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**From coffin-making to undertaking: The rise of the funeral  
directing industry in the 1880s**

**Remsberg, Virginia Russell, M.A.**

**University of Delaware, 1992**

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FROM COFFIN-MAKING TO UNDERTAKING:  
THE RISE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTING INDUSTRY IN THE 1880s

by  
Virginia Russell Remsberg

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in Early American Culture

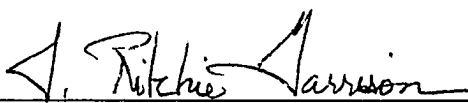
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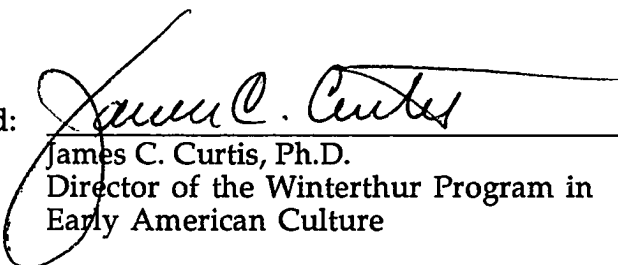
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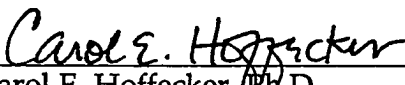
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THE RISE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTING INDUSTRY IN THE 1880s

by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, J. Ritchie Garrison, for his guidance and support throughout the writing of this paper. I also am indebted to Dr. Kenneth Ames for the initial assistance and direction which he provided. In addition, I have many people to thank who have been generous with their time and advice as the project progressed: Neville Thompson, who first steered me to this topic (in a much altered form) and encouraged me with her interest and enthusiasm; Dr. Bernie Herman, whose insights and suggestions gave me a new perspective on the topic; Michael Podmaniczky, Greg Landry, and the rest of the crew in the Winterthur Wood Conservation Lab for their assistance in interpreting the nineteenth century woodworking terms I encountered; and John Hankey, who offered encouragement and excellent advice.

In gathering research for this paper I relied extensively on the cooperation and goodwill of others. I am grateful to Gladden and Ben Kurtz for their willingness to share their wonderful family legacy; the staff of Henry W. Jenkins and Sons, Company for making their remarkable archives available; Flora and Ross Wiley, who gave

bountifully of their knowledge and friendship; Dude and Woody DeVoe and their exceptional memories; Aimee O'Neill, who provided introductions and information; and Alice Remsberg, who provided much appreciated support. Many thanks to the staff of the Winterthur Library and Joseph Downs Collection for their unstinting assistance and permission to reproduce materials from their collection.

I am grateful to the staff of the Baltimore Museum of Industry for their patience and forbearance in asking when this thesis would be finished. Finally, I wish to thank my husband, who took the photographs for this paper, and my father, without both of whom this paper would never have been written. I dedicate this thesis to Evia Peloquin Russell.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the manner in which undertakers moved from merely providing coffins for the dead to developing the full service industry of funeral directing during the late nineteenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, an undertaker might provide coffins for the deceased only as a sideline to his other business and offered no other services. By 1900, the undertaker handled all necessary preparations for interring a corpse — from picking up the body, embalming and laying the body out, providing a coffin, purchasing the cemetery lot and digging the grave, coordinating and staffing the funeral, and providing grief counseling for mourners — and called himself a "funeral director." This thesis traces the development of the funeral directing industry in Baltimore during the pivotal decade of the 1880s, when many of the changes took place. The study uses primary source materials of daybooks, account books, artifacts, and advertisements in City Directories to examine the work of both a rural and an urban undertaker.

## Chapter 1

### FROM COFFIN-MAKING TO UNDERTAKING: THE RISE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTING INDUSTRY IN THE 1880s

#### Introduction

Scholars of the Victorian "cult of death" have studied a number of subjects — headstones, the rural cemetery movement, mourning etiquette and accoutrements, even deathbed scenes — yet few have examined the technology of undertaking, and none have examined the topic closely.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century, an undertaker was a tradesman who provided coffins and no other services for burial of the dead as a sideline to another business. By the end of the 19th century, an undertaker might furnish the coffin, embalm and lay out the corpse, coordinate all details of the funeral, and place the body in the ground. As evidence of the expanded services, this tradesman called himself a funeral director, rather than an old-fashioned undertaker. This study will examine the work of both a rural and a city undertaker during the 1880s, a pivotal decade of change in the industry, and then consider reasons behind these changes.

### Early Undertaking

Until the late nineteenth century, the family took responsibility for washing, dressing, and laying out the corpse. The process is not pleasant, no matter how beloved the deceased. The body changes almost immediately after death. Livor mortis, a permanent purplish discoloration of the skin caused by the settling of the blood after circulation ceases, begins approximately two hours after death and continues for six to ten hours. The discoloration caused by livor mortis explains the necessity for burial shrouds for corpses not preserved by refrigeration or embalming. Rigor mortis, defined as "a condition in which the muscles of the body become hardened as a result of chemical changes within the muscle fibers," begins two to four hours after death and continues for approximately twelve hours until the body is completely rigid.<sup>2</sup> This process is accelerated if the person experienced high fever or convulsions before death. Rigor mortis gradually recedes in sixteen to forty-eight hours, and the body is once again limp. At this point putrefaction sets in. Gases produced by bacterial activity are released throughout the body, causing gross changes:

The body becomes distended, the skin color changes through green to purple to black, the tongue and eyes protrude, there may be protrusion of abdominal organs through the vaginal and rectal openings and large amounts of foul-smelling bloodstained fluid exude from the body orifices.... It is not uncommon to see advanced decomposition within twelve to eighteen hours, to the point that facial features are no longer recognizable, most

of the hair slips away from the scalp and the entire body becomes swollen to two or three times normal size.<sup>3</sup>

Putrefaction is accelerated by the presence of bacterial infection in the body. Autolysis, a process by which enzymes cause the body to essentially digest itself, causes body tissues to soften and eventually liquefy.<sup>4</sup> If the body experienced a high fever before death, the action of the digestive juices will frequently cause rupture of the stomach or esophagus. Infestation of the body also aids in decomposition; in particular, flies may lay eggs in moist areas of the body, especially on the eyelids and around the nose and mouth, within a few minutes after death.<sup>5</sup> A warm environment, such as a hot Baltimore summer, accelerates decomposition; alternately, cooler temperatures retard the process.

The person laying out the body needed to wash, dress, and pose the corpse before rigor mortis set in. Someone had to be assigned to keep watch over the body and protect it from flies and rodents. Most importantly, the corpse had to be disposed of before putrefaction began. The process could be complicated if the weather was warm, if death was caused by a high fever, and if time had passed before the body was found. No wonder, then, that families were willing to give up their traditional duty of laying out the dead when undertakers began offering the service in the late nineteenth century.



In the colonial period, the only specialized equipment needed for burying the dead was a coffin. This was easily obtained from a cabinetmaker, and the combination of cabinetmaker/undertaker appears frequently in Baltimore City Directories as early as the eighteenth century. Since coffins were commonly trimmed with fabric, usually with padding, upholsterers also took up undertaking as a sideline. When hearses replaced wagons as the customary conveyance of a coffin to the cemetery, livery stables and hack drivers could invest in a hearse and black horses and advertise themselves as undertakers, contracting with a cabinetmaker to provide the coffins (figure 1). Sextons, who bore the responsibility for digging the grave and interring the coffin, also called themselves undertakers.<sup>6</sup> Since undertaking was viewed as nothing more than facilitating the removal of a corpse from his house to the grave, any layman who provided an ancillary function qualified as an undertaker. Each of these workers provided their services after the family had laid out the body.

The coffin maker purchased handles, hinges, and other hardware from catalogs or from hardware stores. Several hardware stores listed "undertakers' hardware" as a specialty, though not as their main service. Catalogs even sold illustrations for undertakers' use in newspaper ads (figure 3). Fabric for lining coffins could be purchased from an upholsterer, who, as in many other professions, doubled as a retailer to the trade. Shrouds and pillows for the coffin were provided

Francis M. Denny. E. Madison Mitchell.  
**DENNY & MITCHELL,**  
 (Successors to John Hughes & Sons.)  
**UNDERTAKERS,**  
 Coach and Livery Stables,  
 65 S. Broadway and 550 W. Fayette St.,  
 BALTIMORE, MD.

**Figure 1.** Advertisement for Denny & Mitchell, Undertakers, Coach and Livery Stables. B.R. Sheriff and Wm. H. Taylor, Sheriff & Taylor's Baltimore City Directory for 1884 (Trenton, NJ: John L. Murphy, 1884), 1515. Courtesy, The Baltimore Museum of Industry Research Center.

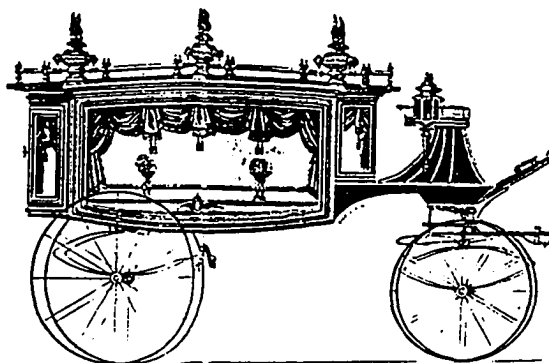
**MRS. EMILY J. PALMER**  
 Is prepared to furnish  
 IMPORTED AND DOMESTIC  
**BURIAL SHROUDS**  
 And all Else pertaining to the Dead,  
**No. 37 ST. MARY STREET.**

**Figure 2.** Advertisement for Mrs. Emily J. Palmer, furnisher of burial shrouds. B.R. Sheriff and Wm. H. Taylor, Sheriff & Taylor's Baltimore City Directory for 1885 (Harrisburg, PA: Patriot Publishing Co., 1885), 1650. Courtesy, The Baltimore Museum of Industry Research Center.

#### ADVERTISING CUTS.



Single Newspaper Column.



Double Newspaper Column.

**Figure 3.** Advertising cuts sold for use as art in newspaper ads for undertakers. Crane & Breed Manufacturing Company trade catalog (Cincinnati: the company, 1886). Courtesy, the Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

by women of the community, often home-based seamstresses such as Mrs. Emily J. Palmer, who advertised in the 1885 Baltimore City Directory (figure 2).

The rise of factory-produced furniture in the third quarter of the 19th century was matched by factory-produced coffins, but (unlike the furniture industry) factory-manufactured coffins tended to be more ornate and expensive than those produced by the local cabinetmaker/undertaker. These manufactured coffins were sold through mail order catalogs or through retail outlets in cities. As factory-made coffins became more available, undertakers' supply houses began to appear. These retailers featured a large display room of coffin and casket samples and also carried a full line of mortuary goods: coffin hardware, trimmings, and linings; doorbands; hatbands and gloves for funerals; shrouds and burial clothes, etc.

By mid-century, "coffin trimmers" appeared, tradesmen who outfitted coffins with hardware and linings. The 1880 Census of Manufacturers lists 17 coffin trimmers in Baltimore. A coffin trimming business required no training in the trade and incurred virtually no capital investment or overhead costs. Coffin trimmers could purchase coffins on an as-needed basis from cabinetmakers or undertakers' supply houses, and an inventory of coffin hardware and upholstery was inexpensive to maintain. Although it was not as

lucrative as the full-service funeral directing industry that was emerging at the same time, almost anyone could establish a coffin trimming business and have a ready market among those who could not afford lavish funerals.<sup>7</sup>

Embalming was first used in this country as a means of preserving dead Civil War soldiers until they could be returned to their families for burial. The procedure was performed initially by doctors, who already had experience in related techniques due to specimen-preservation, anatomical studies, and coroner's work. By 1880, undertakers trained at embalming schools offered the service to the general public.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the undertaking industry already showed signs of change before the 1880s. Factory produced coffins were available, and retailers had begun to specialize in undertakers' supplies and funeral goods, a signal that the range of services provided by undertakers was expanding. Still, much of the business was unchanged since colonial times, and most people who called themselves undertakers furnished coffins as a side to the profession of their training. By the end of the decade the emergence of embalming, among other factors, forced a choice; many tradesmen either turned to full-time funeral directing or gave up undertaking altogether.

Edmund G. Kurtz

Jarrettsville, Maryland is located approximately twenty miles northeast of Baltimore City in rural Harford County, midway between Baltimore and the Pennsylvania line. Jarrettsville was connected to Baltimore by train at the Forest Hill station, five miles away; the Baldwin station, seven miles away; and the Fallston station, eight and a half miles away. The Maryland Gazetteer for 1887 lists the population as 200.<sup>9</sup> The 1880 Census of Manufacturers lists six blacksmiths, five flour and grist mills, four lumbermills, two wheelwrights, two shoe manufacturers, one marbleworks (from the local limestone quarry), one fruit and vegetable preserver, one carriagemaker, and one cabinetmaker, Martin Kurtz (figure 4).

Martin Kurtz arrived in the tiny town of Jarrettsville in 1844 from nearby Shrewsbury, Pennsylvania. He opened a cabinetmaking business and provided coffins and undertaking as a sideline. The 1880 Census of Manufacturers lists Martin Kurtz as a cabinetmaker with three helpers and \$1,000 invested in his business. At the time of his death in 1883, Kurtz left a thriving funeral business, a three-story warehouse with a cabinetmaking shop, and a farm with livestock and several fields of crops to his son Edmund Gladden, then 24 years old (figure 5).<sup>10</sup> As Jarrettsville's only undertaker, the funeral business was very prosperous, and Edmund Kurtz did very little cabinetmaking

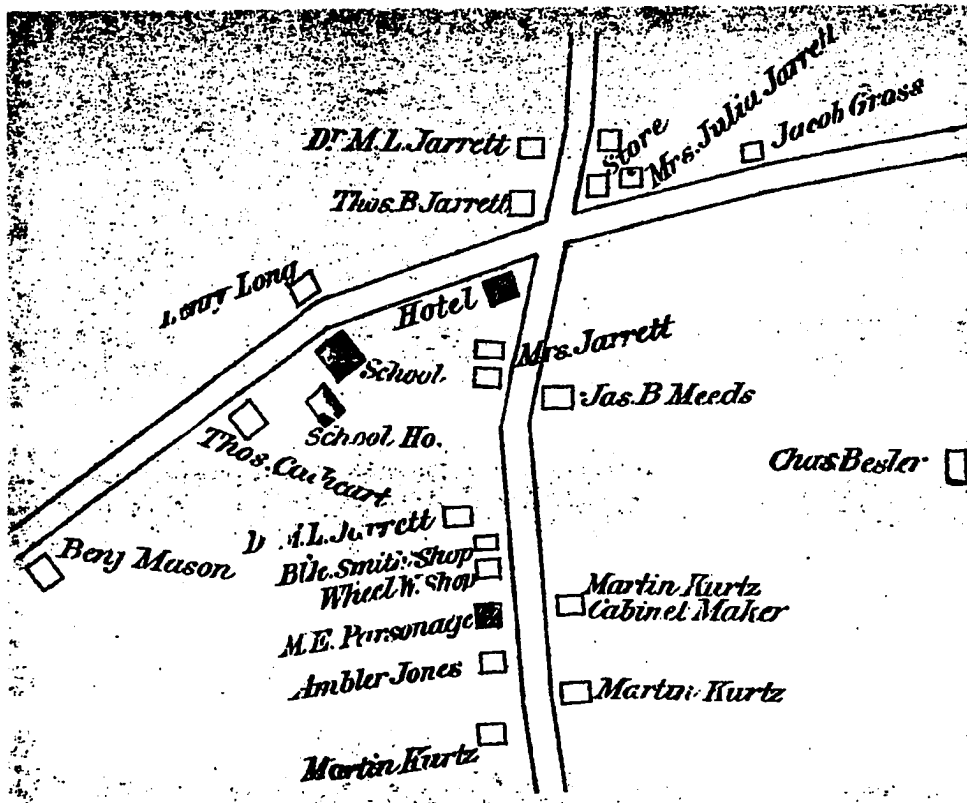


Figure 4. Martinett's Map of Jarrettsville, 1878. Reprinted in Jarrettsville Lions Club, "Jarrettsville: Past and Present" (Jarrettsville, MD, 1976).

---


# UNDERTAKING!

ESTABLISHED

BY

MARTIN KURTZ,

IN 1844.



CASKETS,  
COFFINS  
and  
UNDERTAKERS  
GOODS.

The undersigned having succeeded his father, the late Martin Kurtz, in the Undertaking Business, offers his services to the public, and asks the continuance of their patronage to the old stand. Having purchased a first-class NEW HEARSE, I am prepared to serve funerals in a satisfactory manner and with promptness and care. Having had charge of the business for the past six years, I fully understand it IN ALL ITS BRANCHES, and can guarantee satisfaction in all cases. **25** Prompt attendance at any hour of the day or night.

## EDMUND G. KURTZ,

jan30 -tf

JARRETTSVILLE, HARFORD COUNTY, MD

---

Figure 5. Advertisement announcing E.G. Kurtz's inheritance of his father's business.  
Bel Air Times, 12 June, 1885, 4.

# KURTZ

## *Funeral Home*

ESTABLISHED 1844





M. GLADDEN KURTZ

MARTIN G. KURTZ, SR.

CHARLES E. KURTZ

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR FOUR GENERATIONS



*Good Taste and Adequacy Mark Our Establishment*

SINCE 1844

PHONE JARRETTSVILLE 2211

JARRETTSVILLE
MARYLAND

**Figure 6.** Advertisement for the Kurtz Funeral Home showing E.G. Kurtz's son Martin with his two sons. Harford County Directory (Baltimore: State Directories Publishing Company, 1953), 300.



during the 1880s. Subsequently, his son Martin Gladden Kurtz took over in 1928. The business has remained in the family to this day (figure 6).<sup>11</sup>

Like most of Jarrettsville's residents, Kurtz tended a farm in addition to his other occupations. The farm included several fields in which Kurtz grew timothy hay, feed corn, wheat, oats, tended an apple orchard, and raised livestock, including sheep. The several hands Kurtz employed worked on the farm, not in the undertaking business. The farm included a pond which he referred to year-round as the ice pond. Ice was cut from the pond in winter with the assistance of neighbors and stored in an ice-house next to the large three-story warehouse. In addition to meeting the needs of the Kurtz household, the ice was used to preserve corpses in ice caskets.

