John-Lawrence Funeral Home

Falmouth Genealogical Society

August 11, 2018

Falmouth Public Library

300 Main Street

Falmouth, MA 02540

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Presented By

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John-Lawrence Funeral Home

Marstons Mills, MA

Historical practices
Regional changes
Cremation vs Traditional burial
Where is it going and why?
Headstones
Record keeping
Public access to records
Obituaries

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CREMATION:

Scholars generally agree that cremation probably began in any real sense during the early Stone Age...around 3000 B.C....and most likely in Europe and the Near East. During the late Stone Age cremation began to spread across Northern Europe, as evidenced by the finds of decorative pottery urns in western Russia among the Slavic peoples.

Cremation was rare with the early Christians who considered it to be pagan and in the Jewish culture where traditional entombment was preferred.

By 400 A.D. as a result of Constantine's Christianization of the Empire, cremation was rare. Earth burial had completely replaced cremation except for rare instances of plague or war, and for the next 1,500 years remained the accepted mode of disposition throughout Europe.

Modern cremation as we know it, actually began only a little over a century ago and was fostered to address concerns with hazardous health conditions.

In North America there had been only two recorded instances of cremation before 1800. The real start began in 1876 with the first crematory in Washington, PA. A second crematory opened in 1884 in Lancaster, PA. Forces behind these crematory openings were Protestant clergy who desired to reform burial practices and the medical profession concerned with health conditions around early cemeteries.

By 1900 – 20 crematories

By 1913 – 52 crematories with 10,000 cremations

By 1975 – 425 crematories with 150,000 cremations

By 1999 – 1,468 crematories with 595,617 cremations

By 2009 – 2,100 crematories with 900,000 cremations 37% deaths/cremated

By 2018 – cremation is expected to reach 50%

By 2030 – cremation is expected to reach 71%

Why cremation? Industry experts believe that economic and demographic factors play the biggest roles, followed by environmental, religious factors, and an overall preferences.

Because new trends have emerged over the course of the last decade, more – and lesser known – laws have been created regarding the disposal of cremated remains.

According to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), both boats and planes must be a minimum of three nautical miles from the shore before any cremains can be cast overboard. The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration does not prohibit cremations being tossed or scattered from airplanes however, some states prohibit scattering ashes over developed areas or bodies of water, and pilots may need to reach a mandatory minimum altitude before the ashes can be scattered.

BURIAL:

Each year cemeteries in the United States alone inter over 30 million feet of hardwood and approximately 90,000 tons of steel in caskets, 17,000 tons of steel and copper in vaults, and 1.6 million tons of reinforced concrete in vaults.

Again, religious preferences, economics, and demographics play a role in the decisions for traditional ground burials. The number of burials has dropped from 61.4% in 2005 to 45.6% in 2015. By 2030 those numbers are expected to drop to 23.2% for traditional ground burials.

HEADSTONES:

Limestone – acid rain causes complete deterioration

Slate – one of the strongest materials – we see some still in existence

Marble – highly durable – variety of colors

Granite – have a tendency to get moldy

Bronze – oxidize over time

RECORDS:

Record-keeping has changed.

Each governmental jurisdiction prescribes the form of the document for use in its preview and the procedures necessary to legally produce it. One purpose of the certificate is to review the cause of death to determine if foul-play occurred as it can rule out an accidental death or a murder going by the findings and ruling of the medical examiner. It may also be required in order to arrange a burial or cremation to provide evidence of the fact of death, which can be used to prove a person's will or to claim on a person's life insurance. Lastly, death certificates are used in public health to compile data on leading causes of death among other statistics. Many states, including Massachusetts, have adopted a digital filing system. The funeral director is responsible for obtaining the personal vital statistic information that appears on the certificate.

Regulations for obtaining certified copies of a death certificate has also changed and varies from state-to-state.

OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES:

Publication of obituary and death notices has become expensive. Again, due to economics and demographics some families choose to forego the traditional newspaper publication and oftentimes opt for the on-line presence offered by funeral homes and social media. Those families who choose traditional burials typically will request placement of a full obituary in their local newspaper.

"What does the Bible say about cremation?"

"My Answer"

By Billy Graham

Billy Graham was asked this question: "Is cremation against the teaching of the Bible? Will those cremated be resurrected?"

His response: "The aspect of cremation that worries some Christians is the thought of the total annihilation of the body. We need to get our thinking in the right perspective here. The body is annihilated just as completely in the grave as it is in cremation. The graves of our ancestors are no longer in existence, and soil in which they were buried has long since been removed elsewhere. We must therefore accept that what happens to the body or to the grave cannot be of any significance so far as the resurrection is concerned.

