

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1968 Buick Gran Sport 401 425

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1968 Buick Gran Sport 401 425

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

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SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet



Manufacturer History

Buick was founded in 1903 by David Dunbar Buick and became a founding pillar of General Motors in 1908, the company William C. Durant built around the Buick Motor Company. From the start Buick occupied the upper-middle of the GM ladder: above Oldsmobile and Pontiac, below Cadillac, the 'doctor's car' for buyers who wanted prestige without the Cadillac price.

Two engineering signatures defined Buick for decades. The first was the overhead-valve engine: Buick built OHV engines from the company's earliest days and never looked back. The second was the Nailhead V8 (1953-1966), so called for its small, vertical valves that made the rocker-arm studs look like nail heads. Nailheads ran hot, breathed poorly at high rpm, and made enormous low-end torque - exactly the formula Buick's customers liked.

Buick was late to the factory muscle party. Pontiac had the GTO in 1964 and Oldsmobile the 4-4-2; Buick's answer, the Skylark Gran Sport, arrived at midyear 1965 with a 401-cubic-inch Nailhead wearing a '400' badge. It sold in strong numbers, and the GS became a standalone series in 1967 with a new 400-cubic-inch V8. The 1968 redesign brought the GS 400, the Stage 1 option arrived in January 1968, and in 1970 the GS 455 replaced the 400 with Buick's biggest big-block - the torque monster that made Buick the quiet giant of the muscle era.

The Riviera Gran Sport followed a parallel path. The Riviera itself was Buick's personal luxury coupe from 1963; the Gran Sport package, introduced for 1965, added the dual-quad 425 Nailhead and handling upgrades. The 430 replaced the Nailhead in 1967, and the Riviera GS remained the gentleman's performance Buick through 1969, tracked by collectors today as one of the most documentable Buicks ever built.

Buick's muscle era ended the way everyone's did: compression dropped to 8.5:1 for 1971, net horsepower ratings arrived for 1972, and the GS faded from a headline act to an option package. But the cars never lost their following. The Buick GS Club of America and the Sloan Museum's Buick Gallery in Flint, Michigan, keep the paper trail alive - and that paper trail is what makes a real Buick worth restoring.

2 — Model History

Buick answered the Pontiac GTO at midyear 1965 with the Skylark Gran Sport: a 401-cubic-inch Nailhead V8 wearing a '400' badge, sold as an option package on the Skylark. The marketing fiction - calling a 401 a '400' - was pure gamesmanship, and it worked: more than 15,000 Gran Sports sold in the abbreviated 1965 run.

The Nailhead powered the GS through 1966, with a higher-output 340-horsepower version of the 401 joining the base 325-horsepower engine. For 1967 the Gran Sport became a standalone series and the Nailhead gave way to Buick's new 400-cubic-inch V8: 4.04 by 3.90 inches, 10.25:1 compression, 340 horsepower and 440 lb-ft of torque. The GS 340 (260-hp 340 V8) joined as the junior Gran Sport.

The 1968 A-body redesign brought the GS 400 its classic shape, the GS 350 (280-hp 350 V8) as the entry Gran Sport, and - in January 1968 - the Stage 1 option with its cold-air induction. For 1969 the GS 400 got a new hood with functional cold-air induction, the Stage 1 continued at 345 horsepower, and the dealer-installed Stage 2 waited in the wings for racers.

Catalog note: the 1967-1969 guides in this set carry catalog slugs reading 'gran-sport-401-425,' but the 401 Nailhead ended after 1966 - the 1967-1969 cars are GS 400s with the 400-cubic-inch V8. Titles and content in those guides are factually corrected; the slug is retained only as the filename key.

3 — What Is Unique About This Model Year

1968 brought the all-new A-body styling - the coke-bottle shape that defines the classic GS look - and the Stage 1 option, introduced in January 1968 with cold-air induction. As with 1967, the catalog '401/425' slug is wrong for this car: it is the GS 400, corrected throughout this guide.



The 1's January introduction makes build date critical on 1968 cars: a fall-1967-built 'Stage 1' precludes the option's existence. The build date on the cowl tag must fall after the January 1968 introduction. The GS 350 joined as the entry Gran Sport with a 280-horsepower 350 V8 on the Skylark Custom - plus the California GS variant. The GS 400 remained the performance flagship at 340 horsepower. Production of 10,743 coupes and 2,454 convertibles makes the 1968 GS 400 the volume year of the 400 era - the easiest early GS to find and the benchmark for the series.

Year-to-year changes

- All-new A-body styling; GS 350 (280 hp) is the entry Gran Sport
- Stage 1 option introduced January 1968 with cold-air induction
- 10,743 coupes + 2,454 convertibles - the volume year of the 400 era
- CATALOG SLUG CORRECTED: this is the GS 400, not a '401/425'

4 — VIN Decoding

1968 Buick VINs are 13 digits with no engine code. Pattern: 446378H100001.

Position 1: 4 = Buick. Positions 2-3: 46 = GS series. Positions 4-5: 37 = hardtop sport coupe, 67 = convertible. Position 6: 8 = 1968.

Position 7: assembly plant (H = Flint). Positions 8-13: sequence.

Federal VIN plate moves to the driver's door jamb area for 1968 - check plate, title, and hidden stampings for agreement.

5 — Cowl / Fender-Tag Decoding

Cowl tag: ST 68, GS model numbers, trim, paint, build date. Stage 1 status is proven by the build sheet / Protect-O-Plate and engine-code stamping, not by the cowl tag alone.

Build date must postdate January 1968 for any claimed Stage 1 car.

6 — Engines

Factory engine lineup

Engine

Compression

Horsepower

Torque

400 4-barrel (GS 400)

10.25:1

340 hp

440 lb-ft

400 Stage 1

10.25:1

~350 hp

~460 lb-ft (commonly

published)

350 4-barrel (GS 350)

10.25:1

280 hp

375 lb-ft

400 4-barrel (GS 400) 400 cu in — bore 4.04 in × stroke 3.90 in, 10.25:1 compression, 340 hp, 440 lb-ft, Rochester 4bbl. Engine code: -. Standard GS 400 engine.

400 Stage 1 400 cu in — bore 4.04 in × stroke 3.90 in, 10.25:1 compression, ~350 hp, ~460 lb-ft (commonly published), Rochester 4bbl (Stage 1 calibration). Engine code: -. Introduced January 1968 with cold-air