

Chaney Hardware

Founded: 1888–89

Location: East High Street, Montpelier (1888–94); 125 South Main Street (1895–)

Charles H. Chaney was born in Ashland County, Ohio, in 1848 and seems to have begun supporting himself and helping to support his family when only aged twelve, about the time he moved to Marion, Indiana. Chaney later moved to Jay County and established a tile manufacturing business in Camden with J. R. Cash. At the same time Chaney operated a general contracting business; he built barns, residences, and business blocks in Wells, Jay, and Blackford Counties. Chaney sold his interest in the tile business and in 1888 or 1889 moved to Montpelier and purchased the hardware stock of Saunders & Johnson.

Chaney was a prosperous businessman, owning five oil wells on property in Jay County in addition to his Montpelier hardware business. In 1894 or 1895 Chaney and Adolphus H. Bonham, a local businessman who owned a feed and livery stable, built a brick business block on Main Street in Montpelier. There, on the first floor, Chaney operated his hardware store. He displayed his various goods in the main room, kept a tin shop in the rear, and maintained a supply of buggies, carriages, and wagons in a warehouse in the back. The second floor contained the Grand Opera House, a Montpelier landmark, which prospered during the gas boom years. Charles Chaney died in February 1908, and his son William B. continued the business, selling heavy and shelf hardware, stoves, ranges, farming implements, paints, oils, and other items. William L. and

Michael A. Chaney owned Chaney Hardware, Montpelier's oldest continuous business,
by the 1990s.