

Westcott Funeral Homes serve Cottonwood and Camp Verde, Arizona



The current Westcott Funeral Home in Cottonwood



Architect's computer generated drawing of the new Westcott Chapel at Westcreek Memorial Park.

COTTONWOOD, AZ— Nestled in the heart of Arizona's Verde Valley, the **Westcott Funeral Homes** of Cottonwood and Camp Verde have served the area families since 1948. The mountains of the historic mining town of Jerome border the south side and the glorious red rocks of Sedona provide a breathtaking northern perimeter.

Howard Westcott grew up in the truly wild west town of Jerome. He knew he wanted a career in funeral service. After serving as a major in the Army during World War II, he returned to establish the **Cottonwood Funeral Chapel** which quickly became the Westcott Funeral Home. In 1986, the members of the now vacant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints approached Westcott about moving his business to their former location. The former church, a much larger building, is still the facility housing Westcott Funeral Home. As the Verde Valley grew, Westcott saw the need to expand to neighboring Camp Verde.

Steve and April Palmer purchased the funeral homes from the Westcott family in 1997. Palmer had been in the funeral service since 1971, starting in Massachusetts, then Southern and later Northern California before purchasing the Westcott Funeral Homes. He currently serves as president of the *Arizona Funeral Directors Association* and is a monthly columnist for *YB News*.

The Cottonwood chapel has a lot of unique features from its days as a church. The generous chapel seats 175, overflow into the connected church's former hall increases the seating to 400. This additional room, by utilizing folding doors, can be refigured as a reception area. The larger former altar area allows many participants on the risen area behind the microphone. Chamber groups, cowboy bands, Native American choirs have all found this to be a unique asset for funeral services that are not seen in a typical mortuary. The acoustics of the building almost make amplification unnecessary even though it is equipped with a wireless public address and music system. Large monitors for the playing of DVDs adds new service offerings to the public.

The former kitchen converted easily into a preparation room as it was already plumbed properly and had an adequate exhaust system. The classrooms allow space for several offices. The selection room fills what was the gym, allowing the display of many forms of merchandise and memorial products.

The presence of a Boston Terrier to greet visitors has been a trademark since the Palmers purchased the firm. Jake, the third and current canine employee, came to the funeral home after the death of his owner. He was the second Boston Terrier to join the staff this way.

The Camp Verde chapel had been an adequate facility for the small demands of the town. The building was a former residence that had been converted into a wood shop and office. The shop became the chapel, which seats 85. The offices still fill that need and the former kitchen of the residence again became the preparation room.

The tremendous growth of the Verde Valley made it obvious the Camp Verde facility would need to be expanded or replaced. That, coupled with the need for more cemetery offerings and for a crematory, led the Palmers to design a new final care offering that would encompass these elements.

Westcreek Memorial Park, to be located on 17 acres of undeveloped land along the "golden corridor" of state route 260 will offer an 8,500 square foot mortuary, complete with reception facility, viewing areas adjacent to the retort and patios off the visitation rooms with a full view of the red rocks of Sedona. The look of the building will be adobe/pueblo in earth colors with exterior posts exposed, sky lights and a lobby fireplace to greet visitors. The memorial park will have the appearance of a natural park rather than a sodded cemetery. Walking trails, natural desert landscape and a dry river bed will compliment the natural beauty that already exists. Mausoleums and niches will be located along ambling pathways for those who have family interred and those who just wish to enjoy the serenity of the park.

The mortuary and master plan of the cemetery are under the design of **J. Stuart Todd**

Architects and financial consulting is provided by the **Foresight Companies**. Construction will begin within the next year.