados, et al (2009:17292) have argued that this is not the case for the United States in the years

immediately following the Great Depression. Instead, Granados, et al contend that, during periods of economic stability and expansion, individuals may participate in luxury activities, such as alcohol consumption and smoking, both of which are associated with various health risks, which they may not be able to afford during periods of recession (Tapia Granados, et al 2009:17293). Additionally, during periods of economic expansion, individuals may be under more stress at work, may work longer hours, and may, thus, be more likely to be victims of work-related accidents. Air pollution may also increase during times of greater economic output, exacerbating pre-existing long-term health conditions, such as lung disease (Tapia Granados, et al 2009:17294; Chay and Greenstone 2003:1160-1161). Economic expansion may also lead to increased “social isolation, lack of home care, and decreases in social support” for the sick and injured, as jobs pull family members away from their homes (Tapia Granados, et al 2009:17294). While short-term behavioral modifications and environmental changes may seem insignificant in altering one’s health, research has shown this is not the case (Ruhm 2007:839). Infant mortality, coronary heart disease, cancer, respiratory diseases, infectious diseases, and motor vehicle accidents are just a few of the causes of death that increase during periods of economic upturn (Ruhm 2000:646; Ruhm 2007:843; Chay and Greenstone 2003:1160; Tapia Granados 2005:400). Ruhm (2000:647), for example, has demonstrated that a one percent rise in unemployment translates to as much as “a 0.5 to 0.6 decrease in total mortality.” As surprising as it seems, economic downturns, such as the Great Depression and associated recessions of the 1930s, are undeniably associated with decreased overall mortality rates, as a result of environmental and behavioral factors.

In the 1930s, when the United States was witnessing dramatic declines in infant mortality, especially for infants over one month of age, the greatest decreases in cause of death came from gastrointestinal diseases, particularly diarrheal diseases (Dorn 1940:35). The lowest decreases in causes of infant mortality came from various natal and prenatal causes of death, such as injuries at birth, birth defects, and diseases transmitted from the mother, among other similar things. Thus, as reflected by the high neonatal mortality rates, the first few weeks of an infant's life were the most dangerous; once they survived their first month, infants had an ever-increasing chance of survival, meaning life expectancy at birth continued to increase over time (Dorn 1940:35-36).

In general, the early-to-mid twentieth century was characterized by increasing life expectancies. Much of this stems from dramatic decreases in infant and child mortality. Advances in scientific understanding of infectious diseases led to greater prevention of the spread of diseases, as well as the development of more effective treatments for such illnesses. Public health programs taught the American public that they could help prevent the transmission of serious or fatal illnesses by relatively simple methods, including hand washing and safe food handling, while higher standards of living resulted in a better-nourished population whose bodies were able to more effectively fight off infections.

From 1955 to 1968, age-adjusted mortality rates in the United States declined only about two percent (Hoyert 2012:5). This appears to be the result of increases in deaths from chronic diseases, particularly those caused or worsened by smoking, such as cancer and chronic lung diseases (Hoyert 2012:5). Because individuals were living longer, they became more likely to die as the result of these chronic conditions. By the middle of the twentieth century, infectious diseases were much less likely to cause death

than their non-infectious counterparts, such as cancer or heart disease (Kunitz 1984:559-560). The dramatic decreases in crude mortality rates from infectious diseases that began around this time were likely influenced by the introductions of antibiotics, sulfonamides, and antimycobacterial drugs as treatments for various infections, though in several cases mortality from such diseases started to decline slightly before the introduction of these drugs, suggesting that increases in economic status and public health campaigns also continued to play significant roles in improving American's health (Kunitz 1984:559-560; McKinlay and McKinlay 1977:422-423; Jayachandran et al 2010).

Between 1969 and 2010, medical advances in preventing, diagnosing, and treating various forms of cardiovascular disease resulted in a 41 percent decline in age-adjusted mortality (Hoyert 2012:5). This decline occurred even though deaths from cancer and chronic lung diseases actually increased from 1969 to 1990 and 1969 to 1998, respectively (Hoyert 2012:5). The leading causes of death continued to be cardiovascular disease, cancer, and stroke from 1935 to 2010 (Hoyert 2012:1). This shift does not mean that infectious diseases no longer presented a threat to the American population. A handful of infectious outbreaks occurred during this period, including Legionnaires' disease in 1977, AIDS after 1980, and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in 1993 and later (Jones, et al 2012:2335). The impact of AIDS was significant enough to cause a statistical increase in infectious disease mortality rates among persons aged 25-44 years and 45-64 years (Armstrong, et al 1999:63). Bolstering this slight increase was an increase in deaths of persons age 65 and older, largely due to more deaths from pneumonia and influenza (Armstrong, et al 1999:63).

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, the rapid increase in life expectancy at birth and the related decrease in mortality rates were starting to slow down (Olshansky, et al 2005:1138). For the first time since the 1950s, infant mortality in the United States plateaued briefly during the first few years of the 21st century (MacDorman and Mathews 2009:671). The greatest differences in infant mortality during this period appear to be related to the economic status of mothers. Mothers who have access to prenatal care and better nutrition give birth to infants with lower risks of infection, malnourishment, and other preventable diseases (MacDorman and Mathews 2009:671-672). Though the United States' infant mortality rate continues to decline, the country lags considerably behind other developed nations and the gap continues to grow, reflecting the skewed distribution of wealth in the country (Woolf and Aron 2013:65-68).

By the year 2000, the leading causes of death stemmed from what can be described as “modifiable behavioral factors”: tobacco use (cancer and chronic lung disease), poor diet and lack of physical activity (obesity-related causes, such as diabetes and heart disease), and alcohol consumption (liver disease and cancer) (Mokdad, et al 2004). Smoking-related disease would, by the end of the twentieth century, account for about twenty percent of deaths in the United States (Hummer, et al 1998:285). Some researchers are now predicting that the increase in life expectancy that has been occurring for more than the past century may actually cease, the result of wide-spread obesity that now plagues the population of the United States (Olshansky, et al 2005:1138, 1140). Olshansky, et al (2005:1141) have argued that “the prevalence and severity of obesity and its complications will worsen and the rates of obesity-induced death will rise.” While the impact of AIDS has declined recently, other threats which, either alone or in conjunction

with obesity, that have developed include infections acquired in hospitals, including those that are resistant to antibiotics, possibly as a result of overuse of antibiotic therapies (Olshansky et al 2005:1142).

Throughout most of the twentieth century, the United States as a whole underwent a steady decline in mortality rates, with a typical decrease of around one to two percent per year, with the exception of the period from 1955 to 1965, when mortality rates remained basically unchanged (Cutler and Meara 2004:333). In the early decades of the twentieth century, mortality rates were highest among the very young, and life expectancies were low. Over time, due to improvements in infectious disease prevention and treatment, life expectancies increased, rising from 47.3 in 1900 to 78.7 in 2000 (CDC 2012:“Health,” Table 18). Public health initiatives and improved nutrition led to the vast decreases in child and infant mortality across the country during the first half of the century. In the middle of the twentieth century, medical advances, such as the development and use of antibiotic therapies decreased death rates among all age groups.

Infant mortality rates decreased radically throughout the twentieth century, from approximately 100 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1900 down to 6.89 per 1,000 a century later. Life expectancy at birth rose from just over seventy-five years for Caucasian women and about 68 years for Caucasian men in 1970 to just over 80 years and seventy-five years, respectively, in 2008 (Arias 2012:6). The greatest differences in life expectancy at birth and infant mortality existed among economic classes and ethnic groups, with individuals in lower economic classes facing higher infant mortality rates and shorter life expectancies compared to middle and upper-class Caucasians (Weitz 1994:130). Overall, increase in economic standing appears to be one of the leading

causes of a decrease in mortality rates (Birchenall 2007:351). This is because increased economic standing results in decreased infant and child mortality, as well as increased health of adults and lowered adult mortality rates (Birchenall 2007:351; Weitz 1994:130-134). Furthermore, social welfare programs, such as Medicaid, introduced in the 1960s, helped to significantly decrease infant mortality rates, which had leveled off in the 1950s and 1960s (CDC 1999:par 6). As a result, infant mortality rates dropped again in the 1970s. Put simply, mortality and morbidity rates for all leading causes of death decreased as social status increased (Weiz 1994:130).

By the last several decades of the century, better diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease led to increasing survival rates for older Americans, while improved prenatal care decreased the occurrence of low birth weight newborns, thus improving their chances of survival. Additional influences on decreasing mortality rates included greater access to medical care and decreases in preventable causes of death (including, for example, cancer and other diseases caused by smoking). A successful public health campaign instituted in the 1990s began educating the American public about the dangers of placing infants to sleep on their stomachs, which led to more than a 50 percent decline in deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (CDC 1999:par 7). However, these improvements in treatment and prevention are beginning to be overshadowed by problems relating to poor diet and lack of exercise, which threaten to shorten Americans' life expectancies.

Mortality Trends in Brownville, Nebraska

Specific data on mortality rates are difficult to obtain for Nebraska prior to 1920, and for Brownville, specifically, or even Nemaha County this has proven nearly impossible. However, there are a few ways to gain insight into mortality trends in Brownville. One way is to plot the percentage of burials in Walnut Grove Cemetery for various age groups each decade, which allows one to observe general changes over time. More specific insights into the specific causes of death in Brownville are available from the U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, which are available for the years 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1885. Additionally, federal reports listing cause of death for the entire state of Nebraska are available for the years 1920 through 1940. It is also possible to plot the raw number of burials per year. Obviously, these raw data will be heavily influenced by overall population changes, though it will allow for the identification of spikes in deaths. Piecing together the patterns of causes of death and mortality estimates makes it possible to more clearly understand how Brownville compared to the nation as a whole, as discussed above.

By calculating the ages at death of all individuals (when feasible) buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery by decade, it is possible to gain some insights into the basic changes in life expectancies of Brownville's population throughout time. It is important to note that the data are likely skewed in several instances. In the early decades, there were almost certainly more infant deaths than appear in the data. This is because many of the gravestones only include one inscribed date, the date of death, so it is impossible to confirm the age of the individual. In many cases, the individual may have the same birth and death date, as rates of stillbirth and death at birth were quite high in the late

nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. Additionally, many early gravestones in Brownville are in such poor condition that they are unreadable and were, therefore, excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, the town's population was quite small for the first decade, resulting in only 21 individuals for this data set. A similar difficulty exists with the data from the 2010s: only eight individuals were buried during the two years for which data were collected in the cemetery (2010-2011). Regardless of these impediments, the compilation and analysis of these data have provided worthwhile results.

Figures 2.2-2.18 (below) illustrate the distributions of age at death in Brownville for each decade from the 1850s through the first two years of the 2010s. While the data for the 1850s are incomplete for the reasons outlined above, the trends for the subsequent decades demonstrate the expanding life expectancies that developed over time across the country. During the 1860s and 1870s, the typical age at death fell towards the end of the spectrum, with higher death rates apparently among the relatively young (under the age of about 30 years) (Figures 2.3-2.4). In the 1870s, more than 21 percent of the deaths were children aged one to four years. During the 1880s, the distribution leveled out, with slightly higher death rates among children aged one to four years, as well as for adults between the ages of forty to forty-nine and sixty to sixty-nine (Figure 2.55).

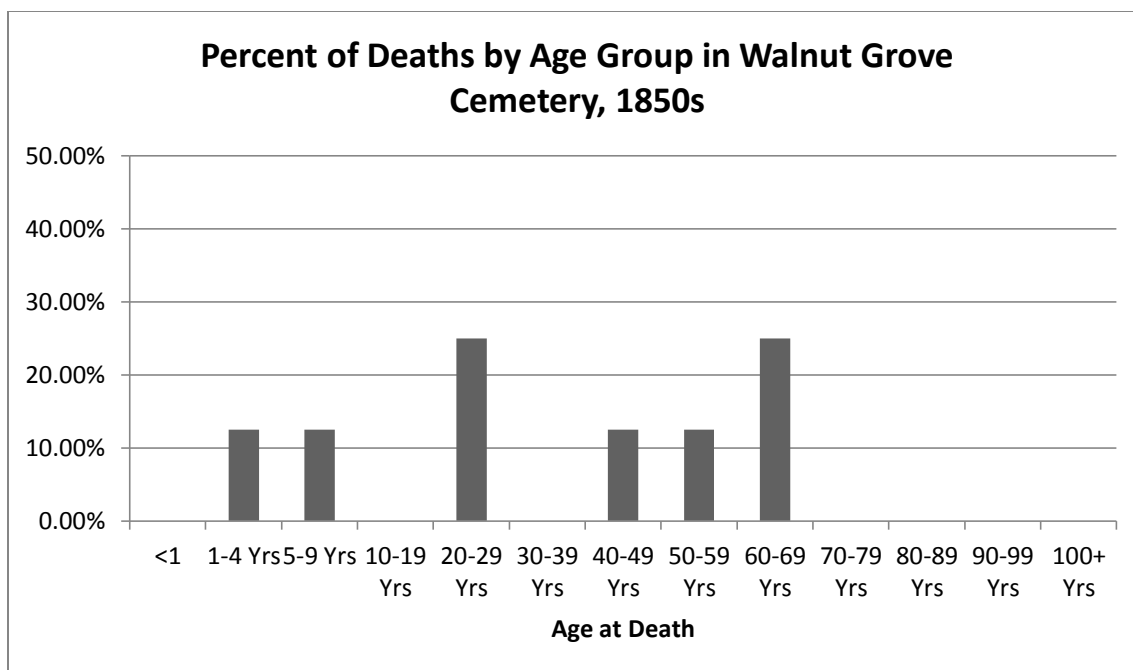


Figure 2.2: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1850s.

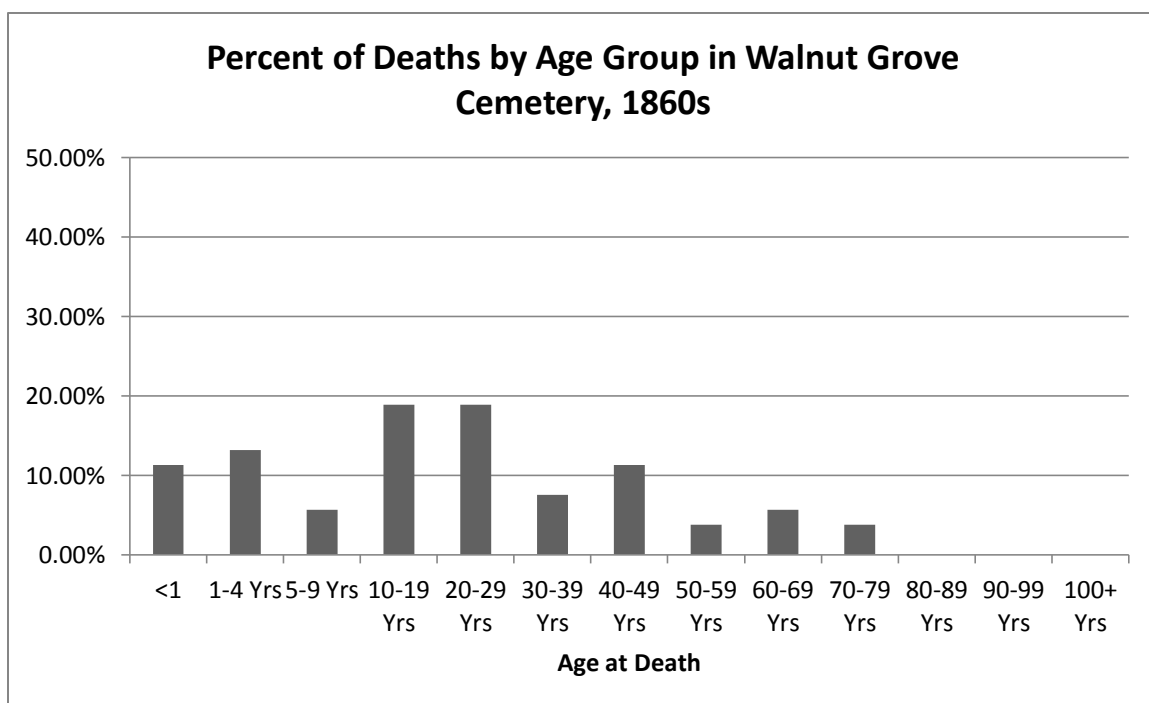


Figure 2.3: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1860s.

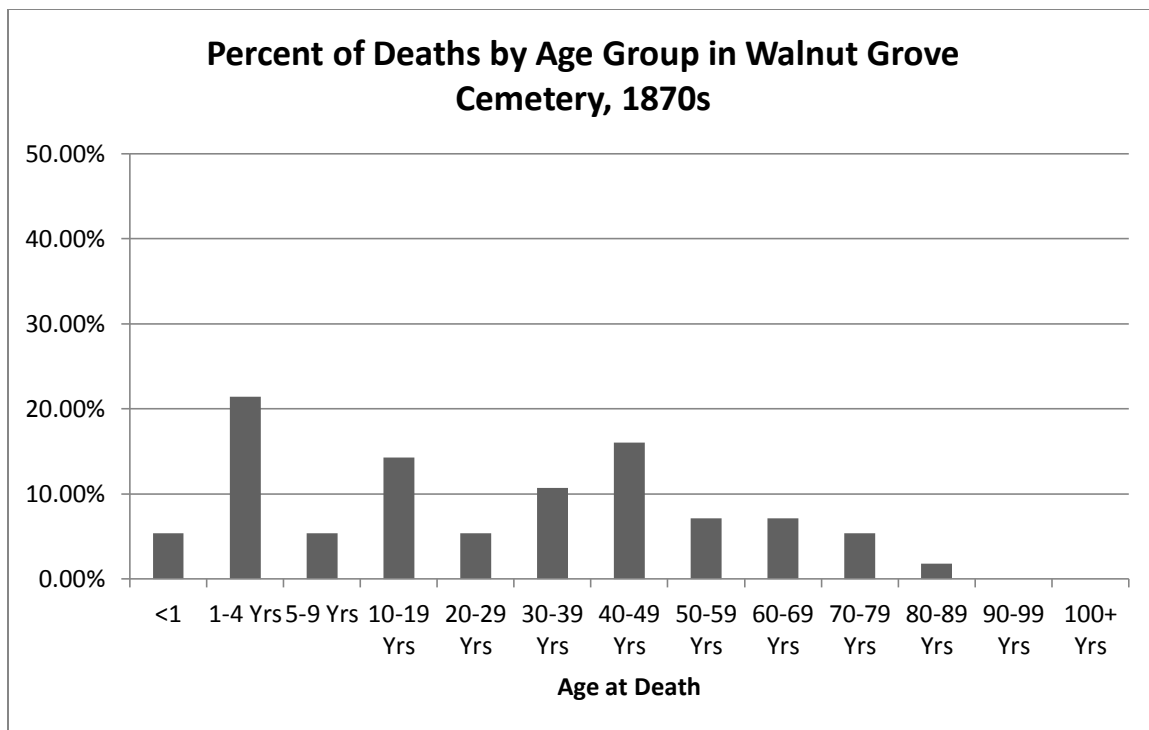


Figure 2.4: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1870s.

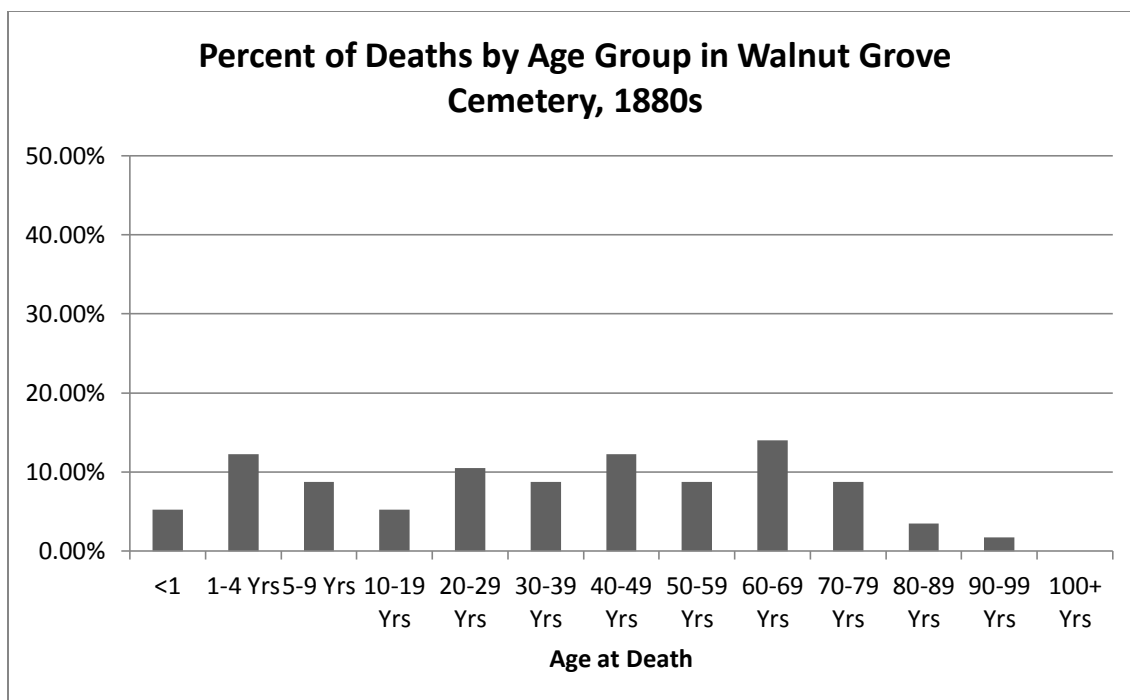


Figure 2.5: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1880s.

The 1890s marked a significant shift in the age distribution, as infant and child mortality dropped significantly and the majority of deaths occurred among persons aged sixty years and older (Figure 2.6). Death rates for persons between the ages of ten and nineteen years were still fairly high, though, accounting for more than thirteen percent of all deaths that decade. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the majority of deaths occurred among persons aged sixty to seventy-nine years old, as the rate of death leveled out for individuals between the ages of ten and nineteen (Figure 2.7).

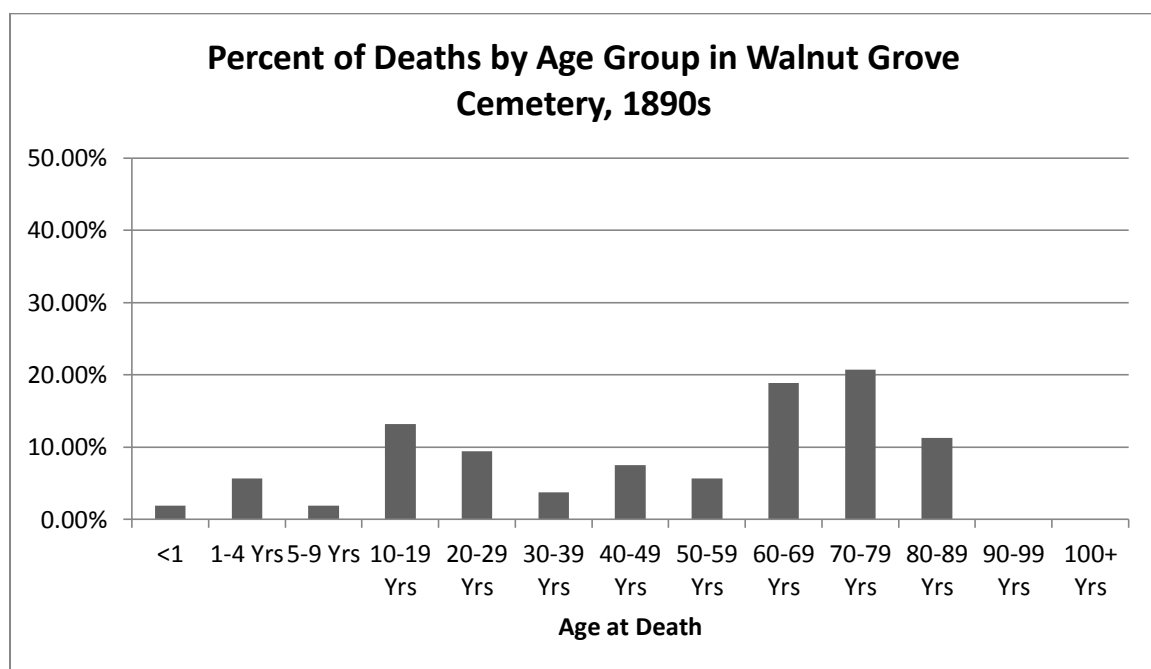


Figure 2.6: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 1890s.

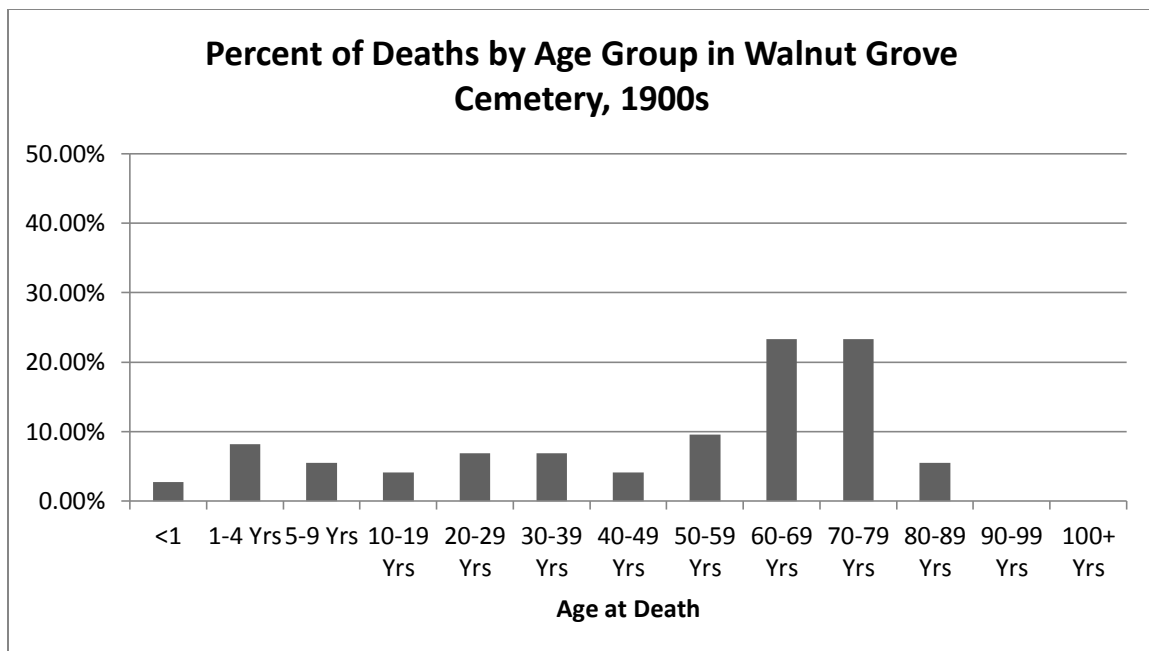


Figure 2.7: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 1900s.

Life expectancies continued to increase during the 1910s, with the largest percentage of deaths occurring among persons aged eighty to eighty-nine (Figure 2.8). For the first time, it appears, significant numbers of individuals were surviving into their eighties. Also for the first time, there were no deaths of children between the ages of five and nine, a trend which would continue to the present day. In the 1920s, the trend continued, with the largest percentage of persons dying in their eighties in that decade (Figure 2.9).

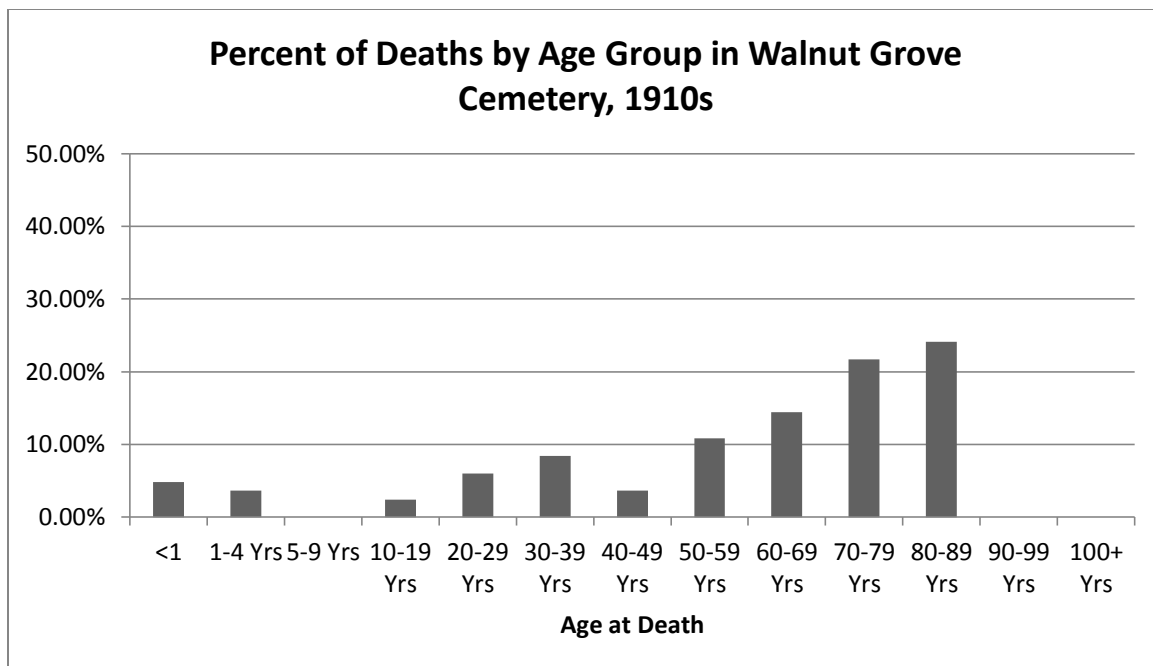


Figure 2.8: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1910s.

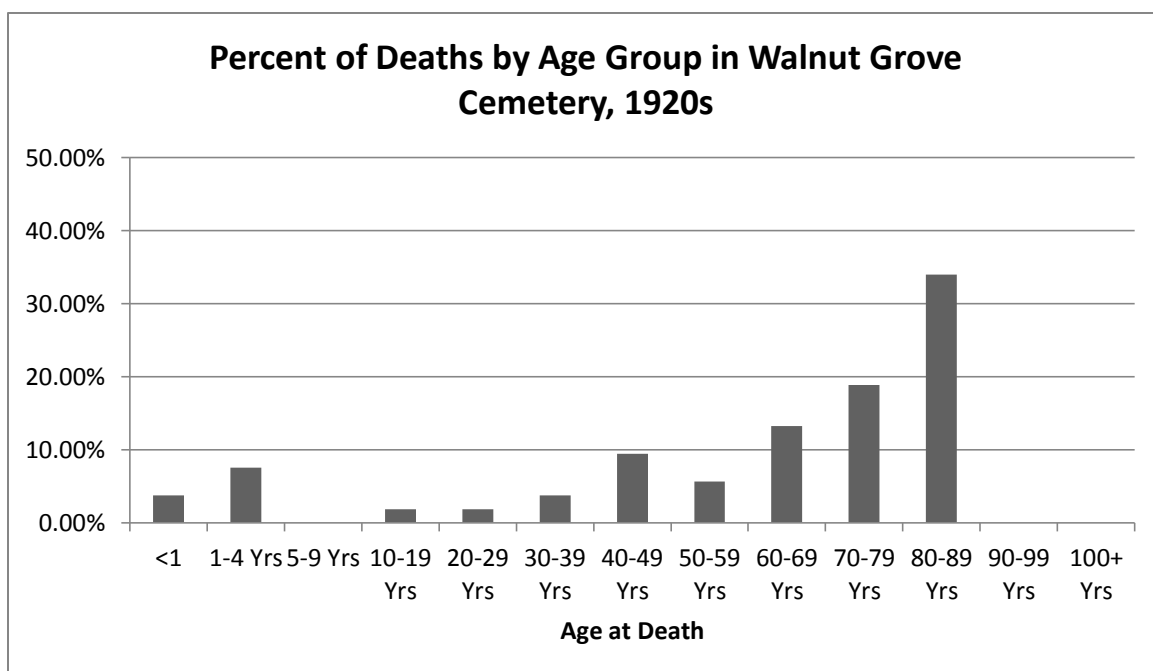


Figure 2.9: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1920s.

In the 1930s, a pattern developed that would persist through the 1980s: very few individuals passed away before the age of sixty years, and most individuals were in their seventies or eighties at their time of death (Figures 2.10-2.15). Death before age fifty had become quite rare. Brownville's population mirrored that of the rest of the United States, with infant mortality becoming an unusual occurrence, unlike earlier decades when the death of a baby was commonplace.

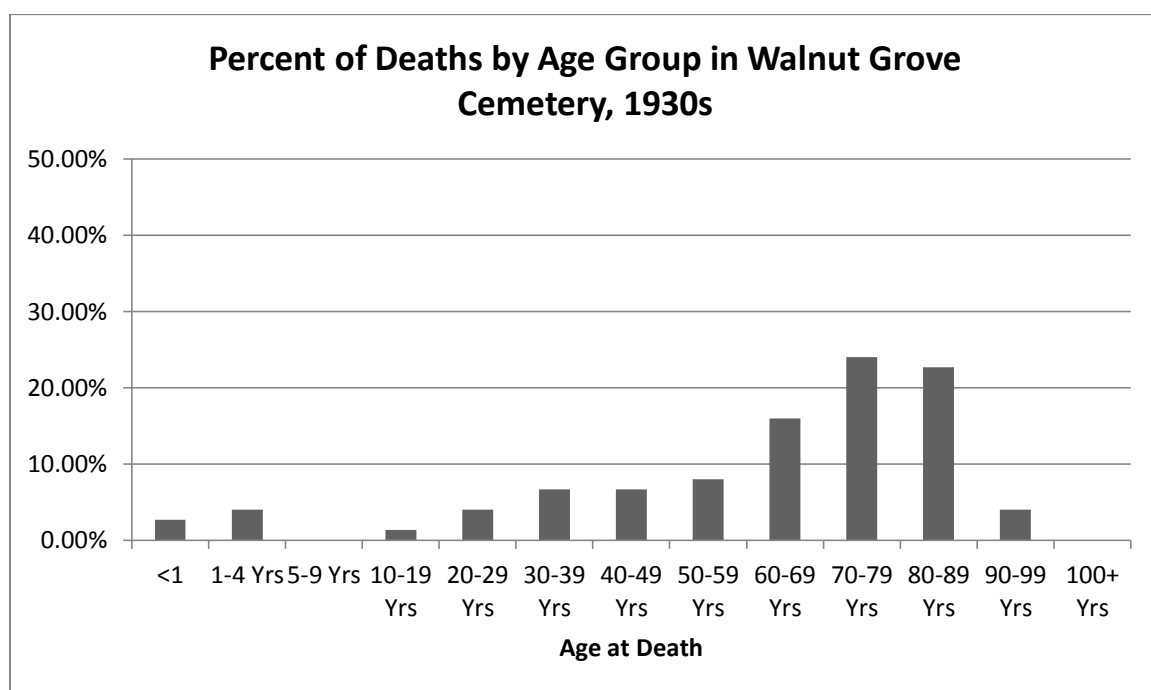


Figure 2.10: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1930s.

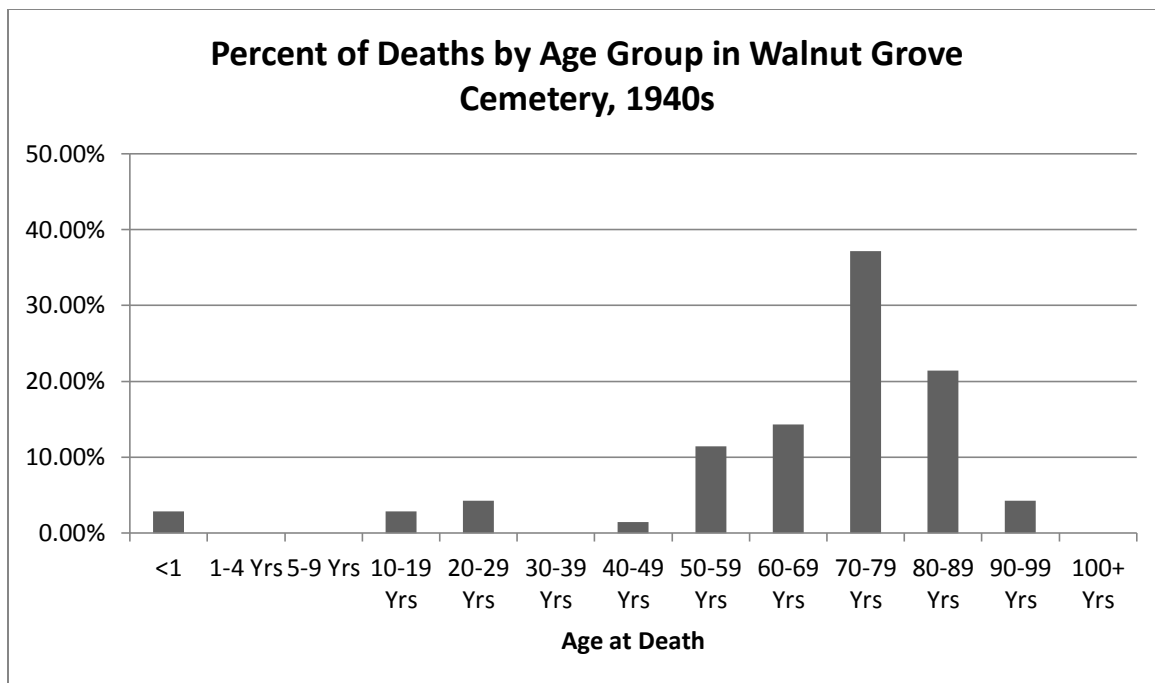


Figure 2.11: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1940s.

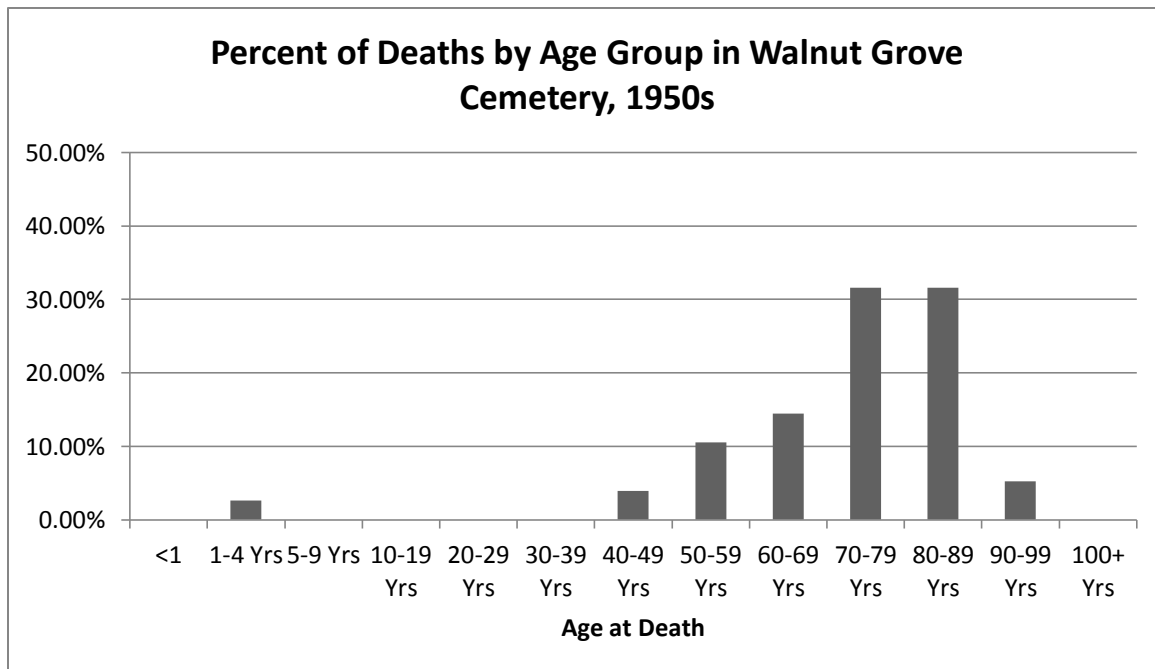


Figure 2.12: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1950s.

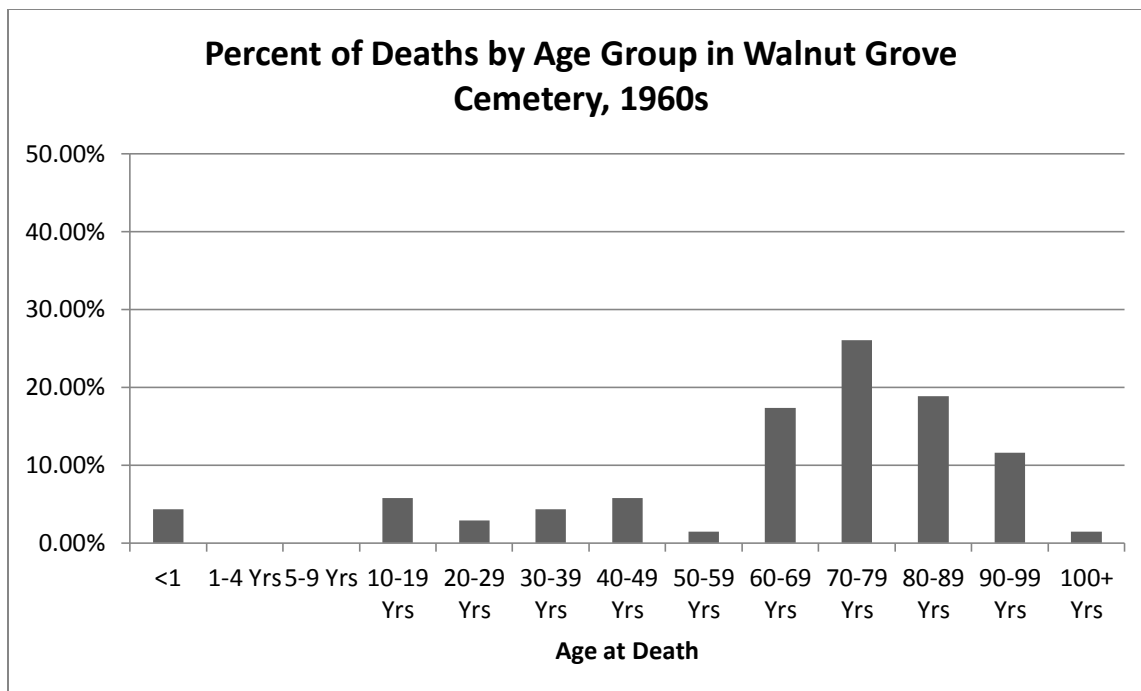


Figure 2.13: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1960s.

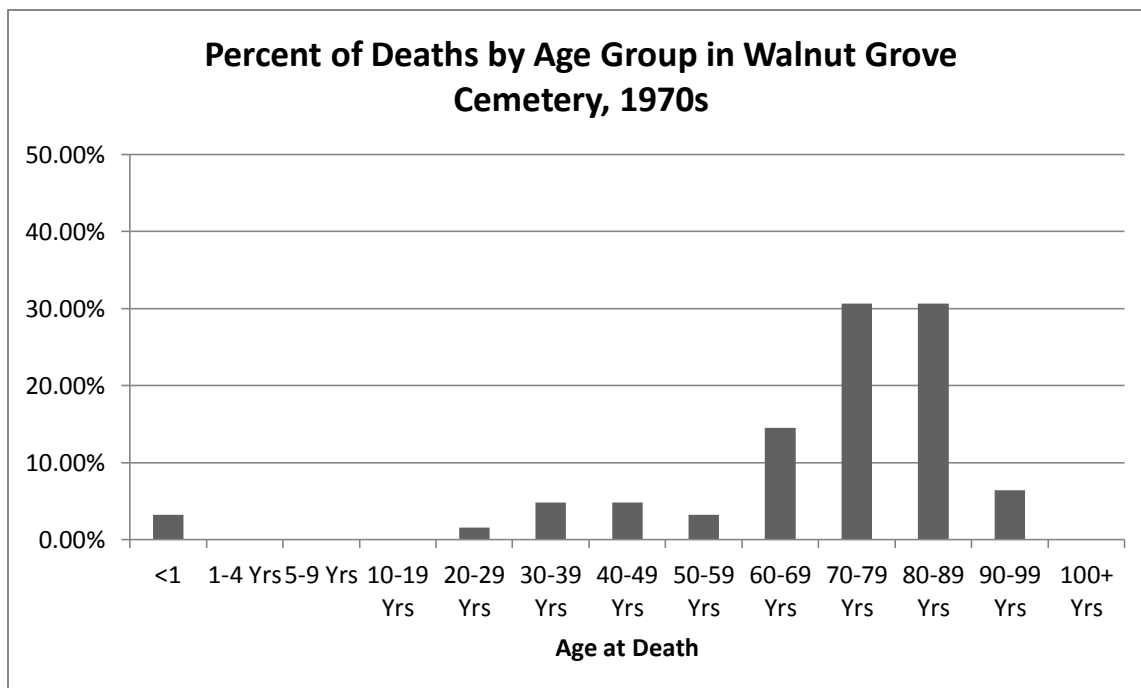


Figure 2.14: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville's cemetery in the 1970s.

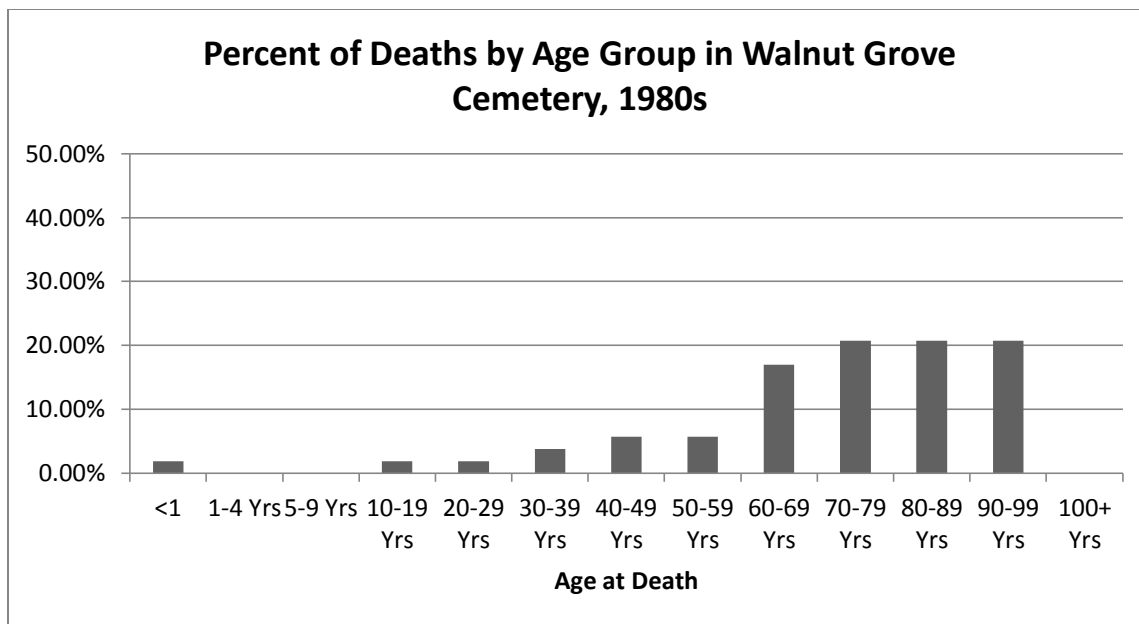


Figure 2.15: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 1980s.

During the 1990s, nearly forty percent of individuals buried in Walnut Grove were between the ages of eighty and eighty-nine, reflecting increased life expectancies as well as the increasing number of individuals in this age bracket (Figure 2.16). The only individuals younger than sixty who died that decade were two persons in their fifties, one person aged forty-eight, and one twenty-nine-year old. In the 2000s, however, the trend shifted very slightly, with the majority of individuals between the ages of seventy and seventy-nine at death, rather than in their eighties (Figure 2.17). The first two years of the 2010s also had a majority of individuals who died in their seventies, though only eight burials took place during those two years, making it difficult to draw effective conclusions (Figure 2.18). Whether or not the slight shift in the average age at death from the eighties to the seventies for both the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s is reflective of the possible decrease in life expectancy predicted by Olshansky, et al, in

2005 is unclear, if intriguing. Even so, only two individuals died below the age of fifty in the 2000s, and no one died before the age of seventy during the early 2010s.

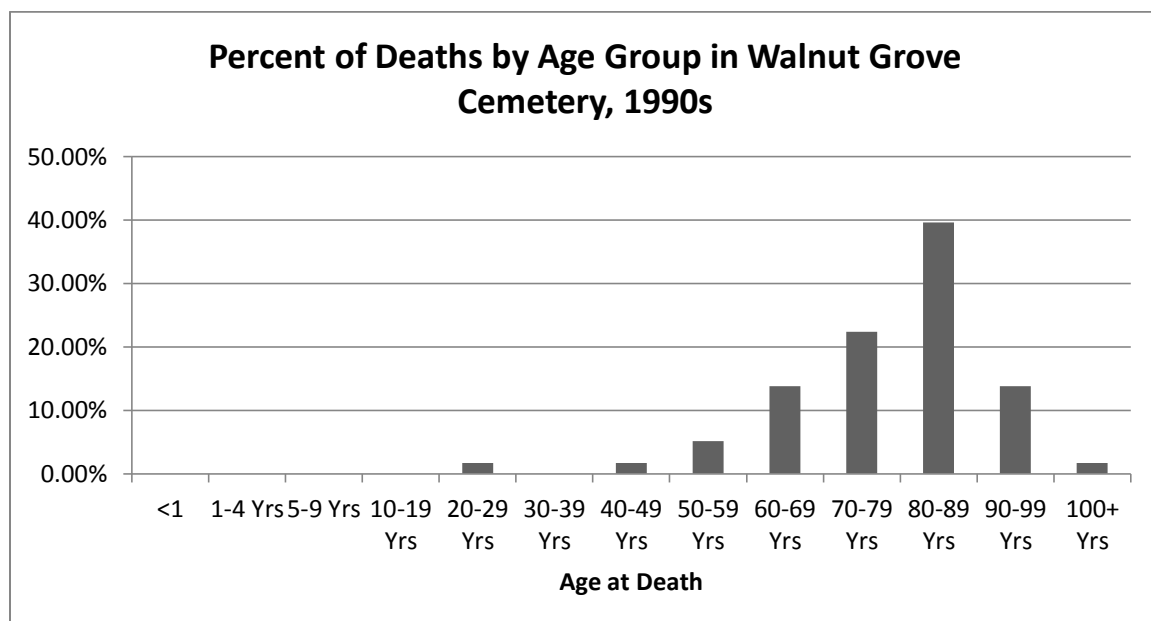


Figure 2.16: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 1990s.

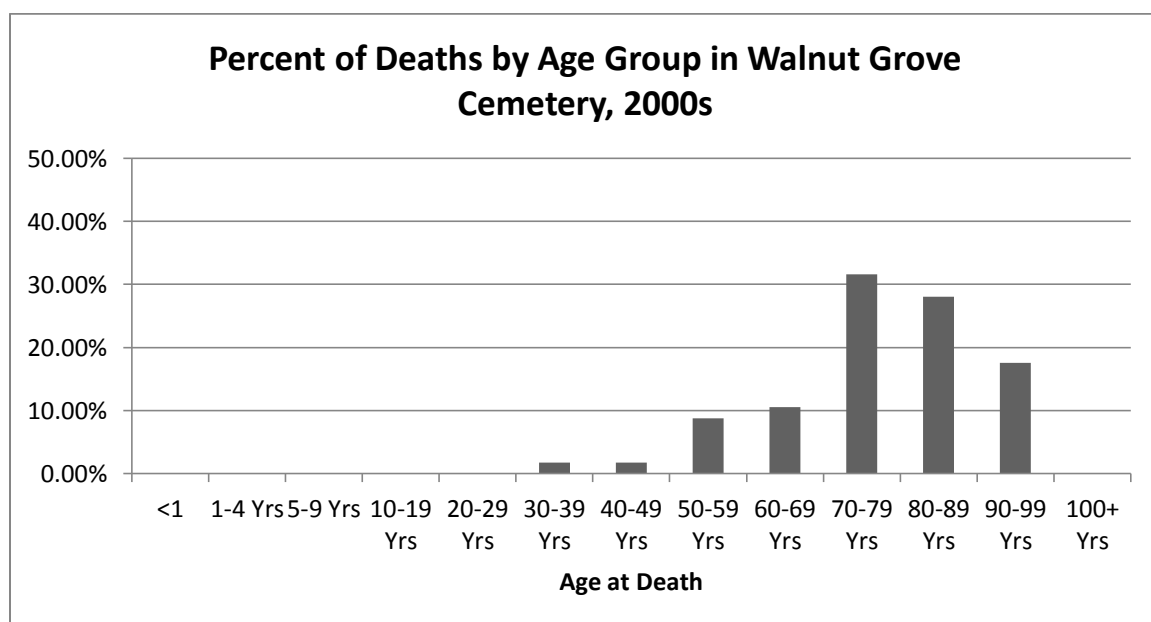


Figure 2.17: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 2000s.

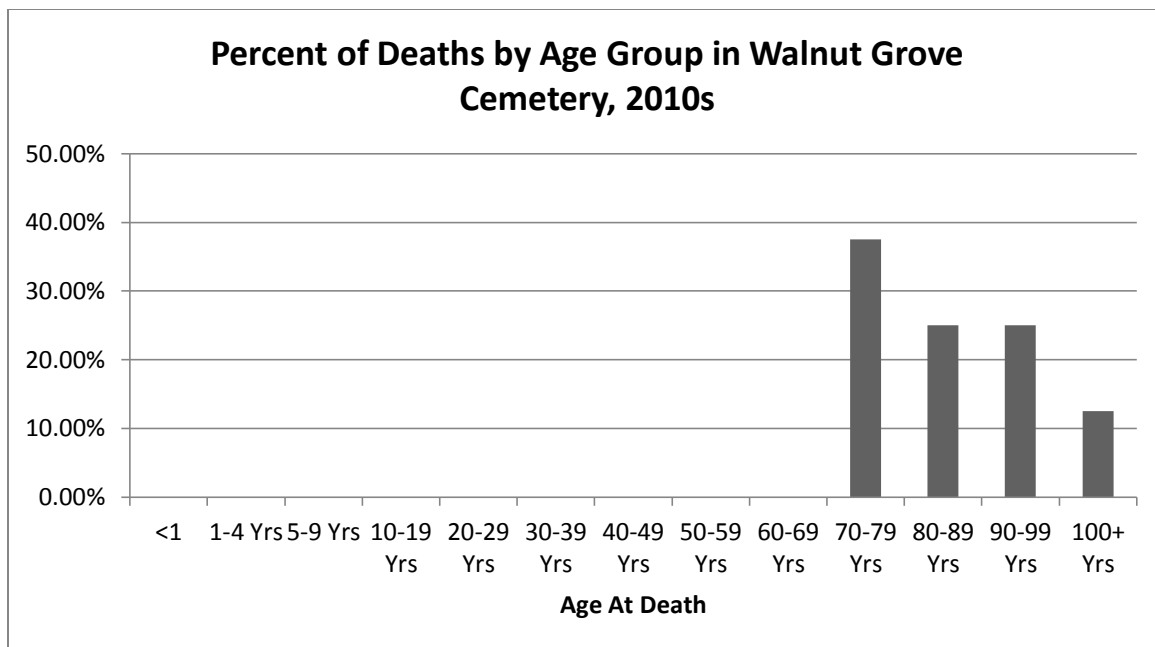


Figure 2.18: Percent of deaths by age group in Brownville’s cemetery in the 2010s.

An analysis of the Federal Census Mortality Schedules for Nemaha County from the years 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1885 provides insights into the causes of death for residents in and around Brownville. In 1860, the leading cause of death was whooping cough (pertussis), with 12.5 percent of deaths (seven out of 64) attributed to this bacterial respiratory disease. Pertussis is a highly contagious disease characterized by severe coughing fits which can be particularly deadly for infants (CDC 2012:“Pertussis” par 1,4). All seven cases were individuals four years and younger, with five infants aged four months or younger. The next most common cause of death in 1860 in Nemaha County was typhoid fever. Five out of sixty-four (or 7.8 percent) of deaths that year were attributed to this bacterial infection, which causes a high, sustained fever and other general malaise (CDC 2013:“Typhoid Fever”). The disease spreads easily when food or water is handled by a person who carries the disease or when water sources are

contaminated by human waste. Around twenty percent of untreated cases are fatal (CDC 2013: “Typhoid Fever”).

The 1870 Federal Census Mortality Schedule indicates that the most common cause of death in Nemaha County that year was attributed to various lower respiratory diseases, most commonly pneumonia, consumption (tuberculosis), and measles (rubeola). Out of 84 recorded deaths, twelve (14.3 percent) were the result of lower respiratory infections. An additional twelve were attributed to consumption and the related scrofula (a swelling of lymph nodes, most often caused by tuberculosis) (NIH 2013: “Scrofula”). Consumption, now known as tuberculosis, is a bacterial infection that is spread through the air via close contact with infected individuals (CDC 2013: “Tuberculosis”). While the disease typically affects the lungs, it also can infect most other parts of the body. Eleven deaths were the result of measles, nine of which were children or infants under the age of three years (including six one-year-olds, an infant of nine months, and a one month old infant). Measles, also called rubeola, is a viral respiratory disease that also presents with a rash. The disease spreads easily through the air by contact with infected individuals, and exposure to the virus by an individual without immunity almost always results in contraction of the disease (CDC 2013: “Measles (Rubeola)”).

In 1880, 143 deaths were recorded for Nemaha County in the Federal Census Mortality Schedule. Twenty-nine of the deaths (20.3 percent) were the result of various upper respiratory infections, especially diphtheria and croup. Diphtheria is an extremely deadly disease caused by a bacterial toxin that causes a thick coating on the back of the throat and nasal passages, which can block an individual’s airway and cause death (CDC 2013: “Diphtheria – Fact Sheet for Parents”). The disease can also cause abnormal heart

rhythms, heart failure, and paralysis. Mortality rates for infected persons are around ten percent, but for children under age five, up to twenty percent succumb to the disease (CDC 2013:“Diphtheria – Fact Sheet for Parents”).

