

Muster Funeral Home

Calhoun, KY

By Jerry Long
c.2025



Generation One



McLean County, KY 1880 Federal Census, Lower Calhoun Precinct, p.294A::

Muster, J. H.	43	undertaker	born KY & parents born KY
" M. L.	44	wife	" "
" Hettie G.	18	daughter	" "
" W. G.	16	son	" "
" John W.	14	son	" "
" Jennie	12	daughter	" "
" Mattie	10	daughter	" "

[note: in the 1860 & 1870 McLean County, KY censuses the occupation
Of John H. Muster was reported as carpenter.]

Calhoun Constitution, Calhoun, KY, Tuesday, 29 July 1890, p.2:

A full line of black and white cloth-covered Caskets; also all sizes of robes for gents, ladies and children, at J. H. Muster's Undertaker's Shop.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 18 July 1896, p.3:

Sickness at Calhoon

There is a good deal of sickness at Calhoon. Judge J. H. Muster, who has long suffered with dropsey, is not expected to live. J. H. Fields is very low with Bright's disease. There is a number of cases of chills and malarial fever.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 29 July 1896, p.8:

Local Laconics – Judge J. H. Muster, one of the best citizens of Calhoun, died Friday night.

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Generation Two



Calhoun Star, Calhoun, KY, Friday, 15 October 1909:



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 13 June 1936, p.4:

Calhoun, Ky., June 12 – Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Muster, Jr., have moved into the Harrison property on Main street which they recently purchased. The home has been remodeled and will be a funeral home and residence combined.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 10 September 1942, p.12:

J. W. Muster

Calhoun, Ky.--J. W. Muster, 77, prominent citizen of Calhoun and for fifty years a director, died complications home at funerals Calhoun at 8:30 p.m., Wednesday. He was a member of the Christian church, and until the last three years was active in religious and civic affairs of the town and community. He is survived by his widow, one brother, W. G. Muster, and two grandchildren, Elizabeth and Billy Muster, all of Calhoun.

Funeral services will be conducted from the Muster Funeral home at 4 p. m. today by the Rev. J. R. Gunn, pastor of the Methodist church. Burial will be in the Calhoun cemetery..

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Generation Three



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 2 Tuesday, 2 March 1938, p.4:

John W. Muster

Calhoun, Ky., March 21. – A telegram was received here today announcing the death of John William Muster, Jr., 48, in a sanitarium at Denver, Colo., where he went for his health four weeks ago. Mr. Muster was a son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Muster, Sr., He was born and reared here and was a member of the undertaking firm of J. W. Muster & Son.

He was a deacon in the Christian church and a member of the Masonic lodge. He served as deputy sheriff, resigning on account of his health. Besides his parents, he is survived by his widow, Mrs. Eunice Muster, a daughter, Elizabeth, and a son J. W. Muster, III. The body will be returned to Calhoun for| burial.

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A Sesqui-Centennial History of Kentucky, Frederick A. Wallis & Hambleton Tapp
(Hopkinsville, KY, et al: The Historical Record Association, 1945) pp.1096-1097:

JOHN W. MUSTER

Until his death, September 9, 1942, John W. Muster served the public as a funeral director, a business which was established in McLean County, Kentucky, by the Musters before the Civil war, his father, J. H. Muster being the first of the name to conduct this undertaking business.

John W. Muster became associated with his father immediately after completing his education in the public schools of McLean County. In the early days the business included the manufacture of coffins, which were made from the beautiful native walnut which was then so abundant in Kentucky.

The business to which John W. Muster devoted his life has been successfully operated by his father, himself, his son and his grandson for almost a century. He was always a figure in the public life of the community, having served for thirty-four years as marshal in his home town, Calhoun, Kentucky.