Our resurrection is related to that of Christ's in 1 Corinthians 15, and we must realize that the resurrection of Jesus was quite different from that of say, Lazarus's Lazarus needed the body that had been buried, but when Jesus came forth from the tomb, his body was so changed that he could not easily be recognized.

In that chapter, Paul states of the burial of our bodies: body that rises is not made of the same substance as the one that was buried, but is immortal and incorruptible.

In Corinthians 5, Paul makes the contract between living in a tent, a temporary home that can be pulled down and put away and living in a permanent home that will last forever. Our bodies are our temporary tents. Our resurrected bodies will be our permanent homes. They are similar in appearance but different in substance. Cremation is therefore no hindrance to the resurrection."

DEATH CERTIFICATE INFORMATION

(Please Print)

DECEASED'S LEGAL NAME:

_____

ADDRESS: (include city, state, zip code)

_____

DECEASED'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: _____ RACE_____

DECEASED'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION: _____

(High School or GED, Some College but No Degree, Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)

DECEASED'S PRIMARY OCCUPATION*: (cannot use retired or disabled)*

_____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF DEATH: *Married Never Married Widow Divorced Divorced but Separated*

SPOUSE:_____ SPOUSE MAIDEN NAME: _____

DECEASED'S FATHER'S NAME:

_____

FATHER'S PLACE OF BIRTH:

_____

DECEASED'S MOTHER'S NAME:

_____

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: _____

MOTHER'S PLACE OF BIRTH:

_____

DID THE DECEASED SERVE IN THE MILITARY? YES NO (Please provide DD 214)

INFORMANT: _____

Name Relationship

_____

Address

_____

Primary Telephone Alternate Telephone

_____

E-mail

Cremation

By Jason Ryan Engler

Understanding Cremation History

Although I've served as the historian for the Cremation Association of North America for only six years, I have studied the history and practice of cremation for a much longer time and have learned some important lessons that pertain to death-care professionals. While the history of cremation may not seem a very popular subject to some, these lessons are valuable and reiterate the purpose and responsibility we have as caretakers of the dead in all aspects of our professions.

History is where our proudest triumphs and darkest defeats dwell; in the past lie all of the things that have made us the individuals we are today, and have made our profession what it is today. I like to think of a beautiful urn as representing history. In my mind, the urn is created in bronze and has many embellishments – a flame finial, graceful handles, a solid pedestal, a handsome polished surface. Because it is bronze, it is unchanging in its structure, even though the surface may change colors over time. The bronze material represents various events in history that have sculpted the present, and the integrity of the urn is dependent on the quality of the bronze the foundry used in its creation; the handles, finial, etc., all represent the increase in knowledge that has come from history. The urn exists and does not change – and it is a beautiful sculpture that can be admired and from which others may learn. This is history – an ever-present memory that exists for the admiration and education of future humankind.

What Can We Learn from the History of Cremation?

Cremation is the new tradition.

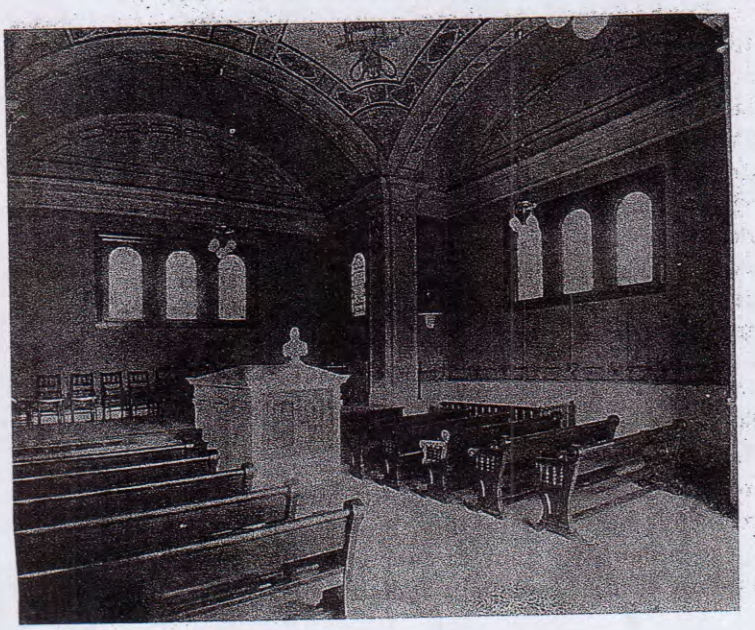
Cremation now has a permanent seat at the death-care table. In fact, on a national level, it has more than half of the table to itself. Looking at the statistics from CANA tells an interesting story, and it is clear that the early cremation movement didn't move much, but when it started to move, it moved fast.

