

Tombstone Design Following A Modern Styling

Dyersburg, Tenn. — (UPI) — Tombstone styles, like everything else, keep changing.

"Things just aren't the same as when I first started working on markers back in 1914," said Clarence O. Parmenter, who entered his family's monument business when he was 16.

"Folks were a lot fussier about monuments back in those days," he said. "They demanded all kinds of fancy carving and ornamental work. A man had to be pretty much of an artist."

Today, he said, monuments are streamlined, with a few simple lines and little fancy work.

There are exceptions, though.

A few years ago, a man drowned while fishing at Reelfoot lake.

"He loved fishing so much his wife decided it would be nice to depict his hobby on the marker," Parmenter said. "Using three colors of granite, we reproduced an actual scene from Reelfoot lake, including a man in a boat catching a fish."

Parmenter also has carved a shotgun on the monument of a hunter and the official emblem of the Illinois Central Railroad on the marker of a man who wanted it there to commemorate his 50 years with the line.

Significant Change

But the most significant change, Parmenter believes, is the trend to pick out a monument before death.

"I never will forget the first time my father sold a monument that way," Parmenter said. "An old couple, they were both in their 70's, came by and picked out their tombstone and told my father what they wanted on it."

"That was in 1908, and it really created a sensation."

"Many folks were so superstitious they said the couple would be punished for picking out their tombstone before their time to go."

"I guess they always figured they were right, too, because the wife died before my daddy could get the tombstone finished."

Often, markers contain only the name and the birth and death dates of the entombed. Sometimes, however, the deceased one arranges to leave a final word to the world.

Parmenter particularly remembers this epitaph:

"Beware kind friends as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I,
As I am now, so you must be,
Prepare, therefore, to follow me."

Easy--See Diagram



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