John W. Muster was born in McLean County September 13, 1865. His father, J. H. Muster, was born in Jefferson County, Kentucky, May 24, 1836, and died in Calhoun, McLean County, Kentucky, July 24, 1896. Other children, none of whom are living, were—Hettie, Jennie, Mattie, and Wm. G. Muster, who was last survivor of this immediate family. The mother was Margaret Gibson, who was born in McLean County, Kentucky, September 2, 1833. She died June 12, 1891. The grandfather of John W. Muster was born in Amsterdam, Holland. He first made his home in Pennsylvania after a long and arduous journey across the Atlantic in the days of the old sailing vessels. Later, he moved to Jefferson County, Kentucky, where he married a Miss Farmer, who was a native of England.

John W. Muster married Henrietta Denton of Henderson County, Kentucky, who was born September 16, 1867. One of their two children died in infancy. The other, John W. Muster, Jr., was born May 3, 1891, and died on March 21, 1938. He attended the public grade and high school at Calhoun, McLean County, and after completion of a course in embalming, was connected with His father in the funeral directing business. Active in community life, John W. Muster, Jr., served for some time as deputy sheriff. He married Eunice Whayne, who was born in McLean County, September 29, 1893—the daughter of David M. and Mary Donna Whayne, pioneer residents of McLean County, both deceased, but leaving in the hearts and minds of the people appreciation of what they had meant to the community in which they lived, having been members of a rural Cumberland Presbyterian Church, New Cypress, which he had the honor of naming. He was a prominent farmer and tobacco dealer.

Mrs. John W. Muster, Jr., is a woman of remarkable ability, and was one of the first graduates of the Calhoun High School. This was in 1914, the only other graduate being Mrs. Sophia Haynes, nee Howdon. Mrs. Muster taught in McLean County schools prior to her marriage. She is an active worker in the Christian Church, and is a member of the Order of the Eastern Star.

The two children of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Muster, Jr., are Elizabeth Whayne Muster, and John W. Muster, III. Elizabeth was born in Calhoun, Kentucky, July 6, 1918. She married Chester Hile, of Evansville, Indiana. They have one child, Whayne Ann Hile, who was born in Daviess County Hospital, Owensboro, Kentucky. Chester Hile is now an instructor in the United States Army Air Corps.

John W. Muster, III, was born in Calhoun, Kentucky, March 1, 1925. After completing grade and high schools at Calhoun, he attended the Kentucky School of Embalming at Louisville,

Kentucky. John W. Muster, III, became the fourth generation of the Muster family to engage in the business as a funeral director. At the present he is in the Medical Corps of the Army, located at Crile General Hospital, Cleveland, Ohio. He was married July 5, 1943, to Claire Gibson, daughter of Fred and Bess Stiles Gibson, prominent in McLean County, being descendants of pioneer families of the county.



Generation Four



McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, Thursday, 5 September 1957:

Hughart Funeral Home sold to Muster Funeral Home

Two of McLean county's oldest businesses were merged into one this week with a deal completed Monday [2 September 1957].

Hughart Funeral Home, which has establishments in Livermore and Island, was sold to Muster Funeral Home of Calhoun. The Hughart establishment had been in the family for 55 years, with Harold Hughart as the principal owner.

John W. Muster III said that the Livermore business will be continued with John Hughart as manager. John is a nephew of Harold and has been employed by the funeral home for about ten years.

Musters take possession of the funeral service on September 15. For the present they will use the Hughart building. As a permanent location for the Livermore home they have purchased the Walter Atherton home on Broadway near Morton avenue. A large two-story home built by the late Mr. Atherton in 1911, it will be extensively remodeled to serve as a funeral home. John Hughart and his family will live there. Mrs. Atherton plans to build a small house on the lot she retained from the property. Musters hope to be in the new location about November 1.

The sale of the funeral home is a retirement move on the part of Harold Hughart, who has been in poor health for several years.

The business was founded in 1902 by his father, the late J. P. Hughart. Harold took over on the death of his father and now John, a grandson of J. P., is still carrying on, making three generations in the business.

Harold will keep his other business as distributor for Standard Oil products in a portion of McLean county.

The Muster institution dates from 1845, when John W. Muster began supplying handmade caskets for the people of Calhoun. John W. Muster III is the fourth generation of the family in the funeral service.



McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, Bicentennial Issue, Thursday, 1 July 1976, p.27 and Thursday, 31 August 1978, p.7B:

Musters' County's oldest business began in Guffey

Muster Funeral Home is the oldest business establishment in the county.

It was founded between 1845 and '50 by John H. Muster, great-grandfather of the present director. The first building was at Guffey where Muster, a cabinet maker, constructed his own caskets of native walnut and delivered them in horse-drawn hearses.

Later the funeral home was moved to Calhoun, where it was first located on the site of the present Christian Church parsonage. There they also manufactured their own caskets, besides doing mortician work.

About 1900 the firm passed into the hands of John W. Muster who moved his undertaker's shop" to the second story of the Ballantine-Hull building. He was joined in 1918 in the business by his son, John W. Muster Jr., who opened the first funeral residence in McLean County at its present Calhoun location.

The business was moved to its present location on Main Street in Calhoun in 1936. The old part of the house is about 100 years old. Four rooms are all that remain of the original building. Numerous renovations and improvements have been made by the present owners.

At the death of J.W. Muster the business was operated by Mrs. J.W. Muster, who became the first licensed lady funeral director in McLean County. A member of the first graduating class of Calhoun High School, she also was the first female coroner in Kentucky.

After World War I Bill Muster joined the firm as the embalmer and junior partner. His two sons, John and Mike, have joined the business, becoming the fifth generation of Musters to be associated with the firm. John was the first person in the state to obtain a bachelor of science degree in funeral service education.

Muster's established ambulance service in 1928 when the first motor-driven ambulances were introduced in Kentucky. The firm now has two van-type and three Cadillac-type ambulances.

Muster Funeral Home now operates the only non-subsidized ambulance service this side of Louisville. Muster's purchased the two van-type ambulances this year through a grant from the Green River Area Development District.

The funeral home receives calls for all fire departments in the county and is the centralized dispatching point for the Calhoun, Livermore, Sacramento, Beech Grove and McLean County Volunteer Fire Departments and the McLean County Rescue Squad.

The firm has "a staff" of 14 volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians to draw from in an emergency situation. Those men are stationed at strategic locations across the county.

Muster Funeral Home, after more than century of service to the county's residents, is one of the most modern and best equipped mortuaries in Kentucky.

The residence offers such facilities as a church-type chapel, private family rooms, casket sales rooms, modern preparation room, lounge, music rooms and a business office.



Muster Funeral Home [on Main Street in Calhoun,] as it looked some forty years ago. This view is looking north from Third Street. The building has since been renovated. This porch removed and a Colonial-style one was added. The sleek black car parked in front of the home is one of the first motor-driven ambulances [1940 Packard Sedan] in the state.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 26 August 1996, pp.1A & 2A:

Mustering Tradition

**Calhoun funeral
home, in business
since 1855, to be
honored by state**

By Mark Cooper, Messenger-Inquirer

The Muster Funeral Home in Calhoun has been in the same family for more than 140 years, but the business belongs more to the people of McLean County than it does to the Musters.

"During a family's loss, the funeral home is not really ours – it belongs to the grieving family," Will Muster, 26, said. "The funeral home belongs to the people we serve. That is the most important thing (my family) has taught me."

Will Muster represents the sixth generation of his family to own and operate the funeral home since its opening in 1855. That family longevity will be honored this year in a new program that recognizes Kentucky businesses 100 years old or older.

Six businesses in the region have been designated "Kentucky Centennial Businesses" by the Kentucky Historical Society, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet.

The businesses will be honored at a reception Nov. 7 in Erlanger in conjunction with Gov. Paul Patton's Economic Leadership Awards given at the Kentucky Industrial Development Council's annual meeting.

Honoring long-standing businesses is a step toward understanding how businesses survive the constantly changing economic environment, according to Amy Carman, communications program manager for the Kentucky Historical Society.

"These businesses can show others how they can adapt to changing economies," she said. "We wanted to recognize these businesses because their endurance continues to make important contributions to communities."

