



— A BRIEF HISTORY OF —

HISTORIC ELLICOTT CITY'S UNDERTAKERS & FUNERAL HOMES

AN ORIGINAL EXHIBIT

This exhibit was originally displayed at the **Howard County
Welcome Center** from **October 6–November 30, 2022**

— DEVELOPED AND SPONSORED BY —



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COVER PHOTO

*A hearse owned by Easton and Sons
Date Unknown
Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society*



Introduction

Ellicott City served as home to the new business model of funeral services in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and has the unusual distinction of being home to four funeral homes within a few miles.

Before the 18th century, funeral homes did not exist. Most would die in their homes and funeral services were held within the home as well. During this period, washing and preparing the bodies of loved ones for burial was typically an extension of women's domestic duties. Most home funeral services were held in a room called the parlor. The parlor was used to entertain guests and would usually denote the wealth of a family since it would be unused the majority of the time. This space would be used as a place to receive mourners and well wishers in the event of a death in the family.

Easton & Sons Parlor

Date Unknown

Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society

This practice continued in areas around the United States well into the 20th century. As death care became increasingly professionalized many families began choosing to utilize a funeral home in conducting funeral services. While outsourcing death care services was diverse and uneven throughout the rest of the United States, there was a dedicated undertaker on Main Street Ellicott City by the 1860's.



Undertaker Locations in Town

Today, the sites that used to house family-run funeral homes play a different, yet still important role in our local communities.

Hillsinger's Undertakers

8267 Main Street

currently the Howard County Welcome Center

Before the original structure on the property was torn down to become the post office in 1940, it was once the WJ Bewley Funeral Home in the 1860's. After Bewley's death in 1872, Stephen Jones Hillsinger, an apprentice to Bewley, purchased the business in January of 1873 and started the Hillsinger & Son funeral business. Hillsingers became the Hillsinger-McNabb Funeral Home after Stephen Jones' death in 1922 and the business was relocated to Catonsville, where it is known as McNabb Funeral Home today.

*Stephen Jones Hillsinger in front of Hillsinger's Undertakers
1920s*

Photo Courtesy of Hillsinger's Undertakers


ADMINISTRATOR'S SALE
 OF
VALUABLE PERSONAL PROPERTY,
 IN ELLICOTT CITY.

By virtue of an order from the Orphans' Court of Howard county, the undersigned, administrator of William J. Bewley, deceased, will sell by public auction, at the Livery Stable in Ellicott City, of which the said deceased was late proprietor, at 10 o'clock A. M. on WEDNESDAY, the 8th day of January, 1873, the complete outfit of three entire Stables, consisting of the following very VALUABLE PERSONAL PROPERTY, to wit:

THIRTY-ONE SUPERIOR HORSES, suitable for riding or driving, several of them excellent draft Horses, two Omnibuses, one Four-Horse Broad-Tread Wagon, one Four-Horse Narrow-Tread Wagon, one Two-Horse Wagon, one One-Horse Wagon, four Express Wagons, three Open Passenger Wagons, two splendid Hearses, and nearly

100 OTHER VEHICLES, such as Hacks, Single and Double Carriages, Phaetons, Barouches, Jaggers, Top and No-Top Buggies, many of them nearly new, and all in the best condition. **ALSO,**

SIX SLEIGHS, SINGLE AND DOUBLE, from thirty to forty Sets of Single and Double Carriage and Buggy Harness, three Sets of Express Harness, four Sets of Wagon Harness, fifteen Strings of Sleigh Bells, a large lot of Bridles, Saddles, Knee Robes, Horse Blankets, Halters, Whips, &c., together with a large number of Coffins and Trimmings, and many miscellaneous articles, such as Lumber, Stoves, Grain Bags, Cutting Box, a quantity of Stable Manure, &c.

To any one desiring to enter the Livery or Undertaking Business an opportunity is here offered such as seldom presents itself, the stand being an old and well-established one, and possessing peculiar advantages.

The terms of sale, as prescribed by the court, are all sums of fifty dollars and under cash; on all sums above that amount a credit of ninety days will be allowed, the purchaser giving his note, to bear interest from the day of sale, with sureties to be approved by the undersigned.

BUYS ELLICOTT CITY POSTOFFICE'S SITE

U. S. To Erect \$90,000 Building At Corner Of Main And Hamilton Streets

Acceptance of a site at Main and Hamilton streets for the new \$90,000 Ellicott City postoffice was announced today by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department.