The second leading cause of death was various lower respiratory infections, especially tuberculosis and pneumonia, claiming nineteen lives (13.3 percent of recorded deaths). The same year, fourteen individuals (9.8 percent of all deaths in the county) died from scarlet fever, a bacterial group A *Streptococcus* (CDC 2013: “Scarlet Fever: A Group A Streptococcal Infection). The disease includes a sore throat and fever, followed a few days later by a rash, and some individuals also experience nausea and chills. Scarlet fever is spread by close contact with infected persons, and death generally comes from associated complications from invasive group A *Streptococcus* (Laurance 2009:par 6). Other notable causes of death in Nemaha County in 1880 included various forms of heart disease, measles (rubeola), consumption (tuberculosis), and problems stemming from birth, such as congenital infections, “want of vitality,” and stillbirth.

Eighty-nine deaths were recorded in Nemaha County in 1885 on the state Mortality Schedule. Measles (rubeola) was the leading cause of these deaths, with eleven out of the 89 deaths (12.4 percent) attributed to the disease. Diphtheria and consumption (tuberculosis) each accounted for nine deaths (10.1 percent, each), and inflammation of the bowels claimed seven lives (7.9 percent). Only one of the cases of inflammation of the bowels occurred in an individual over the age of seven months, suggesting that it was a disease that either generally struck the very young or was particularly fatal for infants. The actual disease that caused the vaguely-described inflammation of the bowels is unclear, though it may have been a diarrheal disease with any number of possible causes.

Interestingly, though it was not a major cause of death, this is the first mortality schedule for Nemaha County that includes “old age” as a cause of death, and three individuals were listed as deceased due to this cause. While it is enticing to jump to the conclusion that this shift was the result of increased life expectancy, it is not a large enough sample to draw this conclusion.

What is clear from these four mortality schedules is that infectious disease was a major cause of death in Nemaha County between the years of 1860 and 1885. All of the major causes of death recorded in these four reports were infectious diseases, which generally spread easily from person to person. While a handful of cardiovascular causes of death are scattered through the lists, it was not until 1880 when this non-infectious cause of death began to claim a significant number of lives (nine out of 107, or 8.4 percent).

After 1885, death rates and causes of death in Nebraska remain a mystery for several decades, as the 1890 Federal Census Mortality Schedules, along with several other special schedules, were lost to a fire in 1896 (Blake 1996:par 6). The 1900 and 1910 schedules were destroyed in accordance with a Congressional order after the data were compiled (USGenWeb n.d.:par 5). Thus, the next available data appeared in 1920, when Nebraska was first included among the Death-registration States (Linder and Grove 1947:97).

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.19 summarize the age-specific death rates in Nebraska for the years 1920, 1930, and 1940. The age-specific death rate is the mortality rate calculated for a specific age group, expressed as a factor of 1,000. While a massive drop in specific death rates for all ages did not occur between 1920 and 1940, a significant

decrease did take place for infants under one year of age and young children between the ages of one and four years. The death rate for infants dropped from 74.1 in 1920 to 53.2 in 1930 and then again to 39.3 by 1940 (Linder and Grove 1947:155). Death rates for children between the ages of one and four years made a more moderate, yet still significant, decline from 7.1 in 1920 to 4.7 in 1930 and to 2.1 by 1940 (Linder and Grove 1947:155). By 1940, the death rate for persons age 85 and older had risen to 238 (from 226.6 in 1930 and 218.8 in 1920), indicating that more individuals in Nebraska were living into their 80s by that point.

	All	<1	1-4	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
1920	10	74.1	7.1	2.2	3.4	4.7	6	8.5	17.4	42.9	103.7	218.8
1930	9.6	53.2	4.7	1.8	2.4	3.3	4.5	8.9	18.3	44.4	102.6	226.6
1940	9.6	39.3	2.1	0.9	1.5	2.1	3.5	7	16.2	39.6	102	238

Table 2.1: Specific death rate by age in years in Nebraska for the years 1920, 1930, and 1940. (Source: Vital Statistics Rates in the United States 1920-1940

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsus/vsrates1900_40.pdf)

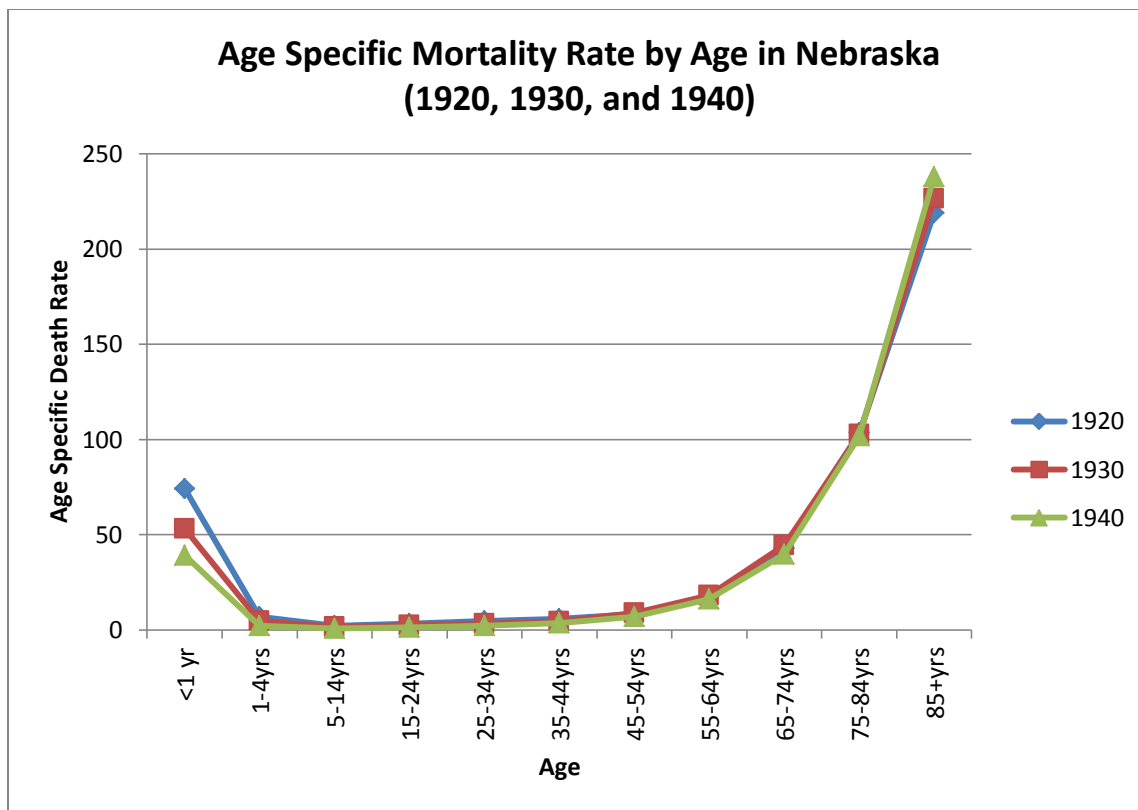


Figure 2.19: Changes in age specific mortality rate by age in Nebraska for the years 1920, 1930, and 1940.

In general, Nebraska tended to have lower death rates from many diseases than the rest of the country as a whole between 1920 and 1929 (Steuart 1922:12, 30, 37-38, 50, 52-54; Chapin and Steuart 1932: 26, 34). Table 2.2 outlines the changes in rates of various causes of death in Nebraska for the years 1920, 1929, and 1945. Like the United States as a whole, deaths from infectious diseases declined significantly during this period, while heart disease and cancer claimed more lives (Steuart 1922, Chapin and Steuart 1932, Dunn 1947). While part of the increase in deaths attributed to cancer and heart disease could be the result of better or more specific diagnosis, the declines in deaths caused by infectious disease suggests a much more significant shift had occurred.

Persons were living longer and succumbing more often not to illnesses caused by infections, but by conditions that were either inherited or due to lifestyle or environmental causes or simply the result of old age.

Cause of Death	1920 (%)	1929 (%)	1945%
All causes	100.00%	100.00%	100.00 %
Typhoid Fever	0.45%	0.19%	0.01%
Malaria	0.01%	0.01%	0.02%
Smallpox	0.17%	0.07%	N/A
Measles	0.93%	0.25%	0.04%
Scarlet Fever (Scarlatina)	0.46%	0.39%	0.05%
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	1.90%	0.45%	0.03%
Diphtheria and Croup	0.86%	0.37%	0.10%
Influenza	5.76%	4.80%	N/A
Erysipelas	0.39%	0.34%	N/A
TB, lungs	3.55%	2.64%	N/A
TB, meningitis	0.25%	0.16%	N/A
TB, other	0.52%	N/A	N/A
TB, all	N/A	3.23%	1.40%
Rheumatism	0.48%	N/A	N/A
Acute Rheumatic Fever	N/A	0.22%	0.08%
Cancer and Other Malignant Tumors	7.70%	10.11%	14.04%
Diabetes	2.07%	2.27%	2.76%
Meningitis	0.54%	0.24%	0.10%
Cerebral Hemorrhage and Softening	6.16%	8.92%	N/A
Heart Disease	9.30%	18.78%	28.58%
Bronchitis	0.71%	0.25%	N/A
Pneumonia, All Forms	8.59%	3.63%	4.84%
Other Respiratory Diseases	1.04%	0.04%	N/A
Diarrhea & Enteritis, under 2 Years of Age	2.07%	0.75%	0.44%
Appendicitis and Typhitis	1.92%	2.03%	0.69%
Hernia/Intestinal Obstruction	1.13%	0.87%	N/A
Cirrhosis of the Liver	0.45%	0.65%	0.70%
Kidney Disease	5.23%	0.42%	6.73%
Puerperal Septicemia	0.59%	0.67%	N/A
Other Puerperal Causes	1.12%	0.34%	N/A
Congenital Debility and Malformation	6.46%	0.45%	4.24%

Violent Deaths (Except Suicide)	6.43%	N/A	N/A
Accident	N/A	7.56%	6.49%
Homicide	N/A	0.31%	0.14%
Suicide	1.20%	1.62%	1.27%
Syphilis	N/A	N/A	0.57%
Polio	N/A	N/A	0.08%
Pellagra	N/A	N/A	0.01%
Alcoholism	N/A	N/A	0.21%
Intracranial Lesions of Vascular Origin	N/A	N/A	11.17%
Stomach Ulcer	N/A	N/A	0.60%
Unknown or Ill-defined	1.33%	0.72%	2.13%
All Other Causes	20.25%	N/A	11.18%

Table 2.2: Percentage of All Deaths for Selected Causes in Nebraska, Excluding Stillbirths (1920, 1929, and 1945) (Sources: Steuart 1922, Chapin and Steuart 1932, and Dunn 1947). Note: N/A refers to unavailable data (because the terminology was not used that year, the disease was grouped within another cause, or the disease was not a major cause of death during that year).

Age-adjusted mortality rates and infant mortality in Nebraska continued declining towards the end of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century. Age-adjusted mortality rates are mortality rates that are modified to reflect a standard age distribution, typically that of the nation. This standardization facilitates comparisons of mortality rates among communities. The age-adjusted death rate for Nebraska for the years 1979-1981 was 930.6, while the United States as a whole had a rate of 1,022.8 (NCHS 2012:88). By 2006-2008, the rate had dropped to 740.1 for Nebraska, compared to 764.9 nationally (NCHS 2012:88). Infant mortality rates also continued dropping during this time, from 8.1 in 1989-1991 in Nebraska (9.0 nationwide) to 6.3 in 2002-2004 and 6.0 in 2005-2007 (6.9 and 6.8 nationwide, respectively) (NCHS 2012:101).

By the end of the twentieth century, coronary heart disease had become Nebraska's most frequent cause of death, even though the rate decreased 25 percent from 1990 to 1998 (Public Health Association of Nebraska n.d.:par 10). Deaths attributed to diabetes rose almost fifteen percent between 1989 and 1998, likely spurred by a 75 percent increase in obesity during the same period (Public Health Association of Nebraska n.d.:par 11-12). Cancer rates declined slightly during this period, but cancer remained the second-leading cause of death in the state (Public Health Association of Nebraska n.d.:par 13). Infant mortality rates reached an all-time low in 1999, though the rates for African-Americans were more than twice the rate for Caucasians (Public Health Association of Nebraska n.d.:par 16).

Conclusions

While the various mortality and life expectancy rates are not known specifically for Brownville throughout the period of interest, analysis of the state-wide and county-wide data, where available, suggest that Brownville's population likely had slightly lower mortality rates, in general, than the nation as a whole. Like the rest of the country, Nebraska's population has experienced a decreasing threat from infectious diseases, which was the most common general cause of death in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As public health programs brought awareness about the causes of and ways to prevent infectious diseases, and as scientists developed more efficient methods of combating illnesses, fewer individuals succumbed to these causes of death. Furthermore, more secure economic statuses that developed throughout time provided many Nebraskans with increased access to health care. As a result, Nebraska, and most likely

Brownville, has shared the general nationwide trends of decreasing mortality and infant mortality rates that began slowing towards the end of the twentieth century. The increase life expectancies have also recently slowed for both Nebraska and the United States as a whole.

Since Brownville can now be classified as a primarily rural community, however, it is possible that the statistics for the community may actually be a little lower than the state of Nebraska as a whole. Prior to about 1940, rural communities generally had “healthier” populations, but the trend shifted in the middle of the twentieth century, with advances in public sanitation and health programs and easier access to advanced medical care (Haines 2001:1). Therefore, Brownville likely falls statistically somewhere between the Nebraska averages and the national averages. The data from Walnut Grove Cemetery support the national and state-wide patterns, with age at death gradually increasing throughout time and with decreasing frequencies of deaths of young persons.

Throughout the period of use of Walnut Grove Cemetery, mortality rates have dramatically declined while life expectancies have increased. As a result, death and mourning, which were common experiences for Brownville’s citizens in the early decades of settlement, grew rarer over time. The next three chapters explore the specific ways that the citizens of Brownville thought about death and how these concepts evolved over time, focusing on the ways in which the words and images engraved on the gravestones changed to reflect not only the citizens’ concepts of death, but also of life, theology, and personal identity.

CHAPTER 3: ICONOGRAPHY OF WALNUT GROVE CEMETERY

In 1966, Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz published an article that would become the basis of gravestone studies in the United States. “Death’s Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries” (*American Antiquity*, vol 31, no. 4, April 1966:502-510) continues to serve as the foundational work in the field, primarily because the results are reproducible with various data sets across the eastern United States. These results are most commonly applied to the eastern part of the country because of the longer settlement history, which corresponds with Dethlefsen and Deetz’s period of study (i.e. the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries) and because of the shared colonial history of the region. Rarely have such studies been undertaken in the central portion of the country, where time of settlement, cultural differences, and distance from the original study have created barriers to replication of results. Regardless of such differences, it is still feasible to apply the same research methodology to a region outside of the ‘comfort zone’ of gravestone studies. While the results may not directly parallel those of the eastern United States, they are nonetheless significant.

In their study of more than forty cemeteries in Massachusetts, Dethlefsen and Deetz identified “three universally occurring design types” present in all of the cemeteries in the same seriation: death’s heads, cherubs, and urns and willow trees (1966:503). As death’s heads declined in popularity, they were gradually replaced by images of cherubs, which were, in turn, gradually replaced by urns and willow trees. Each image steadily grew in popularity, experienced a peak in frequency, then gradually declined in popularity and was replaced by another image. Some cemeteries displayed

additional motifs, such as portraits, that rose in popularity as well, illustrating that variation in iconographic preference occurred even within the small (approximately 100 mile by 50 mile) territory included in this study. The varying images, however, still displayed similar temporal distribution patterns, appearing first in small numbers, growing in popularity, then declining and, eventually, disappearing. The three ‘universal’ designs, however, were always dominant in all of the cemeteries included in Dethlefsen and Deetz’s study.

Other researchers (cf. G. Stone 1991, Baugher and Winter 1983, and Moore, et al 1991) have followed in Dethlefsen and Deetz’s footsteps, replicating the study at numerous cemeteries in the Northeast and modifying the study for cemeteries in the Southeast and, to a lesser degree, the Pacific Northwest. They have demonstrated that the methodology and analysis can be applied to cemeteries outside of Massachusetts. Few, however, have attempted to apply the techniques to study cemeteries in the Great Plains, and then generally only with a limited sample size. Terry Jordan’s 1982 study of Texas cemeteries is the most notable and extensive example. Moore, et al’s 1991, Kiest’s 1993, and Broce’s 1996 studies are the only other prominent examples from the Great Plains. Moore, et al focused only on a portion of the cemetery with the oldest burials, investigated only gravestone material, form, and height, and used only a representative sample. Kiest and Broce focused on ethnic cemeteries. Kiest explored Czech cemeteries in Nebraska, while Broce focused on an ethnic Slovak cemetery in the High Plains of Colorado. This study aims to fill this geographical gap, examining an entire multi-ethnic cemetery and the ways in which the deathscape evolved throughout time.

Methodology

Field crews collected the data for this study over the course of several days spread out across three and a half years. As the project initially began as research for a term paper, there was a significant time span between the date on which data collection began and when it resumed and was subsequently completed. Field crews recorded each gravestone on a field specimen catalog form, noting the following: name, dates of birth and death, inscriptions, and images. The crews photographed each gravestone using a Nikon D60 DSLR camera with an AF-S Nikor 18-55mm lens or an Olympus E-520 with an Olympus 14-42mm lens. The location of each was recorded using a Trimble Geoexplorer 6000 GeoXT handheld geographic positioning system (GPS). All 1,229 gravestones in the cemetery were recorded. Upon returning to the lab, the author entered all of the data from the field specimen catalogue forms into an Excel spreadsheet, downloaded the GPS information and imported it into ArcMap10, and downloaded all of the digital images to a removable hard drive.

Next, the data were coded for the presence or absence of numerous variables. Only those gravestones with identifiable dates of death were included in the study, as approximate date of gravestone carving (in this case, assumed to correspond most closely with date of death) serves as a control for this study. For gravestones marking multiple burials, the latest date of death was used as the date of marker placement. Clearly, inconsistencies may exist with the actual dates of some gravestone placements, as they may have been placed earlier than the last internment, with later name(s) added as additional family members passed away. Regardless, this is the methodology that other researchers (cf. Gorman and DiBlasi 1981) have used, and this methodology causes the

least distortion of all the alternatives (such as omitting gravestones marking multiple burials, using the earliest date of death, or averaging death dates). For this portion of the study, the gravestones were coded for presence or absence of 104 iconographic motifs. The raw frequency of each image was calculated for each decade, as well as the percentage frequency. The percentages were graphed using Excel, creating charts (such as the one in Figure 3.7) that visually display the temporal distribution of each motif. The temporal distributions were then analyzed and conclusions were drawn about the observed patterns.

Before beginning this study, the author outlined several hypotheses regarding the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery. In the vein of Dethlefsen and Deetz, the author hypothesized that it would be possible to identify several phases of gravestone iconographic morphology throughout time. By analyzing the changes from one phase to another, the author further hypothesized that it would be possible to gain insight into corresponding cultural changes that occurred within Brownville's society, particularly changes in the ways the population as a whole thought about life and death, while acknowledging that such analysis of material culture would, by design, over-generalize these conceptions as well as simplify the diversity of individuals' perceptions and experiences. Gravestones from the earliest period should exhibit iconographic motifs that reflect the difficulty of life on the frontier, while later gravestones were expected to convey less information about the difficulties of life. As carving technology developed, the author anticipated that the intricacy and number of images would increase, while the variability of similar images would decrease. That is, when the same image appeared on more than one stone, the images would be identical on later twentieth century stones

while older, hand-carved stones would display more variability due to the less precise nature of the carving methods.

Analysis of Temporal Patterns

Analysis of the popularity of various images present on the Brownville gravestones throughout time has allowed the author to identify four basic iconographic phases that characterize the iconography of this cemetery (Figure 3.1). Phase I extends from the founding of the cemetery in the 1850s to the turn of the century. Phase II spans from 1900 to the 1920s, and Phase III includes the 1930s through the 1970s. Phase IV begins around the 1980s and continues to the present. While some temporal patterns stretch across phases or disappear only to reappear later, several images appear solely within a single period. For example, scrollwork is present on gravestones in all four phases, though it peaks in Phase I. In contrast, weeping willows appear solely in Phase I while wedding rings appear exclusively in Phase IV.

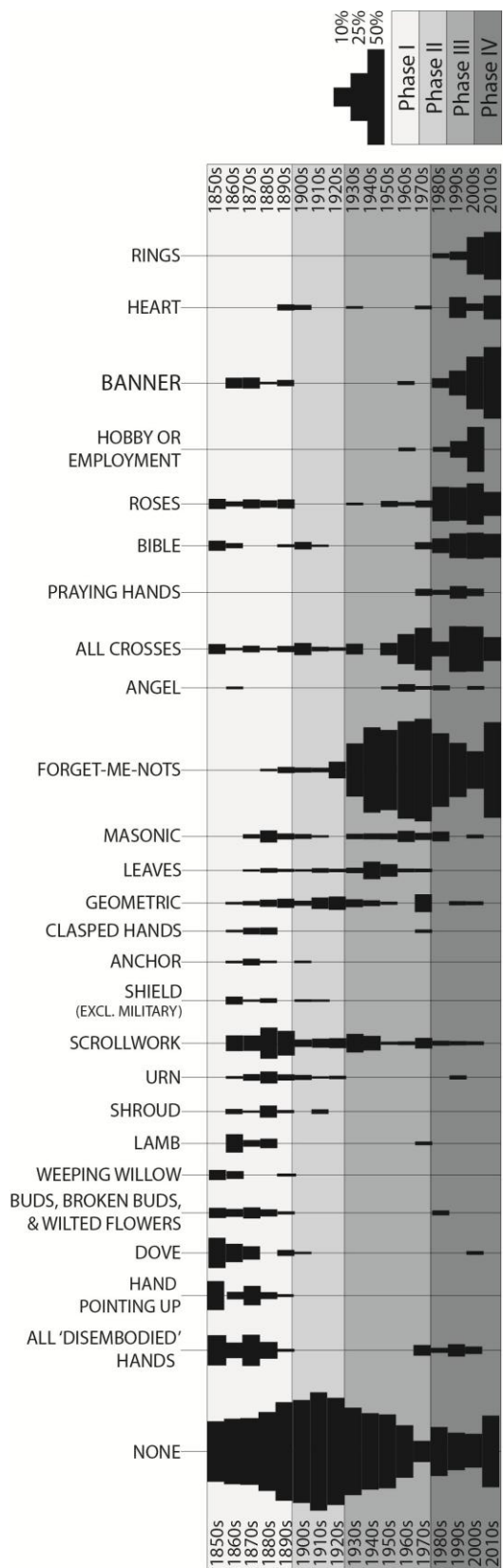


Figure 3.1: The iconographic phases of the gravestones of Walnut Grove Cemetery.

The images that appear on Brownville's gravestones can be divided into two basic categories: symbolic iconography and decorative elements. Symbolic iconography includes images that convey powerful religious and cultural meaning, such as lambs, weeping willows, or Bibles. Decorative elements, such as scrollwork (Figure 3.2) or geometric patterns (Figure 3.3) convey relatively little information about religious culture or other social trends. Instead, while such elements may initially appear to simply fill space on what would otherwise be blank space, these patterns can offer insights into the technological methods available during their periods of popularity. For example, scrollwork, which peaked in popularity during Phase I, was generally very lightly engraved and took up relatively little space, something which could be relatively easily accomplished by a stone carver who engraved stones by hand. Decorative images of leaves, however, peaked in popularity during Phase III, a period during which technological advances in machine-engraving allowed carvers to create more intricate designs on gravestones.



Figure 3.2: Example of scrollwork on the gravestone of J. H. and Martha L. Zook in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 3.3: Example of geometric pattern on Martin Theodore Hill's gravestone in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Phase I: 1850s-1890s

Phase I spanned from the cemetery's founding in the 1850s to about the turn of the century. This period is characterized by a diversity of images. 56 distinct images appear on gravestones during Phase I, compared to 44 in Phase II, 29 in Phase III, and 35 in Phase IV (Figure 3.4). This diversity is remarkable when one remembers that stone carvers made gravestones entirely by hand during this period. At the outset of this research, it was hypothesized that the number of images would increase, rather than decrease, over time as a result of technological advances in carving techniques. Though the technology was relatively simple, a broader variety of images appears on gravestones from the second half of the nineteenth century than appears during any other phase in Brownville. As the twentieth century progressed, gravestones became more uniform throughout the cemetery.

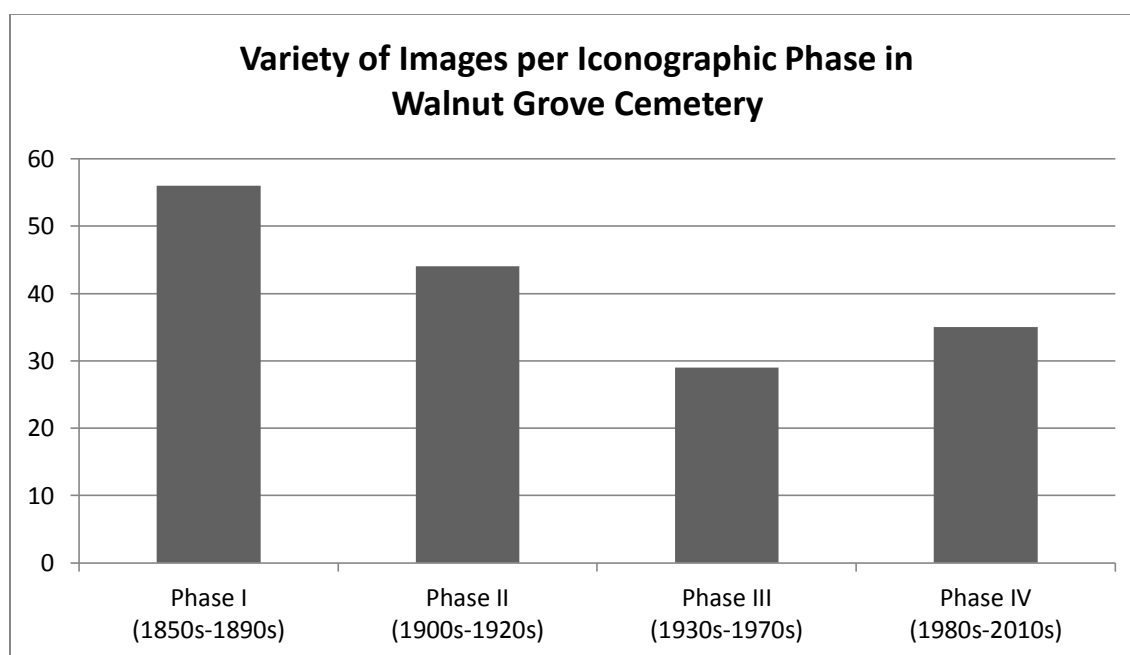


Figure 3.4: The variety of images per iconographic phase in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Though fifty-six distinct images date to Phase I, considerable uniformity exists within each individual image category. For example, nearly all of the images of doves are visually almost identical (Figures 3.5-3.7). Extremely close inspection of the images reveals slight variations. Both the consistency and the slight variations are, perhaps counterintuitively, the result of the hand-carved nature of the stones. The inability of individual carvers to exactly replicate one another's engravings, or even their own prior engravings, led to minor deviations from one stone to the next. The consistency stems from the small number of carvers in Brownville who appear to have apprenticed under one carver, Charles Neidhart.



Figure 3.5: An example of a typical dove engraved on the markers in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 3.6: A second example of a typical dove engraved on the markers in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 3.7: A typical dove on a gravestone in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Charles Neidhart was Brownville's first stone carver. He arrived in Brownville in 1867 or 1868 (Cutler 1882:"Nemaha County, Manufactories," par 2). Originally from Germany, Neidhart initially immigrated to the United States around age eight with his grandparents. Approximately five years later, he returned to Germany, only to make the trip to the United States again about four years later. Upon his return at age seventeen, Neidhart settled in Beardstown, Illinois, and began learning to carve marble. Around age 22 (1865), he returned yet again to Germany, this time to continue his stone-carving training. In 1867 or 1868 (accounts vary), Neidhart once again crossed the Atlantic, this time settling in Brownville and opening a small marble-carving business (Cutler 1882:"Nemaha County, Manufactories," par 2; Morton 1906:737). By the 1880s, he employed four other carvers in his shop in Brownville, along with four additional employees in another shop in nearby Falls City, which he opened in 1876 (Cutler 1882:"Nemaha County, Manufactories," par 2, Morton 1906:737). Neidhart opened other branches in Auburn, Beatrice, Fairbury, Nebraska City, and Tecumseh, Nebraska and Rock Port, Missouri (Morton 1906:737). He remained in Brownville until 1889, when he relocated to Beatrice. Neidhart was active and well-respected in southeast Nebraska and served on the Brownville city council. He was also an active Mason, serving two terms as the master of the Nemaha Valley Lodge (Morton 1906:738).

As the primary stone carver in Brownville and the surrounding area for several decades, Charles Neidhart and his employees serve as a control for this study. Because Neidhart founded Brownville's marble carving industry and trained and supervised the other carvers whom he eventually hired, this reduces the influence of external carving traditions on Brownville's gravestones for the first few decades. As Dethlefsen and Deetz

(1966) noted, historical documents about the stone carver, which are readily available in this case, can provide considerable information about the carver's cultural influences (including his education, training, upbringing, source materials, business methods, and more). Furthermore, Lynn Rainville (1999:575) has argued that carvers exert significant influence over their customers' choices. Carvers (often liberally) modified designs based on their own capabilities and styles, regardless of the purchaser's desires. Though carvers are limited by their abilities, training, and the materials which they can procure, in Brownville, the late nineteenth century carvers appear to have maintained a sizable repertoire of images. As each carver had his own abilities and techniques, each carver contributed to the diversity of images. Unlike several decades later, when most engraving came to be machine-carved and thus displayed significant standardization among images, the sheer number of individuals necessary to meet the demand of a growing population may explain the variety of images displayed on Brownville's gravestones from the 1850s through the 1890s.

There is another, less obvious, explanation for the diversity of gravestones during this period. Perhaps the variety of gravestone iconography in the cemetery decreased over time as the American population came to be more interconnected and grew to share a common culture. As the 'imagined community' of the United States solidified its identity, the way Americans perceived death may have also become more unified and, in combination with advancing carving technologies, resulting in more standardized iconography (Anderson 2006). One can consider gravestones as a form of text. With this perspective, one might view the standardized gravestone iconography that developed in the twentieth century as a form of "national print language" with the earlier, localized

variations much like dialects that had yet to fully unify the population through ‘print’ or, in this case, carving (Anderson 2006:48). Diversity of gravestone iconography may, in this case, be evidence of plurality in not only concepts of death in Brownville, but also in plurality of local and national identity. This population living physically on the frontier was also living figuratively on the frontier of American society. Removed from the heavy population centers of the east, and with a populace composed of immigrants and emigrants, Brownville’s identity was in its formative years during Phase I.

Images that display temporal patterns dating to Phase I include both symbolic iconography and decorative elements, and there is a high frequency of representations of living things, including flora, fauna, and human forms. Images of flora that appear in regular patterns throughout this period include buds, broken buds, and wilted flowers; weeping willows; and roses. The author has grouped buds, broken buds, and wilted flowers into the same iconographic category because of both their visual similarities and their symbolic parallels. Faunal iconography displaying temporal patterns during this period include doves and lambs. The human forms depicted during Phase I primarily take the form of what the author calls ‘disembodied’ hands: either a single hand pointing at something or holding an object or two hands clasped, as if shaking good-bye. Inanimate objects, such as urns, shrouds, and anchors also display significant temporal patterns during this phase, as do masonic symbols. Decorative elements, including shields, banners, and scrollwork, round out the temporal patterns for Phase I.

Images of buds and wilted flowers appear on gravestones in the cemetery from the 1850s through the 1890s, peaking in the 1870s with 5.81 percent of gravestones displaying one of these images (Figure 3.8). Of the thirteen datable examples from Phase

I, including one which marks a triple burial, six provide the age of the individuals at death. All six of these individuals were either infants or newborns at the time of death.

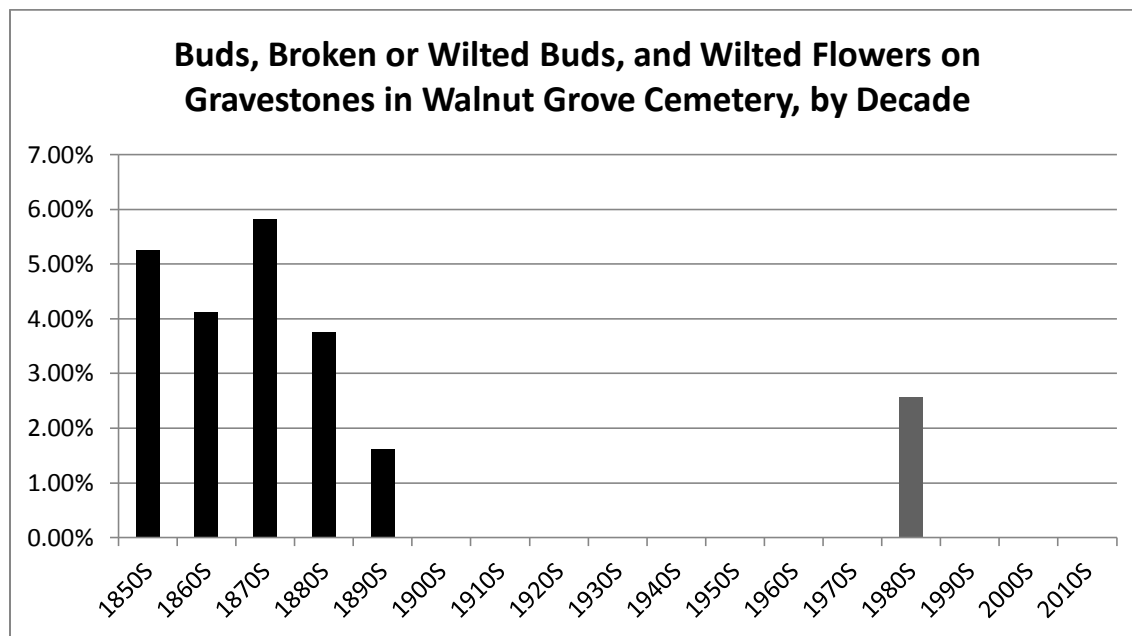


Figure 3.8: Temporal distribution of datable images of buds, broken or wilted buds, and wilted flowers in the cemetery, highlighting Phase I. Note the one exception to the pattern is the solitary occurrence in the 1980s of a gravestone with roses and rose buds.

Several of the remaining gravestones hint at the decedents' age at death. David H. Hamilton, for example, died in 1871 and is described as the 'son of Joseph and Sarah Hamilton.' As grown men were rarely referred to as 'son of' on gravestones during this period (see Chapter 4), it is not out of line to assume that David was a child when he died. Two of the gravestones with unknown ages at death refer to the individuals as the 'daughter of' someone. While it may be tempting to declare these individuals also as children at the time of death, this is a much greater jump than declaring David H.

Hamilton a child, as unmarried women were also often described as the ‘daughter of’ her father or parents (see Chapter 4).

The stone that marks Maud, Mary, and Josie Gilmore’s gravesites clearly states that they were the ‘Children of [A. H.?] and S. J. Gilmore’ (Figure 3.9). Claude C.’s gravestone similarly states that he was ‘Our baby darling.’ Thus, of the thirteen gravestones with buds or wilted flowers that date to Phase I, two are completely unreadable, two mark the burials of daughters of unknown age, and nine mark the burials of children or infants.



Figure 3.9: The Gilmore children’s gravestone.

An additional eight gravestones have images of buds but unknown dates of placement. One, the Wheeldon family marker, is a newer monument, but the other seven may date to Phase I. Two are so degraded they are unreadable, which suggests considerable age. The other five also appear to be very old stones. Rachel Wibley and Minnie Wibley's stones are rectangular tablets typical of the mid to late nineteenth century. Arthur Bauer's stone is a badly-weathered small obelisk, typical of the late nineteenth century, and bears the inscription 'Our Darling.' Harry Bherman's marker is a rather ornate tablet, broken and heavily weathered, also suggesting the stone's old age. Carrie T. McGee's stone is next to Ira S. McGee's stone (see above) and is the same shape: a small tablet which has sunk partially underground so that the dates are unreadable. If one accepts that these seven gravestones likely date to Phase I, this further strengthens the temporal pattern of buds and wilted flowers that exists for Phase I.

In Victorian times, these various forms of buds and wilted flowers symbolized lives cut short. As a symbol on gravestones, the bud or wilted flower likely reflects the fragility of life during this early period in Brownville, when the death rate was high (see Chapter 2) and lives were often cut heartbreakingly-short by disease, accidents, or childbirth. Another symbol present in the cemetery also alludes to the death of young persons. The symbol of the lamb dates to early Christianity, when it represented Christ's sacrifice for humanity. On a gravestone, the image suggests the loss, or sacrifice, of a pure and innocent life that ended too early.

Lambs appear on fourteen Brownville gravestones, one which marks a double burial, from the 1860s through the 1880s, with a single reappearance nearly a century later in 1977 (Figure 3.10). Seven additional gravestones have no visible or legible dates,

but also likely date to the late nineteenth century based on their poor condition and the forms of the stones. Of the fourteen lambs that date to Phase I, seven mark graves that can be undoubtedly ascribed to children. Two additional gravestones likely mark the graves of children. John Cole died in 1865 and, though no date of birth appears, his gravestone proclaims him the ‘Son of John and E. J. Cole.’ His brother, Henry H., died in 1870 and is buried next to him with the same inscription on his stone. As discussed above, since the phrase ‘son of’ was rarely used for grown men, it is probable that these brothers were children at the times of their deaths.

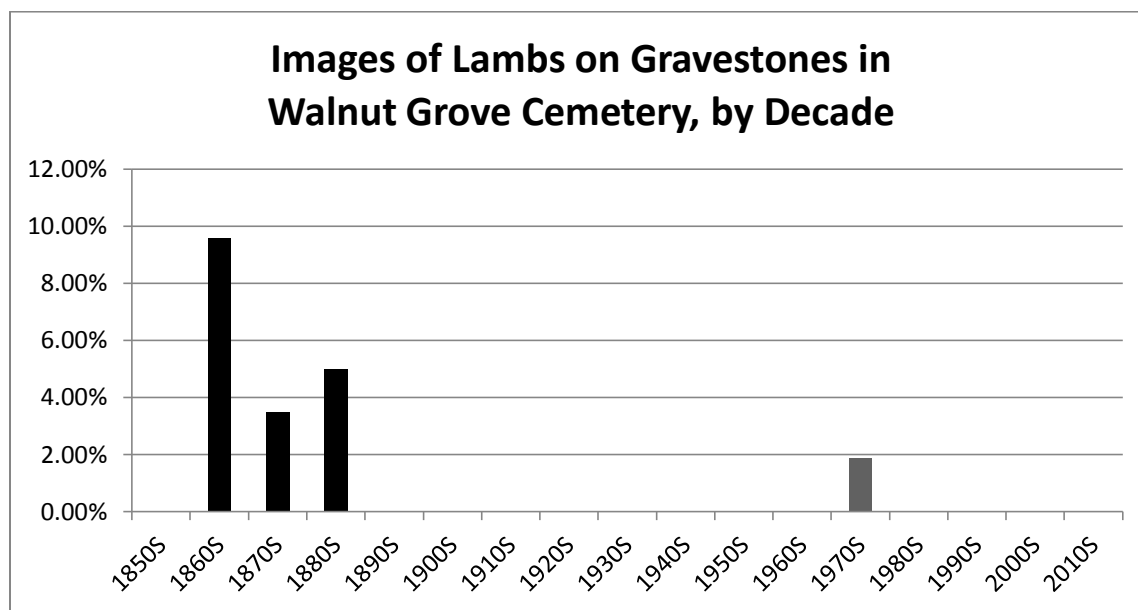


Figure 3.10: Temporal distribution of datable images of lambs in the cemetery, highlighting Phase I.

Two anomalies exist with the images of lambs on Brownville gravestones. John A. Ponn died in 1861 at the age of 22 years. His gravestone describes him as the ‘Son of J. A. and Evelyn Ponn.’ The 1860 Census listed John as employed as a “Clerk in Store”

and showed that he lived with his parents and younger brother. His father was employed as a “merchant,” suggesting that John may have been employed in his father’s business. While John was not a child when he died, he was fairly young and may have been the family’s first-born son, a status which may account for the lamb on his gravestone.

The second anomaly is the gravestone of Kenneth S. Shepherd, Jr., who died in 1977. This is the only gravestone in the cemetery that dates beyond the 1880s and includes an engraving of a lamb. Kenneth’s marker does not mention his age at death, but the lack of a birthdate on a gravestone from the mid-to-late twentieth century suggests that Kenneth likely was born and died in 1977. Besides the obvious connection between his surname and the symbol of the lamb, the most likely explanation of the image is a slight resurgence in popularity of the symbol during this period, perhaps on a national scale. While no other examples of the symbol exist in Brownville’s cemetery, nearly identical examples exist in other cemeteries in the Great Plains, dating to approximately the same period, including the gravestone of the author’s brother, who died as an infant in 1978 in South Dakota.

Another symbol which relates to mourning the loss of a loved one is the weeping willow. Dethlefsen and Deetz identified the use of weeping willows as gravestone iconography as a major shift in not only gravestone imagery but also in northeastern American theology during the colonial period. They noted that the appearance and rise in popularity of willow trees marked a significant departure from earlier forms of memorialization. Rather than the deeply personal images of deaths heads and cherubs that flourished earlier and represented, respectively, the decay of an individual’s mortal

remains and the ascension of the soul to heaven, weeping willows instead “reflect[ed] a trend toward the depersonalization of death and memorial” (1966:508).

James A. Hijiya noted that weeping willows connote senses of mourning, sorrow, and grief over the death of an individual, an image drawn from both biblical and English literature (1983:352). Mourning during the Victorian period was highly ritualized. Survivors staged elaborate funerals, participated in extended periods of formal mourning involving the wearing of specific clothing and even jewelry, and created numerous tributes for and mementos of the deceased (including taking photographs of deceased relatives, especially those who died as children). The restrained grieving of the Puritan era had gradually given way to intense, emotional grieving over the deaths of loved ones, and these passionate emotions came to be reflected in gravestone art (Hijiya 1983:353-354).

Being familiar with Dethlefsen and Deetz’s research, the author anticipated finding few examples of weeping willows in Brownville, as the weeping willow became popular in New England at the end of the 18th century and had significantly declined in popularity in that region by the mid-to-late 19th century, though it never fully disappeared. Furthermore, if the image was present, the author anticipated the images would date to the first decade or two of the town’s settlement. These expectations were largely confirmed, as weeping willows appear on only five gravestones in Brownville: once in the 1850s, three times in the 1860s, and once in the 1890s (Figure 3.11). Two mark the graves of married women, one of whom was 21 years old when she died. One marks the grave of an individual named Priscilla whose age is unknown, perhaps due to

the degraded state of the stone. One marks the grave of Eli T. Starry who died at age fifteen and was the 'Son of A. and B. Starry' (Figure 3.12).

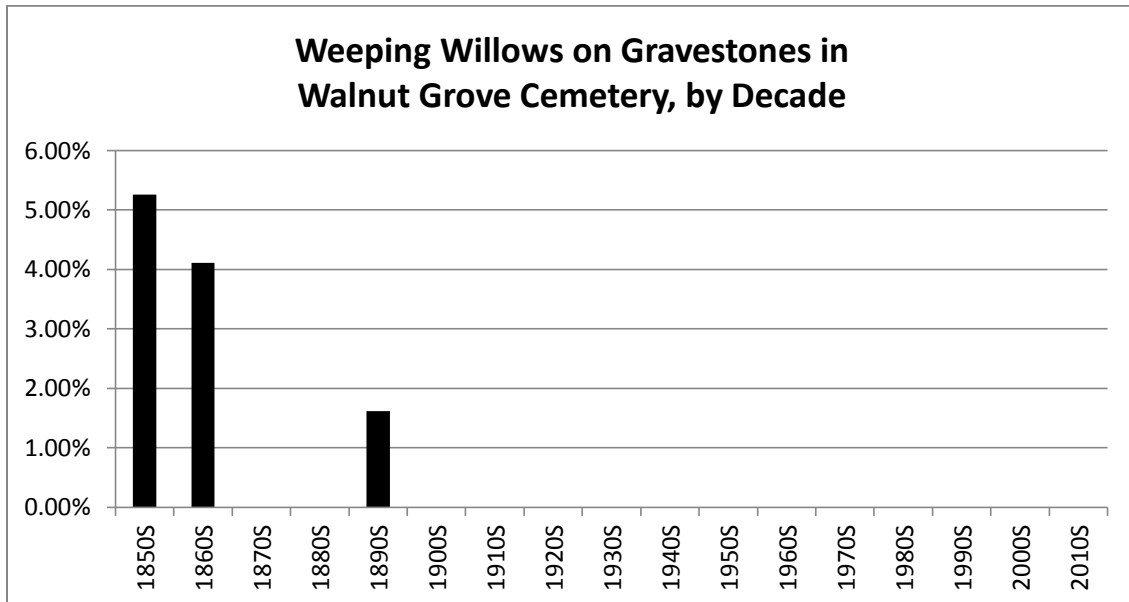


Figure 3.11: Temporal distribution of datable images of weeping willows in the cemetery.



Figure 3.12: The gravestone of Eli T. Starry (c. 1854-1869), which includes an image of a weeping willow. Carved by Gearhart, St. Joseph, MO.

The urn and shroud are two additional symbols which are closely related to the weeping willow and convey a similar sense of grief over death. Dethlefsen and Deetz noted that the urn and shroud often appeared in conjunction with the weeping willow on gravestones in New England. In Brownville, however, the urn and shroud do not appear in association with the weeping willow, though the urn and shroud do occasionally appear with each other. The urn and shroud first appeared in Brownville in the 1860s, peaking in popularity in the 1880s and then lingering on the cemetery landscape through the 1920s and making a final solitary reappearance in the 1990s (Figure 3.13). These images are transitional, peaking toward the end of Phase I and lingering into the early decades of Phase II, albeit not with high frequencies.

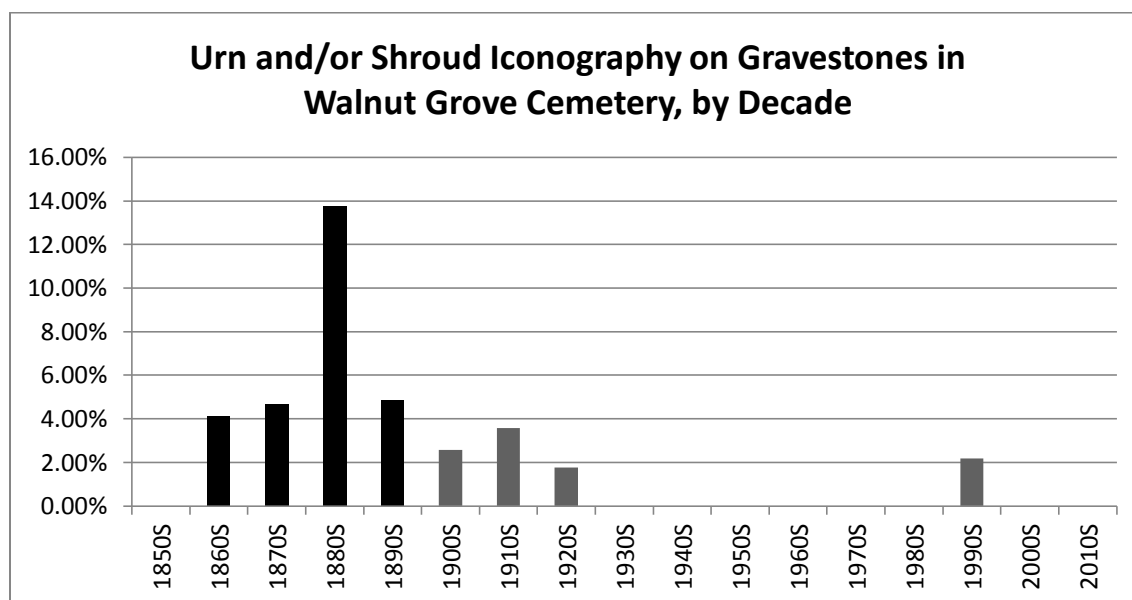


Figure 3.13: Temporal distribution of images of urns and shrouds in the cemetery, highlighting Phase I.

The shroud and urn appear most frequently in Brownville on gravestones that mark the burials of several family members. Fourteen of the 24 examples of shrouds and urns are such markers. Seven of the fourteen mark the burials of three or more family members (Figure 3.14). Furthermore, of the nine examples that mark single burials, five of the individuals are members of families or individuals that have other markers with similar imagery. None of these five single-burial gravestones date to the same decade as the other family members' gravestones with similar imagery. For example, Barney Mooney (d. 1875) died more than a decade before Rosa Mooney (probably his mother, d. 1889), but both gravestones have urns (or, in the case of Barney's, had an urn, as it is now missing from the top) (Figure 3.15-3.16). Similarly, William Stevenson's gravestone (d. 1902) has an image of an urn and is in the same family plot as the gravestone marking Herbert K. and Elizabeth Stevenson's burial sites. This correlation may suggest that the shroud and urn represent the importance of the symbol for families during this period. It may, however, simply be a matter of families gravitating toward similar designs of other gravestones selected by the family in the past, though this pattern has not been identified with other images during Phase I.



Figure 3.14: The Hoadley Family Marker, illustrating both shroud and urn imagery on a gravestone that marks the burial of multiple family members.



Figure 3.15: Barney Mooney's gravestone, which is now missing the urn from the top.



Figure 3.16: Rosa Mooney's gravestone, with an urn on top.

The shroud and urn are perhaps the symbols in the cemetery most directly associated with death, as a shroud covers the body of the deceased and an urn may hold the remains. Thus, like the weeping willow, shrouds and urns suggest that public mourning over the loss of a loved one was acceptable throughout this period of high mortality. For the citizens of Brownville, death was still a frequent occurrence, something which had to be dealt with regularly.

While death was a common occurrence in Brownville during this period, there are also signs that the town's citizens maintained hope for a better life, if not on earth, then certainly in the afterlife. Images of doves, hands pointing to the sky, and anchors dot the deathscape, suggesting that the people of Brownville clung to the hope of a heavenly reward for their faithfulness. Twenty-one datable examples of doves exist in the cemetery, with an additional four undatable examples (Figure 3.17). Three of the twenty-one datable examples mark multiple burials; thus, the twenty-one gravestones mark the burials of 30 persons. The symbol was most popular during the first decade of burials in the cemetery, and gradually decreased in popularity throughout the remainder of Phase I, with a single example appearing in 1907 and another in 2006. The four undatable examples are all almost certainly from Phase I, as they are undatable due to their badly weathered states, which suggests advanced age. While twelve of the individuals whose gravestones bear images of doves were children or infants and just five are known to mark adult burials, it is not possible in this study to draw conclusions about the age of the individuals whose markers have engravings of doves because an additional fourteen burials are of individuals of unknown age.

The dove is a Judeo-Christian symbol, mentioned in the eighth chapter of Genesis when Noah released a dove three times to see if the waters of the great flood had receded (NRSV, Genesis 8:3-13). The second time, the dove returned with an olive branch, showing Noah that the waters had receded and he could return to land. Thus, the dove became a symbol of hope, faith, and renewal for Jews. In Leviticus, the dove, as a symbol of purity, is frequently mentioned as an appropriate sacrifice for numerous sins. Throughout both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament, the dove is one of the most frequently mentioned symbols, appearing 39 times in the text of the Hebrew Bible and ten times in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the dove took on a new role as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It first surfaced in Matthew 3:16 immediately after the baptism of Jesus, when Jesus emerged from the water and “suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him” (NRSV). The story repeats in Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, and John 1:32. Additional appearances of the dove occur in Matthew 10:16, Matthew 21:12 (paralleled in Mark 11:15 and 2:14-16), and Luke 2:24 (NRSV).

The primary significance of the dove throughout the Christian Bible was as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and as a symbol of sacrifice and innocence. As a symbol on ostensibly Christian gravestones in Brownville, the symbolism of the dove likely parallels these associations. On the graves of children and young adults, doves may allude to the sacrifice of innocent lives in a time of high death rates. The image also has a more uplifting connotation as a symbol of hope and renewal, as in the stories of Noah’s survival and Jesus’ baptism.

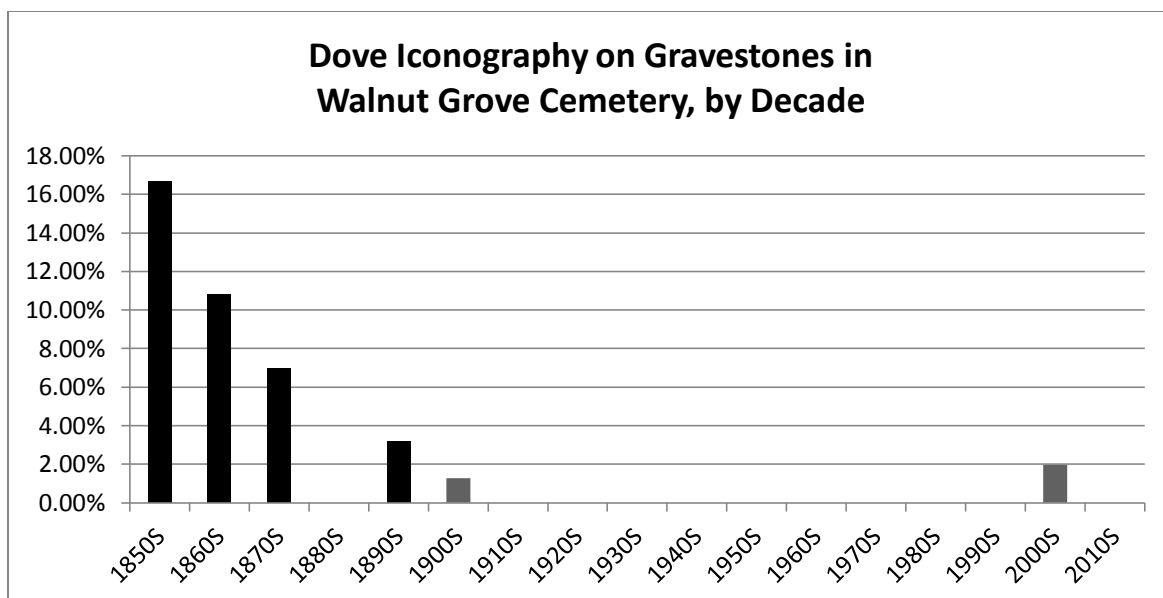


Figure 3.17: Temporal distribution of datable images of doves in the cemetery, highlighting Phase I.

Another symbol suggestive of hope found in Brownville is the image of a hand pointing up. Nineteen gravestones that mark 21 burials have this image. Two date to the 1850s, three to the 1860s, nine to the 1870s, three to the 1880s, and one to the 1890s (Figure 3.18). One additional stone has no visible date, but its rounded tablet form is typical of the mid to late nineteenth century in Brownville. Unlike the images of lambs and buds, the Brownville gravestones with images of hands pointing up do not appear to mark the graves of individuals who died at similar ages. Of the twenty-one individuals whose gravestones bear this image, only three were children, with two others who were likely children. Nine interments were clearly adults, while seven have no ages or birth dates present.

The only obvious link between any of these individuals is familial. Three of the stones, from three different decades, mark individuals who share the same last name and

were likely members of the same family. Bethia Corn, whose gravestone lists no birth date, died in 1866. Edie Corn, born around 1806, died in 1873 around the age of 67. William Corn was born around 1805 and died in 1882 around the age of 77. Additionally, two stones mark double burials of family members, one husband and wife and one unknown pair who share the same last name.

The symbol of a hand pointing up suggests the hope or promise of eternal life, with the hand symbolically indicating that the soul has ascended to heaven. While the symbol of the dove straddles the rather contradictory concepts of hope and the sacrifice of the innocence, a hand pointing up is more firmly optimistic. In general, images of hands suggest a relationship, either between the living and dead or between the decedent and God (Suchan 2008:43, 50). A hand pointing up represents the hope that the individual's soul has ascended or will ascend to heaven (Suchan 2008:50).

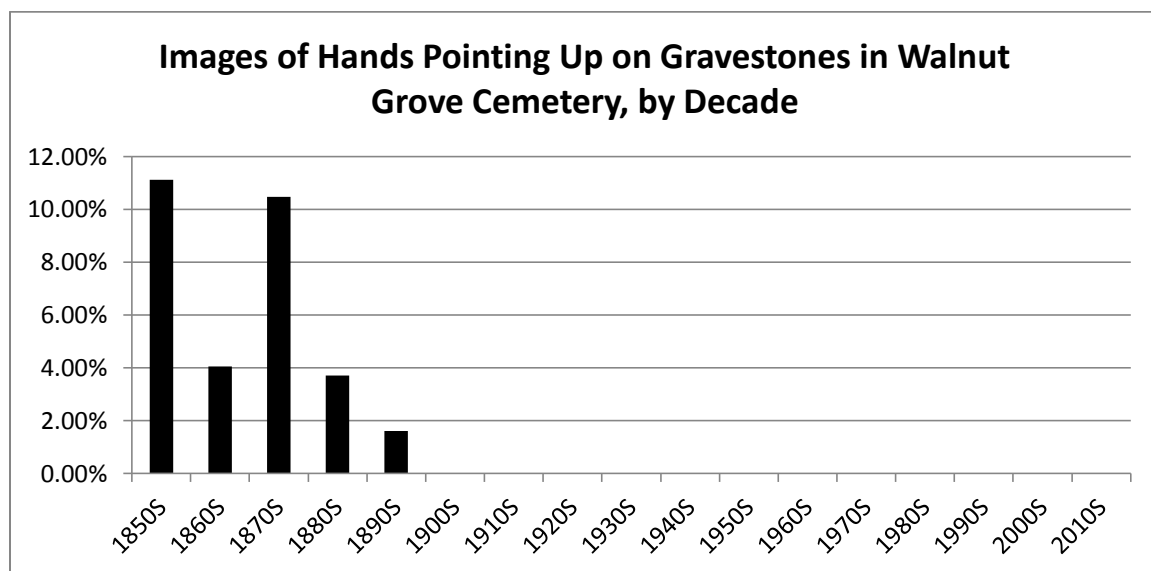


Figure 3.18: The temporal distribution of images of hands pointing up to the sky on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Other ‘disembodied’ hands occur on Brownville’s gravestones, and they all date to either Phase I or late Phase III to Phase IV (Figure 18). These ‘disembodied’ hands from Phase I include hands pointing at objects, such as bibles, hands pointing down, clasped or shaking hands, or hands holding or releasing objects, such as a hammer or a dove. The ‘disembodied’ hands that date to the late twentieth and early 21st century are primarily images of hands praying and are discussed below. Taken individually, the images do not create much of a pattern but, when considered together, are worth noting (Figure 3.19). The ‘disembodied’ hands from Phase I all appear to portray abstract concepts using either a human or super-human form. For instance, hands pointing at bibles may suggest the importance of the scripture on the individual’s life and, thus afterlife. Clasped hands generally appear on the gravestones of married individuals; if one looks closely, they may notice that the cuff on one wrist appears more ‘feminine’ than the cuff on the other hand (Lindahl 1986:178-179) (Figure 3.20). Carl Lindahl (1986:173-174) has argued that images of hands on the nineteenth century gravestones indicate a “general, unspoken prohibition against depicting the dead exactly as he or she appeared in life.” That is, because gravestones are what he calls “threshold markers,” which symbolically mark the transition from life to death, refraining from depicting the full, realistic human form is a method of respecting the “transitional state” of the body (Lindahl 1986:174).

