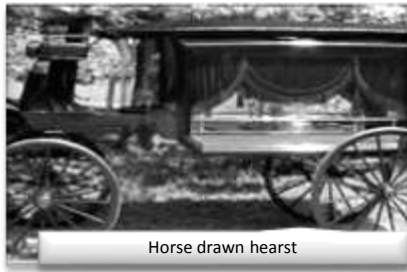


Funeral Directors

The funeral business has changed drastically over the past 100 years. The greatest and most improved area is in record keeping. Missoula is currently home to numerous funeral homes but is very fortunate to have all historical funeral records dating back to the mid-1800s located in one facility. The pre-1900 records, however, are very sketchy and brief. The further into the 1900s, the more family information was recorded. Today, those original paper records remain intact and are being automated for permanent preservation of information.



- A good example of record keeping at the funeral homes was in 1901. The records show there were 120 deaths that year with 36 of those being children. The cause of death ranged from pneumonia, infantile (historical medical terms list an “infantile paralysis” or in modern terms “polio” but many records simply note “infantile” with no further description), and meningitis. Many older people died of typhoid fever, Bright’s disease, cholera, spotted fever, and even suicide.

- The railroad was a large employer in the community and, of course, had many accidental deaths occur due to the dangerous line of work. Records show the railroad paid funeral expense for all their workers.
- Records also show the large number of Missoula men who died defending our country during World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and into today’s modern wars.
- In the early days of the funeral business, the funeral director was usually part of another business. For example:
 - **J. M. Lucy.** He owned the Lucy Furniture and Carpet store and served as coroner and funeral director. The store advertisement noted they were “The Largest Wholesale & Retail Furniture Store in the Northwest” with “undertaking in connection.”
 - **C. H. Marsh.** He owned Eclipse Livery, Feed & Sale Stables and served as funeral director and embalmer. C. H. Marsh was one of Missoula’s first funeral directors.
- **Directors.** Past funeral directors that may be familiar to Missoulians were: Lucy Funeral Home, Lucy & Sons, Marsh & Powell Mortuary, Lucy-Hayes Funeral Home, Geraghty Funeral Home, Squire-Simmons & Carr, Stuckey Funeral Home, Livingston Chapel, and Livingston-Malletta & Geraghty to name a few.
- **Funeral Services.** The majority of early funeral services were held in individual homes. Smaller numbers of services were held in churches. The majority of burials were traditional caskets, however, cremations were found in early funeral records. Bodies were carried to the cemetery in horse drawn hearses. The average service consisted of one hearse unless the individual was very prominent. In that instance, the funeral procession would include two to four carriages.
- Until the 1960s the closest crematory was located in Spokane, Washington.

Information provided by Steve Davolt, Funeral Director at Livingston, Malletta, Geraghty Funeral Home. To access historic funeral records, please contact one of the local funeral homes for information.