The purchase price for three properties, owned by J. W. Hillsinger, A. L. Hillsinger and others, and Edward W. Talbott, was \$20,500, said Michael J. Sullivan, the postmaster of Ellicott City.

106 Feet Along Main St.

The site has a frontage of 106 feet on Main street and 208 feet on Hamilton street. It is being surveyed today by Livingston Johnstone, an engineer of the Treasury Department, who said the building will probably be of native stone.

The architecture will follow lines similar to those of the Courthouse and other prominent buildings in Ellicott City.

The building will face on Main street. It will be ready approximately July 1, 1938, Mr. Sullivan said.

*Bewley Property Sales Notice
December 28, 1872
The Baltimore Sun, pg. 3*

This notice announces that W.J. Bewley's Livery Stable is being sold by public auction following the death of W.J. Bewley. Among the items included in the sale of the property are two hearses and "a large number of coffins and trimmings..." Bewley's apprentice, Stephen Jones Hillsinger, would go on to purchase the property at this auction and continue to use the space for his undertaking business.

*Notice of Sale
Thu, Dec 16, 1937
The Baltimore Sun, pg. 46*

This notice announces the sale of the property that used to house Hillsinger's Undertakers to the federal government. The structure itself was torn down, and in its place, the current building was constructed. By 1940, the site was being used as a post office.

Undertaker Locations in Town

Easton & Sons Undertaking & Livery

8059 Main Street

most recently Bean Hollow

Brothers William and Bernard Fort bought the property in 1836 and established a cabinet makers shop, where they provided coffin-making and undertaking services as part of their repertoire. Following the passing of both William and Bernard Fort, Bernard's second wife Eliza took over the undertaking business until she passed away in 1881.

*Exterior of Easton & Sons Undertaking & Livery
Date Unknown
Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society*





Daniel Laumann and his son-in-law Clinton Easton purchased the property in 1886 and the Easton and Sons funeral home was located here until the late 1950s. The current building on Main Street (which was demolished as part of Ellicott City flood mitigation measures in 2024) was built in the 1930s (opened in 1931), replacing an earlier frame structure building. Following Clinton Easton's death in 1894, his son Milton Easton took over as funeral director and undertaker for the family business. Easton and Sons funeral home continued to serve the community in and around Ellicott City until Milton's passing in 1950. Since then the site has been home to a laundromat, pizzeria, and multiple cafes - the most recent being Bean Hollow, which closed after the 2018 flood.

The Eastons in the funeral parlor office space

April 1927

Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society

Undertaker Locations in Town

Starr Funeral Home

8290 Main Street

currently Main Street Oriental Rugs

As early as 1887 this site was originally home to a print shop, and in 1919 Scott M. Starr purchased the building for use as a funeral home. The Starrs also provided autos "for hire," which meant they provided fee-based transportation services as well. Following Scott Starr's death in 1929, his widow Mary took over as undertaker for the business—a common practice that was often necessary in rural areas that would otherwise be without death care services.

Exterior of 8290 Main Street, Starr Funeral Home

Date Unknown

Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society





*Exterior of 3871 Old Columbia Pike
Date Unknown
Photo Courtesy of Slack Funeral Home*

Undertaker Locations in Town

Higinbothom Funeral Home

8231 Main Street

yellow brick commercial structure

Built in 1890, this structure was bought by the Higinbothom family in 1929. Here, Frank C. Higinbothom Jr. established Higinbothom Funeral Home, where he eventually met and was assisted by John R. Slack following World War II. After Slack earned both his funeral directors and embalmers licenses, he continued working with Higinbothom at the Main Street location.

Higinbothom-Slack Funeral Home

3871 Old Columbia Pike

currently Slack Funeral Home

Built in 1865, the structure was originally owned by the Kraft family. Frank C. Higinbothom Jr. purchased this property in 1953, then he converted the property into a funeral home. By 1954, Higinbothom moved his funeral home business from the Main Street location to this site. Higinbothom's colleague John Slack bought the property from Higinbothom in 1967 and continued to operate the business as Higinbothom-Slack Funeral Home. The business became Slack Funeral Home in 1971 and continues to serve the surrounding community today.

