

Kraft Funeral Service

Founded: 1856

Location: 47 East Main Street, New Albany (1856–1922); 708 East Spring Street (1922–)

George Kraft, a French native who had come to the United States in the mid-1840s, opened a cabinetmaking and chair-making business in New Albany about five years before the start of the Civil War. Shortly after opening his business he added undertaking to his list of services. In June 1866 he expanded his furniture business by purchasing the interests of A. Zilker, who made cabinets, tables, and other home furnishings. The coffins Kraft offered ranged from plain pinewood to rosewood. In advertisements he offered to provide coffins and other funeral needs anytime, day or night.

George died in 1881, and the business passed to his son Frank A. Kraft. Frank had attended both parochial and public schools before attending the New Albany Business College. He had joined his father in the family firm after graduation from high school. During his tenure the company made inexpensive furniture as well as the more expensive furnishings that were sold to hotels and other businesses. Besides an undertaking and furniture-making business, the company included a large livery business. Frank expanded in 1907 by buying the John S. Hill Company.

Frank and his son, George A. Kraft, transformed the business, selling retail and wholesale furniture and providing a funeral parlor. In 1922 George A. moved the business from the south side of Main Street to East Spring Street and discontinued the furniture business.

Paul F. Kraft took over the venture after his father, George A., died. Paul then turned the daily operations of the business over to his sons, Paul F. Jr., Charles A., and Kurt D., sometime after the early 1970s. The brothers opened a second funeral facility in 1997 near the Kraft-Graceland Memorial Park, an eighty-acre cemetery the brothers had purchased ten years before. In 1998 the three brothers continued to operate the funeral service, with Paul Jr. serving as president.