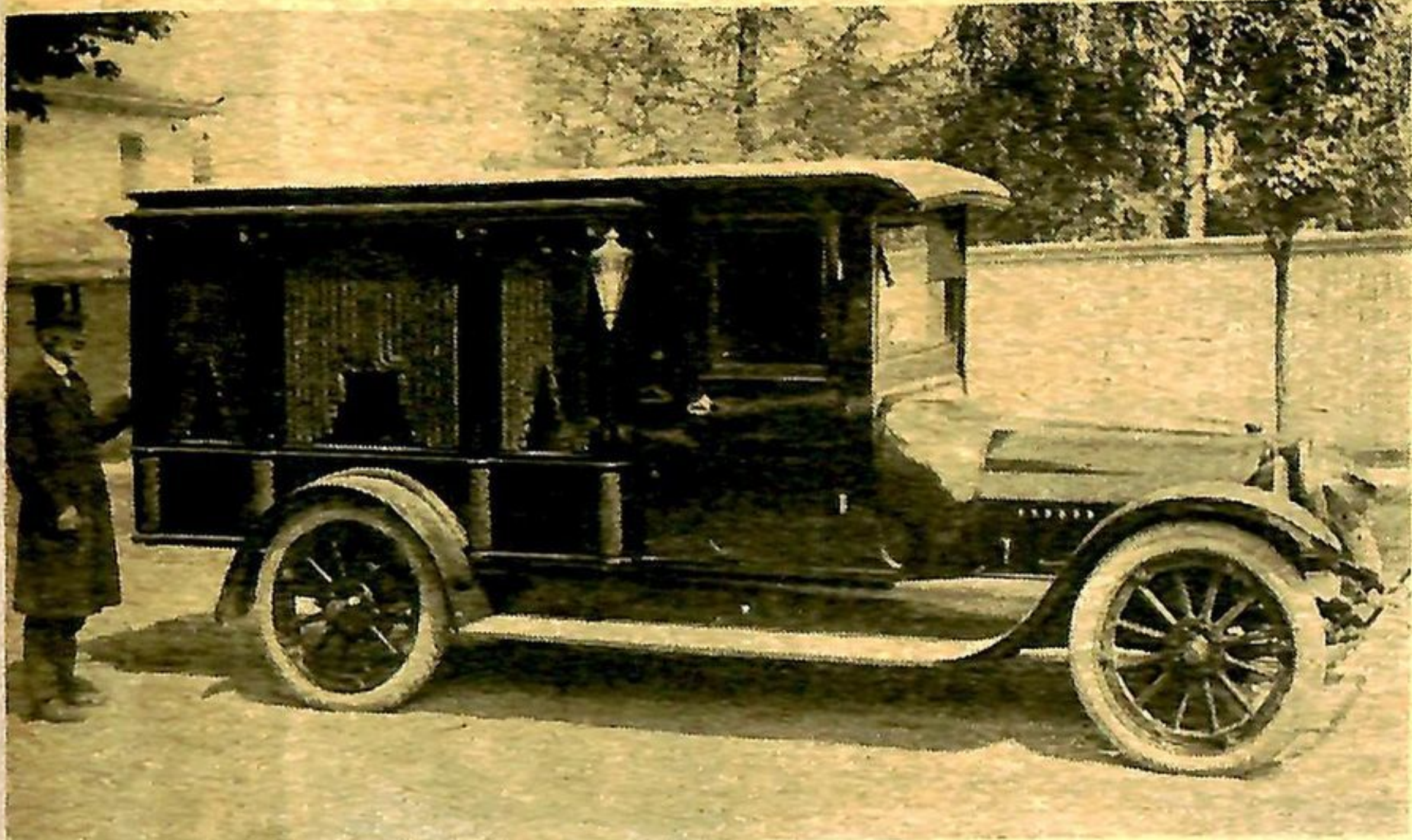
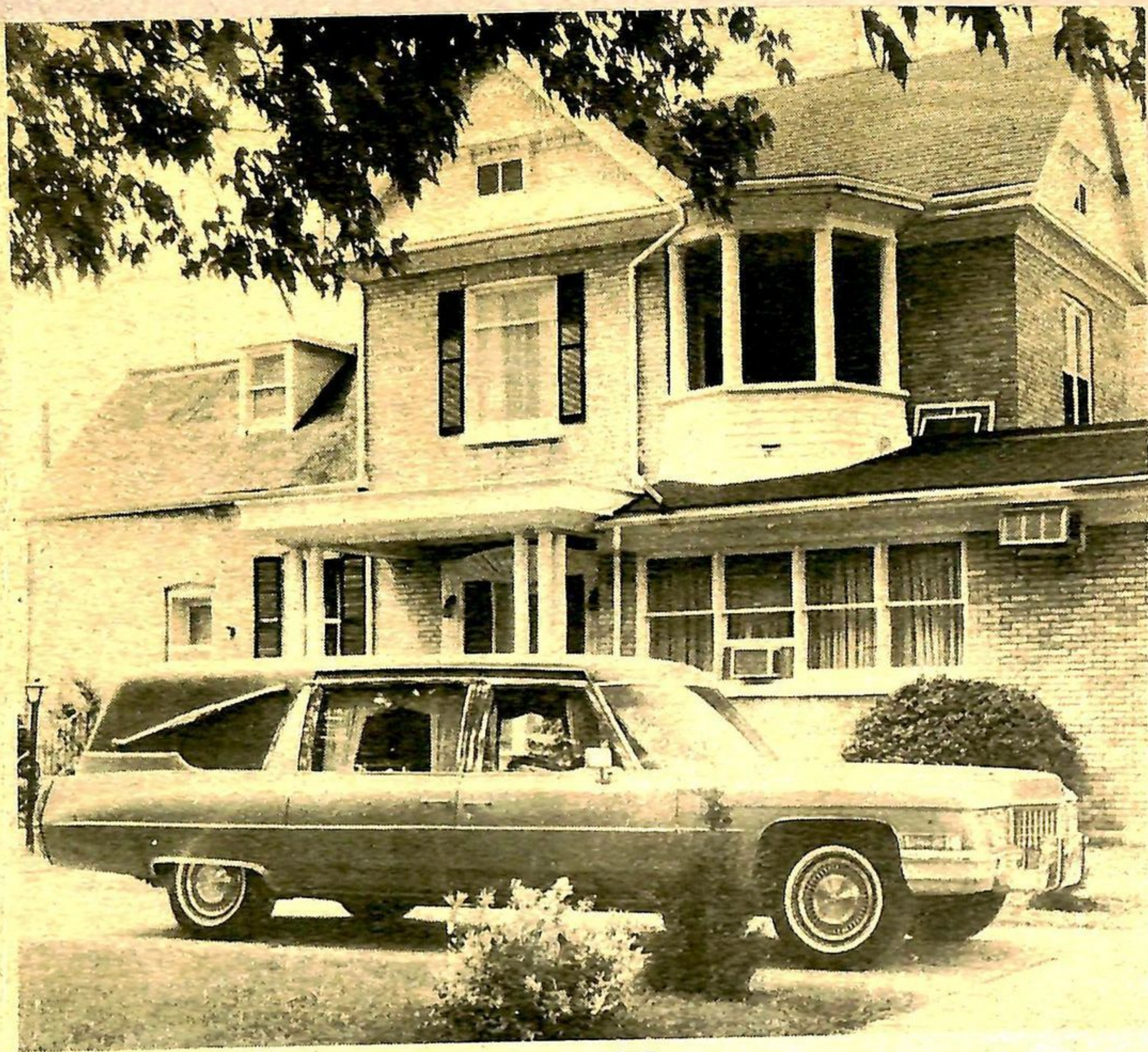