*A parlor room in Slack Funeral Home
Date Unknown
Photo courtesy of the Howard County Historical Society*

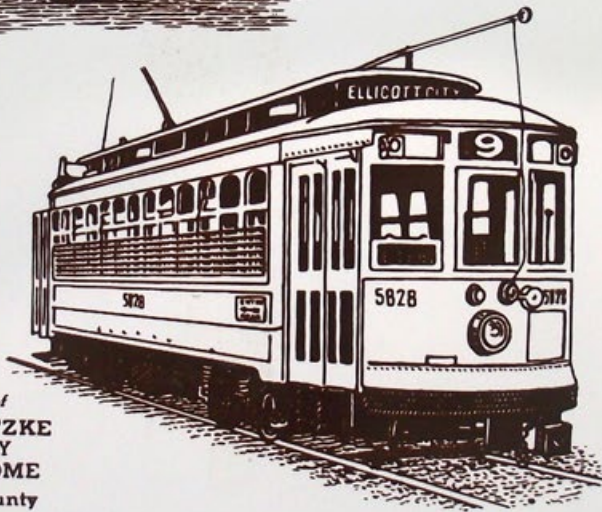
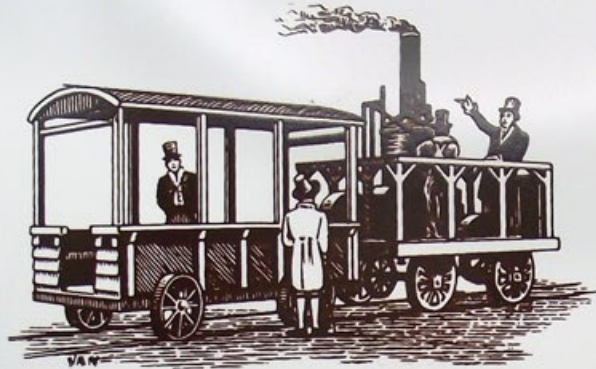


Interview with Funeral Director John Slack



[Watch Video on YouTube](#)

Ye Olde
Transportation
To
Ellicott City



Compliments of
**HARRY H. WITZKE
AND FAMILY
FUNERAL HOME**
of Howard County
465-2848

Witzke's Funeral Home: Catonsville Connection

The Catonsville community frequented many of the businesses in Ellicott City almost as often as those in Howard County and this still continues today. One of these funeral homes, Harry H Witzke's, was initially located in Baltimore City. Witzke's funeral home slowly migrated west to two locations, including one in Catonsville, to find a home in Ellicott City. There are also two unaffiliated locations with the same family name in Catonsville.

Hillsinger's Funeral Home moved from the Ellicott City location to Catonsville after it became Hillsinger-McNabb Funeral Home.

*Decorative Tile
Date Unknown
Loan Courtesy of Witzke's Funeral Home*

Interview with Funeral Director Sherri Collins-Witzke



[Watch Video on YouTube](#)

Restorative Arts: An Art and a Science

The process of restoring a loved one before burial is known as the Restorative Arts. This process is both an art and a science and can be an integral part of the grieving process.

Desairology

The professional who restores a loved one that has passed away is called a desairologist. Coined by the hair stylist Noella Charest-Papagno in 1983, the term is a combination of the words deceased and hair styling - des - hair - ology. She helped professionalize the industry and created a manual for those who wanted to improve their skills. They are experts at making the body look as close to themselves as possible. The goal of most desairologists is to make the person look as if they are sleeping. This process is highly technical and has been said to be one of the most rewarding parts of the funeral director's job.

Embalming

One obstacle to holding services outside the home was the preservation of the dead. While there is evidence that embalming techniques have been utilized since antiquity, the modern process was developed in the United States during the Civil War as a way to transport fallen soldiers home.

The embalming method started with arsenic being injected into the arteries and preserving the body. Many embalmers died from arsenic poisoning. Eventually, arsenic was replaced with formaldehyde, which is still used today along with other chemicals. Following the rise of embalming's popularity, use of the restorative arts became more prevalent.



*Easton & Sons Embalming Room
1920*

Photo Courtesy of Howard County Historical Society

Diversity in Funeral Practices

Sol Levinson's-Serving Ellicott City since 1892

While embalming has become common in many communities, it is not practiced in the Jewish faith. According to census records, there were 48 Jews in Howard County in 1902, primarily focused in Ellicott City, but there was no organized religious center in Howard County until 1967. Given how small the Jewish community was in this period, it is likely that they practiced more traditional funeral rites than many secular Jews may practice today. Because there was no religious center in Howard County, the Jewish community in Ellicott City went to Baltimore for religious services including funeral services. Sol Levinson's was the prominent funeral service provider in Baltimore and continues to serve the community today.