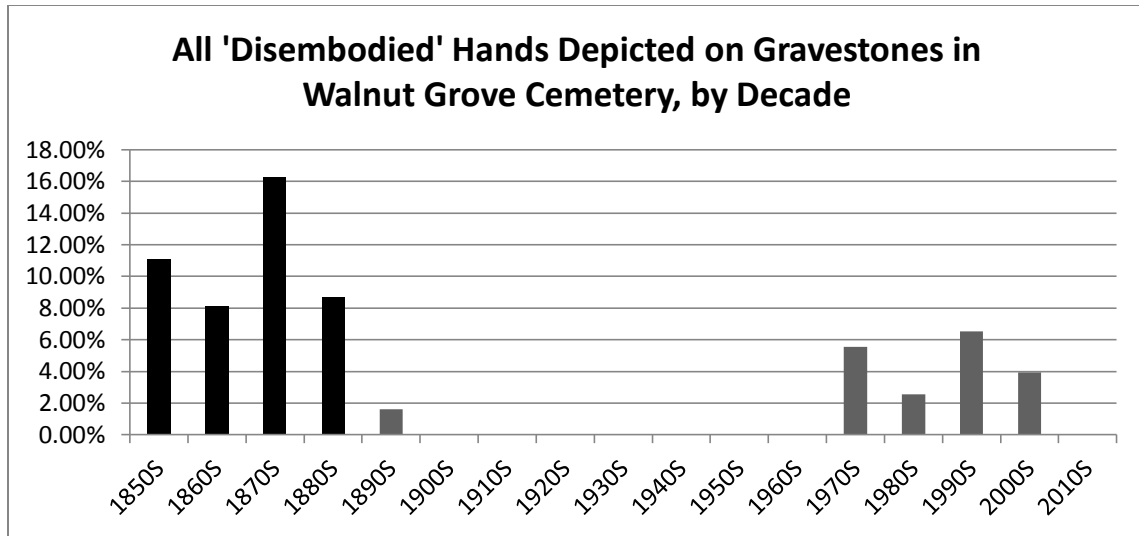


Figure 3.19: The temporal distribution of ‘disembodied’ hand iconography in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase I.



Figure 3.20: Detail of Captain B. M. and Nancy Rebecca Bailey’s gravestone, illustrating two clasped hands, one with a ‘feminine’ cuff (left) and one ‘masculine’ (right).

Another example of a symbol that points to the hope of Brownville's residents is the anchor. Anchors never appear in high numbers in this cemetery, but the temporal distribution of anchors is concentrated in Phase I and the first decade of Phase II and is therefore worth mentioning (Figure 3.21). In a seafaring community, the presence of anchors would not be surprising. While the importance of Brownville as a river port during this period may explain the presence of anchors on seven gravestones, another explanation may also be more likely. The anchor is a Christian symbol, used by early Christians as a type of 'disguised' cross during a time when Christians were frequently persecuted for their beliefs. Over time, the anchor came to symbolize hope, which is likely what the image represents when carved on a gravestone (Suchan 2008:50).

The seven gravestones with images of anchors mark the burials of nine persons. Only one marks a multiple burial, and it is the earliest example of an anchor in Brownville. Caroline Phipps and her presumably twin daughters, Nettie and Nellie, all died in 1863, perhaps the result of childbirth or illness. Three gravestones with anchors date to the 1870s, one dates to the 1880s, and one dates to the 1900s. One additional marker is unreadable due to weathering, but likely dates to the same time period. Interestingly, on all but one of these gravestones, the anchor appears in conjunction with additional symbols. In addition to the anchor, the Phipps stone includes images of a shroud and a flower, as well as a decorative banner. Genie Richards' stone (d. 1876) takes the form of a stone wall and includes a shield and roses in addition to the anchor (Figure 3.22). Elizabeth Bell's (1870-1871) displays a byzantine cross in conjunction with the anchor, perhaps giving credence to the interpretation of the anchor as a symbol of hope, rather than as a disguised cross. Thomas S. Edward's (d. 1885) stone also has a

hand pointing to an unidentified rectangle, as does Harry Colen's (date unreadable). Henry's also depicts an image which may be a couple embracing. Rebecca P. Ashpaugh's (1823-1907) gravestone is rife with symbolism, bearing gates, a dove, and columns in addition to the anchor. The only marker that includes an anchor without any other symbols is that of Elizabeth Clary (1829-1870), and even her stone includes a decorative banner.

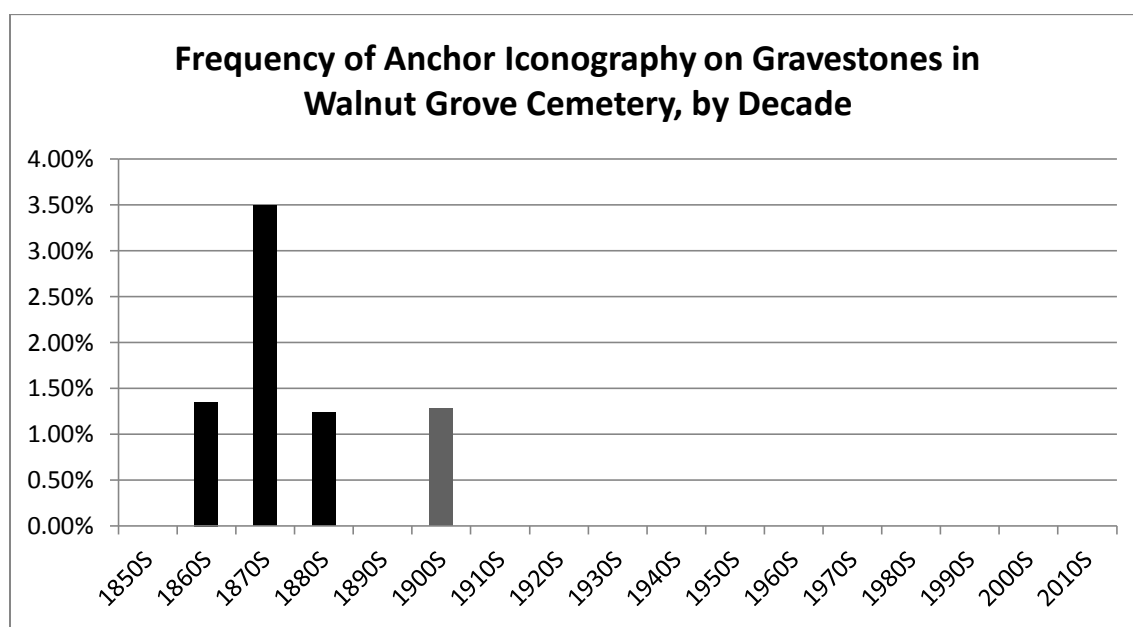


Figure 3.21: The temporal distribution of anchors on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase I.



Figure 3.22: Genie Richards' gravestone, in the form of a stone wall and including a shield, roses, ivy, and an anchor.

That the anchor does not occur as a symbol on its own but only in combination with other images may be one explanation for the paucity of anchors in the Brownville cemetery. An additional possibility is that, if the anchor was still viewed as a ‘disguised’ cross, it may have been used more frequently by Catholics. The presence of a separate Catholic cemetery nearby meant that fewer Catholics were buried in the Brownville cemetery, resulting in lower frequencies of crosses in all forms, disguised or not. A cursory examination of Holy Cross Cemetery, a Catholic cemetery south of Auburn, Nebraska, reveals that crosses appear very commonly on gravestones from all periods, suggesting that the majority of burials in Walnut Grove are probably not Catholic and, thus, not as likely to display crosses on their gravestones.

Images of roses also appear in a temporal pattern in Brownville’s cemetery. The rose has a long history as a symbol, stretching back not only to the Bible, but also to Greek and Middle Eastern mythology and poetry (Lehner and Lehner 2003: 77-79). While many biblical accounts allude to roses growing tall and blooming, the association with love and beauty likely stemmed from ancient Greek mythology. While red roses came to represent love, beauty, and desire, white roses came to signify charm and innocence or silence (Lehner and Lehner 2003:78; Waterman 1857:180). In Victorian times, roses of various forms and colors represented a multitude of sentiments, and even the way a rose was held carried additional meaning. In a book popular during the Victorian period, *Flora’s Lexicon: An Interpretation of the Language and Sentiment of Flowers*, Catharine H. Waterman devoted twelve pages to various roses and their symbolism (1857:174-185). While it is almost certainly impossible to identify the color

of a rose engraved on a gravestone, it is probably safe to assume that most roses on gravestones represent love, innocence, or perhaps even the silence of the deceased.

Roses appeared fairly consistently, though not in especially high concentrations, on Brownville's gravestones throughout Phase I, but disappeared abruptly around the turn of the century (Figure 3.23). Thirteen stones dating to Phase I have images of roses, and they mark fourteen burials. Seven of the individuals were adults at the times of their deaths and, while the ages of the remaining seven individuals are unknown, none were obviously children. This is not particularly surprising for, as noted above, a wilted or broken bud often appeared on the graves of children. A fully-blooming rose may, therefore, be more common on the gravestone of an individual who reached adulthood. The most obvious characteristic that these individuals share is their gender. Of the fourteen burials, thirteen are female. This relationship between the rose and gender may relate to the rose's symbolism of beauty or love. This also suggests that the women's survivors were comfortable openly expressing their love of the individuals who had died, which is not unlike survivors who selected weeping willows or urns for the gravestones of their loved ones. During the Victorian period, such public demonstrations of love and grief were not only acceptable, but encouraged.

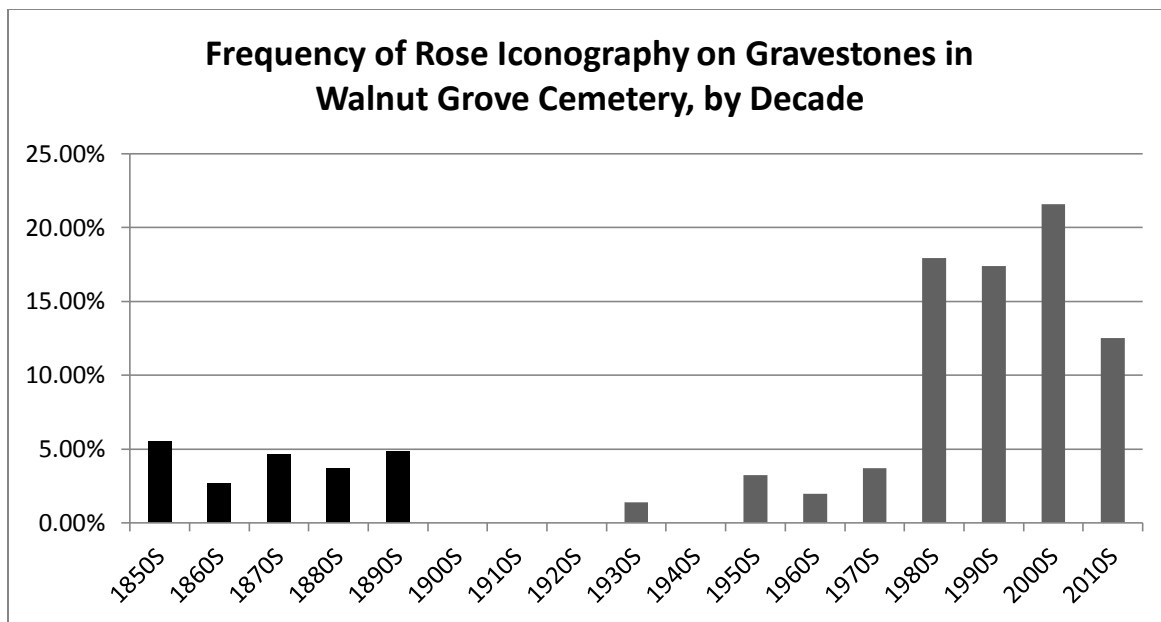


Figure 3.23: The temporal distribution of rose iconography in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase I.

Masonic symbols began appearing on gravestones in the cemetery in 1875, peaking in popularity in the 1880s and then steadily declining in frequency through the 1910s, before resurging in Phase III and remaining popular into Phase IV (Figure 3.24). This is not unexpected, as Brownville has been home to numerous masonic lodges and related organizations, and today is home to the oldest blue lodge in the state and the only one that continues to schedule meetings according to the lunar calendar (Brownville Visitor Center n.d.:3). That lodge, the Nemaha Valley Lodge, No. 4, A. F. & A. M. was founded in September of 1857, though the Masonic Hall where it now meets came into use in 1894 (Sedgwick 1921:222; Brownville Visitor Center n.d.:3). By 1882, there were 79 members of the lodge. Other Masonic organizations in Brownville during Phase I included the Brownville Chapter, No. 4, Royal Arch Masons (R. A. M.), founded November 1867 with an unknown number of members; the Furnas Council, No. 3, R. A.

M, founded April 1871 with 90 members and later merged with the Brownville Chapter, No. 4, R. A. M.; the Adah Chapter, No. 2, Eastern Star, founded February 1872 with 65 members; the Mt. Carmel Commandery, No. 3, K. T., founded July 1870 with fourteen members; the Royal Imperial Conclave of Rome – the Red Cross of Constantine, founded December 1871 with twelve members; and the Excelsior Lodge, No. 15, Knights of Pythias, founded in October 1873 with an unknown number of members (Andreas 1882:Part 7, Masonic and Other Organizations). Phase I was a period of intense activity by the Masons in Brownville, with weekly or monthly meetings of the various groups, and many individuals maintained memberships with multiple organizations (Andreas 1882:Part 7, Masonic and Other Organizations).

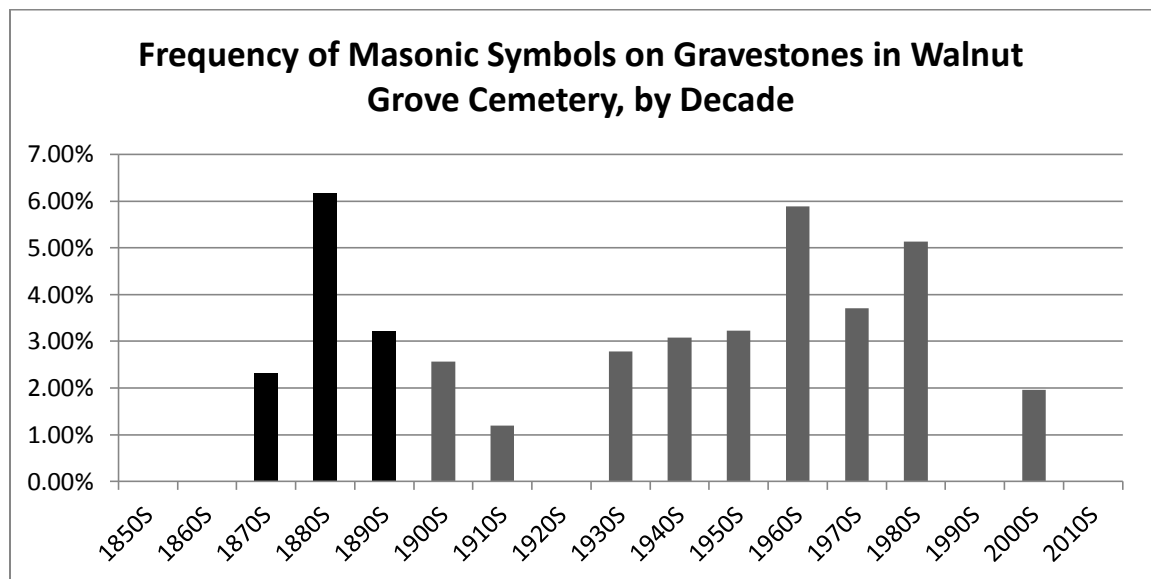


Figure 3.24: The temporal distribution of Masonic symbols on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase I.

Freemasonry's roots trace to the Middle Ages, though the fraternal organization's modern roots generally date to the early eighteenth century in England (Burt 2003:659). American Freemasonry split from European Freemasonry in the 1870s (Masonic Union 2008:par 38). The first wave of popularity of Masonic symbols on gravestones in Brownville also began in the 1870s, peaking in the 1880s, and then disappearing after the first decade of the 20th century. This time period corresponds not only to the establishment of the many masonic organizations in Brownville, but also to a time of new developments and expansion among Freemasons in general, sparked by a resurgence of "the tradition of ritual magic" by Masons in London who established the Order of the Golden Dawn, reviving not only Masonic practices, but also expanding occultic and mythical traditions (Jenkins 2000:72). The decline of popularity in masonic imagery in Brownville during Phase II further corresponds with the upsurge in anti-cult movements during the 1920s.

Several of the individuals whose gravestones date to Phase I and bear masonic emblems also appear on lists of officers from the various masonic organizations. David Campbell (c. 1832-1898), was an officer of the Brownville Chapter, No. 4, Royal Arch Masons in 1882 (Andreas 1882:Part 7, Masonic and Other Organizations). M. Alexander Handley (b. 1822, d. 1883) (Figure 3.25) was the treasurer for the Nemaha Valley Lodge, No. 4, A., F. & A. M. in 1882 (Andreas 1882:Part 7, Masonic and Other Organizations). Robert W. Furnas (b. 1890, d. 1905) was likely a younger relative of R. W. Furnas, a member and officer in many of the organizations, including the first High Priest of the Brownville Chapter, No. 4, Royal Arch Masons (R. A. M.), an original officer in the Adah Chapter, No. 2, Eastern Star, an officer in the Mt. Carmel Commandery, No. 3, K.

T., and the Sovereign of the Royal Imperial Conclave of Rome – the Red Cross of Constantine (Andreas 1882:Part 7, Masonic and Other Organizations). With the large membership numbers for many of the organizations, the symbols are certainly not out of place in Walnut Grove.



Figure 3.25: M. Alexander Handley’s gravestone, with a masonic emblem.

Several decorative elements also occur regularly on Brownville’s gravestones. Shields, banners, and scrollwork were all popular decorations on markers during this period and, although they are not specifically symbolic images, are still worth noting as they display temporal patterns. When appearing on a non-military gravestone, a shield is primarily a decorative element, as it serves as a frame for the engraved text. Shields appear only on gravestones dating to Phases I and II (Figures 3.26-3.27). In Phase I,

shields appear on six civilian gravestones marking nine burials. Of the nine individuals, five were female and four were male. Seven of the nine individuals were adults at the times of their deaths, while the ages of the remaining two are unknown. If one considers the gravestones from Phase I and Phase II together, the pattern is much the same: eight stones marking eleven burials of nine adults and two individuals of unknown age. Five were male and six were female. The ages at death spanned a broad range, from about nineteen years (Ferdinand Theo Uhlig, c. 1845-1864) to seventy-three years (Daniel Miles, 1798-1871). Of the eight gravestones, four also display symbolic images, such as roses, lambs, or clasped hands, one (the Miles family) displays only the decorative elements of the shield and scrollwork, and the remaining three have only images of shields. The image appears to be purely decorative on these eight gravestones, serving primarily as a frame for the vital information carved on the stones.

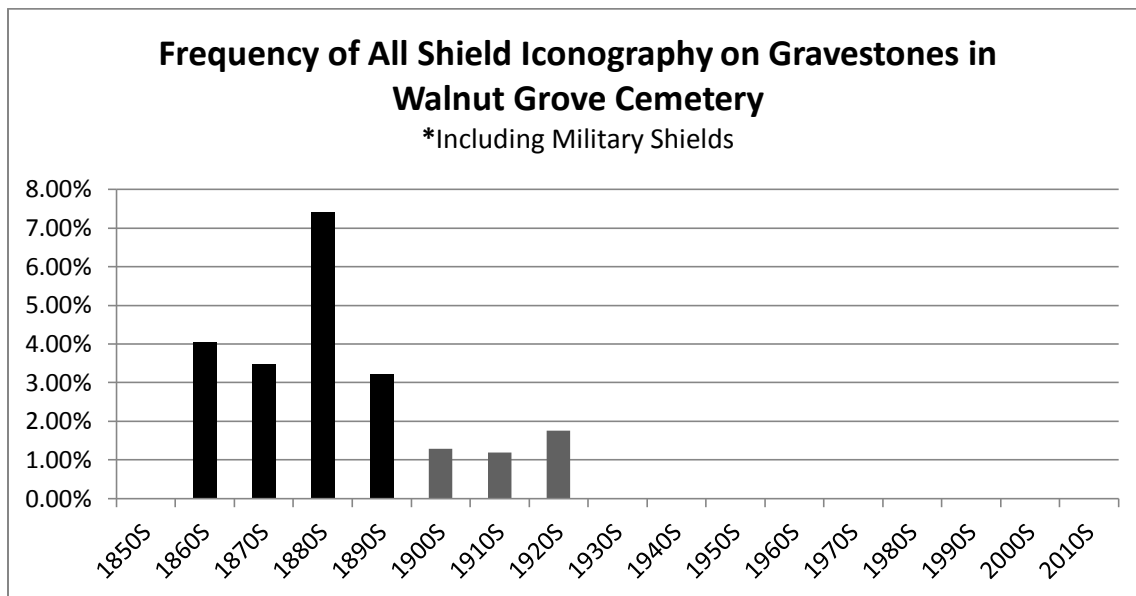


Figure 3.26: The frequency of all shield iconography on Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, including those found on government-issued gravestones, highlighting Phase I.

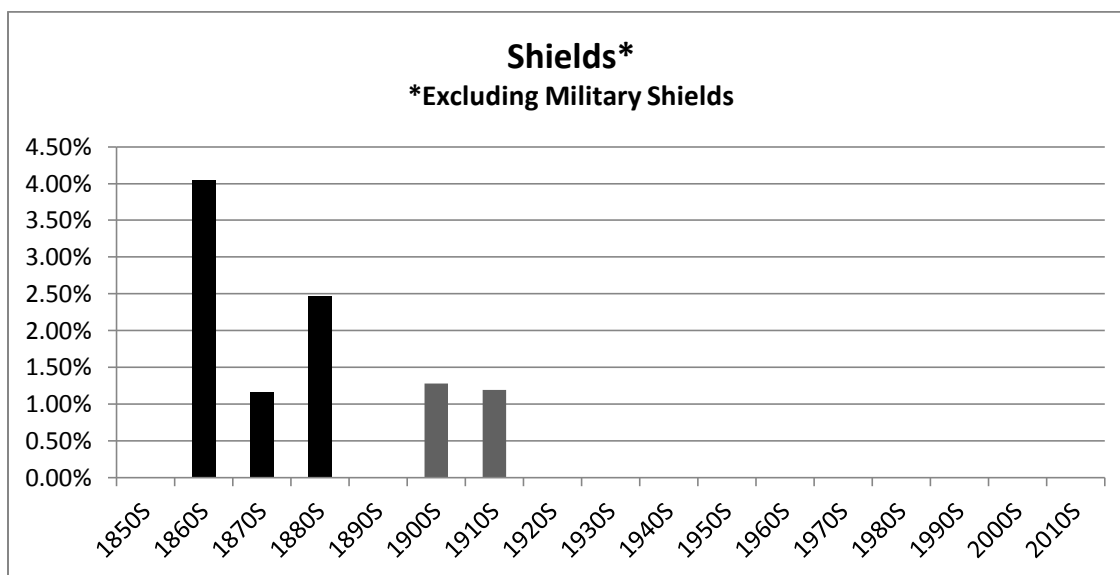


Figure 3.27: The frequency of shield iconography on Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, excluding those found on government-issued gravestones, highlighting Phase I.

Another decorative element that appears framing text on gravestones in Walnut Grove is the image of a banner. They occurred in fairly low frequencies during Phase I, then disappeared completely until the 1960s, after which they grew rapidly to become one of the most popular decorative elements, possibly because of technological changes that allowed for easier decoration of gravestones (Figure 3.28). Banners typically appear framing a single line of engraved text during Phase I, such as the phrases ‘In Memory of’ or ‘Born in...’ or surrounding an individual’s age or other vital statistic (Figure 3.29). They convey no particular meaning, but were simply a stylistic element that disappeared after Phase I only to become much more popular during Phase IV.

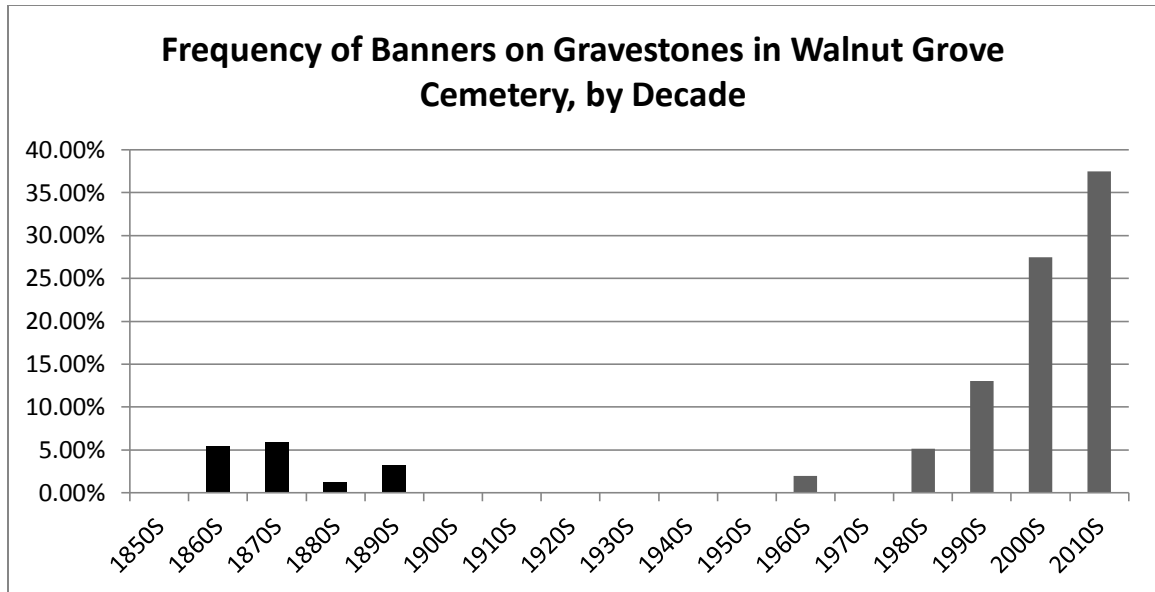


Figure 3.28: The temporal distribution of banners on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase I.



Figure 3.29: James G. Melvin’s gravestone, with an example of a banner surrounding the phrase ‘In Memory of.’

Like the banner, scrollwork is another purely decorative element. The author has defined scrollwork for the purpose of this study as any sweeping abstract design with curved lines (Figure 3.30). Unlike the banner, scrollwork appears on gravestones from all phases in Brownville, but it was most common during Phase I, peaking at just over sixteen percent in the 1880s before dramatically declining in popularity during the first decade of the twentieth century (Figure 3.31).



Figure 3.30: An example of scrollwork on James Berry's gravestone.

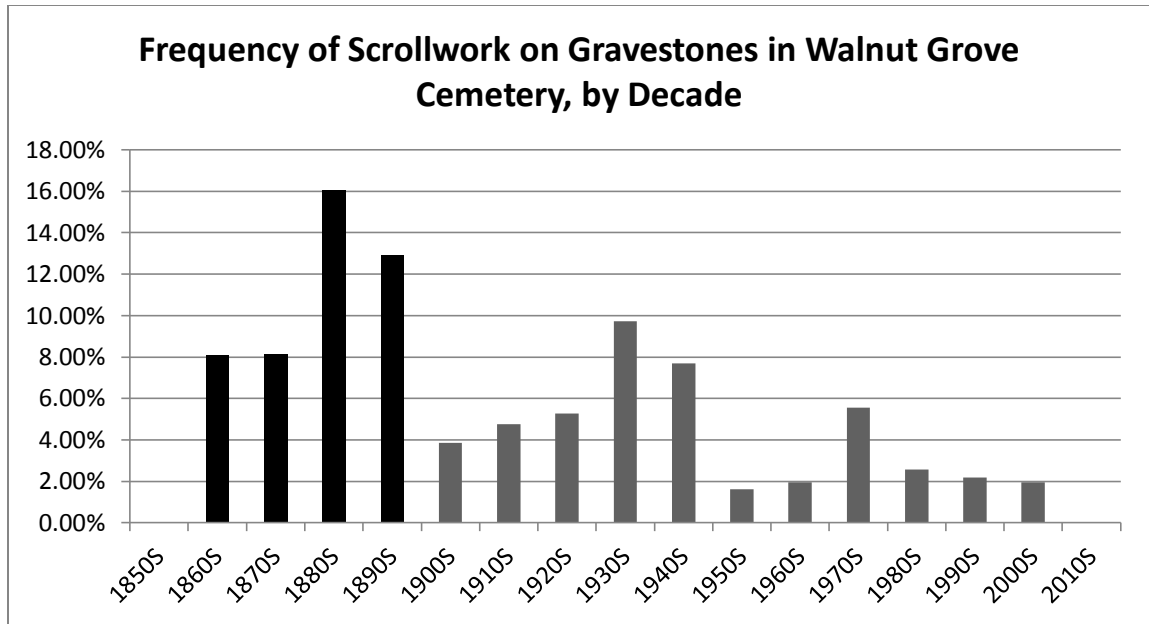


Figure 3.31: The temporal distribution of scrollwork on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

The images on Brownville's gravestones during Phase I highlight several themes that reflect life in the young town during the second half of the nineteenth century. Several of the images, such as lambs and buds, reflect the high death rates and the perils that youth faced during the frontier period. Brownville's citizens frequently experienced sorrow and mourning, as illustrated by the presence of weeping willow trees on several markers. Yet, other images hint that the population of Brownville had hope for their future, whether in this life or the afterlife. Hands pointing up to the sky point to confidence in the reward of eternal life. Symbols like doves and anchors, which have overt religious significance, also more subtly represent hope. Thus, the material culture of the era suggests that Brownville's residents, though they often dealt with life-and-death struggles, had hope for their futures, and perhaps not only for the afterlife. Those hopeful outlooks may have helped sustain individuals and families through dark and difficult

times on the frontier, resulting in a resilient community that intended to face the dangers of plains life head-on. As the new century came about, however, death rates began to decline as government- and privately-sponsored health campaigns educated women about sanitation and healthcare. Brownville's attitudes about death and dying slowly changed as death rates declined, and material culture reflected these changes, with images of weeping willows, buds, and lambs becoming rarer and (with the single exception from the 1970s) eventually disappearing entirely.

Phase II: 1900s-1920s

In sharp contrast to the diversity of images in Phase I, Phase II is characterized primarily by a lack of gravestone iconography (Figure 3.32). Though a few trends from Phase I trailed off into the beginning of Phase II, such as shrouds, urns, and shields, no iconographic pattern dominates this phase. The only images that occur with any regularity are decorative images, and those do not occur in high frequencies. By and large, Phase II is dominated by austerity and lack of images, forming a sharp demarcation between the wide array of images that dominated the late nineteenth century and the dominance of the forget-me-not that would explode in the 1930s.

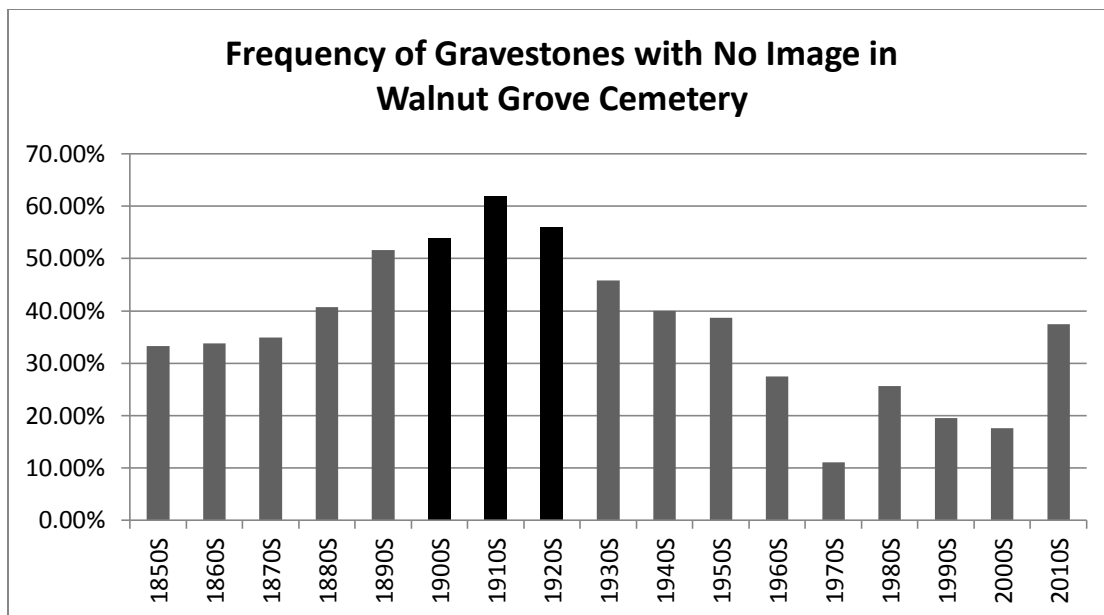


Figure 3.32: The frequency of gravestones with no images in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

This brief, but distinct gap between Phases I and II corresponds well with the Progressive Era, generally considered to span from the 1890s through the 1920s. This was a period of relative prosperity between the Panic of 1893 and the stock market collapse of 1929. During these decades, Progressives supported a wide variety of political, municipal, and social reforms, often focusing on the well-being of the family and children. Significant advances in sanitation practices took place, which helped to decrease child mortality. The suffrage and temperance movements peaked during this period, culminating in the passage of the 18th and 19th Amendments, and the tradition of American ingenuity continued with the development of countless technological advances. Inventions such as the Model T Ford, the tractor, and passenger airplanes were but a few of these innovations.

Gravestone carving was not exempt from technological advance during the Progressive Era. Increasingly, carvers employed mechanical carving methods to create

gravestones. While many of the older gravestones in Brownville were carved from marble, newer technologies allowed stone carvers to work with polished granite stones. Granite was not as commonly used during Phase I as it was extremely difficult to engrave (Knee 2012:4). Though Alexander MacDonald developed techniques for carving granite in the 1830s in Britain, his competitors did not develop such techniques until the 1880s (Knee 2012:5). The technology did not appear in Brownville on a large scale until the early twentieth century, not surprisingly during the Progressive Era. Polished granite gravestones, however, had become a status symbol in Britain, a trend which appears to have crossed the Atlantic to the United States. That the technology was still new and the medium was difficult to engrave, combined with the status associated with carved granite gravestones, explains the lack of iconography during Phase II.

The images that display slight temporal patterns during Phase II were decorative, repetitive patterns that the author characterizes as ‘geometric’ (Figures 3.33-3.34). Such repetitive patterns peaked in popularity during the 1910s and 1920s, though they still occurred in rather low frequencies; fewer than six percent of gravestones during the 1910s displayed such images, while slightly more than seven percent of markers from the 1920s had geometric designs.

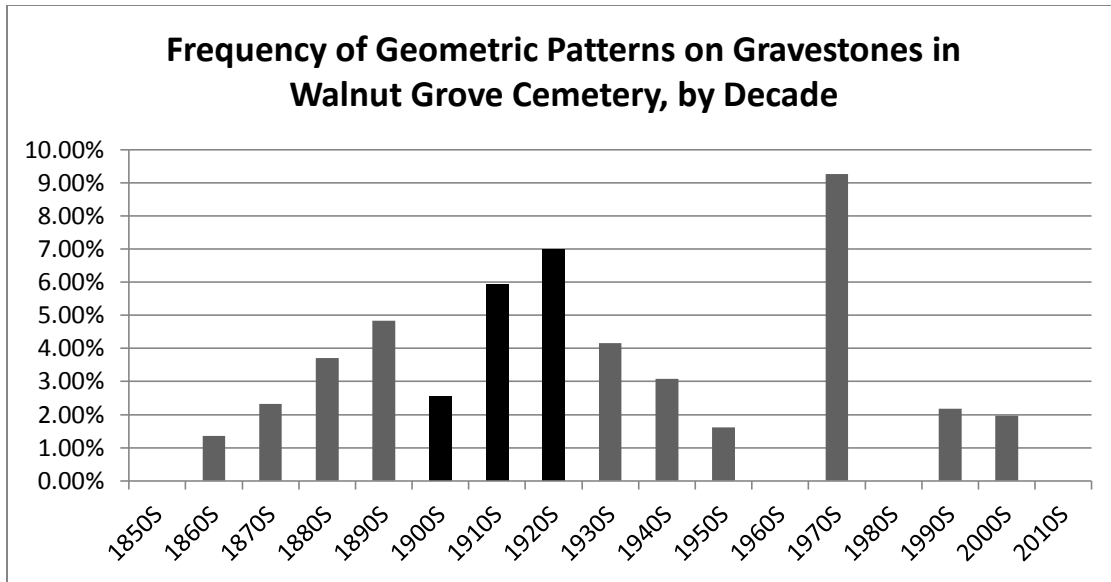


Figure 3.33: The temporal distribution of geometric patterns on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase II.



Figure 3.34: An example of geometric pattern on gravestone from Phase II.

While the Progressive Era was a relatively prosperous period in the United States, the gravestones in Brownville were quite simple, most frequently including only text, with very few images appearing. Though one might assume such a prosperous period would result in extravagant mortuary art, this did not occur in Brownville. Rather, the newly developed techniques made prestigious granite gravestones accessible for more families, albeit with very simple images. It is also possible that, during this rather prosperous period in American history, when lifespans and bank accounts were expanding, Brownville's citizens may not have had to rely as heavily upon their faith for hope for a better future. This was a time of rapidly improving standards of life, before the stock market crashed, before the Dust Bowl, and before World War II would shake the foundations of American life.

Phase III: 1930s-1970s

The 1930s ushered in a new mode in Brownville, with iconography again becoming more prominent on the deathscape. Though this period witnessed the lowest diversity of images during any of the four phases identified in Brownville, iconography was significantly more common than during the previous phase and more images displayed temporal patterns. In other words, though the images engraved on Brownville's gravestones became more standardized, it also became more common for gravestones to include images along with text.

While more gravestones began to exhibit images during Phase III, they were most likely to display a single, specific symbol: the forget-me-not. Flowers are an example of gravestone images that became much more standardized as a result of technological

changes in the early and mid-twentieth century. While flowers are present on Brownville gravestones from the 1850s, the flowers from the second half of the nineteenth century and the first couple of decades of the twentieth century are primarily roses. In the 1920s, however, both the frequency and form of flowers on the gravestones changed. Rather abruptly, the flowers became stylized, with repetitive images of five-petaled forget-me-nots appearing on gravestone after gravestone.

In the field, the author and her field crews recorded all images of flowers simply as “flower,” unless a specific type of flower was discernible in the carving, such as a calla lily or a poppy. The forget-me-nots are so simple and stylized that neither the author nor the members of her field crew, which included a Master Gardener, identified them as forget-me-nots. It was not until later, when perusing the literature, that the author realized they were forget-me-nots. By reanalyzing the photographs and field specimen catalog, the author was able to differentiate between forget-me-nots and other flowers. This re-analysis thus showed that not only did the frequency of flowers change on Brownville’s gravestones in the 1930s, but so did the form.

As their name implies, forget-me-nots (*Myosotis palustris*) represent “faithful love and undying memory” (Figure 3.35) (Lehner and Lehner 2003:117). The symbolism, combined with their simple and easily replicated five-petal form, makes the forget-me-not an obvious choice for gravestone iconography. After a slight increase in popularity in the 1920s, the popularity of forget-me-nots on gravestones in Brownville began to rise dramatically in the 1930s (Figure 3.36). While fewer than nine percent of gravestones in the 1920s displayed forget-me-nots, the frequency ballooned to nearly 28 percent in the 1930s, peaking at 53.7 percent in the 1970s, the last decade of Phase III. The symbol’s

popularity continued into and throughout Phase IV, though with lower frequencies. No other image in in the cemetery appears more frequently during any period. This swell of popularity of the image suggests that concepts of faith and remembrance that existed in Brownville during Phase I resurged during Phase III, intensified, flourished, and likely became the most prominent views regarding death and mourning in this community.



Figure 3.35: Lillie Hoover Walsh's gravestone, which bears an image of forget-me-nots.

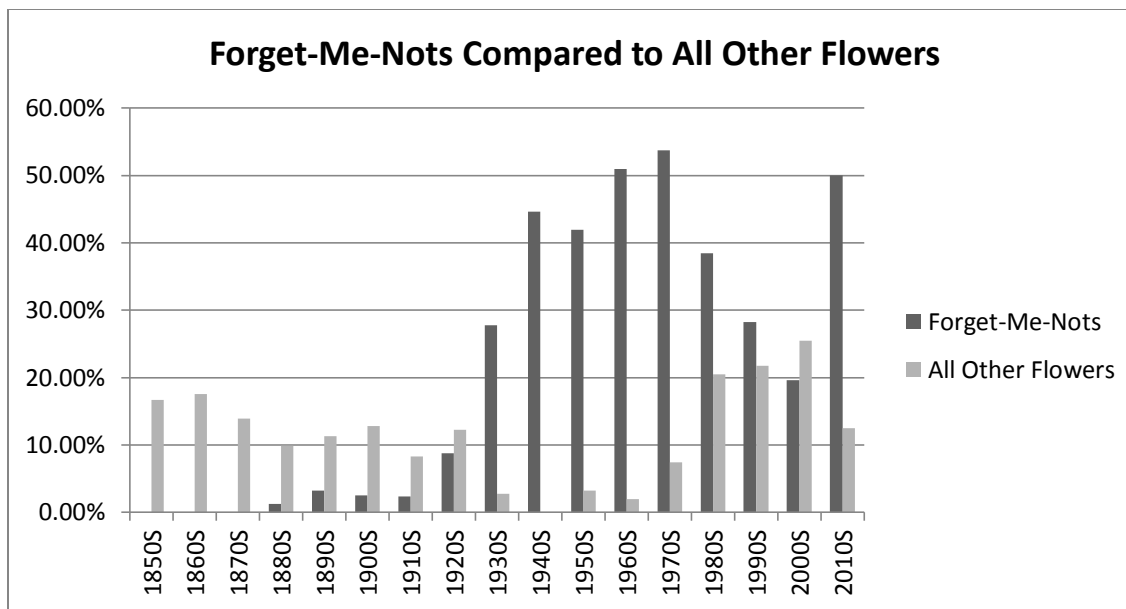


Figure 3.36: The temporal distribution of forget-me-nots compared to all other flowers engraved on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

With the exception of the 1940s, crosses have appeared on gravestones in Brownville in every decade (Figure 3.37). The image, however, did not appear in any regular temporal pattern until the last three decades of Phase III. In the 1960s the frequency of the image's appearance on markers dramatically increased. Prior to this decade, crosses appeared on no more than six and a half percent of gravestones. In the 1960s, the frequency jumped to nearly sixteen percent. With the exception of the 1980s, the percentage of gravestones with images of crosses remained between twelve and twenty-four percent throughout Phases III and IV.

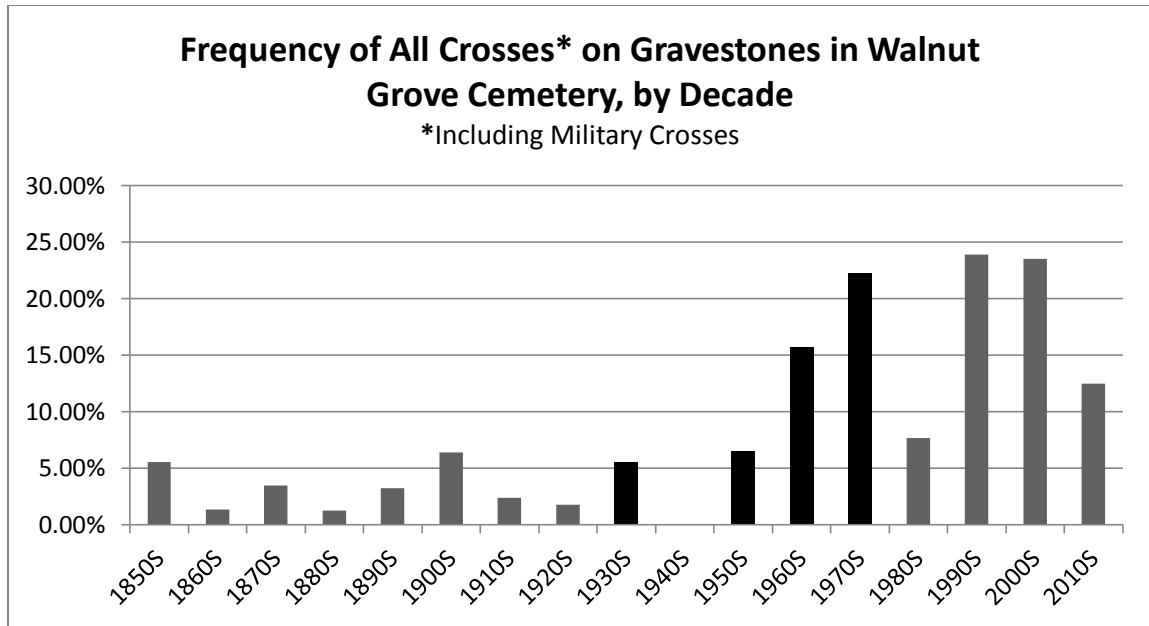


Figure 3.37: The temporal distribution of cross iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Jenkins (2000:183-184) noted that between 1965 and 1985, fundamentalist evangelical and Pentecostal church memberships burgeoned across the entire United States, while more mainstream and liberal churches witnessed significant declines in their membership figures. Evangelical Christianity burst into the mainstream, not least with Jimmy Carter's proclamation during his 1976 presidential campaign that he had been 'born again' (Jenkins 2000:182-183). Suddenly, the rapidly-growing movement that found its footing with Billy Graham's 'crusades' beginning in 1949 was not only widely acknowledged, but also more broadly accepted nationwide (Jenkins 2000:183-184). The cross became a symbol espoused not only by Catholics, but also by fundamentalists. This swift proliferation and mainstream acceptance of evangelical and conservative

Christianity on a national scale thus explains the sudden increase in cross iconography in a primarily non-Catholic cemetery in the Great Plains.

Another symbol related to the expansion and mainstream acceptance of evangelical Christianity began appearing more regularly during Phase III. Though angels never occur in particularly high frequencies in Brownville, the appearance of the symbol in the 1950s is significant (Figure 3.38). Only one angel appears on a gravestone that pre-dates the 1950s. Four examples date to Phase III, with two dating to Phase IV. An additional two modern gravestones have images of angels, but their exact dates of placement are unknown to the author, as the markers appear to have been placed prior to the individuals' deaths, an infrequent but not unique practice in Brownville or elsewhere. As the image appears more frequently on the gravestones of the very young and female, this pattern is explored in Chapter 5. The near-absence of angels prior to the 1950s suggests that, though angels never became particularly popular in Brownville, they did become a more appropriate gravestone image.

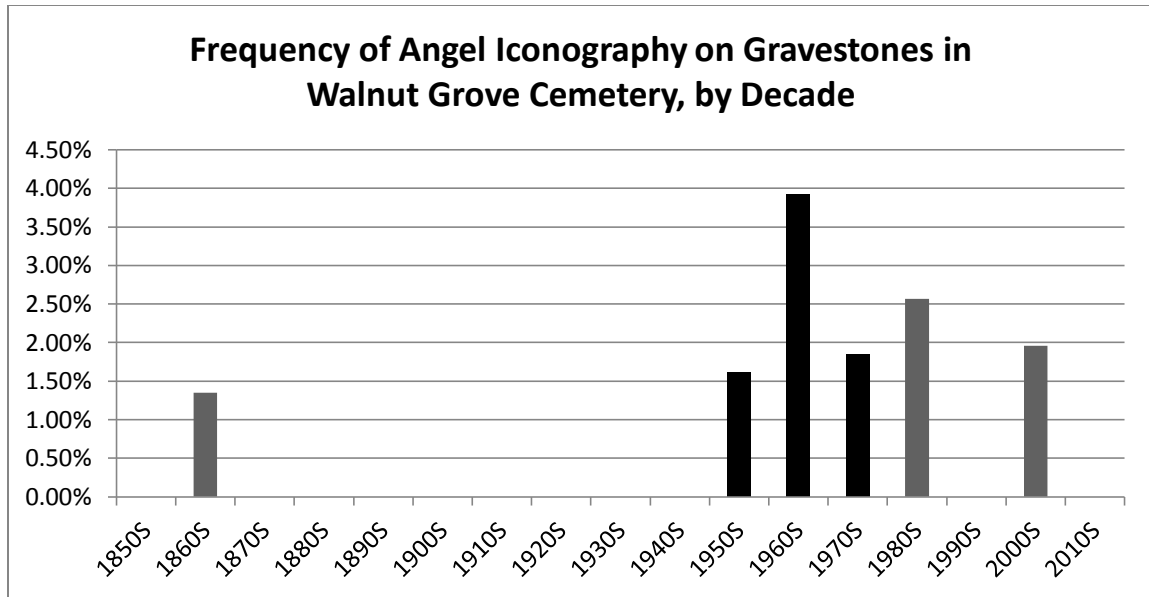


Figure 3.38: The temporal distribution of angel iconography on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase III.

A few decorative elements continued to appear on gravestones in Walnut Grove during this period. While the frequency of scrollwork on the markers declined significantly during Phase III, as did geometric designs (with the exception of the 1970s), the use of leaves as a decorative element reached its peak during this period (Figures 3.39-3.40). The leaves that appeared on Brownville gravestones from the 1930s through 1970s, while stylized, are often more detailed than the highly simplified versions from the turn of the century, suggesting that technological developments during the middle of the twentieth century enabled stone carvers to create more intricate images (Figure 3.41): comparison of leaves from Phase III vs. Phase I).

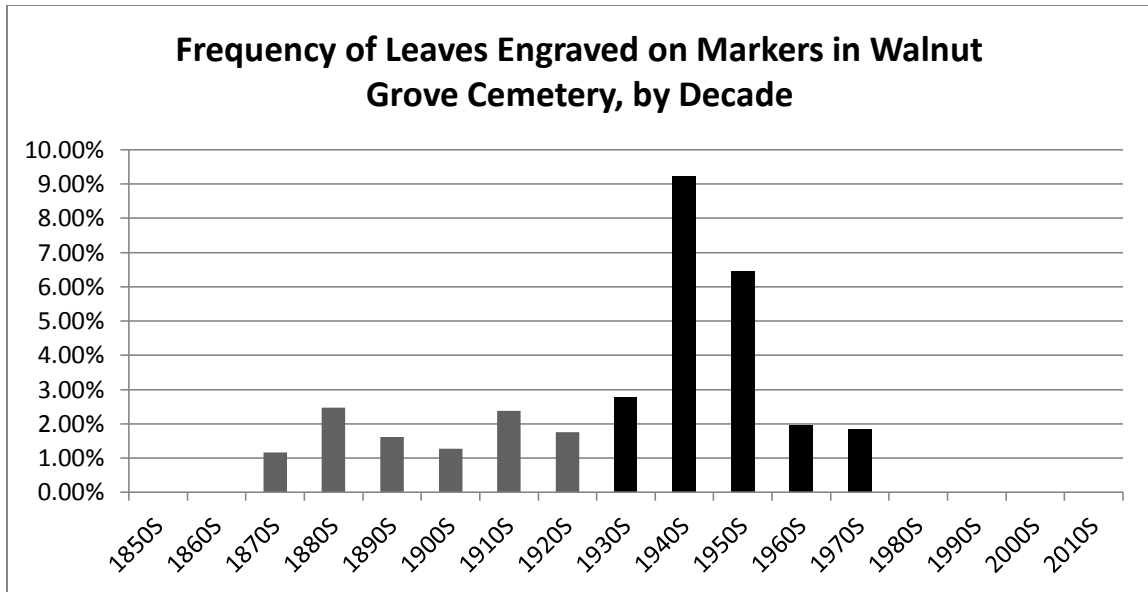


Figure 3.39: The temporal distribution of leaves engraved on markers in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase III.

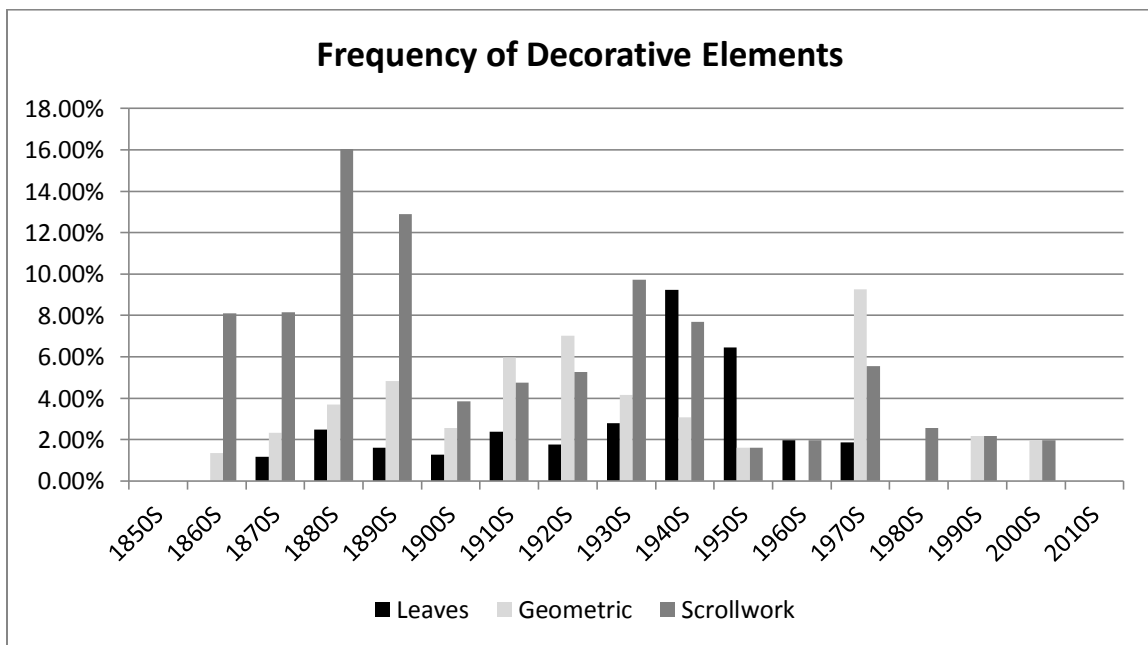


Figure 3.40: The temporal distribution of various decorative elements on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 3.41: A comparison of leaves from Phase III (top) and Phase I (bottom).

Masonic symbols continued to appear consistently throughout Phase III. Though the peak of popularity of masonic emblems occurred in the 1880s, Phase III represents a second wave of popularity for the symbols (Figure 3.42). Many of the masonic emblems that date to this phase are symbols for the Order of the Eastern Star, a masonic organization that is open to both men and women. Sixty-five members founded the Adah

Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star in Brownville in 1872. An additional chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star (OES) was founded in 1942, which was, not coincidentally, the first year that an OES emblem appeared on a gravestone in Brownville (“Order Of The Eastern Star Of Nebraska Brownville Chapter 263”:Table 1, line 8). Two decades later, the Free and Accepted Masons of Nebraska Mahf, Nemaha Valley Lodge was founded, perhaps as a revival of the original Nemaha Valley Lodge No. 4 founded in 1857 (“Free Accepted Masons Of Nebraska Mahf Nemaha Valley Lodge”:Table 1, line 8; Cutler 1882:“Masonic and Other Organizations” par 1). These later chapters are likely responsible for the second wave of popularity of masonic emblems in the cemetery.

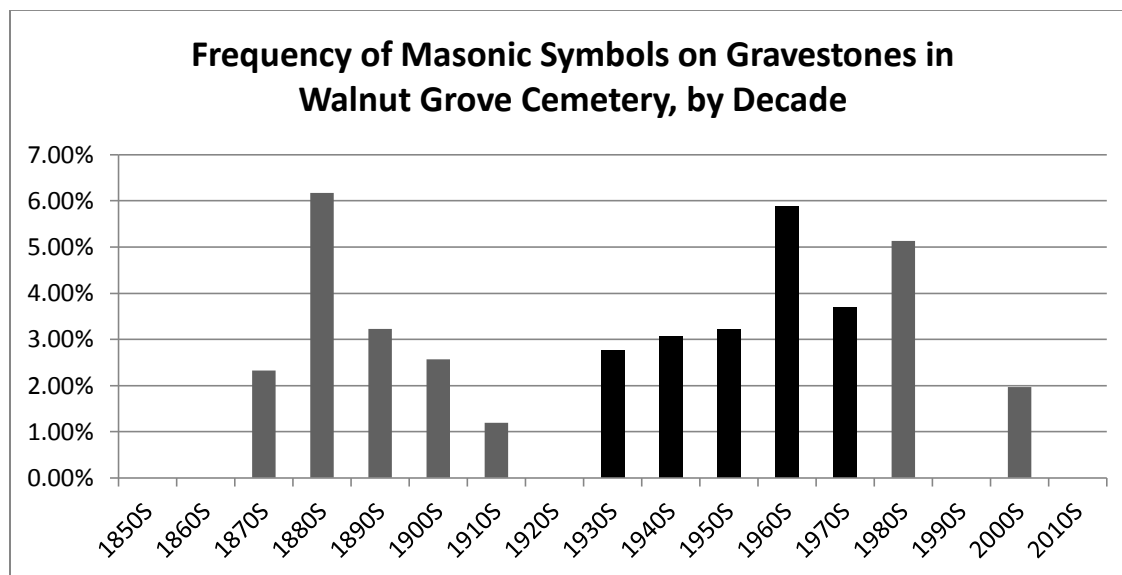


Figure 3.42: The temporal distribution of Masonic symbols on Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase III.

