



Founded in 1853 by Frank Staffan, the funeral home business has been passed down from father to son for several generations. The Mitchell family moved to Chelsea in 1981. John Sr. and Gloria Mitchell bought the Staffan Funeral Home from George and Kathryn Staffan, ending a four-generation Staffan legacy.



In the 1850's Frank Staffan settled in Chelsea as a carpenter, and in 1853 started what would later become the Staffan-Mitchell Funeral Home. In the early days of the funeral home, families came to Frank Staffan primarily for him to build caskets; they would hold funerals in their own homes or churches. The actual "funeral home" was a place to store supplies such as a horse drawn hearse, caskets, a mobile organ, or a "cooling board," which was a precursor to embalming.

Frank Staffan had a large interest in the people of Chelsea and growth of the town. He helped families come over from Europe to Chelsea. He was from France, and he spoke French and German. He would meet them at the train depot and arrange for them to become settled in the area.



Frank's legacy would be continued by his son George P. Staffan in both the community and the funeral home. Together they made and bottled some of the industry's first embalming fluid. George P. Staffan was also one of the first morticians to use a motorized hearse. By the age of 21, George P. Staffan became Chelsea's youngest president. He was also responsible for paving the streets of the village and building nearly half a dozen of the town's buildings, including Sylvan Town Hall.

George P. Staffan's son, George L. Staffan, would also join the funeral business. He was known around town as "G.L." and also adopted the nickname of "Abe", because he was born on February 12, the same day as Abraham Lincoln. G.L. started Chelsea's first ambulance service, answering calls at all hours, and using his hearse as a means to transport injured persons to the hospital. George L. and his wife, Kathryn, ran the funeral home from 1950-1981. Their son, George A., was also a licensed funeral director. On January 1, 2007 George L. Staffan passed away at the age of 95. He was the oldest living funeral director in the state of Michigan.

Today, the Mitchell's cannot claim responsibility for paving the streets or building the town hall, but they have



made a significant contribution to the well being of the people of Chelsea. They have played a significant role in being educators and a community resource in the area of bereavement, bringing in speakers and renowned educators, as well as holding Grief Training Seminars. Over the years, Chelsea has seen its share of tragedy, and the Mitchell's have been there through it all.

Since the days before the Civil War, the funeral industry has changed dramatically. Horse drawn hearses have been replaced by modern day cars, ice boards by embalming, carpenters by morticians, and morticians by modern day funeral directors. Through all of these changes, this small business has maintained the same dedication to the community and the families it serves.



John and Gloria raised their three children, John II, Michael, and Amy, in the Chelsea Schools, and worked diligently in the Chelsea Community. In addition to running their family business, they volunteered endless hours in the community serving Kiwanis, Rotary, the Chelsea Hospital Auxiliary, the Chelsea Depot Association, Timber Town, and the Chelsea First United Methodist Church. They have acted as grief resources to the community, bringing speakers to the area, offering seminars and contributing to the Crisis Team in Chelsea.

John Sr. and Gloria have since retired, but remain very active in the community. Today, their two sons, John II (with his wife Cindy) and Michael have taken over the business.

