

What's traditional about "the traditional funeral"? Funeral rituals and the evolution of the funeral industry in Nova Scotia

Gillian Poulter

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Résumé de l'article

L'industrie des services funéraires promeut actuellement les funérailles dites « traditionnelles » comme l'option préférée des consommateurs. Par l'appel au concept de tradition, elle donne à ce type de funérailles des racines dans un passé folklorique lointain. Les recherches concernant les soins apportés au corps des défunts en Nouvelle-Écosse révèlent que si les éléments essentiels de ce genre de funérailles proviennent effectivement de traditions pré-modernes, ils ont été adaptés pour répondre aux exigences de la société de consommation moderne en substituant l'expertise professionnelle à la participation de la communauté. La transformation de l'industrie des services funéraires en Nouvelle-Écosse a été très lente, particulièrement dans les zones rurales où les services spécialisés, comme l'embaumement, se sont fait attendre plus longtemps qu'ailleurs. Les recherches démontrent ainsi que la transition entre des funérailles organisées par la famille et celles organisées par des services funéraires professionnels a varié d'une région à l'autre. Dans certains cas, le processus a été plus tardif qu'ailleurs, n'étant complété que dans les années 1950. L'étude de la transformation du discours au sujet de la mort suggère que la transition entre les funérailles familiales et professionnelles a eu d'importantes conséquences sur notre manière d'appréhender la mort.

What's traditional about "the traditional funeral"? Funeral rituals and the evolution of the funeral industry in Nova Scotia¹

GILLIAN POULTER

Abstract

The funeral services industry today promotes what it calls "the traditional funeral" as the preferred choice, a description that implies roots in the distant "folk" past. Archival research into the care of the dead in Nova Scotia reveals that the essential elements of the traditional funeral are indeed derived from pre-modern traditions, but have been adapted to modern consumer society by replacing community involvement with professional expertise. The funeral industry evolved slowly in Nova Scotia, particularly in rural areas where it took longer for services such as embalming to become available. Research shows that the transition from family control to professionalized funeral services was uneven, and in many cases did not happen until the 1950s – some decades later than was typical elsewhere. Consideration of the changing discourse of death suggests that the shift from community to traditional funerals had consequences for our experience of death.

Résumé

L'industrie des services funéraires promeut actuellement les funérailles dites « traditionnelles » comme l'option préférée des consommateurs. Par l'appel au concept de tradition, elle donne à ce type de funérailles des racines dans un passé folklorique lointain. Les recherches concernant les soins apportés au corps des défunts en Nouvelle-Écosse révèlent que si les éléments essentiels de ce genre de funérailles proviennent effectivement de traditions pré-modernes, ils ont été adaptés pour répondre aux exigences de la société de consommation moderne en substituant l'expertise professionnelle à la participation de la communauté. La transformation de l'industrie des services funéraires en Nouvelle-Écosse a été très lente, particulièrement dans les zones rurales où les services spécialisés, comme

l'embaumement, se sont fait attendre plus longtemps qu'ailleurs. Les recherches démontrent ainsi que la transition entre des funérailles organisées par la famille et celles organisées par des services funéraires professionnels a varié d'une région à l'autre. Dans certains cas, le processus a été plus tardif qu'ailleurs, n'étant complété que dans les années 1950. L'étude de la transformation du discours au sujet de la mort suggère que la transition entre les funérailles familiales et professionnelles a eu d'importantes conséquences sur notre manière d'appréhender la mort.

In corporate literature and websites, the funeral services industry promotes what it calls “the traditional funeral” as the preferred choice among families.² A traditional funeral includes the transportation of the body to a funeral home where it is embalmed, washed, dressed, placed in a casket, enhanced with cosmetics, and made available for viewing by family and friends. A funeral service is held at the funeral home chapel or in a church, and the deceased is either cremated or transported in procession to a cemetery for interment. At a later date, a memorial service may be held, a gravestone or marker put in place, or the ashes disposed of in a variety of ways.

Describing these funerals as “traditional” implies roots in the distant “folk” past, but are the procedures prescribed by contemporary funeral professionals actually a continuation of older practices, or are they invented traditions as Doug Smith suggests in his study of the Manitoba funeral industry?³ To be sure, the industry has mined the history of diverse cultures going back to ancient times to legitimize practices such as embalming and cremation.⁴ But have they done the same thing with the funeral itself? What is traditional about a traditional funeral — particularly in Nova Scotia where traditions may have persisted longer than in more affluent urban areas?

Much of the secondary literature on the history of funerals examines the British and American experience and focuses on the role of the funeral services industry.⁵ The literature on funerals in Canada is not nearly as extensive. Roy Bourgeois completed an excellent doctoral thesis on the New Brunswick funeral services industry, in which he traced the history and professionalization of the industry in that province. Brian Young has written a notable history of the Mount Royal Cemetery, founded in Montréal in 1902. A short but valuable

history of the Nova Scotia funeral profession was written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Atlantic Funeral Directors and Service Convention in 1974.⁶ However, none of these sources tell us anything about funeral practices *before* funeral homes. One exception is Doug Smith's aforementioned study, *Big Death: Funeral Planning in the Age of Corporate Deathcare*, but he uses American sources to describe pre-funeral home customs.⁷

To date, there has been little work done with primary sources for funeral practices in Canada. I began looking at funerals as part of a larger project examining how ordinary people commemorate their lives. I am particularly interested in using scrapbooks and albums as primary sources, but I have found that, unlike other family events, funerals resist visual representation. In private collections, photographs of weddings abound, but those of the funeral of Grandpa John or Aunty Sue do not. Modern scrapbooking websites have funeral page layouts as a suggested topic, but unlike the thousands of layouts submitted by readers under the headings "wedding" or "new baby" very few samples have been posted.⁸ Marian Sampson of New Minas photographed the gravestone of her mother and included it in the genealogical research material she compiled in a scrapbook in her mother's memory, but this memorial was created some time after her mother's death and describes none of the events attending her mother's actual funeral or burial.⁹ Archival examples are similarly hard to find. Post-mortem photographs enjoyed a brief popularity in the late nineteenth century, and casket photographs are reportedly fairly common in some parts of the United States.¹⁰ Besides the occasional photograph of a political leader or celebrity lying-in-state, however, only photographs of the funeral processions or grave markers of notable people appear with any regularity in Nova Scotian archival holdings, and those of ordinary people hardly at all.