The resurgence in symbolic iconography that occurred during Phase III suggests that something stimulated the citizens of Brownville to reach out again to their faiths for

reassurance and hope. The period of the 1930s through the 1970s was a period of social unrest throughout the country. Ushered in by the stock market crash of 1929, the Great Depression shook the nation not only emotionally but also physically as resource procurement became more problematic for the average citizen. The devastation of the Dust Bowl compounded the economic uncertainty of the depression. Just a few short years after the United States' economy stabilized, war broke out in Europe and, by the end of 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor drug the United States into the conflict. While the end of the war may have brought American troops home, it also ushered in the Cold War, which spanned until the early 1990s. The threat of nuclear war from the Soviet Union and its allies brought tension to the country's leaders and civilians, as air raid drills and frightening news stories became part of daily life. The 1950s and 1960s also witnessed major social upheaval within American society, from the Civil Rights movement to second-wave feminism, the anti-Vietnam movement, and the various conflicts, struggles, and legislation that resulted from these movements.

During these times of social upheaval, Brownville's citizens appear to have turned again to their faiths for hope and security, a movement which is reflected in the material culture of Walnut Grove Cemetery. One image, the forget-me-not, came to dominate the deathscape in the middle of the twentieth century. The image succinctly conveyed the concepts of remembrance and faith. Less obviously, these flowers continued to emphasize the importance of eternal life that earlier images conveyed during Phase I. More subtly than the image of a hand pointing up, the forget-me-not nonetheless implies that the bond between individuals is not broken in death, but suspended until a future reunion. The emphasis during this period, however, shifted more towards the memory of

the individual, rather than the state of the individual's body or soul. Furthermore, a new surge in conservative evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, as a reaction against social instability, which influenced Americans from coast to coast also appears to have impacted Brownville's culture, as evidenced by the sudden increase in the frequency of cross iconography in the cemetery beginning in the 1950s.

Phase IV: 1980s-Present

Phase IV marks the transition from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century and, as a result, the end date has yet to be determined. One must be cautious when analyzing statistics from the 2010s, as data were only recorded for the first two and a half years of this decade. As a result, the analysis for this phase will primarily focus on the decades of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. During this current phase, the diversity of images began to rebound, increasing from the Phase III low of 29 distinct images to 35. Though nowhere near the peak of image diversity during Phase I, the end of the twentieth century appears to have heralded a period of increased attention to individuality on gravestones. Technological advances now allow carvers to create intricate, and sometime custom-made, designs on markers and, while forget-me-nots remain popular, new designs are now beginning to compete with their status.

Four images that have each appeared in at least two other phases appear to have peaked or are in the process of peaking during Phase IV. Crosses, Bibles, roses, and hearts are not new on Brownville's gravestones, but they have never been as popular as they are during this phase. Crosses, which became popular in the 1960s, reached a cemetery-high frequency of nearly 24 percent in the 1990s and 2000s (Figure 3.43). This

continues the trend of conservative and fundamentalist Christianity which developed in the mid twentieth century and erupted into the mainstream during the 1970s. The surge in images of bibles is also likely the result of the increased conservative Christian movement (Figure 3.44). While bibles generally appeared on the gravestones of clergy or lay people during the Victorian period, the image now seems to symbolize an individual's commitment to their faith.

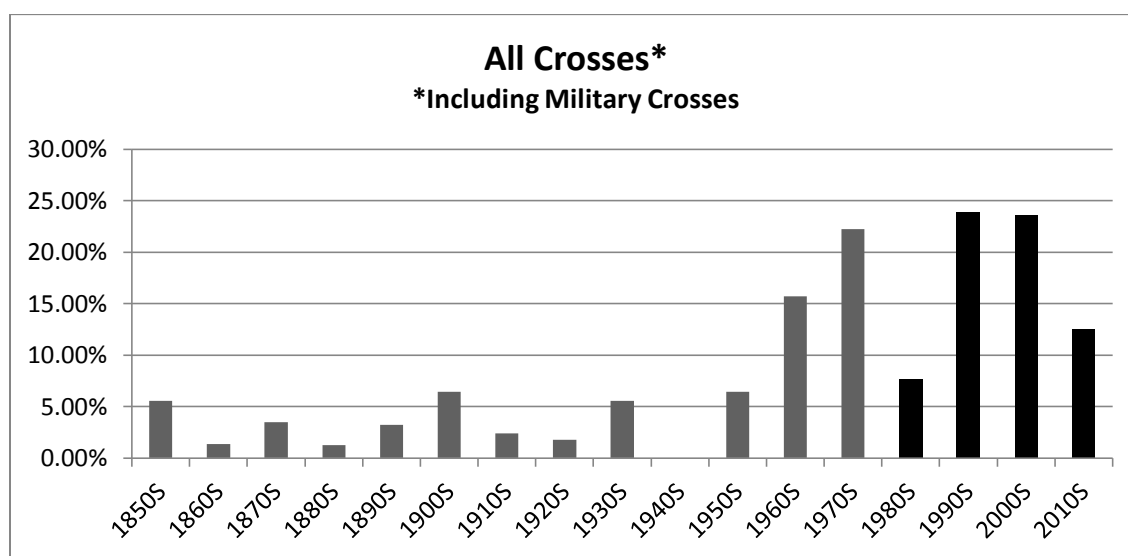


Figure 3.43: The temporal distribution of cross iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase IV.

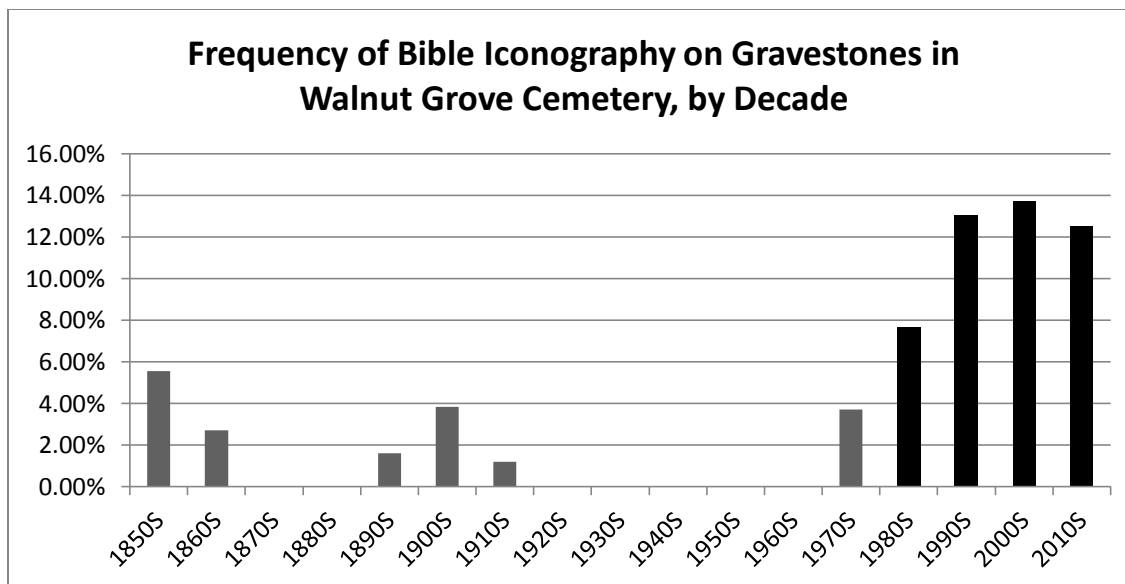


Figure 3.44: The temporal distribution of Bible iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase IV.

The rise in popularity of roses and hearts on Brownville gravestones, on the other hand, speaks to the importance of deep personal relationships that characterize social settings the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Brownville. Roses, which appeared occasionally on gravestones dating to Phase I in the cemetery, disappeared from the deathscape for the first three decades of the twentieth century before making occasional appearances throughout the middle portion of the century (Figure 3.45). In the 1980s, however, the image suddenly became one of the most common images in Walnut Grove. While fewer than four percent of gravestones dating to the 1970s had images of roses, nearly eighteen percent of markers from the 1980s. More than seventeen percent of gravestones from the 1990s displayed the image, and more than 21.5 percent of gravestones from the first decade of the twenty-first century have roses. The trend appears to be continuing into the 2010s, with twelve and one half percent of gravestones

from 2010 through mid-2012 engraved with roses. Though the Victorian period ended more than a century ago, several researchers (cf. Cotter et al 2011, P. Stone 2007, Douglass and Michaels 2004) have noted a return to some aspects of Victorian ideals, fashion, and other forms of domesticity, moderated by the fact that many women now view the ability to choose to participate in these ideals because of the freedom brought about by the feminist movements (Cotter et al 2011:261). The rose as a symbol of love and beauty appears to be making a resurgence, conveying the emotional attachment that remains with survivors after a loved one's death.

Another symbol of love, whether romantic, familial, or platonic, is the heart. A couple of examples from both the 1890s and the 1900s, as well as one each from the 1930s and 1970s, exist in Brownville, but the image did not occur frequently until the 1990s, when nearly eleven percent of gravestones had hearts engraved upon them (Figure 3.46). Most of the gravestones from Phase IV that have roses also have other images, most commonly Bibles and/or images relating to the person's hobbies or employment. As a symbol of love, it is not surprising that the heart is often found on the gravestones of married couples from this phase, but it also appears just as frequently on gravestones marking the single burials of women.

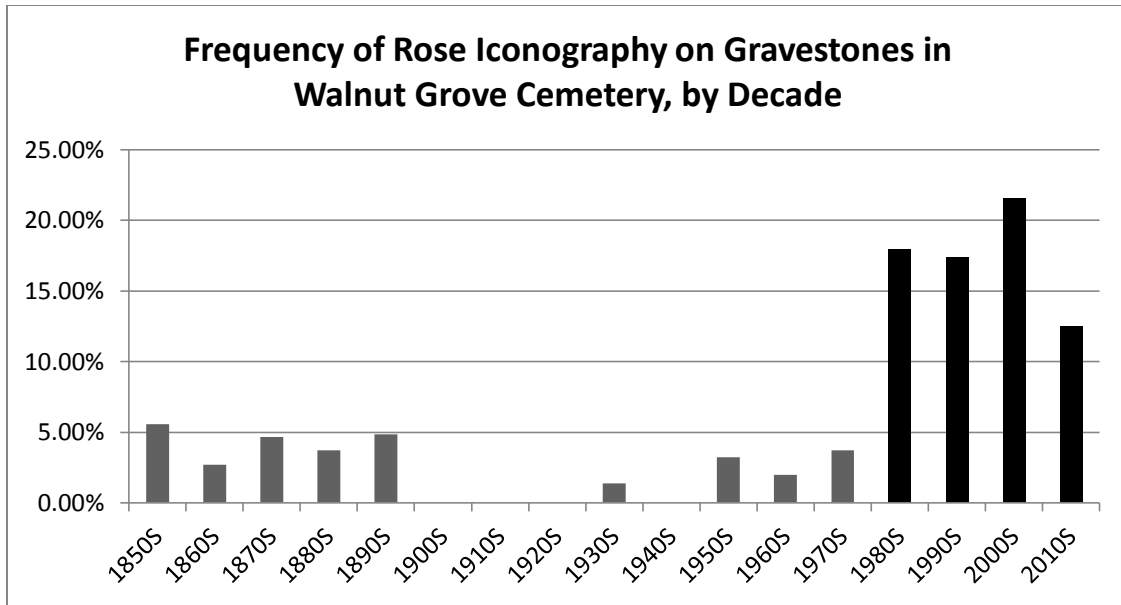


Figure 3.45: The temporal distribution of rose iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase IV.

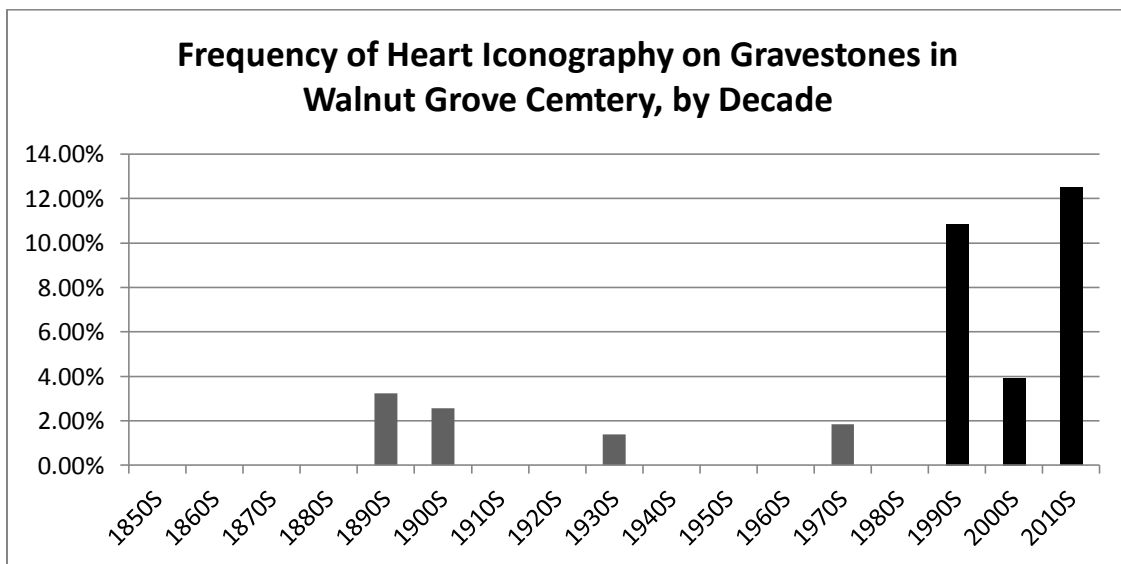


Figure 3.46: The temporal distribution of heart iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase IV.

With the proliferation of hearts and roses during Phase IV, it should not be particularly surprising that wedding rings also frequently decorate gravestones during this period (Figure 3.47). Not a single wedding ring appears on a gravestone in this cemetery until 1982, when Robert E. Haith passed away, leaving behind his wife, Joyce. The marker bears both of their names, though Joyce is apparently still living, and displays images of two interlocked wedding rings, bibles, and forget-me-nots (Figure 3.48). The following decade, two additional gravestones display similar groupings. William L. and Gladys M. Kelley's marker includes two interlocking rings, bibles, forget-me-nots, and a military cross, while Joyce M. and Roland F. Stewart's stone includes interlocked rings, a cross, and forget-me-nots. Ten gravestones dating to the 2000s include images of rings, and all but one includes multiple images similar to the previous groupings. The two gravestones from the 2010s continue the trend. The rise in popularity of wedding rings, particularly when one considers it together with the increased popularity of hearts and roses, suggests that identification as a couple has become an important aspect of personal identity in Brownville during the last few decades. After the flurry of second-wave feminism, and in spite of the weaker third wave of feminism that occurred in the 1990s, marriage remains important for social status both in Brownville and throughout the country. Further analysis of this pattern appears in Chapter 5.

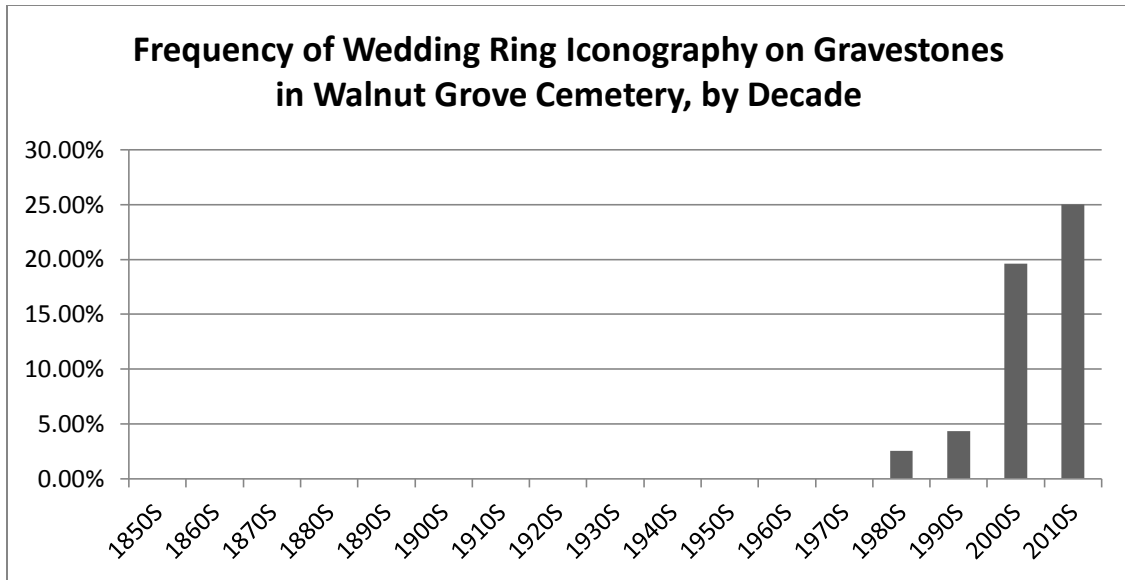


Figure 3.47: The temporal distribution of wedding ring iconography on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 3.48: Gravestone of Robert E. and Joyce Haith, displaying an image of interlocked wedding rings.

The use of banners as decorative elements has increased in each decade, making them the most common decorative element during this period (Figure 3.49). Banners routinely occur in conjunction with wedding rings, announcing a couple's wedding date, but they also regularly appear when non-statistical information is engraved on the stone. For example, Joan Emma Wessel's gravestone displays her name and dates of birth and death as the primary text on the stone, and towards the bottom of the stone is a banner that reads "Mother of Marcia, Marty, and Susan" (Figure 3.50). While it was common during Phase I for gravestones to list such information in line with the person's name and dates of birth and death, by Phase IV this information had largely merged with the decorative element. This development draws attention to the information inscribed within the banner, suggesting its importance to the individual. Reading Joan Emma Wessels' gravestone, for example, provides a stranger a fair amount of information about her, but it also reminds her surviving family and friends of her identity: the nurse's cap tells of her career, the iris perhaps indicates an interest in gardening or a favorite flower (assuming the image is not intended to convey any specific Victorian symbolism), and she was a mother of three. No husband's name appears with hers, and no text describes her as a wife, so it is possible she was not married at the time of her death.

Compared to gravestones from Phase I, markers from Phase IV convey significantly more information about the individual, and much less about the survivors. Gone are the weeping willows and lambs, replaced by cheerful images of hobbies or careers (see below), and non-vital information now appears in combination with the decorative banners. While much emphasis has been placed on the rise of evangelical and conservative Christianity, secularism has also been rising in popularity since the 1960s

(Roof and McKinney 1987:11). Secularism, in this sense, refers to an individual's indifference to or separation from formal religion. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney have noted that the juxtaposition of the religious and the secular has become an identifying characteristic of American culture (1987:9). Combined with the increased emphasis placed on individual identity, the rising importance of secularism in the United States may explain the increasing acceptance and use of non-religious iconography on gravestones in Brownville.

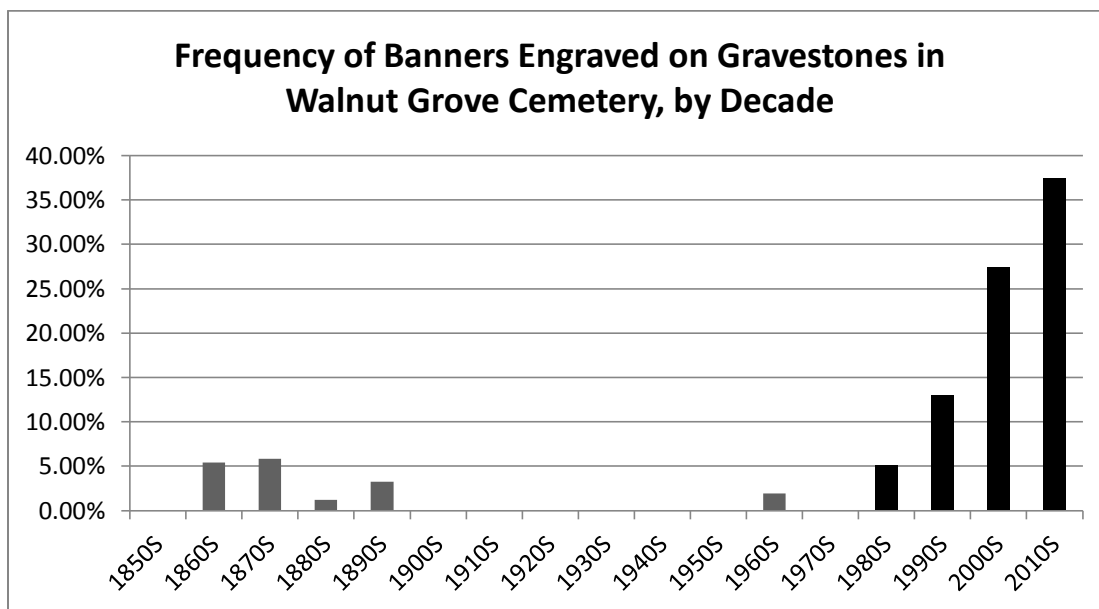


Figure 3.49: The temporal distribution of banners on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, highlighting Phase IV.



Figure 3.50: Joan Emma Wessel’s gravestone, including a banner with text, as well as an image indicating her career (symbolized by a nurse’s cap) and, possibly, her hobby (gardening or an interest in flowers, symbolized by an iris).

The importance of an individual’s identity, even if that identity was as a couple, at the turn of the twenty-first century appears not only in the prevalence of wedding rings, but also in the emergence of images relating to hobbies or employment of the individual whose burial is marked by the gravestone (Figure 3.51). The images include everything from guitars to horses to hunting scenes and beyond. The first example in Brownville dates to 1987. James L. Furnas, Sr.’s gravestone includes forget-me-nots and a hammer, representing what one may assume was either a career or hobby of carpentry or building. Carole Joyce Moore’s 1993 gravestone has an image of a horse, while the Elshire family’s stone of the same decade depicts a fishing scene. The trend bourgeoned in the 2000s, with the images become more detailed and diverse. Nurse’s caps (see Figure 49,

above), farming and gardening scenes, cabins, and antique cars are just a sample. If all of these were counted as unique images, the variety of images that date to Phase IV would be only one less than Phase I: 55 images in Phase IV compared to 56 in Phase I (Figure 3.52). This reinforces the value placed on individual identity of the deceased person, rather than the emotions of the survivors or, indeed, religion. Instead of focusing on mourning the loss of a loved one, gravestones from this period celebrate the life and personality of the person who has died.

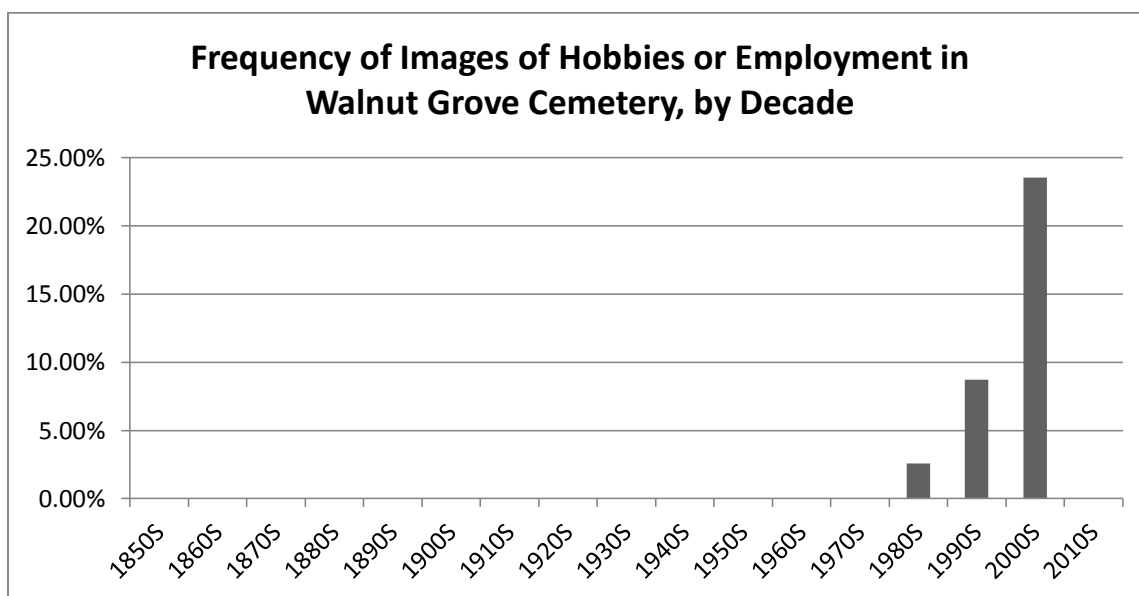


Figure 3.51: The temporal distribution of images of hobbies or employment on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

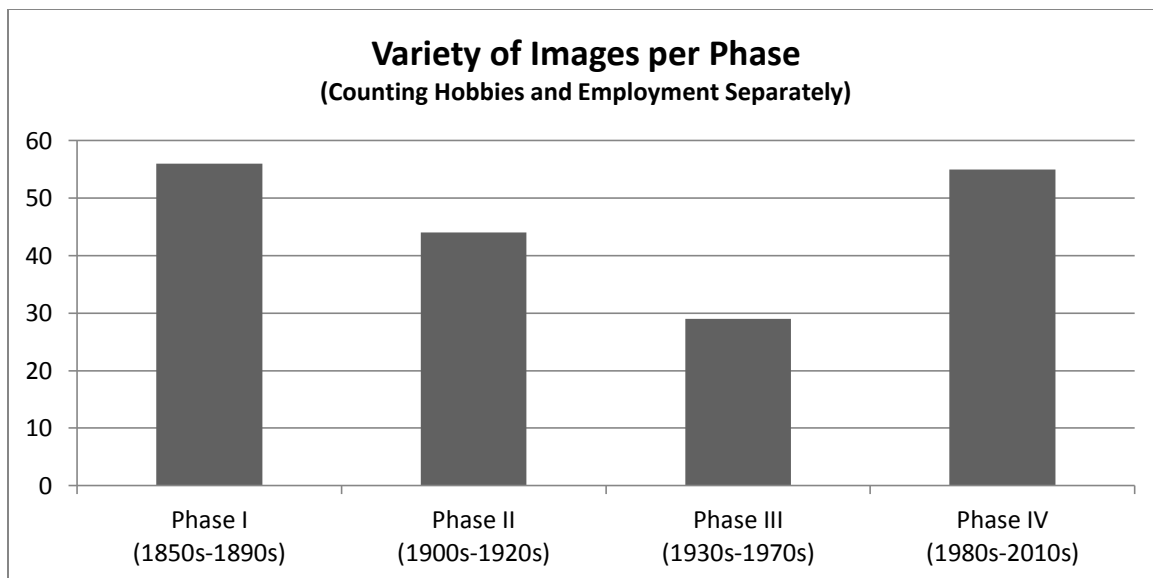


Figure 3.52: The variety of images per phase, counting each discrete image of a hobby or employment separately.

Phase IV is the period with the lowest frequency of gravestones without iconography. Part of this is due to advances in carving techniques (Personal Monuments n.d.:“Introduction” par 3), which allow carvers to create more detailed, complex images on today’s gravestones. A combination of hand-powered tools and computerized technology, such as diamond-tipped saws and engravers, has markedly increased possibilities for carving and engraving markers. The emphasis placed on individual identity in American culture, however, also plays a crucial role in the preponderance of iconography on Brownville’s gravestones during Phase IV. Gravestones now graphically depict individual interests and other aspects of identity. Memory, not merely of the individual, but also of the specific details of his or her life and personality is crucial. One may interpret these detailed depictions as visual narratives of an individual, which have replaced the textual narratives of the epitaphs common in Phase I. Rather than focusing

on the grief of survivors, mourning now centers upon celebrations of life, a transition evident in the images engraved on Brownville's gravestones.

Conclusions

Analyzing the images engraved on Brownville's gravestones allows one to explore the evolving concepts of death that have developed in this small town. Walnut Grove's deathscape began developing in the 1850s with the burial of Sarah E. Chapman in 1856. Her gravestone displays a simple and solitary broken bud, reflecting her family's sorrow over a life cut short. In a period characterized by high death rates, particularly among children, infants, and new mothers, when death from old age was rare but accidents and disease ravaged communities on a regular basis, the images on Brownville's gravestones reflect the difficulties of life. In such dangerous times, many appear to have clung to the hope of eternal life, or at least a less difficult life on earth, selecting images of doves, clasped hands, and anchors. Mourning was an important facet of Victorian culture, one not confined to the privacy of one's home, but shared with the community. Together, Brownville's early residents mourned their dead, displaying not only their grief but also their hope at the site of each burial.

As time progressed, many of those hopes were realized, as life expectancies grew and children lived to see adulthood. Technological and social changes brought about transformations to the deathscape, as gravestones became simpler and more streamlined. As the comparative prosperity of the Progressive Era increased social stability, and more citizens came to be born in America, fewer gravestones displayed visual cues to individual's identities or personal tragedies. Austere gravestones became the norm in the

period sandwiched between the Victorian Era and the emergence of Art Deco in the mid-1920s, and graphic simplicity came to dominate the deathscape.

As the middle of the twentieth century loomed, images began to reappear in the cemetery. The standardized forget-me-not sprang onto the deathscape, emphasizing the importance of memory of the deceased rather than the sorrow of surviving family and friends. As conservative, fundamentalist Christianity developed and blossomed, crosses began appearing, no longer reserved for Catholics. Overall, decorative elements and symbolic images became more detailed, the result of technological expansion in granite carving. Plain, imageless gravestones grew less frequent throughout Phase III, likely the result of technological advances and post-war prosperity.

With the end of the twentieth century came an increasing importance of individual identity, and Brownville's gravestones reflect this broad trend. Carvers can now produce complex, highly-detailed images that reflected this trend, and many of the markers display images that convey considerable information about an individual's interests and activities during their lives. Unlike the textual epitaphs of the late nineteenth century, pictorial depictions now communicate life stories. Mourning now revolves around the celebration of a life well-lived, rather than the grief at the loss of a loved one.

CHAPTER 4: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF GRAVESTONE INSCRIPTIONS

Most previous gravestone studies have focused on the images engraved upon the markers, rather than on the words inscribed on them. While some authors, including Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966) have paid attention to the wording of epitaphs and familial terms present on gravestones, their analysis has primarily been in support of the identification of seriation patterns of images present in various cemeteries. This dissertation, however, argues that the words engraved upon markers are equally important as the images for identifying major shifts in culture.

In gravestone analysis, as in many other disciplines, language serves as a powerful resource for investigation of the culture that used or produced such language. Most obviously, the engraved texts of gravestones provide statistical information about the individuals buried in a cemetery. Names and dates of death are usually the minimum information engraved on markers in Brownville, though the occasional blank stone appears, as do a handful of stones that include only names. Many gravestones in Brownville, however, include additional words. Some provide information about the individual's age at death, their family members, their places of birth, and even their occupations. Numerous gravestones, particularly those that date from the first several decades of Brownville's occupation, also include epitaphs, some of which are quite lengthy (Figure 4.1). By analyzing these supplemental inscriptions, one can gain greater insights into the cultures that produced them.



Figure 4.1: An example of a long epitaph on Benjamin B. Thompson's gravestone in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

For this study, the author identified two basic categories of inscriptions that provide information beyond the rudimentary statistical information engraved on most markers in the cemetery: modifiers and epitaphs. Modifiers are single words or very short phrases that supplement the primary statistical information. These include words that describe the relationships or family roles of the individual, such as ‘mother,’ ‘daughter of,’ or ‘infant son of’ (Figure 4.2). Modifiers may also include information about the individual’s place of birth or death, such as Fannie H. August’s gravestone, which states that she was “Born in England” (Figure 4.3) or the Hoadley family’s marker that states that Luther Hoadley was a “Native of Winstead, Conn.” (Figure 4.4). Some gravestones include information about an individual’s military service, particularly if they served during a conflict (Figure 4.5).

Epitaphs, on the other hand, are generally longer than modifiers and provide information separate from the basic statistical information and modifiers. Epitaphs range from short phrases to long poetic inscriptions, and they commonly express the feelings of survivors toward the deceased. Short epitaphs include phrases such as ‘Beloved,’ ‘In Memory of,’ or ‘At Rest’ (Figure 4.6). Medium-length epitaphs often include a single quote or biblical phrase, such as ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matthew 5:8, NRSV). Some gravestones, however, include very long poems or quotes. The gravestone of Lindley Zook (Figure 4.7), for example, includes a poem found in several forms throughout this cemetery:

A precious one from us has gone,
A voice we loved is stilled.
A place is vacant in our home
Which never can be filled.



Figure 4.2: The gravestone of Rachel V. Jones, ‘Daughter of Isaac H. and Martha A. Jones.’



Figure 4.3: Fannie H. August's marker, which includes the inscription 'Born in England.'



Figure 4.4: Detail of the Hoadley family marker: 'Luther Hoadley Native of Winsted Conn.'



Figure 4.5: Detail of the Nace family marker: 'Co. D 94 Reg. Ohio Inf.'



Figure 4.6: Naoma Daugherty's gravestone: 'At Rest.'



Figure 4.7: Detail of Lindley Zook's gravestone, including a long epitaph.

With effort, both modifiers and epitaphs can provide significant insights into the lives of the people of Brownville at various times throughout the town's history. As will become evident below, even the simplest of modifiers, single words like 'Mother' or 'Father,' which appear throughout the cemetery's history, serve as valuable sources of information about specific cultures and cultural changes throughout time.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the textual analysis of Brownville's gravestones essentially mirrors the methodology employed to analyze the gravestone images. Field crews collected the textual data at the same time as they collected the image data, recording the names, dates of birth and death, inscriptions, and images of each of the 1,224 gravestones. Each gravestone was also photographed and its location was recorded using a Trimble Geoexplorer 6000 GeoXT handheld geographic positioning system (GPS). The author entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet and coded for the presence or absence of 130 distinct words or phrases. The author then grouped these 130 variables into seventeen classes of similar words or phrases. For example, words like 'mother,' 'father,' and 'son' were grouped with other words that described relationships together in one category. Another example included twenty-two different epitaphs that referred to 'rest' or 'sleep,' including 'there is rest,' 'not dead but sleeping,' and 'she sleeps peacefully.' The author sorted the entries by decade and calculated the total number of each word or phrase, as well as the total number of each category for every decade. Next, the author created graphs using Excel to show the temporal distribution of the various words, phrases, and categories. Graphically displaying the textual information made it

possible for the author to identify and then interpret three distinct temporal textual phases within the Brownville cemetery.

Analysis of Temporal Patterns

The distribution of the textual patterns across time can easily be separated into at least three distinct phases. Phase I spans from the 1850s through the 1920s, though it may be possible to further subdivide this phase into Phase IA, 1850s-1880s, and Phase IB, 1890s-1920s (see below). Phase II spans the 1930s through the 1960s, while Phase III extends from the 1970s to the present (Figure 4.8). These phases were identified by analyzing the temporal distributions and clustering of various words and phrases inscribed upon the gravestones.



Figure 4.8: Major Textual Phases of Walnut Grove Cemetery, Brownville, Nebraska.

Phase I: 1850s-1920s

Phase I is characterized by a wide variety of modifiers and epitaphs, and it is also the phase with the highest overall frequency of epitaphs (Figure 4.9). In the 1850s, more than sixteen percent of gravestones in Walnut Grove had epitaphs. This percentage steadily increased until it reached its peak in the 1880s, with more than 40 percent of gravestones displaying epitaphs. The popularity of epitaphs gradually decreased after 1880, and by the end of Phase I only about seven percent of the markers included epitaphs. This number continued to drop during Phase II, reaching its nadir in the 1960s, when no gravestones included epitaphs. The popularity of epitaphs rose slightly during Phase III, but they never again reached the popularity of Phase I. This frequent use of epitaphs during Phase I can be attributed to popular Victorian sentimentality towards the deceased (McKillop 1995:94). Epitaphs were particularly popular on Victorian-era gravestones, with phrases focusing on remembrance of the deceased and comfort for the survivors (McKillop 1995:95, Smith 1987).

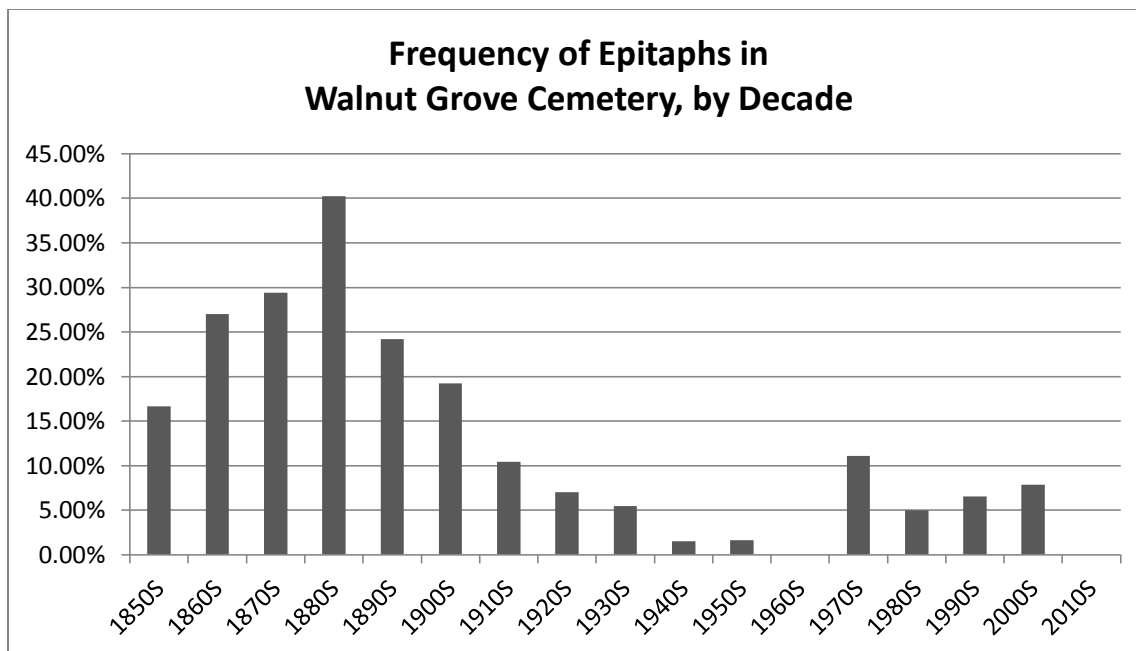


Figure 4.9: Frequency of Epitaphs in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Death rates remained high during the Victorian period, and Americans dealt with the death of loved ones by participating in various rituals, by creating various tributes to the deceased, and by modifying their own behaviors after a family member's passing. Upon death, the body was laid out, generally in the home (either by a female family member or a female member of the community) before the rise of funeral parlors in the mid-1880s (Chamberlain and Richardson 1983; Farrell 1980:174). Women were typically the caretakers of the ill and, when an individual died, the role expanded to include preparing the body for burial. The body was cleaned and dressed, but remained at the home for several days while community members paid their condolences to the surviving family members. Victorian mourning practices included various methods of "sentimental veneration of the memory of the deceased," including jewelry and pictures made from the individual's hair, post-mortem photos and paintings of the deceased (especially of

children), and specific clothing to be worn during various stages of mourning (McKillop 1995:96).

Three basic trends in the language on the gravestones characterize Phase I. Many of the gravestones include words that refer to the relationships of the deceased. Additionally, many of the epitaphs from this period refer, in one way or another, to the death of the individual. Gravestones from this phase also frequently include overtly religious inscriptions, including but not limited to Biblical quotes. Two additional temporal patterns that do not fit into any of these overarching patterns also date to this period: references to an individual's place, either in a physical or spiritual home, and the inclusion of the person's place of birth and/or death.

Terms that identify the various relationships of the deceased are the most common modifiers that date to Phase I (Figure 4.10). The most common of these terms are 'wife' or 'Mrs.,' 'daughter,' 'son,' 'father,' and 'mother.' Additionally, the modifiers 'children' and 'infant' also display temporal patterns, though they do not occur quite as frequently as the other modifiers. The term 'wife' or 'Mrs.' appears on more than eleven percent of the gravestones from the 1850s, reaching a peak of nearly eighteen percent in the 1890s, then gradually decreasing until it reached about seven percent in the 1920s. While these statistics are not particularly startling, they are more surprising when compared to the frequency of the term 'husband' or 'Mr.' (Figure 4.11) The title 'Mr.' does not appear even once in the cemetery, compared to five occurrences of 'Mrs.,' all of which occur between 1865 and 1918. 'Husband' appears only six times during Phase I, compared to 69 instances of the term 'wife' during Phase I.

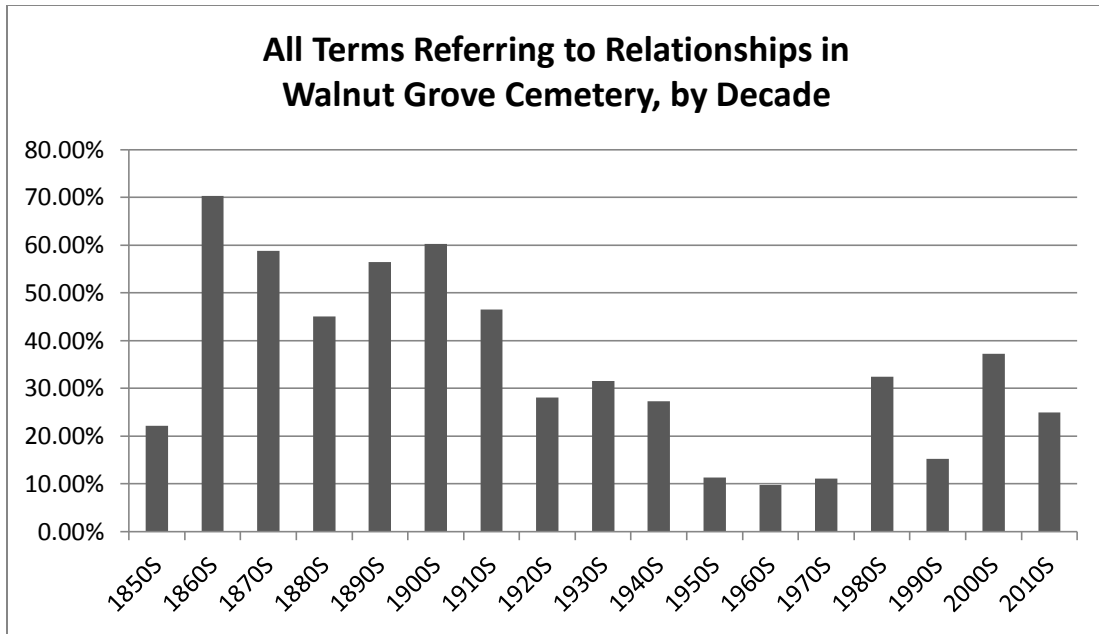


Figure 4.10: Frequency of terms relating to relationships in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

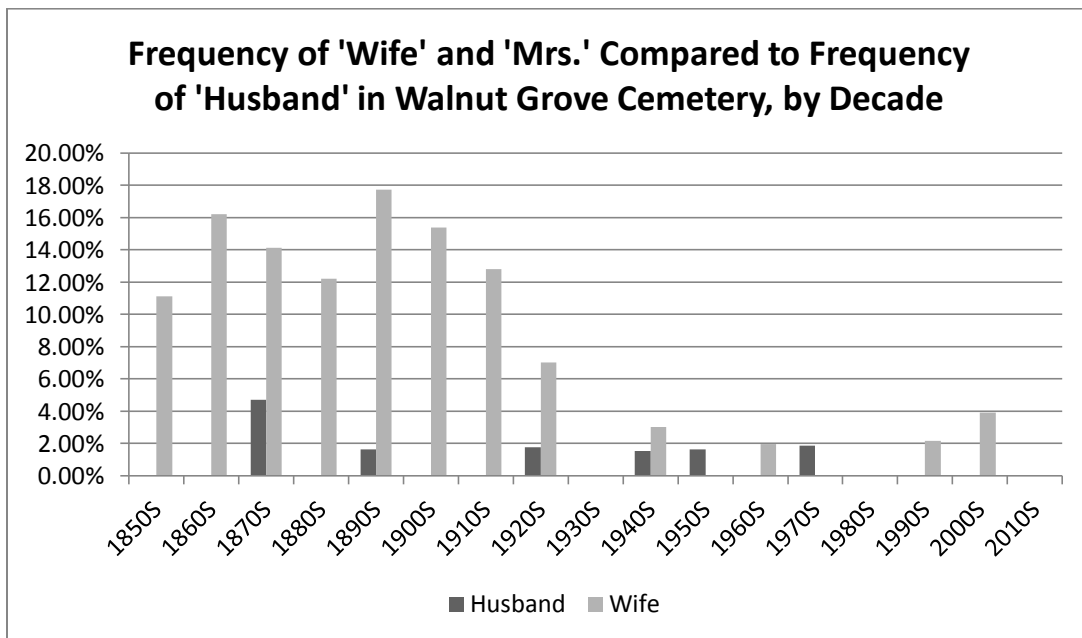


Figure 4.11: Frequency of the terms ‘Wife’ and ‘Mrs.’ compared to the term ‘Husband’ in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

This disparity illustrates the importance of the role of women within the Victorian family. The ideal Victorian male identity was not primarily or commonly derived from a man's role within his family or home, but rather from his role as a worker outside of the home who earned money to support the family (Garton 2002:41). A middle class Victorian woman, however, was expected to be in charge of the home and of childrearing, to be a moral example for her family, and to protect them from the dangers perceived as lurking outside the confines of the home (Boethel 1988:32; Garton 2002:46-47; Clark 1976:29, 1976:53, Fitts 1999:46). So it is not surprising that Victorian men in Brownville were not often identified as 'husbands' on their gravestone; this was likely not their primary role in either their families or their communities.

While one might expect the terms 'mother' and 'father' to appear in similar patterns to those of 'wife' and 'husband' on Brownville's gravestones, this is not exactly the case. Both 'mother' and 'father' became more popular inscriptions in Brownville toward the end of Phase I (Figure 4.12). In only one decade, the 1910s, did the frequency of 'father' eclipse the frequency of "mother" inscribed on the markers. This anomaly appears to be the result of the term 'father' peaking in popularity earlier than did the term 'mother,' though the reason for this earlier peak remains unclear. Both terms dipped in popularity during the 1920s ('father' was completely absent from gravestones during that decade, while 'mother' exhibited a slight, albeit noticeable, dip in popularity) before resurging in popularity during the 1930s. Further research is necessary to understand this decline in the 1920s.

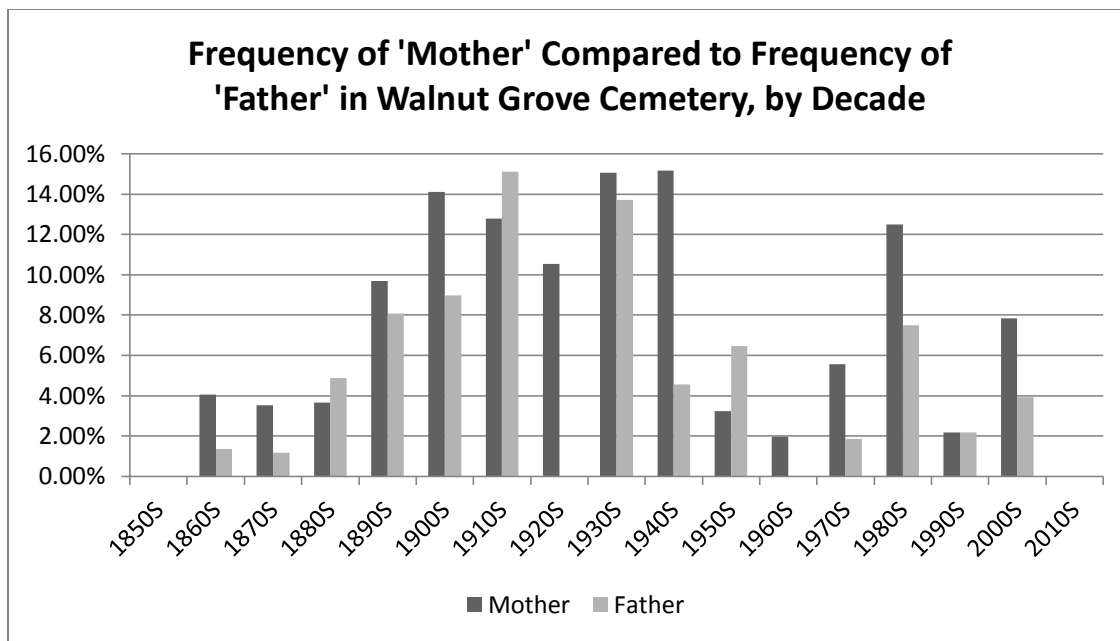


Figure 4.12: Frequency of the term ‘Mother’ compared to that of ‘Father’ in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

The terms ‘daughter’ and ‘son’ peaked in popularity on Brownville’s gravestones during Phase I before disappearing from the deathscape entirely by the 1930s (Figure 4.13). As discussed in Chapter 3, grown men were rarely referred to as the ‘son of’ for the same reasons that Victorian men were rarely described as ‘husbands’ on their gravestones: the ideal middle-class Victorian male role was as a worker, outside of the home, and, though he may have been a loving father, husband, or son, cultural ideals led to these terms rarely appearing on gravestones of this period (for a more detailed discussion of gender roles, please refer to Chapter 5).

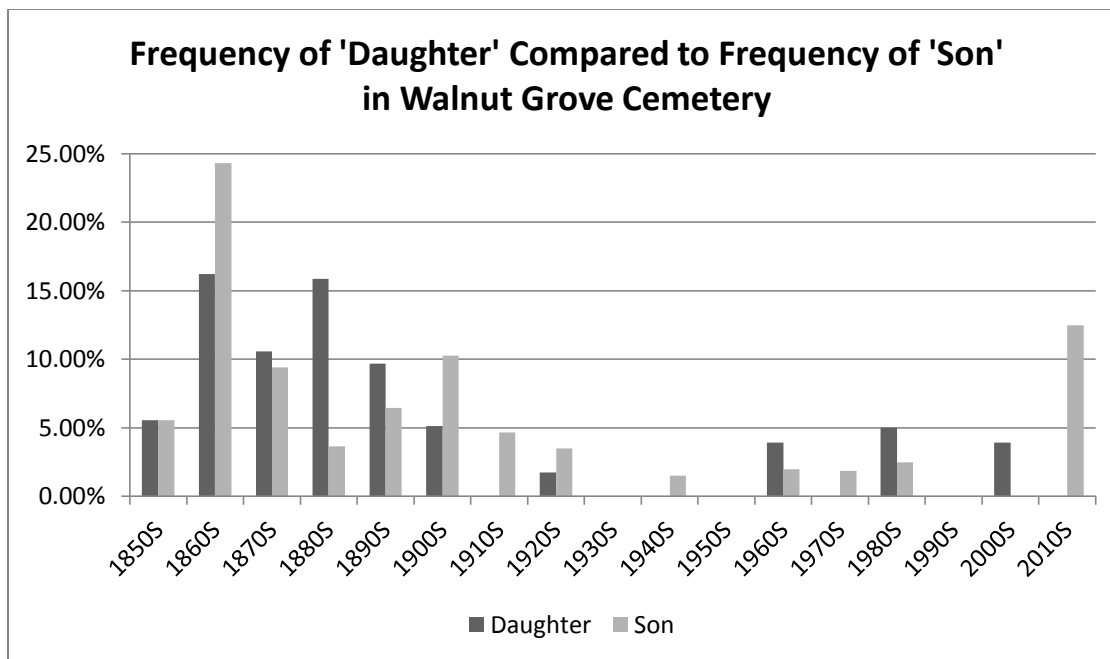


Figure 4.13: Frequency of the term ‘Daughter’ compared to the frequency of ‘Son’ in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

The popularity of the term ‘son’ peaked twice during Phase I, once during subphase IA and once during subphase IB. The first peak in popularity occurred in the 1880s, with just over twenty-four percent of gravestones bearing this inscription. A secondary, smaller peak occurred in the 1900s, when just over 10.25 percent of gravestones included the inscription ‘son’ and, by the beginning of Phase II, the word had disappeared from Brownville’s gravestones, only to reappear occasionally.

Similarly, the term ‘daughter’ appeared most commonly during Phase I, also with two slight peaks, once in the 1860s (16.22 percent) and again in the 1880s (15.85 percent). Though the term ‘son’ had more dramatic peaks in popularity, ‘daughter’ appeared more consistently during Phase I, appearing on forty-six datable gravestones from this phase, compared to thirty-three with the word ‘son.’ ‘Daughter’ almost

disappeared after 1900, with a single example, dating to the 1920s, before disappearing again for three decades.

Of the thirty-two gravestones bearing the inscription ‘son’ and with identifiable ages of the deceased, age at death ranged from less than one year to fifty-six years (Figure 4.14). The average age of these individuals was 12.6 years. While eight individuals were age eighteen or older, the vast majority (twenty-six out of thirty-two, or 81.25 percent) of individuals whose gravestones included an inscription with the word ‘son’ were below the age of twenty. Eight were infants younger than one year of age at the time of death. Thus, the word ‘son’ tended to appear on gravestones of the young, and primarily during Phase I, reflecting the high mortality rates of the period.

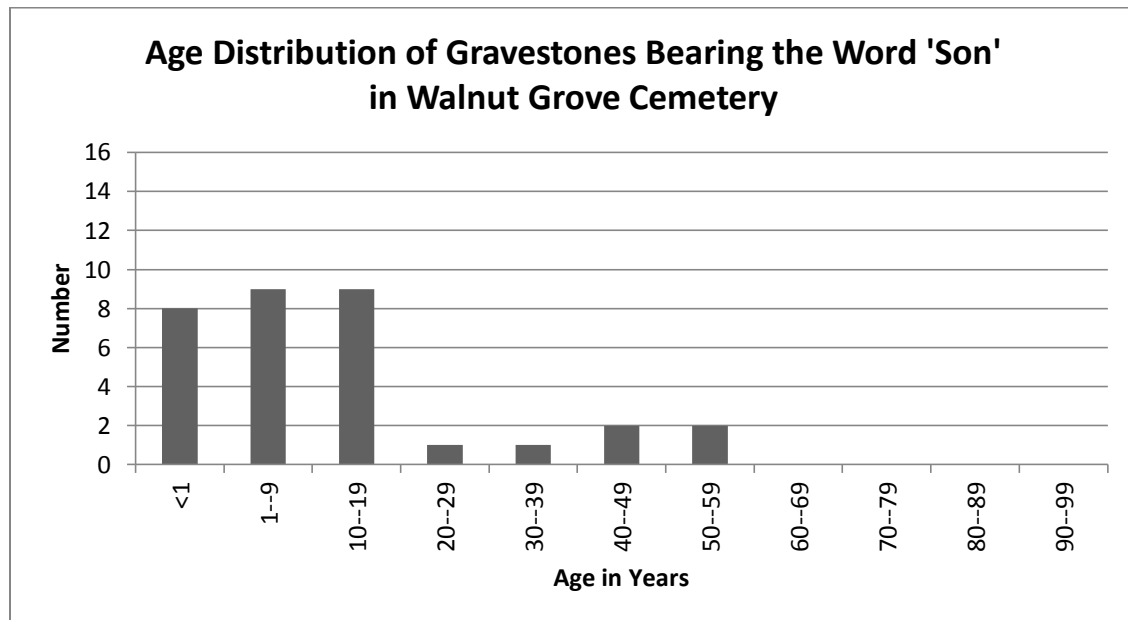


Figure 4.14: Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery with an inscription of the word ‘son,’ by age at death.

Thirty-six gravestones that included the word 'daughter' had identifiable ages of death (Figure 4.15). The average age at death of these persons was 15.6 years, a full three years older than the average for gravestones with the word 'son.' Age at death ranged from less than one year (four individuals) to ninety-six years (one individual), which explains the higher average age at death for this category. Twenty-six were age eighteen or younger, and the majority of these individuals were between the ages of one and nine years. As with the gravestones with the inscription of 'son,' this age distribution, combined with the fact that the majority of these gravestones date to Phase I, illustrates the high mortality rates for children that existed during the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. While the term 'son' exhibits a sharper decline after the age of nineteen, the term 'daughter' remained relatively popular for on the gravestones of women who died in their twenties. Again, the vast majority of these gravestones date to Phase I. This variation between the age of sons and daughters can be interpreted as a reflection of Victorian gender roles, which placed women's status as dependent upon that of their closest male relatives, generally their fathers or, if old enough, their husbands.

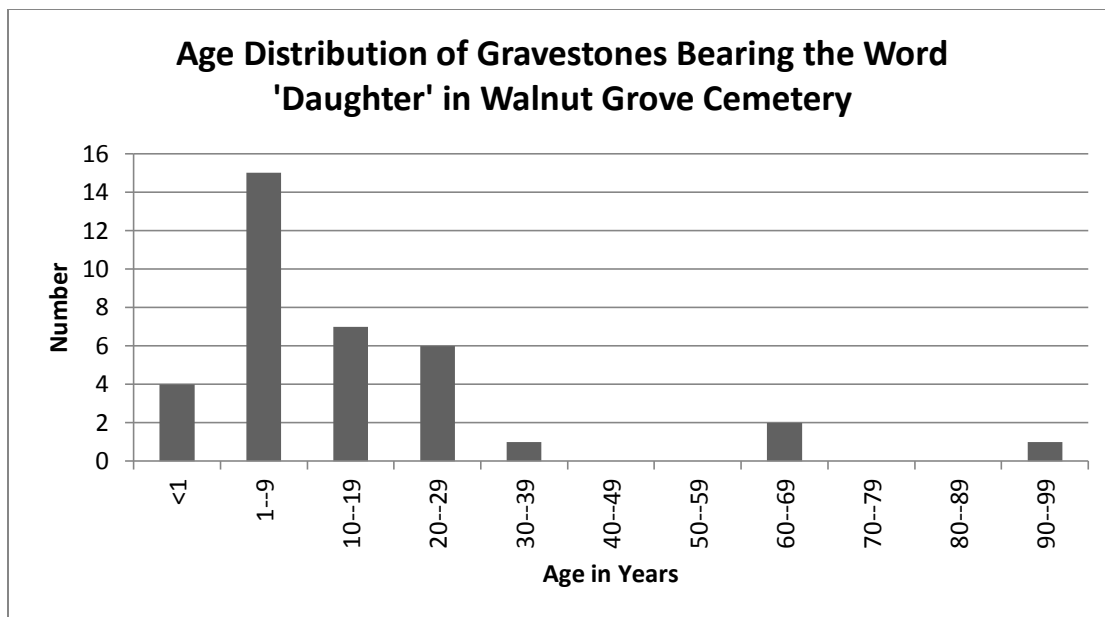


Figure 4.15: Gravestones with the word ‘daughter,’ by age at death.

