

PCS CHAPTER PRO-FILES

(SECOND IN A SERIES)

NORTHEAST CHAPTER

A 30-YEAR HISTORY



PCS Northeast Chapter

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Current Officers/Volunteered Positions:

President: Daniel P. McCann III

Vice President: Fred Goerlitz

Treasurer/Membership: Jeff Hookway

Secretary: Mary M. Hookway

Activities Director/ *The Criterion* Editor: Bill Marcy

The Criterion Publisher: Roy & Annelise Garretson

SHORT STATS

Chartered: 8/19/86

Area of coverage: NY, NJ, PA

Current members: 30

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It is interesting to note that the Northeast Chapter has run three PCS International Meets and is currently partnering with the Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State, and Henney Chapters to host this year's PCS International Meet in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania being held August 15 through August 20, 2016. This will be the 40th Anniversary International Meet, and we have pulled out all the stops in order to make it a fantastic event for all attendees.

Also this coming August, the Northeast Chapter will celebrate its 30th anniversary. In the interest of time and space, it is not possible to relate every detail of the history of our vibrant Chapter, so I will attempt to highlight some events that in my opinion will best relay to you who we are and what we are made of. As I was not a member of the Chapter until my arrival at the Fall Meeting in 1993, I have utilized Chapter archived materials, especially the newsletters, to compile and provide an overview of the early history.



Northeast Chapter members at the Renault Winery in Egg Harbor City, N.J. for Sunday brunch in spring, 2013. L to R: Joe Buono, Rich Litton, Wayne Guy, Mary Hookway, Lucille Marcy, Bill Marcy, Jenn Morin, Dan McCann, Stefanie McCann, Mike Barruzza, Vicky Barruzza, Tracy Goerlitz, and Fred Goerlitz

In May of 1986, a small group of PCS members decided to petition for a Charter from the PCS to start a new Chap-

ter. This new Chapter would serve PCS members in the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania area. So a petition, signed on May 12, 1986 by PCS members Mahlon Thompson, Paul Vickery, Phil Jast, Roseanne Stewart, and Craig Stewart, was approved by the Board, and the Charter was issued on August 19, 1986. The Charter was signed by then PCS President, the late Robert F. Parsons. From that point, the Northeast Chapter began its own path of growth, and grow it did!

In 1987, the Northeast Chapter dove in headfirst to run a PCS Meet, in true Northeast Chapter fashion! The Meet was held in Lambertville, New Jersey; in addition to the usual assortment of local tours and activities, the week culminated with professional cars being exhibited at a mainstream car show in New Hope, Pennsylvania. There is something you should understand: back in those days, it was very unusual for professional cars to be seen at a mainstream car show. Today, we take it for granted that we can show our professional cars at almost any show venue, but there are two major reasons that that is possible: 1) the tireless efforts of some dedicated members of the PCS; and 2) strict adherence to PCS's Rules of Display of professional cars. It has been a hard-won outcome.

When I arrived at my first Chapter event, the 1993 Fall Meeting, I was immediately impressed by the friendly and welcoming way I was treated by people I had never met before. There were a few professional cars parked in the parking lot which I enthusiastically perused, followed by the meeting, professional-car talk, and lots of picture-sharing of professional cars. I met the late Leo Maren III, Mary and Jeff Hookway, Bill Wright, Daniel McCann, Mike Barruzza, Paul Vickery, and Jan and Peter Grave, and I rode to the meeting site with Craig Stewart in his gorgeous 1976 Miller-Meteor Lifeliner ambulance. This was a great day for me!

The Northeast Chapter has always held at least one meeting per year, in the fall, and more when needed, sometimes as often as once a month. Obviously, meetings are important, but there are many other aspects to running any successful club or organization. A good newsletter is important and a key to communication among the members. Our Chapter newsletter, *The Criterion*, comes out four times per year. Craig Stewart was the original editor and Mike Barruzza was the publisher, then Gregg D Merksamer took over as editor for many years, with Ted Collins as publisher. Then in 2013, disaster struck: yours truly took over as editor of *The Criterion*. Subsequently, in the third quarter of 2015, Ted Collins retired from the publisher's duties, and Roy Garretson and his daughter-in-law Annelise Garretson became our current publishers.

Club activities are a huge part of any successful club, and we have done many fun and interesting activities as a group. I cannot detail for you all of our events and activities; actually, I can only scratch the surface. The following activities are highlighted to give you an idea of what a Chapter can do.

WILNER'S LIVERY SERVICE TOUR. On July 20, 1997, about 30 Northeast Chapter members descended on Wilner's Livery Service in Edison, New Jersey. It was a warm and sunny day and a number of us arrived in our own professional cars. Our host, David Wilner, a PCS member, graciously gave us the grand tour of his facility. In addition to his 110-car fleet of hearses, flower cars, and limousines, Dave had an 1850s horse-drawn hearse and a 1976 S&S Centennial Edition hearse for our viewing pleasure. Dave also ran a body shop at his facility, where he did flower-car conversions, usually of Cadillacs. After he told stories of his years in the livery business and answered numerous questions, we headed to a local eatery for lunch.



