

Earlier this summer I had the good fortune of meeting Dave Crow and his family. Dave's father, William A. Crow, served as the pastor of the Ocracoke Methodist Church from May, 1936 to November, 1938. Sixty years later Rev. Crow recounted his memories of living on the island as a young, unmarried minister. He tells about funeral practices:

To bury somebody on the island was a little different in a way. Some boat builders built a coffin, and the women lined it with cotton and silk, and that afternoon we had a funeral. The hole dug to bury the casket left the top of the casket just level with the ground. To go any deeper than that was to run into the water, and the water would just float that casket right back up to the level of the ground. So we just piled dirt up on it and made a mound.



George Howard Cemetery

Rev. Crow then goes on to relate the following story about the one time his mother came to visit:

Miss Bessie Howard (1892-1970) took my mother around over the island. One place she took my mother was to the cemetery, and described to her how when people died on the island, you had the funeral the same day, and you buried the casket just level with the ground. When mother came back after that visit, she started feeling bad, she just didn't feel good. I think maybe her stomach hurt, her head hurt, she was dizzy, she had all sorts of symptoms. They got so bad I had to call my friend Murray Tolson to see if he would take us to Atlantic...Morehead City...somewhere. I think he took us to Morehead City.

But the interesting thing was that as soon as we got on the mainland at Morehead City, my mother said, "William, would you like to go to a movie?"

Well, evidently what had made my mother feel so bad was hearing that if you died you got buried the same day in a casket that was just level with the ground.

Anyway, Mother never did come back to see me after that.