The words ‘infant’ and ‘children’ do not appear in high frequencies in Brownville, but they are worth mentioning because they do appear with specific temporal distributions. ‘Infant’ appears only on gravestones dating to Phase I, likely a reflection of the high infant mortality rates of the time (Figure 4.16). The frequency of this term peaked in the 1870s, with three out of 85 datable gravestones displaying this inscription. Every decade of Phase I except the 1850s includes at least one gravestone that includes the word ‘infant,’ and an additional undated gravestone bearing this inscription likely dates to the same period. ‘Children’ appears on gravestones from the 1860s through the 1900s, before disappearing until the 1990s (Figure 4.17). This term also peaked in the 1870s, with nine of the eighty-five gravestones from that decade including the word ‘children.’ Few of the gravestones provide insight into the children’s ages, though several describe them as ‘infant children.’ Of the four with identifiable ages, two were around seven years old, one was approximately four years old, one was about a year old, and the

fourth died before his first birthday. The frequencies of the terms ‘infant’ and ‘children’ are certainly reflections of the high infant and child mortality of the period and, as these mortality rates decreased after the turn of the twentieth century with the growth of public health movements and advances in medicine and prenatal care, so did the appearance of these inscriptions.

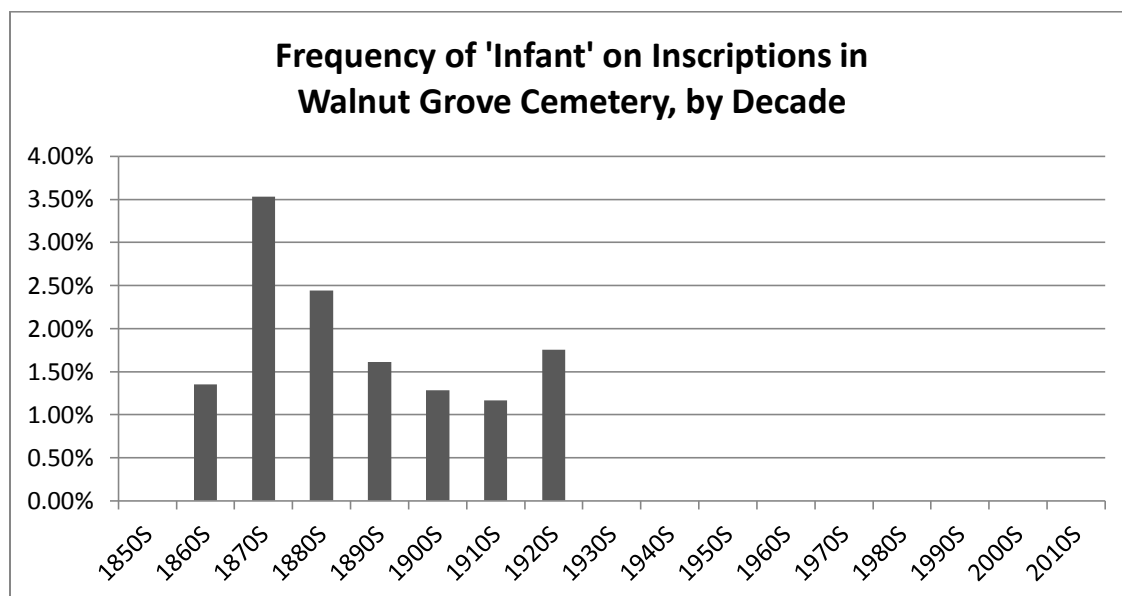


Figure 4.16: Frequency of the term ‘Infant’ on inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

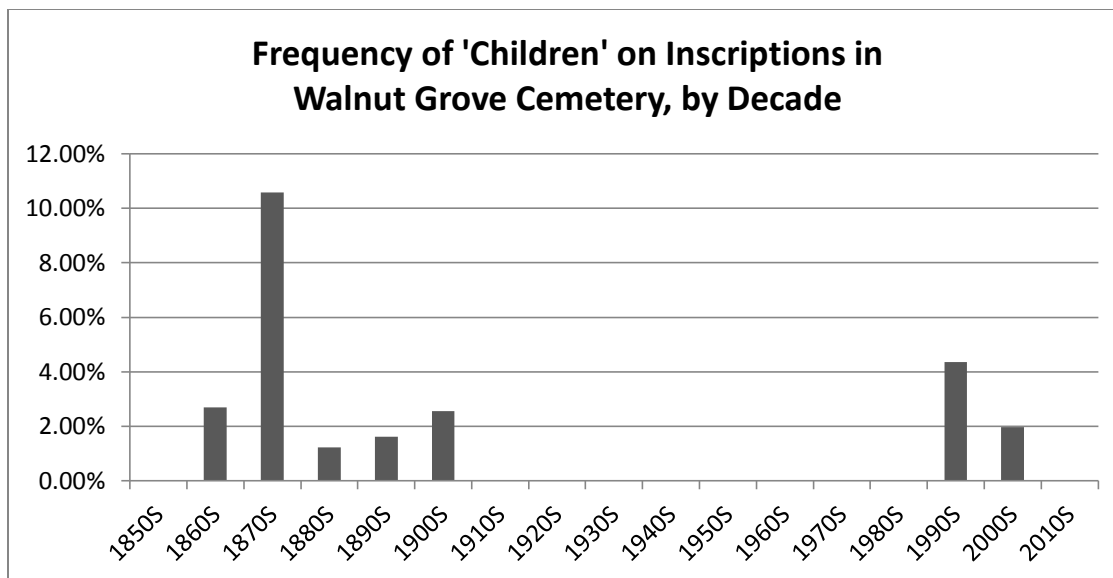


Figure 4.17: Frequency of the term ‘Children’ on inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Epitaphs that refer, in a number of ways, to the death of the individual also typify Phase I. These include a variety of phrases that allude to remembrance, sleep or rest, being gone, meeting again, or mourning. Phrases such as ‘In Loving Memory,’ ‘In Remembrance of,’ and ‘Gone but not Forgotten’ were fairly common from the 1850s through the 1920s, but disappeared from the deathscape in the 1930s (Figure 4.18). Though they reappeared in the 1960s, the pattern is not nearly as dominant as it was during Phase I. References to ‘sleep’ or ‘rest’ include epitaphs such as ‘Asleep in Jesus,’ ‘There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God (Heb. 4:9)’ and ‘Not Dead, Only Sleeping’ (Figures 4.19-4.20).

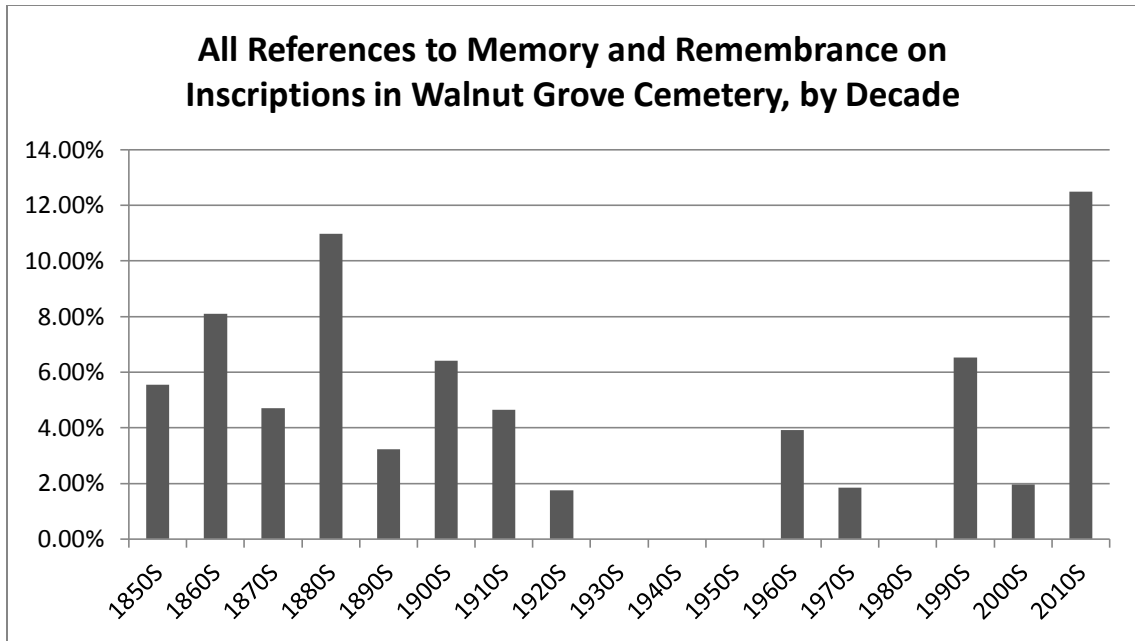


Figure 4.18: References to memory and remembrance on Brownville's gravestones, by decade.

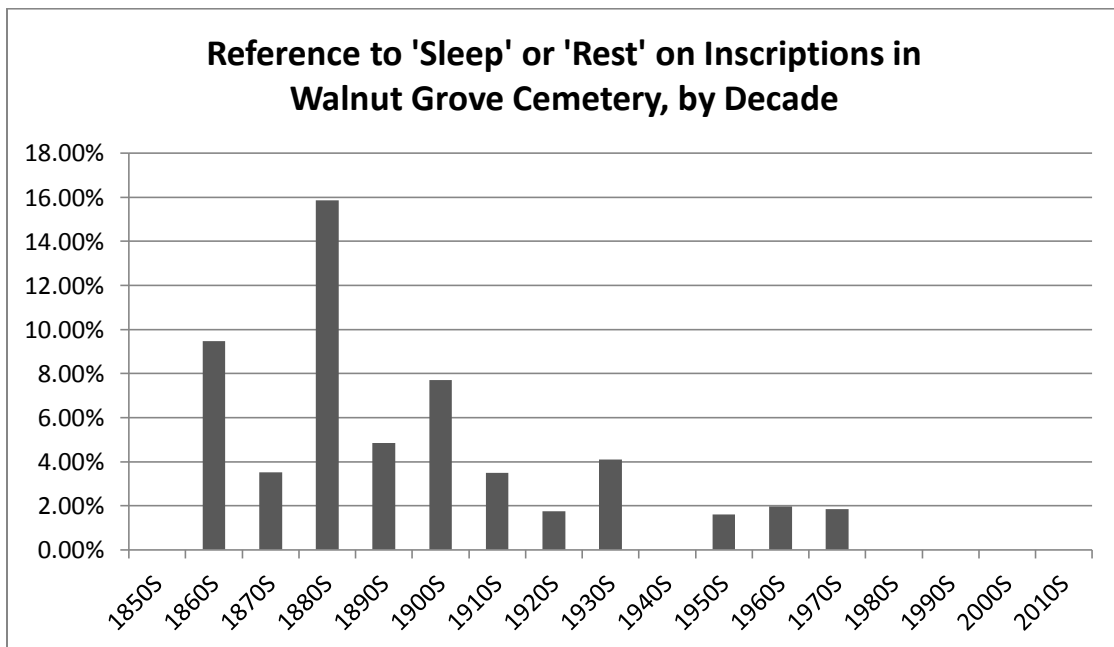


Figure 4.19: References to 'sleep' or 'rest' on gravestones in Brownville, by decade.

The various references to being gone included phrases like ‘good-bye,’ ‘bye-bye’ and ‘farewell’ as well as ‘Gone Home,’ ‘Gone Before,’ and ‘He has gone to the mansions of rest.’ Though these phrases experienced a slight revival in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, their distribution is concentrated from the 1860s to the 1910s (Figure 4.21).

Many gravestones refer to the survivors meeting the deceased again in the future, often in ‘heaven,’ ‘beyond the river,’ or ‘on that bright and happy shore’ (the latter two appear to be references to one or more popular hymns of the mid-to-late nineteenth century) (Figure 4.22). While these phrases also made a brief resurgence in the 1970s, they appear most often on gravestones dating between 1860 and 1919.



Figure 4.20: Susan Atkinson's gravestone with the epitaph 'Asleep in Jesus.'

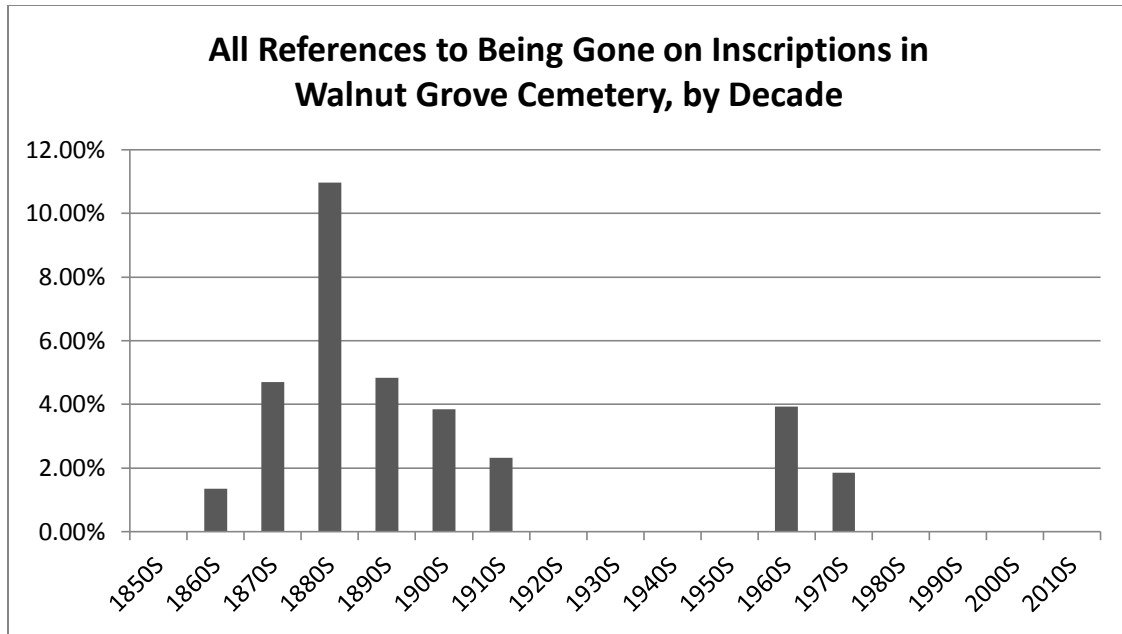


Figure 4.21: References to an individual being gone (all forms) on Brownville's gravestones, by decade.

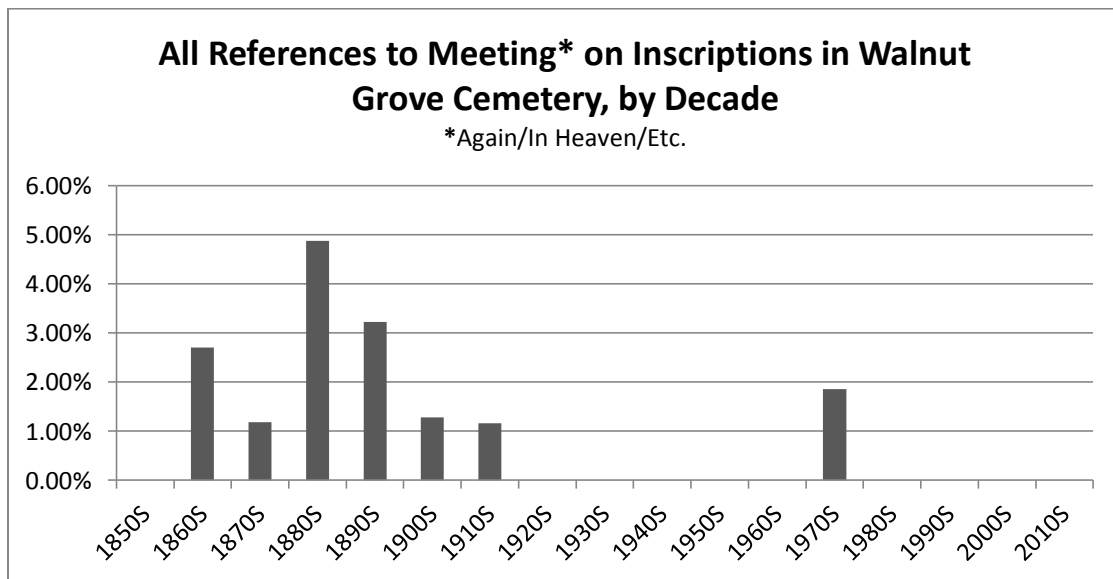


Figure 4.22: References to meeting (i.e. again, in heaven, etc.) on the inscriptions in Walnut Grove cemetery, by decade.

Throughout the Victorian era, Americans struggled to reconcile their fears of death with the perception of death as natural (McKillop 1995:94). One way Victorians accomplished this is by increasingly exerting more control over the process of dying, death, and the rituals that followed (McKillop 1995:81). Another way that Victorians tried to overcome their fears of death was by using euphemisms to refer to death. As a result, death was often likened to ‘rest’ or ‘sleep,’ which is why phrases such as ‘At Rest,’ ‘Asleep in Jesus,’ and ‘Not Dead, Only Sleeping’ appear so frequently on Brownville’s late nineteenth century gravestone inscriptions. This trend is further reflected by the use of the term ‘cemetery,’ which came into common usage during the nineteenth century. Unlike ‘graveyard,’ with its undeniable finality, ‘cemetery’ stems from the Greek word *κοιμητήριον*, or ‘sleeping place,’ an obvious euphemism that attempted to soften the reality experienced in this place (McKillop 1995:94-96; *Webster’s II New Riverside University Dictionary*:“Cemetery”).

References to sorrow, mourning, or grief, while not quite as common as these other categories, occurred only during Phase I, which makes their temporal distribution noteworthy (Figure 4.23). Such references disappeared after the 1910s, suggesting that public displays of mourning or grief quickly grew out of fashion in Brownville, a trend which corresponds well with the decreasing influence of Victorian culture. All of these categories peaked during the 1880s, though their popularities ranged from 3.66 percent (references to mourning) to 15.85 percent (references to ‘sleep’ or ‘rest’). One may interpret the popularity of these epitaphs as reflections of the high death rates of the time paired with a culture that accepted public grief as an appropriate manner of mourning the loss of loved ones. Furthermore, many of these epitaphs suggest an expectation or hope

of eternal life, which may have buoyed the citizens of Brownville during a tumultuous period of high mortality rates.

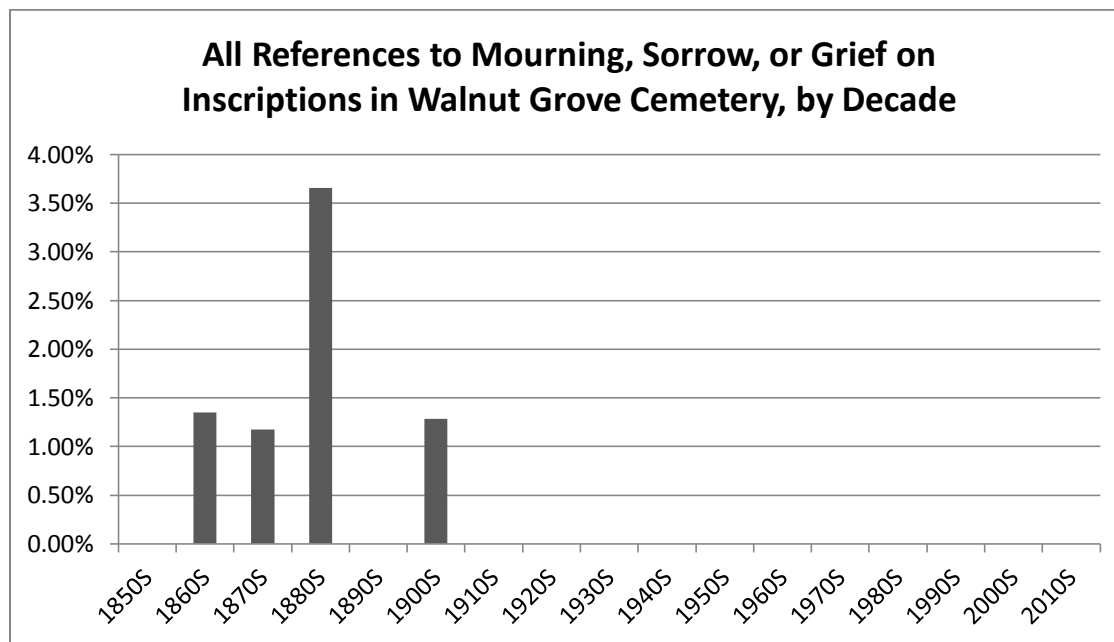


Figure 4.23: References to all forms of mourning, sorrow, or grief on the inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Overt religious references, including biblical quotes, appeared most frequently during Phase I, and, like the references to death described above, peaked in the 1880s. After appearing on more than fourteen percent of gravestones in the 1880s, the frequency declined steadily until it disappeared from the deathscape in the 1930s and did not reappear until Phase III (Figure 4.24). These religious epitaphs include references to God or Jesus, the resurrection, the second coming of Jesus, and all references to heaven (Figures 4.25-4.27). Not surprisingly, nearly all of these phrases are eschatological, though a great variety of phrases exists. Examples of typical epitaphs from this category

include ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ and ‘Sleep on in thy beauty, thou sweet angel child, by sorrow unblighted, by sin undefiled’ (Figure 4.28). Such a pervasive appearance of these phrases may appear obvious in a cemetery but, when compared to the complete absence of religious epitaphs during Phase II, their presence becomes more remarkable.

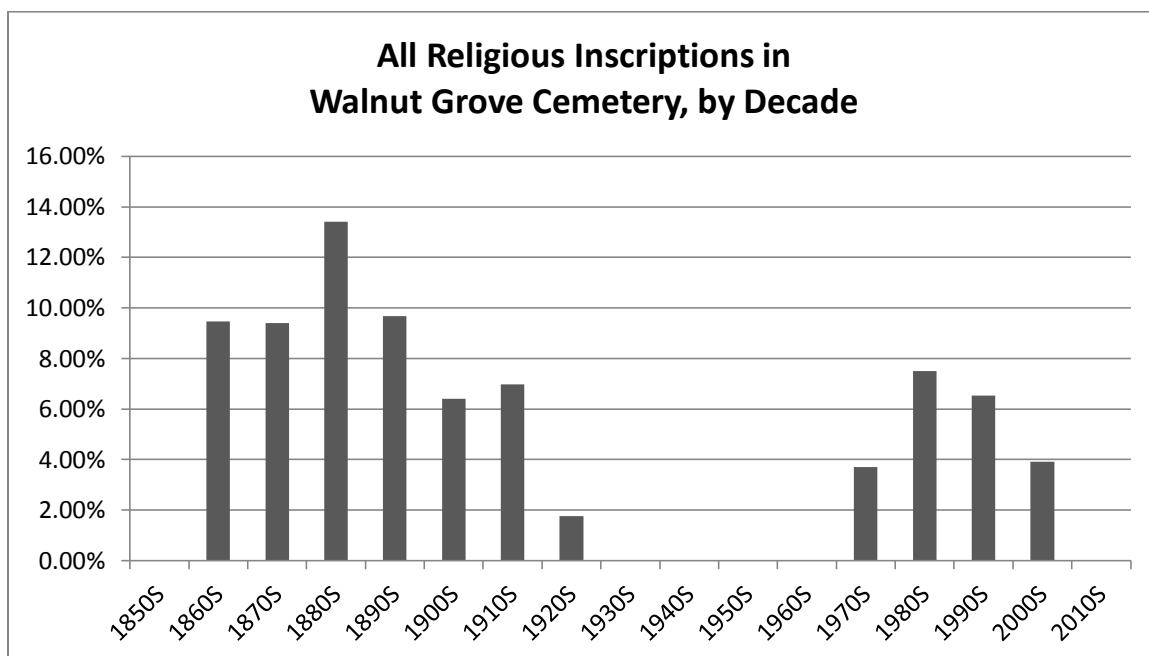


Figure 4.24: All religious inscription on gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

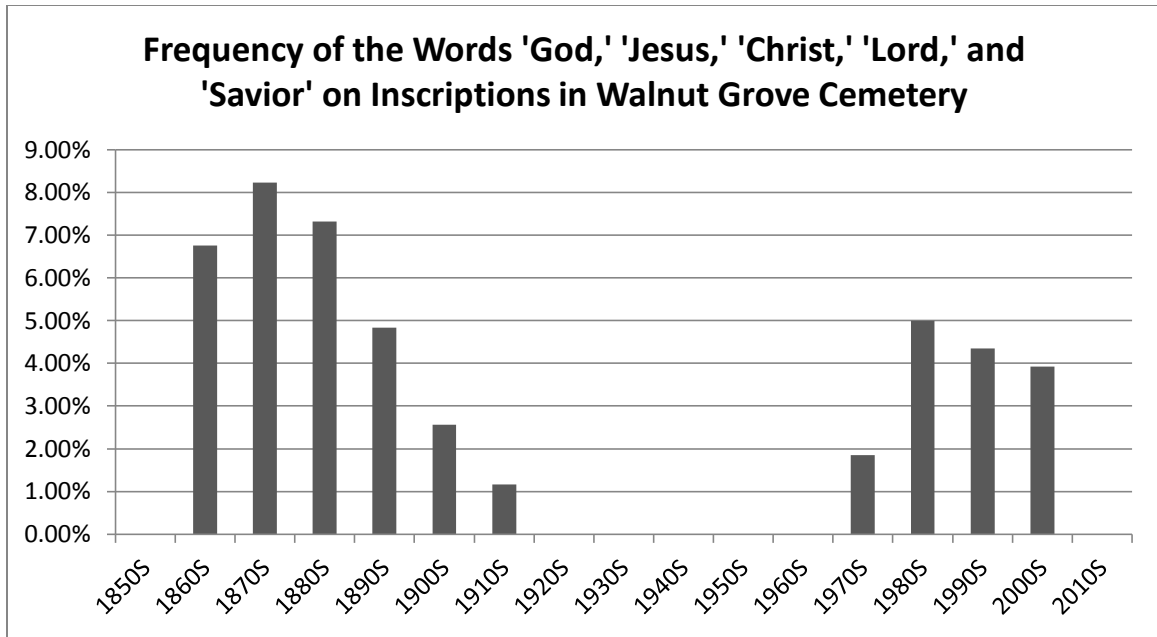


Figure 4.25: The temporal distribution of the words ‘God,’ ‘Jesus,’ ‘Christ,’ ‘Lord,’ and ‘Savior’ on the inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

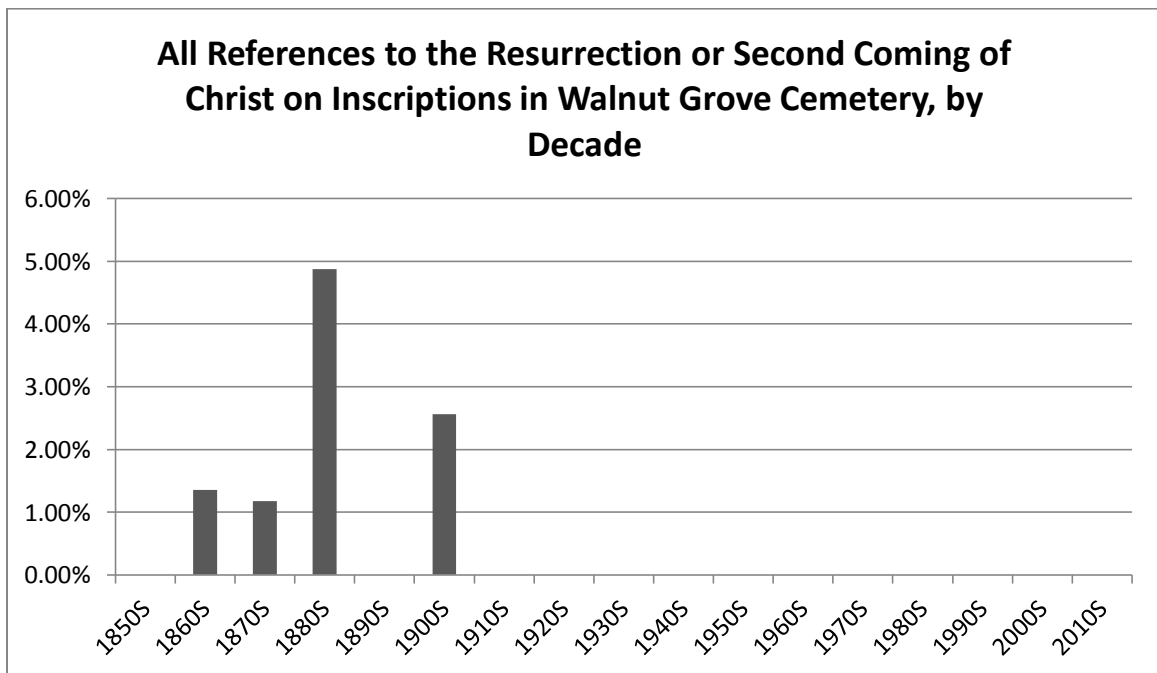


Figure 4.26: All references to the resurrection or the second coming of Christ on inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

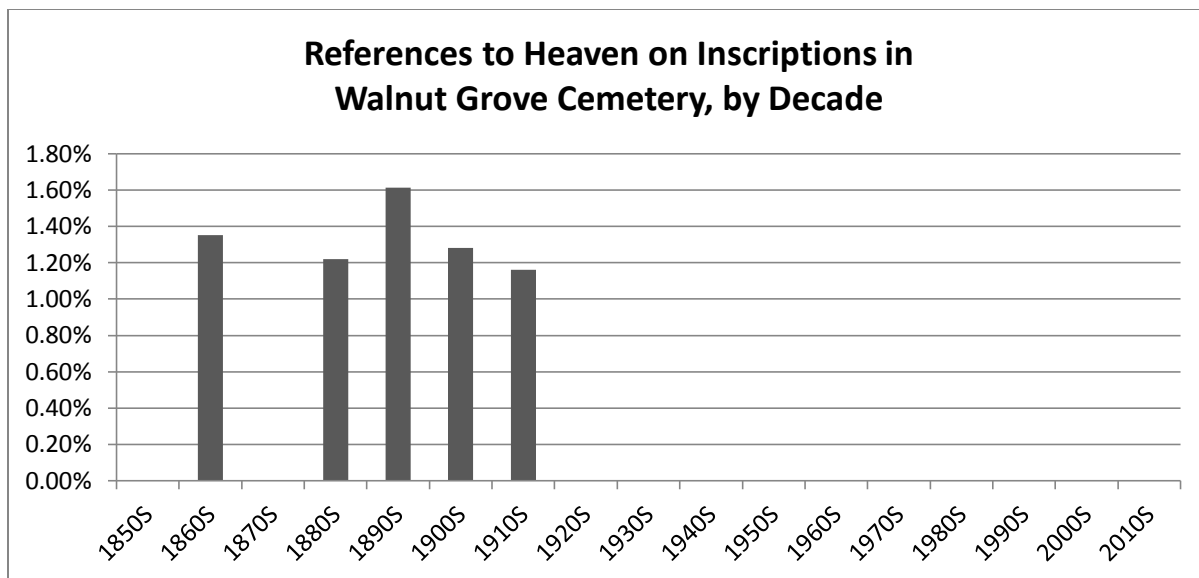


Figure 4.27: All references to heaven on the inscriptions of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.



Figure 4.28: Detail of Henrietta “Hattie” Blackburn’s gravestone with the epitaph ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’

During Phase I, the people of Brownville appear to have either relied more heavily upon their faith to sustain them during periods of grief or they were more likely to display their faith on their gravestones than were later generations of Brownville's citizens. The higher death rates of the late 1800s and early 1900s certainly influenced this reliance, but the overall Victorian mourning culture and theology also appear to have played a role. The Victorian encouragement of public and prolonged grieving led to the recording of that grief via the material culture and, when Victorian culture waned, so did the overtly religious epitaphs. Victorian Christian theology commonly expressed belief in the eternal, heavenly life, which paralleled the safe, pure life ideally experienced by women and children in the home.

Two other temporal patterns appear during Phase I, which do not, at first, appear to fit precisely into the three categories outlined above. During this phase, several epitaphs refer to the individual's place in the house or home, whether a physical home on earth or a spiritual or eternal home in heaven. With the exception of a single appearance in the 2000s on the gravestone of William and Faye Furnas, the term only appeared during Phase I (Figure 4.29). A recurring example includes variations on the following poem:

A precious one from us has gone,
A voice we loved is stilled.
A place is vacant in our home,
Which never can be filled.

Other examples include various forms of 'Gone Home' and 'We miss thee, mother, from our home, we miss thee from thy place...' (Figure 4.30). This latter example may again reflect the social role of the Victorian woman. During this period, the home was a sacred

place and the sphere of women, who were expected to maintain the upright moral standing of themselves and their families. The frequency of epitaphs referring to the ‘house’ or ‘home’ fittingly corresponds well with the temporal distribution of relationship terms discussed above, as well as the rarity of the word ‘husband’ during this time.

Victorians perceived the home as a safe place, removed from external dangers. Many of these epitaphs refer the individual now residing in a heavenly home, suggesting a newly-acquired safety from the dangers faced during mortal life, particularly on the frontier where dangers were ever-present. While death was understood to be a natural part of the life cycle, during Victorian times it was commonly likened to a temporary sleep, which would eventually come to an end when the individuals were reawakened by the resurrection, after which time they would reside “in a home-like heaven” (McKillop 1995:94).

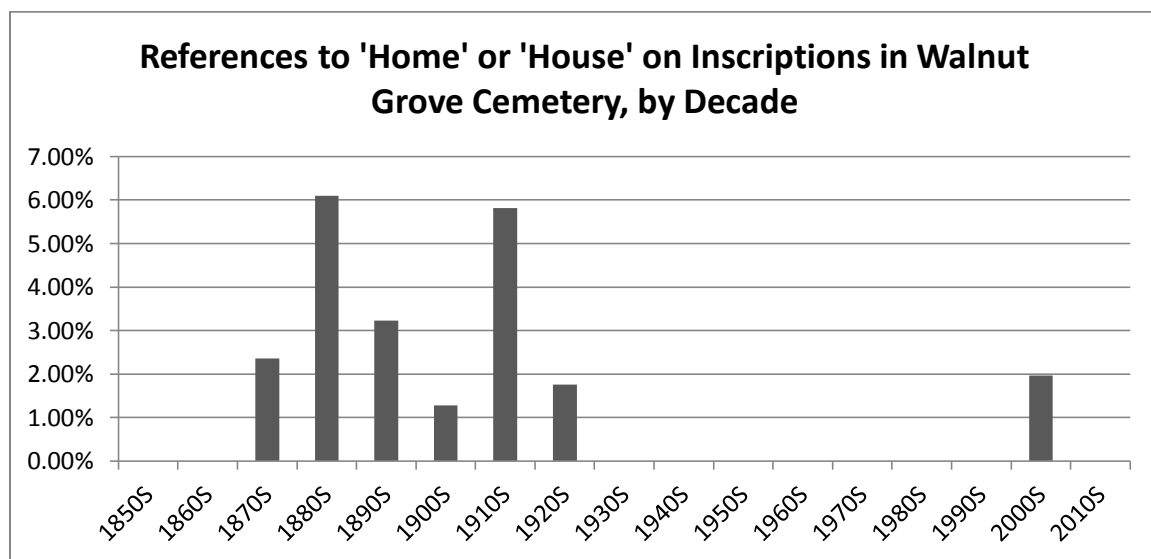


Figure 4.29: All references to ‘home’ or ‘house’ on the inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.



Figure 4.30: The gravestone of Aljalina Cole with the epitaph ‘Gone Home’ inscribed at the bottom.

An additional trend during Phase I was the inclusion of birth and death places on gravestones. With another single exception from the 2000s, birth or death places appeared on Brownville's gravestones only during this first period (Figure 4.31). All of the birthplaces were, predictably, farther east than Brownville, reflecting the east-to-west migration patterns typical in the United States at the time. Several birth places included various parts of Ireland and England, with one individual, Gottlieb Mahle, born in Germany (Figure 4.32). All but two of the places of death were Brownville. Tamer Parker died in 1858 'on board steamer while coming with her son H.W. Parker' and Sarah J. Moore died in nearby Independence, Missouri (Figure 4.33). The temporal distribution of gravestones with inscriptions of birth and death places is a reflection of a community composed primarily of immigrants. Few adults who died during this period could have been born in Brownville, as the town had not existed for very long.

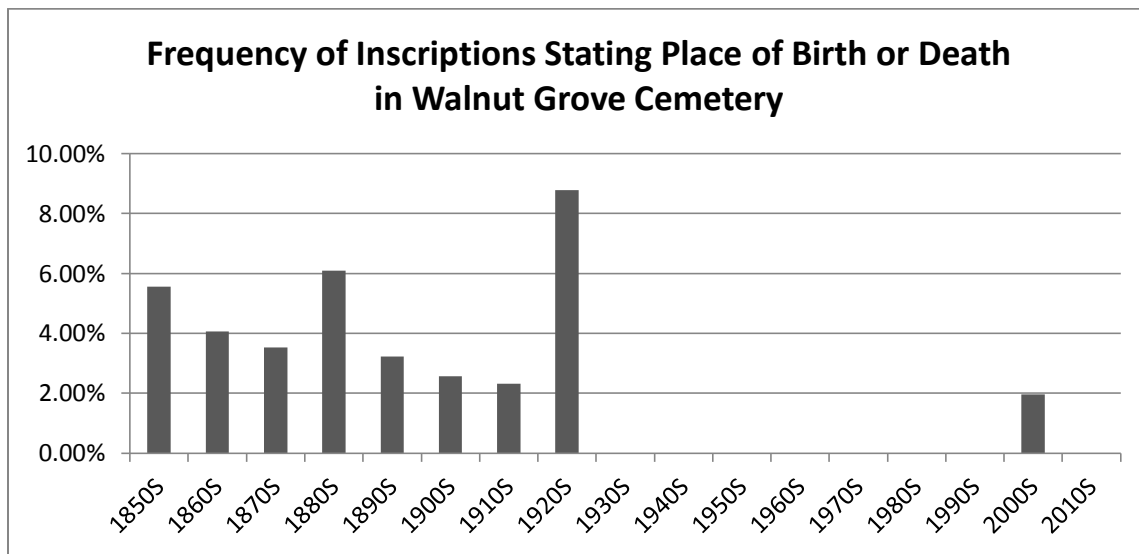


Figure 4.31: The percentages of gravestones bearing inscriptions of place of birth and/or death in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.



Figure 4.32: Gottlieb Mahle's gravestone 'Born at Wittenberg[,] Ger[many].'



Figure 4.33: Tamer Parker's gravestone explains that she 'died on board steamer while coming to Nebraska with her Son.'

Surprisingly, however, the trend peaked during the 1920s, with nearly sixteen percent of graves displaying a birth or death place. This trend is likely not the result of a single phenomenon, but rather the result of several interconnected phenomena. In general, inscriptions had significantly decreased in frequency by the 1930s, likely because of the financial strain of the Great Depression, which made unnecessary inscriptions unaffordable, and the overall standardization of gravestone production that characterized the middle of the twentieth century, a trend which was also identified in the analysis of the imagery on Brownville's gravestones (see Chapter 3). Additionally, the community had been in existence for more than six decades by this point and its population was in decline (Figure 4.34). By the 1930s, most of the citizens of Brownville had likely been born and raised in or near the town, making it unnecessary for individuals to state their place of birth.

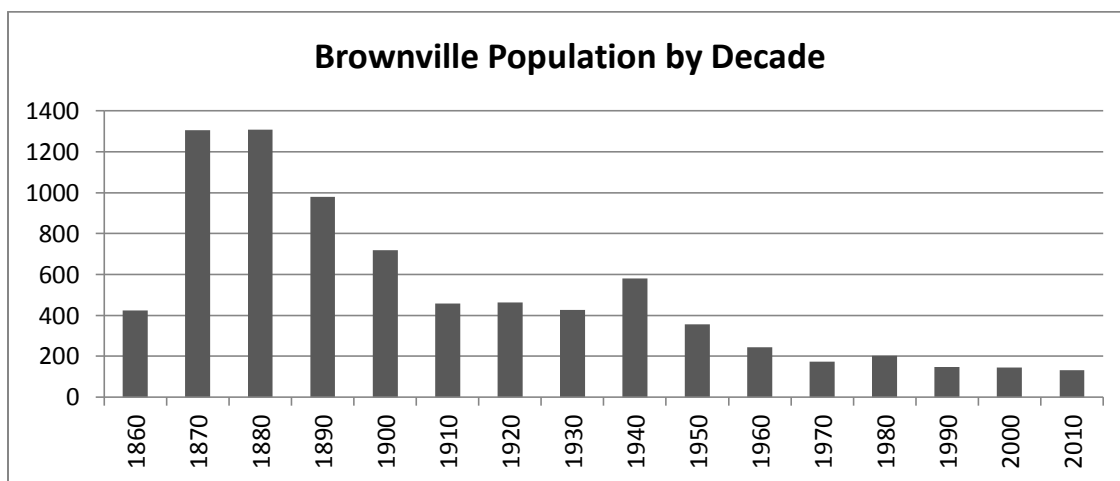


Figure 4.34: Brownville's population, by decade. The increase in the 1940s is likely the result of the construction of the Brownville Bridge, which was built over the Missouri River in 1939 (Heritage Research 2004:4).

The relative spike in popularity of these inscriptions during the 1920s is more difficult to explain. Perhaps the nationalism that resulted from the Great War led more individuals to emphasize their places of birth, though one of these individuals was born in England, not the United States. This spike may also be the result of the relatively smaller number of gravestones dating to the 1920s (fifty-seven) compared to the six prior decades (between sixty-two and eighty-six per decade, with an average of 77.5). Further research is necessary to determine the underlying causes of the relative increase in popularity of these inscriptions during the 1920s.

Upon inspection of the temporal distribution of the inscriptions that date to this period, it may be appropriate to further divide Phase I into two sub-phases, one from the 1850s through the 1880s and one from the 1890s through the 1920s (see Figure 4.8 above). Phase IA includes the peak popularity of epitaphs, and most of the temporal patterns described above are strongest during these four decades. Phase IB, then, may represent a transitional period between the peaks of Phase IA and the extremely low frequency of epitaphs that date to Phase II. The author has not fully separated these two sub-phases because the temporal patterns established during Phase IA continue through Phase IB, though they are generally in decline. Two exceptions to these declining overall frequencies include the inscriptions of the modifiers ‘mother’ and ‘father,’ as well as the appearance of military information. ‘Mother’ and ‘father’ occurred more frequently during Phase IB than during Phase IA. Military information became a more regular inscription on gravestones during this sub-phase, likely due to the deaths of veterans of the Civil War and other conflicts.

Many of the textual trends of Phase I parallel the iconographic trends described in Chapter 3. Both the words and images from their respective phases suggest that emotionally coping with death was a frequent and very public experience. Faith and family ties appear to have bolstered Brownville's citizens through this period of uncertainty fueled by high death rates. The material culture of Brownville's gravestones suggests that the pinnacle of late Victorian culture in this town occurred in the 1880s, after which the preoccupation with death and mourning steadily declined in parallel with the lowering death rates and the rise of the Progressive Era (see Chapter 2). The beginning and end of Phase IA correlate well with the peak of the Victorian cult of death (1850s) and the subsequent decline of its popularity starting in the 1880s (Garton 2002:43). Unlike the iconographic Phase II (1900s-1920s) (see Chapter 3), which temporally corresponded almost perfectly with the textual Phase IB (1890s-1920s), many more gravestones included supplemental inscriptions than they did images. Though the frequency of inscriptions decreased throughout this sub-phase, it was during the following phase that inscriptions nearly disappeared from Walnut Grove's gravestones.

Phase II: 1930s-1960s

By 1930, the frequency of epitaphs in Walnut Grove had dropped to below 5.5 percent, a drastic decline from the 1880s peak of over 40 percent (Figure 4.35). The most significant trend during this phase was that the vast majority of gravestones had no additional inscriptions beyond name, date of birth, and date of death (Figure 4.36). Of the few supplemental inscriptions, the primary trend was toward modifiers that described the relationships of the deceased, primarily 'mother' and 'father' in continuation of the trend

observed in Phase IB, though even these appeared at the lowest rates of all three phases (see Figure 4.12 above). This dramatic decline in inscriptions may largely be the result of the massive social disruption caused by the Great Depression. Inscriptions may have remained unpopular after this initial disruption because of a string of additional disruptions brought about by World War II and later conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, along with the onset of the Cold War, leading to a desire to de-emphasize death. The material culture in Walnut Grove Cemetery reflects this social upheaval of the mid-twentieth century, with dramatically different engraving styles compared to Phases I and III.

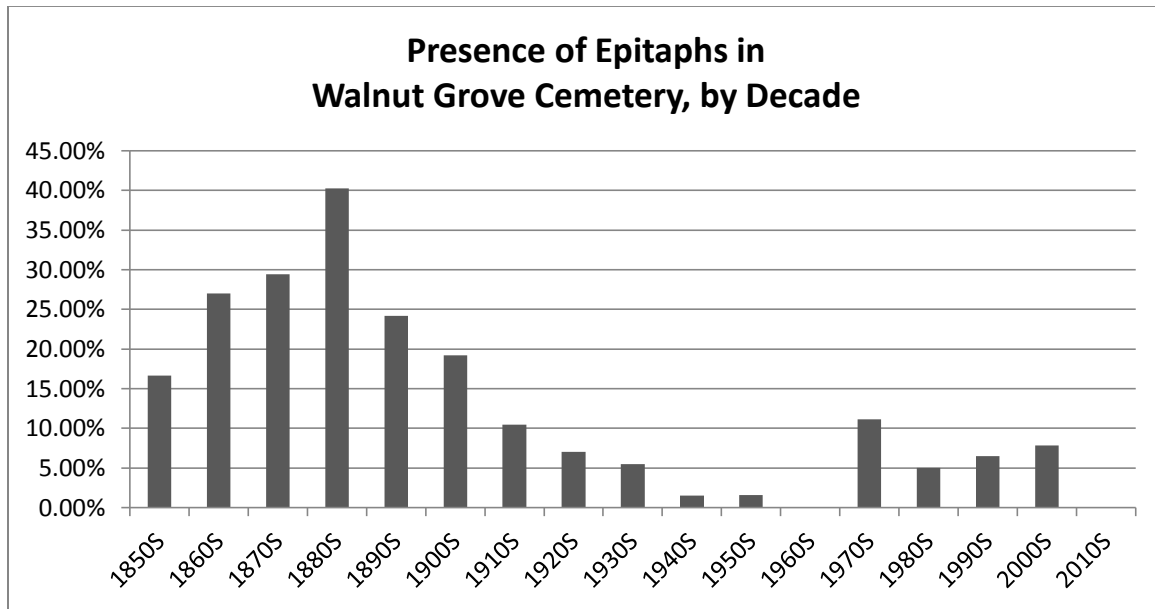


Figure 4.35: Changes in the presence of epitaphs on Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

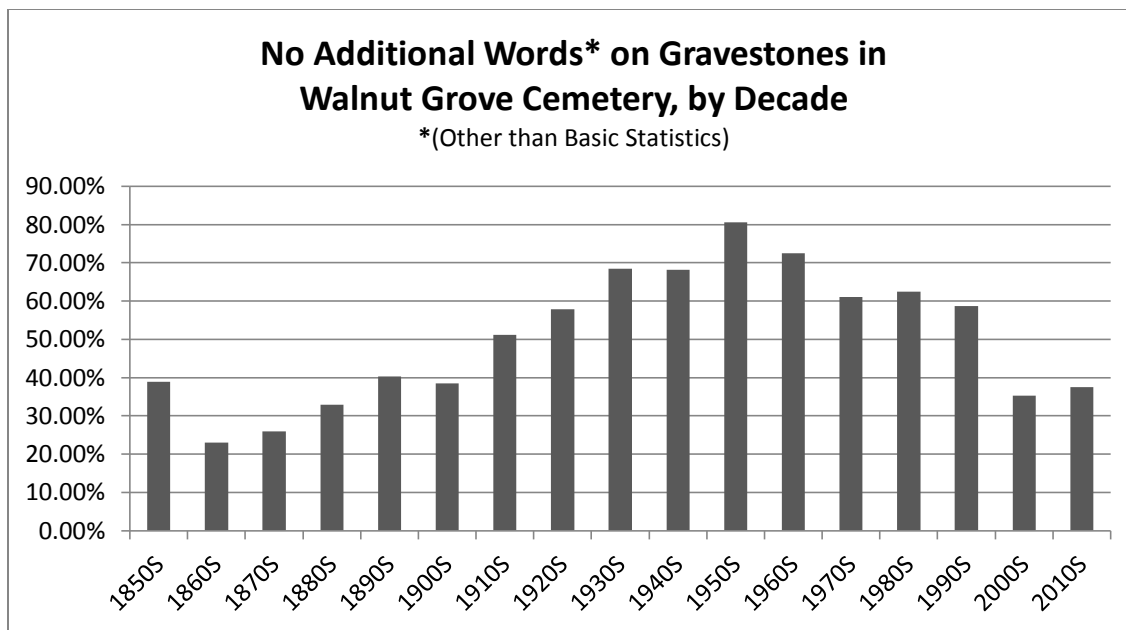


Figure 4.36: Changes in the frequency of gravestones bearing no additional words other than name and date of birth and/or death.

Military information occurs fairly regularly, ranging from nearly 5.5 percent to about 11.75 percent, except for during the 1940s, when only one gravestone included military information (Figure 4.37). This was unexpected, as the author had anticipated that the frequency of military inscriptions would increase during periods of conflict. In general, however, inscriptions were relatively infrequent from the 1940s through the 1960s, which likely explains this dip. The gradual rise in popularity of military inscriptions beginning in the 1950s and continuing into Phase III may have been driven by the publicity of the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, though no veterans of either of these conflicts were buried in this cemetery during Phase II. The gravestones from the 1950s and 1960s that include military inscriptions instead mark a handful of graves of

World War I and World War II veterans, along with a single veteran of the Spanish-American War.

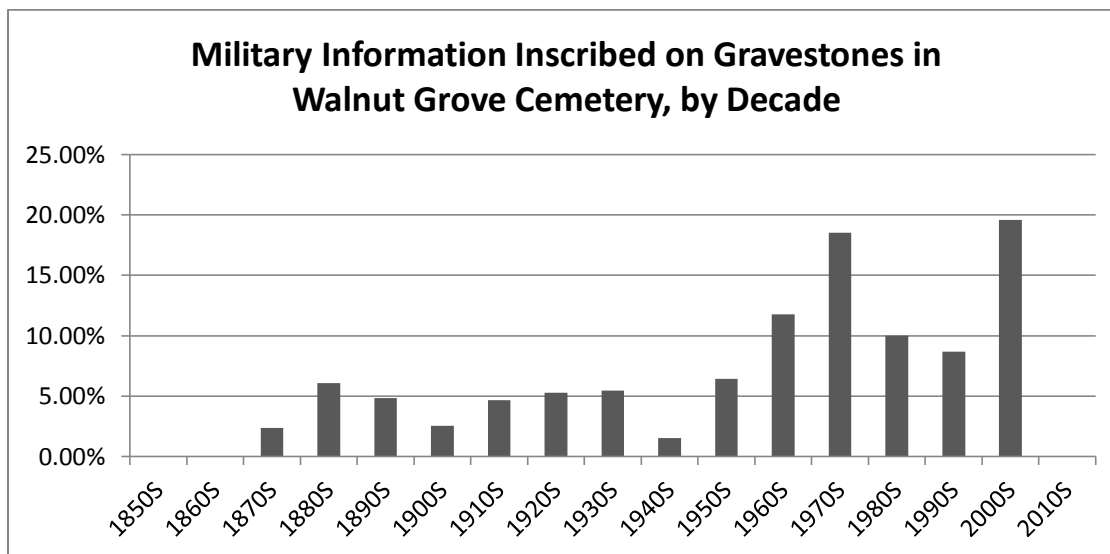


Figure 4.37: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include inscriptions of military information, by decade.

Compared to the iconographic phases, these trends at first appear to lag behind the lack of iconography that characterized the 1900s through 1920s. The textual austerity of the gravestones in Brownville does, however, correspond with the simplification and standardization of iconography that occurred from the 1930s through the 1970s. When the majority of gravestones began displaying the simple forget-me-not, they also became less likely to include lengthy—or even brief—statements of grief or memory. The textual Phase II commenced with the onset of the Great Depression and was augmented by the Dust Bowl, World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement.

It is too simplistic to assume that the lack of inscriptions was purely the result of the transition from marble to granite. Granite markers began appearing regularly in Walnut Grove during the 1910s, and the material carving methods were well-established by the onset of Phase II. The uncertainties the people of Brownville, and the nation as a whole, faced during the mid-twentieth century were significantly different than the citizens of Brownville faced during Phase I. Though death rates outside of military conflicts had sharply declined, social unrest was high, and the promise of eternal life, and religion in general, may have offered little solace for these troubles. Furthermore, with no local carvers in town after 1910 (at the latest), gravestones had become more commercialized and were being imported from greater distances, making their designs less reliant on the local culture and more upon the imagined national culture. In this way, the country-wide social struggles thus infiltrated the local material culture, appearing as austere, even stoic, landmarks on the deathscape.

Phase III: 1970s-Present

As the end of the twentieth century grew closer, inscriptions began to flourish again in Walnut Grove Cemetery. Several patterns re-appeared, while a major new trend developed. Religious references resurfaced after the hiatus of Phase II, military inscriptions reached their peak, and a new trend—the importance of marriage to personal identity—came to dominate Brownville’s deathscape.

Terms relating to relationships continue to appear on the gravestones, though their popularity has fluctuated. ‘Mother’ and ‘father’ (and all related terms, including ‘mom’ and ‘dad’) are not unusual sights on gravestones from this period. While ‘daughter’ and

'son' appear occasionally, the phrase 'children of' made a small, but notable resurgence after an eight-decade absence (Figure 4.38). This reappearance is not the result of increased child mortality rates; in fact, the phrase does not appear on the grave of a single child during this period. Instead, the gravestones of married couples began including inscriptions of their (ostensibly adult) children's names. Rather than drawing status purely from previous generations (i.e. a person's parents or grandparents), individuals and couples now appear to also draw status from the success of their children. Being a parent has become an important aspect of identity in American culture, and young adult children now often maintain extremely close ties to their parents (Sweeton and Davis 2004:68). The term "helicopter parent," appears to have arisen in the early 1990s, and is another reflection of this trend (Cline and Fay 1990; Hofer and Sullivan Moore, n.d.:par 5). This term refers to a parent who is ever-present in their child's life, making decisions for him or her, constantly reminding their child to complete tasks, and even completing tasks for their child (even if the "child" is technically an adult).

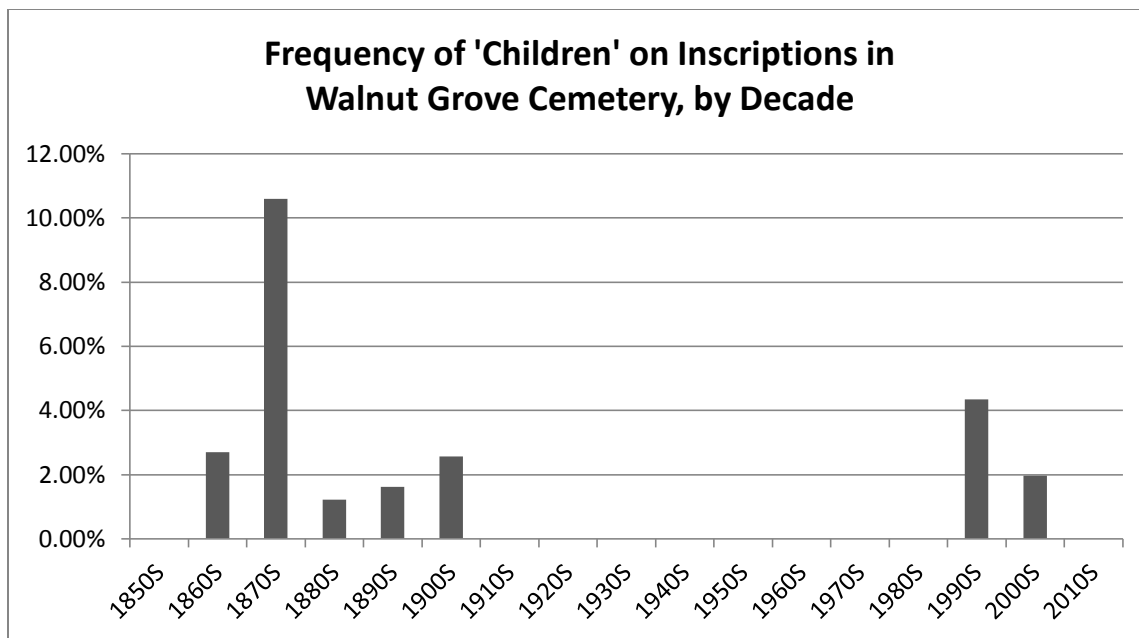


Figure 4.38: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include an inscription of the word ‘children,’ by decade.

Several of the occurrences of the term ‘mother’ during this Phase III refer to the individual as the ‘mother of’ her children, rather than simply describing the woman as ‘mother,’ as was more common in the earlier phases. While only five examples of the phrase ‘mother of’ appear on gravestones in Brownville, they all date to Phase III. Three clearly date to the 2000s, while two additional examples have no dates, as the gravestones appear to have been placed in advance of the individual’s death. For example, Linda J. (Ballue) Johnson’s gravestone lists only a birth date and has a blank space waiting for a death date to be engraved upon her death. Thus, during Phase III, though consistency exists with some of the terms and phrases employed during Phases I and II, the information conveyed by some of these phrases has changed.

Religious references, which disappeared from the deathscape after the 1920s, reappeared on 3.7 percent of gravestones in the 1970s. The trend peaked in the 1980s at 7.5 percent and then declined slightly during the next two decades (Figure 4.39). Typical religious references from this period include references to God or Jesus, such as ‘In God’s Care’ (Figure 4.40). Though religious references in total do not occur as frequently as they did during Phase I, the trend is significant when one considers the complete absence of religious references on Brownville’s gravestones during Phase II. This resurgence is almost certainly related to the mainstream acceptance of conservative Christian theology that began to flourish in the 1970s and involved, among other things, greater public pronouncements of Christian faith.