From the start of the cremation movement in 1874, beginning with the legalization of cremation in 1876 when America's first crematory was constructed, it took almost 100 years for the rate of cremation to reach 5 percent in 1972, then it took less than half that time to increase to 50 percent in 2016. In 2010, the number of cremations in the U.S. exceeded 1 million. There were not a million cremations in the U.S. in the first 40 years of modern cremation's history. Being that it is the new tradition, death-care professionals have an amazing opportunity to care for their families like never before.

Crematories Were Not Always in Simple Structures

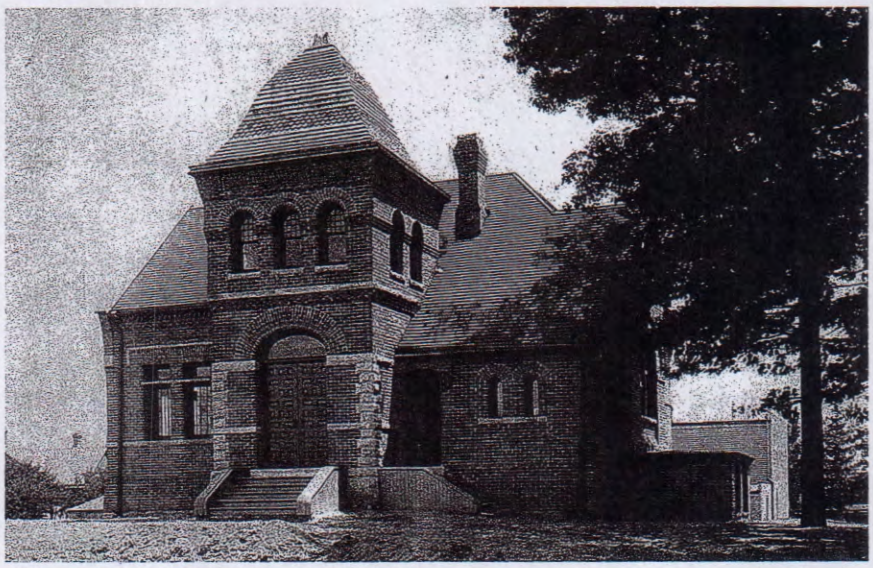
For a good part of cremation's modern history, crematories were often built on a grand and beautiful scale. Standard crematories almost always included an impressive chapel, typically with art-glass windows, marble floors, frescoed walls or mosaic ceilings. A lowering device or decorative catafalque was usually the centerpiece of the chapel, whether an elevator (in the case of facilities with their cremators in the lower level) or a decorative cart with wheels (if cremators were on the same floor as the chapel), these held the casket in prominence during the committal service in the crematory.

The columbarium was also a significant part of the crematory structure or complex. Some crematories, like Fresh Pond in New York, constructed their columbarium niches as part of their chapel; others, like Forest Hills in Boston, added theirs to the lower levels, echoing the ancient Roman columbaria on the Via Appia. The Missouri Crematory



Above: A modern view of historic cremation memorialization as expressed in the Valhalla Chapel of Memories in St. Louis, Missouri. *(Photo credit: Jason Ryan Engler, the Cremation Historian)* Right: The chapel of the Missouri Crematory as it appeared in 1910. Chapels such as these were built on a beautiful scale and included frescoed walls, mosaic tile ceilings, art-glass windows, rich woods and gleaming marble. The catafalque, situated in the center of the picture, discreetly hides the lowering device that lowered the casket to the committal room below. *(Photo courtesy of Engler Cremation Collection)*

Left: Memorial Urns of Imperishable Bronze as offered by Meierjohan-Wengler, 1963. Urns like these from what was once one of America's premier urn manufacturers were the standard in cremation memorialization. Below: The Detroit Crematorium, the fifth modern crematory constructed in the U.S., shows the desire of early cremationists to create beautiful buildings to house crematories. This structure was built in 1887 and was razed in 1929. *(Photos courtesy of Engler Cremation Collection)*



in St. Louis and the Odd Fellows Crematory in San Francisco built their columbaria in freestanding buildings on their grounds in 1895 and 1897, respectively.

Families were not always distanced from the process either. At America's first cremation in 1876, more than 200 people were in attendance. Witnessing cremation was a standard practice at America's early crematories, and this practice created the necessity for family waiting rooms within crematory buildings. Over time, the process became less common, and eventually families were separated from the process entirely.

Today, many funeral establishments have once again made committal rooms and family waiting rooms an essential part of their crematory structures. For some, being closer to the process gives an additional level of closure for families.

Propaganda Wasn't Always a Bad Thing

The word propaganda has been used in a negative connotation in various periods of history, but propaganda was not always a negative tool in the history of cremation. For cremationists, it was a way to get the word out, and if there is one thing that cremationists tried their hardest to do, it was to get their ideas out. Early on, much of the ideology was very biased and negative toward burial, because much of the theme dealt with the sanitary aspect of cremation. With the advent of embalming and medicine, this became less of an argument. So most literature shifted focus toward the aesthetic of cremation. There were a few crematory and columbarium companies that excelled in this, most notably the Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland, California. Under the guidance of Lawrence Moore, known to his colleagues as "Mr. Cremation," the Chapel of the Chimes published and distributed countless pamphlets about its facility – all of which focused on its beauty and the importance of the lasting permanent cremation memorial.