Dahl & Groetzinger Inc. of Owensboro is a good example of adaptability, Carman said. The business began in 1885 as a buyer of "hides, wool, pelts and feathers." Today, it deals in scrap iron and metals.

Another goal of the program is to help the companies save their old records, ledgers, photos, tools and other artifacts from the trash heap, Carman said.

The businesses will be offered advice and technical assistance on preserving their historic business records and artifacts during a workshop Wednesday in Frankfort. The workshop will include sessions on how to properly exhibit and store historic memorabilia.

"But that type of technical assistance is also open to all businesses year-round" through the Kentucky Historic Society, Carman said.

Keeping old records isn't just important to the businesses involved.

For example, funeral home records can be important to families doing genealogical searches, Carman said.

Will Muster said he or another member of his family will likely take advantage of the workshop. The business has ledger sheets dating back to the 1860s, including an 1887 ledger book from John Henry Muster, a carpenter, builder and undertaker who created Muster Funeral Home.



John Henry Muster

"The ledger details all the construction items he used when he built a brick home here in Calhoun," Muster said. "Everything is broken down, including the price of a keg of nails" – \$3.15.

The Muster family immigrated from Amsterdam to Philadelphia in 1776 and eventually moved to Oldham County, near Louisville. The family moved to Guffie in McLean County around 1845 when John Henry Muster was 9.

A carpenter by trade, John Henry Muster made caskets for residents who would display the body at the family's home during funerals. "Back then, they didn't have funeral homes," Will's grandmother, Claire Muster, 69, said. "People held visitation in their parlors."

He also built houses, including the funeral home's current chapel at 300 Main Street in Calhoun, which has housed the business since 1936.

Muster is "one of the five oldest funeral homes in the state," Will Muster said. Only two others – L.D. Pearson & Son, Inc. in Louisville and Milward Funeral Directors Inc. in Lexington – have been in operation by the same family for six generations, he said.

John Henry Muster became an undertaker after residents began needing more from the carpenter than a casket, Will Muster said.

"They wanted him to do more of the funeral," Will Muster said. "Pick up the body, perform the service. ..."

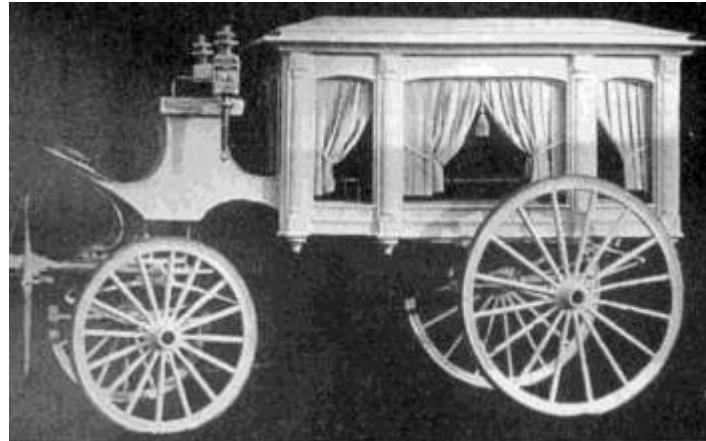
The funeral home made history in 1942 when Eunice Whayne Muster, the wife of John William Muster II, became the state's first woman coroner. She served from 1942 to 1948.

The business has made several adaptations since, including several additions to the original chapel, the purchase in 1957 of a second chapel in Livermore (the former Hughart Funeral Home), the operation of a county-wide ambulance service from 1922-1987 and the creation of an ambulance, hearse and limousine dealership which has thrived since 1976.

"We've supplied most of the hearses and limos that you see in Owensboro," Will Muster said.



Bill and Claire Muster represent the fourth generation of Musters to operate the 140-year-old Muster Funeral Home business in McLean County. Now, their grandson Will Muster, 26, helps them run the family business. The funeral home is being honored as a "Kentucky Centennial Business" through a program recognizing Kentucky businesses 100 years or older. The funeral home belongs to the people we serve, Will Muster says.