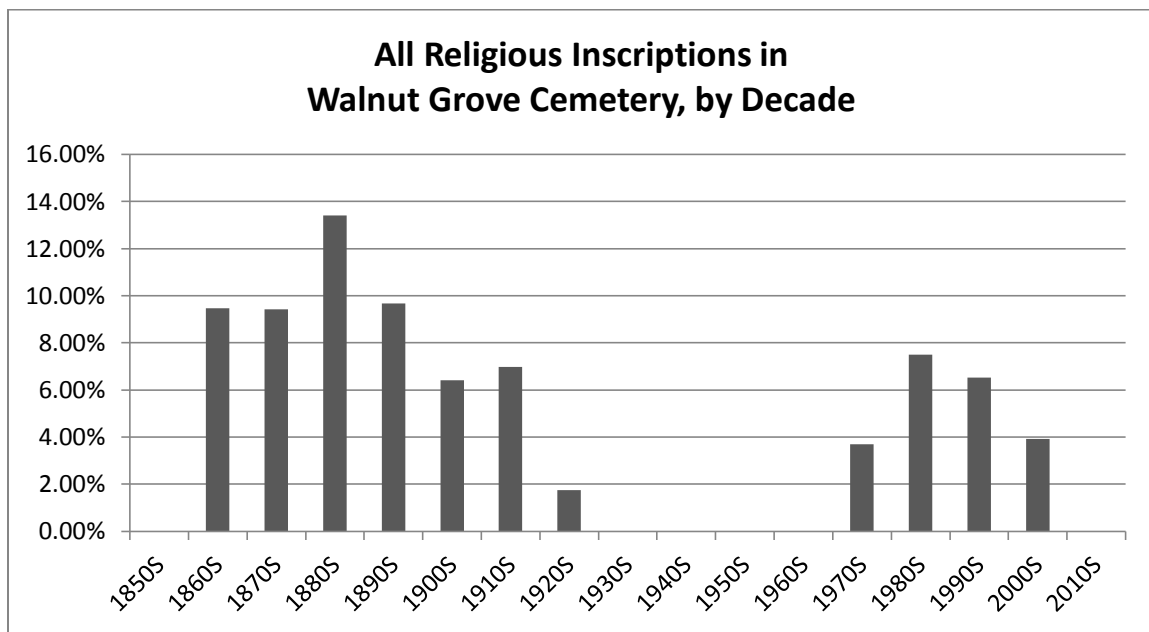


Figure 4.39: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery bearing religious inscriptions of any form, by decade.

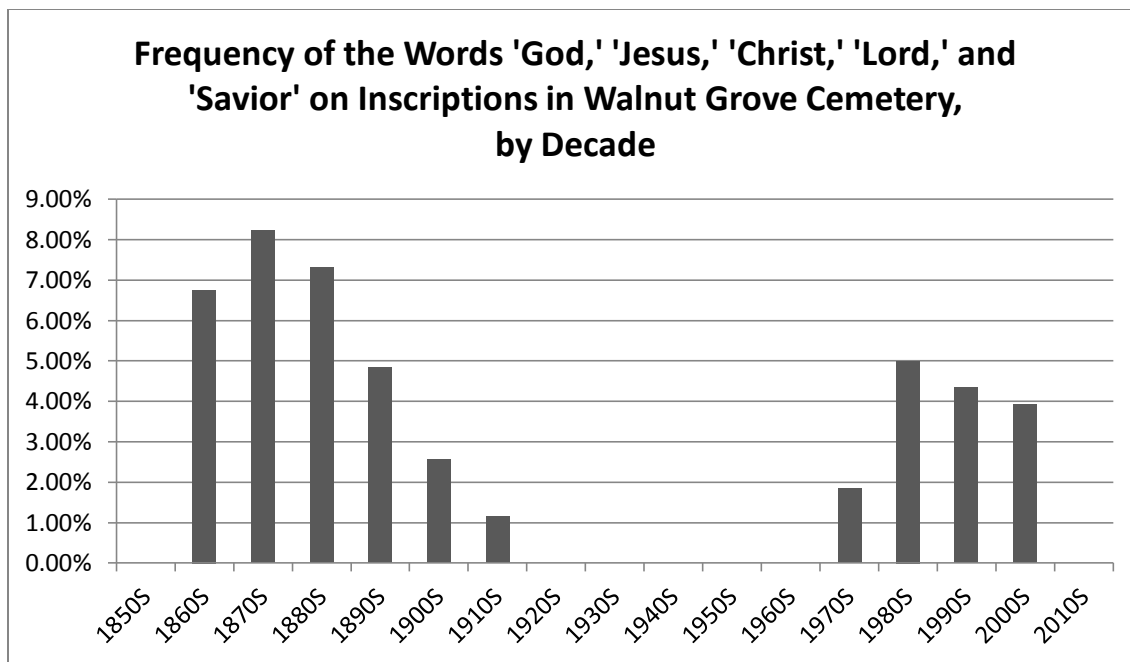


Figure 4.40: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery bearing inscriptions of the words ‘God,’ ‘Jesus,’ ‘Christ,’ ‘Lord,’ or ‘Savior,’ by decade.

During Phase III, military inscriptions reached their peak in Brownville’s cemetery. The trend began rising at the end of Phase II, then peaked dramatically in the 1970s and again in the 2000s (Figure 4.41). In the 1970s, more than 18.5 percent (ten out of 54) markers included military information, while nearly twenty percent of the markers dating to the 2000s bear such inscriptions.

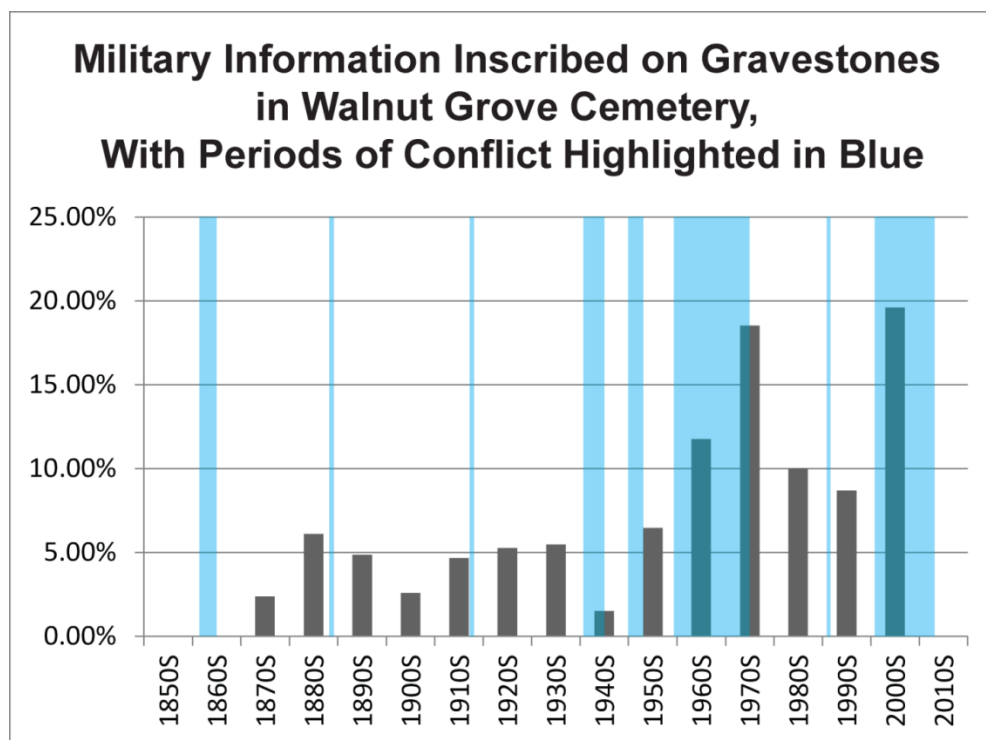


Figure 4.41: Frequency of military inscriptions in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade, with periods of military conflict highlighted in blue.

The increase in military inscriptions in the 1970s and in the 2000s is probably the result of several factors. Much like the increase in images relating to hobbies and employment discussed in Chapter 3, this trend may relate to the increased importance of individual identity during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Displaying one's military information on one's gravestone identifies a role that the person played in their life; in this case, as a soldier, sailor, or airman, oftentimes one who served in conflict. Additionally, conflicts during both of these periods caused significant social upheaval. Anti-Vietnam protests were in full swing by the late 1960s, spilling into the 1970s. The 2000s were also a decade characterized by controversial United States military involvement overseas, with the attack on the World Trade Center and the

subsequent Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom dominating foreign policy and the national psyche. Furthermore, during each of these decades (the 1970s and the 2000s), Brownville's veterans passed away in relatively high numbers. In the 1970s, six World War I veterans died, while seven World War II veterans passed away in the 2000s. This is certainly impacted by the age of the veterans of each of these wars during the respected decades; all of the World War I veterans who died in Brownville in the 1970s were between the ages of seventy-four and eighty-one, while all of the World War II vets who died in the 2000s were in their seventies.

With the exception of a single instance from 1883, the term 'married' or a marriage date began appearing in the 1980s and became increasingly common each following decade (Figure 4.42). Only a single example dates to the 1980s, but the frequency jumped to more than fifteen percent of gravestones in the 1990s and climbed above 31 percent in the 2000s. Three out of the eight gravestones recorded for the first three years of the 2010s also include such inscriptions suggesting that the trend may continue. Additionally, five gravestones with unknown dates also include these inscriptions. Unlike many of the other gravestones with unknown dates, these all almost certainly date to no earlier than the 1980s or 1990s and probably to the 2000s or 2010s, due to their stylistic similarities.

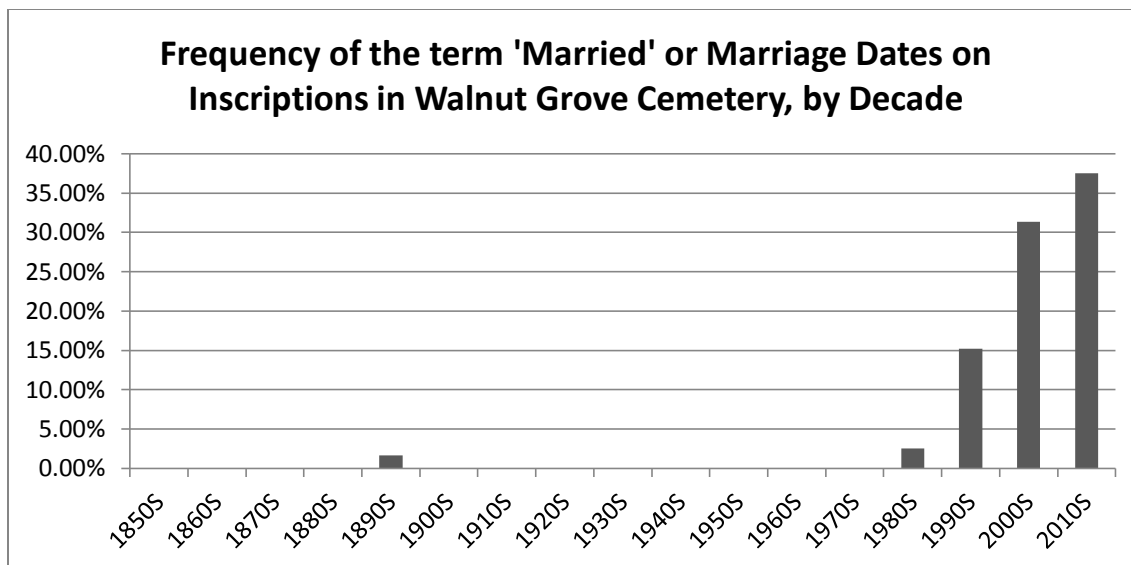


Figure 4.42: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery bearing the term ‘married’ or a marriage date, by decade.

The reason they are undated is because they have been placed prematurely, before either of the individuals has passed away. The trend of placing gravestones prior to an individual’s death occurs only during this period in Brownville and may be the result of individuals or couples purchasing markers when they feel financially stable or, perhaps, when (or shortly after) purchasing stones for another family member who has passed away. Though the dates of these stone placements are not explicitly known, their styles are comparable to others from this period.

Furthermore, a related trend unambiguously dates to Phase III. Beginning in the 1980s, it became common to engrave both names of a couple on a single gravestone, even if one of the individuals was still living (Figures 4.43 and 4.44). All of these trends correspond well with the temporal distribution of wedding ring images described in Chapter 3 (Figure 4.45). These trends imply that marriage and one’s self-identity as a

married person are becoming increasingly important in Brownville, a trend that surely reflects aspects of American culture in general. Despite the social changes brought about by second (and, to a lesser extent, third) wave feminism, marriage continues to be an essential aspect of post-feminist American identity (Stover 2013:8). This theme is further explored in Chapter 5.

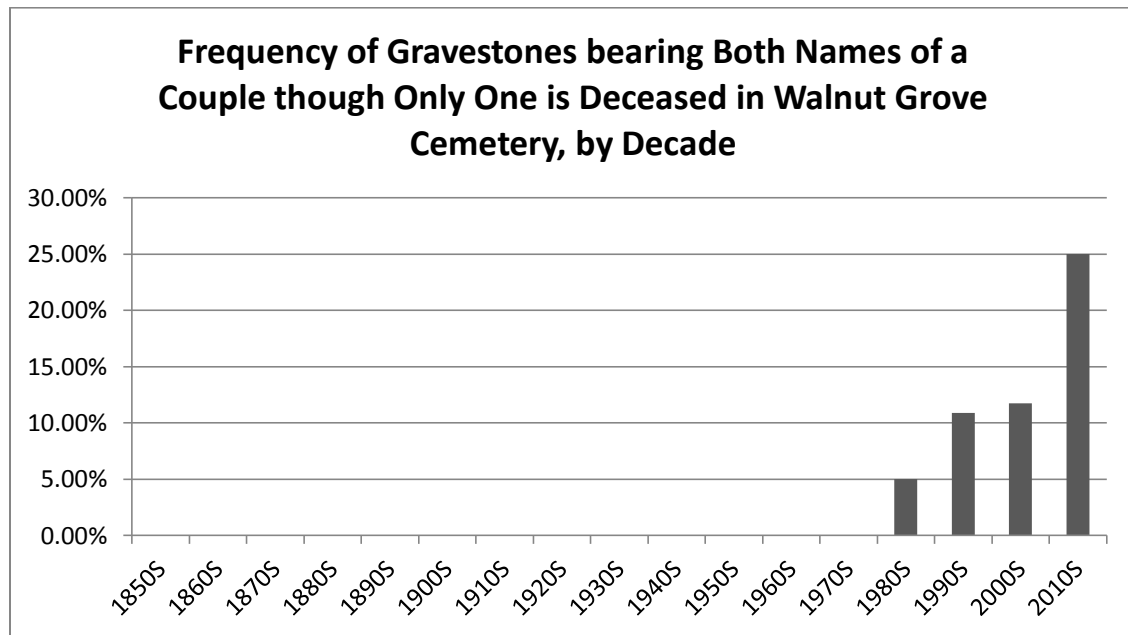


Figure 4.43: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery bearing both names of a couple, yet one of the individuals appears to still be alive.



Figure 4.44: The gravestone of E. Pauline and John E. Ballue. Pauline is, apparently, still living.

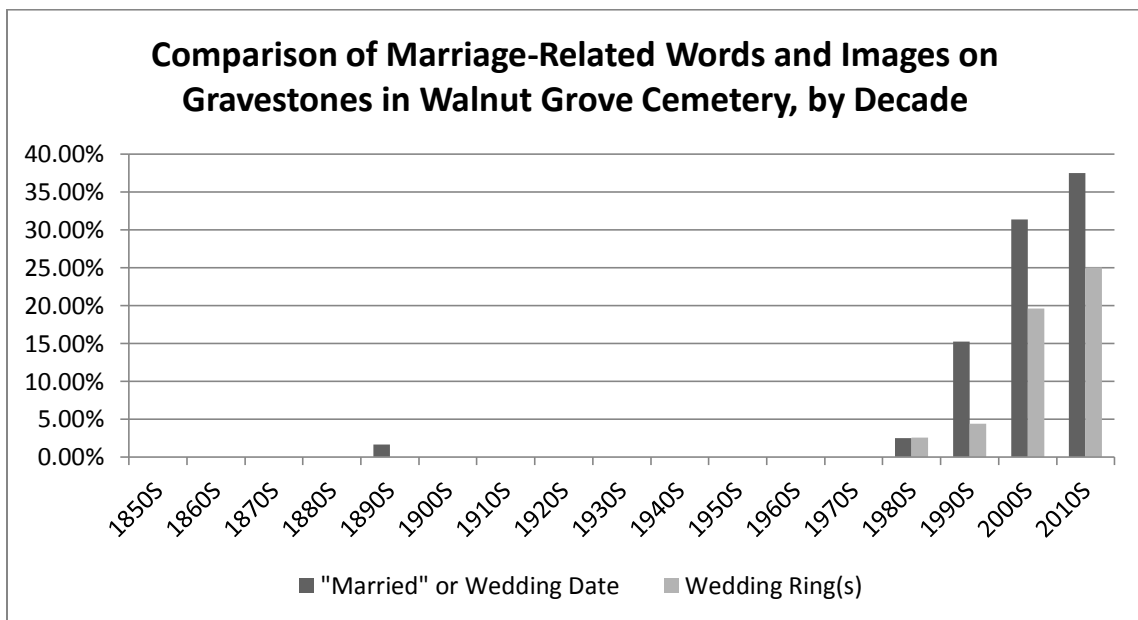


Figure 4.45: A comparison of the percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery bearing inscriptions of marriage-related words and those bearing marriage-related images, by decade.

During Phase III, there was also a slight rise in references to the remembrance of the individual (Figure 4.46). This stems primarily from a resurgence of the phrase ‘In Memory of,’ which appeared frequently on gravestones during Phase I, then disappeared for a few decades during Phase II before reappearing on a handful of markers beginning in the 1960s. The phrase does not appear as often as it did during Phase I. The resurgence appears to be the result of the general reappearance of inscriptions that began late in Phase II.

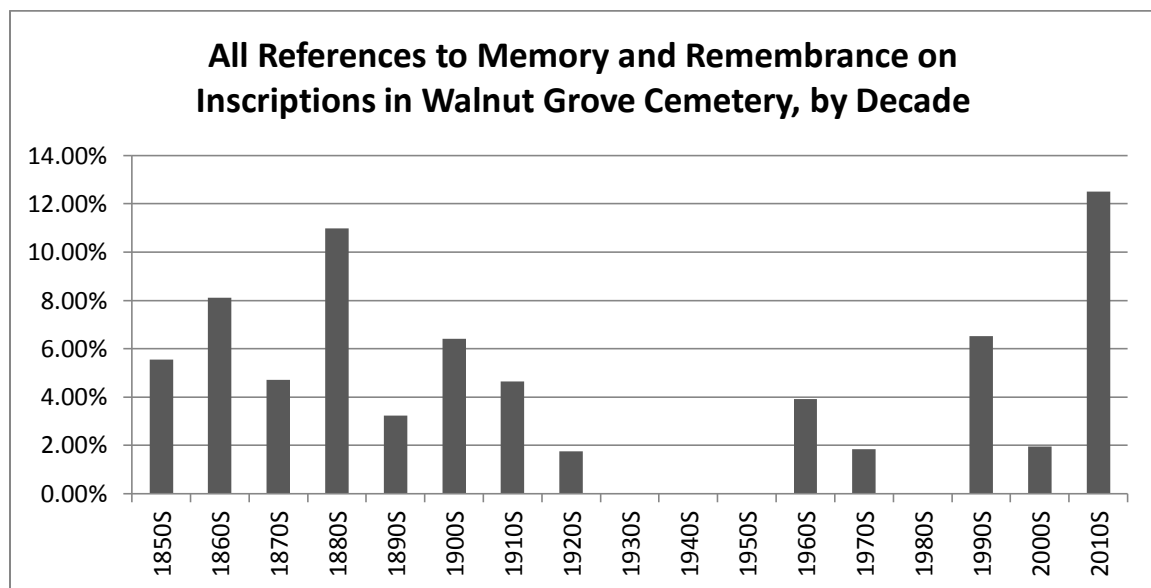


Figure 4.46: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include inscriptions about memory or remembrance of the deceased. Note that the spike in the 2010s is likely the result of the very small sample size from that decade.

The inscriptions from Phase III reflect a rather dramatic shift in the ways Brownville’s citizens defined their individual identities. Status is no longer conferred solely in a top-down manner, inherited from one’s parents, or via one’s own

achievements, but appears to also rise to older generations by the achievements, or even the simple presence of, one's children. The identity of an individual as a parent is highly esteemed, as is one's identity as a spouse. The frequent inscriptions referring to marriage suggest that Brownville's citizens were not removed from the broader neo-Victorian turn of the late twentieth century, further indicating that Brownville's culture is well-integrated with the national culture. References to parenthood and marriage, as well as to military service, are the primary trends that appear in the wording of the material culture of Brownville's deathscape. Phase III also corresponds with a change in theology, as the population came to embrace more conservative Christian ideals, including an emphasis on the presence and grace of God.

While some of the general trends of Phase III may be attributed to the resurgence in popularity of inscriptions of gravestones that began to develop in the mid- to late-twentieth century, this does not fully explain all of the patterns. The dramatic rise in prominence of inscriptions about marriage, combined with the development of joint gravestones for husbands and wives, signals an increase or, more likely, a resurgence of the importance of marriage to personal identity. In spite of the women's rights movements of the 1960s through early 1980s, the very late 1990s signaled a transition towards more clearly separated gender roles for women and men. While the analysis of the images carved onto the markers suggests the importance of individual identity in Brownville's culture (see Chapter 3), the words inscribed on the stones paradoxically emphasize the importance of marriage in Brownville's society. While this may be influenced by the declining and aging population of the community, the author suspects that these trends may be visible in other cemeteries throughout the region.

CHAPTER 5: GENDER, RACE, AND WALNUT GROVE CEMETERY

Gender and race are two complicated and socially-loaded terms. Both are socially constructed and defined concepts which vary across time and space, and often from one situation to another. As a result, they can be difficult to identify. Gender, more specifically, “refers to socially constructed and historically variable relationships, cultural meanings, and identities through which biological sex differences become socially significant” (Laslett & Brenner 1989:382). Regardless of the difficulties surrounding the concepts of race and gender, or even because of the difficulties, race and gender remain worthwhile subjects of inquiry for historical landscape studies. The experiences of persons of subordinate social identities can become hidden in and by the historic record, leaving the histories of places often to focus on dominant members of society (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). In the case of Brownville, histories often revolve around the famous white men in town: Robert W. Furnas, Charles Neidhart, John Brown, and Eugene Gilmore, to name just a few. Paying particular attention to the stories of socially-subordinate residents allows a deeper, more varied story of Brownville to emerge from the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Gender

Gender roles are some of the most basic structuring principles of daily life within societies. They influence not only one’s daily activities, but also the manner of one’s communications with others (Aidala 1985:289). Gender roles both contribute to and develop out of a society’s structure of economic, social, and political relations.

Therefore, when social or economic upheaval occurs in a society, it is not unusual to see changes in gender roles, either idealized or experienced. As a result of this, social, political, and economic changes may be reflected by a community's material culture, in this case the inscriptions and images on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery in Brownville, Nebraska.

Linda Kerber (1997:839) has argued that “throughout the history of the United States, virtually all married women’s identities as citizens were filtered through their husband’s legal identities” [sic]. While this statement is true, it is also an oversimplification. By closely examining material culture in Walnut Grove Cemetery, it may be possible to gain deeper insights into the changes that gender roles have undergone in American society. Prior to the mid-18th century, Euro-Americans perceived women as weaker than men, not only physically, but also intellectually and morally. During the Enlightenment, Westerners valued logic and reason over emotion, and perceived women as being “too emotional for sustained rational thought” (Williams 1989:805). Men were charged with supervising the women in their lives to ensure that they did not degrade into evil. This was, not coincidentally, the same period where many women were accused of being ‘witches’ (Williams 1989:804). Because society viewed women as weak, sexual, and irrational, those who were not reined in by their male counterparts could spiral downward into so-called evil and, thus, be labeled ‘witches’ (Williams 1989:804).

As the eighteenth century wore on, the idea of women as emotional and irrational began to erode, becoming inconsistent with the emerging political philosophy of liberalism. Furthermore, as industrialization began to dominate the US economy, a conflict started to develop between the means of production and the means of social

reproduction. Men began to work away from home, leaving upper- and middle-class women at home all day to take care of the house and children. Working-class families, however, could rarely attain this ideal, as both husbands and wives generally had to earn an income to sustain their families. Gradually, a new gender identity, that of domesticity, began to develop, where women continued to be viewed as physically and intellectually weaker than men, but morally superior to them. The turn of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of separate gender spheres as an ideology, and these separate spheres became institutionalized throughout the century. The ‘home’ came to be viewed as the center of morality, with women at the helm. This also led to changes in childrearing, as women took charge (since they were, after all, considered more moral than men and, thus, more suitable for making decisions about childrearing).

This ‘cult of true womanhood’ that developed among middle class women during the period of industrialization further separated the daily realms of women and men. Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner (1989:388) observed that “the ‘cult of true womanhood’ served to legitimize women’s demands for higher status and greater control over children and household at the same time that it justified women’s exclusion from the economy and reinforced their dependence on men.” Upper-class and working-class women, however, often had significantly different experiences from their middle-class counterparts. Upper-class women were sometimes able to control, to some degree, the number of children they had, as society often perceived them as ‘fragile.’ Because of their economic status, they also had greater access to various forms of contraception, as well as education about human reproduction. Working-class women, on the other hand, often had to work outside their homes in order to secure enough resources to support their

families, leaving the middle-class feminine ideal of the woman who stayed at home, kept house, and reared children simply out of reach.

‘Race’ as a concept has been employed by majority populations, and uses perceived physical differences as a means to “stratify the social system” (Smedley 1998:690). ‘Race’ came into more frequent use in the English language during the eighteenth century, when the English began coming into more frequent contact with non-Europeans (Smedley 1998:690). Unable to assimilate non-Europeans in the colonies and, in the case of African slaves, generally unwilling to do so, the English attempted to maintain cultural separation (not unlike they had done for ages with the Irish), which resulted in racial separation and, in many instances, segregation (Smedley 1998:694). Audrey Smedley (1998:695) remarked that “by the mid-nineteenth century, virtually all Americans had been conditioned to this arbitrary ranking of the American peoples” and that colonialism had spread the phenomenon around the world.

For this study, the gendered and racial identities of as many individuals as possible buried in Walnut Grove have been ascertained. For the analysis of gender and material culture, gravestones marking the burials of married couples and other multiple burials of persons of different genders were eliminated from the study. United States census data, inscriptions, and traditionally-accepted gender-specific names were used to identify the gender of individuals, whenever possible. Census data were the primary sources for identifying ‘racial’ backgrounds, though these identifications appear, unsurprisingly, to have been quite fluid, with some individuals identified on one census as Native American or African-American, only to be identified as white on the next census, and vice versa. This is not unusual, due to the fact that racial identity is socially

constructed, not only from one generation to the next, but also from one situation to another. In these cases, when a predominant number of family members were identified on census forms as belonging to a minority group, this identification was accepted, even if the individuals were later reported differently.

In analyzing the correlations between gender and the engravings on the gravestones in Brownville, it became obvious that gendered patterns do exist in gravestone carving throughout time in this cemetery. Certainly, there are several patterns that, while temporal, are not particularly gendered. These include images such as urns, shrouds, weeping willows, buds, wilted flowers, and hobbies or employment, as well as decorative elements like leaves and geometric patterns, as well as words and phrases that refer to the individual being gone as well as religious inscriptions. Some of the temporal patterns, however, also have gendered components. In other words, some images and words or phrases occur more commonly during certain periods, but are also more common on gravestones of women rather than men and vice versa. Some of these gendered patterns also change throughout time, with a word, phrase, or image appearing more frequently on, for example, men's gravestones during the late 1800s, but switching and becoming more popular on women's markers during the late 1900s and early 2000s.

Several images described in Chapter 3 display significant gendered patterns throughout time. Flowers, angels, doves, and hearts, though they fluctuate in overall popularity, tend to appear on gravestones marking the burials of women and girls, while 'disembodied' hands, lambs, and military shields are more common on the gravestones of men and boys. Others, such as crosses, scrollwork, and, somewhat surprisingly, masonic symbols shift between periods of male and female popularity.

In general, flowers appear more commonly on the graves of women and girls than they do on the graves of men or boys. Roses, which were popular symbols on Brownville's gravestones during Phases I and IV, have always been more common on women's and girl's markers (Figures 5.1-5.2). This may be a reflection of a longstanding association of roses with love and beauty, two 'feminine' ideals during these periods. During Victorian times, and even earlier, poets often anthropomorphized roses as beautiful young women and the Victorian tradition of 'speaking with flowers' bestowed great meaning upon the rose. For example, in *Flora's Lexicon*, Catharine Waterman (1857:181) attributed grace, beauty, virtue, modesty, youth, innocence, and pleasure, among many other characteristics, to the rose.

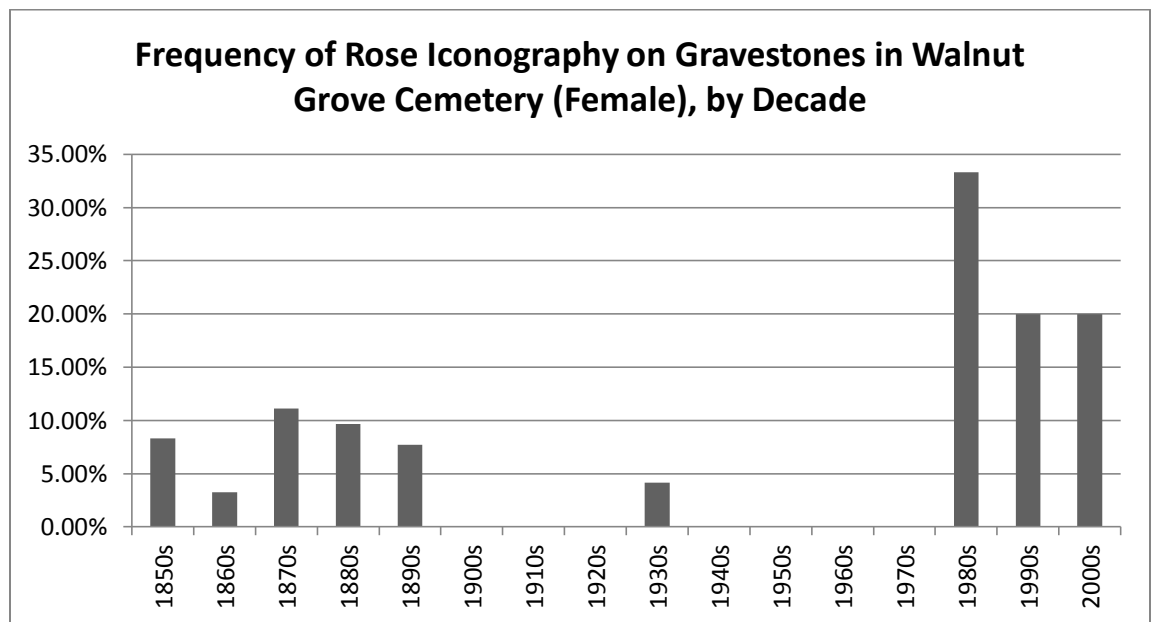


Figure 5.1: Frequency of rose iconography on women's and girls' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

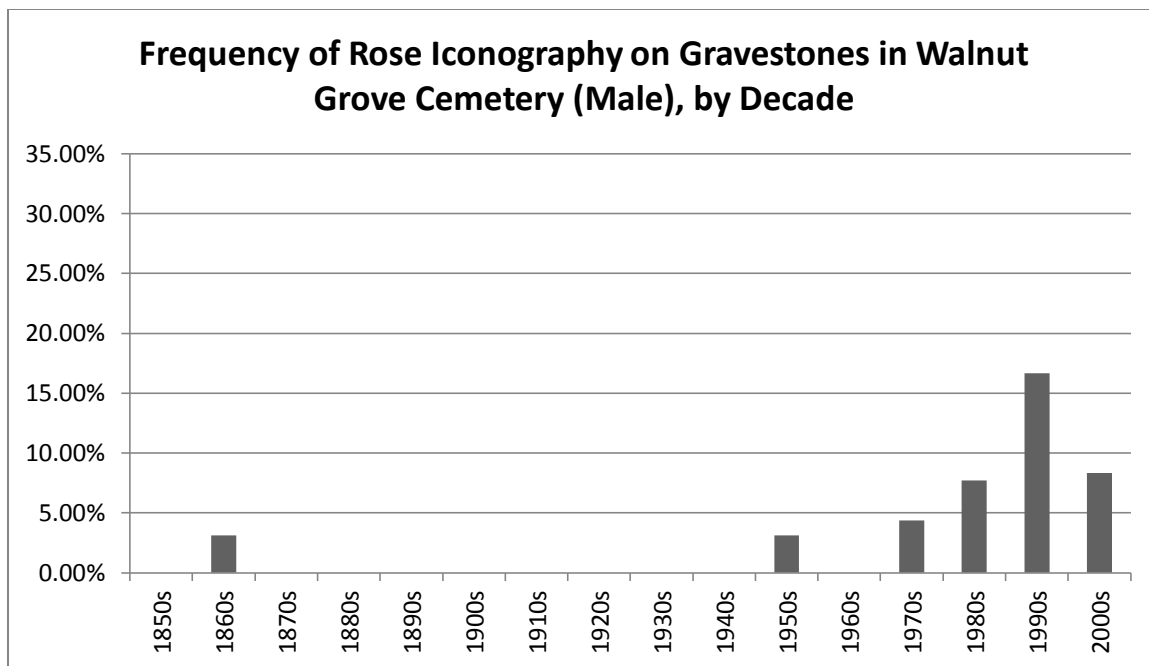


Figure 5.2: Frequency of rose iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Roses, however, aren’t the only flowers that appear more frequently on women’s and girls’ gravestones. The ubiquitous forget-me-not that invaded the deathscape in the 1930s was also more common on women’s gravestones than on men’s (Figures 5.3-5.4). Forget-me-nots, with their meanings of remembrance and true love, do not appear to convey such overtly-feminine connotations as roses. The gendered distribution of forget-me-nots in Brownville is not as unambiguous as the distribution of roses, though they do appear notably more on women’s gravestones. This likely stems from the common view of flowers as ‘feminine’ objects; for example, it is more common for men to give women flowers than vice versa.

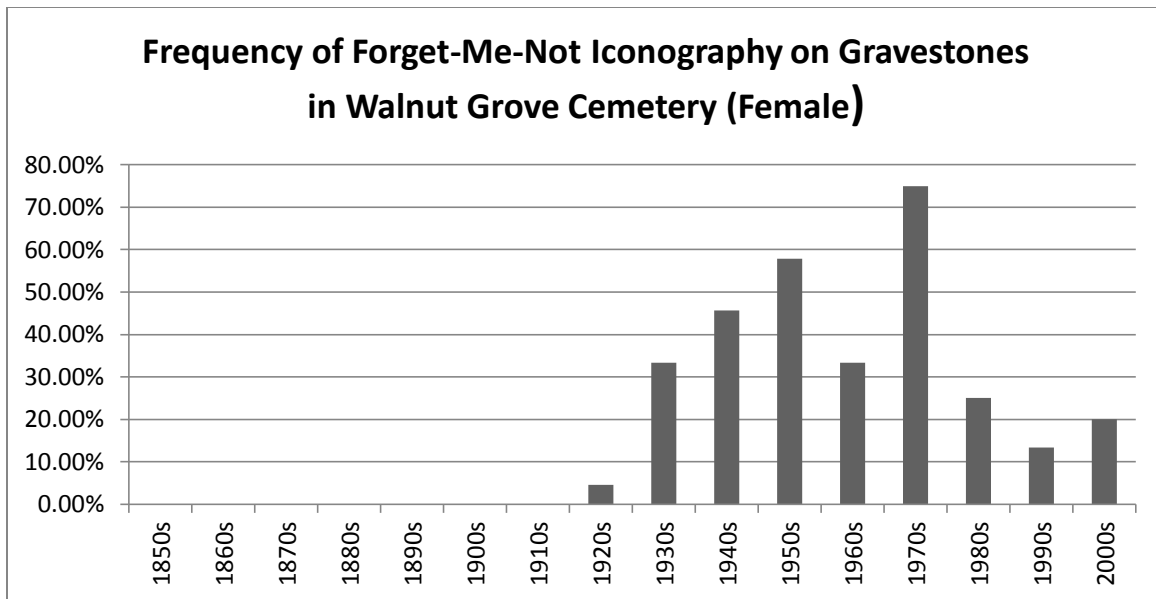


Figure 5.3: Frequency of forget-me-not iconography on women’s and girls’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

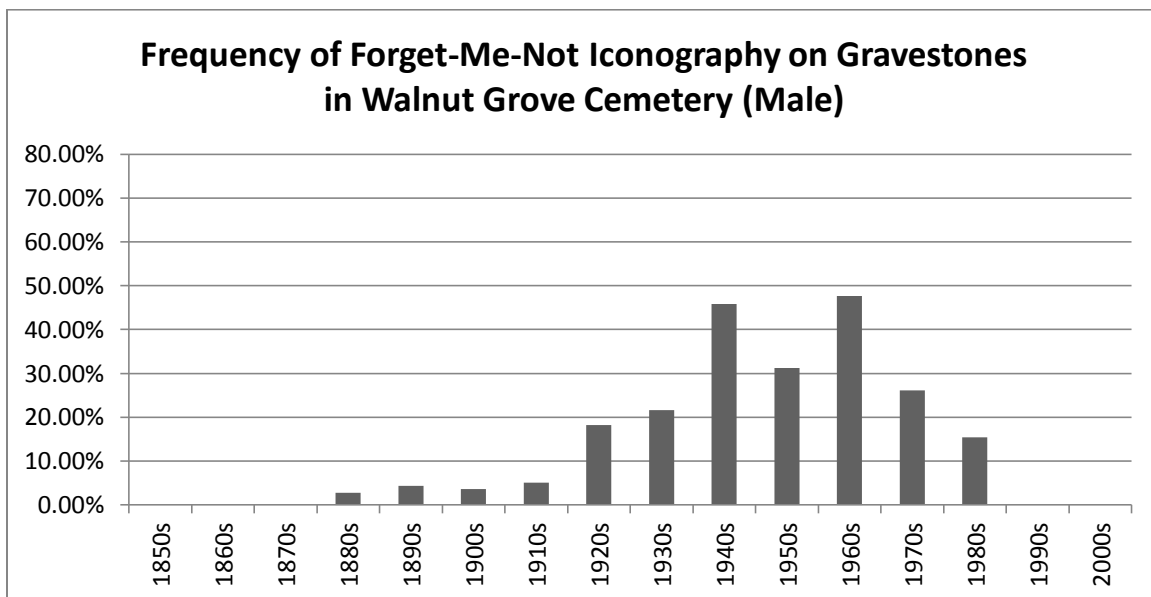


Figure 5.4: Frequency of forget-me-not iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Unlike flowers, the variety of ‘disembodied hands’ that were most popular during Phase I (1850s-1890s) appear slightly more frequently on men’s gravestones in Brownville during that phase (Figures 5.5-5.6). These include image of hands pointing up to the sky, holding bibles, or clasped as if shaking good-bye. With the exception of the 1860s, hands pointing up appeared more frequently on men’s gravestones during Phase I. This figure may be slightly misleading, however, as only four gravestones from the 1850s can be identified as marking the burials of men. In the 1870s, though, the image was undoubtedly more common on men’s markers, with six out of thirty-nine gravestones bearing the image, compared to two out of thirty-six for women. From the 1860s through the 1880s, clasped or shaking hands appeared slightly more often on men’s gravestones than on women’s, but the pattern is clouded by the small data set. During Phase I, only six datable examples of clasped hands appear on gravestones that mark a person of known gender. Four appear on men’s markers (one in the 1860s, two in the 1870s, and one in the 1880s) while two appear on women’s markers (one in the 1870s and one in the 1880s). The pattern is strongest when all forms of ‘disembodied’ hands are considered together, and they are stylistically similar enough to do so. The reasons for this gendered difference remain unclear, though the difference most likely relates to the small sample size. Additional research, perhaps in other cemeteries in the area, may be able to shed further light on this subject.

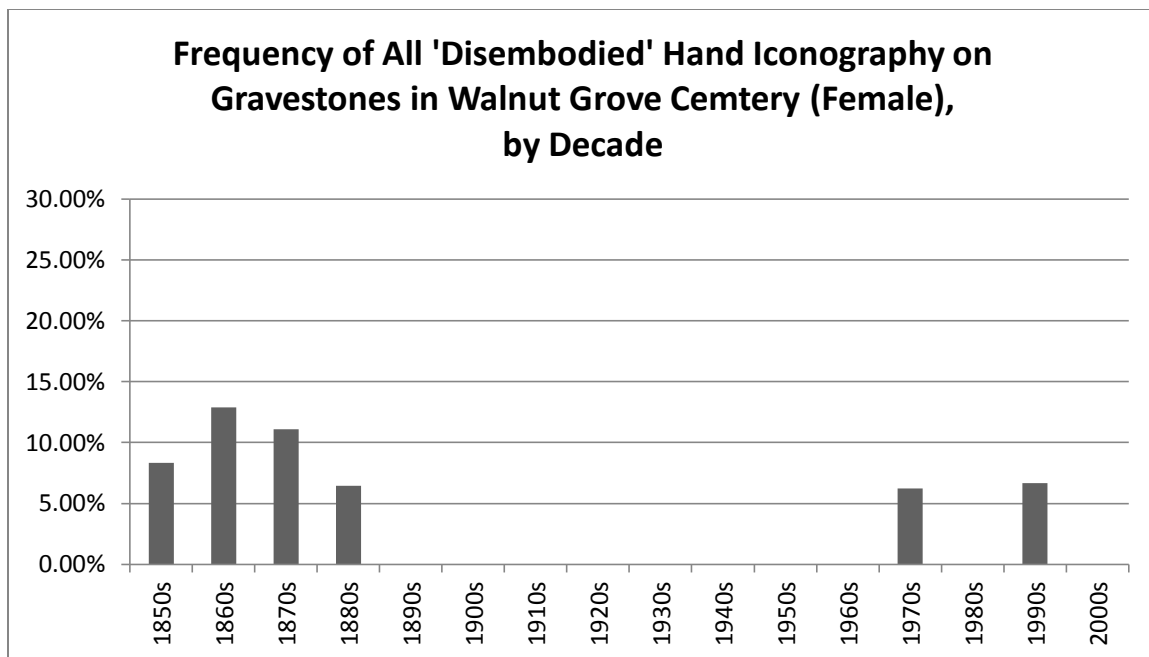


Figure 5.5: Frequency of all 'disembodied' hand iconography on women's and girls' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

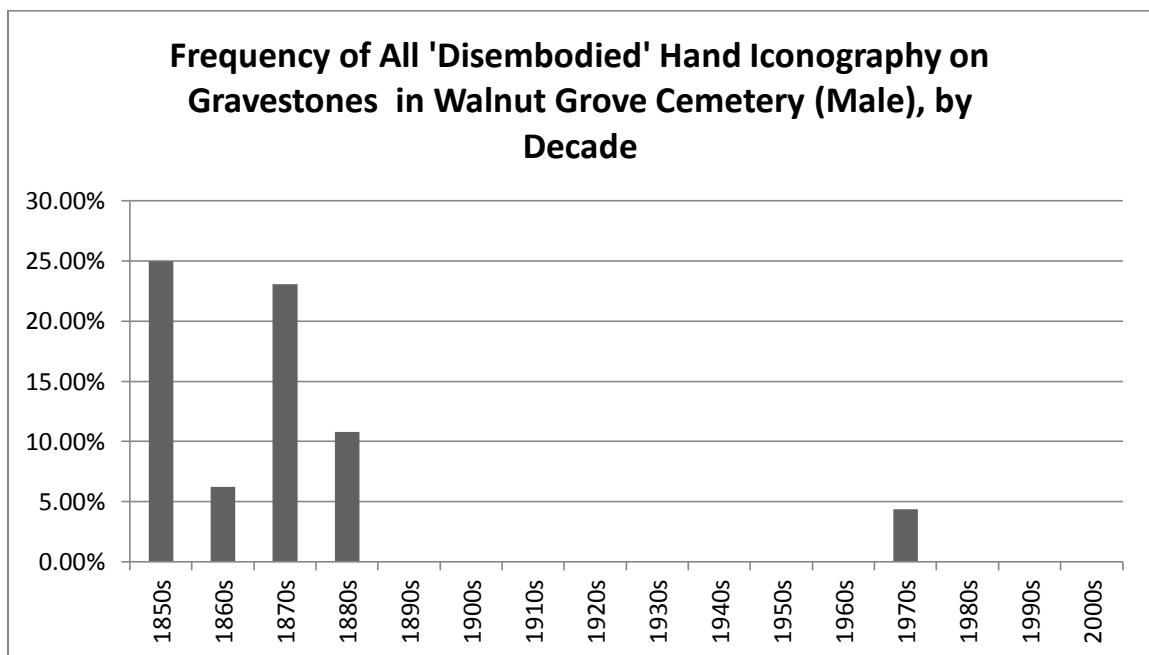


Figure 5.6: Frequency of all 'disembodied' hand iconography on men's and boys' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Doves and angels both unquestionably appear more frequently on women's and girl's markers than on men's and boy's gravestones in Brownville, albeit during completely different phases. Doves, which experienced greatest popularity during Phase I, occur much more commonly on women's and girl's markers during the 1850s and 1860s (Figures 5.7-5.8). The image also later reappears twice on women's gravestones, once in 1907 and again in 2006, while it is absent from men's markers after the 1870s. Furthermore, of the three examples of doves that appear on gravestone that mark burials of male individuals, one was an infant and the other was likely an infant or child, as his marker describes him as the "son of R V and E A Hughes." Young children were often not ascribed adult gender roles, as they were viewed as more neutral-gendered or even feminine, so it may make sense that young boys and infants may have more feminine (or, at least, less overtly masculine) gendered images on their gravestones. Doves served as a symbol of hope and purity. During the Victorian period, gender roles ascribed purity, particularly moral purity, as a feminine ideal. Thus, it is not surprising that this image appeared more commonly on women's and girl's gravestones during Phase I.

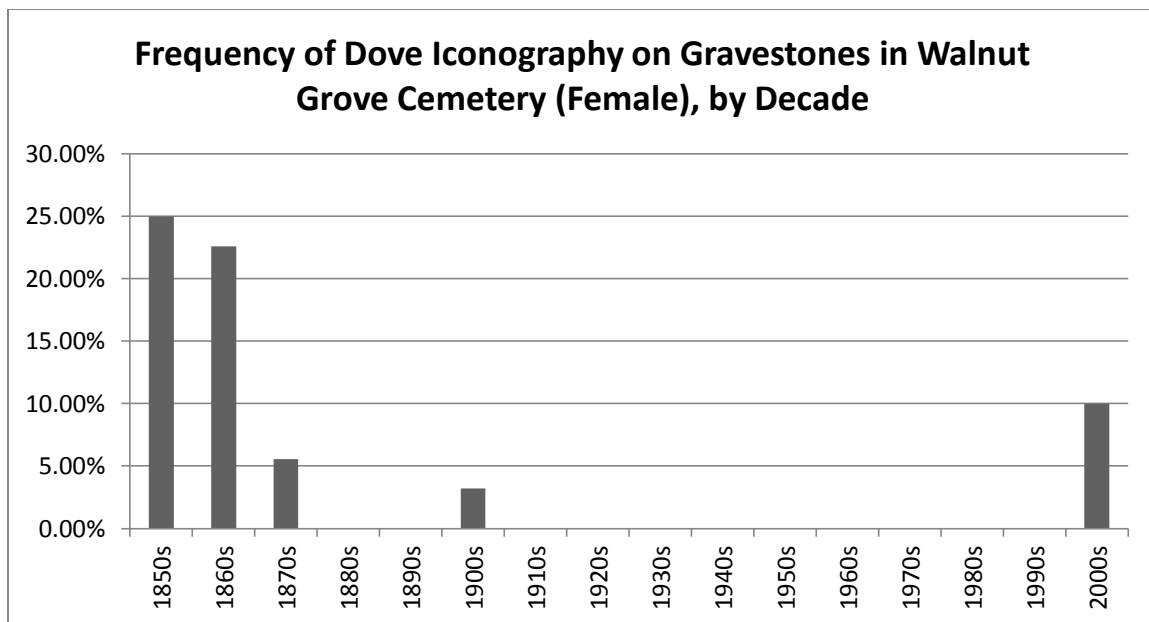


Figure 5.7: Frequency of dove iconography on women's and girls' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

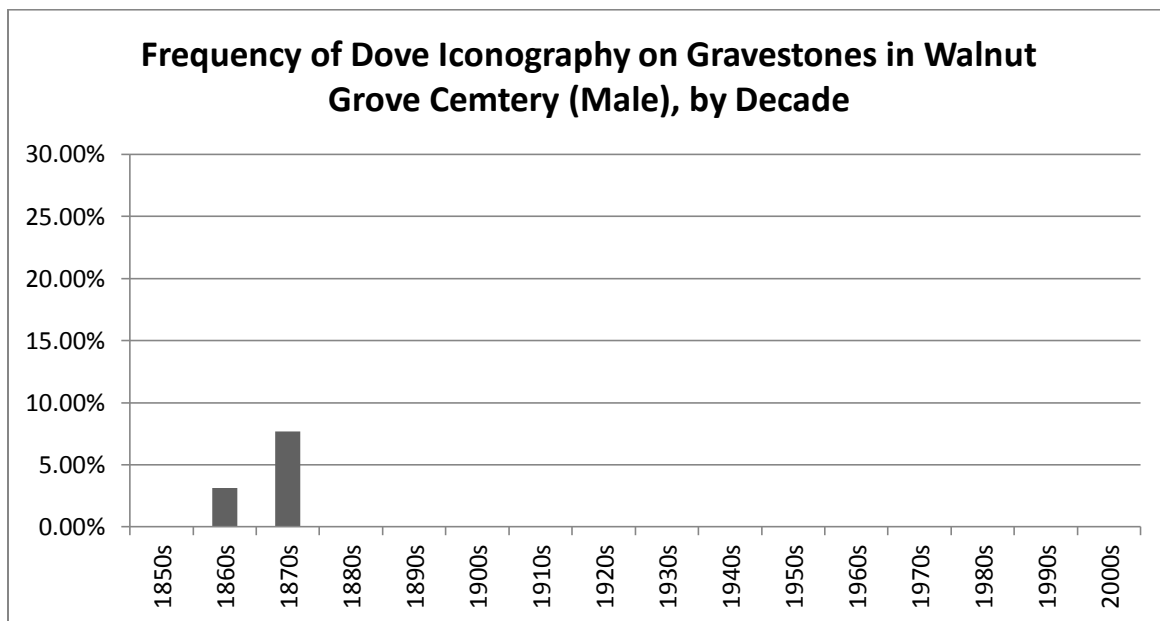


Figure 5.8: Frequency of dove iconography on men's and boys' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Unlike doves, angels became more popular much later, in the mid-twentieth century (though a single example dates to the 1860s) (Figures 5.9-5.10). Only two examples of angels appear on boys' gravestones (and none on men's), and both mark the burials of infants. Furthermore, the angels on these two gravestones are themselves depicted as babies. Of the angels depicted on women's and girls' gravestones, three appear on infants' markers, and one of these is also depicted as a baby angel. Another has a more traditional image of an angel kneeling in prayer, but the inscription reads 'our little angel.' The third infant marker bears the same praying angel, without the inscription. The only single adult burial with a gravestone depicting an angel marks the burial of Aundera D. "Andy" Tunks, who died in 2006 around the age of 63. Furthermore, the single gravestone from the 1860s also marked a (female) child burial. Two additional examples exist, but both appear on markers for persons who have not yet died. James O. "Salty" and Roberta L "Sis" Smith, born in 1944 and 1946, respectively, are ostensibly still living, as no dates of death have been inscribed on their stone. Linda J. (Ballue) Johnson, born in 1949, also has no date of death listed. Both of these gravestones appear to be very new, likely dating to the 2000s or 2010s, possibly suggesting a shift in the application of angel iconography may be occurring. Of the datable examples, all but one are on children's markers, and the majority, including the one adult burial, mark female burials.

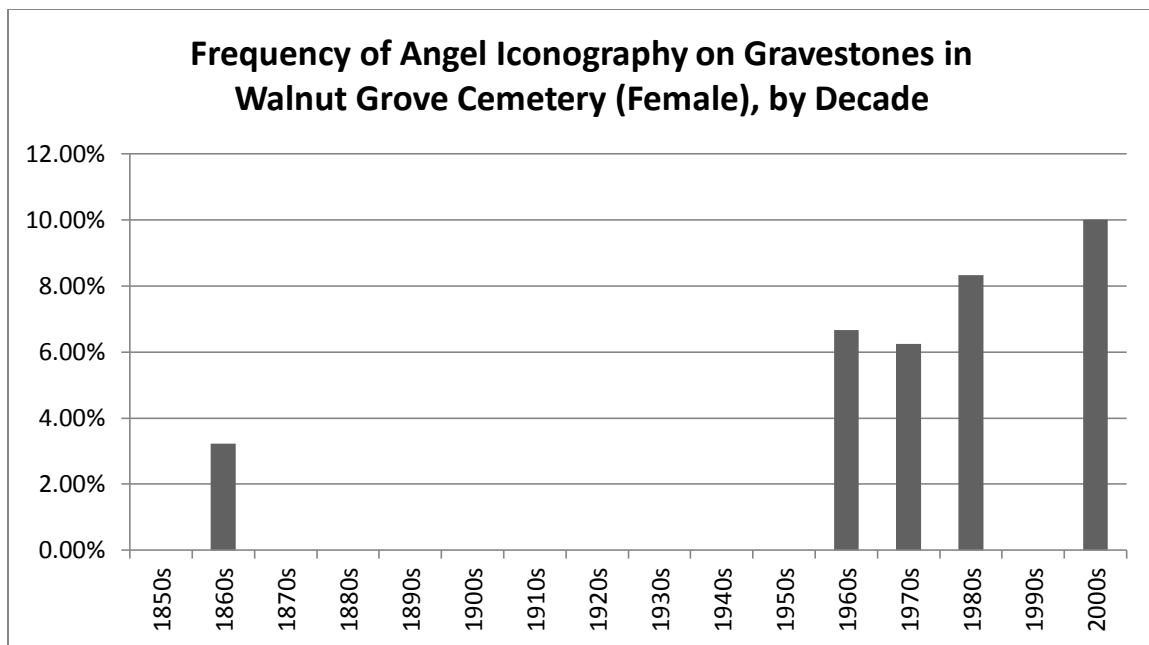


Figure 5.9: Frequency of angel iconography on women’s and girls’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

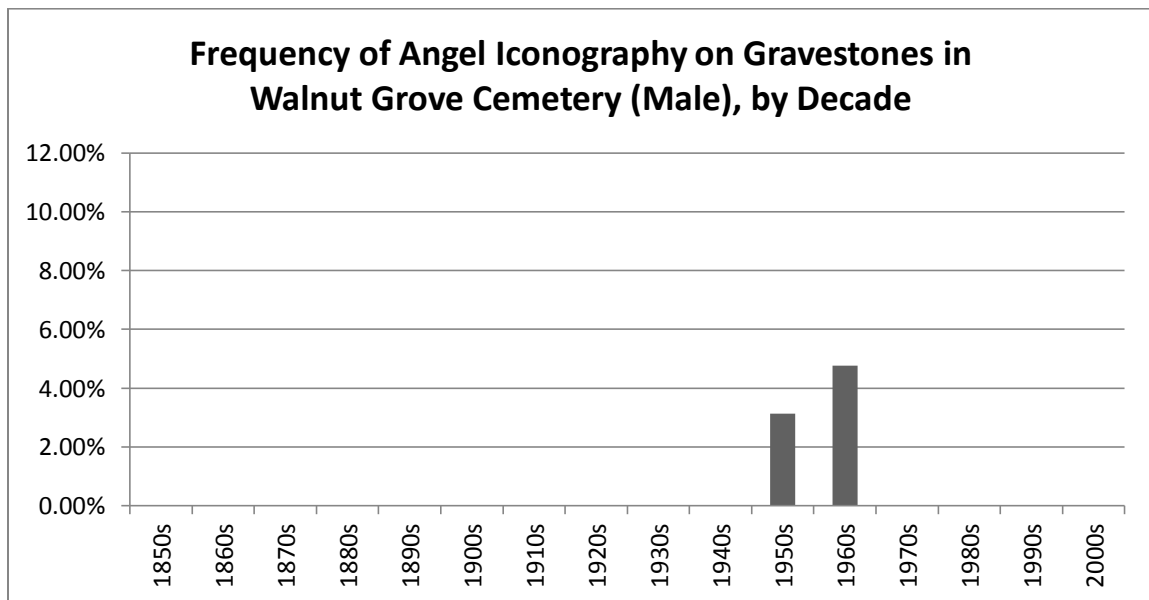


Figure 5.10: Frequency of angel iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

The fact that angels appear most frequently on gravestones of the very young and usually female suggests that both age and gender have been important prerequisites for the selections of angels as gravestone iconography in Brownville. This trend may stem from the symbolism of angels as pure, sinless beings, but it may also signify a shift in popular theology. Biblical writings refer to angels not as humans who have died, but as altogether separate beings that act as intercessors between God and humans. The English word ‘angel’ traces its roots in the Greek *ἄγγελος*, which translates to ‘messenger’ or ‘one that tells’ (Liddel and Scott: “*ἄγγελος*”). Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, American theology and pop culture appear to have adopted a different interpretation, with many viewing angels as embodiments of the deceased souls who have ascended to heaven or guardians over the living (Paglia 2003:97; Bawer 1995:398; Gilbert 2001:239; Smith 2001). Lisa May Guhde’s 1970 gravestone reflects this perfectly, bearing the inscription ‘our little angel’ (Figure 5.11).



Figure 5.11: Lisa May Guhde’s gravestone with the inscription ‘Our Little Angel.’

