



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FUNERAL FLOWERS

by Marguerite O'Brien

With Halloween and Day of the Dead around the corner, there's no better time to learn the language of funeral flowers. The current exhibition at the Kelley House, "Good Mourning, Mendocino: Funeral Rites and Customs," features a

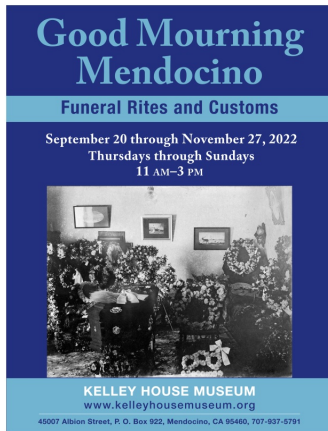
number of floral arrangements that highlight some of the meanings inherent in sepulchral floral bouquets. Learning the special symbolism of flowers became a popular pastime during the Victorian era. There were guidebooks for deciphering what message was being conveyed by the color and type of flower in a bouquet. No one back in the late 1800s thought that "a rose is a rose." It was always so much more!

Among the floral arrangements in the exhibit are five color schemes: red, blue, purple, pink, and white. White is the most common flower color since it represents elegance, reverence, purity, and eternal love. The two wreaths hung in the exhibition feature calla lilies and white peonies. The peonies convey compassion and healing, and calla lilies, one of the flowers most associated with funerals, represent resurrection and rebirth.

Below the wreaths stand the pink and blue arrangements. Pink represents grace, compassion, and innocence. That arrangement consists of peonies, chrysanthemums, and wisteria. The chrysanthemums symbolize truth, lamentation, and grief, and the wisteria can represent purity, innocence, and a love that transcends death.

The blue in the second bouquet represents sadness, sympathy, and peace. This arrangement features roses, hydrangeas, and peacock feathers. It is common knowledge that roses are a symbol of love, but blue roses do not grow naturally and must be created with dye; because of this, the blue rose represents unattainable love. The hydrangeas

represent heartfelt emotions and, since they are a perennial bloom, they also symbolize remembrance. The last feature of this arrangement, the peacock feathers, represent respect, honor, and rejuvenation.



## **CURRENT EXHIBIT**

### **Good Mourning, Mendocino: Funeral Rites and Customs**

*Exhibit runs through Nov. 27*  
Far from an exploration of the macabre, the exhibit reveals the artistry of headstone carvings and mourning parlor décor. Marvel at the business side of burial, as shown on undertaker's ledgers and plot invoices. Historic photos reveal the funeral practices observed amongst Mendocino's diverse cultures, including one of a Taoist altar and another of Pomo baskets used for the deceased.

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## **SPECIAL TOUR**

### **Evergreen Cemetery Tour**

*Sunday, October 30, 11 AM*

Take a hauntingly beautiful walk through Evergreen Cemetery, while Kelley House curator Marguerite O'Brien brings to life some of Mendocino's colorful residents with her storytelling. Meet the town's pre-eminent builder, who also happened to be the undertaker. Chuckle at the story of Cinderella, who lived near the cemetery and played a very mischievous prank to discourage inebriated men from taking shortcuts through the cemetery. Admire the artistry of the headstones and learn how to translate the symbols depicted on them. Drop-ins welcome. Meet at the Kelley House. \$20 per person. 1.5 - 2 hours.

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# A PEEK INTO THE PAST

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## **Farewell Angela Lansbury (1925 - 2022)**

Angela Lansbury left a big impression on our town during the filming of "Murder, She Wrote." This television series was produced from 1984 - 1996, with Angela Lansbury as the lead character, Jessica Fletcher. Nine episodes were filmed in Mendocino (the fictional town of Cabot Cove, Maine)

between 1984 and 1989. Many Mendocino residents were recruited as extras. Lansbury is shown here in front of the Kelley House Museum. **[Visit our Facebook page](#)** to see other photos of Angela Lansbury in Mendocino.

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## **Wagon Team at Mendocino Shipping Point, c. 1909**

This photograph was taken near the south end of Heeser Drive, and shows a man driving a four-horse team and loaded wagon near the Mendocino



Lumber Company's Shipping Point on the bluff above the bay. The two lead animals have bells attached to their harnesses that would signal their approach to other teams traveling around road bends. The point's sea cave is visible under the bluff. Point Beach (aka Portuguese Beach) is below them. The team is traveling on a dirt road, part of a curving tramway system with rails, seen at lower right. This tramway was used by the lumber company to transport goods (lumber, pickets, shingles, etc.) from the mill on Big River Flat to the point and its lumber storage areas.



The Shipping Point had many structures, including its own office with telephone and telegraph connections, all associated with the storage and transfer of goods to the ships that moored in Mendocino Bay. The two buildings in the middle of the image are "Warehouses," according to the 1909 Sanborn map. Behind them is a "Hay & Grain Warehouse," originally a barn. On the right is a "Barn," and to its left is a round, shingled water tank located on the ground. Oxen and horses were used to pull the tramway cars until 1919, when the company purchased a locomotive and a Holt tractor to replace animal power.

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**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Holiday Party,**  
**Saturday, December 3**  
Santa will be back on the porch, and holiday revelry will take place inside. Stay tuned for more details and reach out if you'd like to help us decorate the house.

[EMAIL US](#)



**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!**  
Make new friends and help a good cause. No experience is necessary, but an enthusiastic spirit is much appreciated! Volunteers are asked to contribute about 48 hours per year, typically about 4 hours per month. Opportunities include:

- Museum Docents
- Walking Tour Guides
- Gardening
- Community and Educational Programs
- Research
- Exhibits
- Board Membership

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## MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PERKS

Keep enjoying the perks of membership by renewing today. If you have already renewed, consider giving a gift of a membership to a loved one or friend. Choose a membership level that suits your pocketbook. As our thank you, you will receive your choice of a beautiful digital photo from our archives.

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