

Roadhouse and Rose Funeral Home

Focusing on their families and community is their primary goal



Roadhouse & Rose Funeral Home - Playter Chapel has the distinction of being Newmarket's oldest business and the third oldest Funeral Home in Ontario. It is owned and operated by Wes Playter and Gregg Davey and together with their team, they continue a tradition that was begun in 1842 by Samuel Roadhouse.

When Newmarket was incorporated as a town in 1880 Roadhouse's business was represented by one of nine bees on the "town crest", Newmarket being the "hive of industry". Samuel's son, Neriah John "N.J." Roadhouse who had apprenticed to his father, took over the business upon Samuel's death in 1890. N.J. was civic-minded like his father and was considered one of the "fathers" of modern Newmarket. In 1921 N.J. partnered with his son-in-law, Lyman Rose and the firm took on its present name "Roadhouse and Rose". The need for a larger building led N.J.



and Lyman to move to the firm's present site on Main Street and had the building re-modeled in a Tudor style. At this time they were the first in the area to have a motorized hearse and truck for the conduction of their business. N.J. Roadhouse died in 1932 and Lyman and his wife Mildred took over the firm.

In 1953 Lyman and Mildred retired and sold their firm to three individuals: Donald Roadhouse Rose (Lyman's son), and two other employees of the Rose's, Rodney Ecobichon and Wray Playter. In 1974 Rodney Ecobichon retired and sold his interest in the firm to Glenn Playter, nephew of Wray. In 1986 Don Rose also retired and sold his interest to the two remaining partners in the firm, Wray and Glenn Playter. In 1993 Wray Playter retired and sold his interest to Glenn Playter and his wife Jackie. In 2000, Gregg Davey joined the firm and in 2004 Glenn's son, Wes Playter also joined the team. In 2009, Wes Playter & Gregg Davey purchased the firm from Glenn & Jackie Playter.

Roadhouse and Rose Funeral Home has a rich history of funeral service, being the oldest in the Newmarket area, yet they have embraced and met the challenges of today. "I think the challenges that we face today are the increase in cremation rates, the cost conscious consumer and adapting to new trends. We have adjusted our business and our facility accordingly, offering more services, so that we can offer everything our family needs at one spot. Diversity and catering to different people, in regards to funeral rites and customs is also very important to address," said Wes.

The cremation rate in the Newmarket area is 75%, a challenge for any funeral home. "When a family comes in and wants direct cremation, we stress that there are other things we can provide with a direct cremation, ie memorial service, celebration of life, etc. We tell them that those services don't even have to be at our funeral home, they can be at Royal Canadian Legion or at their home. However, we encourage them to have something at our funeral home that we can do within their means. It is important because it helps with their grieving process and gives people a place to pay their respects and condolences in person," said Wes.

Another challenge that Roadhouse and Rose face is meeting the needs of the cost-conscious consumer. On their website, they have a quote builder which gives the family information on their pricing. "In today's day and age, people don't necessarily have a lot of time to "shop around." They can go on our site any time of day and get our pricing right off of our price list. It is very user friendly. They can enter exactly what they want, picking and choosing the services they want in a "a-la-carte" style and then we put together an exact price, so that there are no surprises when they come in to see us. It

is also unique in the fact that we also have service packages, so if someone knows that their loved one wanted direct cremation, they can go straight to that package. They are able to choose what is relevant to them and get exactly what they need. We are open and transparent with our prices. Many funeral homes do not list their pricing; they want them to come into the funeral home in order to get the information. People like the convenience and the access to our information and we are glad to provide it to them. Being family owned and operated, we know we are in a better position to work within our families needs. We know funeral service can be expensive, so we also help them apply for any benefits that they might not have been aware of. We go above and beyond, because it isn't always about the bottom line, but helping our families to receive the service they need and want," said Wes.

Families use their quote builder when a death is imminent to plan what they want for their loved one's service. "They already have in mind what they would like when they come to see us (ie casket, service, etc.) and they have their questions prepared. It makes it a lot easier for everyone and alleviates their stress during their time of grief," said Wes. Quote builder also helps in their preneed sales. All quotes will be honored for one year. The program keeps all the vital information that the family provides, making it a time-saving benefit when the time does come that they need the services. This technology is hosted by FrontRunner Pro, along with their website. FrontRunner Pro has enabled them to use a lot of creativity by customizing their website any way they like.

Roadhouse and Rose has also partnered with Sympathy Net to offer webcasting of the funeral service. "Webcasting of the funeral gives the family and friends of the loved one the ability to watch the funeral when they cannot be there. It also helps us internally by monitoring the service, we can know what stage the service is at and also helps if our chapel is filled to capacity, we can stream it into other rooms for the funeral attendees," said Wes.

Webcasting and a great website are not the only technologies they have embraced. Roadhouse and Rose have a facebook page, but unlike most funeral homes, they have focused on Twitter as a dynamic way to reach out to their local community. "We have a live Twitter feed on our website which is fairly unique. We have had it for a couple of years now. I haven't seen too many funeral homes have one. Instead of tweeting about someone's funeral is today, we tweet about local events, like a church charity sale, etc. We keep it fresh, new content in it every day through hashtagging events like Remembrance Day, charity dinners and even get volunteers in these events to follow us. By doing this, we are stressing that we are active and supportive of our community and local charities" said Wes. Their use of Twitter has been very positive for their business because they have built a following of people who trust them and look to them for information on local events.

Roadhouse and Rose's excellent outreach to their community is also seen in their aftercare and grief resource program. In 1996, they opened their Genesis Bereavement Resource Centre, and appointed Keith Taylor as its on-site director. Their centre offers post funeral service care and support to their families, a lending library that is open to everyone and group and private counseling services free of charge to anyone in



Left to Right:
Wes Playter, Jackie Playter, Meagan Wurster, Chad Nicholls

their community. The centre has had a very positive effect on the community they serve.

Even though they are a well established funeral home, Wes and his team are not "resting on their laurels." "We have been around for over 170 years, yet we keep things fresh at our funeral home. We have remodeled our upstairs to be a bright facility for our Celebration of Life service. It is not the typical environment that people would expect at a funeral home. Our staff is younger by most standards, which brings new ideas and helps our social media efforts and community involvement. Also, being an independent funeral home, we don't have to answer to a corporate office therefore, we can make the decisions and pool as many resources we feel necessary for each individual or family to better address their needs.

Roadhouse and Rose's future is bright. As the oldest funeral home in Newmarket, they balance the traditions of yesterday with the modern technology of today. They serve their community with excellence and attention to detail and have embraced the new trends in funeral service with passion. Their main priority has always been the family and their community and this dedication will continue to bring them success for future generations to come.

This photo was taken in the 1940's with a young Johnny Hopper (who would become a Main St. Barber) in the foreground.

This photo was taken in October of 2010, after the recent completion of the heritage project, with a young Charlie Jackson in the foreground.

Roadhouse & Rose Funeral Directors

Roadhouse & Rose began as a cabinet-making and undertaking business in 1842 when Samuel Roadhouse, who came to Newmarket to apprentice to John Botsford in 1838, purchased the firm. At this time the firm operated a livery stable (for the horse-drawn hearse) and manufactured their own furniture and coffins with horse-driven factory machinery. The firm was run by two generations of the Roadhouse Family prior to 1921 when it merged with the Rose family. Mildred Roadhouse, daughter of N.J. Roadhouse, had married Lyman Rose (who had purchased another funeral home in town) and the firm of Roadhouse & Rose was born.

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