



All new front end features massive grille and repositioned parking lights. Silver streaks are wider apart, headlight rims are painted. Chief Pontiac is gone

OLD CHIEF PONTIAC has disappeared completely from the hood ornament of all Pontiac cars this year, and a lot more attention has been given to the Chief's horses than his likeness. While Pontiac enthusiasts are still bound to favor distinctive Strato-Streak styling, many performance-minded new-car buyers are likely to take a closer look at Pontiac this year. In '54 180 horsepower was standard in the Star Chief, but this year the Hydra-Matic-equipped Star Chief will sport 227 horses and even the less expensive 860 and 870 models will have 5 more horsepower than last year's powerpack maximum of 200.

There is a definite feel of more power, as evidenced in the '55 Pontiac with 227-horsepower '56 engine and transmission that we drove at the factory in Pontiac, Mich. The added acceleration is felt mostly in the upper speed ranges, or highway speeds.

The source of this new-found power is in the strengthened block, which has a larger bore of $3\frac{1}{16}$ inches (it was $3\frac{1}{4}$ last year) resulting in a displacement increase from 287 to 316.6 cubic inches. Compression ratio has jumped from 8.0 to 8.9 (in synchromesh cars dished pistons will lower the ratio to 7.9, if desired, for operation with regular fuel). The V8 will draw its all-important breaths from a new 4-barrel carburetor with enlarged throats and thru an intake manifold with increased channel

area. A new camshaft (on H-M-equipped cars) will provide increased lift and longer opening for the new aluminum-treated, heat-resistant valves.

The new Hydra-Matic (called Strato-Flight) is certainly the big added attraction in the Star Chief (may be available later on cheaper models). The result of the changes in the transmission is felt immediately. Normal upshifts are barely felt from 2nd to 3rd, and then only when you're really watching for them; from 3rd to 4th there's absolutely no feel. During normal stopping or slowing down, you can't feel the downshift. In all, the feeling is as if you were driving a car with a torque converter. Full-throttle upshifts can be felt, but seem more positive and quicker than with the old H-M transmission; from 3rd to 4th at an indicated 72 mph I barely felt the shift. Downshifts give you a power surge (which they should) but there is no mechanical clunk even at full throttle.

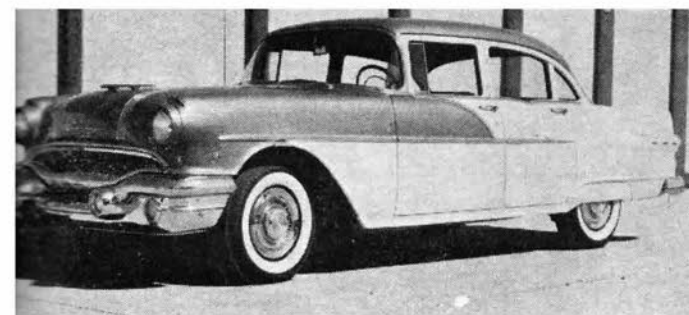
The Strato-Flight H-M is an all-new unit (see page 26 for details) which utilizes a fluid coupling for most gear changes.

There is now a new P position on the quadrant (still up on the column) which has an advantage over some other PARK pawls. Parked on a hill you can leave the transmission in P and still start the car, making it useful as an emergency

Restyled rear end takes on a new look with enlarged 4-pointed stars, chrome-hooded tail lights, dual exhausts with bumper extensions



For the 1st time Pontiac offers Catalina hardtop in inexpensive 860 series



This 870 4-door sedan gives excellent overall view of the Pontiac facelift

brake. You cannot move ahead until you've taken the lever out of P position.

An improved version of the '55 Hydra-Matic will be offered on 860 and 870 models. A new and more rugged synchromesh transmission will be standard on all Pontiacs.

Handling qualities of the Pontiac (rated among the top for '55) are even better this year. Adhesion in corners is quite

good and steering response is equally pleasing to the critical.

Chassis changes are few but well directed. Chief among these are an improved steering knuckle and support assembly.

The ride is still "solid and well-behaved" (as we described it last year), altho possibly a trifle softer.

The slightly softer ride is derived from new valving in the shocks and full-length rear spring liners.

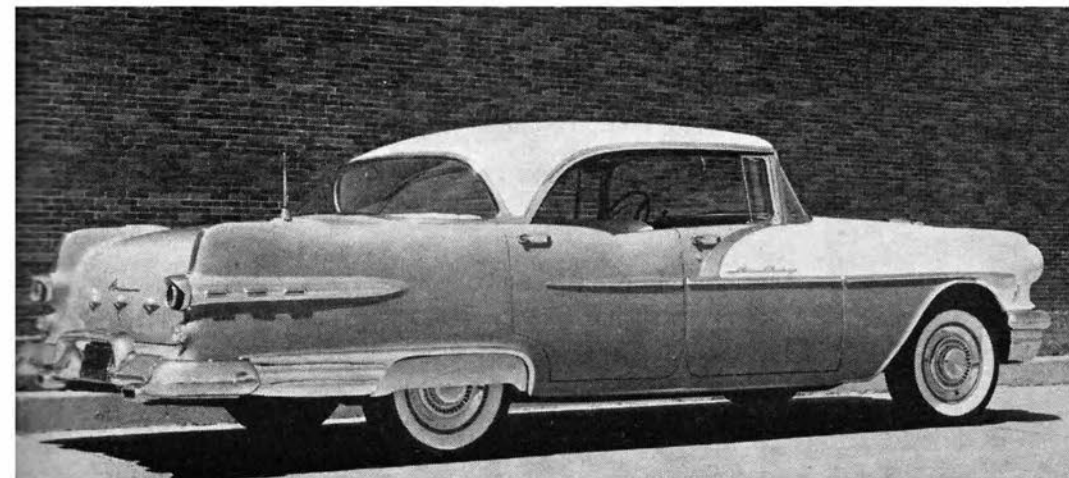
A refined power steering unit is less bulky (but with larger pump capacity) and while it retains road feel, the necessary wheel pull is reduced from 9 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds pressure. Universal joints have been enlarged to take the increased torque. On the Star Chief and 870 models, insulation (including Pontiac's 1st underhood insulation) has been improved for quieter operation.