Muster Funeral Home in Calhoun used this horse-drawn carriage as a hearse until 1920, when they bought their first motorized hearse.

“Centennial Businesses”

*Area companies designated
“Kentucky Centennial Businesses”:*

- Muster Funeral Home, Calhoun
— established 1855.
- Mullen & Haynes Co., Owensboro
— established 1874.
- Dahl & Groetzinger, Inc.,
Owensboro — established 1885.
- First State Bank of Greenville,
Greenville — established 1890.
- Beaver Dam Deposit Bank,
Beaver Dam — established 1890.
- The Hancock Clarion, Hawesville
— established 1893.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 19 November 2004, p.2B:



CALHOUN – John W. Muster III, 79, of Calhoun died Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2004, at Owensboro Medical Health System. John William Muster III was born March 1, 1925, in Calhoun to the late John W. and Eunice Whayne Muster II and was known as "Bill" to his family and friends. He was a member of Calhoun High School class of 1943 and was later married to the former Claire Marie Gibson on July 5, 1943, in Owensboro. Bill Muster was a Kentucky licensed funeral director for more than 55 years and had served as president of Muster Funeral Homes of Calhoun and Livermore for more than 50 years. He was the fourth generation of his family to serve the people of McLean County and its surrounding communities. As a dedicated funeral director, he was a member of many professional associations. Bill was a member and past president of the Kentucky Funeral Directors Association, was a member of National Funeral Directors Association, served as a director for the Kentucky Funeral Directors Burial Association for more than 30 years, served on the Calhoun Cemetery Board for several years and was also a former member of the National Conference of Funeral Service Examining Board.

Bill Muster was a member and past deacon of the Calhoun Christian Church, a member and past president of Calhoun Lions Club and an Army veteran of World War II. He was a 50-year member of the Vienna Lodge No. 423 F&AM and was an honorary member of the Monsarrat Lodge No. 379 F&AM. Bill Muster was also a 50-year member of Rizpah Shrine Temple in Madisonville and was also a member of Western Kentucky Consistory.

Survivors include his wife of 61 years, Claire; two sons and their wives, John W. Muster IV and Susan and Michael Muster and Dee Ann, all of Calhoun; four grandchildren, John W. Muster V and his wife, Adrianna, Lee M. Muster, Kendel Marie Muster and Holly Michelle Muster, all of Calhoun; a niece, Whayne Ann Crick Badgett of Madisonville; and two great-nieces.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Muster Funeral Homes, Calhoun Chapel, with Dr. Richard Sams officiating. Burial will be in Calhoun Cemetery, with military honors conducted by McLean County Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Post No. 5415. Friends may visit with the Muster family from 4 to 8 p.m. today and after 9 a.m. Saturday at Musters in Calhoun.

The Muster family requests that expressions of sympathy take the form of donations to Muster Funeral Homes Memorial Scholarship Fund at McLean County High School. Memorial contribution envelopes will be available at Musters in Calhoun.

[Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 218 November 2004, p.3,B, "Longtime funeral director Muster died at 79": "Muster was director of Muster Funeral Home from 1945 to 2003 and was the fourth generation of the Muster family to join the family business. During Muster's time as director the business expanded, opening the Livermore Chapel of Muster Funeral Homes in 1957..."

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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 22 August 2014, pp.1B & 4B:

Muster Funeral Home a family tradition

By Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer

CALHOUN

John W. "J.W." Muster VI is listed as a public relations consultant at Muster Funeral Home in Calhoun.

He is 6 years old.

"He gets \$4 a funeral," his dad, John W. "Will" Muster V, said Wednesday afternoon at the funeral home. J.W. said he wants to be a funeral director just like his dad and granddad.

His job is to take flowers to the viewing rooms and work the door.

"I open doors and get sweaty," said the first grader at Calhoun Elementary.

J.W. is the seventh generation to work at the funeral home that was established in 1855 by John Henry Muster.

John Henry's father, John Muster, preceded him in the burial business. According to a family account, in 1822, there was a cholera outbreak in Jefferson County, and John Muster of Jeffersontown "was one of two good Samaritans who helped tend to and bury the dead during the outbreak."