Even if death and funerals were not often represented visually in the past, they were nevertheless recorded in a wide range of other sources, including personal papers and memorabilia, newspapers and periodicals, advertisements, government regulations, oral histories and interviews. I have drawn together the descriptions and comments found in these sources in order to shed light on how bodies were prepared, the role of mourners, and the rituals that constituted the

funeral and burial before or without the intervention of funeral professionals. In this paper, I will report on this research and make a few observations about the evolution of the traditional funeral and the funeral services industry in Nova Scotia. Since the term “traditional funeral,” has been claimed by the funeral industry, let me instead call the earlier funerals “community funerals” because they truly were the product of the family, friends, and neighbours who surrounded the deceased. One of the richest sources I have found so far for community funerals is a collection of published interviews with Cape Bretoners remembering funeral practices in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, before funeral homes operated in their communities.¹¹ Harald Gunderson’s compendium of funeral homes in Atlantic Canada is similarly helpful in tracing the evolution of the history of the business of funerals.¹² However, much research remains to be done, so this report and my observations must be understood as preliminary.

The “Community Funeral”

Using Nova Scotian sources, I have compiled a composite of the funeral process, where possible indicating the effects of region, religion, class, gender, and ethnicity. It is a complex analytical framework and further work is required to substantiate my interpretations and to distinguish more clearly differences between classes and urban/rural practices. However, the broad outline of the community funeral seems clear. The funeral process began immediately after a death had occurred, when female neighbours or local midwives gathered at the home of the deceased to lay out the body.¹³ This seems always to have been the work of women, although there are hints that men might have done it on occasion. Legend has it that noted United Empire Loyalist Captain John Grant of Loyal Hill, Summerville, was laid out by two village men when he died in 1790; and Maurice Donovan of Ingonish Beach remembers one man who washed and laid out a family member because he had died of an infectious disease.¹⁴

The corpse was typically laid on a bed or a flat surface, such as boards or a door, suspended between supports and covered with a white sheet. In some homes this would be in the front room, in

others the bedroom or the kitchen. First the body was washed and then, using simple materials readily at hand, the mouth was closed by tying a handkerchief under the chin and coins or pebbles were used to close the eyes. In some cases, such as extreme mutilation or if the emaciated face of a very thin corpse was too frighteningly spectral, the face was covered.¹⁵ Washing the body had a practical function, but it was an essential element in caring for the dead common in many cultures.

Once cleansed, the body was dressed. In earlier times, it was bound in a winding sheet or shroud, but in the twentieth-century it was more usual to clothe the body in the deceased's finest attire. For instance, Albert Ettinger, a funeral director from Shubenacadie, remembers "women used to be buried in their wedding dresses."¹⁶ This practice may not always have been the case or may have differed according to class. The author of *Etiquette in Canada*, published in 1932, presumably reflected elite standards when she claimed:

The English custom is to dress the dead body of a woman in a fine white nightgown covered with a dressing gown of white or pale hue Some persons are horrified at such intimate clothes being used and think a woman should be buried in a plain dress and a man in an ordinary business suit. Others feel that shrouds of white crêpe de chine are most appropriate. But the tendency is to favour every day wearing apparel.¹⁷

Were white wedding dresses the modern substitute for the white shroud and white nightgown? Probably not, especially since white wedding gowns were far from ubiquitous before World War II. White symbolized purity and was therefore considered suitable (but not essential) for transformative religious rituals such as christenings, baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. However, the pre-printed customer ledgers used by funeral homes such as Lindsay's in Kentville included a line for the cost of "burial garments" until at least the 1970s, so there was obviously considerable variation in practice. Analysis and comparison of funeral home records and individual recollections gathered in oral interviews would give a clearer idea as to the meaning and significance of burial clothes. For instance, did the

income-level of the deceased make a difference in the decision to purchase burial garments? Were women more likely to be buried in their own clothes than men? If wedding dresses were commonly used, does this indicate that a connection was seen between wedding and funeral rituals? Or, were wedding clothes merely the finest and best cared for garments in most people's wardrobes?

While the body was being prepared by the women, a six-sided coffin was being constructed by a local carpenter or lumber mill. It was a full day's work and might be done without charge since the maker saw it as his contribution to the community. Patrick Robinson of Ingonish Beach explained, "I liked to do it. I figured that I was doing a good deed."¹⁸ He used three-quarter-inch pine planks to make coffins and took pride in custom-measuring them to make sure they fit snugly. He covered the coffin with black cotton cloth and local women made "a tucker," a padded lining of pleated white silk, to fit around the body. A small pillow elevated the deceased's head and purchased metal handles, a cross, and breastplate completed the exterior.¹⁹ The breastplate or coffin plate could have commemorative details inscribed on it and was kept as a keepsake by the family rather than buried with the coffin. Children's coffins were, of course, much smaller and covered with white rather than black fabric, perhaps symbolizing the purity of a young child's soul.

The preference for cloth-covered coffins apparently came from abroad. When Hannah Booth died, her grief-stricken husband, Captain William Booth, a British Royal Engineer posted in Shelburne, ordered a coffin covered with black cloth and trimmed with yellow nails. He noted in his journal that in Nova Scotia "'tis not usual to cover the coffin with cloth, however, I ordered them to ... comply with our custom."²⁰ By around 1840 cloth-covered coffins had become more common. In a talk about funeral customs from those times Dr. W.O. Raymond, a gentleman historian, explained that coffins for ordinary people were made of pine polished with lamp black, but the wealthy had them covered with cloth and trimmed with what he described as a tin foil material — probably tinplate.²¹ By 1890, cloth caskets had become *de rigueur* for the wealthy. An editorial in *The Funeral Director* advised, "At the present time cloth caskets are in demand by the rich, both here and in the

States.” Fine cloth caskets were the most highly prized, “with mountings to suit the taste and pocket of the purchaser.”²² By the time Mr. Robinson was making his cloth-covered coffins in the interwar years, what had been an imported and élite style of coffin had become the norm.

