



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### **Bro. Charles Henry KINSELLA, Funeral Director**

Charles Kinsela was born on 8th April 1886 in Sydney with native-born Australian parents and with convicts as his paternal great-grandparents. He was educated privately at Rockdale College and served in 1903-1908 in the First Light Horse Regiment. His grandfather, in 1830, had established an undertaking business. In 1906 Kinsela became manager of the firm which by then was under the control of his mother. On 26th October 1910 he married Beatrice Veronica Hope de Bello who was a milliner.

Charles Kinsela was determined to improve the image of undertakers and the family prospered because of their service and respectability. He took complete control of the firm in 1914 and claimed to have "the most up to date plant in the Commonwealth providing Reform Funerals at a lower rate than any other in the trade." He also began providing carriages and motor vehicles for weddings. Kinsela in 1920 became the first undertaker in Sydney to purchase motor hearses and a mortuary ambulance. He next established a large complex at 116 Oxford Street near Victoria Barracks.

Following World War 2 he declared himself a funeral director rather than an undertaker and visited California on several occasions and brought in many innovations modelled on the American way of death. His daughter, Beatrice, became a pioneer female embalmer. Kinsela then commenced using Packard hearses and Cadillac Motor vehicles.

In 1932 a multi storeyed building in Taylor Square was converted into art deco funeral premises. This building was of 3 storeys of 1100 square feet with a frontage of 51 ft. to Taylor Square and 80 ft. to Campbell Street. The ground floor comprised 2 chapels and a waiting room. The upstairs areas contained offices and storerooms. There were Protestant and Catholic chapels. The main chapel had a 35 ft. high ceiling and was described as of "A dignified atmosphere with the highest standards of lighting and ventilation." It was called "A building with a soul" and contained statues designed by Bro. Rayner Hoff, a "Fan of Life Shrine", "Sunset of Life" amber glass and was designed to help the bereaved bear their trouble by a greater understanding of the mystery of the great beyond.

In May 1938 the firm was registered as a private company, Charles Kinsela Pty. Ltd., and had built up to 38 branches, mostly in the eastern Suburbs. The firm was using the best of equipment and had built up a very good reputation. By the late 1930s Kinselas had about 15% of the market, conducting 1700 to 1900 funerals per year.

Charles Kinsela continued in business and died in 1944. He was a very capable businessman described as being affable, dynamic and flamboyant. He was a foundation member of the Australian Funeral Director's Association and belonged to the organisation from 1935 to 1944, always doing his utmost to improve and uplift the image of funeral directors.

He was a motor yachtsman, a lawn bowler, a show horse judge and trotting horse owner. He also belonged to Tattersalls, NSW Masonic Club, St. George's Motor Boat and Rose Bay Bowling Club.