While discussing the Muster lineage, the owners and operators of the funeral home said they never gave joining the family business a second thought. The family patriarch, John W. Muster IV, lived with his parents in an apartment above the funeral home at 300 Main St., in Calhoun. The funeral home has been added on to through the years, but the original structure remains.

John "Will" Muster and his brother, Lee, who are funeral directors and embalmers, have always been in the business. When they were students at the University of Kentucky, they worked for a Lexington funeral home.

Even though, when they began college, they knew they would end up at the funeral home, their father wanted them to have a bachelor's degree in a career of their choice.

Muster IV had hoped his sons would join the family business, but "they were free to pursue other interests," he said. "You can't force your children into a family business."

"You have to like doing this, or people will know," Will Muster said.

The job is confining, Lee Muster said. There are no vacations to speak of, he said.

When the men were children, the few vacations they had were taken in a hearse, Will Muster said.

Will and Lee try to get away for at least two UK football games each year. That's the extent of their free time, they said.

Running a funeral home is a way of life, not just a job, they said.

"We've had funerals on Christmas Eve," Will Muster said.

The National Funeral Directors Association reports that 86 percent of funeral parlors are family owned. It takes a certain personality to work with grieving families and the deceased.

Thoroughness, kindness, calmness and patience are attributes that work for a funeral director. The three men and Susan Muster, wife of John the fourth, displayed all these qualities Wednesday afternoon.

Susan Muster joined the family business 45 years ago. She met her husband at the University of Central Oklahoma. He was studying mortuary science, and she was majoring in accounting.

After moving with her new husband to Calhoun, she became a funeral director.

"She picked it right up," said John Muster IV. "She's a real social person."

"You don't get a second chance at funerals — you have to get it right the first time," Will Muster said.

It's not only important for the family, but for the funeral home, as well. Good and bad news travels fast in a small county, he said. A satisfied client may tell one person of his experience, but an unhappy one will tell eight or more people, Will Muster said.

Will Muster said the town keeps an eye on them.

"They like to see improvements," he said.

"We try to do something every year," Will Muster said.

Old buildings need constant maintenance, he said.

One of the latest improvements is the family and visitor lounge and increased parking. The lounge is decorated with old photographs of people and places of McLean County. The pictorial can be a distraction for families.

The facility is homey. Much of the furniture belonged to family members. Upon the deaths of Will and Lee's grandparents, Claire Gibson Muster and John W. "Bill" Muster III, several pieces were brought to the funeral home that include the floor clock in the foyer and an antique sideboard from their dining room.

"This way, the whole family can enjoy them," Will Muster said.

The family is especially proud to offer a chapel to their clients. It seats more than 300.

"Small towns need bigger chapels than large cities," Will Muster said.

"Here, everyone knows everybody else, and they attend funerals," he said.

A funeral director also has to anticipate what a family will want after the funeral. For an example, Muster's does not believe in cremation but will make arrangements for the family. If they want their loved ones ashes scattered, Will Muster said he will suggest that the family keep a portion of the ashes for burial and a monument.

Down the line, most often, people want to visit a place of burial. Burying some of the ashes proves to be a comfort later, he said.

Ninety-five percent of the time, families are glad they opted for burial and monument.

"We don't own a cemetery or monument business," Will Muster said. "We don't make a nickel," but he said they end up with a satisfied client.

A family that spends so much time together has to be accommodating and thoughtful, and the Musters appear to be both.

"We all get along," Will Muster said. "Being the age we are, it hurts too much to get into a fight."



Members of the Muster Family, John W. Muster IV, from left, John W. "J.W." Muster VI, 6, Susan Muster, John W. "Will" Muster V and Lee Muster stand in front of the Muster Funeral Home on Wednesday in Calhoun. J.W. is the seventh generation to work at the funeral home, which was established in 1855 by John Henry Muster.



