



1932 SILVER-KNIGHTSTOWN CADILLAC V12 AMBULANCE

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THE BODY BUILDERS OF KNIGHTSTOWN

THE PROFESSIONAL CAR

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IN THIS ISSUE - The principal feature in this issue is a richly detailed and profusely illustrated history of Knightstown and Silver-Knightstown by Thomas A. McPherson.

Some Of the most interesting professional cars ever built in this country came out of the small town of Knightstown, Indiana where they were designed and constructed by *three totally separate* companies with intersecting histories. First came the Knightstown Body Company, successor to the Knightstown Buggy Co. which had built horse-drawn funeral vehicles in Knightstown since the early 1900s. Two years later, a short distance across town, the Knightstown Funeral Car Company set up shop. The existence of two competing firms with very similar names building hearses and ambulances in the same small Northern Indiana town created understandable confusion among their customers. Because the Knightstown Body Co. was controlled by members of the Silver family, this company advertised its products as *Silver-Knightstown* hearses and ambulances. The rival Knightstown Funeral Car Company marketed its professional car bodies under the noble name of *Knightstown Galahads*.

Both Silver-Knightstown and the Knightstown Funeral Car Co. went out of business during the Second World War. But there was yet *another* lineal successor. Established after the war, the National Body Mfg. Co. resumed hearse and ambulance production in the former Knightstown Funeral Car Co. plant. National perpetuated its predecessor companies' reputation for building distinctive hearses, ambulances and service cars on an impressive variety of chassis, virtually anything desired by the customer. National remained in business through the late 1960s when it was succeeded by National Custom Coaches, which switched from building passenger car-based funeral cars and ambulances to van and modular ambulances. National Custom Coaches carried the Knightstown connection into the mid-1970s.

Tom McPherson tells this fascinating, somewhat convoluted tale with remarkable clarity and in great detail. Tom's Knightstown feature is in the same highly readable style as his meticulously researched opus on the first automobile funeral in America which was published in TPC #91. We're pleased to announce that there's more to come. Tom will complete the Knightstown saga with an equally complete, illustrated history of National in our next issue. Watch for it. All of the photos used to illustrate these stories come from Tom's own SVP Publications collection.

Also in this issue: the "Owner's Pride" story of Donn Brechenser's 1974 Cotner-Bevington/Oldsmobile Hightop Ambulance, plus all of our other regular features.