Kurtz' daybooks show that he mainly split his twelve-hour days between undertaking and working on the farm, with a small amount of time spent on furniture repair and making small wooden items, such as butter boxes. He expanded the three-story warehouse in 1886 to make more space for the undertaking business, apparently adding a new room for storage of coffins and supplies. In 1886 Kurtz also supervised the work of his hired hands in constructing a building he referred to as the "barracks." Although the purpose of the new structure is unspecified, it might have been built as housing for his help in preparation for the arrival of his bride later that year.<sup>12</sup>

Kurtz met the funeral needs of neighbors for miles around, occasionally travelling three hours round trip. Of the 75 funerals recorded in his daybooks for which he provided attendance at the funeral, 51 of the deceased were adults, 14 were children, and 10 were unspecified. His account books show that he frequently provided coffins without the services of attendance to families who chose to lay out and bury their dead themselves. In particular, children seem to have been buried by their families without Kurtz's services.

Kurtz was, if not deeply religious, then at least an avid churchgoer. Religious services were the major form of social activity available, and Kurtz attended Sunday services, Sunday school, prayer meetings on Wednesday nights, and tent revivals and lectures by visiting preachers as often as he could. His successful courtship of Mary ("Mamie") Gladden in 1886 revolved around these religious outings. They married on December 29, 1886 in the Episcopal church.<sup>13</sup>

Kurtz adopted a detached, dispassionate tone in his daybook entries, even when describing his wedding. His daybook entries are short and impersonal, with no signs of sentimentality. He never shows emotion at the mention of a death, referring to news of a death as "an order." The death of his Uncle David Reid in April 1888 is described in the same terms as that of anyone else in the community:

March 30 feeding &etc filled Ice Casket and took it over  
to Uncle David Reid and put him on ice got  
home at 315 odd jobs<sup>14</sup>

This tone might be a defense mechanism, evidence of the necessary distance an undertaker in a small town would need to develop when every "order" was an acquaintance or friend. It is important to remember that these are daybooks, not diaries; records of what Kurtz did, not what he thought.

### Baltimore City Undertaking

In contrast with Kurtz's rural undertaking, Baltimore City directory listings offer evidence of the proliferation and specialization of the undertaking business during 1880-1890. In 1880, 58 firms were listed as undertakers, and seven offered "undertakers' trimmings." In 1884, 72 undertakers were listed, five firms sold "undertakers' supplies," and one embalmer was included. The 1885 directory listed 98 undertakers, six undertaker supply firms, one coffin manufacturer, and one furnisher of burial shrouds (no embalmers). By 1890, a new category of "funeral director" appeared, and four undertakers classified themselves under this new term. The use of the term "funeral director" steadily grew. By 1894, the number of funeral director listings rose to 18; the same year there were 108 undertakers and seven embalmers. Although the listing of "Undertakers" was far longer than that of "Funeral Directors," by 1894, all advertisements for these

businesses use the terms funeral director or embalmer rather than undertaker, suggesting it was more prestigious to specialize.

The move toward specialization can also be traced in the firm of Henry W. Jenkins and Sons, Company. This firm, still operating a funeral home in Towson, Maryland, today, has the distinction of being the oldest continually operating undertaking firm in America.<sup>15</sup> Michael Jenkins, founder of the company, moved his cabinetmaking business to Baltimore in 1799 and accepted a position as the city's coroner. Receipts from 1799 show that Jenkins sold coffins, with attendance, in addition to furniture. The 1879 Baltimore City Directory shows that Henry W. Jenkins operated a cabinetmaking and interior decorating business at 31 Light Street with Thomas W. Jenkins, his son (figure 7). No mention is made of undertaking, which perhaps was considered implicit for a cabinetmaker. By 1884, William F. Jenkins had joined the firm, which changed its name to Henry W. Jenkins & Sons, and the company now offered its separate services at two locations: cabinetmakers at 66 North Charles Street and undertakers at Saratoga and Park Avenue (figure 8). William oversaw the undertaking business at the Saratoga Street location (he is listed as manager there in 1888), and presumably Henry and Thomas ran the cabinetmaking business. In 1894, Henry W. Jenkins & Sons called

HENRY W. JENKINS.

Established 1800.

THOMAS W. JENKINS.

**HENRY W. JENKINS & SON,**

*No. 16 Light Street, Baltimore.*

---

**PRACTICAL**

**Cabinet Makers and Upholsterers.**

---

**MANUFACTURERS of MANTELS, DOORS, CABINET,**

**Bank, Office and Church Furniture to Order.**

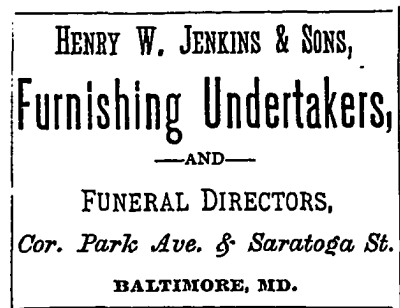
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**UPHOLSTERING IN ALL ITS BRANCHES.**

---

**The Oldest Furniture Establishment in Baltimore.**

Figure 7. Advertisement for Henry W. Jenkins & Son's cabinetmaking business. George W. Howard, The Monumental City: Its Past History and Present Resources (Baltimore: J.D. Ehlers and Company, 1873), 387. Courtesy, the Baltimore Museum of Industry Research Center.



**Figure 8.** Advertisement for Henry W. Jenkins & Sons' undertaking business. Note use of term "Funeral Directors." R.L. Polk & Co.'s Baltimore City Directory for 1888 (Baltimore: Nichols, Killam & Moffitt, 1888), 1434. Courtesy, the Baltimore Museum of Industry Research Center.

themselves "funeral directors" in their listing, evidence of their move toward professionalization.

Illustrations show that Jenkins designed high-quality case furniture and interiors in the latest styles. These hand-colored illustrations are stamped "HWJenkins & Sons, Cabinet Makers & Interior Decorators." The market for this furniture was wealthy Baltimoreans. The firm's undertaking records show that some of their mortuary customers were also wealthy and prominent citizens, including John Quincy Adams, Archbishop John Carroll, Johns Hopkins, Ferdinand C. Latrobe, and Charles Joseph Bonaparte.<sup>16</sup>

### The Business of Undertaking

One of the most important services an undertaker offered, and one which distinguished an undertaker from a mere coffin trimmer, was preservation of the corpse. In Maryland's warm and humid climate, a corpse could deteriorate rapidly if no steps were taken to preserve it either by refrigeration or embalming.<sup>17</sup> Since the funeral usually took place at least a day after the death and often two days or more, one might expect that preservation of the corpse was mandatory, rather than optional. However, the account books of undertakers of the period show that many of the burials did not include any form of preservation of the corpse. In fact, of the 75 funerals that Edmund

Kurtz listed in his daybooks between 1886 and 1888, only 27 of the bodies were preserved (36%). A similar ratio is evident in the accounts of Henry W. Jenkins & Sons. On the preprinted forms for funeral orders that the firm began using in 1880, there was no line for ordering an ice casket or embalming; the undertaker needed to write in these instructions, suggesting that preservation was an exception rather than the rule. Time of year did not factor into the decision of whether to preserve the body; Kurtz's daybooks have examples of winter funerals where Kurtz used an ice casket and summer funerals where no preservation was used. Since use of an ice casket or embalming entailed additional cost, customers may have made this choice based on economic criteria. However, even costly funerals where no other expense was spared might not include preservation of the corpse.<sup>18</sup> The spare entries in Kurtz's daybooks or Jenkins' records do not explain these choices, so we can only wonder about the reasons.

The first preservation method to be used widely in this country was preservation of the corpse by refrigeration. Of the many patented devices for this, the "J.C. Taylor & Sons' well-known, popular, reliable and celebrated Cold Air Ice Caskets" were a common choice (figure 9). Ice caskets were reusable and effective. The Taylor trade catalog describes the use and function of the ice casket:

Each Ice Casket contains the most complete and handiest cooling board in existence. Raised half an inch from the bottom of the Ice Casket is a neat, caned, chestnut cooling



board, nicely finished, with adjustable head-rest, and set-screw to lower or raise to any desired distance; attached to the head rest is a chin-support for keeping the mouth closed; also, webbing straps, for securing the body to the cooling board and keeping the arms and limbs in proper position. There is also a device of self-measurement, or scale of feet and inches, which gives the correct measurement without the use of a rule. For removing bodies from upper to lower floors this cooling board has no equal. By securing the body with the straps attached to the same, the heaviest person can easily be removed to any portion of the house by two (2) persons, with the least danger of purging. For a laying out board, where ice is not used, it has no superior. For dressing bodies ..., lift the cooling board from the Ice Casket, by means of the handles, to the stools; dress the corpse; draw webbing straps from the slots and place one each under the shoulders and hips; lower the body in coffin or casket; this can be done without the least danger of soiling or displacing the [casket] linings.<sup>19</sup>

The washed and dressed corpse was placed in the ice casket on the cooling board, which rested a few inches from the bottom of the casket to allow for complete circulation of cold air. Two sets of straps on the cooling board held the arms crossed over the chest and the legs in place until stiffening set in. A metal tray containing ice was placed over the torso of the deceased in order to keep the vital organs from decomposing. When the casket's lid was in place, a glass panel permitted sight of the face of the deceased, but the ice tray was not visible. Melting ice dripped out of a drain hose, and a bucket had to be placed to catch the water. The corpse could be conveniently transferred from the ice casket to the real coffin before the funeral. The Taylor ice casket catalog emphasized other advantages as well:

- 1st. It is light, well made and finished; ...
- 2nd. Our Ice Chamber can be removed and emptied of ice, relieving you of unnecessary weight in handling the Ice Casket, and making it top-heavy.
- 3d. The Ice Chamber can be removed from the case, for repairs (if needed), washed, aired or painted; ...
- 4th. Each Ice Casket contains the most complete and handiest cooling board in existence....
- 5th. The lightness of J.C.Taylor & Sons' Ice Casket permits it to be taken anywhere the ordinary coffin or casket can.<sup>20</sup>

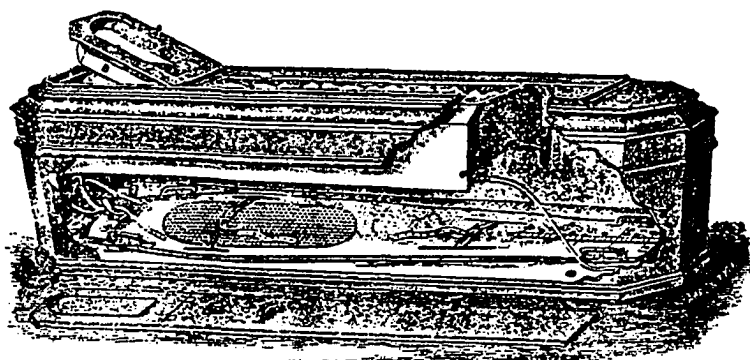
Kurtz owned two ice caskets: one for adults, and one for children (figures 10 and 11). At times, demand was high enough that both of Kurtz's ice caskets were in use at the same time. The family still owns three cooling boards used by Kurtz; two sized for adults, and one sized for children. Two of the Kurtz's extant cooling boards are marked J.C. Taylor, and came with the adult and child-sized ice caskets owned by the family. The central panel on these boards is caned (figure 12). The other cooling board, marked "J.G.V.C.", has a central panel of perforated plywood, much like a Gardner chair seat (figure 13).<sup>21</sup>

Kurtz's daybooks reveal how much additional work and inconvenience use of the ice casket caused. Kurtz needed to make two extra trips to the house when preserving a corpse on ice: once to deliver the casket and lay out the body, and once after the funeral to retrieve the ice casket.<sup>22</sup> The ice casket had to be cleaned after every use, and every three months Kurtz painted the ice casket tray. For David St. Clair's funeral in 1886, Kurtz performed the following tasks:

J. C. TAYLOR & SONS,

MANUFACTURERS OF

PATENT IMPROVED ICE CASKETS



Patented July 21st, 1870.

Manufactured only by J. C. TAYLOR & SONS, 334 Broad St., Trenton, N. J.

For Preserving the Dead by Cold Air.

Manufactory, 334 BROAD ST., TRENTON, N. J.

It has been proved by experiments that Winter is the most favorable time for Embalming Schools, Fluids, Lectures, etc., but for Preserving the Dead in Hot Weather use J. C. TAYLOR & SONS' well-known, popular, reliable and celebrated COLD AIR ICE CASKETS, which are without a rival.

**Figure 9.** Illustration of the Taylor ice casket, showing interior and cooling board. J.C. Taylor & Sons trade catalog (Trenton, NJ: the company, ca. 1883). Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

(following page) Figure 10. E.G. Kurtz's child's and adult's ice caskets.



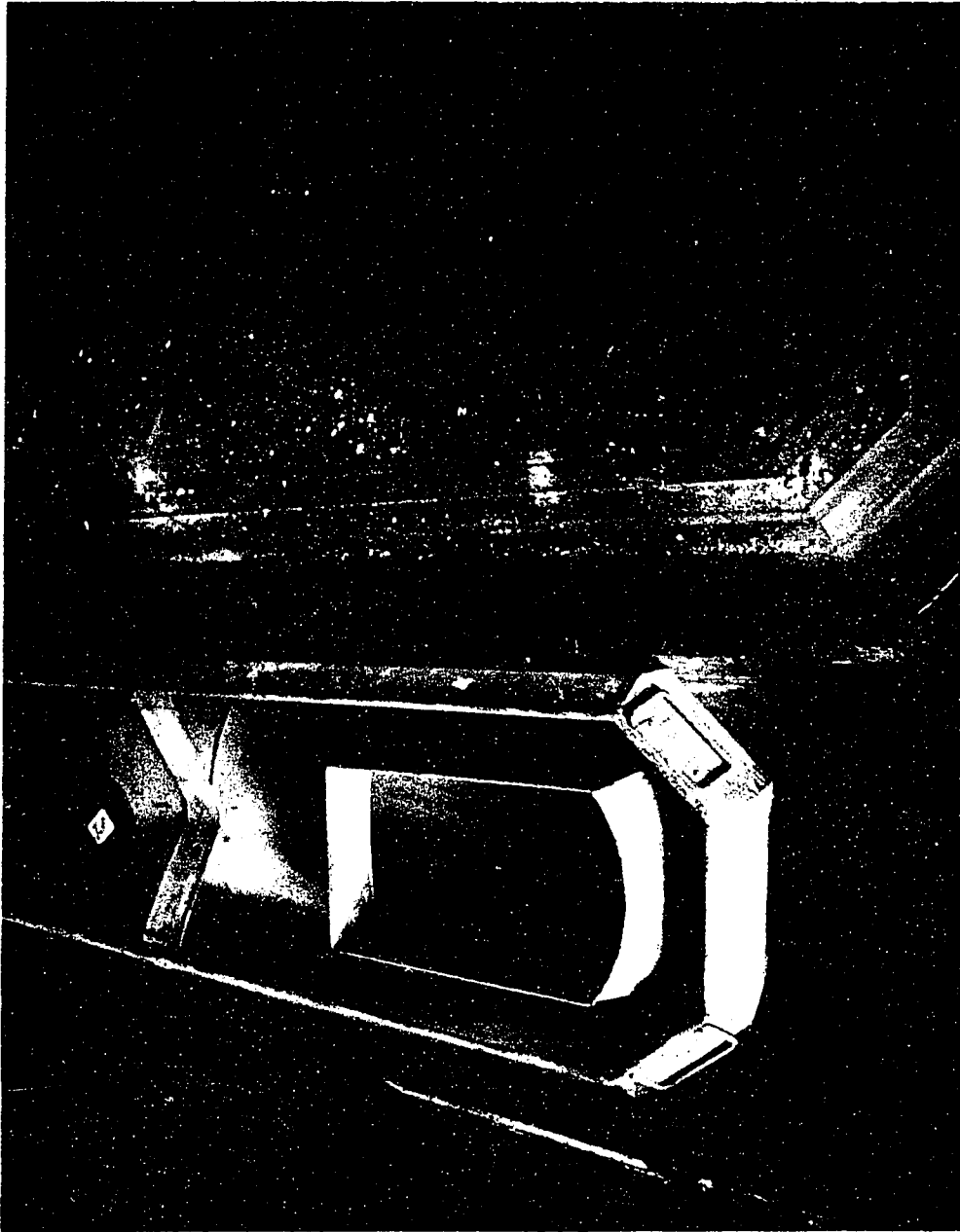
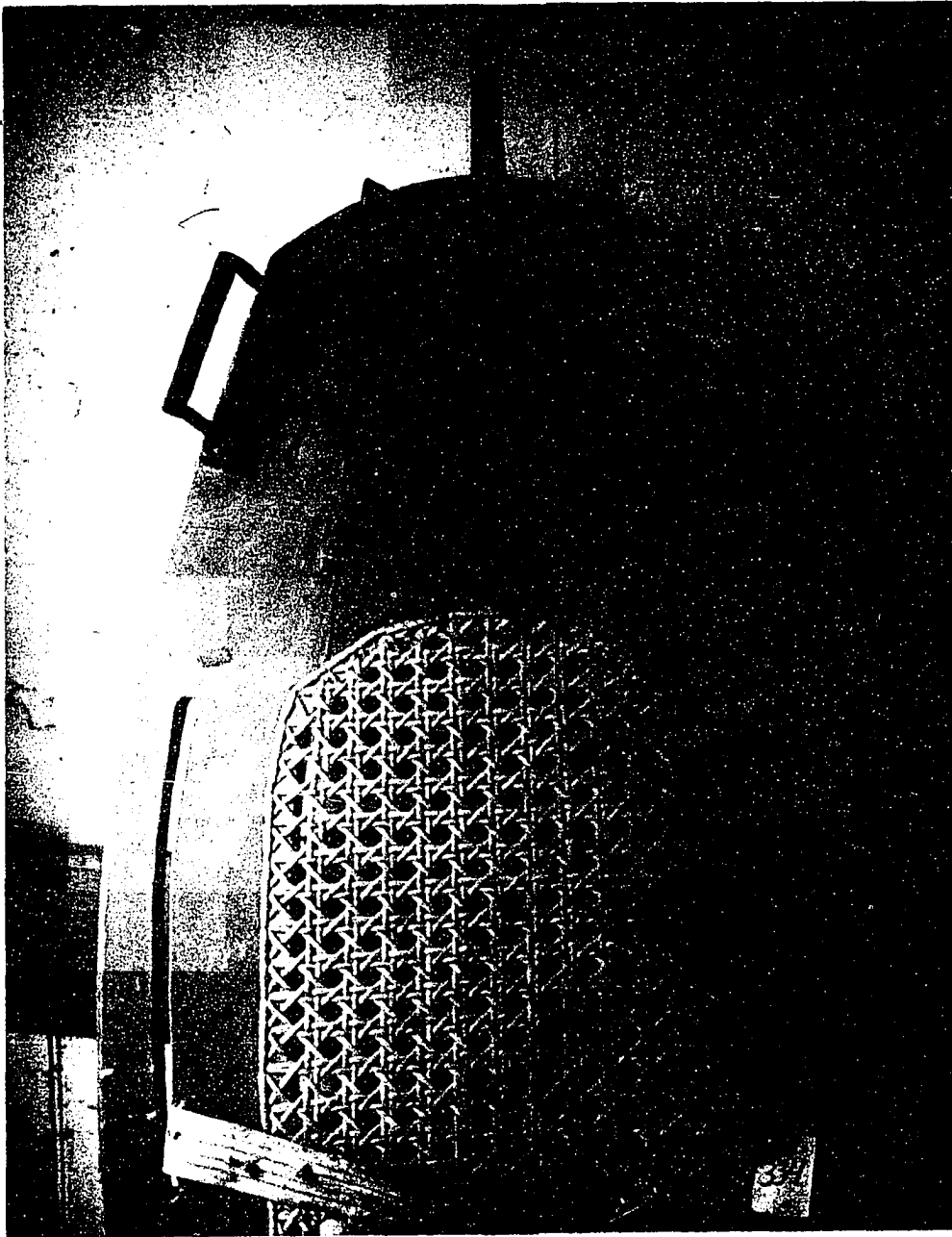