Jewish Funeral Traditions

Jewish funeral traditions are fundamentally different from Christian and other religious and secular traditions. In the Jewish faith, it is a mitzvah (blessing) and an honor and privilege to participate in the care of the dead.

Just as there is a broad set of practices for all communities, there is a wide range of Jewish funeral practices. Some of these practices have been performed since the Talmudic period (70 - 500 CE). In Jewish tradition, the body is considered sentient after death and confused about what it should do next. Luckily, the burial practices help guide the deceased through its transition to "olam ha'ba", the world to come.

The chevra kadisha - The chevra kadisha is an anonymous group of volunteers in the Jewish community that help perform the ritual cleansings and arrangements for the deceased. One such duty is the tahara, which is a ritual cleansing and dressing that precedes the burial. During the tahara, prayers are said to apologize for the intrusion on the body.

The role of the shomer - To help guide the spirit safely into the afterlife, the shomer stays with the deceased throughout the night. The shomer will recite prayers and avoid sleep to make sure the deceased is never alone.

After the body is cleansed and blessed, burial is usually completed within 24-48 hours after death. All Jewish caskets are made only of wood - no nails or any metal can be used for the building of the casket and the deceased wears a simple shroud for burial.

Shiva - Shiva means seven. This is the first seven days of mourning after the burial where close family and friends will come and "sit shiva" with the family. Sometimes, members of the synagogue will come over and help recite the Kaddish, which are prayers for mourning.

A headstone is not placed at the grave until a year has passed since it is thought best not to rush the grieving process.

African American Services in Ellicott City

While Jews were not able to find services in Ellicott City, African Americans were generally able to stay local for funeral services. According to death certificates dating from 1918, African Americans sought services from both Easton and Sons and Starr Funeral Home. Records indicate that the African American community also sought services from Higinbothom after its establishment in 1929.

However, while funeral services were available in Ellicott City, the deceased would not necessarily be buried in town. During the late 19th and early 20th century, some cemeteries were designated as African American cemeteries and in Ellicott City there were no specific cemeteries for African American community members. Additionally, many African American community members were buried in small family cemeteries and/or cemeteries with segregated burial areas. Sanborn fire insurance maps indicate that there were African American cemeteries in nearby Catonsville and Baltimore as well.

Paradoxical progress

The process of becoming an undertaker was theoretically accessible for whites and African Americans. If one could pass the test and pay the fee, very little prevented the individual from becoming an undertaker regardless of race or gender. Urban areas like Baltimore were unofficially segregated in the early twentieth century, which resulted in a distinct need for African American undertakers to care for African American community members who died. This need, while a symptom of broader structural racism, also helped maintain the status quo of segregating these services.

However, rural areas during this time likely saw more integration of undertaking services because there were fewer licensed undertakers offering these services outside of Baltimore City. Ellicott City had more undertaker options than other rural communities, which makes the integration an interesting thing to note.

Death Certificates

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS, se43, Printed 12/27/2022. MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

V. S. No. 1

WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD

N. B.—Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

STATE OF MARYLAND
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1 PLACE OF DEATH
County Hawara 35759 (92)
Village or City Ellicott (No. _____ St.; Ward _____)

Registration Dist. No. 191
[If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number.]

