

Fitch-Denney Funeral Home

Founded: 1888

Location: High and Mary Streets, Lawrenceburg (1888–93); 8 West High Street (1893–1910); 14 West High Street (1910–84); 455 Ridge Avenue (1984–)

In 1888 twins Thomas A. and Joseph T. Fitch, decided to stop attending school at the age of sixteen and begin a livery and drayage business. In the beginning they ran the venture out of their family's stable. As with many others in the livery business they also supplied conveyances for funerals. When the state began licensing funeral directors the two were among the first group to obtain certification. The brothers' continued success after 1888 was due in part to the fact that they were well known in the community as attentive caregivers.

By 1893 the brothers had become so successful they were able to move out of their family's stable and establish themselves on property they purchased from R. H. Gould on West High Street. It was after 1893 that the brothers became more active in the undertaking side of the business. In 1910 they purchased a building for funeral services close to their stables on west High Street, expanding the facility shortly thereafter and moving part of the livery business to the new address. The Fitches were widely known and active in the community. They participated in numerous fairs and parades with their white horses, one of which, Snowdrift, was purported to be a descendant from a herd given to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant by the queen of England.

After World War I the brothers replaced the horse-drawn hearses with motorized vehicles, becoming the first in the county to hold a completely motorized funeral. At some point the company began offering an ambulance service. Later, Thomas gave the local fire department a modern ambulance in an attempt to equip the recently organized

rescue squad with as much contemporary life-saving machinery as possible. Sadly, Joseph caught tuberculosis in 1918, forcing him to retire from the business. Thomas continued to run the company alone until his son, Theodore “Ted” H. Fitch, joined him on the eve of the Great Depression. Ted had graduated from the Cincinnati College of Embalming before the economic calamity struck. He later became mayor of Lawrenceburg. The father and son team continued to run the business until Thomas’s death in 1955.

In 1958 Ted Fitch’s brother, Thomas, joined the company as the bookkeeper, remaining with the family business until 1964 when he sold his half interest in the firm to Ted. A decade later Ronald Denney assumed ownership of the company, changing the name of the business to the Fitch-Denney Funeral Home. Ten years after he took over the company Denney moved the operation to its present location. In 1983 Sharon Hunger joined the funeral home as an office assistant and funeral director.

In 1999 the company continued to serve the Lawrenceburg area in innovative ways, and Ronald Denney remained the owner. As of 1993 the funeral home began offering a free computerized health record card—the size of a credit card— that provided emergency personnel with vital information when the patient was unconscious or unable to speak for himself.