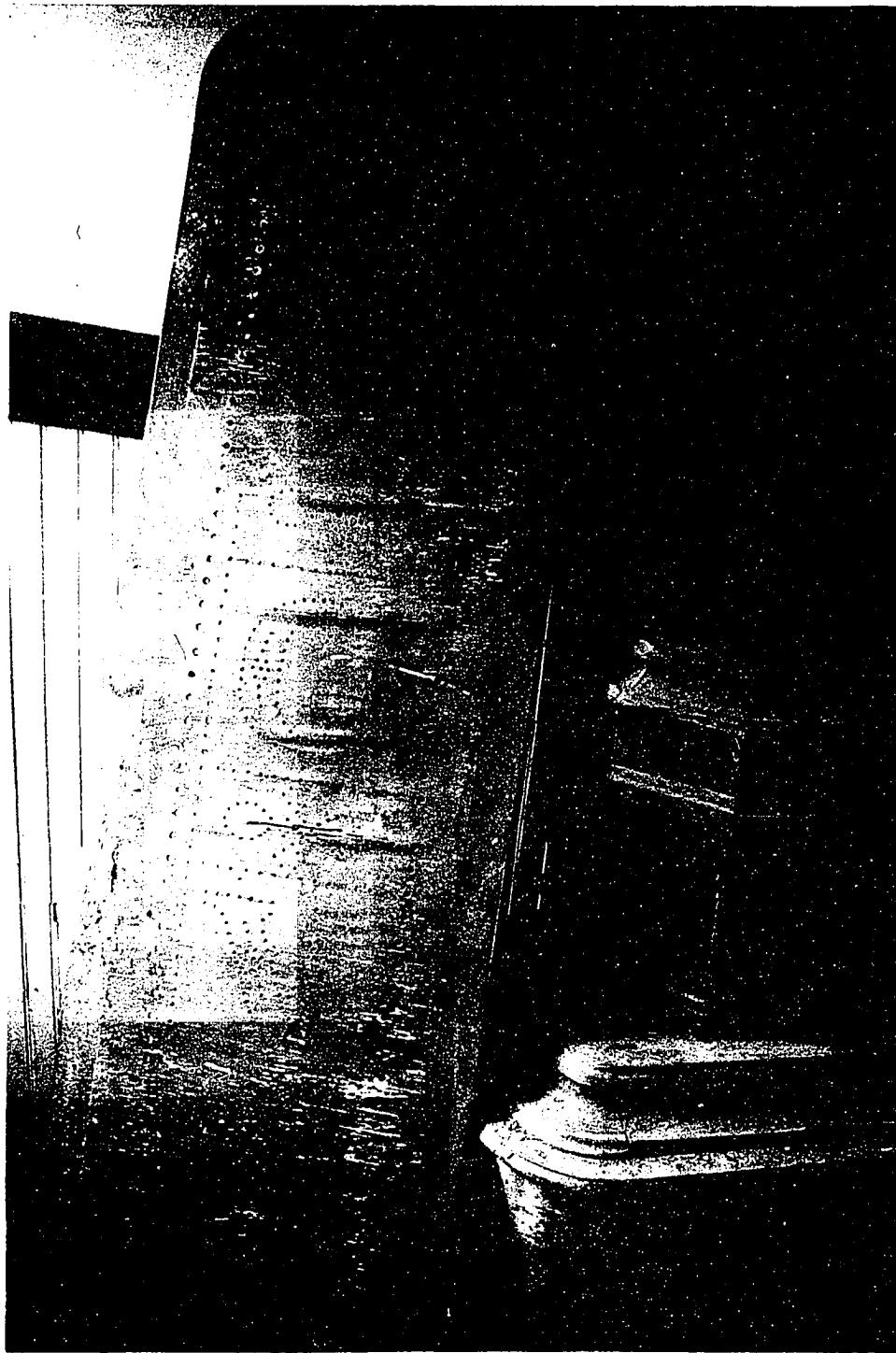
Figure 11. Interior of Kurtz's ice casket. Tray contains ice over the torso and around the head, with an opening for the glass portal. Door on lower half of lid allows access to the tray for adding ice.



**Figure 12.** Detail of caned Taylor cooling board. The three-pronged head cradle and side straps held the body in place during laying out and while in the ice casket. Handles at the head and the foot of the cooling board provided stability when moving the corpse.

(following page) Figure 13. Perforated plywood cooling board with "JGVC" design.

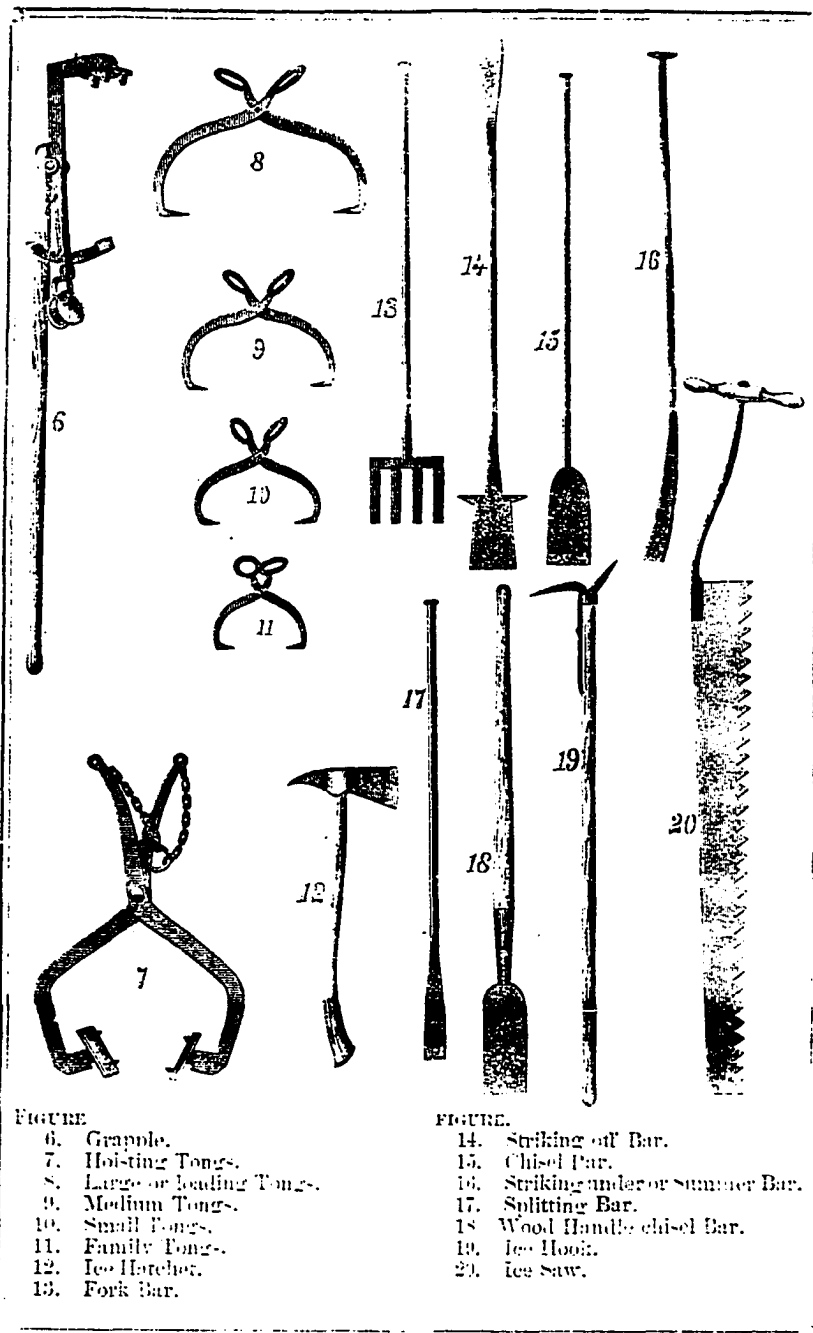




- April 20 ... went out to field to drill in oats but received order and came home and filled ice casket and took it up to David St. Clairs and put him on ice got home at 7 30 Pm....
- 21 Trimming casket & etc fixed box lid till 11 Am washed hearse wheels & etc....
- 22 attended funeral of David St. Clair got home at 3 Pm went up after ice casket got back at 8 Pm
- 23 cleaning out ice casket dusting hearse....<sup>23</sup>

In order to provide enough ice for corpse preservation year-round, Kurtz maintained an ice pond on his property. The ice pond was shallow, and froze quickly in winter. Kurtz worked on the pond year-round to provide ice for the ice casket (figure 14). In December and January, Kurtz and his hired hands and neighbors cut ice on the pond and hauled it to his ice house, a low building with thick walls built into the hill next to the warehouse (figure 15). After the ice was packed into the building, buckets of water were poured over it to freeze it further. When the ice was removed as needed during the year, straw was packed around the remaining ice to insulate it. In fall, the ice pond was repaired and the banks fortified for the coming freeze. Kurtz shared the ice on the pond with his neighbors, and in return for their assistance he helped cut and store ice in their ice houses as well.<sup>24</sup>

Baltimore City undertakers also used ice caskets, but like other city residents, they purchased their ice from vendors. In Jenkins & Sons' account books, the order for William Wallace Retzman's funeral



**Figure 14.** Tools for cutting and moving ice. Trade catalog of Stafford, Holden & Co. (Barre, VT: the company, 1890). Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

(following page) Figure 15. Kurtz ice house, built into the side of a hill.



on June 22, 1879 specifies "R.W. Ice Casket & Ice no. 1 Curr."<sup>25</sup> This indicates that a rosewood ice casket would be used and that ice would be supplied by John Curran, an ice vendor at 171 E. Fayette Street.<sup>26</sup>

The technology necessary for chemical preservation of bodies with an arsenic compound existed at the same time that ice caskets were in use, but the public was not initially receptive to the new technology. Some thought that embalming required mutilation of the body, a misconception fueled by undertakers' determination to surround their trade secrets with an air of mystery. During the 1880s, embalming gained acceptance. James J. Farrell, in Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920, felt that this acceptance was due to a range of cultural influences:

In evaluating embalming ... few Americans specifically considered the single question of preparing a body for burial. Instead, they were unconsciously impressed by a concurrence of events — an increased concern for appearances in a consumer culture, a strong and widely publicized sanitary movement, surgical pretensions in an age of respected medicine, a privatization of the home, etc. — which disposed them to accept embalming.<sup>27</sup>

Embalming also made it more practical to delay a funeral for the arrival of a distant relative.

Undertakers promised the public that embalming would preserve a body almost indefinitely. Some embalming fluid manufacturers even promised to restore corpses that had already begun to decay. A clipping found in one of Kurtz's daybooks, an

advertisement for "The Oriental" embalming fluid, included a testimonial that made such a promise:

What the Morgue Sup't Says

CITY MORGUE, ST. LOUIS, MO.,  
April 28, 1885.

MESSRS. BUTMAN & MARBLE.

Agents Egyptian Chemical Co.

Gentlemen. -- I have used your embalming fluid "The Oriental," and can safely pronounce it in every way superior to anything or any other that in my experience I have ever used. It has been put to as severe a test as it is possible to put a fluid too [sic], and not found wanting. In its use in embalming the body of C. Arthur Preller, whose remains were found packed in a trunk in the Southern Hotel, its action was wonderful. I received the body on April 14th, and it was buried on April 25th, during which time it remained in the morgue on a slab in a perfect state of preservation. During my experience of two and a half years as superintendent of the Morgue in the city of St. Louis I never received a body in such an advanced state of decomposition as that of C. Arthur Preller, it was almost impossible to determine the color of the deceased until after the use of the "Oriental" which brought the body to a very satisfactory state, I can say that the appearance of the deceased improved every day although I kept him eleven days. I heartily recommend the Oriental to the undertakers of St. Louis and in fact to the world as a preserver of the dead.

(Signed,) Respectfully,  
JOHN F. RYAN,  
Superintendent St. Louis Morgue<sup>28</sup>

Despite these promises, the public continued to choose ice caskets over embalming even though ice caskets were more

expensive. In 1884 Henry W. Jenkins & Sons charged \$18 or \$20 for preservation by ice casket, but only \$12 for embalming. Eventually the public was won over by promises of permanent preservation that enabled mourners to imagine their loved one lying in his grave impervious to decay, just as they had last seen him. Embalming was not merely an improved method of preserving the deceased; it was also an improved method of preserving the memory of the deceased. When an undertaker embalmed a corpse, he assumed responsibility for laying out the body — relieving the family of an unpleasant task. By the middle of the 1880s undertakers received nearly as many orders for embalming as they did for ice caskets, and by the end of the decade, embalming clearly was replacing ice caskets (figure 16).

An embalmed corpse still remained at home until the funeral. The undertaker brought his equipment to the house and embalmed the body in the parlor, where it was laid out for viewing. The undertaker strapped the corpse onto the cooling board, made a small incision in the body and drained out the blood. An arsenic-based embalming fluid was then injected arterially. Some fluids were marketed in "flesh tint" to enhance the natural appearance of the corpse (figure 17).<sup>29</sup> After the undertaker dressed the body, shaved it if necessary, and arranged its hair, the deceased was ready to lay out until





the funeral, usually held the next day. A rag soaked in embalming fluid was kept over the face when no one was viewing the corpse.<sup>30</sup>

Considering that the first widespread use of embalming was for Civil War dead, it is interesting that the first instances of embalming in Henry W. Jenkins & Sons' account books were soldiers. In 1879, William F. Barry, a colonel in the Second Artillery, died at Ft. McHenry. His body was embalmed by a Dr. Goldsmith and shipped by Jenkins to Buffalo, New York for his funeral four days after his death. Later that year, Captain Henry Rowles was killed on the British steamer Rathmore by falling off a derrick block. His corpse was embalmed by a Dr. Coxe and stored in the Jenkins warehouse until the body could be shipped by steam yacht to England.<sup>31</sup> Jenkins & Sons continued to contract with doctors for embalming services until 1884, when they began to perform the embalming themselves. The records of another Baltimore undertaker, William J. Tickner, show that by 1884 Tickner also performed embalming, but he seemed to be uncertain about the practice. In October of 1886 he charged \$3 for a "temp. embalming" (this intriguing term is not explained), and in two funerals in September, 1888 he charged for both the use of ice casket and embalming.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 17. Kurtz's case of embalming fluid bottles, probably from the 1890s.

Other changes in undertaking during the 1880s included alterations in burial cases, as the traditional "coffin" gave way to the modern "casket." The new term conveyed the meaning of a container for something precious, and the rectangular shape softened the visual impact on the mourner. As an 1859 casket patent explained,

the burial cases formerly used were adapted in shape nearly to the form of the human body, that is they tapered from the shoulders to the head, and from the shoulders to the feet. Presently, in order to obviate in some degree the disagreeable sensations produced by a coffin on many minds, the casket, or square form has been adopted.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the difference in shape, the term "coffin" continues in use until this day, and has become synonymous with "casket." Kurtz used the two terms interchangeably in his daybook entries; Jenkins & Sons preferred "casket;" and William Tickner used the more formal "burial cases" in his account books.

