

THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

REGISTER: McGorray Brothers Funeral Home Records
MS NO.: 4805

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The McGorray Brothers Funeral Home was founded by Mark McGorray (1829-1891) in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1873, as the McGorray Funeral Home. The name was changed to McGorray Brothers Funeral Home after the death of Mark McGorray in the winter of 1891. He was born in Ireland and came to America in 1844 at the age of fifteen. He settled in Rochester, New York. As a young man, he went to California but later returned to Rochester. He arrived in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1864 with his family. He established a large cooper shop on the South Side. Periods of labor unrest in 1867 and in 1869 prompted Mark McGorray to close his factory. He went into the livery, boarding stable, and undertaking business in 1873 at 3040 Lorain Avenue. He later opened a branch office on Pearl Street. Mark McGorray was active in the civic and political life of Cleveland's West Side. He ran for public office with the Democratic Party in several elections. While he was popular with the people in his ward, he was never elected to public office. Two of his sons, James W. (d. 1919) and Joseph (d. 1910), joined the business when they came of age and took it over after his death.

By the opening decades of the 1900s, McGorray Brothers handled approximately 400 to 500 funerals per year. McGorray Brothers Funeral Home was the first funeral home in the city of Cleveland to purchase a motorized hearse in 1919. It was during this time that McGorray Brothers became the most prominent Catholic funeral home on the West Side. James W. McGorray II (1892-1968) [referred to as James Jr. in some records] took over ca. 1919. He was a 1916 graduate of the Cleveland College of Embalming. He was also a charter member of the Cuyahoga Funeral Directors Association. He served in France during World War I. He was active in the church and civic life of Cleveland's West Side; and later, in Lakewood, Ohio. In 1934, McGorray's purchased the property on Detroit Avenue at Robinwood Avenue in Lakewood which became a branch office. In 1960, the original Lorain Avenue location was sold to Saint Ignatius High School, and the business was consolidated in one location at the Detroit-Robinwod site.

James W. McGorray II married, first, Mildred Halloran (d. December 1925); and second, Coletta McCarry (d. September 5, 1971). James W. II and Mildred had children Patricia (married Kenney), James W. III [referred to in some records also as James Jr.], and Martha (married Beaumont). He had a son, John J., with his second wife, Coletta.

James W. McGorray III (1923-1994) was born on July 14, 1923, in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of James W. II and Mildred Halloran. He married Mary Kathleen Bixler of Lakewood in 1949. They had seven children. He was vice president of the company until 1968, when he assumed leadership on the death of his father. He served as president until his death in December 1994.

Mary Susan McGorray (b. 1957) is the present President of McGorray Brothers Funeral Home. She is the third daughter of James W. McGorray III and Mary Bixler.

The McGorray Brothers Funeral Home Records, 1876-1934, consist of funeral account ledgers, funeral record books, inventory records, carriage and coach ledgers, correspondence, death certificates, burial permits, and other receipts.

The majority of the collection is in large bound volumes. Loose materials from each volume have been removed and placed into folders following each volume. The collection is arranged in three series. Series I: Funeral Account Ledgers and Series II: Funeral Records are arranged chronologically and then by document type. Series III: Business Records is arranged alphabetically by document type, and then chronologically.

This collection is of value to the researcher, providing an excellent source of nineteenth and twentieth century genealogical information, particularly relating to those of Irish Catholic descent. Series I: Funeral Account Ledgers provides the name of the deceased, to whom the account is being billed to (in some cases the next of kin), date of death, and date and location of the burial. The majority of these ledgers have an alphabetized index located in the front of each volume. Series II: Funeral Records houses a wealth of genealogical materials arranged chronologically within each volume. The information listed includes date of death, name of the deceased, age, sex, cause of death, residence of the deceased, place of burial, the person to whom each account is billed (many times the next of kin), that person's address, and finally the attending physician and his or her address. Also contained in these volumes are receipts, burial permits, and death certificates of individuals, providing further genealogical information in addition to that found listed in each volume.

Researchers of Irish Catholic funerals and funeral homes will find the correspondence and receipts, which were obtained from each volume, to be of some interest. Series III: Business Records contains the carriage, coach, and inventory books, which provide detailed records of funerals and the funeral home business of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Provenance: Mary Susan McGorray, 1998.

Number of Containers: 14 Oversize Folders: 0 Oversize Volumes: 0

Size: 5.4 linear feet / 1.65 linear meters

Restrictions: None.

