

Funeral Traditions of the South

EXHIBIT

FUNERAL TRADITIONS OF THE SOUTH was designed to document and preserve the diverse heritage of Southern funerals.

Americans tend to believe that everyone deals with death in the same way, and that way is the way we deal with it personally. In actuality, there are many, many ways of honoring our loved ones in death.

The exhibit FUNERAL TRADITIONS OF THE SOUTH is designed to document our diverse heritage and to educate those who never knew about, or have forgotten, the traditions of their ancestors or the customs of other groups.



Casket decorations represent something important in the life of the deceased.

TRADITIONS

Our funeral traditions are influenced, in part, by geography with customs differing depending upon whether your land is level or mountainous, whether you live above or below sea level or what technology is available to deal with the land you have access to. Traditions are also influenced by the beliefs your ancestors brought with them to this country, what your religion dictates or by the cultural and ethnic ways of your extended family.

CHANGES

Many of our traditions are changing as our life styles change, as technology improves, as our available land decreases and costs drastically increase. Already, our younger citizens do not remember, and even recoil from the ways of their ancestors. If we do not document our heritage of death customs with photographs and oral histories, this knowledge will be lost forever.

Even as our traditions change, one thing has proven to remain the same. The respect for our dead remains intact.

GOALS

The goal of the exhibit is to honor, preserve and share the traditions and customs found around us. Educating others about the richness of our funeral rituals will allow them to understand and honor their neighbors' traditions as well as their own.



Grave markers are often elaborate and artistic as shown by this girl and her cat on a bench engraved "BEST FRIENDS".



Hilton Head Island, SC. The cemetery holds members of two families. Internments were during the 1700s.



New Orleans, LA. New Orleans is below sea level necessitating mausoleums in some areas. Those with steps hold multiple bodies.



Camp Nelson honors military personnel and their spouses. The cemetery is still in use today.



As an RN and later a medical social worker, Carol Shutt spent most of her adult life hearing stories of illness and death. Among other things, she was a Sudden Infant Death Councilor, a hospice

director, and a university instructor of a class called Death, Dying and Bereavement. The stories told by her Appalachian students, combined with her own observations as a health care professional, led her to want to know more about the funeral customs of Appalachia and other areas of the South.

Exhibition is available for touring and flexible options are available.

For additional information:

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