

The **PROFESSIONAL CAR**



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ON OUR COVERS AND CENTERSTRETCH – In 1925, the Superior Body Company of Lima, Ohio entered into a partnership with the Studebaker Corporation of South Bend, Indiana under which Superior built limousine-style hearse and ambulance bodies for mounting on a special 158-inch wheelbase Studebaker commercial chassis. Under the *Studebaker Equipment* banner, these well-received professional cars were marketed by Studebaker – not Superior. The Superior name, in fact, was nowhere to be found in Studebaker's heavy advertising in funeral service trade journals in the 1920s into the mid-1930s. But by 1936 Superior was also building on Pontiac chassis, and 1937 would be the last year for the Superior-bodied Studebakers. The *Bender Body Co.* of Cleveland, O. picked up where Superior left off producing Studebaker hearses and ambulances from 1938 into the early 1940s. The last Studebaker professional cars were the station wagon-based *Ambulets* South Bend offered in the mid-1950s. With roots extending back to 1852, Studebaker was no stranger to the hearse and ambulance business. One of America's largest carriage and wagon builders, Studebaker's standard product line included horse-drawn hearses and ambulances. The Superior/Studebaker partnership was a mutually beneficial one for more than a decade. Backed by Studebaker's 3,000-strong national dealer network, the company's professional car line included four vehicles: *Funeral Coach*, *Ambulance*, *Combination Ambulance & Pallbearers' Car* and a 12-passenger *Mourner's Sedan* – all powered by Studebaker's 75-horsepower *Big Six* engine. Three color choices were available: black and Buckingham gray; black and dustproof gray and Buckingham gray upper with dustproof gray lower. Disc wheels and spring type front bumper were standard. Landau irons for the leatherback rear quarters were optional.

The principal article, front cover, and centerstretch in this issue chronicle the restoration of one of these Superior-bodied Studebakers acquired by PCS member Jerry Kayser of Moses Lakes, Wash. In one of those inspiring stories, Jerry found this faded but remarkably complete and original old hearse in a closed lumber warehouse in North Dakota where it had slumbered for half a century. As showcased on our back cover, Jerry's fine professional car collection also includes a 1939 S&S Cadillac carved-panel hearse, a 1939 Henny-Packard Nu-3-Way hearse and a 1900 Sayers & Scovill horse-drawn hearse. We're extremely grateful to Jerry for sharing this story and great photos with us.