

## Burial of Cremains

Funeral traditions have changed over the years. As cremation becomes more popular, it poses new challenges not faced with the “traditional” funerals with caskets. Obviously, the movement and burial of caskets requires different planning and equipment than is needed for urns.

We are seeing these challenges first-hand in Spink County. Please take a moment to read through these. Your understanding and compliance may help many future generations of your family.

### - Mobility:

An urn of ashes is obviously much easier to transport long distances than a casket. We receive cremains regularly from all over the country. Right now, the United States Postal Service is the only delivery system to handle cremains. However, it is also very easy for a family to transport their loved one’s cremains in a private vehicle or by mailing them to a local friend or relative.

### - Burial:

Here is where we are running into many problems. We have had several local cemetery sextons call us after they have discovered cremains being buried by family in a “private, family get together.” Families are choosing not to notify the cemetery sexton for multiple reasons. However, without the sexton being notified, cemetery records will not be accurate and may cause problems in the future:

- Sextons are responsible for marking graves for the grave diggers who are hired to dig graves. The grave digger relies on the sexton for marking the grave accurately before they dig and sextons rely on accurate records in order to instruct the grave diggers appropriately. When individuals are not working with the cemetery’s sexton, there could be serious issues in the future:
  - Each cemetery has guidelines on how many urns may be buried with a casket or multiple urns in an individual grave.
  - If the sexton is unaware of an urn burial, the grave digger may unintentionally dig up or do damage to an urn already in the grave. The sextons are trying to keep detailed records of how many urns are in a grave and their position within that grave.
- If your loved one already has a headstone in a cemetery but will not be physically buried there, please notify the sexton so the record can show no physical burial where there is a headstone. It will save confusion in the future.

### - Genealogy

- If a person is buried without any documentation, there is a good chance that the next generations will not know of the final resting place of that family member.
- As more and more cemeteries make the transition to computerized programs for burial records, if a loved one is not documented, there will be no record online of those the sexton does not know about.

- Last summer, for example, we had a family call the funeral home from California. They were looking for their “Aunt Martha.” They thought another family member brought “Aunt Martha” (cremains in an urn) to a local cemetery for burial and wanted us to confirm that. The cremains were not forwarded to the funeral home, the sexton had no record of “Aunt Martha” and no documentation was ever filed to document final disposition with the sexton, the county or the state. To this day, “Aunt Martha” is still “missing” because the family cannot find anyone who remembers what happened and the family member who supposedly transported “Aunt Martha” has since passed away. In fact, they believe “Aunt Martha’s” ashes may have been put in her favorite teapot instead of a traditional urn and there is a chance that “Aunt Martha” may have been unintentionally thrown away when the family cleaned the apartment out. This family may never know what became of “Aunt Martha.”
- Documentation
  - Documentation is required to properly register a burial.
    - It starts with the local cemetery sexton as discussed above.
    - A burial permit needs to be filed with the county where burial occurs.
    - The burial permit is also used as registration with the state.
  - In an effort to improve our own records of final disposition, we have implemented the following at the funeral home:
    - We complete a “receipt” document for each cremation that is in our care.
      - We complete this document with burial information when we handle the burial and this documentation remains with the individual’s file in a fireproof cabinet.
      - When a family takes their loved one from our care, we have them sign the receipt and only the person who signed the contract is able to remove their loved one from the funeral home. We make a copy of their driver’s license to put on file as well.
        - We include the family’s intention for final disposition. For example, we make a note on the receipt that as of that date and time, the family indicated that their loved one would be “scattered in the Black Hills in the summer of 2018” or “committal service and burial planned for May 12, 2018.” If the family changes their mind after they leave of course, we only have on record what their intention was that day.

We encourage each family to protect their loved one who is being laid to rest. Please take the time to contact the sexton of the cemetery and follow the regulations in place at each cemetery. As a step to protect the urn and your loved one in the same manner that a casket is protected, some cemeteries now require an urn vault for burial. Please allow the cemetery sextons (many of whom are volunteers) to keep accurate records for your family in the future.

We share this information because we are witnessing family’s anguish not being able to find their loved one’s final disposition and/or place of rest. Please help us, the sextons and the grave diggers

help your family for years to come. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us at the funeral home (605-472-2444).

The following sextons have graciously allowed us to publish their contact information:

<u>CEMETERY LOCATION</u>	<u>NAME OF CEMETERY</u>	<u>SEXTON NAME</u>	<u>SEXTON PHONE #</u>
Ashton	Ashton	Bob Oberfell	605-472-2662
Athol	Athol Catholic	Bob Woodring	605-460-2853
Athol	Athol	Deb Christenson	605-460-0161
Doland	Doland	Joe Remily	605-450-0133
Frankfort	Mount Hope	Alan Johnson	605-472-1741
Frankfort	St. Ann's Catholic	Bob Knox	605-472-0971
Mellette	Mellette	Craig Oberle	605-380-2535
Northville	Plainview	Lyle Peterson	605-887-3522
Redfield	Greenlawn	City of Redfield	605-472-4550
Redfield	St. Bernard's Catholic	Kelly Hyke	605-472-2444
Rockham Grace	Rockham	Mark Baxter	605-450-0206
Tulare	Garfield	Ted Price	605-596-4315
Tulare	Graceland	Loren Marzahn	605-460-2265
Tulare	St. John's	Wayne Binger	605-450-0255
Tulare	Tulare	Ted Price	605-596-4315
Zell	St. Mary's Catholic	Jerry Zens	605-472-2088

We thank all sextons and grave diggers for their hard work, attention to detail and willingness to help us serve families with professionalism and compassion. And we thank families in advance for assisting the cemetery sextons keep accurate records.

Kelly and Bonnie Hyke