Cremation Is Preparation for Inurnment

In cremation's history from the mid-1920s until the late 1980s, there was a common theme. The memorial idea was the understanding that a memorial identity established for an individual after they died was an absolute necessity in the grieving process. The memorial idea consisted of three parts: inurnment in a permanent urn; engraving the urn with a person's name and dates of birth and death; and permanent placement of the urn in a cemetery or columbarium niche.

When this idea was paramount among cremationists across the country, bronze was the standard for cremation urns. This bronze era of cremation's history produced some of the most permanent and enduring cremation urns ever created, which is precisely why bronze was selected as the medium for cremation urns – because of its permanence and durability. Bronze is a nonferrous alloy of copper and tin, making it virtually indestructible, and this is

exactly the memorial that cremationists required to fulfill the memorial idea.

This was of utmost importance, because placement in a permanent urn aided in the perpetual memorial – and therefore the lasting identity of the deceased. Additionally, as clarified in CANA's first "Manual of Standard Crematory & Columbarium Practices," published in 1941, this prevented desecration of the cremated remains – reminding all involved that cremated remains are valuable human remains.

The History of Cremation Teaches Us What Cremation Is Not

The historic cremationists in the U.S. seldom regarded cremation as direct disposition. Early on, there were arguments in favor of the economic advantage of cremation, but those arguments quickly dissolved and were replaced with statements advocating equal treatment of the deceased in cremation and burial. A 1930s pamphlet from the Hillside Chapel of the Cincinnati Cremation Co. clarified, "The body must be prepared for cremation by a funeral director in the same manner as for interment. The casket is selected in accordance with the deceased's station in life."

Cremation was never meant to be an alternative to funeral or memorial services. Most cremationists believe it is meant to be just one of many steps in the process of remembering a loved one and celebrating their life.

You Have to Drink the Kool-Aid

There is no other way to state this: Cremation is here to stay. You have to accept it as the new tradition. It may leave a bad taste in your mouth, but you have to drink from the bitter cup and adapt to best serve families who choose cremation.

Lawrence Moore, whom I mentioned earlier, started his career in death care as a 19-year-old casket salesman. One day he visited the California Crematorium, and his interest was sparked. An enterprising young man, he was approached by the crematory's board and was offered the position of manager, which he accepted. He became a believer in cremation and was inarguably the most successful crematory and columbarium operator in his time. Among his many accomplishments, he was the first to introduce the cardboard temporary container, and he invented the metal identification discs as well as the Moore Cremation Chamber, which had installations in many areas of the West Coast. He expanded the California Crematorium and changed its name to Chapel of the Chimes – even employing Julia Morgan, a famed California architect, to create unique spaces in his facility. Additionally, he coined the word "inurnment" – of which he became the chief practitioner. When he was just 20 years into his reign as manager, from 1911 to 1934, the California Crematorium conducted nearly 24,000 cremations, over half of which were placed in bronze urns and inurned in its columbarium.

When a family who chooses cremation sees you going above and beyond to celebrate and remember their loved one, not only do they get the service they deserve, but you get the benefit of knowing you took care of them like no one else could. Simply because you believed.

The Permanent Cremation Memorial Is Very Important

The permanent cremation memorial was the staple of the history of cremation in America – and for good reason. It is a necessity for future generations. Think of what has been learned about civilizations in ancient history by the study of their death practices. Scattering or keeping a loved one's remains at home removes the possibility of future archaeologists and anthropologists learning about our culture. When a name is engraved on a permanent memorial urn made of material that will last, or on a stone marking a place of rest, these permanent, tangible signs provide stepping stones for future generations.

A permanent place of rest ensures a peaceful remembrance not only of the dead, but especially for the living. There are scores of grief professionals who reiterate that memorials help those who are grieving. Seeing names and dates engraved in a permanent place speaks volumes. Look at the memorials that are erected to honor places and events that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

It is our duty as death-care professionals to explain this importance to the families in our care. Maintaining the value of human remains – whether cremated or embalmed or in any other condition – is so important. We must do all that we can to maintain the heritage of our ever-changing culture, and therefore keep ourselves and our profession relevant. To do so is to fully serve those who call on us in times of need. It is, after all, what our life's work is all about. •

Learn More About the History of Cremation

This fall, the National Museum of Funeral History and CANA will open the world's first History of Cremation exhibit. Visit www.nmfh.org to learn more about the exhibit and how you can get involved.