

# Pontiac Trail Book Wins Award

Friends of Pontiac

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# NEWS FLASH

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PONTIAC - OAKLAND MUSEUM

MARCH 12, 2014



May 17, 2014 Designated  
"Fiero Day" at the Museum

2014 Museum Movie  
Nights Announced



## Director's Notes

As usual, when I sit down to create one of these newsletters there is so much going on, I don't know where to start. Although the number of visitors slow down dramatically this time of year, our work does not. If anything it increases as we take on larger projects we wouldn't attempt during the tourism season.

This winter we are going to work on organizing behind the scene spaces. We are still unpacking from our move here. Months go by and we just don't even have time to think about it. I would really like to get this phase done. I often think of items I would like to use for display, or for a story I am working on and I just can't find them.

Also this winter we are focusing on the museums internet presence. We are now working with a new person to rework our website. We want to add things, update other

things, change the look of it, just make it a more interesting place to go for Pontiac enthusiasts and those wanting to learn more about the museum. We also are going to work on creating some museum videos for YouTube, one of our museum board members has agreed to help us with that. And Mike Williams, a Pontiac enthusiast here in Illinois has agreed to take over the Flickr page I started. We just listed our first item on Amazon, it is the Pontiac Trail book...and we have already sold a few.

Rob Collova has agreed to help out by creating a museum store on Ebay. We hope this will help sell some of our unique gift shop items and increase our income. We are going to continue on Facebook which just continues to grow.

All of this will help create interest in the museum and our events and ultimately bring more visitors.

## Pontiac Trail Book Earns Award

We are proud to announce that the book *The Pontiac Trail - Route 66 and the Chicago to St. Louis Roads* has won an award from the Illinois State Historical Society.

The book was written by Larry McClellan with contributions from Dave Sullivan and Tim Dye. It was published by the Pontiac Vintage Press here in Pontiac, Illinois.

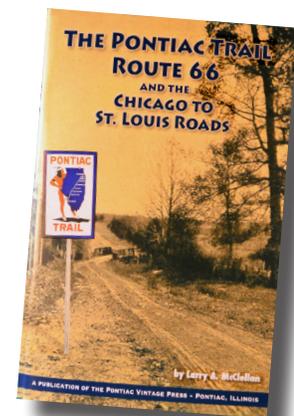
Much of the graphics and photos for the book came from material housed in our library here at the museum. In addition to having the largest Pontiac-Oakland library in the world we also have a serious Roadside America library consisting of maps, atlases, books and other material.

The award will be accepted by Mr. McClellan at a ceremony to

be held in Springfield, Illinois on April 26.

Mr. McClellan is scheduled to speak at several locations around the state on this subject. Watch for a date when he will be scheduled to speak here at the museum.

The books are now available on Amazon and the museum gift shop.



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### ABOUT THE COVER

THE FIRST THING TO ARRIVE AT THE MUSEUM FOR THE FIERO DISPLAY WE PUT TOGETHER LAST YEAR WAS THIS 1984 FIERO PACE CAR OWNED BY DON FUNK.

MANY OF THE CARS THAT ARE LOANED COME FROM COLLECTORS I HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS, THAT WAS NOT THE CASE WITH THIS CAR. DON WAS A VISITOR AT THE MUSEUM ONE DAY AND WE STRUCK UP A CONVERSATION. THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT HE OWNED A FIERO PACE CAR WITH LOW MILES THAT HE HAD PURCHASED NEW. IT JUST SO HAPPENED I WAS IN THE PLANNING STAGES OF A FIERO DISPLAY AND HE WAS HAPPY TO LOAN US HIS CAR FOR IT.