2 FULL NAME Julia

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
3 SEX <u>Female</u>	4 COLOR OR RACE <u>Caucasian</u>	5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED (Write the word) <u>Married</u>	16 DATE OF DEATH <u>Oct 31</u> , 191 <u>8</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
6 DATE OF BIRTH _____, _____, 18 <u>92</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)			17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Oct 24</u> , 191 <u>8</u> , to <u>Oct 31</u> , 191 <u>8</u> , that I last saw him alive on <u>Oct 31</u> , 191 <u>8</u> and that death occurred on the date stated above, at <u>7 P. m.</u>	
7 AGE <u>26</u> yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds. If LESS than 1 day, ____ hrs. OR ____ min.?			The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Lobar pneumonia</u>	
8 OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Domestic Duties</u> (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer)			(Duration) ____ yrs. ____ mos. <u>7</u> ds.	
9 BIRTHPLACE (State or country) <u>Virginia</u>			Contributory Secondary (Duration) ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds.	
10 NAME OF FATHER <u>Harvey Patterson</u>			(Signed) <u>H. A. White</u> M. D.	
11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or country) <u>Virginia</u>			<u>Nov 2</u> , 191 <u>8</u> (Address) <u>Ellicott City, Md.</u>	
12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <u>Julia Jackson</u>			*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or, in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL or HOMICIDAL.	
13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or country) <u>Virginia</u>			18 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (FOR HOSPITALS, INSTITUTIONS, TRANSIENTS, OR RECENT RESIDENTS) At place of death ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds. In the State, ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds. Where was disease contracted? If not at place of death? Former or usual residence: _____	
14 THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE (Informant) <u>John Levin</u> (Address) <u>Ellicott City R.F.D.</u>			19 PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Brookton, Howard Co</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>Nov. 3</u> , 191 <u>8</u>	
15 Filed <u>Nov 2</u> , 191 <u>8</u> <u>C. B. Hammon</u> REGISTRAR			20 UNDERTAKER <u>Easton Sons</u> ADDRESS <u>Ellicott City</u>	

If more blanks are needed, address State Registrar, 16 W. Saratoga St., Balto., Requesting V. S. No. 1

Easton and Sons Death Certificate
1918
Image courtesy of the Maryland State Archives

This death certificate indicates that Easton and Sons prepared the individual for burial during the 1918 influenza pandemic (aka the Spanish Flu pandemic). As the cause of the death is identified as the lobar pneumonia.

Death Certificates

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS, Form 43, Printed 7/2022. MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

V. S. No. 1

WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD

N. B.—Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

STATE OF MARYLAND
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1 PLACE OF DEATH
County Howard 34382 (10)
Village or City Ellicott (No. _____ St.; _____ Ward) Registration Dist. No. 191
[If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number.]

2 FULL NAME Charles Edward

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
3 SEX <u>Male</u>	4 COLOR OR RACE <u>Colored</u>	5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED (Write the word) <u>Married</u>	16 DATE OF DEATH <u>Oct. 23</u> , 191 <u>8</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
6 DATE OF BIRTH <u>April 16</u> , 185 <u>7</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)			17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Oct. 20th</u> , 191 <u>8</u> , to <u>Oct. 21st</u> , 191 <u>8</u> , that I last saw him alive on <u>Oct. 21st</u> , 191 <u>8</u> , and that death occurred on the date stated above, at <u>4A</u> m.	
7 AGE <u>61</u> yrs. <u>6</u> mos. <u>5</u> ds. If LESS than 1 day, hrs. OR min.?			The CAUSE OF DEATH * was as follows: <u>Pneumo pneumonia</u> (Duration) yrs. mos. <u>4</u> ds.	
8 OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Labor</u> (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer)			Contributory Secondary <u>Probably Influenza</u> (Duration) yrs. mos. <u>6</u> ds. (Signed) <u>Wm. J. Gumbrell</u> M. D. <u>Oct. 24</u> , 191 <u>8</u> (Address) <u>Ellicott City</u>	
9 BIRTHPLACE (State or country) <u>Maryland</u>			* State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or, in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL or HOMICIDAL.	
PARENTS	10 NAME OF FATHER <u>Charles Needdom</u>	11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or country) <u>Maryland</u>	18 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (FOR HOSPITALS, INSTITUTIONS, TRANSIENTS, OR RECENT RESIDENTS) At place of death yrs. mos. ds. In the State, yrs. mos. ds. Where was disease contracted, If not at place of death? Former or usual residence	
	12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <u>Unknown</u>	13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or country) <u>Maryland</u>	19 PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Mt. Gilboa</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>Oct. 24, 1918</u>	
	14 THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE (Informant) <u>Mary Needdom</u> (Address) <u>Ellicott City</u>		20 UNDERTAKER <u>Easton Sons</u> ADDRESS <u>Ellicott City</u>	
15 Filed <u>10-24-18</u> <u>W. J. Gumbrell</u> REGISTRAR				