John W. "Will" Muster V, left, fixes the tie of his 6-year old son, John W. "J.W." Muster VI, on Wednesday in the family and visitor lounge at the Muster Funeral Home in Calhoun.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 21 January 2019, p.1B:

Six generations of funeral services

Muster Funeral Homes second oldest in state

By Seth Dukes, McLean County News

It's easier to raise employees than it is to hire them.

At least, that's what Will and Lee Muster's grandfather always said. Their family has certainly taken that to heart after six generations of continuous service at Muster Funeral Homes.

Will and Lee own the funeral home, which is the second oldest funeral home in the state, with their father. They have chapels in Livermore and Calhoun, and they said they average about 125 funerals each year.

The Musters grew up in McLean County, so they know almost all of their customers.

"Here, we know 85 or 90 percent of the people that come in really well," said Will. "It's uncommon we don't know anybody in the family."

Will says that having that personal relationship with their customers helps them make the service the best it can be.

"It makes it more personal that you're trying to help somebody here that you know," Will said. "You have a connection with them. If you know your customers, I think you'll try harder."

Will says that a major reason they are chosen by their customers is their attention to detail.

"When they come here, everyone knows we can get the major things done," said Will, "but what they really appreciate are the small things we can do, the attention to detail."

Will said often times, larger and more expanded funeral homes can lack that attention to detail simply due to the size of their operation.

The next generation is already in training. Will's son has been working at the funeral home since he was about 5 years old.

"That's where he gets his spending money," Will said. "That's how it was for my brother and I."

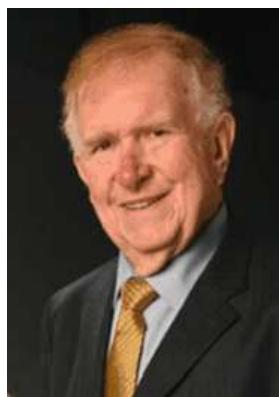
For more information on Muster Funeral Home, contact their Calhoun chapel at 270-273-3124.



Generation Five

John W. Muster, IV
(1947-2025)

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 5 December 2025, p.2B



CALHOUN — John W. Muster IV, 78, of Calhoun, Kentucky passed away Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2025 at TriStar Skyline Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. John William Muster, IV was born March 2, 1947 in Calhoun, Kentucky to the late John William 'Bill' Muster, III and Claire Marie Gibson Muster.

John's life was one of dedicated service, community involvement, and family memories. A 1965 graduate of the former Calhoun High School, John's pursuit of education led him to Central State College in Edmond, Oklahoma. There, he not only earned a bachelor of science degree in Funeral Service in 1969, but also forged lifelong bonds as a member and chapter president of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. It was at Central State that John met the former Susan Jane Bondurant, the then-president of Sigma Kappa sorority. Their shared values and aspirations led to their marriage on March 30, 1969, in Edmond, a union that would be celebrated with love and partnership for more than 56 years.

John's professional journey was deeply rooted in his family's legacy, as he joined Muster Funeral Homes in 1969, becoming the 5th generation to offer compassionate care to many families throughout Western Kentucky. In 1971, John received his funeral directors and embalmers licenses from the Kentucky Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors, and in 2021 he was recognized as being a 50 year licensee in the state of Kentucky.

His dedication to service extended beyond funeral care, as he was also installed as a deputy coroner under his father, Bill Muster, in 1970. John served as either McLean County Coroner or a deputy coroner until his official retirement in the spring of this year, with over 55 years of service as coroner or deputy coroner for his county. At his retirement from McLean County Coroner, John was recognized as being one of the longest serving coroners throughout the state. John also served as a licensed EMT, working alongside his family to provide McLean County Ambulance Service until the county assumed operation of the service on Sept. 1, 1986.