While angels appear most often on young girls' and infants' gravestones, lambs appear most frequently on young boys' and infant boys' markers (Figures 5.12-5.13). Most popular during Phase I, lambs quickly went out of fashion on Brownville's gravestones after the 1880s, appearing on only one marker after that decade (Kenneth S. Shepherd, Jr.'s marker from 1977). Part of this is a reflection of decreasing infant and child mortality rates in Brownville beginning around the turn of the twentieth century. While most of the gravestones mark burials of children or infants, or those presumed to be children or infants based on the inscriptions on the markers, there remains a clear preference toward the use of lambs on boys' gravestones. This may stem from the symbol of the lamb as a sacrifice, combined with ideal gender roles of the Victorian era. The loss of a son literally meant the loss of income for a family, as grown (and nearly-grown) men were the individuals who worked outside the home. Thus, the loss of a son signaled the possible loss of economic security for a Victorian family.

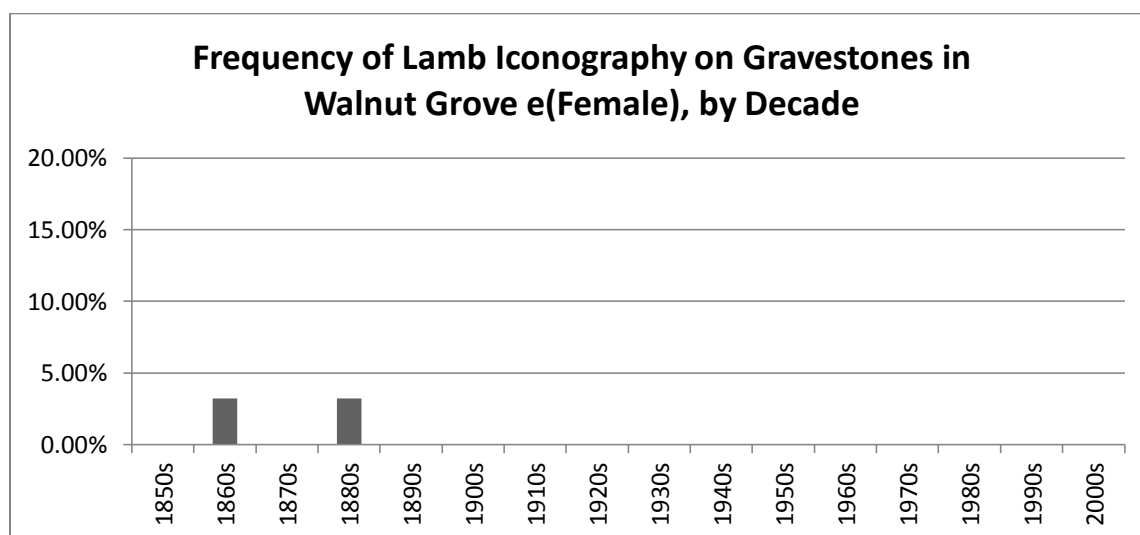


Figure 5.12: Frequency of lamb iconography on women's and girls' gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

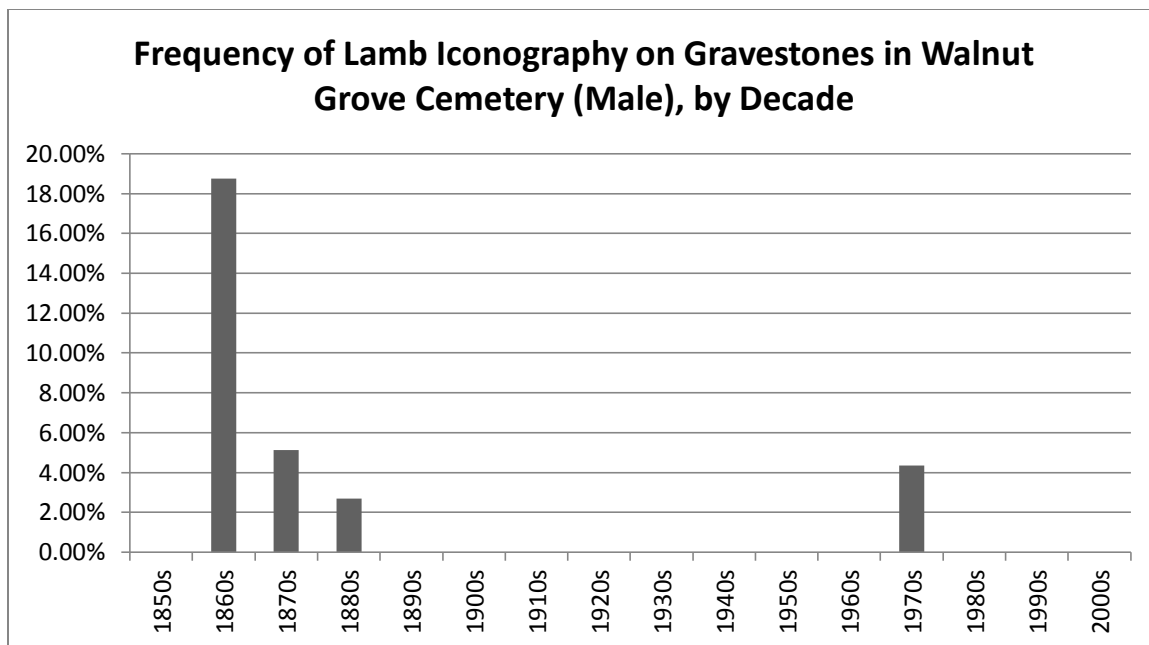


Figure 5.13: Frequency of lamb iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Though never extremely common symbols in Walnut Grove, hearts appear generally more often on women’s markers than on men’s, particularly from Phase III (1930s-1970s) on (Figures 5.14-5.15). Of the examples on gravestones marking female burials, all of the individuals were adults when they died. Of the two single male burials, one was a young child (Emmett Goff, who died around the age of three) and the age of the other, Walter Griffie (d. 1898) is unknown. They also appear occasionally on married couples’ gravestones, also after 1970, which corresponds with the increasing emphasis on marriage and identity as a couple that developed in the mid-to-late-twentieth century. The heart, as a symbol of love, is therefore not out of place on married couples’ markers. On the seven individual women’s gravestones, three of the women were described as the ‘wife of’ their husbands, while one of these three (Cindy Sue [Bare] Alden Schorsch,

1951-2004) is also described as ‘mother of.’ An additional marker describes Mary Lavonne Lotter Harden (d. 1995) as ‘Mom.’ One may therefore consider the heart a symbol of the love of surviving family members, perhaps a spouse, which has been more acceptable for use on the gravestones of women or couples.

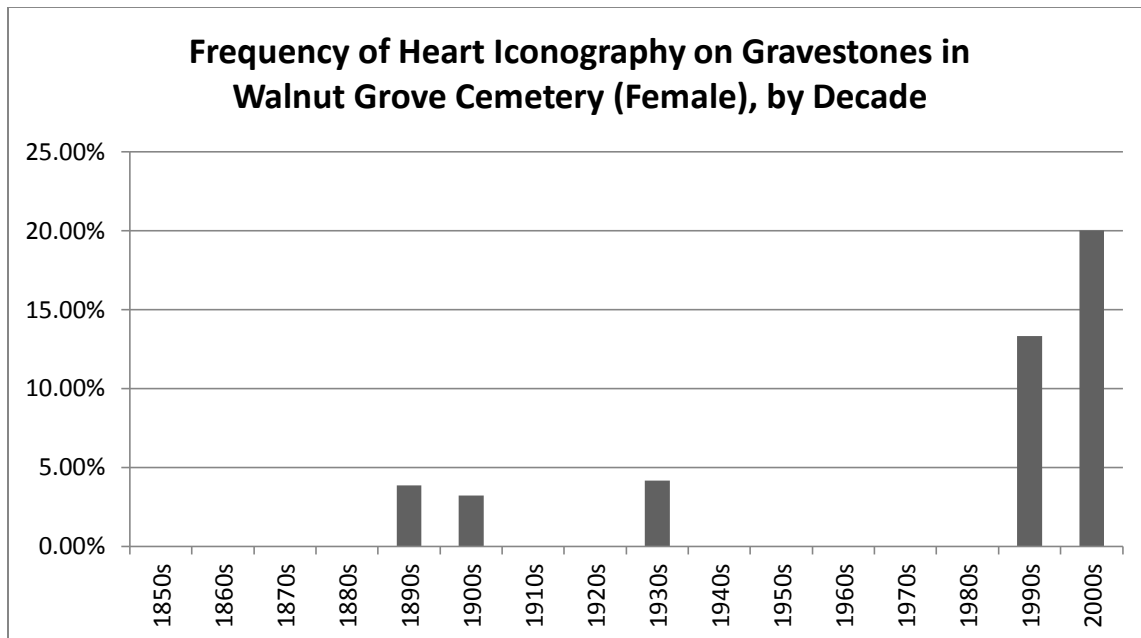


Figure 5.14: Frequency of heart iconography on women’s and girls’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

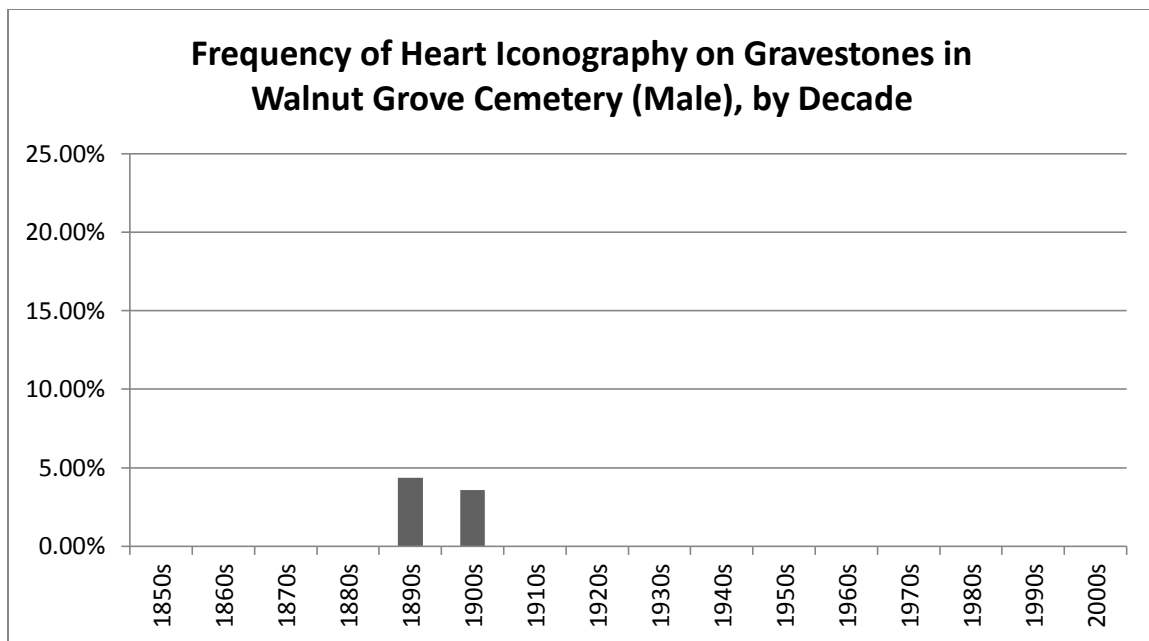


Figure 5.15: Frequency of heart iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Perhaps the least surprising gendered image in the Brownville cemetery is the military shield (Figure 5.16). Predictably, all gravestones with this symbol mark the burials of men who served in early wars. The military shield went out of style in the early 1900s, when simple crosses on military plaques began appearing more frequently. The majority of these gravestones mark the burials of veterans of the Civil War, though two Mexican War veterans (Jonathan Masters and J. W. Mullen) and one Blackhawk War veteran (Jonathan Plasters, a member of Lincoln’s company) also have gravestones with military shields. While the shield does appear occasionally on non-military markers, in such instances it serves as a frame for text and does not exhibit any notable gendered patterns.

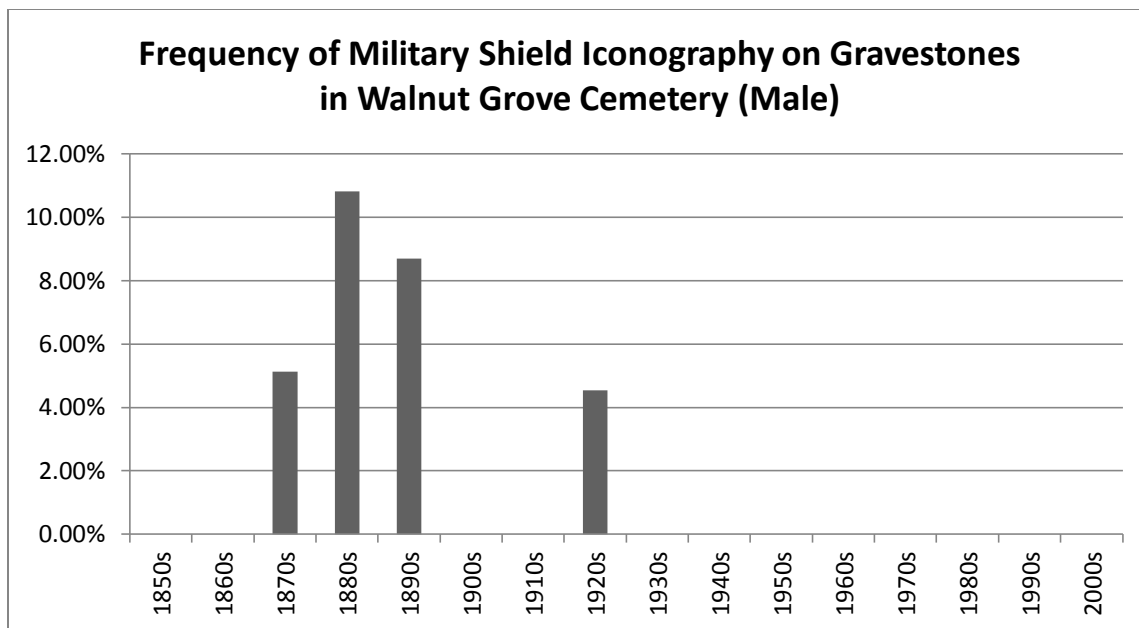


Figure 5.16: Frequency of military shield iconography on men’s gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

A handful of symbols were popular with one gender during one phase, and then became popular with the other later. Scrollwork, masonic symbols, and crosses all display this pattern. During Phase I (1850s-1890s), scrollwork was more common on women’s gravestones. During Phase II (1890s-1920s), however, the decorative element appeared about equally as often on men’s markers as it did on women’s, and the pattern reversed again by the 1930s, albeit never to the same extent as during Phase I. This weaker pattern exhibited in Phase III likely relates to the overall general decline in popularity of scrollwork as a decorative element.

The fluctuation in patterns of masonic symbols may be the most surprising gendered imagery trend in Brownville (Figures 5.17-5.18). Masonic symbols tend to appear more often on men’s gravestones, a reflection of the male-oriented nature of the

organization. Prior to the 1940s, masonic symbols appear only on the gravestones of men. In the 1940s, though, they began appearing on women's gravestones in Brownville. As noted in Chapter 3, a second chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star (O.E.S.) was founded in Brownville in 1942 (the first was founded in 1872). Unlike many other masonic orders, the O.E.S. is open to both men and women. In the 1960s and 1970s, masonic symbols were actually more common on women's gravestones than on men's. This new chapter that was established in the mid-twentieth century appears to have appealed to quite a few women in Brownville, a trend which is reflected in the material culture of the cemetery.

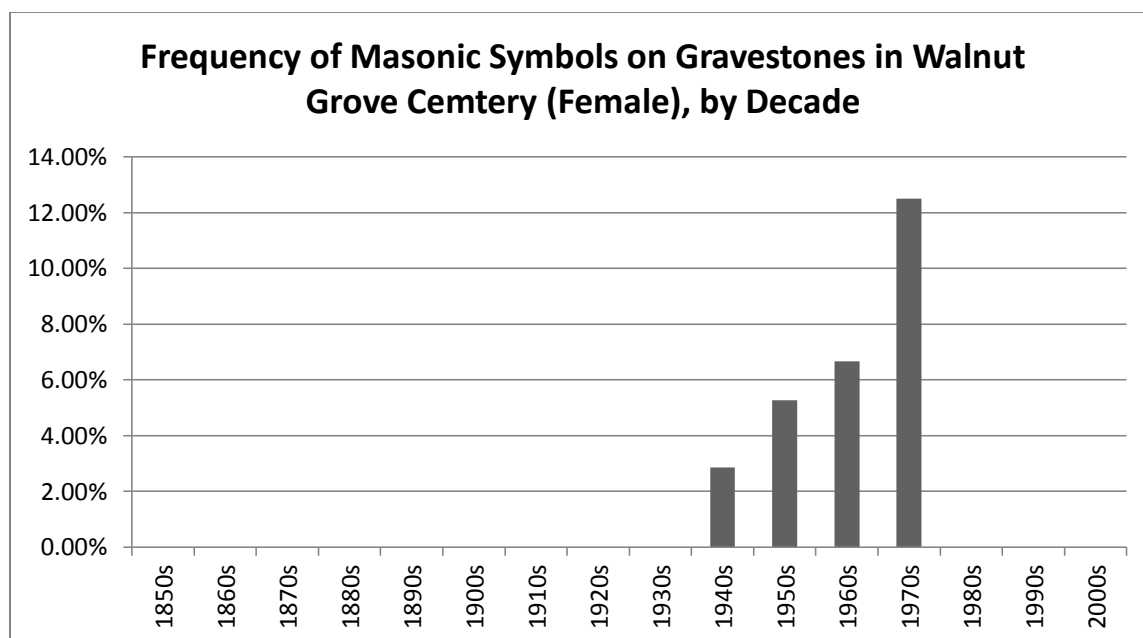


Figure 5.17: Frequency of masonic symbols on women's gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

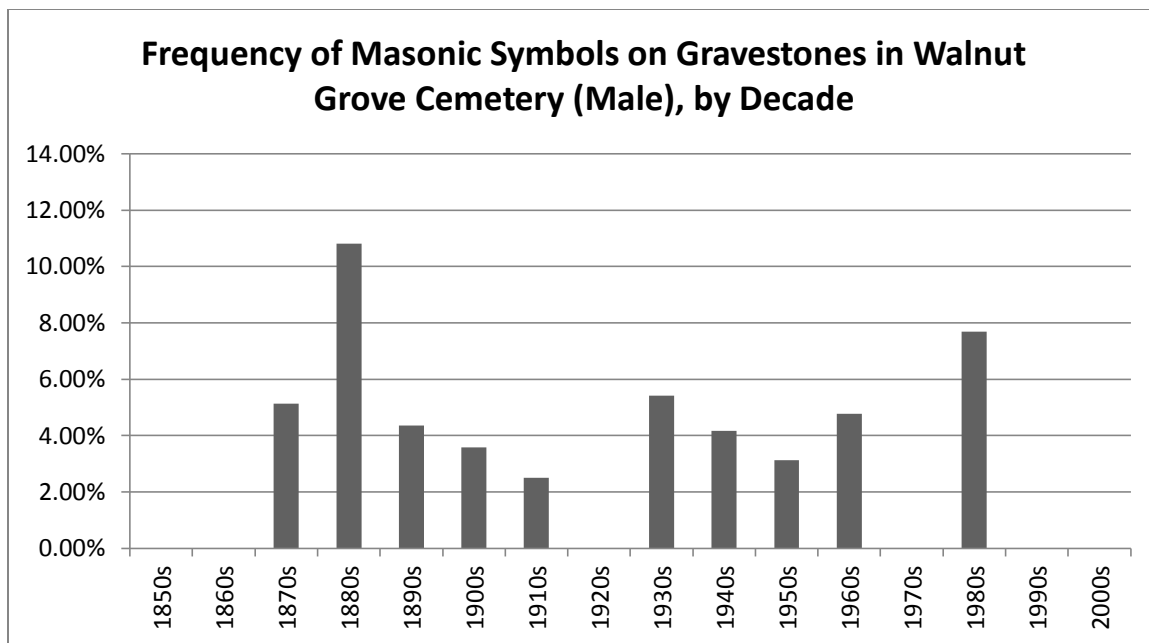


Figure 5.18: Frequency of masonic symbols on men’s gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

Crosses also shifted genders, albeit in a pattern opposite of masonic symbols. Though crosses were not especially common during Phases I and II (1850s-1920s), they appeared on at least one gravestone from each decade from the 1850s through the 1930s (Figures 5.19-5.20). The majority of these examples appear on women’s gravestones through the 1890s, then the symbol gradually begins to appear more on men’s markers. By the 1930s, crosses appeared predominantly on men’s gravestones, largely because the military began providing markers with this image to veterans. In the 1990s, the symbol began appearing regularly on married couples’ gravestones, probably the result of the rise of conservative Christianity and its emphasis on the importance of family that flourished towards the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

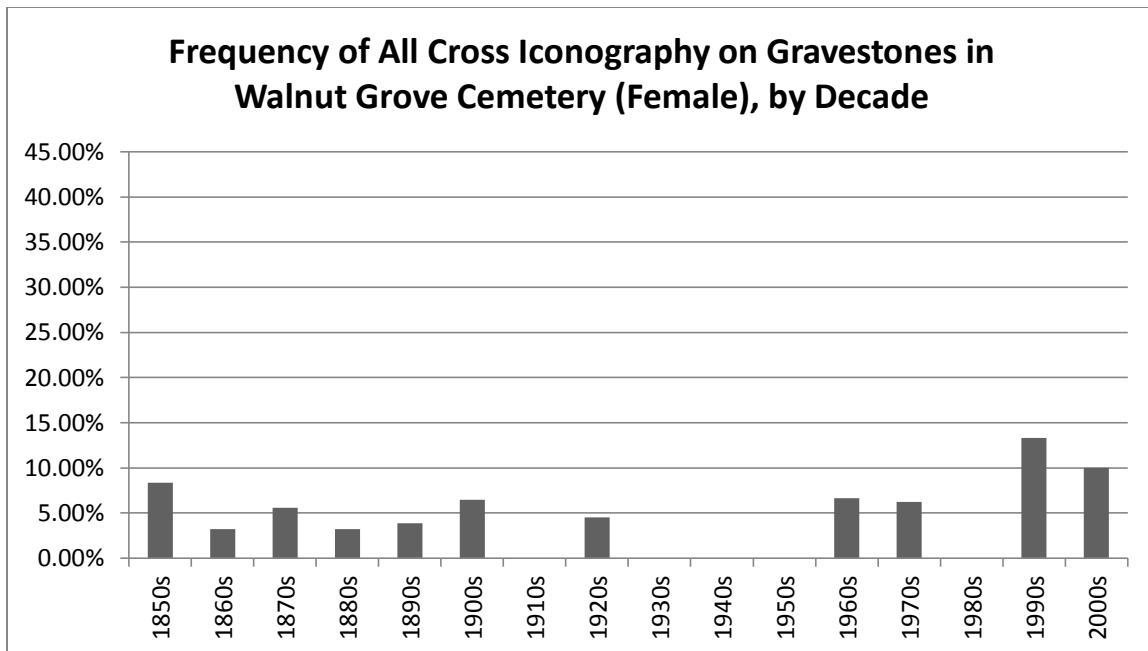


Figure 5.19: Frequency of cross iconography on women’s and girls’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

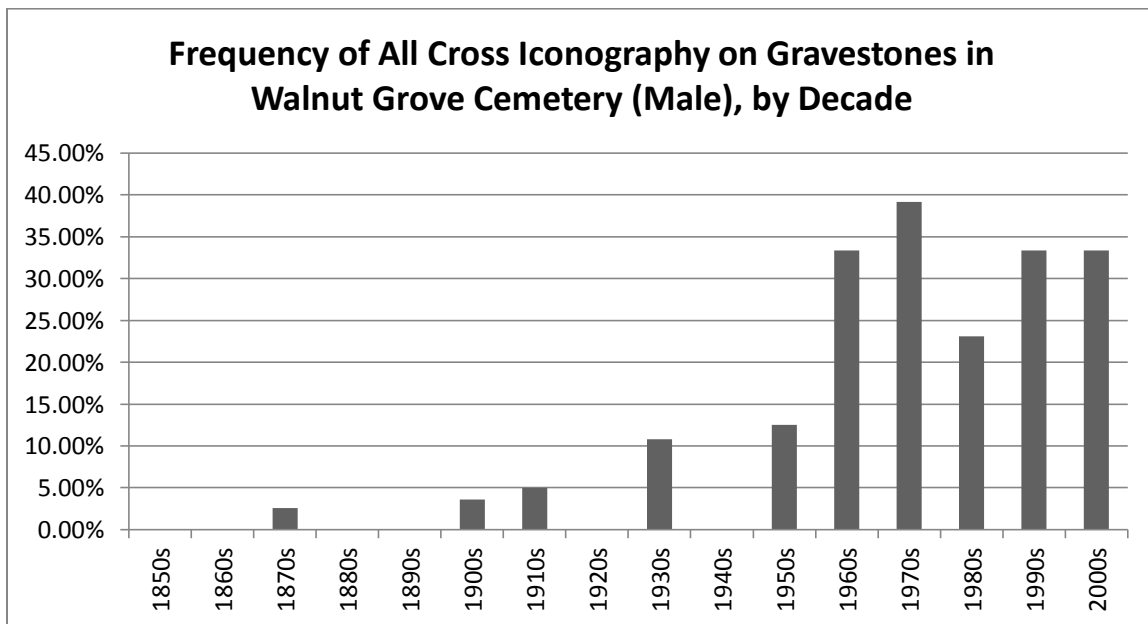


Figure 5.20: Frequency of cross iconography on men’s and boys’ gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

The Victorian woman was perceived as pious, pure, and the “saintly protector” of the (ideally) sacred Christian upper- and middle-class American home (Bendroth 1999:39). It is, therefore, fitting that crosses appeared more frequently on women’s gravestones than men’s during this phase. By the 1920s, however, conservative and fundamentalist forms of Christianity, which had been present, albeit as a very small minority, during the Victorian Era, began first emerging from the shadows of mainstream Protestantism. Fundamentalist Christians made it known that they viewed the (American) man as the superior moral authority, declaring Christianity as a particularly masculine practice (Bendroth 1999:39). By the mid-1940s, some fundamentalist Christians had lifted men to the role of family spiritual leader, while relegating women to submissive roles as household caretakers (Bendroth 1999:41). When conservative Christianity burst into the mainstream in the 1970s, the submissive role of women was well-established, broadly-accepted in conservative circles, and a stark contrast to the coeval Women’s Rights Movement. Early fundamentalist Christian movements (i.e. during the Victorian Era) looked down upon what they considered the idolatrous worship of the house and home among their non-fundamentalist counterparts. And yet, in their struggle to drown out the voices supporting women’s rights, fundamentalist Christians had resorted to distinctly Victorian-sounding support of the sacred nature of the home and role of the family as a refuge from the sins of contemporary society, while maintaining the ultimate authority of the father (Bendroth 1999:39-44). As a result, distinct gender roles have become more openly accepted and, in this case, displayed in the material culture during Phase IV. Conversely, the Women’s Rights Movement may have also influenced gravestone inscriptions in Brownville, a topic which is covered later in this chapter.

The strongest gendered image patterns date to Phase I (1850s-1890s) and Phase IV (1980s-2010s). This is partially a result of the fact that these two phases were also the periods with the greatest variety of images (Figure 5.21). This allowed for greater personalization of gravestones while still following the general cultural trends of the times. Thus, it is not particularly surprising that gravestones dating to Phase II (1900s-1920s) were less likely to have strongly gendered images, because gravestones dating to this period, in general, were less likely to include any images, let alone strongly gendered images (Figure 5.22). Furthermore, though images were not uncommon during Phase III (1930s-1970s), this was the period of lowest diversity of images in Walnut Grove.

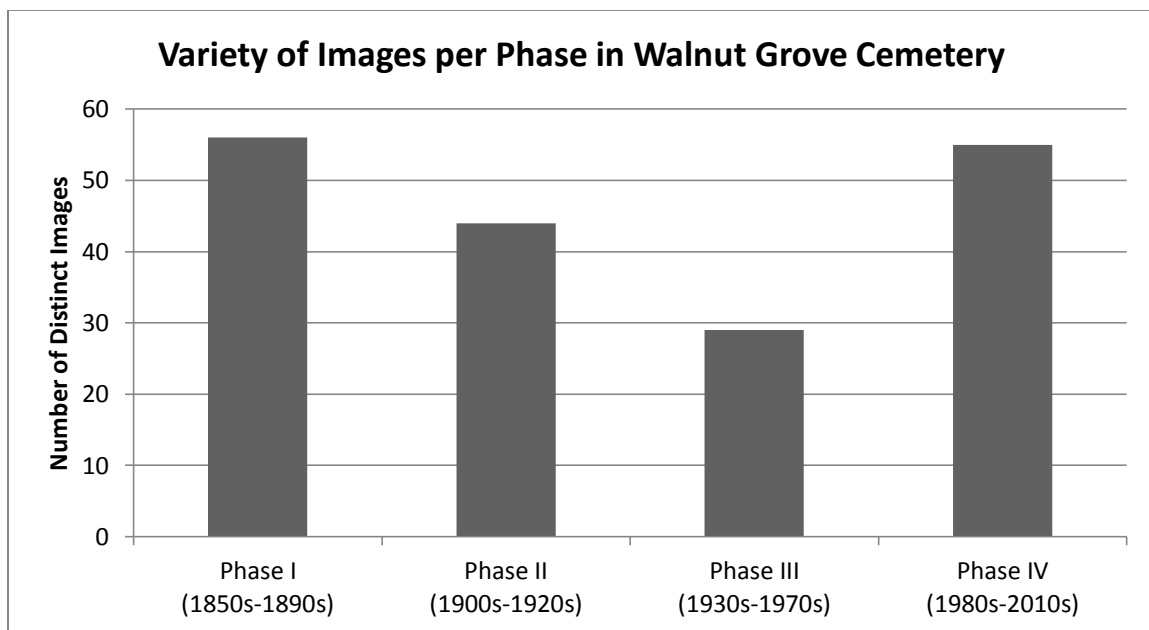


Figure 5.21: Variety of engraved images per phase in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

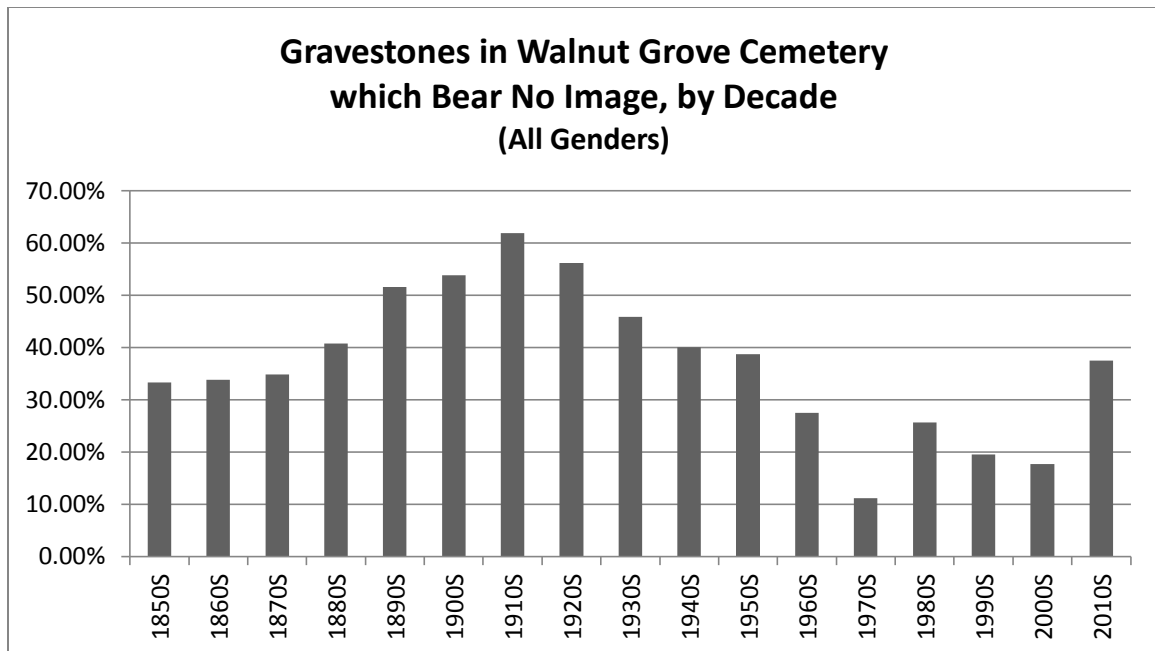


Figure 5.22: Frequency of gravestones with no engraved image in Walnut Grove Cemetery, by decade.

The cultural settings of these periods provided the greatest influences on the gendered iconography on the gravestones. The paucity of imagery that appeared during Phase II was a reflection of the stability and relative prosperity of the Progressive Era, with more families able to purchase higher quality, but difficult-to-carve, granite markers. During Phase III (1930-1970s), as advances in gravestone carving technologies allowed carvers to engrave more detailed imagery on polished granite, the imagery became highly standardized, with the majority of markers bearing nearly-identical depictions of forget-me-nots (Figure 5.23). This standardization and dominance of a single image would appear to leave little room for gendered differences, yet forget-me-nots still appear slightly more often on women's markers dating to this period.

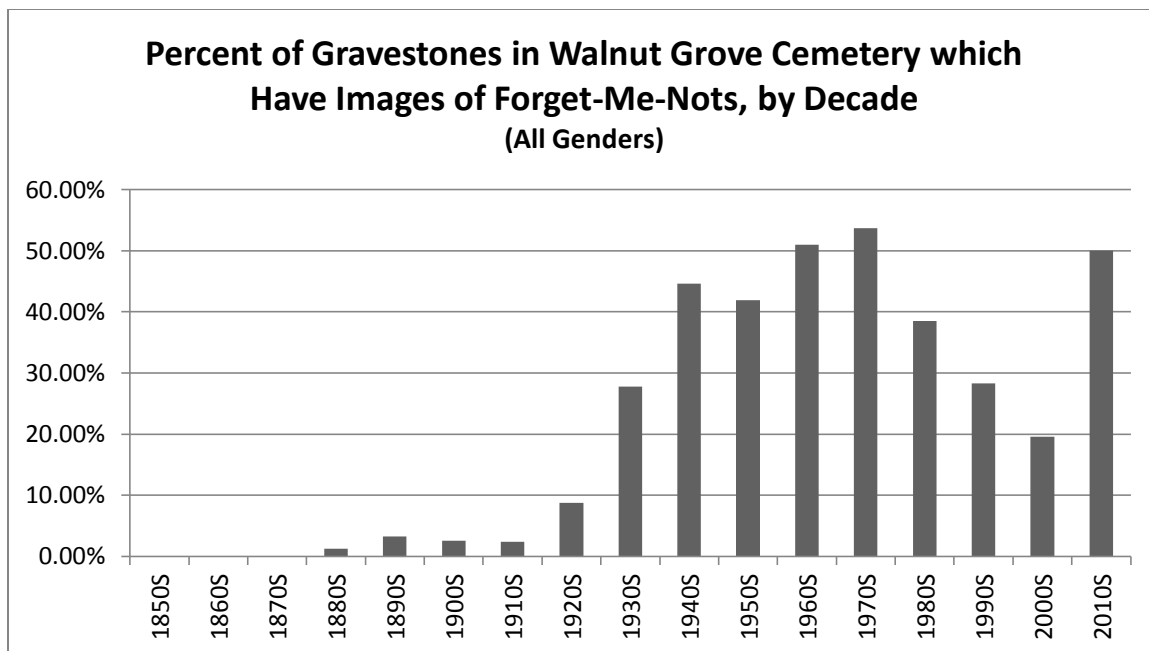


Figure 5.23: Percent of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that have engraved images of forget-me-nots, by decade.

By the last decade of Phase III (the 1970s), however, forget-me-nots were much more common on women’s gravestones than men’s (75% to 26%), signaling a transition to the more distinctly gendered iconography that would arise during Phase IV (1980s-present). At first, this may appear surprising, in light of the feminist movements of the 1960s through 1980s. Cotter et al (2011), however, have noted that the increasing liberalization of gender roles began slowing in the mid-1990s. The changes, they contend, do not correlate well with either “changes in American social structure nor to broader changes in social ideology” (Cotter et al 2011:282). Rather, the stagnation of the liberalization of gender ideals correspond to a period when more women were arguing for the right to choose whether or not to participate in the workforce, maintaining their right to stay home if they chose—not if the decision was made for them (Cotter et al 2011:283-

284). Intensive mothering, which involved making sacrifices for the well-being and success of one's child(ren), developed during the 1990s and stood in marked contrast to the earlier ideal of the business suit-wearing career woman who sacrificed her family life for (supposed) equality with her male counterparts (Cotter et al 2011:285). Furthermore, some women argued that the choice to stay at home benefitted their own mental health, removing them from the stress of the workplace, as well as from the struggles that resulted at home from the demands of one's career (Cotter et al 2011:285).

By Phase IV (1980-present), gravestone iconography became more diverse, as the new technologies allowed for great personalization of markers. Combined with an increased emphasis on personal identity in American culture, this resulted in a wide variety of images, including religious and secular, appearing on gravestones. Forget-me-nots, which had been popular on both men's and women's gravestones, began appearing more commonly on women's markers. Roses, angels, and hearts all became markedly more common on women's gravestones, while crosses began appear more commonly on men's. This return to clearly gendered iconography may reflect not only the rise of conservative Christianity, but also the deceleration of gender role liberalization in the United States.

Several words and phrases that display temporal patterns in the Brownville cemetery also display markedly gendered patterns, particularly on women's and girls' gravestones. Gravestones marking female burials are much more likely overall to include descriptions of their relationships to survivors (Figure 5.24). This includes inscriptions such as 'sister,' 'wife of,' and 'mother.' This is not to say that inscriptions of the masculine counterparts to these terms do not appear. In fact, the term 'daughter of'

displays the weakest pattern of the female-gendered relationship terms. The term 'son of' actually appears quite often, particularly in the first two decades of the cemetery's existence, though this may simply result from the small sample size (Figure 5.25). In the 1850s, of the four burials that could be identified as men or boys, one gravestone marks the burial of 'George Washington Alderman, Son of Jacob and [Lucy Ann?] Alderman.' While the small sample size may make the results misleading, only one of the twelve gravestones marking female burials from the 1850s identifies the decedent as 'Aldora, daughter of Ben and Julia Rodgers.' The trend continued in the 1860s, with gravestones marking sixteen out of thirty-two (fifty percent) male burials identifying the individuals as a 'son of' his parents. Only eleven gravestones (just over thirty-four percent) marking female burials from the same decade display the phrase 'daughter of.' This trend reversed quickly, however, with twenty-two percent of female gravestones exhibiting the phrase in the 1870s, compared to just over 20.5 percent of male gravestones. Overall, these two phrases varied quite frequently in their popularity, though 'daughter of' appears sporadically, but in higher frequencies than 'son of' from the 1960s on.

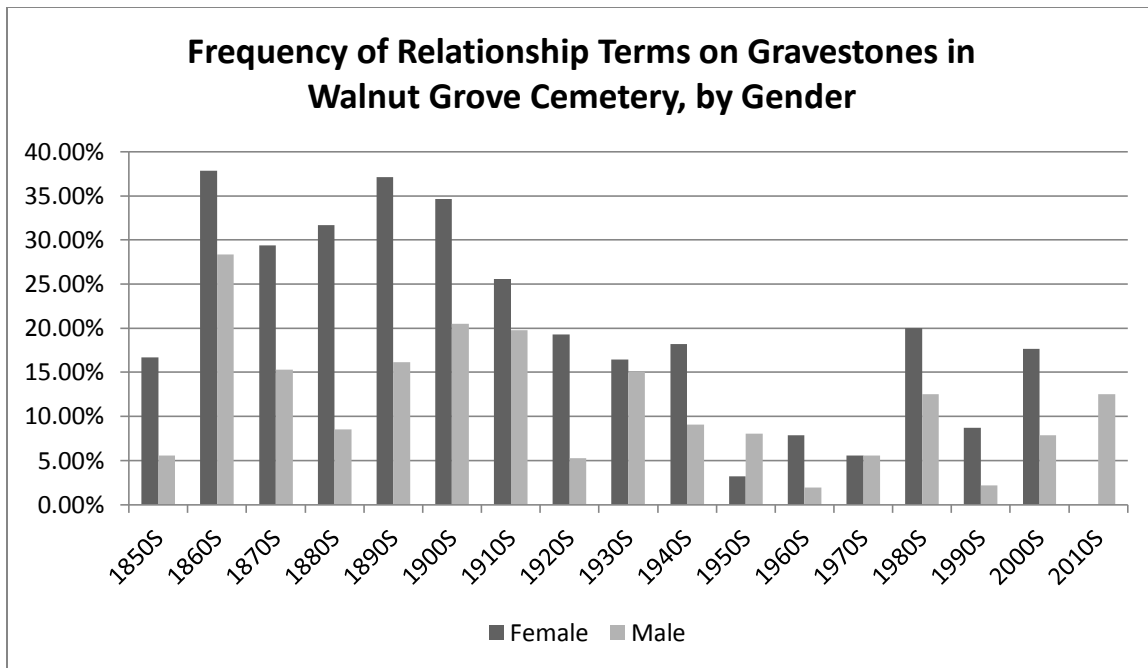


Figure 5.24: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut grove Cemetery that include inscriptions of relationships of the deceased, by decade.

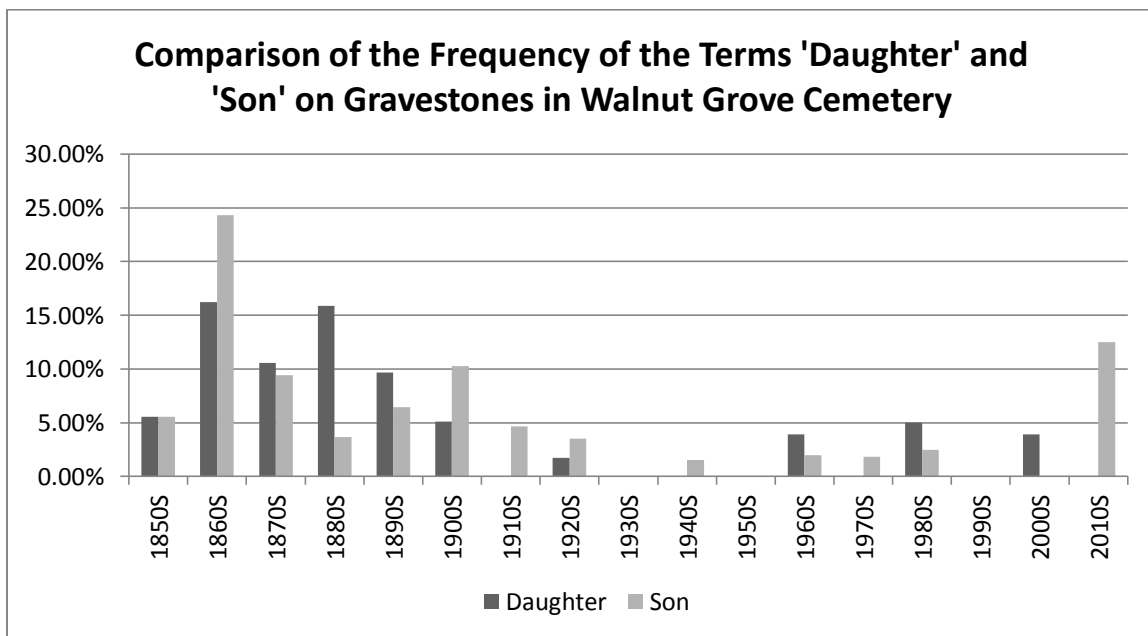


Figure 5.25: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut grove Cemetery that include the terms ‘daughter’ or ‘son,’ by decade.

While both ‘mother’ and ‘father’ display strong temporal patterns, an underlying gendered pattern also exists (Figure 5.26-5.27). Both descriptives exhibited a peak in the 1910s, but ‘mother’ again surged in popularity during Phase III (1970s to present). Additionally, it has almost always been more common for a gravestone to include the word ‘mother’ than the word ‘father.’ The pattern is just as pronounced when one includes all of the gravestones in the analysis, and not just the single-gendered burials (Figures 5.28-5.29). This implies that, even after the Victorian period and before Phase III, two periods characterized by distinct gender ideals, being a mother has always been an important aspect of a woman’s identity, even more so than being a father.

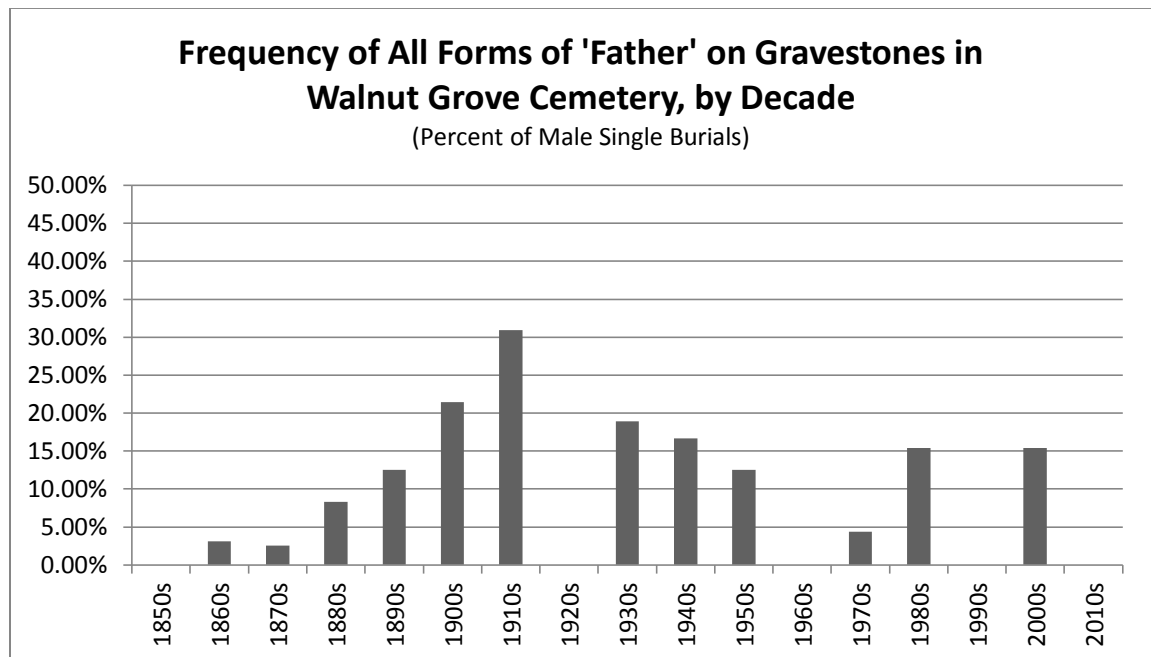


Figure 5.26: Percentage of gravestones marking single burials in Walnut grove Cemetery that include the term ‘father,’ ‘dad,’ or ‘daddy,’ by decade.

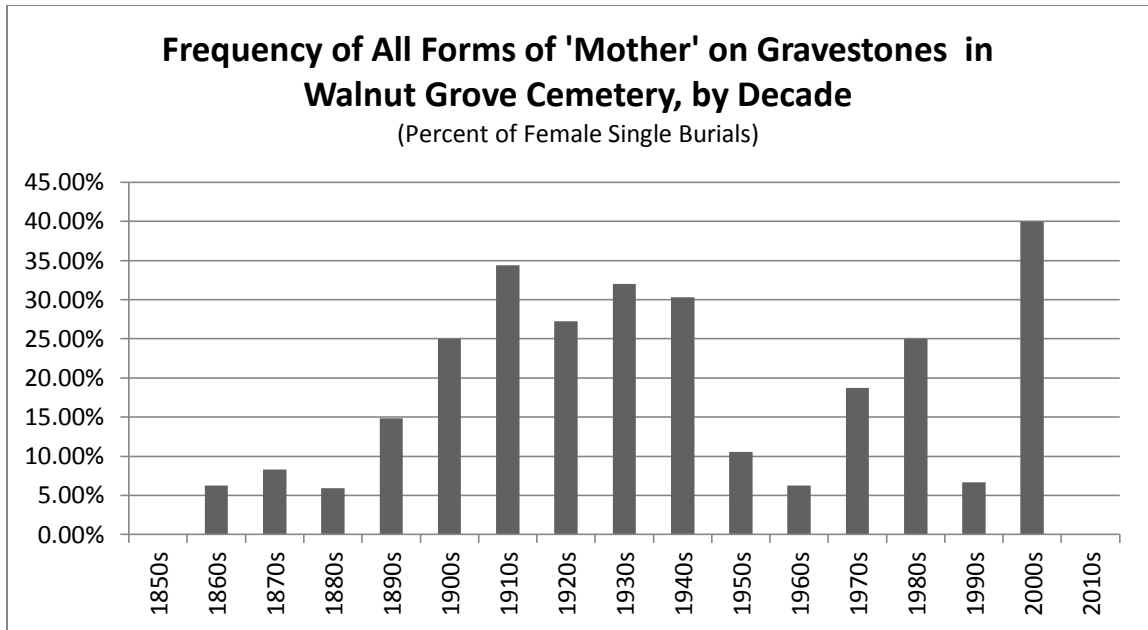


Figure 5.27: Percentage of gravestones marking single burials in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term 'mother' or 'mom,' by decade.

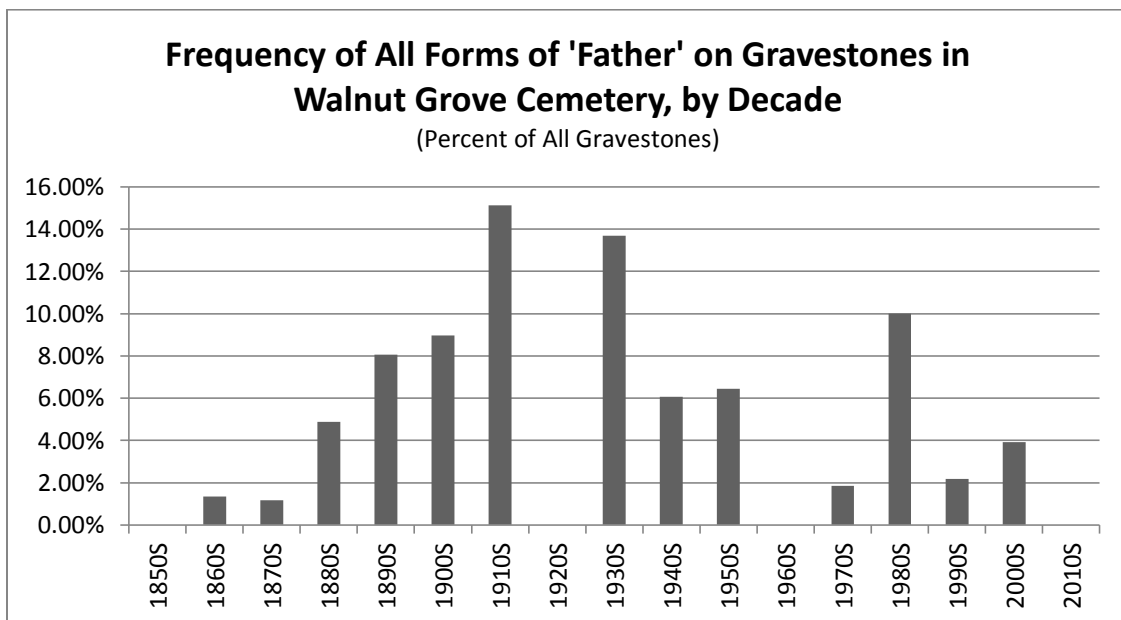


Figure 5.28: Percentage of all gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term 'father,' 'dad,' or 'daddy,' by decade.

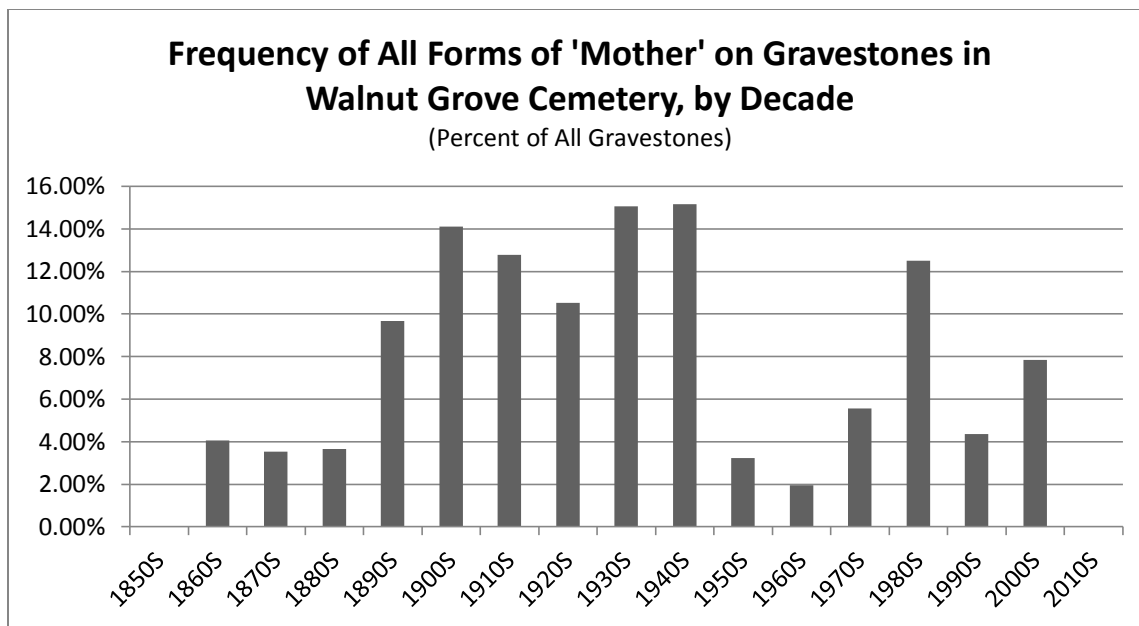


Figure 5.29: Percentage of all gravestones in Walnut grove Cemetery that include the term ‘mother’ or ‘mom,’ by decade.

The most strongly gendered textual pattern in Brownville is use of the term ‘wife’ (including the title ‘Mrs.’) compared to ‘husband’ (Figures 5.30-5.33). ‘Husband’ appears just nine times on Brownville’s gravestones. ‘Wife,’ on the other hand, appears on 80 gravestones. ‘Husband’ occurs so rarely, one may interpret this near-absence as a sign that identity as part of a married couple has been more important for women than for men. The trend of using a single marker for married couples (and not for an entire family, as was common during Phase I), which began in earnest in the 1980s, at first made it appear that identity as part of a married couple was equally important to men and women. No pattern exists for the order of names; some husbands’ names are inscribed on the left, some are to the right. However, the frequency of the terms ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ suggests that the identity as a wife has been more important for women’s personal identity in Brownville than the self-identification of a man as a husband.

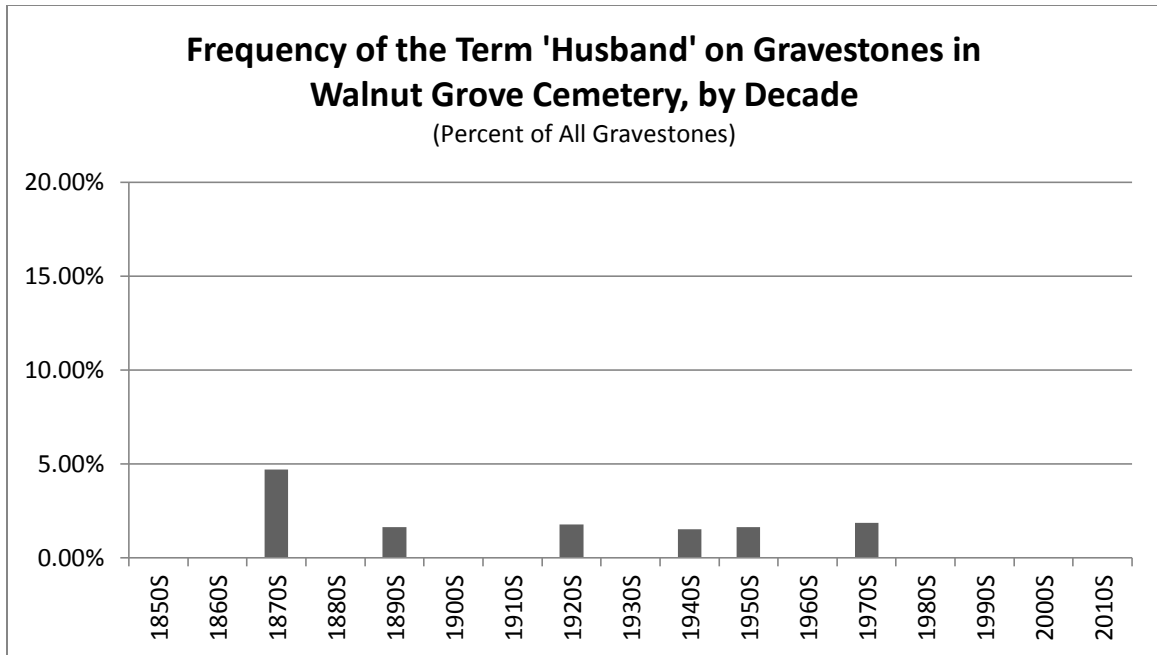


Figure 5.30: Percentage of all gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term 'husband,' by decade.

