

Tombstone Inscriptions Speak of Life, God and Love

*adapted from materials gathered by
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*Often, inscriptions
speak of the
Resurrection and
the hope of seeing
loved ones again.*

Several years ago, Margaret Stubbe, secretary of the Dutch-Polish Mennonite Foundation in the Netherlands, together with some co-workers, made an extensive listing of inscriptions on tombstones in a number of Mennonite cemeteries in Poland. Her findings showed that biblical quotations and religious poems were often used to describe the life of the person buried there. Sometimes, popular adages or simple expressions of

piety were inscribed to remind the passing viewer of the brevity of life, and the solemn responsibilities shared by all of humanity. Expressions of love and appreciation also appeared frequently on the markers.

The following examples demonstrate the rich variety of ways in which the dead were remembered through tombstone inscriptions in the Heubuden cemetery:

Hier ruht in Gott
Abraham Harder
Von Alt Munsterberg
Geb. d. 8 August 1826

Gest. d. 22 Juni 1888
Ruhe sanft

Here rests in God
Abraham Harder
From Old Munsterberg
Born 8 August 1826
Died 22 June 1888
Rest gently

(on the reverse)
Leidvoll war die Zeit
Ihr folgt die Ewigkeit
Dich will ich fassen
Herr Jesu und nicht lassen
Stirbt auch der Leib;
Denn auferstehn, ja auferstehn
wirst du

Time was full of suffering
It is followed by eternity
I will hold to you
Lord Jesus, and not let go
Even if the body dies
For you will rise again, yes, rise
again

Mein Staub nach kurzem Ruh.
Unsterbliches Leben
Wird der dich schuf, dir geben,
Gelobt sei er.

My dust, after a short rest
Immortal life he who created you
Will give to you
Praised be he.

Sometimes the inscription reflected changing styles of writing, as in this example of one of the oldest decipherable inscriptions in Heubuden:

AR

Hier ruhet
Abraham Regehr
Geboren zu Kaelitzkij
Den 14 Meij Ao 1731
Gestorben
Den 4 Octob: Ao 1802
Alt geworden 71 Jahr
4 Monat 20 Tag
Dieser verewigte wurde den 1ten
Novemb: A 1759 zum Dienst
eines Diaconen, und den 21ten
Septemb:
Ao 1759 zum Lehrer der hiessigen
Gemeine erwahlet

Here rests
Abraham Regehr
Born in Warnau
On 14 May 1731
Died
On 4 October 1802
Was 71 years old
4 months 20 days
He, now in eternity, on the 1st
Of November 1759 was chosen
For the service of deacon, and on
the 21st of
September 1759 as minister
of the church here

(on the reverse)

Seelig ist der Man der die
Anfechtung erduldet
geb. d. 2. Januar 1834.
Blessed is the person who
Endures temptation
gest. d. 7. Juli 1881.

A number of inscriptions
end with the hope, Sanft ruhe ihre
(seine) Asche (May her [his] ashes
rest gently). It is an inscription
found in many cemeteries besides
the one at Heubuden.

Hier ruhet in Gott
Frau Anna Claassen
geb. Reimer
aus Simonsdorf
geb. d. 16. Januar 1856
gest. d. 5. Marz 18Ö. (indecipher-
able)
Sanft ruhe ihre Asche
Here rests in God
Mrs. Anna Claassen
nee Reimer
From Simonsdorf
born 16 January 1856
died 5 March 18 . . .
May her ashes rest gently

(on the reverse)

Sie ging dahin die meine
Seele liebte
Die treue Gattin und der
Kinder Gluck
Sie ist dahin, die mir mein
Herz betrubte
Und lasst uns weinend
Hier zuruck

She whom my soul loved
went away
The faithful wife and
the children's blessing
She is gone, she who made
my hearts sad
And left us crying
here below

Often, inscriptions speak
of the Resurrection and the hope
of seeing loved ones again.
Sometimes this is expressed in
biblical quotations, "Christus ist
die Auferstehung und das Leben"
(Christ is the resurrection and the
life), at other times, in simple
verse: Der Trennung Schmerz ist
nur hienieden, Dort wiedersehn
und ewiger Frieden" (The pain of
separation is only here on earth;
up there, reunion and eternal
peace.)