Bill Marcy Photo

Northeast Chapter members pose for a photo at the Fall Meeting at Manasquan Hose Company #1, Manasquan, N.J. Front and center: Gregg D. Merksamer; rear row, L to R: Lucille Marcy, Jeffrey Hookway, Mary Hookway, Fred Goerlitz, Daniel McCann, and Jen Morin

LEHRER-GIBILISCO FUNERAL HOME GRAND RE-OPENING. As a result of the friendship we had formed with David Wilner, we were made aware that a customer of his with a funeral home wanted to hold a grand re-opening for his newly renovated 100-year-old Victorian-style funeral home in Rahway, New Jersey. So the call went out to our Northeast Chapter members to bring their professional cars for a display. It turned out to be quite an event; it was not just a display and an open house at a funeral home, it was a block party, and it seemed like the whole town came out! There were tours of the funeral home, live music, food galore—and people had a ball! The Northeast Chapter displayed 10 professional cars. Wow!

ATWOOD-PETERSON-GUTHLEIN FUNERAL HOME GRAND REOPENING. Once again, as a result of our relationship with David Wilner, we were invited to another grand re-opening of a funeral home, this time in Egg Harbor, New Jersey. Our host, Bill O'Brien, had us display our professional cars out in front of his funeral home, fed us, and gave us the grand tour. Due to the distant location, we could muster just a handful of professional cars and a much smaller group of spectators.

RENAULT WINERY BRUNCH AND TOUR. The Northeast Chapter has been to the lovely Renault Winery in Egg Harbor City, New Jersey. In addition to delicious food and warm ambiance, they offer a tour of their historic winery. The Northeast Chapter has traveled to the Renault Winery a number of times, beginning in 1999, the year we brought so many members that they offered us our own private room. The last two times we were there, we had a real live wire of a tour guide named Suzie. When Suzie gives a tour, she provides all the dirt on the winery and lets you taste their wines and chocolates.

PCS INTERNATIONAL MEET 1999. In early 1996, the Northeast Chapter decided to host an International Meet for a second time in scenic Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1999. Once the host hotel was decided, we then got to work on planning an enjoyable event for everyone, holding monthly meeting for about a year. Time literally flew by. Leo Maren III was the Meet Chair, or Meet Head, as he liked to call himself. We had a fabulous time running the Meet, and in the end, the members of the Northeast Chapter remained friends.

NORTHEAST CHAPTER CHARITY CAR AND TRUCK SHOW AT PEDDLERS VILLAGE, LAHASKA, PENNSYLVANIA.

At our Northeast Chapter Fall Meeting, I suggested we run a car show at Peddlers Village in Lahaska, Pennsylvania, and I volunteered to head it up. Members were in agreement. We hosted the first car show there, and a dozen others followed. We had several objectives for this show. First of all, it was to showcase our professional cars to the general public. Second, it



Northeast Chapter professional cars at Lahaska, 2013

was to promote the car hobby as a whole, it was to allow people from different car clubs to meet, mingle, and enjoy each other's cars. Third and most importantly, we were raising funds to benefit a needy local charity. In my opinion, the show succeeded on all goals. The first year, we registered 79 cars and trucks, and we raised and donated in excess of \$1100 to our first charity. In addition, we had a fabulous selection of professional cars to show to spectators and fellow show attendees. One year we had 86 cars on the field. We have probably donated about \$5,000 to \$6,000 to local charities over the years. It was a fabulous venue and we had lots of fun hosting it. Beside myself, who served as Show Chairman for most years, members Jen Morin and Daniel McCann ran the show on several occasions. Of course, we were always supported by other Chapter members such as Mary and Jeff Hookway, the late Harvey Schoefield, Fred Goerlitz, and others. As time passed, participation in the show seemed to stop growing and began to shrink. We have not run the show for the past couple of years, although we hope to start a similar show in another venue, perhaps as early as 2017; time will tell.

Gregg Merksamer photo

SHOWS, MUSTERS, SPECIAL EVENTS. The Northeast Chapter has always been an active group. For years, it was not unusual for our Chapter to have as many professional cars at an International Meet as the Host Chapter, sometimes more! The Northeast Chapter has sponsored a number of awards at these Meets, too. We have been a familiar presence at many shows over the years. Sometimes we caravanned to a show one hundred miles away. We have displayed Northeast Chapter professional cars at every type of event you can think of; e.g., fire musters, parades, EMS displays, National Night Out celebrations, cruise nights, local car shows, etc.

In 2015, we were invited to hold a professional-car display at a well-known East Coast car show, Lead East. This show runs for five days, hosts about 1800 show cars 1973 and older, and features music of the Fifties and Sixties, live bands, dance contests, car-related seminars, and even a prom. This event is special, and it was an honor to be part of it. We had four professional cars there which I felt were fairly well received. We handed out issues of *The Professional Car*, *The Criterion*, and membership applications and literature. Should we be invited again, we plan to have even more professional cars on display.



