

9th Annual Regional Car Show at the Pontiac Museum

by Chris Winslow



2020 has been a really long year for the car hobby. Week after week, events which have happened every year for decades were canceled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. There would be a slight glimmer of hope where we thought an event might actually happen, only to see the event canceled, sometimes only a few days before it was to occur.

These cancellations included local events like the Easter Car Show, the Cobblestone Nationals, Wheels in Motion, and, most recently, the Lion's Club car show in Cuba scheduled for the September 26th weekend. It also included national events like the GTOAA and POCI national conventions and the Tri Power Nationals.

So, as the weekend for our annual car show in support of the Pontiac Museum approached, many of us worried that there might be a last minute cancellation by either the City of Pontiac or the State of Illinois. But, in the week leading up to the event weekend no such cancellation message came. In addition, the weather report for the weekend had predicted excellent weather for both Saturday and Sunday. As we woke up Friday morning and prepared to head to Pontiac, the weather was still predicted to be perfect for a car show.

Having taken the GTO on the Route 66 mini cruise earlier in the summer, it was the Trans Am's turn for a long run, so we loaded it up, popped out the T-Tops and headed for Pontiac.



Regional Car Show at Pontiac



For those of us that headed to Pontiac on Friday, the first event in town was a Bar B Q at the home of Gateway GTO members Alan and Liane Finkenbinder. This has become a favorite part of the weekend for those of us go every year to put on this car show. The Finkenbinders graciously open their home and welcome all of us over for an evening of great food and great company.

We rolled into the town square in Pontiac around 8:00 on Saturday morning to set up registration. As we arrived, we had 16 pre-registrations but we were not really sure what to expect in terms of overall attendance. In a normal year, we would have expected a good turn out based just on the weather prediction. But 2020 was anything but a normal year. Having worked with Mark Melrose on setting up the registration for the event, I had spoken with some who really wanted to come to the event, but had decided not to come due to health concerns. Others, were anxious to get out of the house and attend a car show. For those, this was the only significant Pontiac show in this part of the country all year that had not been canceled.

We were also not sure what exactly to expect for Saturday attendance. Normally for this event, there is an organized cruise on Saturday to look at car collections or travel to some historic Route 66 sites. In addition, there is a chicken dinner followed by an ice cream social and a performance by the local theater group. All of these activities had to be canceled this year. Initially, there had been hope that we could have a food truck event for Saturday evening as a substitute for the chicken dinner, but ultimately that also had to be scrubbed. The City did organize a tour of some local historic homes and ran the trolley to get people to and from the homes. In addition, the Pontiac Museum, along with the other museums and shops in the town square were open. In the end, we registered 64 cars for the event on Saturday. This was a very respectable number and suggested that Sunday could be huge.



Regional Car Show at Pontiac



For Saturday evening, those of us in town for the car show the next day joined with local car enthusiasts for a car show around the square in Pontiac. Since it was open to everyone and there was no official registration, it is hard to say how many people and cars attended, but it was a sizable event with some really great cars.

On Sunday morning, we headed into town early. We wanted to get registration set up early expecting there could be a big crowd and also we wanted to make sure we were there to get control of parking. When we arrived there were already a lot of folks there and a steady stream of cars continued to arrive. Registration was consistently busy early and then got crazy around 10am. By the time we closed registration at 12:00, we had registered a total of 211 cars. This was close to a record for the event. Thanks to Paula, Gail Schott, Barb Lewis, Sharon Wildebrandt, Donna Bowers, and Sue Vie for all their help pulling off the successful registration.





Regional Car Show at Pontiac



I did not get a chance to spend a lot of time looking at the cars this year, but in general it looked like a great quality show field. We had, of course, a large contingent of GTOs, but there were also sizable groups of other Pontiacs like Firebirds and Fieros.



At the end of the day, once we totaled up all of the revenue, we ended up generating \$5360 for the Pontiac Museum with this car show. This included a record 50/50 take by Earl Lewis. This is an amazing amount of money to raise given the current economic climate. The members of Gateway GTO and Heart of Illinois GTO can be proud of pulling off such a successful event in such challenging times.

Regional Car Show at Pontiac



Regional Car Show at Pontiac

