

Basic Detail Report

Title Corpse Preserver

Date 1876-1879

Primary Maker Disbrow & Van Cleve

Medium Black walnut, sheet iron, horsehair, glass, brass

Description Corpse preserver consisting of a two-piece black walnut case

insulated with horsehair. The body was laid in the lower half of the case; the top

half was then attached, and its galvanized iron tray was filled with ice, resulting

in the cooling of the body to preserve it during the mourning period. Two pipes

extending through the back end of the case allow for the draining of melted

water. The top deck has two hinged access panels for the loading of ice; the

forward panel further has a hinged oval portal to allow viewing of the face of the

deceased through the glass. Each side and end has a pair of black painted iron

handles, and each end has an iron latch for connecting the two sections of the

case. A ratchet system allowed the body to be raised or lowered for viewing. The

ratchet handle (b.) is separated from the corpse preserver.