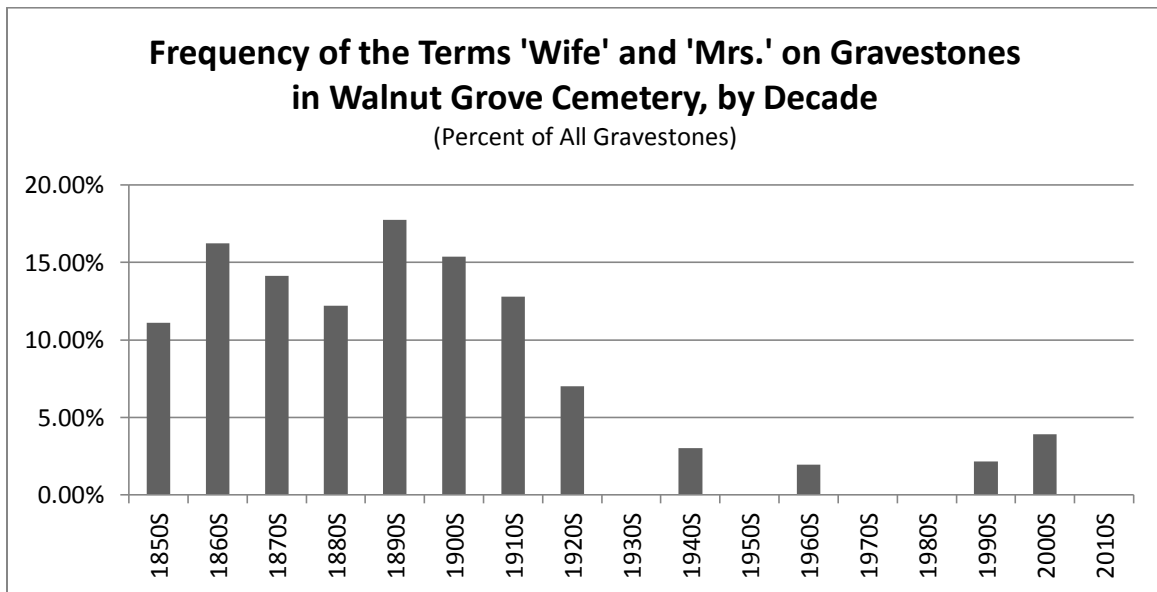


Figure 5.31: Percentage of all gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term 'wife' or 'Mrs.,' by decade.

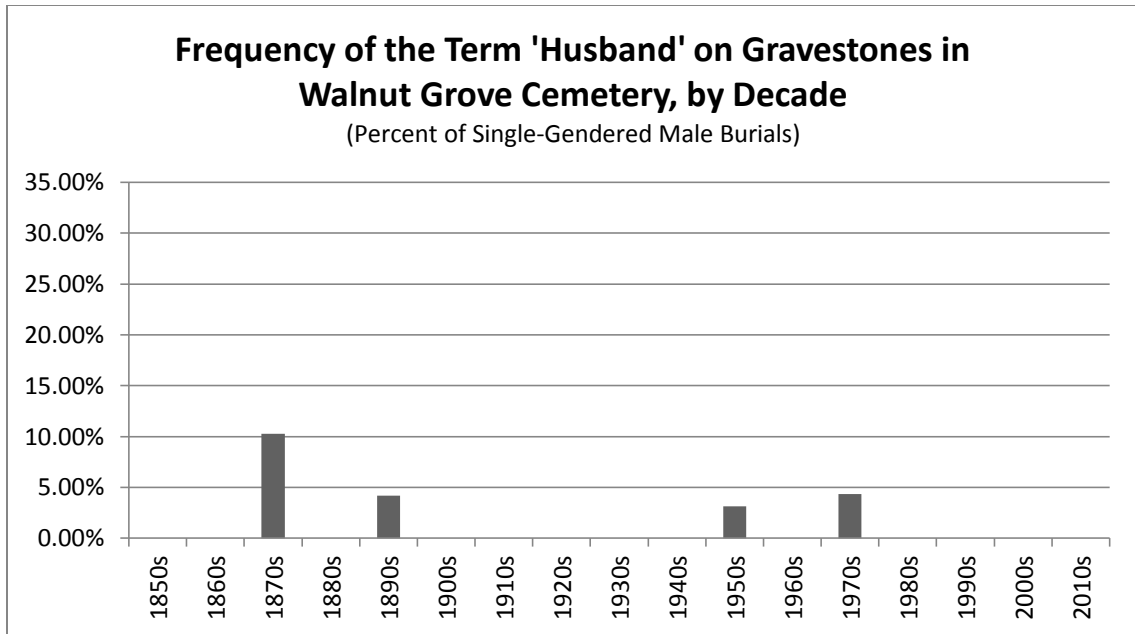


Figure 5.32: Percentage of gravestones marking single burials in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term ‘husband,’ by decade.

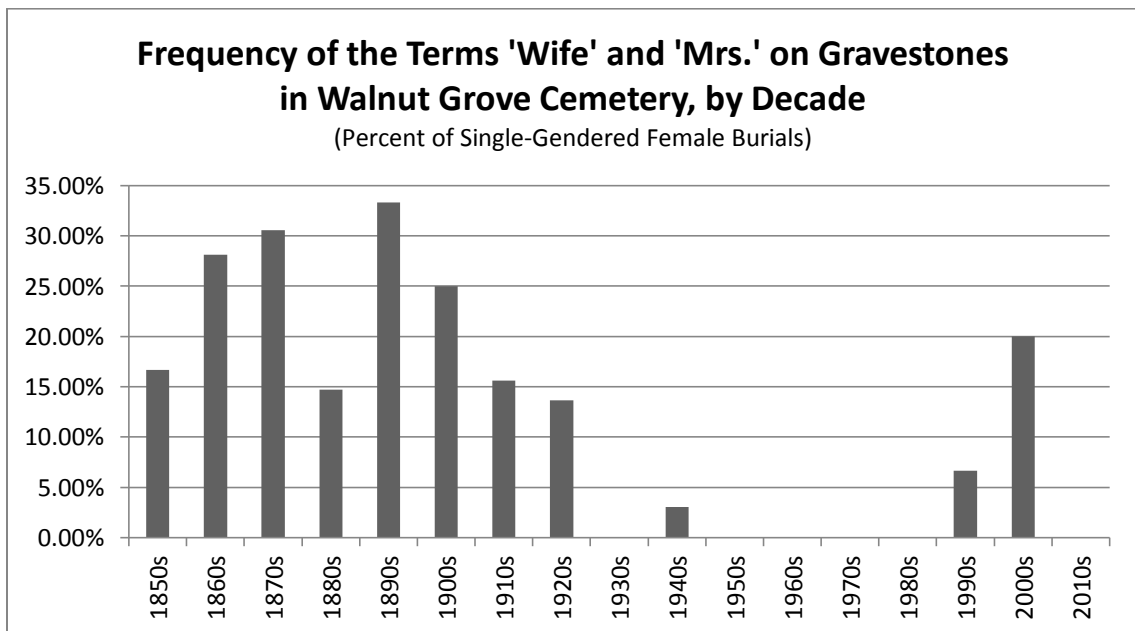


Figure 5.33: Percentage of gravestones marking single burials in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include the term ‘wife’ or ‘Mrs.,’ by decade.

The remaining gendered wordings vary depending on time period. References to sleep or rest tend to appear more often on women's markers during Phase I (1850s-1920s), but they do not dominate either gender during later periods (Figure 5.34). References to meeting again also tend to appear on women's gravestones more often during Phase I, though they stop appearing on women's gravestones after the 1890s (Figure 5.35). In general, these two categories of phrases fell out of fashion after Phase I, as overall allusions to eternal life and public mourning decreased in popularity.

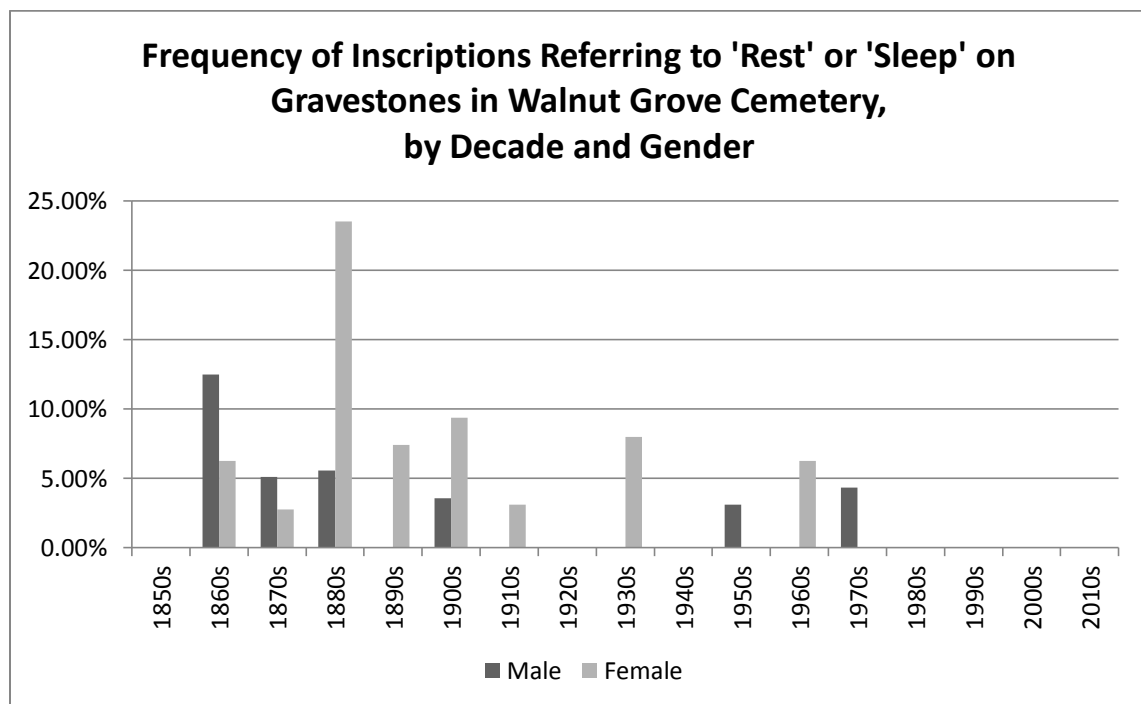


Figure 5.34: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that refer to 'sleep' or 'rest,' by decade and gender.

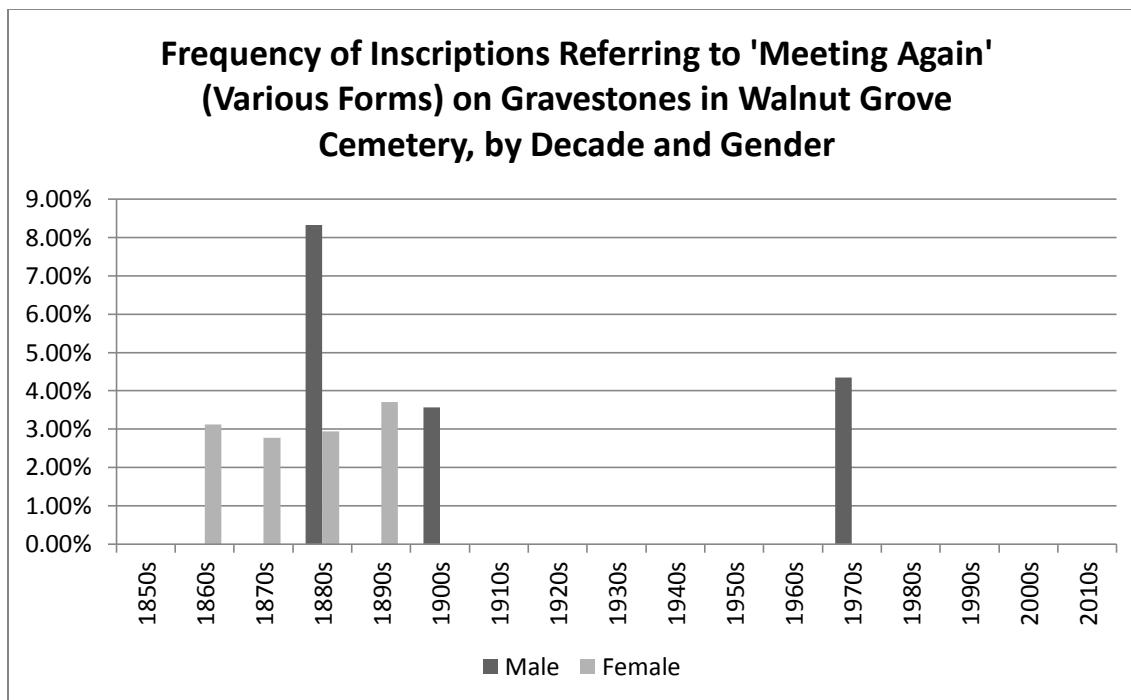


Figure 5.35: Percentage of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that refer to ‘any form of ‘meeting again,’ by decade and gender.

References to mourning or grief appear only on gravestones marking male burials (Figure 5.36). While the frequency is not high, the fact that such phrases only appear on male gravestones and only during Phase I is notable. The high death rate of the period leading up to the turn of the twentieth century significantly influenced concepts of death and methods of mourning. All of these individuals were adults at the times of their deaths, and all of the inscriptions are rather long epitaphs that dwell on the sadness and difficulty brought by the person’s passing. For example, Benjamin Thomas’s (1864-1906) gravestone includes the following epitaph:

*A faithful friend, a husband dear
And a loving father kind and near
He has left this world of care and pain
And gone to heaven in peace to reign*

*The cup was bitter
 The sting severe
 To part with one we loved so dear
 The trial was hard
 We'll not complain
 But trust in Christ to meet again*

Because the loss of an adult male member of the family generally heralded the loss of economic stability for a family, the dramatic and detailed descriptions of loss are present on their gravestones are not especially surprising. As women left without husbands (and children who lost fathers) had fewer options for employment and income, the loss of an adult male member of a family could be devastating to his dependent survivors, which is reflected, albeit subtly, in the material culture of Walnut Grove.

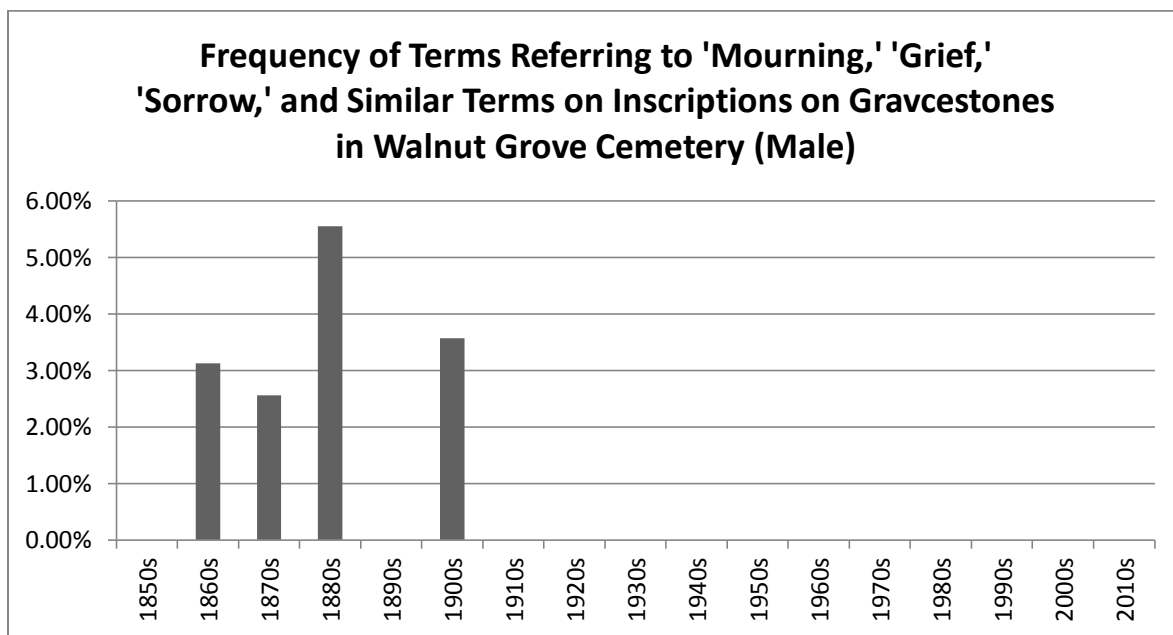


Figure 5.36: Percentage of gravestones that include a reference to some form of ‘grief,’ ‘mourning,’ or ‘sorrow,’ by decade. All of these examples occur on gravestones marking the burials of men.

References to remembering or memory were more common on male gravestones during Phase I (1850s-1920s), but the pattern reversed during Phase III, becoming more common on female gravestones in the 1990s and 2000s (Figure 5.37). The trend toward male gravestones during Phase I may also highlight the important role that men played within the family, even if their ideal role was as a ‘bread-winner’ working outside the home. Regardless of their gendered sphere outside of the home, that role was necessary for the well-being of their family and, once they were no longer fulfilling that role, they left a void within their families. The rise in popularity of the phrase on individual women’s gravestones may shadow the increased identity that women derived from (or were expected to derive from) their expanded roles within their families in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. That the phrases do not appear on men’s gravestones during Phase III may suggest that women have come to be viewed as the axes of their families.

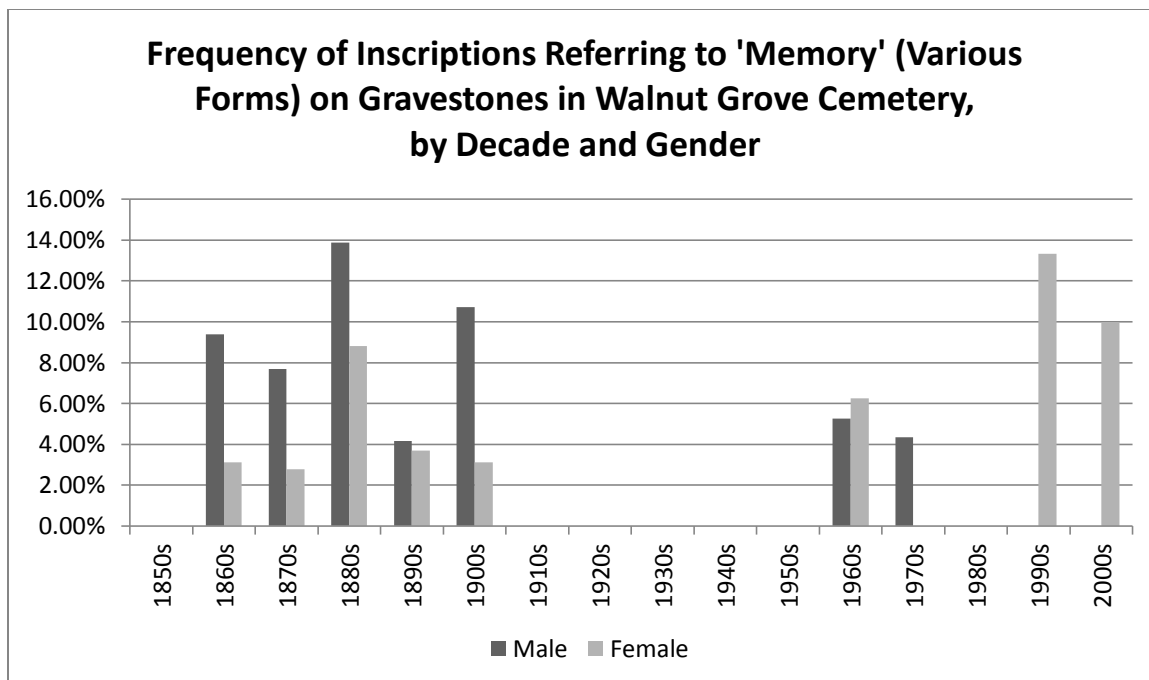


Figure 5.37: Percentage of Gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include references to ‘memory’ (including remembrance). Note that the 2010s are not included in this chart because the single female burial from that decade included an inscription that referred to memory, thus distorting the results from prior decades.

As with the military imagery, military inscriptions unsurprisingly appear only on men’s gravestones in Brownville (Figure 5.38). None of these individuals appear to have died in combat. The highest frequencies occur on gravestones dating to the 1960s and later, and the majority of these men served in either World War I or World War II, though a handful of Korean War veterans and one Vietnam veteran are also present. Earlier conflicts represented in inscriptions from the 1870s through the 1950s include veterans of the Mexican War, the Blackhawk War, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. The increased frequency of military information on gravestones from the 1960s and later likely reflects the larger numbers of troops who fought in the later

conflicts (i.e. nearly five million served [worldwide] during World War I, more than sixteen million [worldwide] during World War II, nearly two million [in-theater] in Korea, and more than three million [in-theater] in Vietnam) (Department of Veteran's Affairs 2013:1).

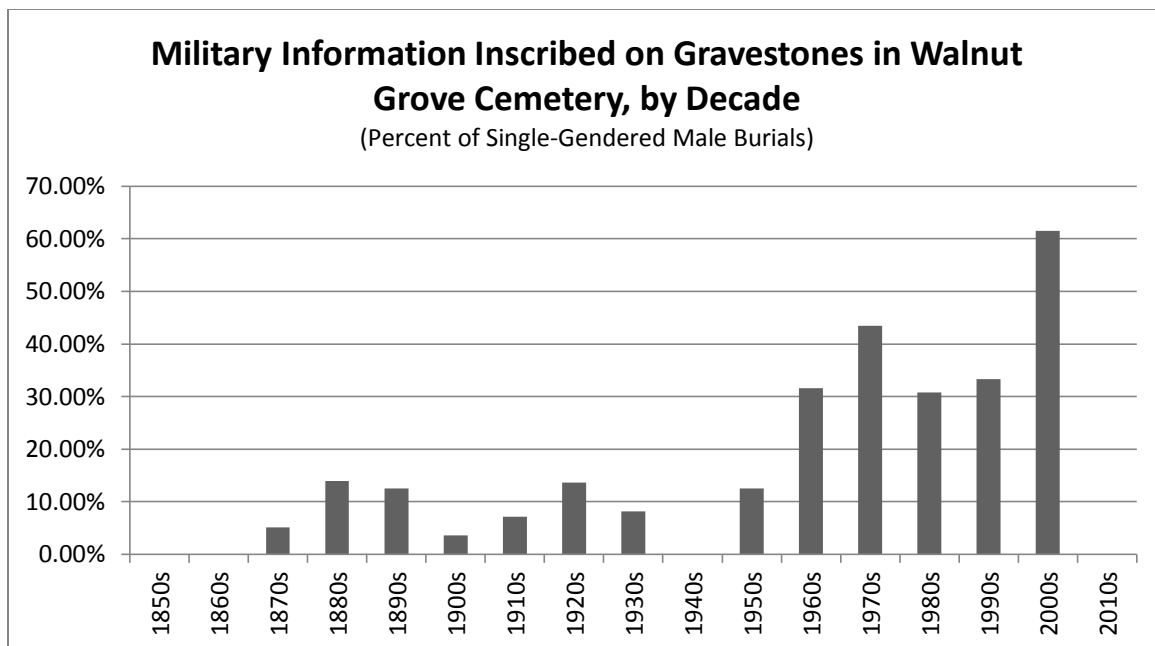


Figure 5.38: Percent of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that include inscriptions of military information.

Much like the patterns identified above between gender and imagery, the strongest relationships between wording and gender appear in the first few and the last few decades of Walnut Grove's use. Part of this again stems from the tendency for markers from Phase II (1930s-1960s) to have no inscriptions other than basic statistics (Figure 5.39). The trend may also reflect a more recent turn towards more distinct and strongly-gendered ideals. The increased frequency of couples' burials beginning in 1980

may also skew the results somewhat, as they have not been included in many of these analyses because of the inability to attribute engravings to one gender or another. At the same time, though, this emphasizes the increased importance placed on identity as a couple, particularly for women. The predominance of words like ‘mother,’ ‘wife,’ and ‘Mrs.’ compared to their male counterparts indicates that women’s idealized gender roles, particularly during Phases I and III, continue to play principal roles in the formation of identity in Brownville.

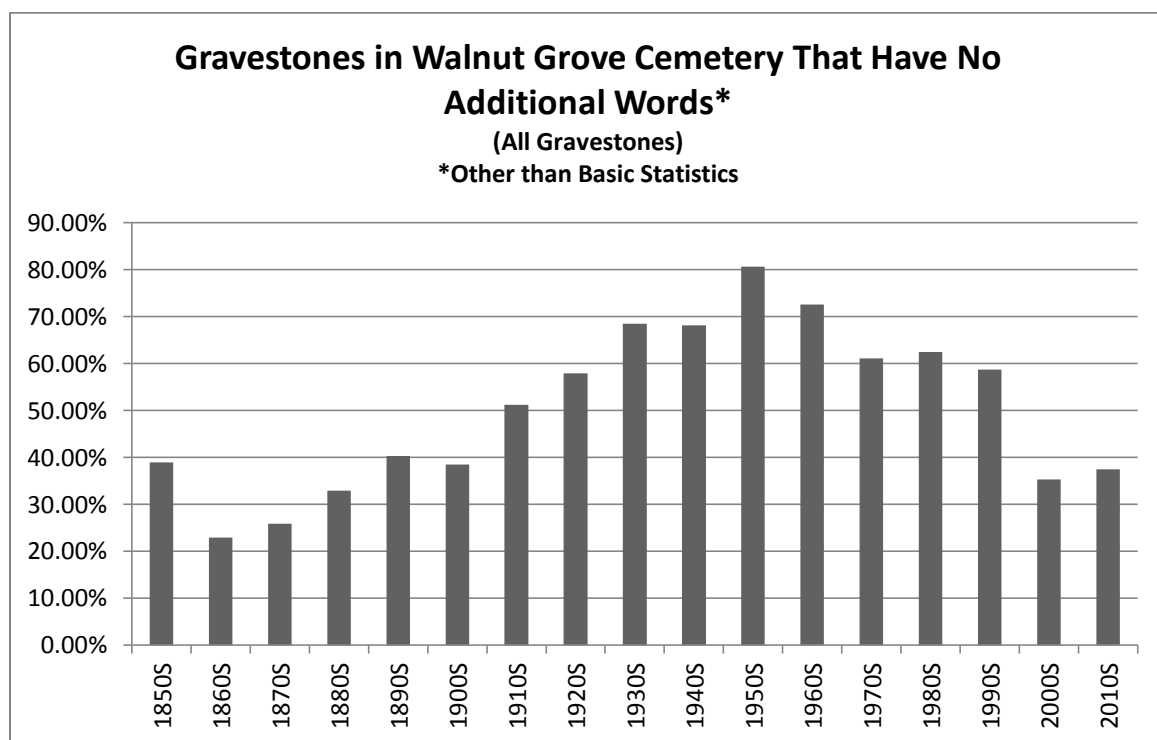


Figure 5.39: Percent of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery that have no additional inscriptions beyond basic statistical information.

Race

Compared to gender, concepts of race in Brownville have proven more difficult to analyze. U.S. Federal Census data provide racial identifications, but several problems exist. Race is not an exact, unchanging identification and can be very fluid. Additionally, it is unclear if the racial identifications recorded in the Census were made by the individuals themselves, or assigned by the Census recorder, who may often have had a very different perspective on the topic than did the persons whom he was enumerating. Furthermore, Patrick Kennedy (2001:22) has highlighted some of the apparent accounting errors in the census, noting that several individuals known to have been living in Brownville in 1880 do not appear on the census, even though their parents and siblings are listed.

Brownville reportedly had a fairly large African-American population during the town's early history, due to its location across the river from Missouri, a slave state. When Richard Brown founded and settled in Brownville, he brought a small number of slaves with him. During the Civil War, Brown faced aggression by anti-slavery activists and, as a result of this and the loss of much of his property by the river's shifting flow, he soon left town (taking his slaves with him) (Kennedy 2001:12). Brownville residents appear to have been predominately anti-slavery, though there was at least one other slave-owning resident besides Brown, the land office register Colonel George H. Nixon. By the end of the war, however, Richard Brown and Colonel Nixon were gone and, apparently, so was slavery in Brownville. After the war, several African-Americans settled in and around Brownville, and two African-American churches were created, one

Baptist and one African Episcopal Methodist (Kennedy 2001:16-17; Manley 1979: 18-19, 20).

There exists an account of three or four (accounts vary) escaped slaves from Missouri who ended up in a confrontation with several Brownville residents in 1857, resulting in the death of one resident, the severe wounding of one of the slaves, and the escape of the others. Several Missouri residents soon arrived in Brownville, wanting to bring the wounded slave back to their state, presumably to collect a \$100 bounty. Brownville's sheriff purportedly refused to hand the man over, and the standoff continued throughout the night. In the morning, the angry mob diffused, and the black man was allowed to stay in Brownville. John Brown, the Kansas abolitionist, was reportedly stationed south of town with more than two dozen armed men, presumably to prevent a lynching. Their involvement appears to have been unnecessary, as the situation calmed once the slave's owner refused to take him back due the severity of his injuries. John Brown's presence in the area has led many to believe that Brownville may have served as a station in the Underground Railroad, helping southern slaves escape to the north and thus secure their freedom (Keim 1887:110).

Oral traditions suggest that as many as twenty black families may have lived in the area during the late nineteenth century, though the number was more likely in the mid-teens (Kennedy 2001:15). The two predominately African-American churches existed alongside Brownville's numerous other churches, some of which had mixed-race congregations (Kennedy 2001:15). Historical photos show rather large groups gathered at these churches to celebrate various holidays and other celebrations (Figure 5.40). While a handful of early settlers, including Richard Brown, the town's founder, and George

Nixon, the federal land office register, owned a few slaves, the practice quickly ceased and Brownville became a haven for several freed, escaped, and escaping slaves (Kennedy 2001:12; Rich 1887:96). Photographs of schoolchildren, however, do not seem to reflect as much racial diversity as do the church photographs (Figures 5.41-5.42)



Figure 5.40: Photo of church members at a baptism (or baptisms) at the river, Brownville, 1890. Photo reproduced with permission from the Brownville Historical Society.



Figure 5.41: Photo of Brownville schoolchildren, unknown date. Photo reproduced with permission from the Brownville Historical Society.



Figure 5.42: Brownville schoolchildren, unknown date. Photo reproduced with permission from the Brownville Historical Society

Patrick Kennedy (2001:17) noted that there was not a separate section for African-Americans within Walnut Grove Cemetery, and that burial records do not list race. Analysis of Census data has also yielded limited results, and the majority of the individuals identified as African-American in the Census do not appear to be buried in Walnut Grove, or at least not in currently marked graves.

Census data and, occasionally, other similar but non-Census data, such as military records, were used to identify the races of as many individuals as possible, with the

acknowledgement that such a task is exceptionally difficult. The racial identifications of 605 individuals were made with a reasonable degree of confidence. Using ArcMap 10.1, the author plotted the locations of all 1,224 gravestones, and then joined the shapefiles with an Excel spreadsheet that included racial identifications obtained from the US Census and other similar historical documents, as well as the names and dates of death, when available. Using the software, African-American and Native American burials were highlighted and then spatially (visually) analyzed. The GIS file was exported as an image, which is included here as Figure 5.43. Additionally, another GIS file was created to illustrate the decade to which each burial dates (Figure 5.44). This latter image (Figure 5.44) shows that earlier burials were primarily concentrated in the central and eastern portion of the cemetery. As time passed, newer burials were placed in the spaces between older burials and, eventually, more individuals were buried in the southwestern portion of the cemetery (Figures 5.45-5.47).

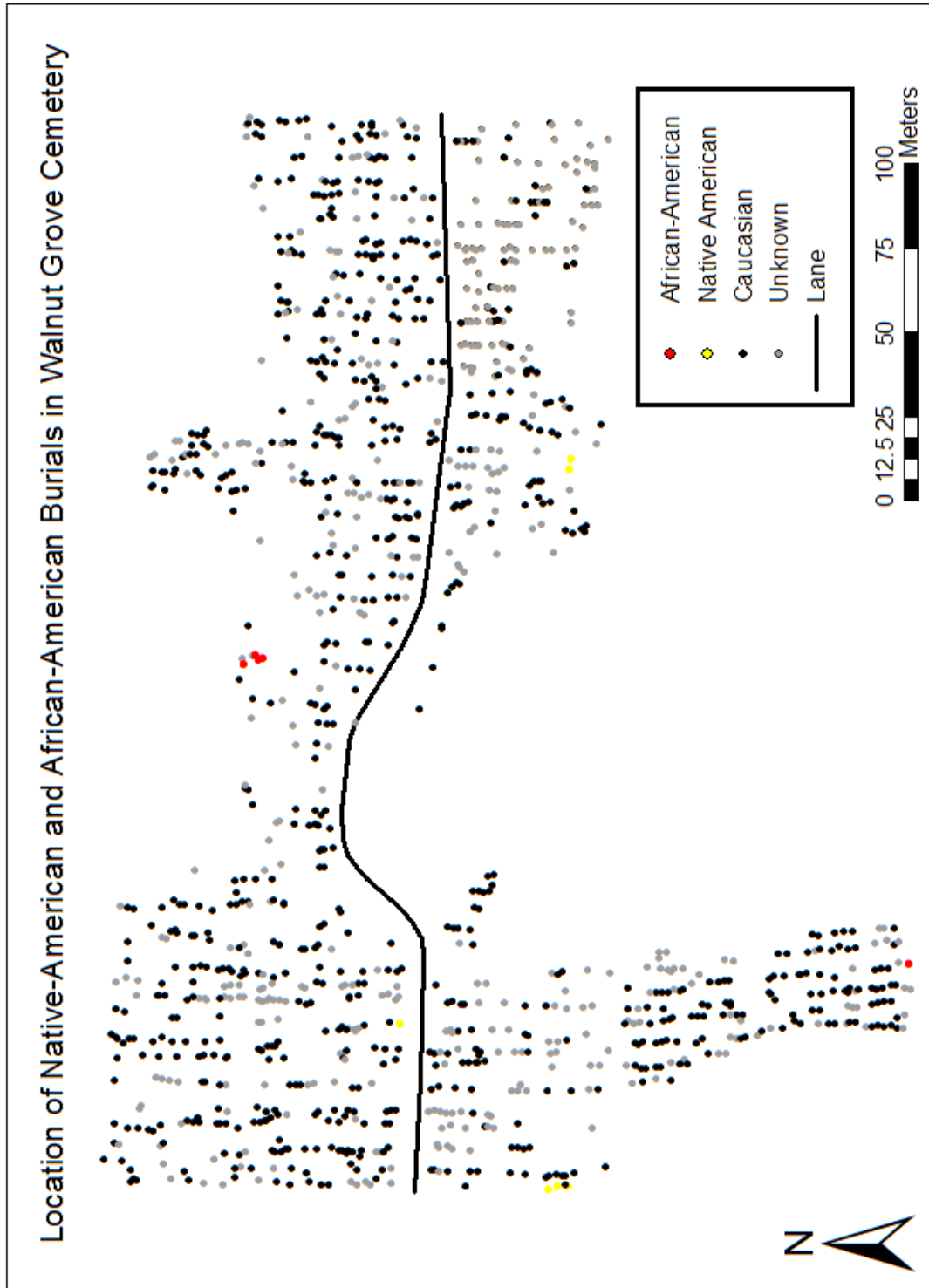


Figure 5.43: locations of confirmed Native-American and African-American burials in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

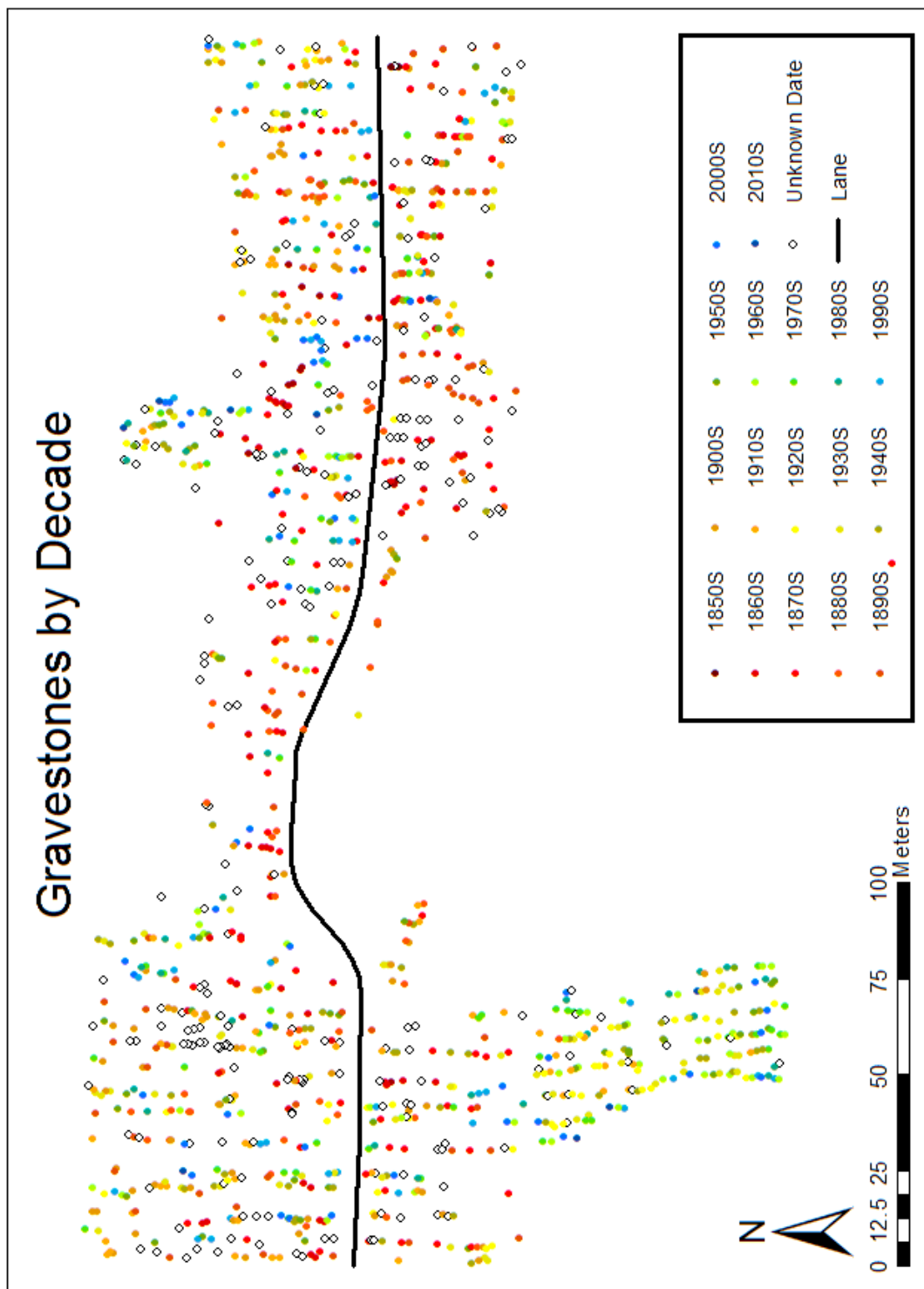


Figure 5.44: Spatial and temporal distribution of gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 5.45: Overview of Walnut Grove Cemetery from the eastern edge.



Figure 5.46: Overview of Walnut Grove Cemetery, facing west-southwest, view of the westernmost curve in the lane.



Figure 5.47: Overview of Walnut Grove Cemetery from the main gate at the western end, looking east. The Barada family plot is a few meters south of the stone column on the right side of this image.

The African-American burials are clustered in one main family group on a steep slope in the north-central edge of the cemetery, with a double-burial (Harriette F. Greene and Mary Alice Stewart) from the same extended family located on the far southwestern edge. All of these individuals were buried near the outer edges of the cemetery, which may at first appear to suggest informal racial segregation. However, further inspection reveals that the graves in the southwest portion of the cemetery are much newer, as are the burials of Harriette F. Greene and Mary Alice Stewart. The remainder of the Greene

family was buried between the 1880s and the 1950s, in an area of the cemetery with many older burials. Harriette's maternal grandfather, Lewis Martin, who served in Company E of the 17th Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War, is buried near this cluster (Figure 5.48). Lewis's wife, Esther, may be buried just north of Lewis, though this is unconfirmed (Kennedy 2001:22).



Figure 5.48: Lewis Martin's gravestone

While it is true that this portion of the cemetery includes many older burials, it is the topography of this family plot that is particularly intriguing. The Martin/Greene family plot is not only located at the very edge of the cemetery, but it is also located on a steep slope in one of the lowest-lying areas of the cemetery (Figures 5.49-5.50). This location is one of the more difficult portions of the cemetery to access and must be subject to significant amounts of rainwater runoff, as well as potential erosion. It is unclear whether the Martin/Greene family came to be buried in this plot by chance or if the location is the result of either informal racial or economic segregation.



Figure 5.49: The Martin/Greene family burial plot (near the tree line in the center of the image) in Walnut Grove Cemetery is located in one of the lowest-lying areas on a steep slope.



Figure 5.50: The Martin/Greene family burial plot in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

The small sample size makes it extremely difficult to draw any conclusions from the spatial distribution of African-American burials in Walnut Grove. The small sample size does raise the question, however: where were the African-Americans who lived in or near Brownville buried? It is possible that, since a handful of families appear to have lived on farms in the area, the families may have buried their deceased in family plots on private land, a practice not uncommon in rural areas. Some of the individuals who appear in photographs may have been simply passing through the town, stopping for a year or so on their ways west, or as workers on river boats. Furthermore, judging by the lumpy

topography and lack of grave markers in a few parts of the cemetery, unmarked graves may exist in clusters.

The Native American burials in Walnut Grove are located in two clusters, with an additional individual buried separately from these two groupings. Joey and Eddie Opelt are buried on the southern edge of the eastern portion of the cemetery (Figures 5.51-5.52). A relative, Andrew Opelt, is buried just north of the lane in the northwestern portion of the cemetery. It is unclear to which nation the Opelts belonged, if any, but US Census data identifies various members of the Opelt family as Native American. The family may have been of Otoe-Missouria ancestry or from the nearby “Half-Breed Tract.” At least some of the Opelt family lived in town and ran the grocery store and the hotel for a while (McKee 2013:par 11). The Barada family is buried along the far western edge of the cemetery, with their gravestones now very near the fence. As evidenced by the 1900 US Federal Census, the Opelt and Barada families appear to be related by marriage (Twelfth Census of the United States, Schedule No. 1—Population, Nebraska, Nemaha, Brownville Precinct, Sheet 7, lines 30-32). The Baradas are a well-known family in Nebraska, descended from Antoine Barada, the son of an Omaha mother and a French father. Antoine was a real-life folk hero, and stories of his feats of strength are reminiscent of Paul Bunyan. The town of Barada, in nearby Richardson county (just south of Brownville), located on a parcel of land called the “Half-Breed Tract,” was founded in the 1870s and named for Antoine Barada.



Figure 5.51: Eddy Opelt's gravestone, located near the southern edge of the eastern portion of the cemetery.



Figure 5.52: Joey Opelt's gravestone, located immediately south of Eddy Opelt's marker, near the southern edge of the eastern portion of the cemetery.

The Half-Breed Tract, established by the Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1830, set aside nearly 140,000 acres land for individuals of mixed Native American and Euro-American ancestry, many of whom were ostracized by both indigenous and Euro-American communities (Waters 2004:573). The territory stretched from the Missouri River west between the Big Nemaha and Little Nemaha Rivers (Waters 2004:573). Settlement began in 1860 but, by the 1870s, much of the land was in the hands of Euro-Americans (Waters 2004:573-574).

The location of the Barada family burial plot on the far western edge of the cemetery, today beneath overgrown bushes and the chain link fence that encloses Walnut Grove is intriguing, and one may interpret that as an example of informal, perhaps economic, segregation, but the sample size is again too small to draw concrete conclusions (Figure 5.53). Other Native American individuals may have been interred in unmarked burials or burials that are no longer marked, in family plots on private land, or in other cemeteries, as the village of Barada, like many surrounding settlements, has its own cemetery. Furthermore, to assume that Native Americans, even those of mixed race who were excluded from living within indigenous communities, employed Euro-American burial practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a tenuous assumption.



Figure 5.53: The Barada family plot, pressed up against the western boundary of the cemetery.

There are clearly not enough marked burials of individuals of known racial minority status in Brownville to determine whether or not informal racial segregation exists in Walnut Grove. Several probable unmarked graves exist along edges of cemetery, particularly in the eastern half of the cemetery, and it is possible that these unmarked graves represent any number of individuals: racial minorities, individuals of low economic status, or individuals of any economic status whose gravestones have simply been destroyed or lost over time. While further intensive research into the 619

gravestones marking burials of individuals of unidentified race could yield a few additional results, it is doubtful that this will result in the identification of enough African-Americans or Native Americans to change the interpretations. Thus, the majority of individuals of African-American or Native American descent were most likely buried in one of two types of locations: either in (currently) unmarked graves within Walnut Grove or, more likely, in private burial grounds on farmsteads or in nearby villages, such as Barada, or, perhaps in the case of Native Americans, were laid to rest by a method other than interment.

While frustrating, the invisibility of the ethnic and racial minorities in Brownville's deathscape is not particularly surprising. Often, individuals who have or are perceived as having subordinate social identities become lost in the historical record. Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach (2008:1,4) have outlined a "model of 'intersectional invisibility,'" which states that persons with "subordinate-group identities," whether racial, gendered, sexual, or economic class, tend to be excluded from the historical record. This effect can be accentuated when a person has multiple subordinate social identities, such as ethnic minority women (2008:1). Kelly Coogan-Gehr (2011:96) has pointed out, however, that some African-American women are simultaneously invisible and "hypervisible" in their communities. Almeda Greene and her daughter, Harriette, both worked as domestic servants for prominent white families in the area, including the Aldrichs and the Coryells (Kennedy 2001:14) (Figure 5.54). Thus, the invisibility of Brownville's minority populations, with the exception of a few prominent families (the Greenes, the Opelts, and the Baradas), is not unusual, though it is disappointing. Additional research may be able to trace the histories of these and other

families and shed more light onto the diversity of Brownville and the level of integration within Walnut Grove Cemetery.



Figure 5.54: Photo of Harriette Greene, unknown date.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A detailed recording and analysis of the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery has illuminated several cultural shifts which largely reflect those of the nation as a whole. Through an analysis of the temporal distribution of various iconographic motifs on the gravestones in Walnut Grove Cemetery, four distinct iconographic phases were recognized: Phase I spans from the 1850s to the 1890s; Phase II extends from the 1900s to the 1920s; Phase III started in the 1930s and continued through the 1970s; and Phase IV began in the 1980s and continues to the present.

The greatest variety of images appeared on the gravestones during Phase I. Several of these, such as lambs and broken buds, appeared primarily on children's graves, reflecting the high infant and child mortality rates. Because death was such a common occurrence, and because the broader Victorian culture embraced the practice of public mourning, many images from this phase emphasize the grief of survivors. Urns and shrouds, lambs, and weeping willow trees, which all convey a sense of loss and sadness, are scattered across the late-nineteenth century deathscape in Walnut Grove.

In Phase II, the iconographic trends shifted dramatically, as gravestones became simplified and plain. The few decorative patterns that date to this period are generally repetitive, geometric decorations that frame the basic statistical information inscribed on the markers. This iconographic austerity coincides with a period when infant and child mortality rates were rapidly decreasing, resulting in greater life expectancies. Public health campaigns, medical advances, and sanitation improvements swept the nation,

benefitting the public by decreasing the likelihood that infants and children would die before reaching maturity.

Throughout Phase III, Brownville's gravestones were more likely to include iconography than those dating to Phase II. That iconography, however, came to be dominated by a single, highly standardized image: the forget-me-not. This phase corresponds with a period of major social upheaval in the United States, beginning with the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl and continuing through World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and into the Cold War. The forget-me-not, with its emphasis on faith and remembrance, is ubiquitous during this phase, appearing in nearly the same form on one gravestone after another.

Toward the end of Phase III, crosses began appearing more commonly on markers in Walnut Grove, and the trend continues to the present day. Earlier, crosses appeared rarely and mainly only on Catholic gravestones. This trend correlates with the rise of evangelical Christianity in American society, brought into the mainstream, in part, by Jimmy Carter during his successful presidential campaign.

Phase IV includes an increasing diversity of images, particularly those that illustrate an individual's hobby or employment, as well as images that convey one's status as a married person. Horses, hunting scenes, garden tools, and musical instruments are scattered across the deathscape, as are hearts and wedding rings. This variety (and, often, intricacy) is only partially the result of technological advances that allow carvers to engrave detailed and highly personalized images onto granite. An increasing emphasis on individual identity is an additional catalyst: gravestones now convey not only the feelings of the survivors, but also give insight into the individual personality of the deceased. A

quick browse of monument company websites illustrates the importance of individuality and its expression on modern gravestones:

“Speidell Monuments doesn’t just create the same memorial over and over. We hand craft the most unique monuments based on our client’s specifications and guidance. We’ll work with you to create something meaningful, unique and worthy of the memory you have in mind.” (Speidell Monuments, Inc. 2011: par 2)

“...have us create a one of a kind custom shape with elaborate etchings and photos. We can provide any number of very unique and creative ideas to fit your tastes and budget.” (Palmer Brothers n.d.:par 2)

“Designs For All Careers” (Monuments USA 2009:“Design Collections”)

By Phase IV, mourning had come to center upon the ‘celebration of life,’ rather than upon the grief and sadness of a life lost. The death of an infant or child has become exceptionally rare, and death now comes most commonly to the elderly, who are often viewed as having lived long, full lives. Unlike the circumstances of Phase I, when lives were often cut tragically short due to infectious diseases that disproportionately killed the very young, gravestone iconography now commemorate the perceived richness of individual lives.

Just as the images engraved on Brownville’s gravestones have changed over time, so have the words inscribed on the markers. Analysis of the temporal trends resulted in the identification of at least three phases of textual trends, which exhibit strong ties to the iconographic phases outlined above. Phase I extends from the 1850s through the 1920s, though this phase may also be further subdivided into Phase IA (1850s-1880s) and Phase IB (1890s-1920s). Phase II stretches from the 1930s through the 1960s, and Phase III runs from the 1970s to the present.

Just as with the first iconographic phase (1850s-1890s), the first textual phase (1850s-1920s) includes a great diversity of engravings. Unlike the iconographic Phase I, however, the textual Phase I stretched into the twentieth century. This means that, though imagery dropped out of favor on gravestones around the turn of the century, epitaphs and modifiers continued to appear with significant regularity. This was the phase when epitaphs were the most common. Though epitaphs peaked in popularity in the 1880s, they continued to appear on gravestones in Walnut Grove for several more decades. The inscriptions focus primarily on remembrance of the deceased and comfort of the survivors, and references to the relationships of the deceased, to the death of the individual, and religious inscriptions (including, but not limited to, Biblical quotes) are common.

Several words and phrases appear most commonly on gravestones dating to Phase I. The term 'infant' only appears on gravestones from this phase, likely the result of high infant mortality rates that dramatically declined in the early twentieth century. References to 'sleep' or 'rest' appear most commonly during this phase. Gravestones were also more likely to include information about the individual's place of birth, reflecting the high percentages of persons born elsewhere. As time went on, a larger proportion of the population came to be born in or near Brownville, reflecting the decreasing mobility of Brownville's population and Brownville's overall decline.

There are many parallels between the textual and the iconographic trends during the respective first phases. Both images and text reflect the acceptance of fervent and public mourning. They also emphasize the importance of faith and family. These trends suggest that Brownville's mid- to late-nineteenth century population maintained links to

the broader Victorian cult of death and rest of the country, which is not surprising considering the rates of migration of people in and out of town. The textual Phase IB marks a transition between Phase IA, characterized by the Victorian cult of death, and Phase II, the stoic, austere midcentury.

Phase II (1930s-1960s) is the period with the lowest frequency of epitaphs or modifiers. The initial social disruption that caused such a significant change in the material culture may have been the Great Depression, and there was a string of socially-disrupting events that took place during the middle of the twentieth century. The dramatic disappearance of inscriptions in the middle of the twentieth century possibly reflects a desire among Brownville's citizens to de-emphasize death. This textual trend closely corresponds with a similar trend in the iconography, which became more modest and highly standardized from the 1930s through the 1970s. Inscriptions from Phase II are less likely to include references to the grief or memory, though this was also about the same time that the forget-me-not dominated the iconography, indicating that the sentiment did not fully dissipate. By Phase II, there was no local carver in town, and the gravestone manufacturing industry had become more commercialized. National social and political cultures were certainly impacting material culture in Walnut Grove Cemetery, resulting in plain, succinct inscriptions on the gravestones.

In Phase III (1970s-present), religious references began appearing again, after the break of Phase II, probably a result of the mainstream acceptance of evangelical and conservative forms of Christianity. This period also included the highest frequencies of military information inscribed on the markers, possibly the result of larger numbers of deaths of veterans of World War I and World War II. Marriage and self-identity as a

married person had become important aspects of identity, as evidenced by the frequent inscription of marriage dates, a trend which parallels the iconographic fashion of hearts and wedding rings that appeared around the same time. Similarly, status as a parent has also become an important component in individual identity, as evidenced by inscriptions of the phrase 'parents of,' followed by the names of their (usually adult) children on numerous gravestones dating to Phase III.

Several strongly-gendered patterns in images and words appear on Brownville's gravestones, and these patterns also change over time. Flowers and hearts always appeared more commonly on the graves of women and girls, while disembodied hands and military shields appeared most commonly the graves of men. During the iconographic Phase I (1850s-1890s), doves, scrollwork, and crosses appeared more commonly on women's and girls' gravestones than on gravestones marking male burials. While masonic symbols appeared more often on men's gravestones during the first two phases (1850s-1890s and 1900s-1920s), during Phase III (1930s-1970s) they appeared most frequently on women's gravestones, probably reflecting the establishment of a second Order of the Eastern Star in town. During Phases III and IV, men's gravestones were more likely than women's gravestones to bear an image of a cross, possibly as a result of the rise of male-dominated conservative Christianity. Angels appeared more often on gravestones marking female burials, particularly young girls, than on any others during Phase IV. The small sample size may have skewed this interpretation, and it is possible that age is more influential than gender for the distribution of this image. The deaths of the very young had become quite rare by Phase IV, and the appearance of

angels on these gravestones may suggest a theological shift, whereby deceased infants came to be viewed as guardian angels who watch over their loved ones.

Throughout most of Walnut Grove Cemetery's history, relationship terms generally appear more commonly on women's and girls' gravestones, though the popularity of such inscriptions varies across time. Both the words 'mother' and 'father' (and their varying forms) peaked in popularity during the 1910s (in the middle of textual Phase IB), but 'mother' resurged in popularity again during Phase III (1970s to present). This highlights the gendered importance placed on motherhood across time in Brownville, a trend which likely reflects national trends.

The strongest gendered pattern identified in this study is the use of the terms 'wife' or 'Mrs.' compared to the use of the term 'husband.' While 'husband' appears exceptionally rarely and with no particular temporal pattern, 'wife' and 'Mrs.' appear commonly, particularly during textual Phases IA and IB and resurging again in Phase III. Once again, this suggests that women's roles as women and as mothers have been considerably more important for the formation of women's self-identity than have men's roles as husbands or fathers.

The iconographic phases I and IV and the textual phases IA and III show the strongest gendered patterns. This is partially due to the greater variety of images and inscriptions, overall, which appeared during these phases, which resulted in greater personalization of gravestones. During the Victorian Period (which corresponds with both the iconographic Phase I and textual Phase I), gender roles were highly separated, with women expected to maintain their homes and nurture their children and men expected to work outside of the home. The home was ideally safe and warm, while the

outside world was perceived as dangerous, frightening, and cold. Gender roles liberalized over the course of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1960s through the 1980s, but this liberalization began to stall in the mid-1990s. Some women came to embrace the choice to stay at home raising children and caring for the home, emphasizing their autonomy to make such a decision.

The material culture of Walnut Grove Cemetery provided significantly less information about concepts of race in Brownville through time. Few individuals of racial minority status were identified in the cemetery, resulting in too small a sample size from which to draw conclusions. This invisibility of racial minorities in the material record may, however, suggest that Brownville was not as fully integrated as some stories recall. Patrick Kennedy (2001) touched on this theme, noting that most of Brownville's African-American citizens worked in presumably low-paying jobs such as laborers, washerwomen, and domestic servants. The fact that most of the black women were employed suggests that they were working-class, as few middle or upper-class women were employed during the late nineteenth century.

Even less is known about the Native American residents of Brownville. Though these families likely had ties to the nearby "Half-Breed Tract," it appears that little information remains today. It is possible that the Native-American individuals buried in Brownville were fully-integrated members of the community. At least one Indian family ran a grocery store on Main Street. Census data (as well as the proximity of the "Half-Breed Tract") certainly suggest that intermarriage occurred in Nemaha County.

The fleeting population of the town, in general, combined with the ephemeral nature of the African-American and indigenous communities have resulted in a semi-

invisible status of individuals of 'subaltern' social status. A few individuals are clearly identifiable, but the diversity of Brownville's population is simply not reflected by the diversity of the cemetery. This may be the results of the mobility of individuals of subordinate social status, particularly African-Americans. Many individuals worked as unskilled laborers, which was a profession with little permanence. When work dried up in one location, unskilled laborers could move on and find work elsewhere. Furthermore, persons of less privileged economic status are less likely to own property, which can further contribute to impermanence in residence. Therefore, it is possible, even probable, that most African-American and Native American residents of Brownville were buried elsewhere. These locations may include communities significantly farther west or in larger urban areas nearby, both of which may have drawn individuals and families away from Brownville with the promise of employment. Walnut Grove Cemetery is, thus, an example of a material record that does not fully reflect the diversity of the historical community which produced it.

This study has shown that the material culture of Walnut Grove Cemetery was useful for identifying major shifts in theological thought, periods of social upheaval, and concepts of gender in Brownville. The images and words inscribed on the gravestones changed throughout time, hinting at the social influences on the persons who selected the engravings. The study has shown that, it is possible to track major shifts in culture by analyzing the images on gravestones across time in this specific cemetery, and also that it is also feasible to identify these oscillations with the words inscribed on the markers. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the study of gravestones can also be useful for identifying more recent cultural shifts as well as historic trends. The project was not as

effective in identifying the diversity of the community, as the individuals of subordinate social status buried in the cemetery do not proportionally reflect the town's historic diversity, as evidenced by historic photographs, census records, and oral traditions. This is not to say that the study of race in Walnut Grove Cemetery was not successful.

Conversely, the project has illustrated that the lack of evidence in an assemblage may point to more complex social situations. In the case of Brownville, the diversity of the cemetery presumably does not reflect the historic diversity of the town because of issues relating to population mobility and economics. The salient points to this are the acknowledgement that subaltern invisibility exists within the material record and that, when a population is not visible within that material record, the researcher should not accept the absence as evidence of non-existence.

Several lines of investigation are suggested for future research to expand this study. Additional research into the documented and oral histories of the African-American and Native American families of Brownville may afford insights into the locations of their burials and may help provide a more complete history of Brownville. The presence of several suspected unmarked graves, located primarily along the edges of the cemetery should be investigated via historical sources, oral traditions, and, if necessary, non-invasive or minimally-invasive geophysical techniques, such as ground penetrating radar, resistance, conductivity, and magnetometry. For comparison purposes, additional parallel studies of nearby cemeteries, such as Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln or Wyuka Cemetery in Nebraska City may provide confirmation of regional trends, such as the local iconographic and textual patterns identified at Walnut Grove Cemetery.

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