

## E. M. Coots' Sons, Incorporated

Founded: 1872

Location: Harrisonville, Kentucky (1872–79); Shelbyville, Kentucky (1879); 141 Spring Street, Jeffersonville, Indiana (1890); 152 Spring Street (1891); 441 Spring Street (1898, 1916); 100 block of East Chestnut Street (–1927); 120 West Maple Street (1927–)

Five generations of the Coots family have presided over one of southern Indiana's oldest businesses. Edwin M. Coots, a native of Shelbyville, Kentucky, farmed for a living until 1872, when at the age of twenty-three he moved to Harrisonville, Kentucky, to start an undertaking business. He had purportedly worked with his father in an undertaking establishment while growing up and remained in the funeral trade until his death in 1907. In 1879 he moved back to his hometown, transferring his business there and adding furniture making to his list of services. In December 1881 he moved to Jeffersonville, Indiana, and bought out the furniture and undertaking business of George C. Zinck. Coots took his profession seriously and endeavored to gain as much knowledge about his craft as possible. He graduated in September 1882 from the Cincinnati Embalming School and performed the first-known arterial embalming in the history of Clark County two weeks after receiving his degree. Although he first turned to undertaking in 1872, furniture making probably took up most of his time until the mid-1890s.

Coots was active in the local Presbyterian church, several Masonic lodges, and the Democratic party. In 1884 he campaigned for and won the post of county coroner, an office he had for at least four terms. With his added duties of coroner, the business likely became too much for one person to handle, so he formed a partnership with Frank R. Willey. Willey was a Clark County native and had begun his working life as a farmer before becoming a New Albany merchant. The partnership lasted for fourteen years. In

1899 Willey went into the insurance business and also became head of the Electric Light, Gas, Heating & Coke Company of Jeffersonville.

Glover L. and Froman M. Coots took over their father's business after his death and continued as partners until 1912, when Glover died. Froman continued as the firm's manager until his death in 1930. He engineered the move of the business from Chestnut Street to Maple Street in 1927. Edwin M. Coots II took over for his uncle, continuing to oversee its operations until 1987.

After 1987 Edwin III and his son, Edwin M. Coots IV, presided over the business. The fourth generation of the family had worked at the funeral parlor practically since birth. After Edwin III came back home from the Korean War and graduated from the Indiana School of Embalming he joined his father as a partner in the firm. Edwin IV attended the Mid-America College of Mortuary Science after graduating from Bellermine College with a degree in accounting in 1983. In 1999 Edwin III served as the president of the company.