

# 1955 BUICK CENTURY RIVIERA 2-DOOR HARDTOP

1955 Buick Century Riviera 2-door hardtop, Model 68

On loan from: Bill and Rosella Meier, Kearney, NE

Original cost: \$2,364.00 (In 1955: Average car cost, \$1,900.00; average household income, \$4,130.00; average home cost \$10,950; gallon of gas, 23 cents)

Number made: 80,338

Engine, etc.: "Fireball" V-8, valve-in head; 236 hp; 322 cu. in.; 122 in. wheelbase; 3,805 lbs.

The name Buick Century was used by GM for its full-sized line from 1936 until 1942 and again from 1954 – 1958, and from 1973 – 2005 for their mid-sized cars. The Century took the place of the Series 60 Buicks.

The model name Century came from the time Buick designed its first car capable of reaching 100 mph. A Buick executive returned from a trip to the British Isles and reported the British referred to going 100 mph as "doing the century". Other executives liked the name and decided to use it for the new model.

The Centuries produced from 1936 – 1942 were the fastest Buicks of the era and were capable of producing speeds of 95 mph and above. (The 1936 Century was able to cruise at 100 mph.) This earned the Century the nickname the "banker's hot rod". The Century was dropped at the end of 1942 only to be re-introduced as a second generation car in 1954.

The 1955 Buick Century was one of Harley Earl's personal favorite designs. Buick's ad campaign said the car was "At the forefront of fashion – thrill of the year", and it was. With a sweeping side body line, wraparound

windshield, strong face, and jet-age tail, it had everything that made the mid-50's GM cars the pinnacle of American car design.

Like the muscle cars which came later, the 1955 Buick Century was built on the smallest platform available that year, the Special, but powered by the division's largest Roadmaster engine. This made them attractive to law enforcement agencies which used them patrolling freeways where they were well suited for high speed pursuits. Actual California Highway Patrol cars were Special 2-door sedans with Century markings, Roadmaster engines, and 3-speed manual transmissions. Broderick Crawford drove a 2-door Century sedan during the first season of the TV series "Highway Patrol". *Motor Trend* clocked the 1955 2-door sedan at 9.8 seconds to 60 mph and 106.5 flat out. Performance was also helped by the Variable Pitch Dynaflo transmission, a much improved version of the automatic.

The models had four "ventiports" on each front fender with the fourth one signifying the higher horsepower Roadmaster engine. The Century came with standard equipment that included new tubeless tires, directional signals, front and rear side armrests, a step-on parking brake, heavy insulation, trip odometer, and electric clock. Power brakes were optional.

Sources: <http://www.conceptcarz.com/vehicle/z8850/Buick-Century-Series-60.aspx>

<http://www.classiccardatabase.com/specs.php?series=5142&year=1955&model=24164>

<http://www.howstuffworks.com/1955-buick-century.htm>

[http://www.gmheritagecenter.com/gm-vehicle-collection/1955 Buick Century Hardtop.html](http://www.gmheritagecenter.com/gm-vehicle-collection/1955-Buick-Century-Hardtop.html)

See

also: [http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955 Buick/1955 Buick Brochure 1/dirindex.html](http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955_Buick/1955_Buick_Brochure_1/dirindex.html) (Original 1954 brochure no. 1)

[http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955\\_Buick/1955\\_Buick\\_Brochure\\_2/dirindex.html](http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955_Buick/1955_Buick_Brochure_2/dirindex.html) (Original 1954 brochure no. 2)

[http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955\\_Buick/1955\\_Buick\\_Spring\\_Fashion\\_Festival/dirindex.html](http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Buick/1955_Buick/1955_Buick_Spring_Fashion_Festival/dirindex.html) (Original 1954 brochure; includes colors available)