



1948 NATIONAL PONTIAC AMBULANCES AT THE PLANT

NUMBER 93 THIRD QUARTER 1999

THE NATIONAL STORY

THE PROFESSIONAL CAR



THE PROFESSIONAL CAR

Number 93

Third Quarter 1999

IN THIS ISSUE - Professional Cars From Knightstown - Part II

- **Owner's Pride: 1941 Meteor-Cadillac Funeral Coach**

- **News Of The Industry: Eureka, Miller-Meteor Finis (Again)**

ON OUR COVER - The feature article in this issue is Part II of Tom McPherson's story on the coachbuilders of Knightstown, Indiana. Tom's previous piece in TPC #92 covered Silver-Knightstown and Knightstown. That story ended with the demise of both of these firms during World War II. Enter Vern Z. Perry, who in 1945 started up a *new* hearse and ambulance manufacturing enterprise in the former Knightstown Body Co. plant. The ***National Body Manufacturing Co.*** was a significant – if second-string -- player in the U.S. professional car industry for the next two decades. Best known for its Chevrolet and Pontiac sedan delivery conversions, National went on to turn out a truly wondrous variety of hearses, ambulances, combinations, service cars and limousines on chassis from General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. We're again grateful to Tom for another thoroughly researched, engrossing professional car company history. Most of the photos came from Tom's own vast personal collection. The photo on our cover shows a fleet of six 1948 National-Chevrolet ambulances lined up in front of the National Body Manufacturing Co. plant, which was (appropriately) located on the National Road at the Big Four Crossing in this small Northern Indiana town.

INSIDE BACK COVER - For a small company National was a *big* advertiser in U.S. funeral service trade journals. Up until its last few years, National ads featured excellent artwork. This July, 1953 ad was typical. No fewer than seven National-Pontiacs are illustrated, ranging from the standard-wheelbase, economy priced Servette Service Car and Ambulette Ambulance on up to the Deluxe Landau Funeral Car.

BACK COVER - From its creation just after the Second World War, National was best known for its low-budget Chevrolet and Pontiac sedan delivery hearse and ambulance conversions. But National built some Fords, too. One of the most unique of these was this 1955 Ford Flower Car – a fairly straightforward conversion of a Ford Courier Sedan Delivery. Enclosed flower cars like these never really caught on. Funeral directors much preferred the open-deck-type flower car.