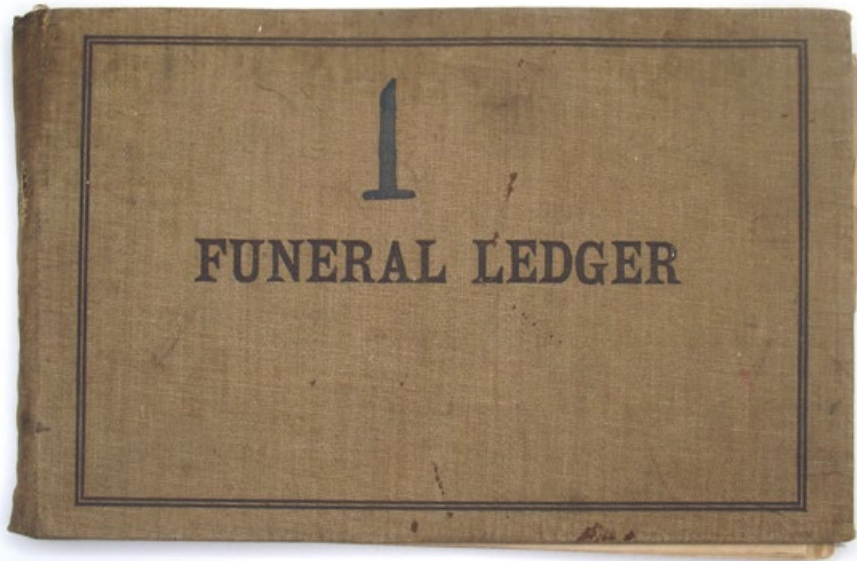
If more blanks are needed, address State Registrar, 16 W. Saratoga St., Balto., Requesting V. S. No. 1

Easton and Sons Death Certificate
1918

Image courtesy of the Maryland State Archives

This death certificate is another example of how the cause of death was listed for those who died of the Spanish flu.

Funerary Artifacts



Funeral Ledger
 Early 20th Century
 Loan Courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

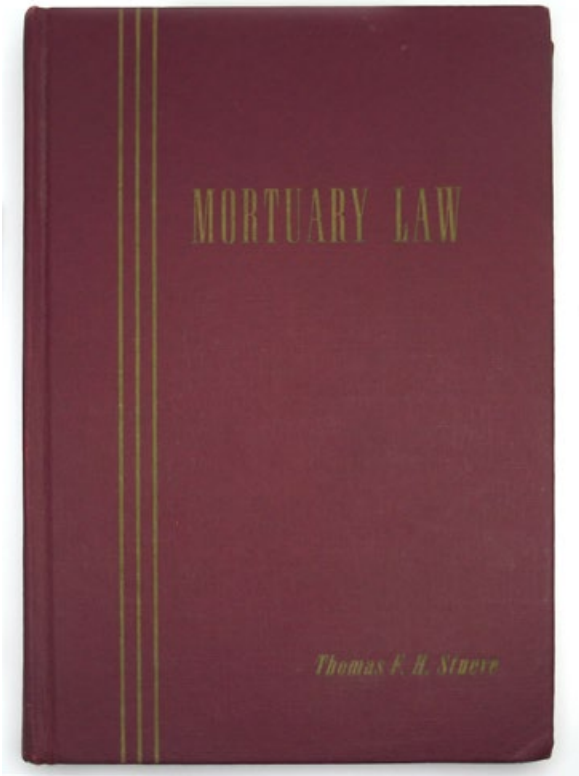
This funeral ledger documents the various types of data and information that were collected by funeral directors and undertakers in the early 20th century. As the death care industry became more formalized, so too did the type of documentation death care providers needed to collect and record.

Funeral of *Alice* [redacted] Age *33* Died *July 9, 31* Buried *July 10, 31* ✓ 43
 Ordered by *Geo* [redacted] Address *16 Whitus Ave* Date *7-8-31*
 Cemetery *Freetown* Lot *Catonsville Md*

	DR.			CR.
Casket and Services	8000	July 10		9400
Embalming		July 11	Cash M. Coates	12 50
Dress of Sundress - <i>Horse</i>	1400	July 12	" S. Boardley	5 00
Hearse		July 16	" " "	3 00
No. Carriages @		July 23	" R. Coates	4 00
Pall Bearers "		July 25	" S. Boardley	3 00
Grave or Vault		Aug 1	" " "	0 00
Flowers		Aug 8	" " "	0 00
Chairs		Aug 10	" " "	0 00
Special		Aug 10	" " "	0 00
Total	9400			

Funeral of *Joe Clanton* [redacted] Age *9 months* Died *7-21-30* Buried *7-22-30* 13
 Ordered by *Joe Clanton* Address *Edenwatt City* Date *7-21-30*
 Cemetery *Wt Esilboa* Lot

