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Paul and Olive Colburn Collection

1894-2001

1 box (0.5 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 860



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Husband and wife Paul Francis and Olive ("Tommie" Fox) Colburn were active members of the Association for Gravestone Studies from the 1980s. Natives of Lowell, Mass., and long-time residents of Berwick, Me., the Colburns shared an interest in New England gravestones and marker symbolism, with Tommie enjoying a particular specialty in metal-based markers.

The Colburn collection represents a cross-section of the couple's work documenting and lecturing about New England grave markers and marker symbolism as well as Victorian funerary practice. Of note are a small number of items reflecting Victorian mourning culture, including images of funeral wreaths and arrangements, three mourning handkerchiefs, and a funeral card.

See similar SCUA collections:

Gravestones
New England
Photographs

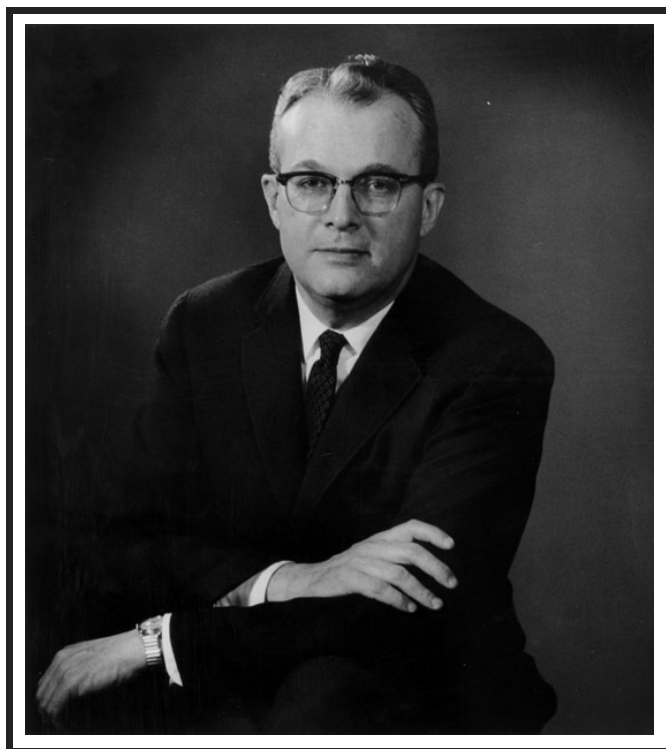
Background on Paul and Olive Colburn

Husband and wife Paul Francis and Olive ("Tommie" Fox) Colburn became involved in the Association for Gravestone Studies in the 1980s along with Tommie's cousin, Catherine Goodwin. The Colburns toured northern New England, giving presentations on gravestones and their symbolism to local historical organizations. Metal-based markers were a particular interest of Tommie's, and she traveled throughout New Hampshire and southern Maine in search of them.

The Colburns were childhood friends growing up in Lowell, Massachusetts. Paul (born in 1923) and Olive (often known by her nickname Tommie) were married in 1946 following Paul's service in the Maritime Service in the World War Two. The Colburns moved to South Berwick, Maine in 1952, where they would live the rest of the lives together, raising three children and becoming deeply involved in civic affairs and their church.

In addition to holding a number of local elected offices and philanthropic positions, Paul was involved with the Olde Berwick Historical Society and served as president for fifteen years. He also attended and taught classes at Springvale Senior College, and visited schools to introduce young people to local history.

Tommie died in 1998. Paul continued lecturing until his own illness prevented him from doing so. Paul Colburn died in 2009.



John W. Lederle

Scope of collection

The collection represents some of the Colburns' work documenting and lecturing about New England grave markers and marker symbolism as well as Victorian funerary practice.

A large portion of the collection is comprised of labeled 35 mm slides the Colburns used in their presentations. The slides predominantly depict Victorian-era markers in Massachusetts, particularly Lowell, where the Colburns spent their childhoods; New Hampshire; New York; Rhode Island; Vermont; and coastal Maine, where the Colburns settled in the 1950s. The slides are divided into four sets, one of fifty slides, the second of sixty-two slides illustrating a talk titled, "Victorian Cemetery", and two binders of slide sheets.

Other materials in the collection document not just grave markers, but other aspects of Victorian funerary practice, such as notes on symbolism, photographs of wreaths and flower arrangements, and mourning handkerchiefs. Also included is an article about New Hampshire carver Paul Colburn by Theodore Chase and Laurel Gabel, former AGS Research Clearinghouse Coordinators.

Inventory

Article: Theodore Chase and Laurel Gabel, "The Colburn Connections: Hollis, New Hampshire Stonecutters, 1780-182" (55 pages) including cover letter from Jo Goeselt

1995

Box 1: 1

Article: Loren N. Horton, "In the Midst of Life: Victorian Funeral Etiquette" *Hope and Glory: A Journal Devoted to the Eclectic World of Queen Victoria* (Iowa Chapter, Victorian Society of America), Vol. 3,1

1989

Box 1: 2

Civil War "Soldiers' Monument" (Goodwin Park, Portsmouth, New Hampshire). White bronze monument

ca.1909

Postcard and photo

Box 1: 3

"Founders of Berwick Academy" typescript, photocopy and note cards (consists of names and burial information)

undated

Box 1: 4

Funeral wreaths and arrangements (stereoviews)

ca.1895

6 items

Box 1: 5

Laurel Hill Cemetery (Saco, Maine) brochure

ca.2000

Box 1: 6

Lecture notes, possibly from talk given at Olde Berwick Historical Society, focusing on Victorian era

undated

Box 1: 7

Memorial card for Mrs. Roswell S. Fox

ca.1894

Box 1: 8

Mourning handkerchiefs

undated

3 items

Box 1: 9

Symbolism notes and copies from various sources

ca.1985

Box 1: 10

Grave markers in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York

1984-1995

18 sleeves

Box 1: 11

Grave markers in Maine, New Hampshire

1985-1995

16 sleeves

Box 1: 12

Slide carousel labeled, "Victorian Cemetery" (62 slides)

undated

62 slides

Box 1:

Slide carousel labeled, "Newbury, VT Rotary Club, May 22, 2001"

2001-05-22

50 slides

Box 1:

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Association for Gravestone Studies, 2014.

The collection was initially offered to the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS) in 2010 by Catherine Goodwin, Olive Colburn's cousin, following the death of Paul Colburn. However, Goodwin died in 2011 before she was able to transfer the collection to AGS. In 2012, Goodwin's daughter Jean Demetracopoulos delivered the collection to AGS trustee Joshua Segal, who transported the collection to the AGS office in Greenfield, Massachusetts. In 2013, after AGS established contact with one of the Colburn's heirs, Lucinda Colburn transferred ownership of the collection to the AGS and thence to UMass.

Processing Information

Processed by Nancy Adgent, with assistance of I. Eliot Wentworth, 2015.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

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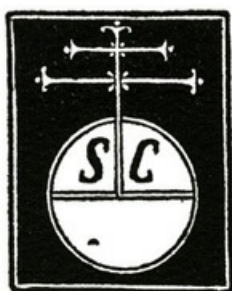
Colburn, Paul [main entry]
Colburn, Olive

Genres and formats

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