Photo taken by Joe, employee of Roy Garretson

Chapter members behind Northeast Chapter banner at Lead East Car Show, Parsippany, N.J., September 2015. L to R: Paul Vickery, Roy Garretson, Lucille Marcy, Dawson Blackmore, and Bill Marcy



Bill Marcy Photo

The kids seem to love the Marcy's 1968 Superior Pontiac ambulance at Shook Funeral Home Show, September 2015

Shook Funeral Home in Clifton, New Jersey hosted the third

annual car show in conjunction with the Clifton Street Fair. This show also provides a fabulous opportunity to display professional cars at a mainstream event. With literally thousands of spectators, the crowds never stop looking at our professional cars. The hosts, Nancy and Roy Garretson, who are Northeast Chapter members, donate all of the money to charity.

DINNERS, PICNICS, AND SPECIAL MEETING PLACES. The Chapter has been invited at least three times to the home of Donna and Paul Vickery, long-time Chapter members, for a picnic on their estate. Their yard is so big that we have had as many as 8 or 10 professional cars parked in their back

yard with lots of space left over. Northeast Chapter has met at Shook Funeral Home and Nicos Elias' Funeral Home: Nicos is a Chapter member. We have been to Kanter Auto Parts in Boonton, New Jersey, and got to see up close and personal PCS member Fred Kanter's personal collection of classic cars. We have also met in squad buildings, fire houses, and even in churches.

THOMAS GAMBARDELLA COLLECTION. About a dozen years back, we were invited to then Northeast Chapter member Tom Gambardella's garage in Yonkers, New York, a long drive for most of us. He was an elderly gent who had asked us repeatedly to come see his collection. Tom owned a livery service for about fifty years, and his collection was based on those cars. His garage from the outside appeared quite ordinary, but when the door opened to let us in, there stood one of the warmest people I have ever met. Tom's collection was very impressive; he had one beautiful vintage professional car after another. All the cars were immaculate, with the exception of a work-in-progress carved-panel hearse. After the tour, Tom and his family took all of us to an Italian restaurant for a delicious dinner. It was quite a day and Tom was quite a guy!

PCS INTERNATIONAL MEET 2008. In 2008, the Chapter took it on again. Headed by Meet Chair Daniel McCann and the Meet Committee, the Meet was held in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey. With the Meet site being in close proximity to Philadelphia, New York City, and Atlantic City, there were tours galore. In addition, North-

east Chapter member Rich Litton went to great lengths to encourage a number of New Jersey ambulance squads to bring their vintage professional-car ambulances to the Meet—and a fabulous showing they made!

As you might have already guessed, the Northeast Chapter is a fabulous organization, and we are proud to be a part of it. Whether we are hosting an International Meet, running a car show, having a Chapter picnic or a brunch, or just participating in an event, we do it with a sense of purpose and pride. We enjoy each other, our professional cars, and whatever we may be doing at the time. I know that for me, and assume for many of us, it is a source of great pride to be a part of such a special organization, an organization that has done a wonderful job of bringing our professional cars into the mainstream of the old-car hobby. The work of having professional cars recognized at any car show is ongoing, and we members of the Northeast Chapter are prepared to do our part to help carry on the wonderful traditions of the Professional Car Society.



Gregg Merksamer photo

2008 International Meet, Mt. Laurel, N.J.

The Northeast Chapter boasts many members who have worked tirelessly for our Chapter and for the entire Professional Car Society. If I started to name names, I know that someone would be left out, so I will refrain from even trying. We have/had members on the PCS Board, in officer positions, members who have run International Meets, local shows and displays, written articles, taken countless photographs, and handled Club publicity: our members have done it all! Some members have been Northeast Chapter officers for years on end. Members contribute countless hours to making *The Criterion* what it is. Under Gregg D. Merksamer and publisher Ted Collins, *The Criterion* has won countless awards. Yes, I am very proud of the accomplishments of the Northeast Chapter.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER. While we are currently experiencing a decrease in growth and participation in activities like so many organizations have in recent years, our expectations are to continue being a great Chapter. The Northeast Chapter will celebrate thirty years as a PCS Chapter this year; co-host the PCS International Meet in Gettysburg, along with the Henney, Mid-Atlantic, and Tri-State Chapters; no doubt have a celebration brunch or dinner; welcome new members; and attend parades, cruise nights, and car shows. Holding a picnic at the Vickery Estate has been discussed as a possibility, and we will plan our new charity car show for 2017.

Our best years are in front of us! And into the future we will go, full of enthusiasm for our professional cars and the history they represent, continuing our traditions of being caring people who take the time to create opportunities for people to appreciate our rare cars. Any of this sound good to you? If it does, we cordially invite you to become a member of the Northeast Chapter.



Bill Marcy Photo

The Northeast Chapter displays Keith Adams's 1957 Chevy service car, Roy Garretson's 1942 Cadillac Fleetwood 7533 limousine, Paul Vickery's 1956 Miller Cadillac ambulance, and the Marcys' 1968 Superior Pontiac Rescuer ambulance at Lead East Car Show