



The Final Event – Funeral Records

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As with many life events, death too generates records that although not created for family history research, are rich in information that does just that. As one of the final event participants, funeral homes created documents, as did families and other businesses who participated in the event.

Ledgers, funeral cards, copies of government documents, letters, bills of sale, transportation records are just a sample of records that can be found within funeral home records. A relatively modern developed business, the funeral home as we know it and the education of interested individuals, regulation and licensing developed in the late 19th century. From the beginning of time to the U.S. Civil War, death was a family, community, or individual affair. Traditions and ceremonies vary between cultures and religions which are still honored today. The time period and other social or cultural traditions all impact sources to discover information about the final event.

Funeral records when considered as a group of various types of records, can be found in manuscript collections, within special collections at public and university libraries, at historical societies, online, in books, periodicals, microfilm. Records associated with funerals can be found at county courthouses in land records and other common sources we think of surrounding death. Being creative in your searching using keywords, reading citations, understanding and knowing about history all can help in discovering records, information and sources.

Following are suggestions for further reading and links to information.

Burke, Billie Jean Cromer. *Hill Funeral Home Death Certificate Records, Carterville, IL Jan 28, 1928 to July 1, 1959*. Genealogical Society of Southern Illinois. Carterville, IL 2001.

Burns, Stanley. *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America*. Altadena, Calif. : Twelvetreets Press, c1990.

Bruce, Philip Alexander. *Social Life of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*. Richmond, VA. Whittet & Shepperson. 1907.

Carlson, Lisa. *Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love: A Complete Guide for Those Making Funeral Arrangements with or without a Funeral Director*. Hineburg, VT. Upper Access, Inc. 1998.

Clarke County Iowa Genealogical Society. *Clarke County Iowa Deaths, Webster Funeral Home Records for "Shipped-In Cases" 1917 – 1964*. Iowa Genealogical Society: Des Moines, Iowa. 1999.

Coleman, Penny. *Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A history of burial*. New York. Henry Holt and Co. 1997

Crane, E H. *Prof. E.H. Crane's Manual of Instructions to Undertakers : With Full and Complete Instructions in the Best Methods for Preserving the Dead, Including Minute Directions for Arterial Injection with Plates Illustrating the Location of the Principal Arteries*. Crane & Allen, 1888.

AND

Internet Archive, [Kalamazoo, Mich., Crane & Allen], 1 Jan. 1888,
<https://archive.org/details/profehcranesmanu00cran/page/n7/mode/2up>

Cullen, Lisa Takeuchi. *Remember me: A lively tour of the new American way of death*. New York. Harper Collins, 2006

Cummins, Eleanor. "How 'Big Funeral' Made the Afterlife so Expensive." *Wired*, Conde Nast, 1 Oct. 2021,
<https://www.wired.com/story/death-funeral-industry-lobbying-politics-health/>

"Death Care Industry in the United States." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Oct. 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_care_industry_in_the_United_States

FamilySearch

FamilySearch, FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org/>

Search Library Catalog and FamilySearch Digital Library (Books) from the drop down menu "search"

"Funeral Cards - A Little Used Resource." *FamilySearch Wiki*,

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Funeral_Cards_-_A_Little_Used_Resource

"Headstones, Hot Springs, Arkansas Monument Company, Vol. 2." *FamilySearch*,

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/596080-headstones-hot-springs-arkansas-monument-company-vol-2?offset=1>.

Funeral Program Collection. African American Genealogical Research Institute. Matteson, IL. 1997.

"Funeral Homes and Family History: They're Dying to Meet You!" Legacy Family Tree Webinars, 5 Oct. 2021, <https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/funeral-homes-and-family-history-theyre-dying-to-meet-you>

Genealogy Today Funeral Card Collection

http://www.genealogytoday.com/guide/funeral_cards.html

Harding, Vanessa. Burial of the plague dead in early modern London. *Epidemic Disease in London*, ed. J.A.I. Champion (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993): pp. 53-64

Harrell, Leta Watts. *Funeral Notice Cards 1949 – 1989 with Greenwood County Connections*. Relatively Searching, Hamilton, KS. 2000

Harris, Mark. *Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*. New York. Scribner. 2007.

"Home Funeral History." NATIONAL HOME FUNERAL ALLIANCE,

<https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/home-funeral-history.html>

Houston Public Library Digital Archives, <https://digital.houstonlibrary.org/>
"African American Library at the Gregory School." Houston Public Library Digital Archives,
<https://digital.houstonlibrary.org/gregory>

Johnson, Patricia K., and Lois A. Jacobson. *Burial Transit Permits: July 1950 - January 1984, Elkhart City, Indiana and August 1950 - December 1982, Elkhart County, Indiana*. Elkhart County Genealogical Society, 2002.

Laderman, Gary. *Rest in Peace: A cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America*. New York. Oxford. 2003

Mitford, Jessica. *The American way of death revisited*. New York. Knopf, 1998.

National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), <https://nfda.org/>.

The National yellow book of funeral directors. Youngstown, OH : Nomis Publications.

"Peltier Funeral Home, Fort Wayne, Indiana : Coffin Sales, 1862-1877." *FamilySearch*,
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/513231-peltier-funeral-home-fort-wayne-indiana-coffin-sales-1862-1877?offset=11>

Purple directory: National listing of minority funeral firms. Detroit, Mich. Shugar's 1995 –

Rogak, Lisa. *Death warmed over: Funeral food, rituals, and customs from around the world*. Berkeley, CA. Ten Speed Press. 2004

Smith, Linda Dayhoff. *J.M. Connelley Funeral Home Records, Charleston, SC 4 October 1889 – 21 May 1891. Vol 1 & 2*. Southern Sands Publications. Columbia, SC. 2001

Whitten, Joseph L. *Wedding Bells & Funeral Knells: Marriage, Birth & Death Notices from St. Clair County, Alabama Newspapers 1911 – 1939*. Joseph L. Whitten. Odenville, AL. 2002.

Wright, Roberta Hughes. *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries*. Detroit, MI. Visible Ink Press. 1996

Google Searchers

Funeral home records state memory project

Funeral card collections genealogy