

Cadillac Hearse

In June 2013 we purchased our 1959 Cadillac Hearse from the USA, via eBay. Since arriving in New Zealand the hearse has been at Bristol Motors in Upper Hutt undergoing full restoration, this was completed in 2021 – it has certainly been a labour of love by all those involved. Arriving in New Zealand the Cadillac hearse was a light blue colour and as part of the restoration process we have changed the colour to a traditional black.

The restoration has seen the Cadillac fully stripped down to the chassis, ensuring that every aspect has been completed to the highest possible standard. Like all vehicles over 60 years old, the chrome mouldings had many small dents, these have been painstakingly removed and all chrome restored to the standard it was when it was first delivered from the body builders to the original funeral home.

All linings inside the vehicle, and every part of the Cadillac has received attention - down to every nut and screw. It is certainly a work of art, and we are proud to have been able to restore this Cadillac ensuring its classic beauty can live on for future generations.

The 1959 Cadillac was seen by most in the funeral profession as the most beautiful hearse ever produced by Cadillac. I am sure for all the car lovers in the world, you will appreciate the time and effort it has taken to restore this hearse to its former glory.



Hearses

Dotty Hearse | Cadillac Hearse | Chrysler Hearses



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Dotty Hearse

Dotty started life in the workshop of Ohio coach builder AJ Miller, who built her on the original 120 Packard Chassis. In the early part of last century Ohio was home to America's most successful hearse and ambulance builders, and AJ Miller was a leader in the field.

Dotty remained with her first owner, a Funeral Director in Bellefontaine, Ohio, until she was sold in the 1960s, and in 1976, Dan Zoeller, from Zoeller Funeral Home, bought her. In 1990 he had her fully restored, using original parts. The linings were redone in keeping with the original styles and colours, and she arrived back as new. At that point she had 24,000 miles on the clock. He used her only about six times a year, for special occasions such as the funeral of his grandparents and parents. Simon Manning who had been looking for a vintage hearse then spotted her on eBay.

“It’s something that is a little different. It’s a passion of mine that I have always wanted to fulfil that has led me down this path.”

Though most funeral homes have moved away from black cars, the design and tradition of Dotty were irresistible.

“When I reported the purchase to my parents, my mother announced that the car would have to be named after her because they shared the same year of birth – and ‘Dotty’ was born. She arrived from Houston via Australia on Christmas morning 2006, and while opening all the Christmas presents from under the Christmas tree, I could see the best present of all docking at the Port of Wellington. With help from Frank at the wharf, I was able to be there as she was unloaded.

I guess you have many thoughts over the months it takes to get something like this out to New Zealand, but I can tell you she looked far more beautiful in real life than any photo could do justice.”

Dotty sits in a glass garage at Harbour City Funeral Home Lower Hutt, however she is available for funerals through Harbour City Funeral Home, The Wilson Funeral Home and Guardian Funeral Home.



Chrysler Hearses

In 2017 we decide to update our hearse fleet. The Chrysler's were chosen as they would be a unique hearse not currently seen anywhere in New Zealand.

The hearses started life as a 2017 Chrysler 300LX Saloon 3.6 litre V6 and over a period of 12 months were converted from Saloons into Hearses.

These hearses are created from the second generation of the Chrysler 300 Series.

This is a complex process which involve the car being cut from behind the A pillar, the entire rear end of the car is one piece made of fibreglass which has been attached to the extended chassis.

The hearses arrived in New Zealand and were certified by the Low Volume Vehicle Technical Association (LVVTA).

They are now identified as 2018 Chrysler 300 LX Hearse, as they were first registered in New Zealand in 2018.

The Chrysler 300 is more than an icon of a brand — it is a pillar of a company renowned for providing innovation and modern design to the masses. It stands for premium engineering like an advanced all-wheel-drive system, technology like active safety features and leading-edge fuel efficiency, along with the distinctive design worthy of all that its wings carry.

They are unique and specialised vehicles. As a hearse the design allows for ample storage accessible from two large hidden side doors. On the passenger's side it has been specifically designed to hold the casket trolley in a manner which ensures no damage can occur to the door mouldings.

The rear deck of the hearse has an electronic sliding deck, along with “Gull Windows” which open through a remote control to allow for easy access for placement of flowers in the rear section of the hearses.