Series I: Funeral Accounts Ledgers

Container

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1 | <u>Folder</u> | 1: Funeral accounts ledger, 1876-1884. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 2: Receipts, removed from 1876-1884 volume. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 3: Funeral accounts ledger, 1880-1882. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 4: Funeral accounts ledger, 1882-1886. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 5: Receipts, removed from 1882-1886 volume. |

Container

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|---|---------------|---|
| 2 | <u>Folder</u> | 6: Funeral accounts ledger, 1884-1898. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 7: Receipts, removed from 1884-1898 volume. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 8: Funeral accounts ledger, 1886-1890. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 9: Address of Martin, James of Brier Hill; burial permit of Miller, Lillie (d. 1891); material removed from 1886-1890 volume. |

Container

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|---|---------------|---|
| 3 | <u>Folder</u> | 10: Funeral accounts ledger, 1890-1895. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 11: Funeral accounts ledger, 1895-1899. |

Container

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|---|---------------|--|
| 4 | <u>Folder</u> | 12: Receipts, removed from 1895-1899 volume. |
| | <u>Folder</u> | 13: Funeral accounts ledger, 1899-1903. |

- Container 4
Continued
- Folder 14: Letter dated May 7, 1989; Reagan, John E., correspondent; removed from 1899-1903 volume.
- Folder 15: Vault receipts of Kelley family, 1876-1902; and note, Sweeney, James (d. 1904); material removed from 1899-1903 volume.
- Folder 16: Funeral accounts ledger, 1899-1906.

Container

- 5
- Folder 17: Receipts, removed from 1899-1906 volume.
- Folder 18: Funeral accounts ledger, 1903-1906.
- Folder 19: Funeral accounts ledger, 1907-1908. (original housed in Container 14, Folder 55, Oversize Materials)
- Folder 20: Correspondence; Schlee, Isabella Doyle Wilson, March-April 1957, removed from 1907-1908 volume.
- Folder 21: Receipts, removed from 1907-1908 volume.
- Folder 22: Funeral accounts ledger, accounts A through E, 1908.

Container

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- Folder 23: Funeral accounts ledger, 1910-1911.
- Folder 24: Letter dated March 4, 1917; Kendall, E.H.B., correspondent; removed from 1910-1911 volume.
- Folder 25: Receipts, removed from 1910-1911 volume.
- Folder 26: Funeral accounts ledger, 1912-1913.
- Folder 27: Letter dated December 18, 1935; Hanlon, Emily, correspondent; removed from 1912-1913 volume.
- Folder 28: Receipts, removed from 1912-1913 volume.

Container

- 7 Folder 29: Funeral accounts ledger, 1914-1916.
- Folder 30: Cemetary burial receipts, removed from 1914-1916 volume.
- Folder 31: Letter dated May 3, 1915; Gaughan, Harry J., correspondent; removed from 1914-1916 volume.
- Folder 32: Funeral accounts ledger, 1917-1919.
- Folder 33: Receipts, removed from 1917-1919 volume.

Container

- 8 Folder 34: Funeral accounts ledger, 1920-1923.

Container

- 9 Folder 35: Funeral accounts ledger, 1923-1925.
- Folder 36: Receipts, removed from 1923-1925 volume.
- Folder 37: Funeral accounts ledger, 1929-1930.
- Folder 38: Receipt of bill from the estate of McIntyre, Margaret dated March 3, 1930; removed from 1929-1930 volume.

Container

- 10 Folder 39: Funeral accounts ledger, 1931-1932.

Container

- 11 Folder 40: Receipts, removed from 1931-1932 volume.
- Folder 41: Funeral accounts ledger, 1933-1934.

Series II: Funeral Records

<u>Container 11</u>	<u>Folder</u>	42: Funeral record book, 1910-1911.
<u>Continued</u>		
	<u>Folder</u>	43: Receipts, removed from 1910-1911 volume.
	<u>Folder</u>	44: Funeral record book, 1911-1912.
<u>Container</u>		
12	<u>Folder</u>	45: Poem, removed from 1911-1912 volume.
	<u>Folder</u>	46: Funeral record book, 1912-1915.
	<u>Folder</u>	47: Burial permits and receipts, materials removed from 1912-1915 volume.
	<u>Folder</u>	48: Funeral record book, 1915-1916.
	<u>Folder</u>	49: Death certificate and receipts, Gorbett, Rosina (1855-1916); telegram addressed to Brosnan, John dated January 3, 1916; material removed from 1915-1916 volume.
	<u>Folder</u>	50: Funeral record book, 1920-1921.
	<u>Folder</u>	51: Receipts, removed, undated.

Series III: Business Records

	<u>Folder</u>	52: Carriage ledger, 1894-1902.
<u>Container</u>		
13	<u>Folder</u>	53: Coach ledger, 1903-1907.
	<u>Folder</u>	54: Inventory, October-November 1919.

Oversize Materials

Container

14 Folder 55: Materials described in Folder 19 above.