

# Freeman Family Funeral Homes & Crematory:

For more than two decades, Mike and Lana Freeman have welcomed Shelby County families through the doors of one of the city's most storied buildings. Inside the stately brick home at 819 S. Harrison St., history and compassion meet under one roof.

When Mike Freeman purchased the former Carmony-Ewing Mortuary in 2001, he was already an experienced funeral director but new to owning his own firm. What he found on Harrison Street was more than a business opportunity; it was a chance to continue a local legacy that had been taken corporate for a brief time.

"Buying it back locally mattered," Freeman said. "We've always believed a funeral home should be hands-on and community-owned."

That philosophy still shows in every detail. The Freemans and longtime funeral director Ryan Haehl personally oversee each service, keeping arrangements, embalming and cremation in-house.

"Families know the same people who greet them are the ones caring for their loved ones," Freeman said.

The Freemans' commitment extends beyond the chapel. They're regular supporters of local schools, 4-H programs, alumni associations, and community events.

The Shelbyville setting itself deepens that sense of continuity. Built in 1871 for attorney and civic leader Alonzo Blair Sr., the mansion was once the pride of Shelbyville's south side. Its French Revival design, marked by a Mansard roof and arched window crowns, made it one of the city's grandest homes. In Blair's day, the house hosted state leaders, including governors Thomas Hendricks and "Blue Jeans" Williams, and in 1879 it became the site of Shelbyville's largest funeral procession when Blair himself died.

Later owned by the Wray family, including former state senator Albert Wray, the home passed to Charles and Carmen Ewing in 1939. The Ewings remodeled the structure, adding the familiar front columns and transforming the residence into a funeral home, a purpose it has served ever since.

Today, the Freemans have carefully modernized the space while honoring its past. They've opened walls, brightened the chapel, and preserved original woodwork and brickwork. Upstairs, Mike keeps a growing collection of antique funeral artifacts, from hand-pressed memorial cards to gravity-flow embalming bottles, that he hopes one day to display as a small museum.

The history of the industry still matters to Freeman.

"Dep (Ewing) told me he had been the 'caretaker' here for about 30 years," he said of the former owner. "Now it's my turn to take care of it for a while, and hopefully Ryan after me."



**RIGHT:** Mike and Lana Freeman staff the historic funeral home on Shelbyville's South Harrison Street.

# A Tradition of Care in Historic Settings



Above: Ryan Haehl serves as funeral director at Freeman Family Homes. Left, the exteriors and interiors of the Shelbyville and Morristown locations. Below, memorabilia lines the walls of the Shelbyville upstairs facility, accessed by the home's original staircase. | left four photos provided; all other photos by Jack Boyce