Kurtz made most of the coffins he sold. Cherry, walnut, maple, and cedar lumber was purchased from a local sawmill. He cut logs of chestnut and poplar, used as secondary woods, in nearby St. Clair's Woods, owned by his neighbor, John St. Clair. Wood was stored in his barn until it was needed. Coffins were made in advance, then stored until required.<sup>34</sup> A study of his daybooks shows that during slow periods, Kurtz made parts in bulk for several coffins, then assembled them in mass production style. A typical

series of this work is described in the following excerpt from his 1886 daybook:

March 13 ... working on little coffins and dressing up  
coffin sides ....  
14 dressing up coffin sides & etc ....  
15 dressing up little coffin sides putting on 2  
coffins ....  
16 fitting little ends on coffin working rabbits on  
ends & sawing sawing sides & etc all day  
17 sawed 8 sets of c. sides & etc till 8 Am ....<sup>35</sup>

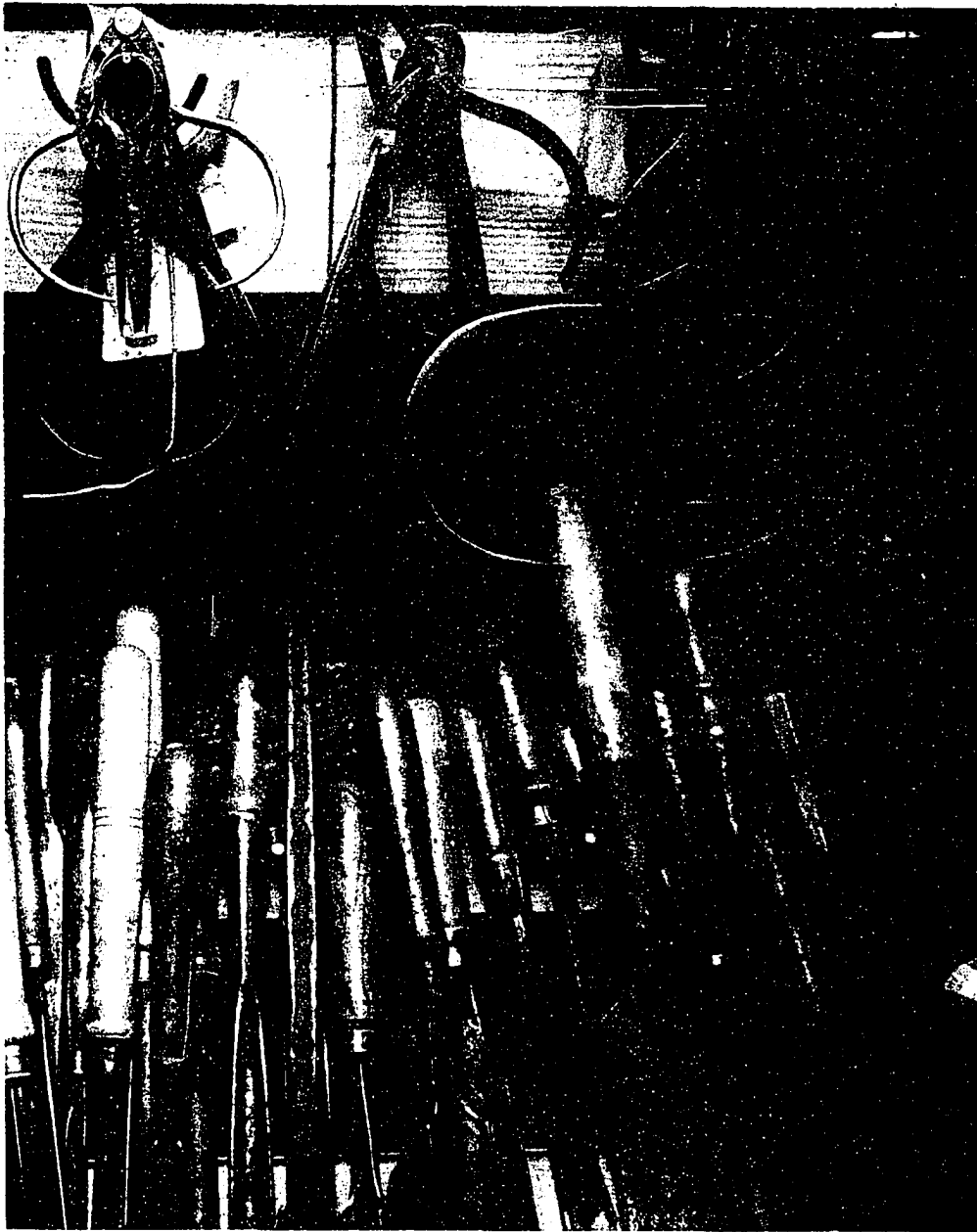
The little coffins he refers to are children's coffins, and approximately half of the coffins that he made were for children. First the coffin parts were "gotten out" by sawing the board to the rudimentary shape. Next the parts were "dressed up" — the boards were roughly prepared to produce a more uniform surface. The parts would then be planed and assembled. Glue that came in cake form was melted in an iron pot and used to join the parts. When assembled, the coffins were sanded and varnished. Harford County historians proudly maintain that the Kurtz family had a secret varnish recipe that produced an unusually handsome sheen. The authors of the 1953 Harford County Directory declare that Kurtz's reputation for putting fine finishes on coffins was unsurpassed by anyone in the country."<sup>36</sup> Kurtz had ample room for storage of finished caskets in his three-story warehouse. He refers to this inventory in March, 1886 when he "fixed boards & etc to keep matter from off of the coffins & etc" after a rainstorm.<sup>37</sup> Though prepared in advance, the coffins needed to appear fresh.

Kurtz's account books indicate that he provided a wide range of casket styles, from very plain to very ornate. The simplest were flat-lidded maple or poplar coffins stained to imitate cherry or rosewood. "Plain cherry" coffins (distinguished from "nice cherry" coffins in funeral orders) were another inexpensive option. These coffins were used for African Americans and children. A typical example follows:

Dec 15  
 Thomas Johnson Black  
 6.0 x 19 in  
 poplar im rosewood  
 4 han tacks hinged  
 lid Buried from J. Parry tenant house  
 Buried at Cooptown  
 12 m<sup>38</sup>

This coffin was made of poplar stained to imitate rosewood and had four handles, decorative tacks in the top, and a hinged lid. Not all African Americans had the plain coffins, however. For example, Harry Brown's wife, a black woman, had glass inserted in her coffin lid, a fancy option requiring additional expense.

Most of the coffins Kurtz made himself were relatively plain, usually of walnut and perhaps with the top of the lid decorated with a strip of moulding made with one of Kurtz's numerous moulding planes (figure 18). However, he also made moulded top coffins (abbreviated as "MTC" in his notes), which were more elaborate and took a long time to produce. These were probably coffins with vaulted tops formed by wrapping the lid with hot rags and steaming it to shape



**Figure 18.** Wood chisels from the Kurtz woodworking shop.

on forms, a time-consuming process. In 1886, Kurtz began a moulded top coffin on February 3 and worked on it five more times until it was completed on February 13.<sup>39</sup> Moulded top coffins were clearly the top of the line, for in 1881 Martin Kurtz buried a young relative in one:

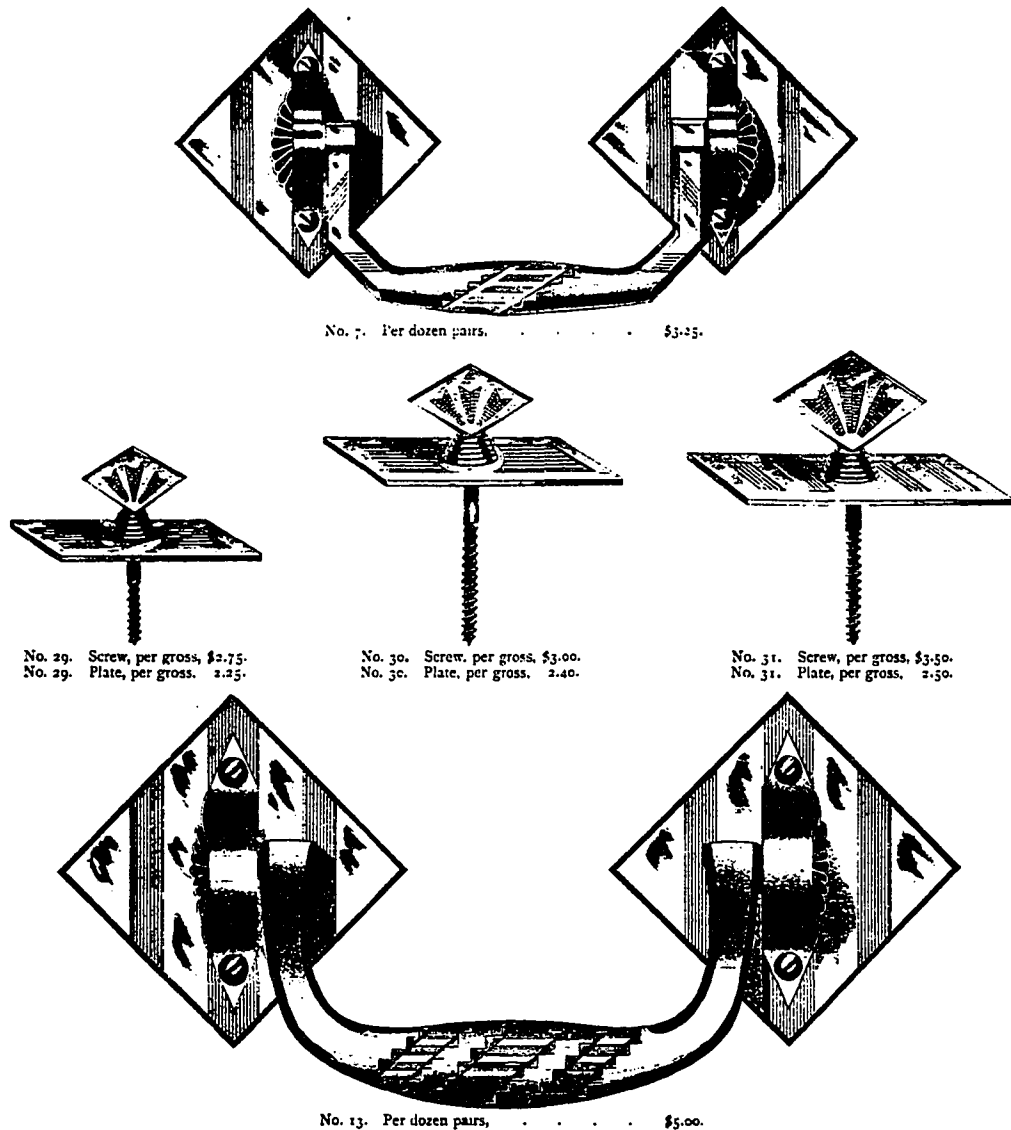
Jan 10  
 Roy C Kurtz MTCherryC  
 4.2 x 12 1/2 4 han.  
 silver moulding and tips  
 buried from New market  
 " at Rock chapel  
 33 m<sup>40</sup>

Kurtz ordered coffin hardware from Baltimore supply houses. Every coffin needed to be equipped with handles or rails for the pallbearers, but extravagant extras were also available. Customers might order coffins with handles and matching screws, fancy hinges, and decorative tacks and escutcheons in a variety of finishes: white metal, silver or silver plate, oxidized metal, or ebonized (figures 19-20). Many of the coffins Kurtz trimmed had plates engraved with the name and age of the deceased or with a sentimental epitaph, such as "Our Darling" (figure 21). The order for Nelson Gilbert's wife includes the catalog number of the nameplate chosen for her casket:

Oct 30  
 Nelson Gilberts Wife  
 Walnut Casket 6.0 18  
 6 han moulding sil panel  
 t[indecipherable] sil moulding Sli Glass  
 no 56 om plate engraved  
 ME Gilbert Aged 25 yrs 3 mo 5 days  
 Buried from Nelson Rampley



## FINE ELECTRO SILVER PLATED.



**Figure 19.** Silver-plated handles with matching screws and escutcheons. Meriden Britannia Company, Illustrated Catalogue and Descriptive Price List of Wm. M. Smith's Fine Silver, Bronze, Gold Plated and Oxidized Silver Casket Trimmings (West Meriden, CN: the company, 1880), 24. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

# SILVER PLATED COFFIN TRIMMINGS.

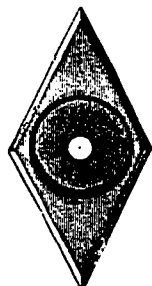
☞ See Page 7 for Nos. 1, 4, 5 & 6 Hinges and Nos. 1, 13, 15 & 25 Dowels



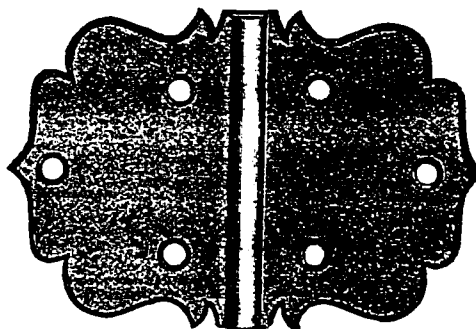
No. 65.  
Tuck & Screw



No. 67.  
Tuck & Screw.

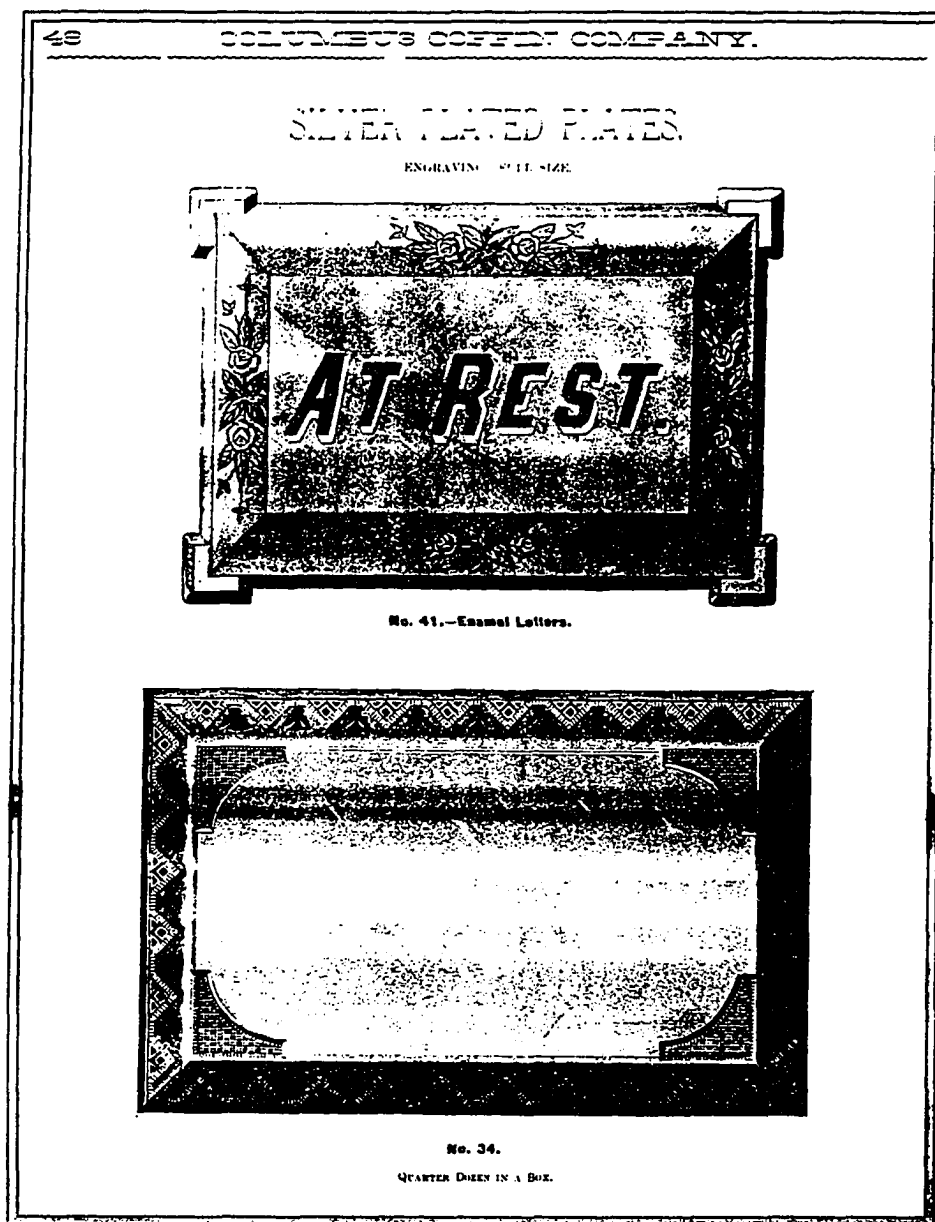


No. 68, Diamond



No. 6.—Size of Engraving  
No. 8.—Size,  $3 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.  
No. 7.—Size,  $2\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{8}$  inches.

**Figure 20.** Silver-plated coffin trimmings: tacks, screws, escutcheons, and hinges. Miller Bro's & Co., *Illustrated Catalogue of Coffin Trimmings* (Boston: the company, ca. 1885), 9. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.