The body was kept in the home from one to three days, although hot weather or a very obese corpse might require speedy burial. In winter, the stove was allowed to go out to keep the house cool. If ice was available, a bathtub full was placed under the body, or ice was packed around the abdomen to slow decomposition and minimize odour.²³ The fear of being buried alive continued strong into the twentieth century, so for some it was important to see the signs of decay because that verified the person was actually dead.²⁴ Even in the 1960s, in Havre Boucher, Antigonish County, Clement Munroe recalls it was customary to wake “the person at home or at a relative’s home in the village for a two-day period. The funeral was held on the third day at 9:00 a.m. followed by interment in the parish cemetery at the rear of the church.”²⁵

What took place during the period in which the corpse was in the home differed from one place to another. Generally, neighbours stayed up all night, taking turns to sit with the body. “You wouldn’t leave the body alone,” remembered Mrs. Willie D. Deveau of Belle Marche, Cape Breton.²⁶ Superstition played a part in this practice. For instance, Nova Scotians of Scottish heritage knew the reason their ancestors watched over the body was to protect it from enemies who might try to steal it.²⁷ In some homes, the visitation or wake period was a social occasion where stories were told, music was played, and the life of the deceased remembered fondly (or not). In other homes, it was a more solemn affair with little talking, although hymns might be sung or prayers said. In either case, visitors were often fed, although this practice too was variable. Mrs. Deveau remembered visitors were served lunches every few hours during the night,²⁸ but in Neil’s Harbour, Cape Breton, there was no food, drink, or singing, which Emily Seymour put down to her neighbours’ Newfoundland heritage and Anglican and Presbyterian faith.²⁹ The visitation period served as a time of remembrance. As Mrs. Deveau explained, it might have made it easier for the family if the arrangements were taken over

by a funeral home, but, "Maybe I would have felt worse than I did here. There's not as much remembrance [in the funeral home]. In the house, you remember everything."³⁰

When the time of visitation or wake was over, the coffin might be moved to the church for the funeral service; but even in towns where there was close proximity to churches and funeral homes, until after World War II, it was common for the funeral to take place in the residence. For instance, Win Brown of Brown Funeral Home in Springhill recalls that at the time of the 1956 mine disaster, "services started from the residence of the deceased following visitation."³¹ It must often have been a logistical nightmare with friends, neighbours, clergy, and flowers crowded into the house. A funeral notice in *The Kentville Advertiser* reported that 50 Salvation Army officers and soldiers, as well as friends and relatives, attended Mrs. Daisy Well's funeral in August 1926. So many guests must have filled her mother's home to bursting,³² but may also have been a point of pride and demonstrated the family's social standing.

At Catholic funerals in White Point, Cape Breton, the priest was met at the door with a candle and everyone in the house knelt down and remained kneeling while the sacrament was administered. After saying the rosary, mourners rose and talked to the priest.³³ Protestant services were typically short; John MacDonald estimated they took about 15 minutes in Breton Cove, but this might differ according to status and means. Many of the funerals announced in Kings County newspapers in the 1920s noted the presence of a choir or quartette of singers, as well as an abundance of floral tributes. The funerals remembered by the Cape Bretoners interviewed were not so elaborate: after a short service, with perhaps a hymn and a prayer, the coffin was carried to the church for another service, or taken directly to the cemetery. Besides religious denomination, the contrast between these funerals may have been due to differences in location and class. Kings County had more towns and was closer to Halifax, so therefore may have been influenced by urban practices. Without a clearer picture of what those urban practices were, I cannot substantiate this claim. Perhaps the differences were due to the class of those involved. Again, more definitive research needs to be done, and, most particularly, how to define and assign class in rural Nova Scotia, where

ethnicity or income level might be a more relevant marker than employment status, needs to be determined.

In White Point, Bob Fitzgerald recalls that family and neighbours dug the grave themselves and carried the coffin on their shoulders, followed by a procession of mourners. He interprets this practice as an example of neighbourly love saying: “It showed that you weren’t alone When there was somebody died, the whole community mourned the loss of one of their number.”³⁴ In Lunenburg County, German customs were followed. Grave singers led the procession to the burial site, stopping to sing German hymns along the way; and artificial flowers made by girls in the community were laid on the grave.³⁵ In most community funerals the coffin was taken to the burial ground on a horse-drawn wagon, with family and neighbours following by carriage or on foot. Sometimes coffins were brought in or out of residences with some difficulty — tight quarters might mean a window had to be removed, or the coffin had to be sledded over heavy snows. A tall body laid out upstairs might prove difficult to bring down a narrow staircase.³⁶ Especially heavy coffins might be difficult to carry and lower into the ground. Writing about Halifax in the mid-nineteenth century, Dr. Raymond recalled that the coffin of one deceased was carried by 12 men rather than the usual four or six pallbearers, who then had to dig an incline into the side of the grave in order to lever the coffin down on rollers.³⁷ Winter brought its own complications as the ground had to be either thawed with bonfires or dug with pick and shovel, or the bodies had to be stored in a receiving vault until spring, when there was a mad rush to bury them before the weather got too warm.³⁸

The Transition From “Community” To “Traditional” Funerals

It appears that what the funeral services industry calls “the traditional funeral” derived its essential elements from pre-modern traditions, but were adapted to the modern industrial environment by replacing community involvement with professional expertise. Understandably, this shift was necessary in an urban environment. In 1920s Halifax, a community burial was not possible because the rural sense of community had been lost. Where housing and jobs were uncertain and

transience common, families were less likely to have neighbours and kin available to help with preparation of the body or to visit with the deceased.³⁹ Men working for wages were not in a position to take a day off to build a coffin or attend a weekday funeral.⁴⁰ Instead, families hired an undertaker or funeral director to provide a facsimile of the community funeral that they equated with a proper burial. Equally, in the more rural areas of the province, a traditional funeral was not available because families lacked access to a funeral home. The transition from family control to professionalized funeral services was, therefore, uneven in Nova Scotia. In Halifax and major towns, funeral directors took control of the dead much earlier than in rural areas. While the 1920s is seen as a watershed era in the American experience, in Nova Scotia older ways continued to be widespread throughout the interwar years. It was not until the 1950s that a major shift is evident in the way Nova Scotians dealt with their dead.

The funeral business began in the nineteenth century with the emergence of undertaking — basically men with horse-drawn carts who were hired to transport the coffin from the home to the grave site, or to undertake more comprehensive arrangements, such as procuring a coffin and providing mourning clothes, pall bearers and a hearse. As was typical elsewhere, in Nova Scotia undertaking began as a side-venture for carpenters, who had a vehicle and could also make the coffin. Undertaking on its own was not particularly lucrative in rural areas. “Anti-Humbug” noted in a trade magazine in 1890, “some of the country Undertakers do not have more than a dozen funerals in a year.”⁴¹ Undertakers such as S.J. (Jud) Ray of Aylesford, who operated in the 1890s, also repaired carriages and sleighs. He did not make the coffins himself, preferring to order them ready-made from a funeral furnisher — a wholesaler of funeral goods. Ray picked up the coffins from the train and delivered them to the residence.⁴² In time, and in the right location, undertaking did become a viable business. The earliest Nova Scotia reference I have found so far to a specialist undertaker is a report of an advertisement for John Cumming and Company placed in a Halifax newspaper in 1832. Cumming had “fitted up a hearse” which he promised would cost little, if any, more than the cost of hiring bearers.⁴³ At the other

end of the time-line, John P. Covert was still listed as an undertaker and ambulance service in the Kentville civic directory in 1965.⁴⁴