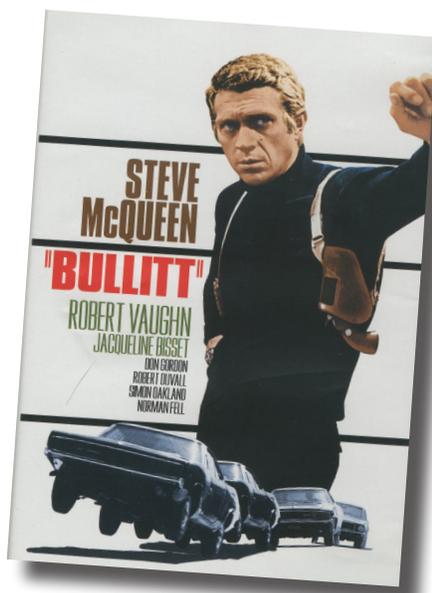
WHEN THE CAR FIRST ARRIVED I OF COURSE WANTED TO TAKE SOME PICTURES OF IT FOR PROMOTIONAL USE. SINCE IT WAS A NEWER CAR I DID NOT THINK THE RESULTS WOULD BE AS GOOD USING THE SAME FORMULA THAT I HAVE IN THE PAST WITH THE OLDER CARS, MATCHING THEM UP WITH A HOUSE OF SIMILAR AGE.

I THOUGHT OF THE MURALS WE HAVE HERE AS A BACKDROP, ONE THAT I LIKE IS HARD TO GET CLOSE TO BECAUSE IT FACES THE RIVER. I DROVE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER AND FOUND A CHURCH PARKING LOT. THE MURAL WAS A LITTLE FAR AWAY, BUT WITH THE COURTHOUSE IN THE BACKGROUND IT WAS STILL A NICE VIEW.

I WAS HAPPY ENOUGH WITH THE RESULTS THAT I USED THIS LOCATION AGAIN TO SHOOT OUR RICHARD PETTY GRAND PRIX FOR A SMOKE SIGNALS STORY.

## Movie at the Museum

A movie night at the museum is one of our new programs for 2014. Each month the museum features a different movie where the cars are the stars. Our first movie was Tucker, and this month we are showing the Steve McQueen classic, Bullitt. Movie night is the second Thursday of each month at 7pm. There is no admission cost and we offer free popcorn. The movies may vary in their genre from dramas, comedies, documentaries to down right silly, but you can always count on one thing, there will be a car prominently featured in each one.



## Upcoming Events

Below are some upcoming events in Pontiac, Illinois of interest to the Pontiac enthusiast.

- May 3-4 - Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor Festival
- May 17 - Fiero Day at the Museum - and Cruise Night
- May 18 - Midwest First Generation Firebird Club Visits Museum
- May 31 - Pre-War Festival and Heritage Days
- June 21 - Cruise Night in Pontiac
- July 19 - Cruise Night in Pontiac
- August 16 - Cruise Night in Pontiac
- September 20 - 21 - All Pontiac Cruise & Show

## The Fiero Display - Fiero Day at the Museum

The Fiero seems to be one of those cars that people either love or hate. The engineering of the car with its space-frame chassis and how it was constructed with Enduraflex panels was very unique, even revolutionary at the time.

It was introduced in 1984 as a two-seat commuter car. It came equipped with a 2.5 liter 4 cylinder engine. This combination was part of the initial problem. American buyers associated a two seater car as a sports car, and sports cars traditionally had a certain amount of speed and performance. The Fiero had the sporty car looks, but with that four cylinder engine it did not have the get up and go.

Pontiac had developed a four cylinder Super Duty engine that delivered the performance, but it was only available for racing applications, not to the general public.

A rash of engine fires gave the Fiero a bad reputation from which it would never recover, even though the cause had been corrected. The last year for the Fiero was 1988 and everyone who owned a 1988 Fiero GT equipped with



**Pontiac had this to say about the Fiero "The 1984 Fiero is a proud new American car unlike anything else in the world. In basic concept, engineering execution, materials, and assembly technology, the Fiero represents, in many ways, what lies in store for future automotive designs".**

the six cylinder engine will tell you it was a very nice car, but it was too late to save the car. The Fiero was the last Pontiac assembled in Pontiac, Michigan.