John's entrepreneurial spirit shone through in 1976 when he and his brother founded Muster Associates, a professional vehicle sales company specializing in ambulances and funeral vehicles, which achieved sales recognition both nationally and internationally. John loved being able to talk with other funeral professionals, hear both their family heritage and trade stories, and supply them with their professional vehicle needs. Muster Associates would eventually evolve into Muster Coaches, and the company will continue to supply professional vehicles with the same service to which funeral directors have become accustomed to from John. At Muster Coaches, one of John's favorite sales promotions was his annual 'Run for the Roses' sales campaign. Each year, Muster Coaches would draw one lucky customer from that year to receive a trip to the Kentucky Derby with John and his wife, Susan. John always loved being able to treat funeral professionals from across the nation to a true Kentucky Tradition and even installed several as official 'Kentucky Colonels.'

An avid outdoorsman, John relished the simple joys of hunting with his father, brother, friends, and later, his sons. Quail hunting was his favorite, but he also enjoyed duck, dove, and a wild boar hunting trip with his sons. His love for the Green River was profound, where he could often be found boating or simply enjoying a moment of relaxation on the boat dock with his wife and a Jay's cheeseburger.

John's passion for sports was evident in his enthusiastic support for his sons' and later his grandson's football games. With both of his sons graduating from college in Lexington, John also enjoyed going to University of Kentucky Football Games. John's love for sports coupled with his love of the outdoors led him to being an avid snow skier. In his earlier years, he always looked forward to annual family snow skiing trips out west.

A man of faith, John served as a long-time deacon and church trustee at Calhoun Baptist Church. His commitment to his community was further exemplified by his membership in the Vienna Lodge #423 F. & A.M.

All of his professional, church and local government involvements led John to having several different titles or responsibilities. However, his favorite titles were 'Pop' or 'Poppa John' when he was blessed with his two grandchildren, JW and Maddie Grace. John loved nothing more than watching JW play football and participating in any activity with Maddie Grace, celebrating their many achievements with pride. As his father would say, children are great but grandchildren are by far the best. John is survived by his wife of 56 years, Susan Muster; two sons, John W. 'Will' Muster, V (Adrianna) and Lee Miles Muster (Elizabeth) both of Calhoun; two grandchildren, John W. 'JW' Muster, VI and Madeline Grace 'Maddie' Muster; a brother, Michael Gibson Muster

(DeeAnn) of Calhoun; a sister-in-law, Mary Jo Baker of Edmond; a nephew; three nieces; and his extended families at both Muster Funeral Homes and Muster Coaches.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025 at Muster Funeral Homes, Calhoun Chapel. Burial will be in the Calhoun Cemetery in McLean County. Friends may visit with John's family from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m. Monday and from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. Tuesday at Musters in Calhoun.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests in order to celebrate John's love of both the history and future of McLean County that expressions of sympathy take the form of donations to either the Muster Funeral Homes, Memorial Scholarship Fund at McLean County High School; P.O. Box 160; Calhoun, Kentucky 42327 or the Calhoun Cemetery, Iron Fence Restoration Fund; C/O John Howard; 400 Guy Settle Loop; Calhoun, Kentucky 42327.

John's services will be streamed live on musterfuneralhomes.com at 11 a.m. Tuesday.



Muster Funeral Home Records

Muster Funeral Homes – 300 Main Street, Calhoun, KY (at this location since 1936) and 212 Broadway St., Livermore, KY (at this location since 1957; formerly the J. P. Hughart & Sons Funeral Home). Some of the records at the Calhoun location date back to the late 1800's and records at the Livermore location date back to circa 1912.



Left – John Henry Muster (1836-1896, founder of Muster Funeral Home; son of John Muster & Nancy Schindler. Right – The Second, Third and Fourth Generations of the Muster Family in 1918. From Left to right, John W. Muster, II (1891-1938, son of John William Muster, I & Henrietta Denton), Elizabeth Muster Beeler (1918-1982, daughter of John W. Muster, II & Eunice Whayne), John W. Muster, I (1865-1942), son of John Henry Muster & Margaret Lee Gibson, and Willie Muster (1832-1923, son of John Muster & Nancy Schindler and brother of John Henry Muster). Pictures from Muster Funeral Homes website:

<https://www.musterfuneralhomes.com/our-history>



Muster Funeral Home, 300 Main Street, Calhoun, KY