The professionalization of funeral services followed a similar path to that of other occupations, most notably the medical profession. By the turn of the twentieth century doctors had emerged as the dominant group in the field of healthcare, usurping the role of midwives and exerting control over nurses.⁴⁵ Simultaneously, male funeral professionals were also taking the care of the dead out of the hands of women, some of whom had been community midwives. In the next few decades, funeral practitioners in every province organized themselves into professional groups which established their own recognized body of knowledge, specialized training, and code of conduct. At the urging of these new provincial associations, the state reinforced the authority of the funeral profession by passing legislation regulating licensing, embalming, and the transportation of bodies. In Nova Scotia the first Embalming Act was enacted in 1912, and similar legislation was passed in other provinces.⁴⁶ It is no coincidence that professionalization happened during the transition to consumer society, when services and commodities were being constructed as “needs” and their consumption became a marker of identity.

The transition from undertaker to professional, licensed funeral director happened at various times in different places. Undertakers were active in Britain as early as the eighteenth century, but it was the American popularization of embalming, as a result of the Civil War, that allowed the British, American, and, subsequently, Canadian funeral professions to gain status and legitimacy.⁴⁷ The training required to master the science of embalming gave practitioners a claim to professional status, and changing ideas about death and the psychology of grieving later positioned funeral directors as experts in bereavement counselling.

The American profession traces its origins to the foundation of the National Funeral Directors' Association in 1882, but progress was slower in Canada, taking until 1926 when the Canadian National Funeral Directors' Association was formed. An article in *The Funeral Director*, March 1890, regretted the lack of applicants for a diploma from the Board of Examiners of the Undertakers

Association of Ontario. The writer urged men to get a diploma because “it would give the public more faith in their ability to perform their duties than anything else possibly could.” Embalming was the basis of professional training in this early period. Sixteen self-styled funeral directors from Nova Scotia joined the Maritime Funeral Directors’ Association when it was formed in 1902. They offered comprehensive services, including embalming, a large range of caskets, mourning supplies, and all necessary arrangements for the funeral and burial. However, it is unlikely that many of these practitioners had received formal training at one of the American schools of embalming. Some, like William J. Dooley of North Sydney, who received his embalming certificate in 1902, would merely have taken a course lasting a few days from a travelling instructor.⁴⁸ Subsequent generations of funeral directors received increasingly rigorous training; by the 1930s embalming courses required nine months of instruction.⁴⁹

Public disasters, such as the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, the Halifax Explosion of 1917, and the influenza epidemic in 1918–1919, drew public attention to the role and expertise of funeral directors and helped to legitimize embalming in the province.⁵⁰ Funeral directors, such as John Snow of Halifax, who by 1909 was known as one of the “pioneer embalmers in this province,”⁵¹ were commended for their valuable service in protecting public health and preserving bodies for identification during the *Titanic* rescue effort. Newspaper stories told of the presence of embalmers on salvage vessels, and their organization of hastily set up morgues. For instance, the *Mackay-Bennett* left Halifax “with coffins, a hundred tons of ice, an undertaker and a chaplain,” but found so many bodies “that embalming fluid ran out and 116 had to be buried at sea.”⁵² This salvage operation publicized embalming and attracted clients to Halifax companies, such as the Nova Scotia Undertaking Company, begun in 1902 by D.C. Cruickshank. Cruickshank was a furniture-maker, who, having suitable vehicles, also offered undertaking and an ambulance and firefighting service. Dale Jackson argues in a brief history of the company that it was the public disasters that put the undertaking side of the business on a stable financial footing.⁵³

In the American literature, the 1920s are seen as a milestone in

the evolution of the funeral services industry. James J. Farrell, one of the foremost historians of the American way of death, marks that decade as the time at which a complex of social, intellectual, and cultural changes made embalming standard practice in the Northern states and rendered community funerals less appealing.⁵⁴ Gary Laderman makes a similar argument, claiming that by the 1920s, funeral homes were commonplace in the United States. He points to demographic changes, decreasing mortality, and the growth in hospitals and the medical profession as reasons. In addition, he explains that more people were dying in hospital and the design of family homes was changing, leaving no space for laying out the body. Furthermore, the location of municipal cemeteries on the outskirts of town made transportation necessary for the casket — whether by horse-drawn carriage or automobile. In this new, modern environment, the funeral industry was able to flourish.⁵⁵

However, these arguments do not particularly ring true for rural Nova Scotia. Institutional and structural changes took longer to take effect in the province. House design in rural areas was not subject to the pressures affecting urban architecture, and the change of location of burial sites was unlikely to make much difference to families living outside of town anyway. The number of people dying in hospital was low in the 1920s, and the self-sufficient character of rural communities and low average income meant there was insufficient customer-base to support full service funeral homes, so the funeral services industry was relatively slow in taking over the care of the dead in rural areas. In rural Nova Scotia, the watershed moment appears to come three decades later — in the 1950s.

It is hard to say when embalming first became available in rural Nova Scotia. There were certainly some embalmers operating in the early decades of the century. Frederick Roop graduated from the New England Institute of Embalming in 1912 and took over his father's business in Middleton, and the ledgers of Borden's Undertakers in Hantsport show that they embalmed Richard McNealy in 1913, charging \$10 to do so. More research is needed to determine how common it was at that time. An indication that embalming came later to Canada can be found in the claim of the Dodge Chemical Company (the largest supplier of embalming chemicals in the world

at that time) that a subsidiary was established in Canada “in the early 1930s, as embalming became more widely practiced.”⁵⁶ It is safe to say that a few embalmers operated in larger towns in Nova Scotia in the 1920s, but embalming (hence professional funeral industry services) were only available later in small towns, and later still in remote areas of the province.