	DR.			CR.
Casket and Services	2000	July 22		2600
Embalming				
Dress or Suit				
Hearse				
No. Carriages @				
Pall Bearers "				
Grave or Vault	600			
Flowers				
Chairs				
Special				
Total	2600			



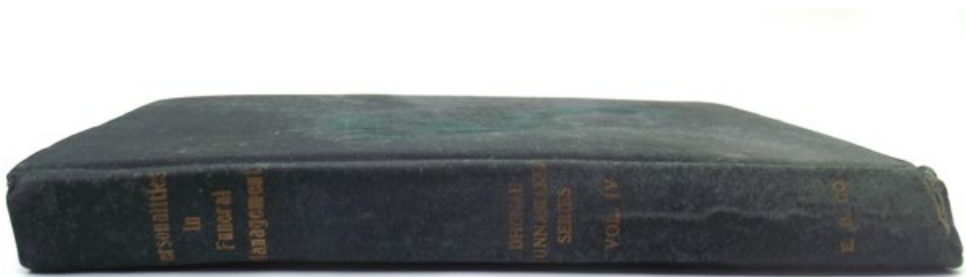
Funerary Artifacts

Mortuary Law Book, by Thomas F. H. Stueve
Originally published in 1940, copy on display published in 1975
Loaned courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

This mortuary law book is another example of the growing professionalization and codification of death care services in the late 19th and early to mid 20th century.

Personalities in Funeral Management, by Charles O. Dhonau
Originally published in 1929, copy in photograph published in 1929
Loan Courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

This textbook is an example of the types of materials utilized to train undertakers and funeral directors in the early 20th century.



Funerary Artifacts

Embalming Fluid with Fairy Lights
Date Unknown
Loan Courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

A necessary supply for undertakers and funeral directors since the Civil War, embalming fluid is used to preserve a body and slow the decomposition process. This embalming fluid container was creatively repurposed to be a decoration after its contents were used.





Funerary Artifacts

San Veino Preservative Deodorant Bottle

Date unknown

Loan courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, PA

San Veino preservative deodorant is another product utilized to help slow the progression and signs of decomposition. While the product is still sold today, it is no longer sold in glass bottles.

Funerary Artifacts

Glass Cosmetic Powder Container

Date unknown

Loan courtesy of Witzke's Funeral Home

Just as many people perform beauty treatments as a part of their daily routine in life, many morticians and other death care providers also work to provide beauty treatments to the deceased to help prepare them for burial.



Funerary Artifacts

Curling Iron

Date unknown

Loan courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

Until the invention of the electric curling iron in 1959, this curling iron is an example of one of the hair styling tools an undertaker or death care provider might have used during the process of preparing a person for burial.

Various makeup brushes and tools

Date unknown

Loan courtesy of Witzke's Funeral Home





Funerary Artifacts

Ashtray from Higinbothom Funeral Home
Date unknown
Loan courtesy of Slack Funeral Home, P.A.

Funeral homes, like many other businesses, often created small products like ashtrays with their logos on them for both promotional and practical purposes. Before smoking in public places was broadly banned across the U.S, places like Higinbothom Funeral Home would likely have had many ashtrays located throughout the building for the convenience of mourners and employees.

Ashtray from Witzke's Funeral Home
Date unknown
Loan courtesy of Witzke's Funeral Home



*Exterior of Witzke's Funeral Home
Photo Courtesy of Witzke's Funeral Home*

Conclusion

The legacy of the funeral homes in Ellicott City and Catonsville continues on today. Four family run funeral homes still operate and serve these communities today.

Witzke's Funeral Home

The Witzke Funeral Home is still in operation and Sherri Collins-Witzke is a pinnacle of community engagement and servitude. Many services are held for community members from all over the area at the funeral home at this time.

Slack Funeral Home

The Slack Family continues to hold services for many of the more historic families in the area and they also have a great relationship with the families from the former Hilltop area in Ellicott City. They sponsored the Hilltop Family Reunion in 2022.

Sol Levinson's (Columbia Location)

Sol Levinson's continues to work with the Jewish community in Howard County and beyond. They opened a location in Columbia in 2018 and continue to operate out of Baltimore City.

McNabb Funeral Home

McNabb Funeral Home, located in Catonsville after the Hillsinger-McNabb location closed in Ellicott City, continues to operate today.

These businesses continue to serve the community and their impact is felt throughout the area through their philanthropic and charitable efforts.