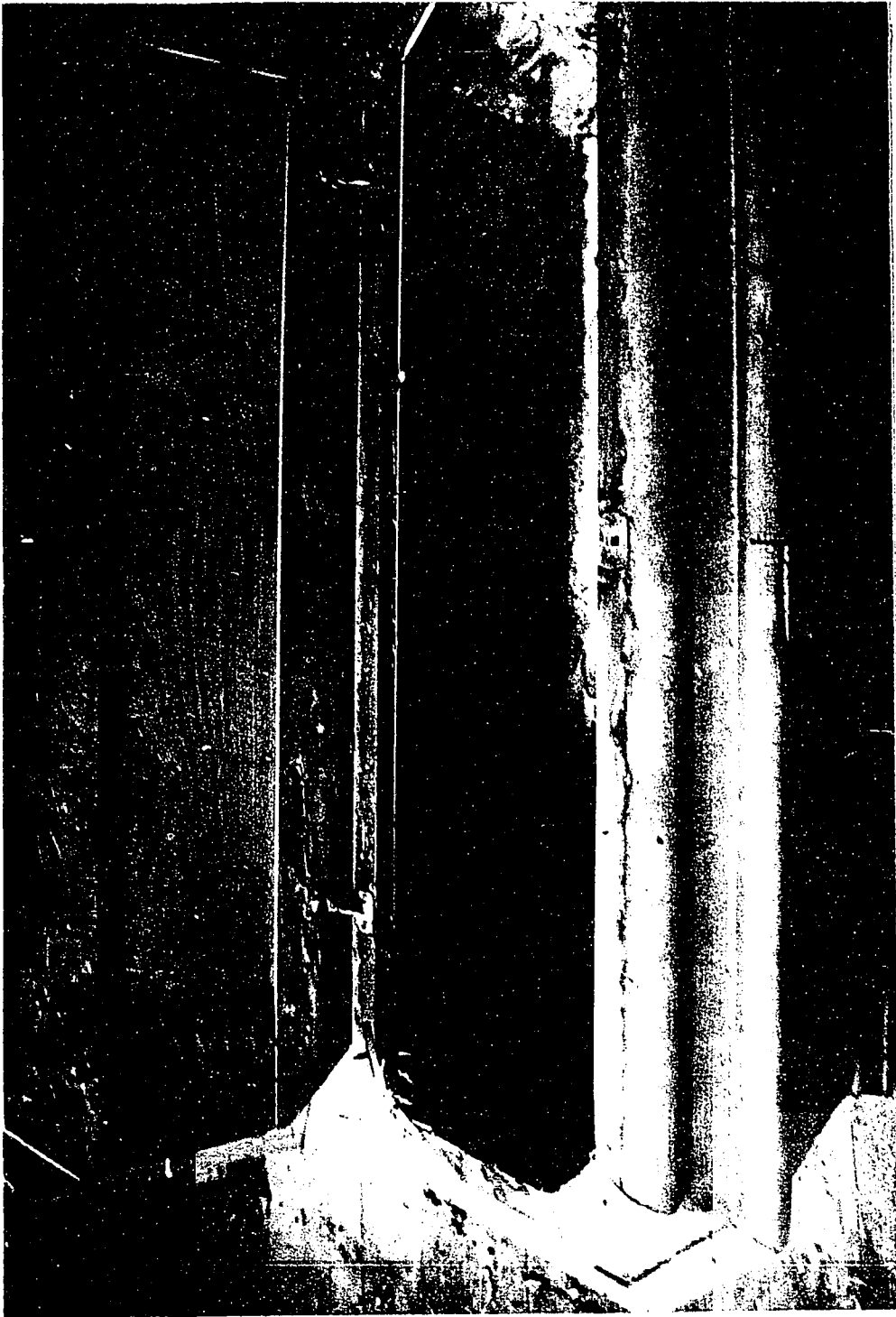
**Figure 21.** Silver-plated coffin nameplates. Columbus Coffin Company, Illustrated Catalogue of Wood and Cloth-Covered Coffins and Caskets, Undertakers' Hardware and Supplies, Robes, Linings and General Supplies (Columbus, OH: the company, 1882), 34. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

" at Bethel<sup>41</sup>

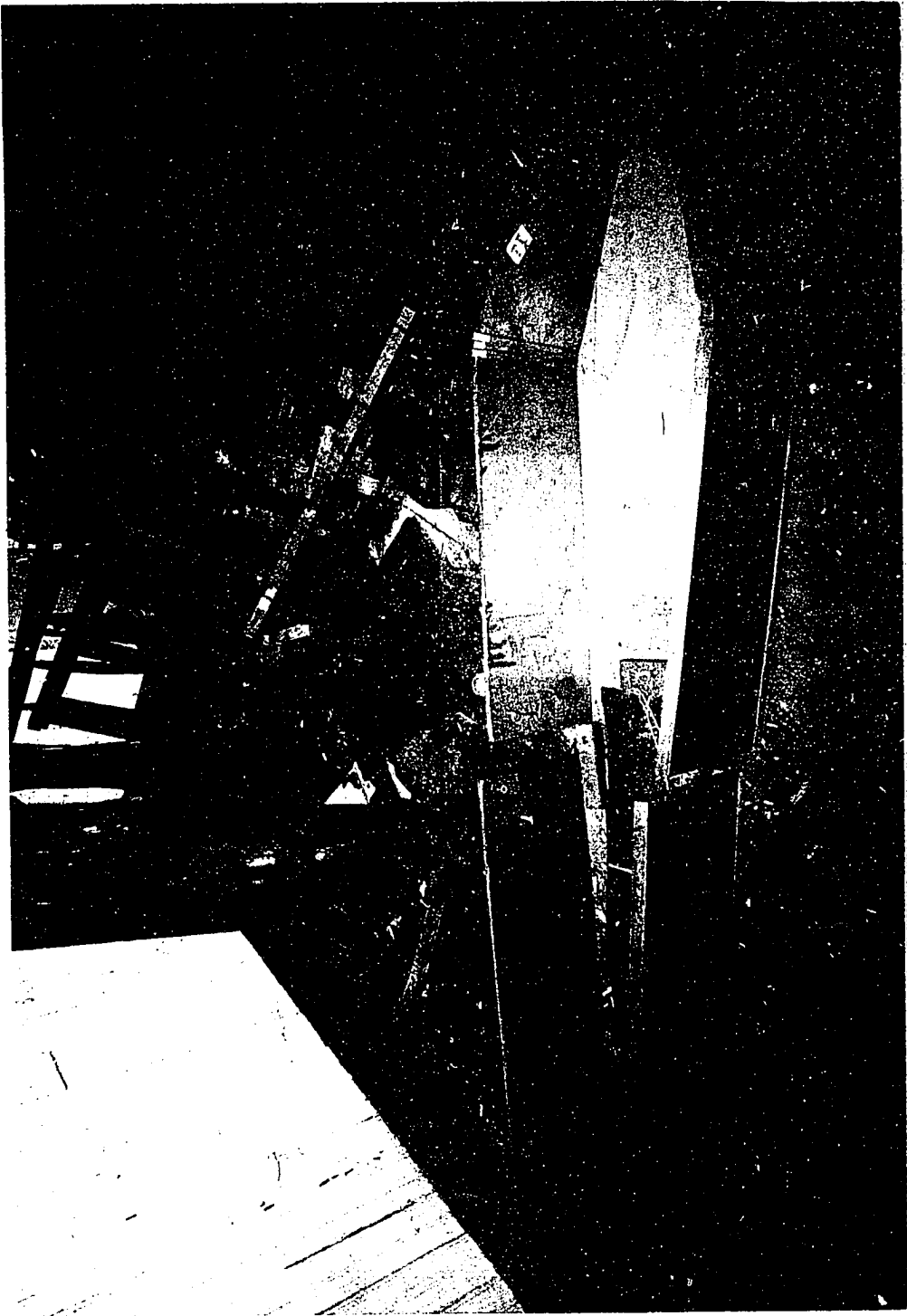
Occasionally he reports in the daybooks time spent "cutting rabbits in coffin lids for glass & etc," a reference to a hole with a retaining lip used to hold a glass panel over the face.<sup>42</sup> These extras were made to order.

In addition to the two ice caskets mentioned before, five caskets dating approximately from the 1880s have remained in the possession of the Kurtzes. Three are children's caskets, and two are for adults. None have ever been lined, indicating that they were never selected for use; they survived as part of the coffins in storage. One is an octagon cornered infant's coffin with a hinged lid (figure 22). The lid probably remained open during the viewing. The finish of the interior is very rough, but the lining would cover the roughness. This coffin was very likely made by Edmund Kurtz. Another is a unique child's eight-sided coffin, separated into two parts. The bottom section fits into the upper section, making it adjustable; hooks at the end of the bottom section attach to eyes at the end of the top section (figure 23). This coffin is very plain and roughly finished. It might have been made by Kurtz as an experiment or a model. No lid for this coffin survives. The remaining child's coffin is sized for an infant, and is painted white (figure 24). This was a common color choice for children's caskets sold in trade catalogs, and Kurtz almost certainly bought this coffin ready-made. Its lid is a removable oval panel that fits into the top of the

(following page) Figure 22. Octagon-cornered infant's coffin with hinged lid.



(following page) Figure 23. Child's two-part coffin.





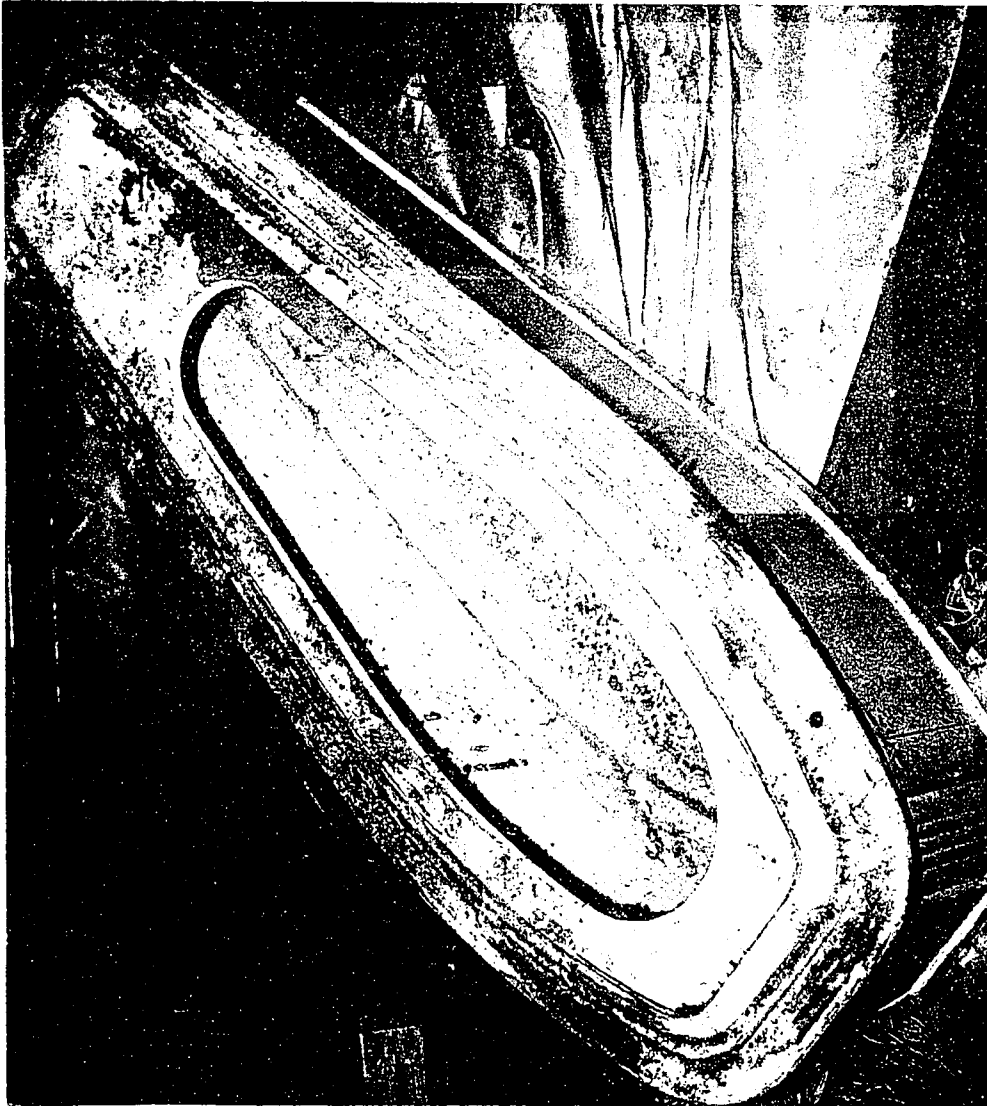


Figure 24. Painted white infant's coffin.

coffin. When removed, three-quarters of the corpse inside would be visible. Delicate gold stenciling decorates the side of the coffin.

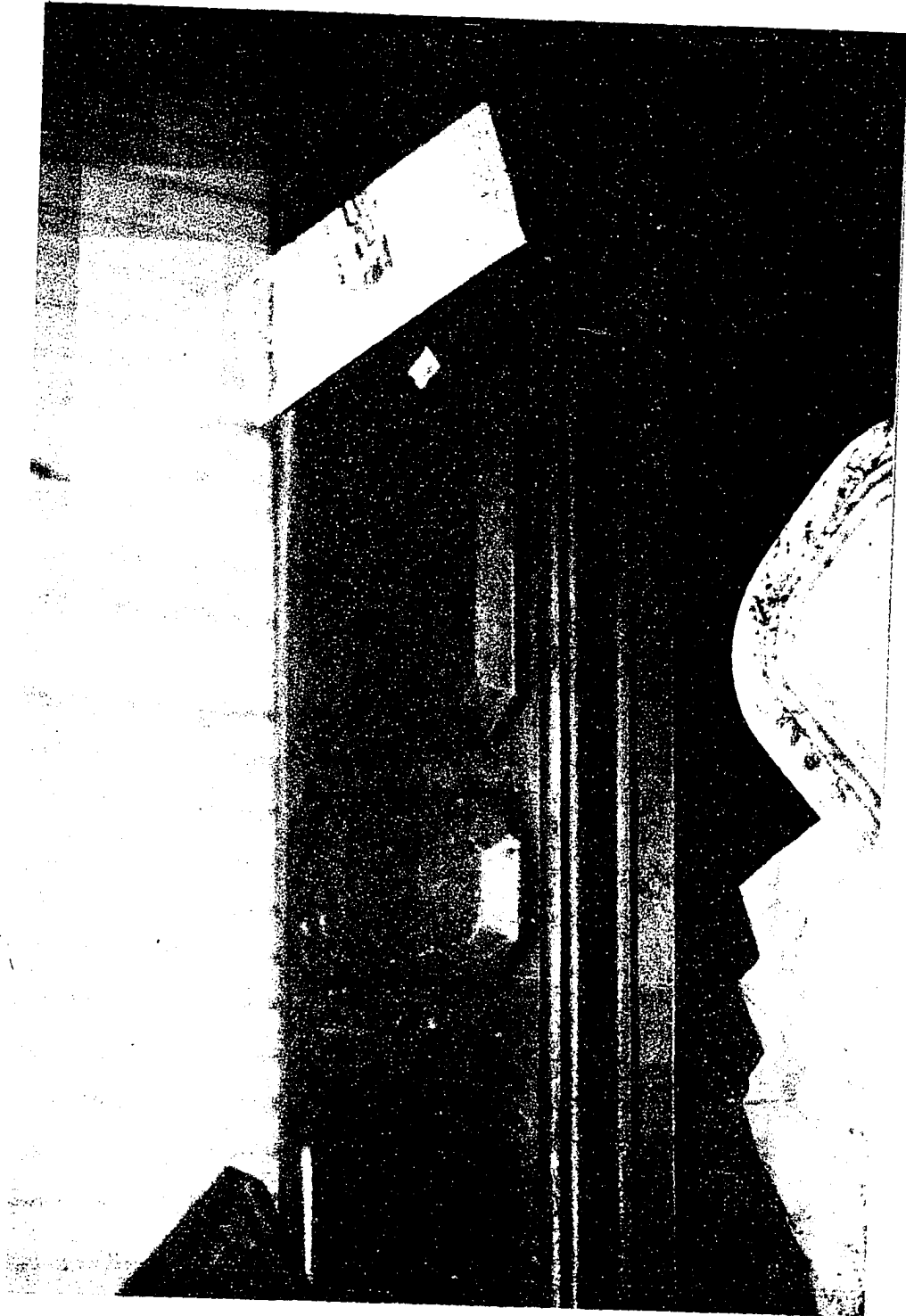
One of the adults' caskets also seems to have been factory made. The top is embellished with three rectangular raised panels, a large one at each end separated by a smaller one in the middle (figures 25 and 26). The brass nameplate would be attached to this middle panel. The panel over the top half lifts off, which would leave the torso of the body inside open to view. Once the viewing was finished, the panel was screwed in place at each corner (figure 27).<sup>43</sup>

Kurtz also supplied factory-manufactured coffins for customers who requested them, but made more coffins than he purchased. At first, Kurtz took the train to Baltimore to purchase coffins and escorted the order home, a trip that took most of a day (as this excerpt from an 1886 daybook shows):

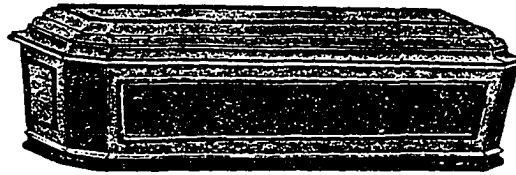
October 5 got up at 4 Am got ready and went to Monkton  
took 7.06 train to Balto at 8.15 got casket & etc  
and started from Balto at 10 15 arrived at 11.18  
got home at 1 15 Pm trimmed casket & etc fixed  
box & etc till 9 Pm<sup>44</sup>

Factory-made caskets were available from several undertakers' supply houses in Baltimore City; the only one Kurtz mentions by name is Warfield and Rohr. During one emergency in 1886 he arrived in the city on a Sunday and had to visit the residence of George W. Warfield to place his order:

(following page) Figure 25. Adult's casket with raised panels. Panel over torso is removable for viewing the corpse.

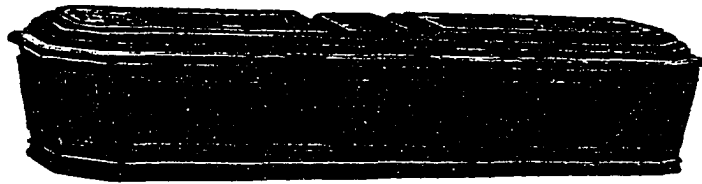


## UNTRIMMED CLOTH CASKETS.

**No. 34.—Casket.**

Covered with fine white brocade; velvet mouldings and base; cap fastens with spring catch and dowels; full length glass 3 ft. 9 in. and under. All other sizes have French glass in sliding frame.

No. 50.—Same, but covered with fine all white broadcloth. These two numbers made in all ordinary sizes, 5 ft. 9 in. and under.

**No. 36.—Casket.**

Covered with all black broadcloth; cloth mouldings and base; large French glass in sliding frame; cap fastens with spring catch and dowels. Made only in adult and extra large sizes.