In the early years, embalming was done at the deceased’s home, in the barn or kitchen, using a gravity bottle or hand pump. Embalming in the home was common enough that training manuals included instructions on how to keep furniture clean and dispose of waste fluids.⁵⁷ Some funeral directors continued to use this method right up to the 1950s. William G. Dooley from North Sydney began his career as an undertaker in 1897, but did not open his own funeral home until around 1952. Before then he embalmed bodies at their homes, or if they died in hospital he moved them back to their homes in order to work on them there. Chewing continuously on tobacco, which he considered to be a disinfectant, he and his colleagues experimented with different ways to make the body look life-like, practicing on sailors who had no family around to criticize the results. While their embalming techniques seem crude today, they were apparently effective because Dooley kept one embalmed body standing in the corner of his office for a year in the hope that someone would recognize him.⁵⁸

Dooley was not alone in ending the practice of home embalming in the 1950s. Bill Freeman took over Zink’s Funeral Home in Mahone Bay in 1946 and remembers that “going to the home of the deceased and embalming and casketing in close proximity to the family ... came to an end in the 1950s when more people were passing away in the hospital and the funeral homes of the province were much better equipped to deal with death and dying.”⁵⁹ After George Francis of Sydney Mines got his license from the William J. Collier School of Embalming in New York in 1935, he often took his equipment to the home of the deceased. He recalls, “not everyone wanted to pay for embalming, so it wasn’t unusual for the deceased to be washed and dressed and placed in the casket by relatives or friends.” However, when he moved the business to a new location in the early 1950s, he insisted that bodies had to be prepared in his new facilities rather than in the home.⁶⁰ This shift indicates that differences in

funeral practices that could have been due to class or local custom may have been erased by the growing hegemony of the funeral services industry.

Attitudes to death and mourning continued to evolve in the interwar years, as did knowledge about disease and sanitation, making the presence of a decomposing body in the home less tolerable. Old customs were dying — John MacDonald of Breton Cove explains that the custom of sitting up with the body lapsed in the 1940s due to the influence of outside ideas. The first time he remembers it happening was in 1943 or 1944 when family members who had arrived from Boston for a funeral sent everybody home, saying, “There’s no need of anybody staying up. Because they don’t do it away This is all foolishness ... sitting up with the dead. That’s gone down the river.”⁶¹ Thus, by the 1950s, with a growing number of funeral homes opening for business in small rural towns, it became usual for the body to be embalmed and left at the funeral home for the visitation period. However, this was far from universal. Clement Munroe claims that in Havre Boucher, Antigonish County, wakes did not move from the home to the funeral home until the 1980s.⁶²

Post-World War II Challenges

World War II marked a number of changes in the care of the dead in Nova Scotia. Until then, there existed a mix of community funerals entirely controlled and organized by the family, community funerals partly assisted by an undertaker, and traditional funerals under the control and direction of a funeral director. After the war the proliferation of funeral homes and the success of the funeral services industry in popularizing embalming and “the traditional funeral” as the best way for families to deal with their grief, meant that the industry took control of death in Nova Scotia. However, the funeral business also became the target of public criticism. Though not a legal requirement, embalming became ubiquitous. A scathing critique of the American industry by Jessica Mitford in 1963 accused funeral directors of forcing clients to pay for embalming and a long list of other over-priced goods and services.⁶³ Although these accusations were

hotly denied by the funeral industry, there was some truth to them. For example, a commonly used textbook for funeral directors advised giving the embalming fluids a few hours to work before dressing the body. The author counseled that this would also be a convenient opportunity “to sell burial garments.”⁶⁴

Casket sales had become crucial to the bottom-line of the funeral industry, but the practice of inflating the price of caskets came under scrutiny as a result of Mitford’s book. Caskets were an American invention that had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century,⁶⁵ and they illustrate a series of changes that took place in production, in religious beliefs, and in western culture generally. The rectangular, rather than six-sided, design of the casket was streamlined for mass production; they did not need to be custom-made and could be produced in a variety of woods and finishes. In addition, the rectangular shape was less of a reminder of what reposed inside than the form-fitting coffin. Since many Canadian undertakers purchased them ready-made, caskets came to be more commonly used than coffins when undertakers or funeral directors were involved. The shift from coffins to caskets is clearly evident in the ledgers of Borden Undertakers of Hantsport.⁶⁶ The earliest casket sold by Borden’s was to Albert Davison in June 1889. The following month, Theo Marsters paid \$28 for an embossed casket. Only 19 caskets in total were sold before 1894, but in that year only seven coffins were sold, indicating a rapid switch in consumer demand.⁶⁷ It was evidently not a matter of cost since the charge for a coffin before 1894 ranged from under \$15 to \$40, with \$25 or \$30 being usual, while caskets were a similar price, ranging from \$25 to \$65. However, the cost differential increased considerably after 1894. Between 1894 and 1918 (the latest date a coffin was sold), the most expensive coffin sold was \$31, with most being \$25 or less. At the same time, casket prices were generally in the \$35–70 range.⁶⁸ This indicates that coffins had become a cheaper alternative to caskets, but since caskets vastly outsold coffins after 1894, it is clear that cost was not a factor. It could be that growing affluence and the influence of elite taste and fashion were responsible, or perhaps coffins were no longer as readily available. Further research may reveal the cause of this shift, and whether it was a general trend.

Another innovation was metallic caskets. Stove manufacturers began to produce embossed metal caskets which were sold as a handsome and more effective way to preserve the body. Advertisements promised metal caskets would protect the body from both decay and grave robbers — suggesting that these were either genuine contemporary fears or ingenious marketing ploys. Set within the burial vault or case increasingly required by cemeteries to prevent the ground over the grave from sinking, the casket was equated to a jewellery box protecting its precious contents.⁶⁹ They proved puzzling for rural Nova Scotians who had not seen a metal vault before. A retired railway worker recalled, “In quite early years a young man’s body was brought home from the States in a casket having an outer copper vault; not knowing what the vault was for, it was not known how to open it, so using chisels, etc. it was removed with difficulty, and taken to a nearby barn and used as a grain bin for years.”⁷⁰

The pages of *Canadian Funeral Service*, a monthly trade magazine from Toronto founded in 1923, illustrate the challenges the industry faced in the immediate postwar period. The Canadian funeral industry relied heavily on American suppliers, schooling, and experts. Articles and anecdotes make it clear that, even before the Mitford book was published, North American funeral directors were struggling to overcome a public image tarnished by stereotypical Dickensian-like characters from the early 1800s. Articles advised funeral directors to emphasize their professional expertise by providing customers with facts about their services and equipment, and to “reflect ... [a] friendly, helpful attitude toward” the families they serve, rather than to “depend upon stereotyped generalities and like a stuffed-shirt orator rely upon lordly gestures to produce the hoped for effect.”⁷¹ Here, made explicit, was the substitution of funeral professionals for neighbours and kin — funeral directors were advised to act as if they were the neighbours their services had replaced.