For the 1st time dual exhausts are offered as an option. These have elongated extensions that recess neatly into the rear bumper. The standard system has larger pipe diameters and newly designed mufflers for minimum back pressure. The Pontiac also has a new starter motor with the smaller clutch and solenoid enclosed in a watertight housing to aid in easy starts and protect the mechanism from moisture and road dirt.

In the all-important styling department Pontiac has gone along with a more-or-less typical facelift—while vaguely new in appearance the 2-inch longer '56 models are unmistakably Pontiac. The familiar silver streaks are slightly wider apart and recessed almost flush with the hood to assume their best appearance to date. The new grille is more massive in appearance. The basic body shell remains the same with such trim innovations as chromed spears on a convex molding pointing forward along the rear fenders from the tail lights—these have Scotchlite tape in 3 small indentations to serve as side reflectors.

The 4-pointed stars of '55 have grown in size and moved from the fender to the rear deck. New rear-end treatment is highlighted with slim chrome hoods over the tail lights. Side trim is basically the same on all models and flows in an almost exact reverse of '55's sweep.

Pontiac will have models galore (15 in all) with 4-door hardtops added to the increasingly (Continued on page 57)



The 4-door Catalina is new and will be offered thruout the Pontiac line. Top-priced Star Chief shown here has optional rear fender skirts and dual exhausts



PONTIAC

'56 Pontiac

popular Catalina 2-door hardtops thruout the line. The luxury Safari will continue to head Pontiac's station wagon group and a new 9-passenger wagon will be offered. The 3-seat wagons feature a split middle seat to allow 1-, 2-, or 3-passenger seating in conjunction with varied bed space.

Pontiac is going right along with the color trend by offering a whole variety of bizarre finishes (Tarragon green, Granada gold, etc.) and some 79 interior trim options. Upholstery will be leather (on custom models), Morrokide (washable leather-like material), nylon or orlon in many new weaves.

Altho interior dimensions remain the same as in '55, the front seat has been repositioned and tilted back for a slight increase in head and legroom. The dashboard retains its desirable '55 shape (with instruments that look up at you) and has a few chrome and color variations. Dash padding is available on all but air-conditioned models (the vents are in the way). Lighter and ashtray have swapped sides, with the former now on the driver's side of the center-positioned glove box.

Optionally speaking Pontiac has gone all-out. All power assists will be available, including a new 6-way power seat (Pontiac's novel "360-degree" hand-operated seat will again be available). Other accessories are improved front-mounted air conditioning (it has quicker cooling thru use of recirculated air), signal-seeking radio, standard (for the 1st time) directional signals, electric windshield wipers (vacuum standard), and trumpet-type horn for use with standard horns for a louder blast. Novel, too, is the option of dual rear-seat radio speakers which, when used in conjunction with the front speaker, give a hi-fi, salon-like effect. A new windshield washer is operated from a tiny pendular foot pedal which is pumped to control duration and intensity of stream; automatic type will also be available. An internally adjusted side mirror is a convenient '55 carryover.

Safety-wise, in addition to the padded dash option, Pontiac will have safety door-latches (introduced late in '55) and will very likely offer optional seat belts.

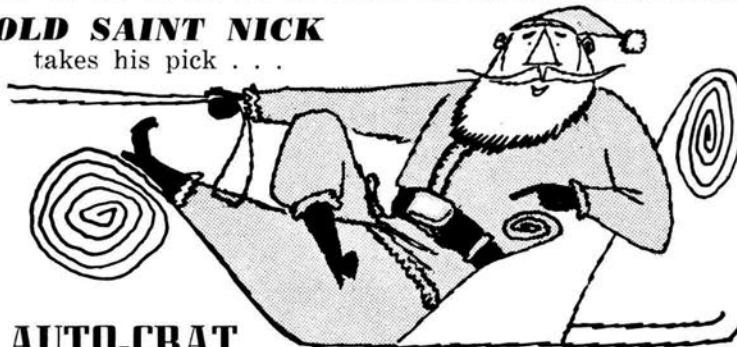
—Al Kidd and Walt Woron

Do you want to buy a '56 car?

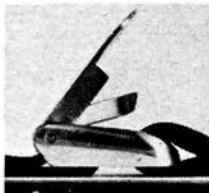
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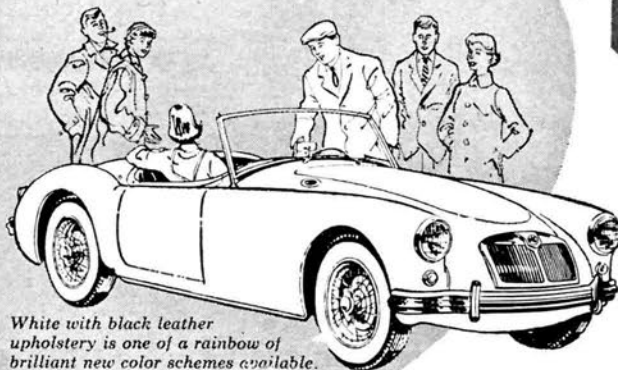
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