**No. 37.—Casket.**

Figure 26. Caskets with panels similar to casket in Kurtz collection (figure 25). Columbus Coffin Company, Illustrated Catalogue of Wood and Cloth-Covered Coffins and Caskets, Undertakers' Hardware and Supplies, Robes, Linings and General Supplies (Columbus, OH: the company, 1882), 7. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.



Figure 27. Detail of screw holes on adult's raised panel casket.

October 10 ... got [to Baltimore] at 4.00. went to W&R to their residence and then to Aunt Lizzie got supper went to W&R store got a draped casket took to sta. started from Baltimore at 11.20 got to Monkton at 12.10 started from Monkton 12.30 am got home at 3 am<sup>45</sup>

Later, Kurtz began to telegraph to Baltimore for a casket, ordering the one he wanted from a catalog (figure 28). This excerpt is from 1888:

June 4 Went to Forest Hill and telegraphed for coffin odd jobs & etc straightened shop & etc & went to Forest Hill met train and fetched coffin home & trimmed same till 12 Pm<sup>46</sup>

This improvement saved Kurtz a considerable amount of time.

Nearly all of the caskets Kurtz purchased were covered in black broadcloth that was either draped over or glued to the coffin. These caskets must have been expensive: they are usually ordered with a large amount of elaborate trimming, and their cost includes the expense of the casket, train fare from Baltimore, and nearly a full day of Kurtz's time to order and retrieve the casket. The one coffin which Kurtz covered with cloth himself indicates how rare the procedure was:

Jan 24  
Miss Marthy Amos  
Black Cloth Covered Casket  
round top covered by us  
with end Handles  
panel with Silver moulding  
large [indecipherable] thru Screws no 34

buried from her home below Baptist Church  
Buried at Baptist 8 m<sup>47</sup>

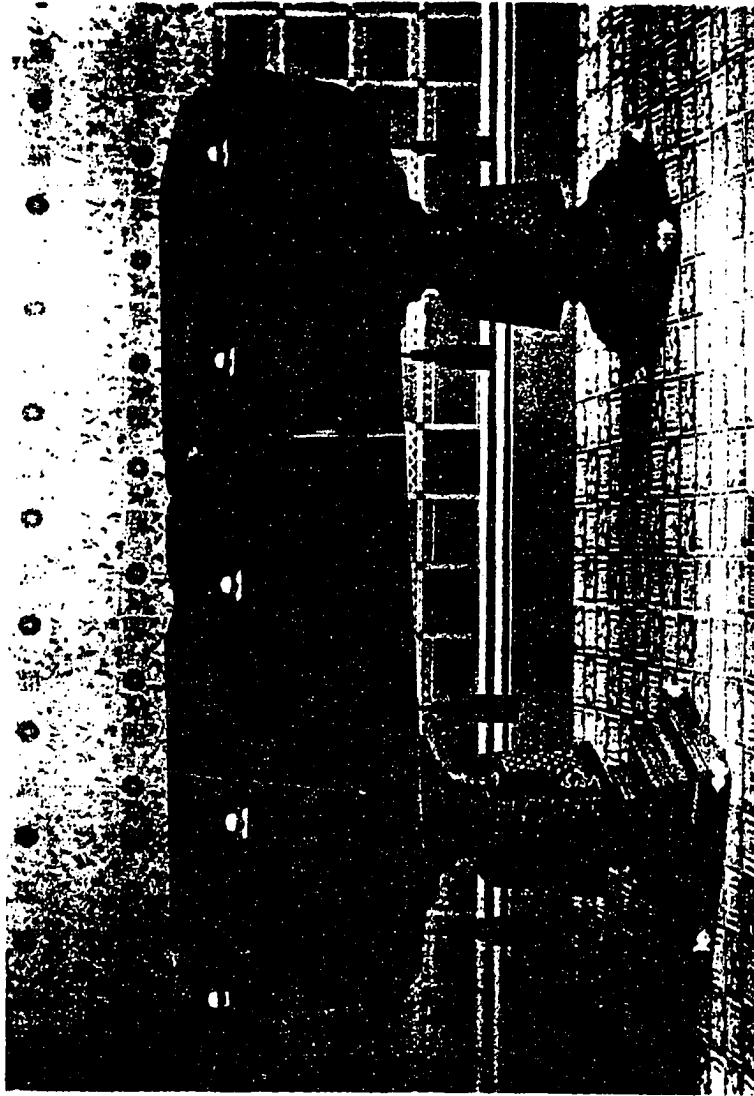
Kurtz also sold several children's caskets covered in white moreno wool.<sup>48</sup>

Twice Kurtz traveled to Baltimore and "attended to business." A few days after each trip, a shipment of caskets arrived.<sup>49</sup> Evidently Kurtz kept some manufactured caskets in stock in addition to ones he made himself. It is possible that the coffins bought in bulk were plainer cloth-covered caskets that might fit the needs of someone who preferred cloth-covered to wooden but couldn't afford an elaborate specially ordered casket; alternately, perhaps the coffins that were specially ordered might not have been fancier, just an unusual size. These questions cannot be answered by the sketchy entries in Kurtz's daybooks. It is clear, however, that the residents of Jarrettsville had several choices of coffins available to them: factory manufactured cloth-covered caskets, either plain or with customized touches, or wooden coffins made by Kurtz, which varied in complexity and style.

In Baltimore City, Henry W. Jenkins & Sons made some of the caskets they sold until 1880, but after that all caskets were purchased from undertakers' suppliers. Jenkins & Sons most often mentions purchasing from Warfield & Rohr, but other suppliers included William Sauter, the Baltimore Casket and Coffin Company, and the National Casket Company. The firm of Warfield & Rohr initially sold



WM. L. LOCKHART. 1883. ADVANCE SHEET. 1883.  
 EAST CAMBRIDGE, MASS. WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH OFFICE  
 ON THE PREMISES.  
 ORDER A SAMPLE, IF IT DOES NOT PLEASE WITH EXPECTATIONS, RETURN AT OUR EXPENSE.  
 PLATE NO. 4.



No. 44—COMBINATION, HEROIC SIZE VELVET PANEL MOULDING, SATIN TUFTED OCTAGONS, SLIDE GLASS. TELEGRAPH  
 NAME—MANCHESTER.  
 No. 44½—SAME DESIGN, ALL CLOTH, HEROIC SIZE CLOTH PANEL MOULDING, SATIN TUFTED OCTAGONS. TELEGRAPH  
 NAME—MARS.

**Figure 28.** Catalog illustration including code name for telegraph orders. Wm. L. Lockhart, Price List and Telegraph Key of Solid Mahogany and Cloth Covered Caskets (East Cambridge, MA: the company, 1883). Courtesy, The Winterthur Library, Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

cabinet and builders' hardware, but moved exclusively to selling undertakers' supplies by 1884. William Sauter began as a manufacturer of plated coffin hardware, then expanded his business to offer other undertakers' supplies. The Baltimore Casket and Coffin Company retailed caskets exclusively; the firm's first listing in the Baltimore City Directory was in 1885. The Baltimore branch of the National Casket Company first appeared in the city directory in 1894. These undertakers' suppliers proliferated and specialized in the 1880s to meet the growing demands of the emerging funeral directing industry.

Adding fancy hardware and lining to the coffin, or coffin trimming, was the last step Kurtz took before placing the corpse in the coffin. Coffins in storage, whether made by Kurtz or purchased, were never trimmed until they had been selected for use. Kurtz purchased specially ordered caskets from Baltimore untrimmed, even though casket trade catalogs indicate that coffins could be trimmed to order.<sup>50</sup> Frequently Kurtz had to stay up until three o'clock in the morning to finish trimming a coffin before the funeral the next morning. Because the interior was always covered with fabric, the undertaker could leave a rough finish on the inside of the coffin when making it.

To upholster the coffin, the undertaker first spread a layer of padding on the bottom. Next, he arranged a lining of satin cloth, usually white, around the sides and nailed it in place along the inside upper edge. Finally he tacked a thin strip of trim around the top of the

inside of the coffin, and folded the strip back on itself to cover the nails (figure 29). The lining was visible when the top half of a double lidded coffin was open, or if the lid was left off the coffin entirely and the body was in full view. Very little of it would show through a glass portal over the face.<sup>51</sup>

Kurtz ordered his trimmings by mail, and kept a large supply on hand. On a slow day in March, 1886 he spent the afternoon "arranging trimmings and linings in shop cupboards & etc ...."<sup>52</sup>

Before a beautifully varnished or cloth-covered casket was buried, it was placed in a wooden "outside box" at the graveside (figure 30). These were simple boxes of cheap wood that Kurtz made right before the funeral; his daybook entries refer to them as "rough boxes." Shipping containers of purchased caskets might also be recycled as outside boxes, and casket trade catalogs offer manufactured outside boxes in addition to their line of coffins.<sup>53</sup> The purpose of this outside box seems to have been largely symbolic, to prevent dirt from filling in around the beautiful casket.<sup>54</sup> Habenstein and Lamers report that "since Colonial times some box or container to enclose and protect both body and casket seems to have been demanded by those burying their dead...."<sup>55</sup> Henry W. Jenkins & Sons and Tickner & Sons both list outside boxes as part of their customers' orders, and choices of finish include pine, walnut, chestnut, and oak.

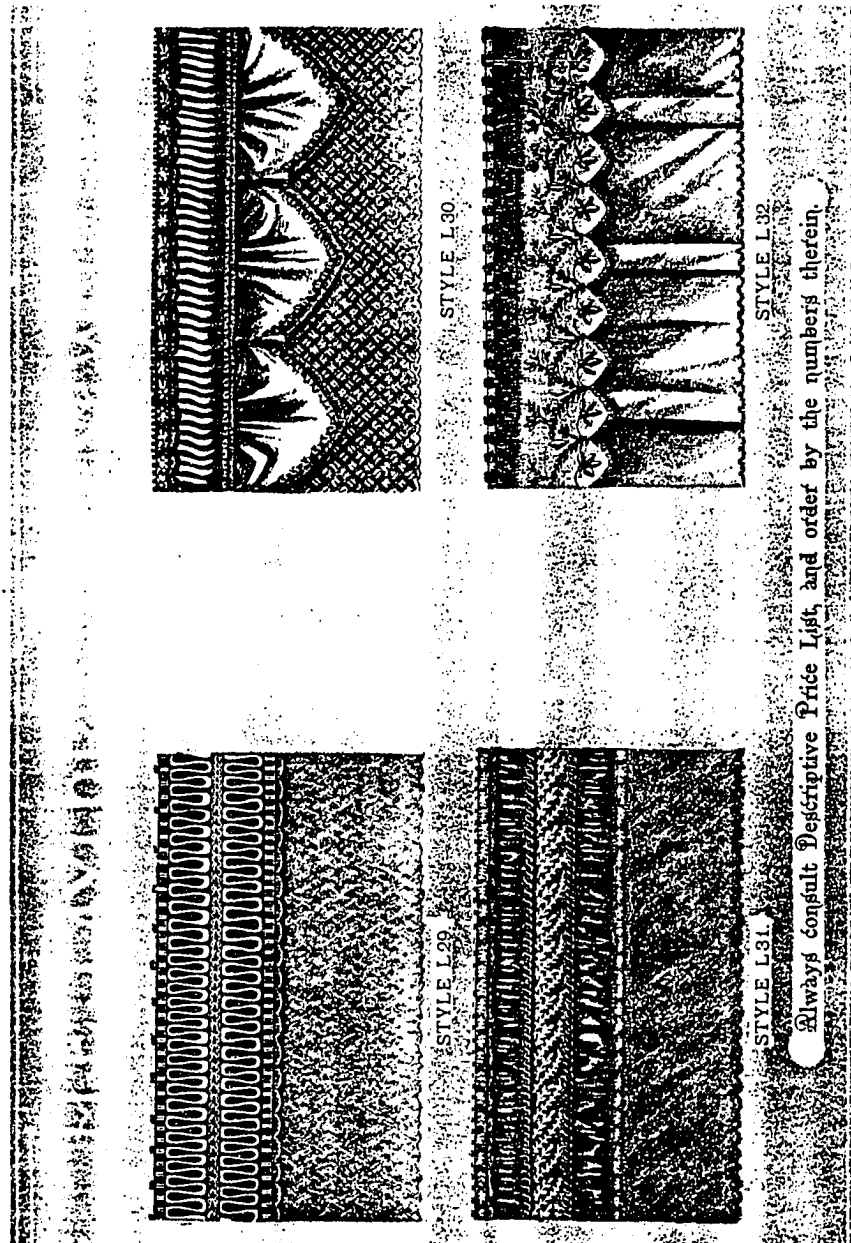


Figure 29. Coffin linings. H.E. Taylor & Co., *Robes and Linings* (Hadlyme, CN: the company, 1884), 34. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

## HAMILTON, LEMMON, ARNOLD &amp; CO.

15

**Partial Ornamental Metallic Cases.**  
Finished in Rosewood.

See Page 68, Illustrated Catalogue.

No. 13, Case, 5 feet 10 in.....	\$48 00
" 15, " 6 " 2 " .....	49 00

**Partial Ornamental Metallic Casket.**  
Finished in Rosewood.

See Page 70, Illustrated Catalogue.

No. 11, Casket, 5 feet 7 in.....	\$62 00
" 12, " 5 " 9 " .....	64 00
" 14, " 6 " .....	67 50
" 15, " 6 " 3 in.....	69 50
" 13, " extra size, 5 feet 9 in .....	72 00

Extension handles for above Caskets can be had for \$8.00 and \$10.00 additional.

When ordering Metallic Cases or Caskets by telegraph, it is only necessary to give the telegraph word and number.

**Chestnut Outside Boxes.**

Made of first quality, thoroughly seasoned, clear chestnut lumber, inch thick, finished in oil and shellac, with cross tops, and covered with burlaps for protection in shipment.

2 feet to 3 feet inclusive.....	\$4 00
3 " 3 in. to 4 feet, inclusive.....	5 00
4 " 3 " to 4 " 9 in., inclusive.....	6 00
5 " to 6 feet 3 in. inclusive.....	8 00
Extra sizes.....	9 00

Above boxes with full nickel-plated corners, additional \$5.00.

**Mahogany Outside Boxes.**

Made of inch thick, first quality, thoroughly seasoned mahogany, highly finished and well constructed, with copper nails and screws, nickel plates on corners, cleated tops, in burlaps and crated.

5 feet to 6 feet 3 in.....	\$35 00
Extra sizes.....	40 00

**Red Cedar Outside Boxes.**

Highly Polished, put together in substantial manner with Copper nails and screws. Covered with burlap for protection in shipment.

5-0 to 6-3 pieced sides.....	\$20 00
5-0 to 6-3 sides, made of one piece.....	35 00

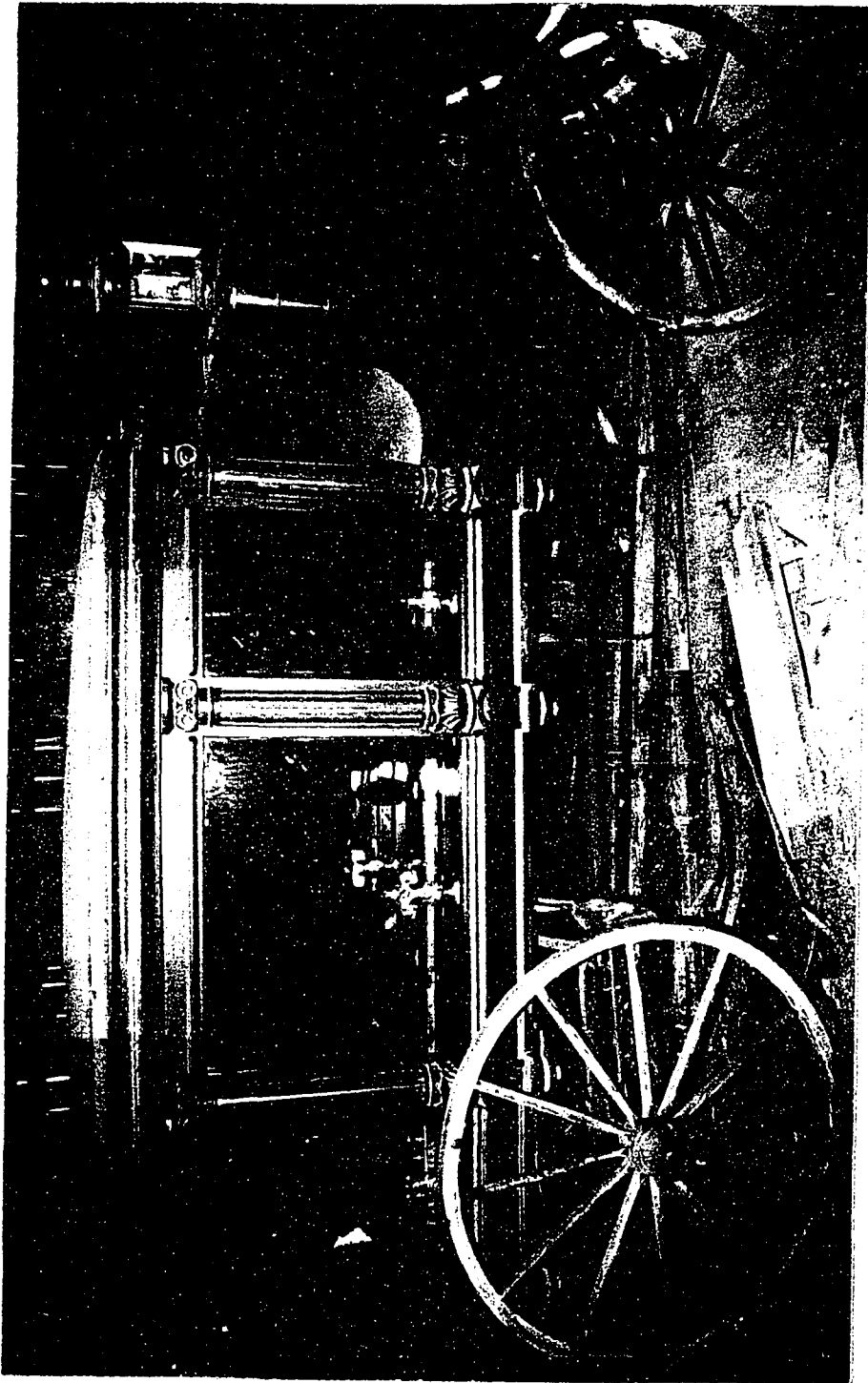
Above boxes, with full nickel-plated corners, additional \$5.00.

