

The **PROFESSIONAL CAR**



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IN THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 2 – PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE – TONY KARSNIA

PAGE 5 – CUNNINGHAM PROFESSIONAL VEHICLES - PART 1 – BY THOMAS A. McPHERSON

PAGE 25 – *GETTING THE CALL* - THE BILLY GRAHAM FUNERAL – BY THOMAS A. McPHERSON

PAGE 31 – CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

PAGE 33 – *ONLY THE FINEST*: CUNNINGHAM VEHICLE FLEETS

PAGE 37 – OTHER BODIES: WHEN A CUNNINGHAM WAS *NOT ENTIRELY* A CUNNINGHAM

PAGE 39 – OWNER’S PRIDE: PETER CUNNINGHAM’S 1926 CUNNINGHAM V5 AMBULANCE

COVER AND CENTERSTRETCH PHOTOS – A great-great grandson of James Cunningham – founder of the revered James Cunningham, Son & Co. carriage and hearse builders of Rochester N.Y. – has owned this 1926 Cunningham V5 ambulance for more than 20 years. When contributing editor Tom McPherson learned of its existence early last year, he tracked Mr. Cunningham down in California and sold him on his proposal to feature the ambulance in his comprehensive history of the family firm in *The Professional Car*. Mr. Cunningham commissioned professional photographers Bill Mallard and Greg Goodsell to extensively photograph the car *especially for TPC*. The photo shoot took place at the Gold Hill Winery in Placerville, near Sacramento, California.

EDITOR’S MESSAGE – Much of the content in this issue is devoted to Part 1 of a two-part history of Cunningham by Tom McPherson. Accompanying our main feature, however, is the fascinating story -- also by Tom -- of the recent funeral of famed evangelist Billy Graham. Exhaustively researched and written by a widely known and respected professional-car-industry insider and historian, Tom’s *Getting The Call* story is some of the finest reporting we’ve ever had the pleasure of publishing in this magazine. Founded in 1838, Cunningham ceased vehicle production in 1936 in the depths of the Depression, two years shy of its centennial. From humble roots, Cunningham emerged as one of America’s premier carriage builders, turning out exquisite landaus, broughams, and berlines for America’s wealthiest and most famous families. From the 1870s on, however, hearses, casket wagons, and ambulances were the company’s real bread and butter. Like its carriages, Cunningham’s notoriously expensive hearses were the epitome of style and quality, preferred by America’s leading vehicle liveries and undertaking firms. The company’s principal competitors were Crane & Breed and Sayers & Scovill, but Cunningham was in a class of its own at the pinnacle of its unique craft. Cunningham entered the motor age in 1908, introducing the industry’s first auto ambulance the following year. As in the horse-drawn era, hearses and ambulances paid the bills. Produced in relatively small numbers, Cunningham’s custom-built conservatively styled passenger cars are rightfully recognized as full classics today.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE – we’ll feature coverage of the 2018 PCS International Meet in Detroit as well as our regular features, including Bee Hamlin’s roundup of PCS Chapter activities and Rich Litton’s ambulance photos.

– *Walt McCall*