



The GP in Canada

by Tim Dye



Pontiacs had always been built in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada since their inception in 1926. Because of an import duty the Canadian government had placed on all American built cars (which was quite substantial) brought into Canada, and a more price-conscious consumer, GM found it favorable to place parts from the Chevrolet parts bin on their Canadian built Pontiacs.

They included major components such as the drivetrain and frame. Interior and exterior trim made up of various



U.S. built Pontiacs were mixed in as well, then throw in the Canadian nomenclature that included such cars as the Strato-Chief, Laurentian, Parisienne, Beaumont and Acadian and this made for some interesting cars.

The import duty was lifted in 1965 but unique models with strange drivetrain combinations and unheard of names in the U.S. continued through 1970. By the following year cars on both sides of the border were pretty much identical. But during that time after the import duty was lifted and the unique Canadian cars ended there was a new model introduced and it would very much resemble its cousin to the south, the Grand Prix. Starting in 1966 and running through the 1968 model year Canadian buyers were offered a Grande Parisienne. At a quick

1966 Grande
Parisienne
Sport Coupe



glance it looked every bit like a Grand Prix but it included a lot of those Canadian trim and drivetrain twist that I referred to earlier.

The 1966 Grande Parisienne was the top of the line, the most noticeable differences were the name badges and the upholstery. Upon closer inspection inside you might notice the Chevrolet like console, shifter, steering wheel and column. Oh, and depending on what model you are looking at you might notice the two extra door handles not available on the American Grand Prix until years later. The biggest differences are found under the hood. The standard engine was the Strato-Flash 283 most being hooked to the 2-speed powerglide transmission. You might be thinking that this was an underpowered combination that would hardly pull the full sized car around. I can tell you from experience that it does pretty well. It's no race car mind you, but it goes down the road pretty well and at nearly twenty miles to the gallon, mileage the 389 can only dream about. Also available was the Astro-Flame 327 and the (forget about the mileage) top motor was the Jet-Flame 427. Optional transmissions were the 3-speed Hydra-Matic, 3-speed standard and 4-speed standard. I'll let you figure out the possible combinations there.

Interestingly the verbiage in the brochures refers to all of these powerplants as Pontiac engines. In case you are wondering they were painted orange, one major difference is that the valve covers don't say Chevrolet on them.

For 1967 the Grande Parisienne once again mimicked its American counterpart the Grand Prix in styling with the new hideaway headlights and fender skirts. Once again a 2-door sport coupe and 4-door hardtop was offered. New to the line-up was a Grande Parisienne woodgrain paneled station wagon. This is a sharp looking wagon which looks like an American big car wagon with a Grand Prix front clip. An Astro-Jet 396 was added to the engine line-up but the Jet-Flame 427 was still the top dog. I don't know about you, but my imagination runs wild with the possible combinations here. How about a black wagon with woodgrain, a 427 and a 4-speed. Speaking of colors, American buyers were offered Starlight black and Cameo



1967 Grande Parisienne Sport Coupe in Bolero Red.



ivory, Canadian Pontiacs came in Tuxedo black and Provential white, these may have been Chevrolet names for the colors. Another thing to note is that no convertible was offered in Canada in 1967, the only year in the U.S. it was available on a Grand Prix.



1968 brought some big changes to the Grande Parisienne.

It was the year the Wide-Track made it to Canada. The X-frame was gone and a new frame the brochure called a "perimeter frame" was used. I can't tell from my research material if this was a Chevrolet or Pontiac frame. Prior to this one of the first things from a distance that told you this was a Canadian car was the narrow stance. The wheels seemed to be sucked in, this does make it easy to put some very wide tires on with room to spare. Another big change was in the styling, while the Grande Parisienne still had that Grand Prix front clip with the hide-away headlights it no longer shared the Grand Prix styling at the rear. It now looked like a Catalina in the back. The lineup remained the same with a 2-door



1968 Grande Parisienne Safari in Tuxedo Black.

sport coupe, 4-door sport sedan and my favorite the Grande Parisienne Safari with exterior wood grain paneling. The engine lineup remained the same for 1968.



1968 Grande Parisienne four-door Sport Sedan in Tripoli Turquoise Metallic.

Another interesting note is that all three of the brochures including the Grande Parisienne are fully illustrated, however the illustrations were not done by Van Kaufman and Art Fitzpatrick like their American counterparts. I always like learning new things about my favorite car, Pontiac. This has been informative for me to take a look at the Grande Parisienne. I hope you enjoyed this brief overview of the car from Canada, where GP stands for Grande Parisienne.