**Figure 30.** Page from trade catalog selling factory-made outside boxes. Hamilton, Lemmon, Arnold & Co., Wholesale Price List of Varnished and Cloth-Covered Burial Cases and Caskets (Allegheny City, PA: the company, 1884), 15. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

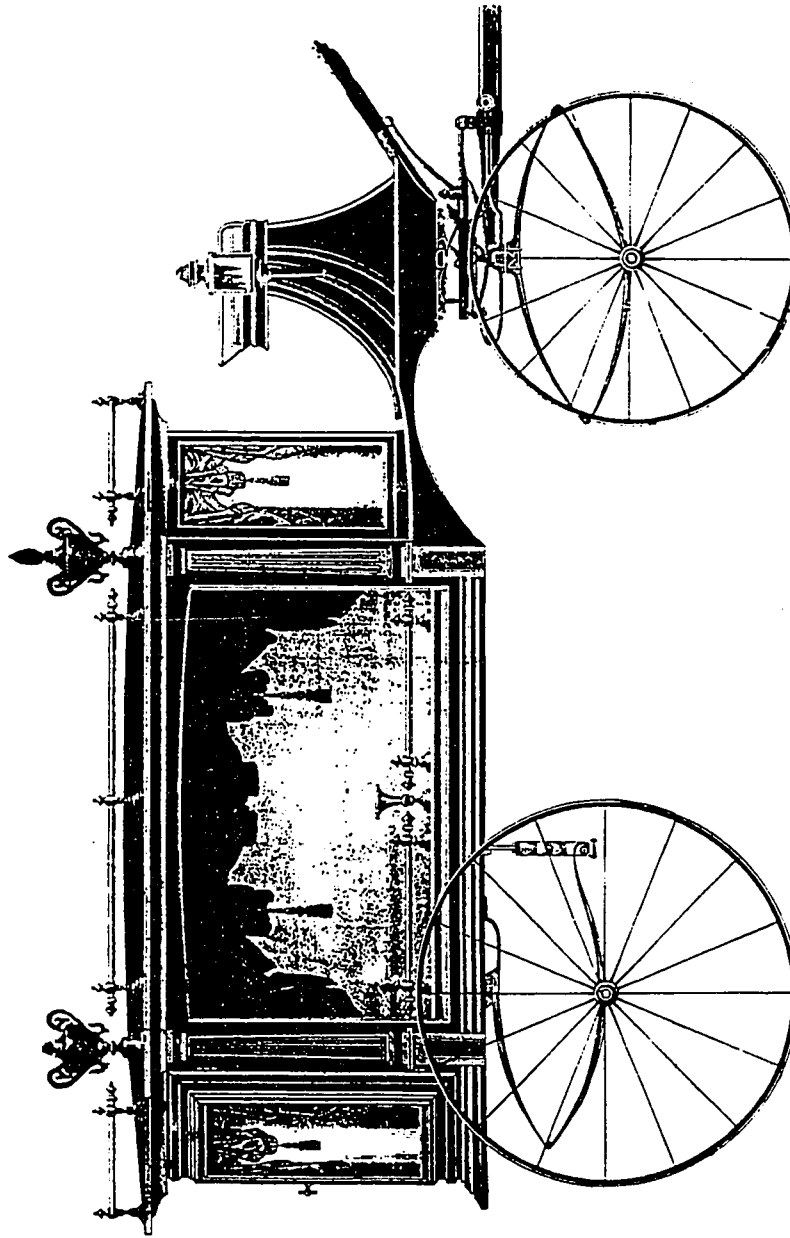
There are marked differences in the way Kurtz and Baltimore City undertakers provided transportation of the body to the grave. The hearse that Kurtz used is still owned by the family, and is in perfect condition (figures 31 and 32). The main compartment of the hearse is essentially a display case, with all four sides made of glass. The glass panels are separated by stylized wooden Ionic columns. These visually support the convex roof, which is reminiscent of a vaulted coffin lid. The roof is plain, sporting none of the plumes or torches popular on hearses of a decade earlier. The fringed black wool curtains, embellished with heavy tassels, are cut short enough that the coffin inside would always be on view (figure 33). When a coffin was placed in the hearse, brass knobs were set in holes on either end of the coffin to hold it securely in place and ensure that it would not shift during the bumpy ride. There are several holes for the knobs, making it adjustable to accommodate any size of coffin (figure 34). Kurtz's two horses were black, an appropriate color for pulling the hearse. The overall effect of the hearse is sedate -- its business is grief with dignity.

In Baltimore as in most urban areas, cemeteries were located on the outskirts of the city. Most of the residents did not own carriages or horses, since all their business in the city could be accomplished on foot and hacks could be hired for longer trips. Therefore, undertakers needed to provide city residents not only with the specialized funeral equipment of a hearse, but also needed to provide transportation to the

(following page) Figure 31. The hearse from the 1880s is still intact and in the possession of the Kurtz family.

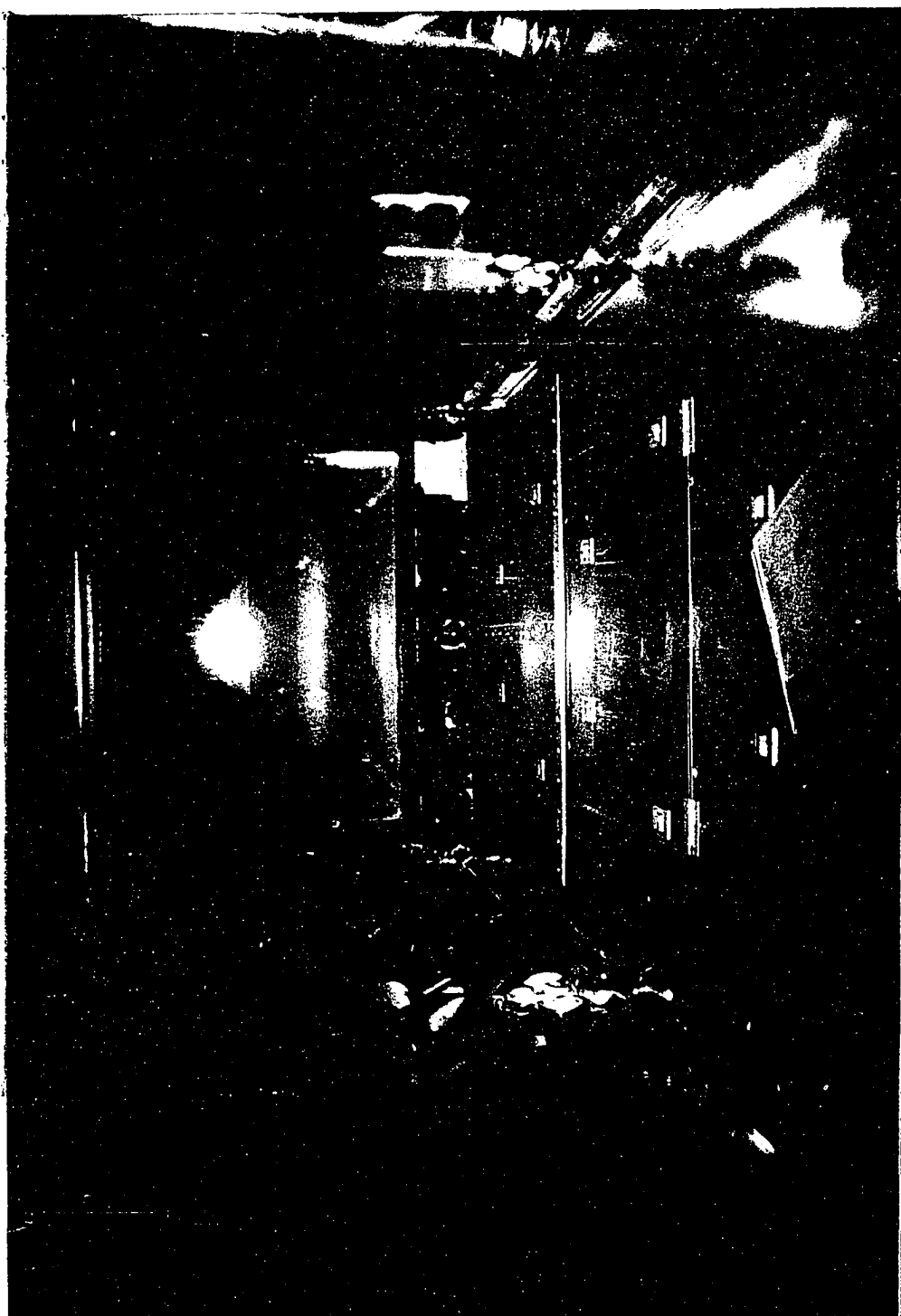




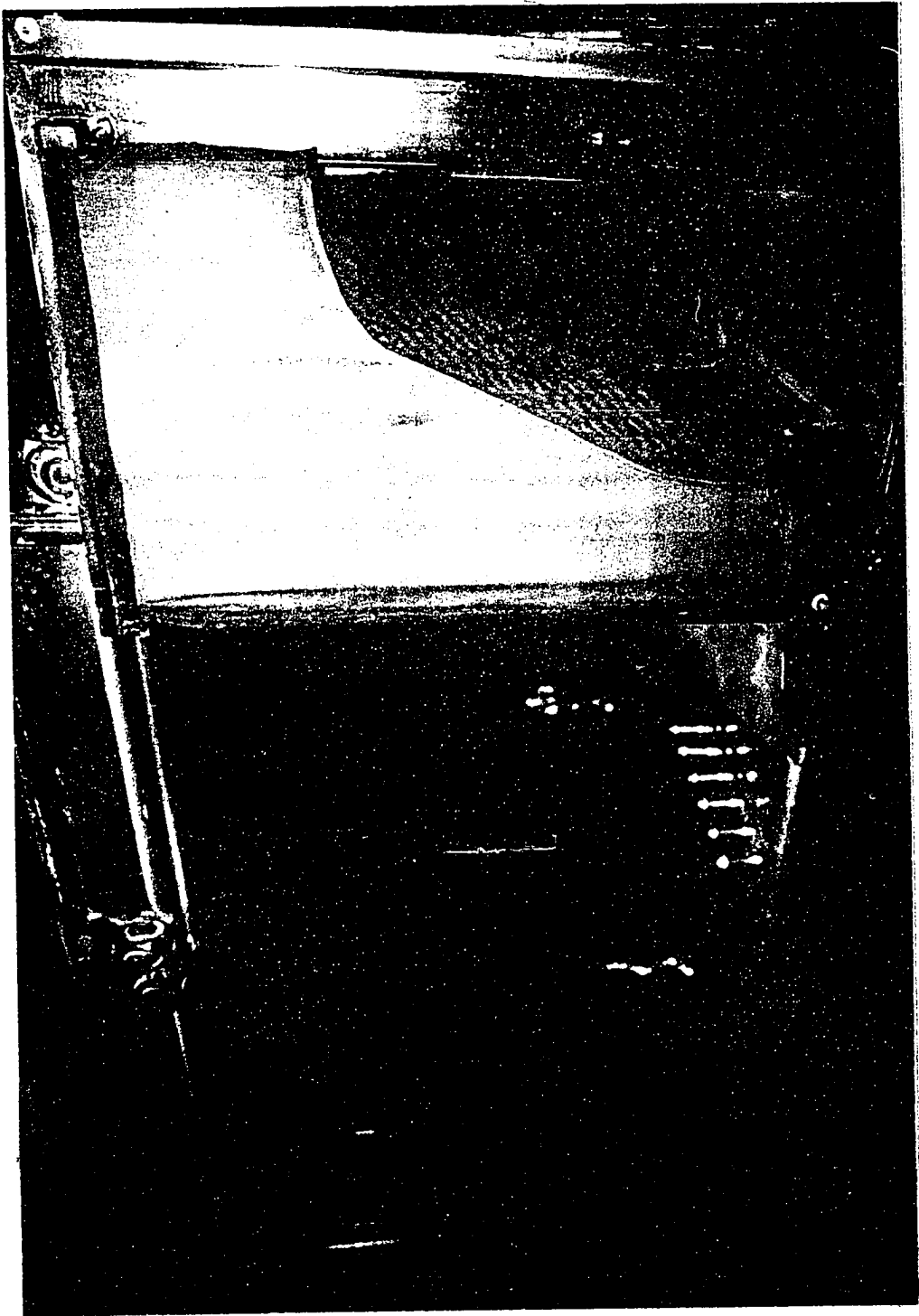


**Figure 32.** Hearse similar to Kurtz's. Crane & Breed Manufacturing Company trade catalog (Cincinnati: the company, 1886). Courtesy, the Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

(following page) Figure 33. Interior table of Kurtz hearse.



(following page) Figure 34. Back of Kurtz hearse, showing adjustable brass knobs to keep coffin in place.



graveside. City undertakers supplied hearses and carriages for their clients by contracting with local livery stables. Their order specified either a small hearse for a child or a large hearse for an adult and the number of carriages required. The 1879-1881 cashbook of Baltimore's Central Stables shows that a majority of their business came from providing hearses and carriages for funerals. Like many other livery stables, they listed themselves as undertakers in the city directories.<sup>56</sup>

### Directing the Funeral

Kurtz was notified of a death in the community by the family or a neighbor. If the corpse was to be preserved, he would fill the ice casket and take it by wagon to the home of the deceased. By the time Kurtz arrived, the body would be laid out in the bedroom, already washed and dressed by relatives, probably the women of the house. The undertaker would arrange the body on the cooling board, carry the cooling board to the parlor and place it in the ice casket, set the ice chamber in place over the torso and close the lid. Alternately, the family might fetch the ice casket from Kurtz and place the corpse in it themselves. The corpse would remain on view in the family's parlor until the funeral, usually held the next day.<sup>57</sup>

When Kurtz returned to his warehouse after putting a corpse on ice (or immediately after receiving an order, if the corpse was not

preserved), he selected a coffin from his ready-made inventory and began to trim it to the family's specifications. On rare occasions, he made a coffin to order, or purchased a casket from Baltimore. Again, these might be especially elaborate or oddly sized burial cases. Once the trimming and lining was finished, Kurtz made the rough box.

Kurtz's services might end at this point, if he was selling just the finished coffin without his attendance at the funeral. In September, 1886, he wrote:

September 28 ... put lid on a little coffin & etc. filled and  
prettyed same in afternoon ....  
29 Polished & trimmed little coffin made box  
& etc. in morning<sup>58</sup>

However, Kurtz never attended the funeral of the child for whom he prepared the coffin. The family had purchased the coffin and supervised the burial themselves, perhaps in a family plot on their property.

Before attending a funeral, Kurtz would clean and dust the hearse. His hired hands harnessed the horses to the hearse. Kurtz travelled to the home of the deceased to transfer the body from the ice casket to the coffin before the funeral. If the funeral was held at a church, Kurtz would transport the corpse there. Usually, however, the funeral was held in the family's home. The lid of the coffin remained open during the service, and Kurtz screwed the lid on, out of sight of

the family, before loading the coffin into the hearse. Mourners followed the hearse by horseback or on foot to the cemetery.

The outside box was waiting at the graveside; the casket was set inside and the box screwed shut. The sexton of the church or the caretaker of the cemetery would dig the grave before the funeral, but Kurtz presided over the lowering of the box into the ground.<sup>59</sup> Webbing straps were passed between horizontal wooded runners on the underside of the outside box, and the box was lowered into the grave by these straps. When the box rested on the ground, the webbing was pulled out, and the grave filled in.

At this point Kurtz returned to his warehouse in the hearse, but his work was not yet finished. If the ice casket had been used, Kurtz brought it back in the hearse or made a separate trip in the wagon to retrieve it. The ice casket and hearse were both cleaned after a funeral, ridding them of literal and symbolic contamination and leaving them fresh for the next funeral.

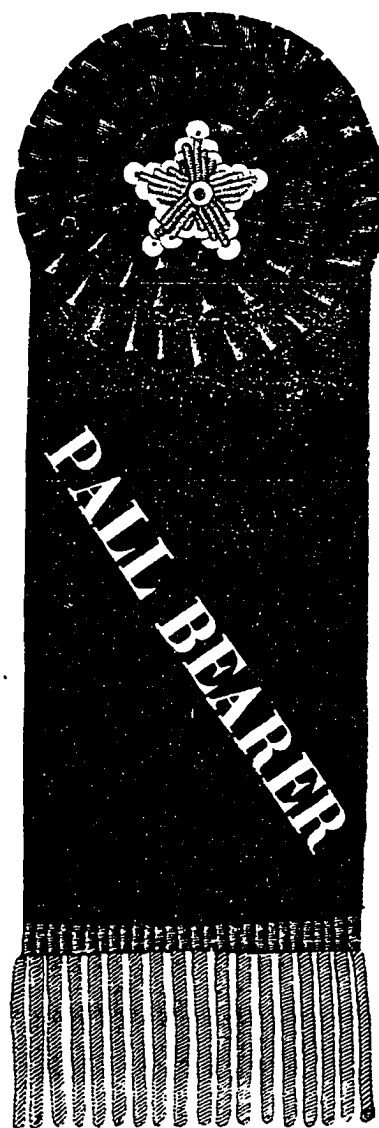
Baltimore City undertakers varied from Kurtz's procedures. The account books of Henry W. Jenkins & Sons shows that they usually rented wreaths or doorbands for the home of the mourners, a signal to the community that a death had taken place (figure 35). On infrequent occasions the body was transported from the deceased's home to Jenkins' warerooms, and taken from there to the church for the





**DOOR DRAPERY.**

Fine Black or White Cashmere, or Crepe  
and Silk Ribbon.