Other articles advocate the use of advertising and public relations to counter attacks on the profession regarding the “high cost of dying.”⁷² The idea of using advertising and public relations as a business tool was quite controversial; writers had to overcome the resistance of funeral directors to new ideas about marketing caused

by the fact that their professional code of ethics had long counseled against self-promotion. For instance, the mortuary law textbook used by future Kentville funeral director Paul R. Whitman, while studying for his funeral license in 1946, admonished students to uphold the dignity of the profession, and advised, "It is derogatory to the dignity of the profession to resort to public advertisements, or private cards, or use of handbills, inviting the attention of the public to any of the wares connected with our profession." While not going so far as to prohibit advertising professional funeral services themselves, the author insisted, "A Funeral Director should rely on his professional abilities and acquirements in order to merit the confidence and secure the patronage of his community."⁷³

Like other businesses trying to make a profit, funeral directors did eventually absorb the latest ideas in advertising and marketing. Segmented marketing, frequent product changes in style and colour, the use of new materials, and creating a positive professional demeanour, were all tactics employed in the postwar funeral services industry. In the course of only two years, 1948–1949, increased and more sophisticated use of product advertising, frequent discussion of the need for and ways to promote professional education, an increasing use of photography, and more elaborate classified advertising are evident in the magazine.

Increasing demand for cremation was another challenge faced by the funeral industry. Like embalming, it took some time for the public to accept cremation, and Nova Scotia lagged behind other provinces in this regard. The first modern cremation in Canada occurred 18 April 1902 at the newly opened Mount Royal Cemetery. The next crematories were not opened until 1912 in Vancouver and 1933 in Ontario.⁷⁴ Several more crematories were opened during the 1930s in response to increased demand for low-cost burials. The first crematory in the Maritimes was opened in 1939 in Saint John, New Brunswick,⁷⁵ but it was not until 1974 that Harold Mattatall installed the first Nova Scotian crematory in Dartmouth.⁷⁶ As with embalming, high profile public events played a part in legitimizing cremation. A writer in *Canadian Funeral Service* explained in 1949:

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Cremations in Toronto are increasing as prejudices against this form of funeral decline with the years, according to a recent press dispatch. Moving pictures of the last rites of the martyred Mahatma Ghandi brought numerous requests for particulars at the city's two establishments, Toronto Crematorium and St. James'. At present there is about one cremation in Toronto every day.⁷⁷

Cremation may have been slow to catch on in Nova Scotia for several reasons. Certainly there was strong opposition to cremation by the Roman Catholic Church, which forbade it in 1886 and did not lift the ban until 1963.⁷⁸ To be sure, cremation was counter to the interests of funeral directors, who built their profession on the provision of embalming and saw cremation as a threat to their income.⁷⁹ Direct burial was less expensive because it cut out services and products and therefore funeral directors had little interest in investing in a crematory or encouraging those who would build them. These factors kept cremation at the level of "a fringe practice in Canada" into the 1950s.⁸⁰ I think the most compelling reason for the late arrival of crematories in Nova Scotia was the largely rural nature of the province and hence the persistence of community funerals. Community funerals were already low cost, so there was no consumer pressure for low-cost funerals as there was in urban areas where traditional funerals had become common. It was only in the 1970s that rural consumers began to protest the high cost of traditional funerals and looked for alternatives. Gunderson calls Harold Mattatall "a visionary" who "saw the turning tide towards cremation" when he installed the first crematorium.⁸¹ I suggest Mattatall was responding to growing consumer unrest, as well as the fact that by the 1970s funeral directors elsewhere had shown that new products and traditions could be invented around cremation to replace any lost revenue — in other words the traditional funeral had been reinvented to include the possibility of cremation.

Observations

The transition from community to traditional funerals had consequences for our experience of death. Eager to claim professional status, funeral directors standardized their services to include embalming and elements of élite nineteenth century mourning pageantry.⁸² Embalming was successfully promoted by funeral directors as a way to ease the grieving process by providing families with a last “memory-picture” of the deceased looking as life-like as possible. Creating a natural look was, therefore, a key objective in the embalming process and much care was taken to massage exposed skin with cream and dust it with powder to get a natural effect. The eyes and mouth were closed in a natural pose and family members or friends were encouraged to assist in dressing the deceased and arranging the hair once the body is in the coffin.⁸³ Thus, what was viewed in the funeral parlour was not the deceased, but a representation of the deceased as if he or she were alive. In community funerals the body was a reminder and evidence of death; in traditional funerals the body was presented as if still alive — the fact of death had been papered over. The discourse of death changed; families and friends no longer “visited” the deceased but “viewed” the deceased. In attending the community funeral “visitation”, mourners kept the body company until burial, and affirmed their relationship with the deceased and his or her family and other community members. In this way, community funeral rituals played a role in constructing and maintaining community ties. In the traditional funeral, the purpose of “viewing” was not to meet friends and family, but only to look at the body. Viewing the body is different from visiting the body. Whereas in community funerals the relationship with the deceased continued after death, in traditional funerals the lifelike corpse became a mnemonic object rather than the person him or herself. It was a reminder of a relationship that ended at death, as illustrated by the fact that now we leave the body unaccompanied in the funeral home. The deceased is not a participant in the “viewing” in the same way as she or he was in the “visitation.” For instance, today it is impossible to imagine the coffin being stood on end so that the deceased can enjoy the party, as described by Patrick Slater in his story of a wake in early twentieth century Canada West.⁸⁴

Similarly, the discourse of funeral professionals as “directors” is significant. Community funerals in Nova Scotia did not need to be “directed;” they emerged organically and pragmatically, taking shape according to the skills and resources of family and neighbours, and the customs of their particular community and religion. If an undertaker could not be hired, the coffin was carried. If mourners did not have a carriage, they walked. If the church or community graveyard was too far, bodies were buried in family plots. In community funerals there were no spectators — there were only participants. Instead of an intimate, corporeal experience with the deceased, the traditional funeral took the body out of the control of the family; funerals became more a public performance than a participatory event. Perhaps because of this depersonalization and distancing from death, a new need was constructed — namely bereavement counseling — which the funeral industry stepped in to provide. In traditional funerals mourners needed to be taught what to do and how to feel, they were actors who followed the directions of the funeral professionals. The funeral procession has become a spectacle to be viewed by strangers, just as it was for elite funerals in the nineteenth century.

