

1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon factory racer

The only thing cooler than a factory race car is a factory race wagon, like this 1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon.

Why? Because race wagon.

Long ago, before the days of modern NASCAR and NHRA, there was a time when automakers, especially American automakers, cared much more about auto racing than they do today. "Win on Sunday, sell on Monday," was more than a tired cliché. It was the way of life back then. Your race cars looked just like your street cars. At one point, NASCAR even allowed convertibles, and certain drag racing classes allowed plenty of cars that didn't have their whole bodies lift off just for you to get in.



Such is the case with this example. This 1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon - yes, WAGON - was a factory special, designed for racing. It is also, most likely, the only one of its kind still in existence.



It resides in Stuart, Florida, at a hidden gem of a location called [Factory Lightweights](#). It belongs to Nick Smith, son of Bev Smith. Bev Smith opened a very successful Ford dealership here, and his son Nick was heavily into drag racing. Then Bev passed the business onto Nick, and the passion for racing took a back seat to the car biz.

He picked up a [Ford Fairlane Thunderbolt](#), which is probably the most well-known factory racing special, but there were more. Many more. Factory Lightweights is Nick Smith's museum dedicated to the rich history of OEM racing ventures from the early days.

That's where this 1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon comes in. It's the perfect sleeper. Just looking at it, you'd think it were just a wagon with a silly hood scoop - and that's what they want you to think.



According to what Factory Lightweights says, only six of these were produced. They were built for the A/FX class - or "Altered Wheelbase Experimental" class. This 1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon is certainly an experiment.

It's got a 405 horsepower 421 cubic inch Super Duty V8 with dual four barrel carburetors and a 4-speed Power Shift transaxle.

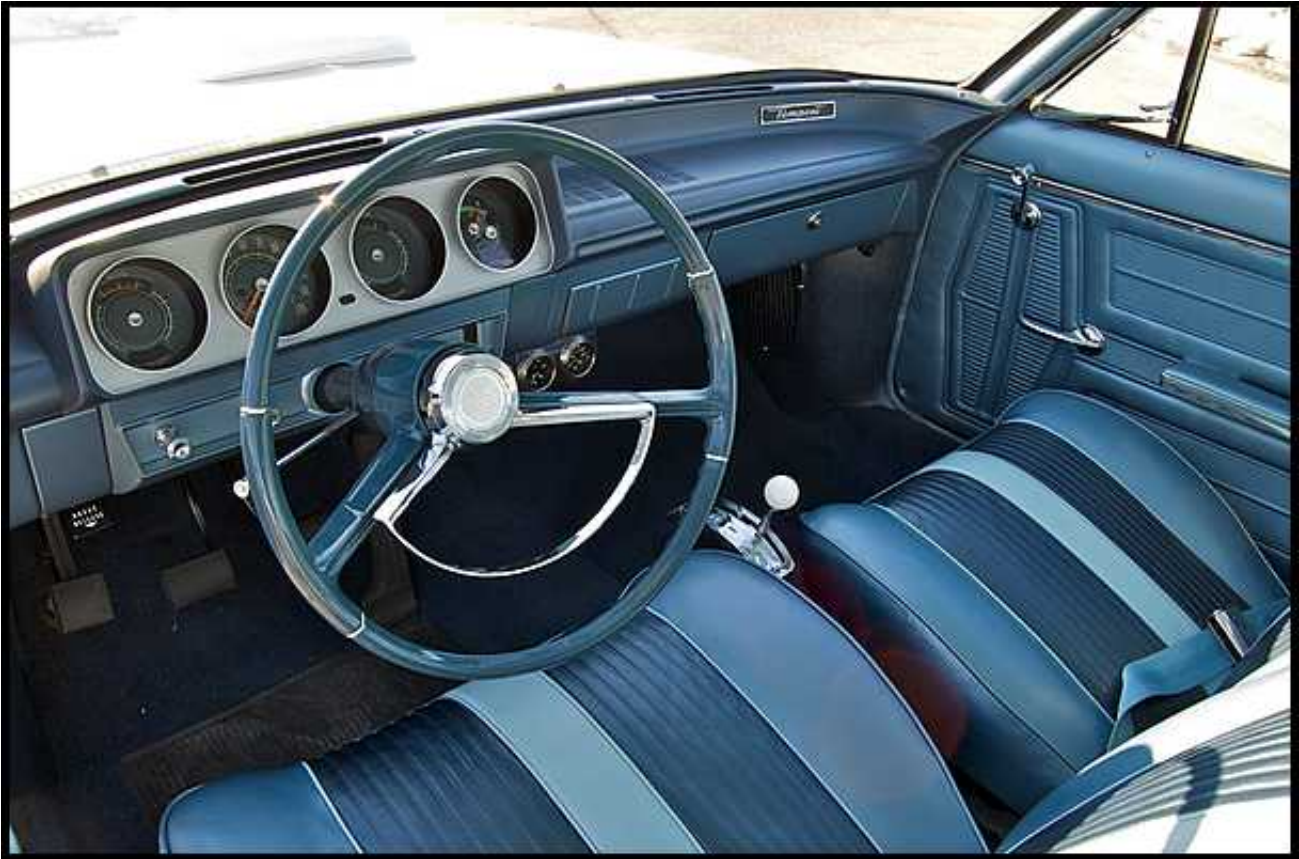


Yes, transaxle, not transmission, for better weight distribution just like a modern Corvette. To make things lighter (after all, the place IS called Factory LIGHTWEIGHTS), it's got an aluminum hood, aluminum front fenders, an aluminum radiator support, grille surround, and even aluminum brake drums. The glass windshield is gone too, replaced with Plexiglas. These improvements resulted in a nearly 50/50 weight distribution.

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As a wagon fan, I became intrigued with this car. I searched the Internet for anything I could find, and it led me to the Mecum auction. It seems that this 1963 Pontiac Tempest wagon factory racer special was part of Dana Mecum's personal collection, and was sold in 2010 at his Indianapolis auction. Prior to that, it was part of the Randy Williams Super Duty collection. They echo the statement of only six of these wagons ever being built (though, more likely, Factory Lightweights echoes the statements of Mecum), so you know it's a rare piece. I'm sure Mr. Smith is proud to have it in his collection.

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Let's go racing.[/caption]

It sold for a staggering \$450,000.

Photos: [Mecum Auctions](#).

Originally found at [Factory Lightweights](#), and currently no longer sporting its decals.