**BADGES.**

Black or White Satin with Gold Trimming,  
and Lettered "Pall Bearer" or "Undertaker."

**Figure 35.** Doorbands, sold in black or white cashmere or crepe and silk, and badges for the pallbearers or undertaker. Columbus Coffin Company, Illustrated Catalogue of Wood and Cloth-Covered Coffins and Caskets, Undertakers' Hardware and Supplies, Robes, Linings and General Supplies (Columbus, OH: the company, 1882), 57. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

funeral (although the concept of the "funeral parlor," an institutional replacement for laying out the deceased in the home, was decades away). Jenkins' accounts show that for an additional charge their undertaker would lay out the remains, relieving the family of the duty; this option was rarely used, however. To complete their full line of services as funeral directors, Jenkins & Sons would arrange for the cemetery plot and the digging of the grave.

The undertakers in Baltimore City provided additional services that Kurtz did not. Henry W. Jenkins & Sons often received bodies that were shipped in from out of town; a Jenkins employee met the shipment at the train station and escorted the casket to the cemetery for burial. Alternately, a customer might request that Jenkins provide a casket for a corpse and ship the remains elsewhere for interment. As new cemeteries sprang up in response to the garden cemetery movement, customers frequently requested that Jenkins disinter a relative's remains and move them to a new location. Since the urban dead were more mobile than the corpses of Jarrettsville, Baltimore City undertakers performed functions that Kurtz did not need to offer.

But firms such as Jenkins & Sons also provided the kinds of services that classified them as funeral directors rather than mere undertakers. They posted the obituary notice in local newspapers. They provided mourning accoutrements, including badges for the

pallbearers and black gloves, hatbands, and ribbons for mourners at the funeral.<sup>60</sup> If the deceased had no appropriate apparel for interment, Jenkins provided shrouds and by the middle of the decade offered suits of street clothes for the remains. If the family was short of mourners to attend the casket, Jenkins offered "four men to act as bearers."<sup>61</sup> They rented folding chairs to seat the crowds at a home funeral and unbleached muslin to cover the parlor floor. For an additional charge, Jenkins & Sons would clear the cemetery lot before the grave was dug. And for one especially sensitive family, Jenkins provided "straw to deaden sound" of the casket being lowered into the grave.<sup>62</sup> Attention to these details qualified Henry W. Jenkins & Sons as funeral directors, rather than as undertakers whose main responsibility was providing a coffin for the deceased.

Although not as advanced as the urban undertakers, E.G. Kurtz's business showed signs of increased specialization and professionalism as well. By the end of the 1880s, most of the caskets Kurtz provided were factory manufactured, leaving him more time to concentrate on the services he provided. The family recalls that Kurtz was trained in embalming in the 1890s and added this skill to the services he provided. Perhaps the best indicator that Kurtz thought of himself as a provider of service to the community rather than as a coffin merchant are the notations in his account books noting cause of death for each order. Like a coroner, he kept a listing of each (unscientific) diagnosis:

old age, heart disease, pneumonia, consumption, paralysis, inflammation of bowels, softening of brain, confinement, malaria, etc. In this manner, Kurtz has made an official record of the deaths in the community and taken further steps to becoming a self-appointed professional.

### Conclusion

The heightened ceremony of rituals surrounding the dead matched the increased formality in other aspects of Victorian life, such as weddings, social visitation, and dining etiquette. As these rituals became more complex, the society created a need for a professional who was informed about the etiquette of mourning and could orchestrate the funeral and offer advice on the mourning period. The family of the deceased, which had previously had the responsibility for laying out the body and arranging for a grave plot, had new responsibilities in their role as mourners and needed to rely on someone else for the funeral arrangements. The undertaker, who traditionally had merely provided and trimmed the coffin and transported the deceased to the graveside, stepped in to fill the void. Although undertaking had previously been combined with some other complementary profession, the other occupation was dropped as the added services required more time and provided additional revenue.

Part of the source for the changes is an increasing professionalization of the industry, a movement in step with other occupations. The Victorian trend toward "separation and specialization" led coffin-makers to begin to provide other services for processing the dead, eventually dropping other occupations to concentrate on these services. Leming and Dickinson suggest that "professionalism was part of the middle class strategy of specialization. It required education in an area of expertise and an ethic or service, and it provided autonomy and income for its practitioners."<sup>63</sup> "Attendance" at the funeral, essentially a coordinating function, became as important a part of undertakers' services as providing a coffin. A change in corpse preservation technology from ice caskets to embalming, in common but by no means universal use by 1890, required specialized training. As the public grew to rely on this new professional for their expanded funeral needs, there was enough support for complementary businesses to spring up — companies specializing in coffin manufacturing, coffin trimmings and hardware, and embalming supplies. When the emerging industry began to produce its own trade journals in the 1870s, the new profession of funeral directing solidified. In 1882, funeral directors across the country began to form regional and national associations.<sup>64</sup>

Funeral directing had many advantages over merely providing coffins. Social anthropologists have suggested that society brands that

which is unclear as unclean; the liminal nature of an unburied corpse — neither fully in the world of the living nor yet in the world of the dead — transfers a stigma to the person who processes the body.<sup>65</sup> By establishing themselves as professionals initiated in the mysteries of their occupation, similar to doctors or priests, funeral directors gained respect and social standing equivalent to the sacred nature of their charge. The social ambivalence to the "man of the appalling trade" was alleviated by the industry's move toward specialization and professionalism.<sup>66</sup>

Habenstein and Lamers summarize changes in the industry during the 1880s as follows:

The new fact in late 19th century undertaking was the great increase in control which the undertaker was beginning to exert over the whole matter of the funeralization of the dead. Spelled out in detail, this meant that he moved from a merchant who first provided goods needed by the bereaved in their burying activities; to a seller of service who actually took part in the preparation of the dead, performing a portion of all the laying out of the body in the home — "conserving the remains" — and transporting body and mourners to places of worship and sepulture; and finally to a director who took charge of the body and of the proceedings involved in its ceremonial disposition.<sup>67</sup>

Through changes that can be traced during the pivotal decade of the 1880s, 19th century undertakers moved from coffin-making to coordinating all details of the interring the dead, and laid the groundwork for the funeral directing industry as we know it today.

## ENDNOTES

1. Notable studies include Ellen Marie Snyder, "Innocents in a Worldly World: Victorian Children's Gravemarkers" and Blanche Linden-Ward, "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth Century Rural Cemeteries," both in Richard E. Meyer, ed., Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989); Martha Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America (Stony Brook, NY: The Museums at Stony Brook, 1980); Barbara Jones, Design for Death (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967); James Farrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); and Kent Lancaster, "On the Drama of Dying in Early Nineteenth Century Baltimore" and Stephen J. Vicchio, "Baltimore's Burial Practices, Mortuary Art and Notions of Grief and Bereavement, 1780-1900," both in Maryland Historical Magazine vol. 81, no. 2 (Summer 1986). The only substantial examination of undertaking is Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, Inc., 1955), a study commissioned by the National Funeral Directors Association as a public relations vehicle.
2. Werner U. Spitz, M.D. and Russell S. Fisher, M.D., ed., Medicolegal Investigation of Death: Applications of Pathology to Crime Investigation, 2nd ed. (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1980), 14.
3. Ibid, 20.
4. C.J. Poulson, M.D., R.P. Brittain, and T.K. Marshall, The Disposal of the Dead (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), 223-6.
5. Spitz and Fisher, 19-21.

6. Curiously enough, this does not seem to be true of Baltimore. No sextons advertised themselves as undertakers in Baltimore City Directories, and Habenstein and Lamers point out that "all the major cities of America, with the possible exception of Baltimore, had sexton-undertakers" (240).

7. These might include funerals for the poorer black community, but it is impossible to determine this for a fact; none of the records of urban undertakers I studied contained any references to race. City Directories which listed "Colored Persons" did not list "undertaker" as an occupation for any African Americans.

8. Habenstein and Lamers, 333.

9. Jarrettsville Lions Club, "Jarrettsville: Past and Present" (Jarrettsville, MD, 1976) 7.

10. The Appendix lists items in the inventory taken after Martin Kurtz's death that were probably used in the undertaking side of the Kurtz business. The total value of these items was appraised at \$1,372.25, exclusive of buildings or land.

11. Information about the Kurtzes comes from several different sources, including five daybooks kept by Edmund Kurtz during 1880, 1884, 1886, 1887, and 1888. The most useful daybooks are those from 1886, which covers the entire year, and 1888, which is complete through September 17. Of the others, his father was still alive and overseeing most of the funeral business in 1880, and the twenty-one year-old Edmund mainly used the daybook to keep accounts, and the 1884 and 1887 daybooks are records of work done by Edmund's hired hands, mostly on the farm. Additional text sources include the undertaking accounts from July 11, 1880 to February 28, 1884 and an inventory taken January 16 and 17, 1884, after Martin Kurtz's death. These sources are reinforced by artifacts from the period kept by the Kurtz family, including caskets, ice caskets, cooling boards, and the hearse. The woodworking shop that was used by Kurtz cabinetmakers from 1850 until 1960 has also been preserved intact. Oral histories by Edmund's great-grandchildren, Gladden and Ben Kurtz, have been invaluable.

12. Daybook of Edmund G. Kurtz, 8 July 1886 and days following, Kurtz family collection (hereafter cited as "Kurtz daybook").



13. Kurtz daybook, 29 December 1886.
14. Kurtz daybook, 30 March 1888. The most emotion Kurtz ever shows is his reaction at the poisoning of his dog: "Prince poisoned by that confound Villian [sic] at night" (Kurtz, 24 April 1888).
15. C.R. Francis, "Funeral Directors Since 1799," The Embalmers' Monthly and National Funeral Director (July 1935; reprint), n.p. Also quoted in Habenstein and Lamers, 227.
16. Francis, n.p.
17. Medicolegal Investigation of Death includes a case study of an exposed corpse which had decomposed to the point of skeletonization in only three months during a Baltimore summer. Spitz and Fisher, 23.
18. For example, Jacob Grafton's wife was preserved in an ice casket before she was buried on December 3, 1886, but Kurtz buried E.H. Kellog on July 25, 1886 without preserving the corpse (even though the Kellog family asked for an engraved nameplate for the coffin, an expensive extra).
19. J.C. Taylor & Sons trade catalog (Trenton, NJ: the company, ca. 1883).
20. Ibid.
21. An advertisement for J.C. Taylor & Son's Patented Improved Cold Air Ice Caskets, ca. 1880 offers a "Gardner perforated chestnut Cooling Board" (reprinted in Habenstein & Lamers, 342).
22. Occasionally, however, the family picked up the ice casket from Kurtz and returned it after the funeral. Kurtz's account book entries note for each funeral the separate distances traveled by hearse, wagon, and to carry the ice casket. Presumably he charged by the mile for these trips.
23. Kurtz daybook, 22 April 1886.
24. For more information on the process of cutting and storing ice, see Wm. T. Wood & Co., How to Harvest Ice (Arlington, MA: the company, 1890). Although this trade catalog describes commercial ice production, the steps are similar.

25. Account books of Henry W. Jenkins & Sons, 22 June 1879, Henry W. Jenkins & Sons, Inc. collection.
26. John W. Woods, Wood's Baltimore City Directory (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1880), 153.
27. James J. Farrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 7.
28. Advertisement for the Oriental embalming fluid, 28 April 1885, Kurtz family collection. One feels certain that had C. Arthur Preller not been buried, John F. Ryan could have resurrected him in no time.
29. An advertisement for Mills & Lacey Embalming Fluid offers a flesh tinted fluid "for beautifying, preserving and restoring the features of the dead to a fresh, LIFE-LIKE appearance so gratifying to friends of the departed" (reprinted in Habenstein & Lamers, 344). The permanent discoloration of the skin caused by livor mortis can be corrected with tinted embalming fluid.
30. Recollections of Harford County embalming practices have been provided by Woody and Dude DeVoe, whose grandfather was an undertaker contemporary with Edmund Kurtz and worked in Five Forks, Maryland, near Jarrettsville. (Kurtz records in his daybook on February 21, 1886 that Graff DeVoe came to get a nameplate engraved.) The DeVoe brothers recall that when their grandfather drained the blood from a corpse, he brought the blood home and buried it. In this manner he disposed of a waste product that could not be left at the family's home with a ceremony appropriate to its sacred nature.
31. Henry W. Jenkins account books, 18 July and 25 November 1879.
32. Account books of Tickner & Sons, 9 October 1886, 17 September 1888, 20 September 1888, MS 2702, Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore.
33. Habenstein & Lamers, 270.
34. As late as 1985, the Kurtz's barn was packed full of lumber.
35. Kurtz daybook, 13-17 March 1886.

36. Harford County Directory (Baltimore, MD: State Directories Publishing Company, 1953), 301.
37. Kurtz daybook, 31 March 1886.
38. Account book of E.G. Kurtz, 15 December 1881, collection 10, Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware (hereafter cited as "Kurtz account book").
39. Kurtz daybook, 3-13 February 1886.
40. Kurtz account book, 10 January 1881.
41. Kurtz account book, 30 October 1881.
42. Kurtz daybook, 13-17 March 1886.
43. The remaining adult's casket was inaccessible, and in deference to the wishes of the Kurtz family I did not examine it closely. It was described as a casket with a glass front and appeared to have been made by Edmund Kurtz. In 1985, the Kurtz family held a series of ten auctions to clear away the items that had accumulated in the three-story warehouse that housed the woodshop, undertaking facilities, and storage. Although the family tried to retain all artifacts that related to undertaking, some items slipped away and were sold. These included 13 coffins (3 without lids), an embalming case that included a rare gravity operated fluid injector, an embalming fluid box, a bottle of Swabb's Embalming Fluid, and hardware for the hearse.
44. Kurtz daybook, 5 October 1886.
45. Kurtz daybook, 10 October 1886.
46. Kurtz daybook, 4 June 1888.
47. Kurtz account book, 24 January 1882.
48. Kurtz account book, 23 and 24 May 1881.
49. Kurtz daybook, 2-10 February 1886 and 24-28 August 1888.
50. Hamilton, Lemmon, Arnold & Company, Wholesale Price List of Varnished and Cloth-Covered Burial Cases and Caskets (Allegheny City, PA: the company, 1884), 3.

51. Many undertakers added a pillow beneath the insensate head of the corpse. The DeVoe undertakers purchased embroidered pillows made by a neighbor's wife for that purpose.
52. Kurtz daybook, 6 March 1886.
53. Hamilton, Lemmon, Arnold & Company, 15. This trade catalog was in the possession of the Kurtz family before the family donated it to Winterthur Library.
54. Today most cemeteries require caskets to be buried in concrete vaults to keep the grave from caving in as the coffin disintegrates. However, a wooden box would scarcely prevent the ground from collapsing.
55. Habenstein & Lamers, 299.
56. Central Stables Cashbook, March 1879-May 1881, MS 959, Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore.
57. The DeVoe brothers recall that a family member would sit up with the body during the night (to protect it from animals as much as for any spiritual reason) and that the constant drip-drip-drip of water draining out of the ice casket was unnerving.
58. Kurtz daybook, 28-29 September 1886.
59. The entries in Kurtz's daybooks and account book never indicate that he took responsibility for digging the grave. However, the inventory taken in 1884 lists a supply of bricks and slabs, used to line graves.
60. Jenkins listed the number of gloves, etc. provided and the number returned, then charged the family for replacement of lost items and rental of the others.
61. Henry W. Jenkins & Sons, 23 July 1879. A common allegation is that Victorian funerals relied so heavily on convention that undertakers would provide mourners for a fee so that an appropriate contingent would follow the deceased to the grave. However, nothing in any undertaker's account books that I reviewed show that professional mourners were provided.

62. Henry W. Jenkins & Sons, 24 June 1879.
63. M.R. Leming and G.E. Dickinson, Understanding Dying, Death and Bereavement (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1985), 270, 287.
64. Leming & Dickinson, 285.
65. Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1988).
66. Emily Dickinson, There's Been a Death in the Opposite House, lines 17-18.
67. Habenstein & Lamers, 436.

## APPENDIX

### Items used for Undertaking listed in the Appraisement of the Personal Property of Martin Kurtz, deceased January 16-17, 1884

1 black mare	125.00
1 black horse	125.00
1 heavy spring wagon	40.00
1 light spring wagon	40.00
1 Hearse	80.00
1 Turning lathe & outfit	12.00
1 Planer & outfit	30.00
1 2 horse tread Power	5.00
2 Grindstones	1.25
1 Iron vise	2.00
1 paint mill & mortar	2.00
1 doz Chair clamps	1.50
1 Miter saw & outfit	10.00
Lot of Bead Planers & etc.	5.00
9 Planes	7.00
Lot of tool (con. saws, square, chisels, Brace & bits & etc.	25.00
Lot of tools screws, nails, irons, saws & etc.	4.00
" of springs, hinges, Bedcasters & etc.	2.00
4 table clamps	1.00
3 saws — crosscut Bracket & etc.	.50
All the scraps of Lower floor of shop	2.00
14,000 ft. of Walnut timer	500.00
Lot of poplar timber	9.00
1,000 ft. of Pine & Hemlock Lumber	20.00
1,000 ft. of Cherry	15.00
Lot of scantling	10.00

" of Pine Lumber in Garrett	15.00
" " paint	6.00
" " old paint	.50
2 boxes & contents & paints	.50
Lot of Oils Varnishes	1.00
" " old cans & paint	.50
" " " corn kegs & contents	.50
1 mortising Machine Varnish Stand	.50
1 Corpse Preserver	25.00
Lot of empty boxes & etc.	1.00
Lot of moulding	2.00
" " Coffin Trimmings	50.00
3 Caskets	60.00
7 Coffins	110.00
4 small coffins	24.00
lot of brick & slate slabs	.50

From Appraisement of the Personal Property of Martin Kurtz,  
deceased, 16-17 January 1884, collection 10, Winterthur Library,  
Winterthur, DE.

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