My preliminary research illustrates how the modern industrial environment, along with intellectual and cultural changes, altered people’s experience of and relationship to death. Caring for the dead was traditionally the work of family and neighbours, but the forms of this ritual were appropriated and increasingly carried out by professionals in modern consumer society. Funerals continued to be rituals that bore great cultural significance and meaning, as illustrated by Suzanne Morton’s study of working-class families in Halifax in the interwar years. She contends that even low-income families would go into debt or scrape together regular payments for insurance or burial club dues in order to provide their loved ones with a suitable burial.⁸⁵ Funeral professionals both satisfied and created clients’ needs by appropriating historical precedents and community rituals in their invention of “the traditional funeral” for the urban environment. In time, their professional services infiltrated rural areas and the traditional funeral became the dominant practice. What was not traditional in this new form was the substitution of professional services for community involvement, and in rural areas of Nova Scotia older forms persisted several decades

longer. Further research is needed to determine whether regional differences, the urban/rural divide, class, ethnicity or other factors made Nova Scotia exceptional, or whether Canadians share a common history in their response to death and caring for the dead.

GILLIAN POULTER is Associate Professor of Canadian History at Acadia University. Her current research project examines the ways in which ordinary people commemorate their lives. She is the author of *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture, and Identity in Montreal 1840-1885*.

GILLIAN POULTER est professeure agrégée en histoire canadienne à Acadia University. Ses recherches actuelles portent sur la manière dont les gens ordinaires commémorent leur vie. Elle est l'auteure de *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture, and Identity in Montreal 1840-1885*.

Endnotes:

- 1 The research for this paper was made possible by funding from a SSHRC Institutional Grant and the Acadia University Research Fund. I am grateful for the invaluable assistance of Katherine Akerman in researching this topic as well as the insightful comments of anonymous readers.
- 2 This claim is made explicitly by Carnells' Funeral Home, St. John's, Nfld., <<http://www.carnells.com/service.aspx?id=131>>, (viewed 20 June 2011), but the term has become so widely recognized that most companies assume it does not need to be explained to consumers. Direct Funeral Services (a network of funeral homes across Canada) takes another approach and warns consumers what to expect of a "traditional" funeral in order to sell its own discounted services, <<http://www.canadianfunerals.com/funeral-homes.html>>, (viewed 13 June 2011).
- 3 Doug Smith, *Big Death. Funeral Planning in the Age of Corporate Deathcare* (Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood, 2007).
- 4 For instance, the texts currently used for online courses offered to funeral professionals by Elite Continuing Education, include, "History of Embalming and Restorative Art" and "Religion and the Funeral Director (Religious, Cultural and National Traditions: Funeral Rites and Customs

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- in the USA.” Both rely on historical precedents for contemporary practices. <<http://www.elitecme.com/dynamic/course.cgi?session=3526&page=course&ttestid=FFL12HI11>>.
- 5 The American industry is explored in James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death 1830–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), and Gary Laderman, *Rest in Peace. A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); the British industry in John Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (1971), and Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth, eds., *The Changing Face of Death* (Macmillan, 1997).
 - 6 Roy Bourgeois, “La Commercialisation de la mort à Moncton, 1856–1914,” (Ph.D. diss., Laval University, 1999); Brian Young, *Respectable Burial: Montreal’s Mount Royal Cemetery* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003); Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (hereafter NSARM), mfm 12564, no. 21, “A Tribute to the Funeral Profession. Report on This Our 25th Anniversary of the Atlantic Provinces Funeral Directors and Service Convention,” 1974.
 - 7 Doug Smith, 17.
 - 8 There are many online scrapbooking sites. For example, see <<http://www.scrapjazz.com/gallery/>>.
 - 9 Marian Sampson, interview by author, New Minas, N.S., 10 April 2007.
 - 10 When I begin the interview phase of this project, I may find that casket photographs are more common in Nova Scotia than it appears from my research to date in public collections.
 - 11 “How We Buried Our Dead,” *Cape Breton’s Magazine* 18 (December 1977): 32–48.
 - 12 Harald Gunderson, ed., *A History of Funeral Service in Atlantic Canada: stories and photographs of funeral directors and funeral homes, cremationists, cemeterians, memorialists and monument makers of Atlantic Provinces*, compiled and edited for the Atlantic Provinces Funeral Directors and Service Convention, 1949–1999 (Bedford, N.S.: The Convention, c.1999).
 - 13 Mary Ann Norris of Wolfville was the daughter of a minister who routinely helped families prepare their dead, a task so commonplace that she gives no details in her diary of how this was done. Randall House Museum, Wolfville, N.S., “The Diary of Mary Ann Norris, 1818–1839.”
 - 14 Edith Mosher, *North along Shore*, (Windsor, N.S.: Lancelot Press, c.1975), 48. Also Maurice Donovan interview in “How We Buried Our Dead,” 37.
 - 15 “How we Buried Our Dead,” 33. This practice may have originated in pagan times to stop the spirit escaping through the mouth. For a discussion of this see <www.wyfda.org>.
 - 16 Gunderson, 271.

- 17 Gertrude Pringle, *Etiquette in Canada: the blue book of Canadian social usage* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1932), 373.
- 18 "How we Buried Our Dead," 37.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 20 Eleanor Smith, "A Contrast of Mourning Styles," *The Occasional* 11, 1 (1988): 21.
- 21 NSARM, C.B. Ferguson Papers (hereafter CBFP), MG1, vol. 1855, folder 5, Dr. Raymond Scrapbook, "Funerals in the Olden Times," n.p.; H.C. Mytum, *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004), 38.
- 22 *The Funeral Director* (Montréal) IV, 3 (15 March 1890): 40–1. Mountings would have included stamped metal edgings, escutcheons, lid motifs, hinges, grips and breastplates. Mytum, 38. Most caskets were imported, but in 1890, there were four casket manufacturers in Ontario, one in Québec and one in Amherst, NS.
- 23 Lisa Smith, Faculty, Funeral and Allied Health Services, NSCC, interview by author, 12 March 2011.
- 24 Mrs. Willie D. Deveau of Belle Marche wanted to be embalmed for this reason. "How We Buried Our Dead," 32.
- 25 Clement Munroe, "The Changing Face of Funeral Service," in Gunderson, 297.
- 26 "How We Buried Our Dead," 33.
- 27 John Alex John X. MacDonald, Breton Cove, in *Ibid.*, 43.
- 28 "How we Buried Our Dead," 33.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 31 Gunderson, 244.
- 32 Obituary, *Kentville Advertiser* (3 September 1926), 6.
- 33 Bob Fitzgerald, "How We Buried Our Dead," 48.
- 34 "How we Buried," 47.
- 35 NSARM, CBFP, MG1, vol. 1855, folder 5, "Funeral Customs in Nova Scotia."
- 36 Peter Willy Murphy, New Waterford, "How We Buried Our Dead," 38.
- 37 NSARM, CBFP, Dr. Raymond's Scrapbook, no. 3, 112, "Funerals in the Olden Times"; NSARM, MG1, vol. 771, no. 17.
- 38 Young, 34.
- 39 Halifax in the 1920s is described in Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: domestic life in a working-class suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
- 40 Industrial time discipline prevailed in urban areas and was another factor facilitating the transformation of funeral practices. Sunday was the most popular day for the funeral service because people working for day wages could not afford to take time off during the week.

