



CHICAGO AUTOMOBILE FUNERAL, 1914

NUMBER 91 FIRST QUARTER 1999

THE FIRST MOTORIZED FUNERAL

# THE PROFESSIONAL CAR

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR:

You are holding the *largest* issue of *The Professional Car* we've ever produced. This 40-pager features the longest, and perhaps most scholarly, story we've ever run in TPC. The final year of this century, 1999 marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the motor hearse in America. In January, 1909 a Chicago undertaker led a funeral procession made up entirely of automobiles -- including the hearse. America's first automobile funeral was the last request of a visionary Chicago taxicab operator who insisted on having an all-automobile funeral. Inasmuch as no U.S. manufacturer yet offered a motor hearse, the funeral director had to have one hastily cobbled up by a local livery service. Later that same year Cunningham introduced the first motor ambulance, and Crane & Breed announced the industry's first production auto hearses. So 1909 was a pivotal year in the history of the American professional car.

We're grateful to funeral car historian Thomas A. McPherson for this major editorial contribution and to his Specialty Vehicle Press for all of the historic photos used in this issue. We hope you will find Tom's story as interesting, and enlightening, as we did.

**COVER PHOTO** - Taken in 1914, this photo from the SVP collection shows a motorized funeral procession conducted by the House Of Lanyon Undertakers wending its way along the Chicago waterfront. Led by a White-chassised eight-column carved hearse (body builder unknown), the procession includes seven matching open-front limousines, also products of the White Motor Company.

**INSIDE BACK COVER** - Crane & Breed announced America's first commercially produced auto hearse on June 15, 1909. One month later to the day, on July 15, the Cincinnati, O. firm announced this second, improved motor hearse design.

**ERRATA** - Our apologies to Tarzana, California PCS member *Matthew Cole*, whose name was left off the list of Windy City Ninety-Eight participants in the 1998 International Meet Report in TPC #90. Matt brought his sparkling white 1966 S&S Cadillac Park Row Limousine to Chicago. Matt was the only California Chapter member who was able to bring a car to the Burr Ridge meet. Several other California Chapter members, of course, flew in for the meet.