Because of the uniqueness of the space-frame chassis, and the fact that the body panels were non-structural, soon after the car was introduced several companies popped up that produced custom body panels. With a minimum

of effort and expense you could customize your Fiero, even make it look like a Ferrari simply by changing the panels. This alone created a lot of fans who still today love their Fieros.

And not all Fiero enthusiasts live in the United States. Last year we had three German Fiero fans (see inset photo on cover) visit the museum. They told me that they considered the Fiero

**continued**

the best engineered American car ever made. Germans are known for their engineering, so I found this very interesting. Especially since most American auto enthusiasts don't hold the car in very high regard.

Here at the museum we wanted to feature the Fiero so we built a special display. One of the most prized Fieros for collectors is the 1984 Pace Car version. On May 27, 1984 Fieros were used as the official pace car at the Indy 500. Pontiac produced 2,000 pace car replicas to commemorate the occasion and we are happy to have one in our display on loan from Don Funk.

The other Fiero in the display is a 1988, the last year produced. This one at some point was turned into a serious road course race car and piloted by its owner Gene Hoesman to three regional championships. We are proud to be able to share this unique Fiero with our visitors.

An additional feature of the display was stumbled on quite by accident. While scanning ebay for Fiero pieces to round out our Fiero display case I found



**Lifting the Fiero chassis with help of city workers and unsuspecting museum visitors.**

an unused Fiero chassis and set of body panels. After visiting with the owner I found out that this was an engineering chassis pulled off of the production line before receiving a V.I.N. and sent to Owens-Corning for research. Suppos-

edly it was to be destroyed but ended up at a wrecking yard in Granville, Ohio, the very same yard years before I had purchased a Can Am prototype car. How these pieces both ended up in the same yard is unexplainable.

With the help of some family members the chassis and body pieces made it to Pontiac where we started scheming how to display it. With space being at a premium it was decided to hang it on the wall. For various reasons and concerns we decided to build a rack that sat on the floor making it look like it was hanging on the wall, versus actually hanging it on the wall. With the help of Dave Bruer, who runs a local farming operation, he built and donated the rack I designed for the Fiero chassis.

After repainting the walls in the display area Jim Adams helped me hang the Fiero body pieces on one wall and helped fit the rack to the chassis so it could take its place on the other wall.

With the help of some city workers we managed to get the chassis from Jim's hangar where we were working on it, to the museum. Then, almost as though we had pre-arranged it three or four Pontiac guys walk in to visit the museum. They got put to work immediately helping us get the chassis through the museum and lifting it into place.

The next thing to do was bring the race car to the museum from where we had it stored. I had moved the car

once and I have to tell you it was not made to fit me. However, one of the Pontiac guys was a pretty thin fellow and I knew he would fit fine so I asked if he would help me with something.



**Gene Hoesman delivering his 1988 Fiero race car to the museum.**

Not knowing what I had in mind he agreed and we went down the street to get the car. He followed me back to the museum in the Fiero race car and drove it into the museum. I asked how it went, and he commented that there was just one problem...the distance between the storage and the museum was not near far enough, he wanted to drive it some more.

Parked right beside the Fiero Pace Car is a smaller version of the car offered through Pontiac dealers, it's a Fiero Pace Car go-cart! It was purchased new by Gary Vass and now resides in the collection of Alan Finkenbinder.

The display is nearly complete with the exception of a couple of signs I need made, but the museum has run out of funds for the display, we have gotten nobody to sponsor it. I hope to have them done before Fiero day on May 17th. We have a large contingent of Fieros visiting that day so we have designated it "Fiero Day" and want to invite anyone with a Fiero to bring it that day, or if you don't have one, just come and visit with the owners and see the cars.

The display has been well received, and although everyone may not love the Fiero, the display brings back lots of memories for visitors.