

Story of family love, admiration lives in gravestone epitaphs

By GORDON B. SEAVEY
WESTFORD — Not all history is to be found in books, and not all early Westford memories are contained in Hodgman's excellent history of the town, published in 1883.

A story of family love and admiration may be noted, of all places, engraved on colorless slate for passersby to read and ponder for generations, past and present.

It concerns one of the town's earliest and, we see, most prolific families, the Parkers of Parkersville. Few, if any, descendants live here today.

Hodgman reports that the ancestor of this family, Abraham, is supposed to have come from Wiltshire, England, and settled in Woburn. He moved to a homestead of some 24 acres near the center of Chelmsford, about the time the town was incorporated in 1653.

A grandson, Aaron, was the first Parker in Westford and his name appears among the original members of the first church, established in 1724. He settled in the southern part of Westford, known as the Parkerville section today.

THE FAMILY prospered, had many offspring and expanded. They intermarried with other early families, such as the Hildreths, Carvers, Proctors and the Cummings. Their many descendants spread to neighboring towns as well as distant communities.

In a few well-chosen words, delicately carved in timeless slate, two grave markers in Fairview Cemetery epitomize deep kindness and affection between generations of Parkers.

As detailed as was Hodgman in writing a history of his beloved town, he overlooked the tenderness and close family ties demonstrated by this old and remarkably large Westford clan.

The inscriptions on these gravestones tell a simple

story that history books mis-

sed:

In Memory of
MRS. EXPERIENCE PARKER

Wife of Ebenezer Parker
who died May 27, 1717
Aged 65 Years

"She was a kind & affectionate Mother of Sixteen Children, a wise counsellor & a friend of humanity.

"Reader remember thou must die; And be food for worms as well as I; Friends & Physicians could not save, My mortal body from the grave, Nor can the grave confine me here, When Christ doth call I must appear."

Whereas Experience's (aptly named) gravestone is somewhat isolated, lined up in a nearby section of brothers and sisters is this slate, with its touching words:

In Memory of
Miss Rebekah, daughter of
Ebenezer & Experience
Parker

She died on her anniversary
birthday April 1, 1808
Aged 24 Years

"She is the first taken out of a family of 16 children, by death...the youngest of them being taken in the 11th year of his age.

"Adieu, to all you, my once delightful brothers and sisters, of 15. Thanks to God that we so long on earth have all remained. But now is the time that a separation of us by death, you see...Which I trust you will all solemnize & prepare to follow me.

(Lines suited to her proceedings in her last hours)

"In holy faith, O Lord, my God, I bow before Thy throne.

O quickly blessed Jesus come & waft me safely home.

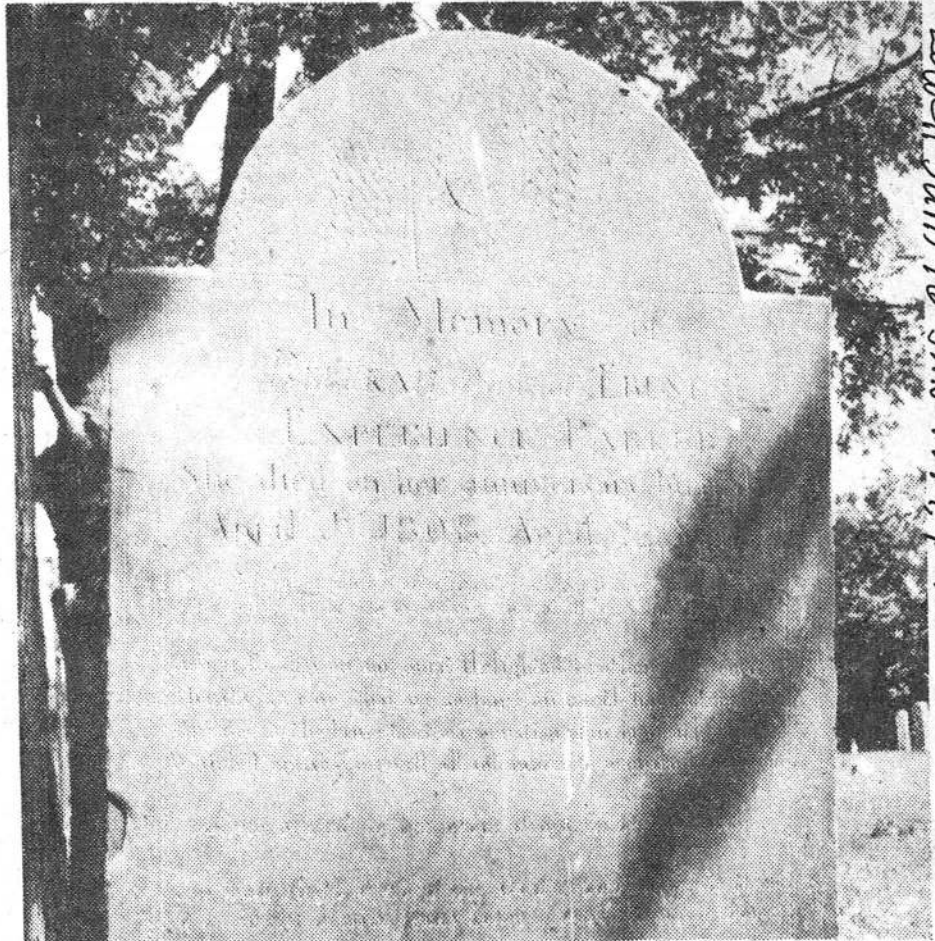
"Erected by John, Ebenezer & Jabez Parker Brothers to the Deceased."

Some of the Parkers moved into New Hampshire as time went on. In reading old gravestones in the ancient cemetery behind the beautiful old meetinghouse in Jaffrey Center, one could note an equally touching monument to a deceased loved one. This one is in modern granite, placed flat with the ground. It memorializes a 31-year old woman who died in the prime of her life. The words say:

EDITH E. FROST
(Placed by Harland S. Robbins)

"The first girl I ever loved, my school teacher in Rindge, N.H."

Born 1813 - Died 1844.



GRAVESTONE OF REBEKAH PARKER

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