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- 41 *The Funeral Director*, 41.
- 42 John A. de Costa, *A History of Aylesford and District* ([n.p.], 1986), 90–1.
- 43 Attributed to *The Occasional* (30 December 1916). Note affixed to NSARM, CBFP, MG1, vol. 1855, folder 5, “Funeral Customs in Nova Scotia.” In comparison, the first mention of specialized undertakers that Bourgeois could find in Moncton was 21 November 1877. Bourgeois, 187.
- 44 Whether Covert was also embalming and directing funerals, like the two funeral homes in the town, is unclear and merits further research. There is a fascinating link between funeral homes and ambulance services that also needs to be explored. Before they were consolidated in the 1990s as Emergency Medical Services, most ambulance services available in the province were run independently by funeral homes. This seems to have been because funeral homes had suitable vehicles and staff with some medical knowledge.
- 45 Nurses responded in the 1920s by professionalizing themselves; in Nova Scotia midwives are still struggling for autonomy today.
- 46 “A Tribute to the Funeral Profession,” n.p.
- 47 Glennys Howarth, “Professionalising the Funeral Industry in England 1700–1960,” in Jupp & Howarth, 120, 129.
- 48 Dooley’s certificate can be seen in Gunderson, 265. It shows that Dooley took his course in Saint John at the Maritime Casket Company with an instructor from the Renouard Training School in New York. Dooley claimed Dr. Renouard lectured in Saint John for a company that built caskets and sold fluid. “How we Buried Our Dead,” 44. This could have been Dr. Renouard’s son, Charles A. Renouard, who worked for Dolge and Huncke, an embalming supplier. Edward C. Johnson, et al., “The Origins and history of embalming,” in *Embalming: Principles & Legal Aspects*, ed. M.L. Ajmani (New Delhi: Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers Ltd., 1998), 40. A typical Renouard workshop took ten days.
- 49 Smith, 23.
- 50 Laderman, 29, makes the same observation about the effect of public disasters in the United States. Smith claims it was the influenza epidemic that established funeral directors in Winnipeg. Smith, 22.
- 51 Gunderson quoting from *The City of Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, Canada : its advantages and facilities, compiled under approval of the Board of Trade ; also a series of comprehensive sketches of some of its representative business enterprises* (Halifax, N.S.: Macnab, 1909), 177.
- 52 “The unsinkable ship and Halifax,” <<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mma/AtoZ/titanicinfo.html>> (viewed 22 June 2011).
- 53 *Canadian Funeral News* (March 1999).
- 54 Farrell, 6–12, 157.
- 55 Laderman, 19, 4–5.

- 56 Gunderson, 146.
- 57 C.F. Callaway, *The Art of Funeral Directing. A Practical Manual on Modern Funeral Directing Methods* (Chicago: Undertakers' Supply Co., 1928), 17–20.
- 58 William Dooley, "How we Buried Our Dead," 46.
- 59 Gunderson, 226.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 270.
- 61 John Alex John X. MacDonald, "How We Buried Our Dead," 45.
- 62 Clement Munroe, "The Changing Face of Funeral Service," in Gunderson, 297.
- 63 Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963).
- 64 Callaway, 25.
- 65 Morley, 31.
- 66 Two volumes of account books with transcribed entries from 1870 to 1942 have been compiled by Allen B. Robertson, *Borden Undertakers' Books* (Nova Scotia: s.n., 1981?).
- 67 I have only included ledger entries that specify the sale of a coffin or casket in my calculation. Many entries are labeled "to untkg." and may have included the cost of a coffin or casket; however, judging from the amounts charged, this seems unlikely. Coffins may also have been procured elsewhere — perhaps donated by community carpenters. Further work with the original documents may clarify this issue.
- 68 I have not included caskets and coffins for babies and children in these calculations since they differed considerably from those for adults.
- 69 Mark Harris, *Grave Matters. A Journey through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 43, 134.
- 70 Teresa Webb, "Railroading in Westchester, NS," Publication No. 2 (Amherst, NS: Cumberland County Genealogical Society, 2003), 16.
- 71 *Canadian Funeral Service* (January 1949): 11–12. I am quoting from an article entitled "Make the public your Partisan," by Evan B. Johnson, an American writer for *Casket and Sunnyside* (another trade magazine), and a "noted authority on mortuary advertising." I do not think it a coincidence that funeral directors as a group work hard to become integrated into their communities. Many take on leadership positions in volunteer groups and services, or stand for public office. This enhances their professional status and community acceptance of their sometimes despised business.
- 72 For example: "High-Cost-of-Dying Assault," *Canadian Funeral Service* (February 1949): 11–12.
- 73 Judge Richard P. Dews, *Mortuary Law* (n.p.: Eckels College of Mortuary and Embalming Science Inc., 1946), 43. Mr. Whitman's textbooks and notes taken while a student at the Simmons School in Syracuse are held in the Paul. R. Whitman Collection at Nova Scotia Community College, Kingstec Campus, Kentville, N.S.

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- 74 Smith, 35.
- 75 Lewis H. Mates, "Canada," in *Encyclopedia of Cremation*, eds. Douglas James Davies and Lewis H. Mates (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 104.
- 76 NSARM, mfm 22, 343, no. 11, Dargie Funeral Homes, Annapolis Royal, Letter from A.L. Mattatall Funeral Service, Dartmouth, N.S., confirming the Dartmouth Crematorium "is now operative," 24 January 1974.
- 77 *Canadian Funeral Service* (February 1949): 17.
- 78 Smith, 37.
- 79 Ibid., 33.
- 80 Ibid., 39.
- 81 Gunderson, 228.
- 82 Future papers will explore mourning and other issues, such as the role of women in the funeral industry.
- 83 Callaway, 24.
- 84 Patrick Slater, "The Wake," in *A Pocketful of Canada*, ed. John D. Robins (Toronto: Collins, 1948), 258–62.
- 85 Suzanne Morton, "Women on Their Own: Single Mothers in Working-Class Halifax in the 1920s," *Acadiensis* XXI, 2 (Spring 1991): 93. Morton draws on the example of women in Boston for this insight. One of the future objectives for this research project is to identify the essential elements that made a burial "proper" or "decent" in the eyes of Canadian families.