1900



1917



1973

## I remember:

*Editor's note: When speaking with Mrs. Dinney a few weeks ago I was fascinated with her stories about the funeral corteges of past years. At my request she very kindly consented to put some of her memories in writing for our readers. No doubt they will recall experiences for many.*

*We know that many people in this area have interesting memories to share. Please get in touch with us . . . we will be pleased to help you write about them if you wish us to.*

By Mrs. Ida M. Dinney

My memory often takes me back to the late 19th century and beginning of the twentieth. It has to do with my father's occupation; he was an undertaker, and also what was then called a cabinet-maker.

In 1887 he bought a furniture and undertaking business in Exeter. He had factory-made furniture for sale but also furniture he made himself in the "back-shop". A few years ago I saw in a home in town, a beautiful polished oak bedroom suite, that my father had constructed.

As for the "undertaking", there were some customs that were different from today's.

For one thing there were few, if any, telephones; so where a death occurred, let's say out of town, it was always two men who drove into town, day or night, to inform the undertaker who then took full charge.

First he contacted his hired man, who came and hitched up one of the horses, while he put his

required equipment into the buggy or cutter according to time of year. He then proceeded to the home of the deceased and did the required work. If this was during the night, the next morning generally two men came into the store to choose a coffin, and in many cases, a shroud, to be worn by the deceased.

In those early days coffins came from the factory, unlined, so my father had lining in stock, which he tacked inside coffins. (This was called trimming it.)

The next thing to be prepared was the name plate for the top of coffin. These were also in stock, so my father would get one from the cupboard, secure it to a little board, kept for the purpose, cover it with a thin mixture of whiting and water; then, with a sharpened little piece of wood he printed the inscription, which told the name, date of birth and age of deceased and finally with a special little tool, he engraved it, cleaned off the whiting, and there was the finished product . . . excellently done. It was then nailed on the top of the coffin. When all was in readiness, the casket and a black door-drape (or maybe a wreath) was taken to the home, in the "casket-wagon" drawn by black team.

On the day of the funeral, which usually started at one p.m. my father wore a suit with frock-coat; and a high silk hat as did the driver. Their seat was up front and up high, on the hearse which was quite ornate. Mother Nature was in charge of "air-conditioning." A black team was used to draw the vehicle.

If the deceased was an adult the drapery inside the hearse was black and the horses were draped

in coarse black "nets". In the case of a young person or child, the drapery and horses' "nets" were white. I think I'm safe in saying that floral tributes were always white, for many years.

In those days, horse-drawn buggies or cutters (depending on the season) carried the mourners who followed the hearse to cemetery. There were often one hundred of these conveyances. If the funeral entered town from the south end and proceeded up Main Street to the cemetery, all merchants drew down their store blinds, until the cortege had passed by.

At the cemetery there was no mausoleum, so mourners gathered around the grave for the committal service in any weather.

I should mention that, in winter, the wheels of the hearse had to be removed, and replaced by runners. Also, there were times, in winter that were fraught with danger, on account of snow-drifts and pitch-holes on the road, but I never remember an accident.

Once as a prevention, my father had a farmer, who lived not far from town, come with his strong team of horses, and hitch them to the "casket-wagon" (a very neat-looking rig with sides of glass panels) which substituted for the hearse.

Sometimes, if the roads were bad, two or three friendly farmers would get out, on the day of the funeral, with their strong teams hitched to their bobsleighs, and drive through the worst drifts on the road, to make driving safer for all. It was part of the helpful, community spirit that existed then.