

Skylarks Flying High!



■ By Angelo Van Bogart

VanDerBrink Auctions to sell rare 1953 Buick Skylark convertible project

1953 Buick Skylarks have had a pretty wild time on the auction block in the last six months. On Nov. 4, 2017, we reported that a blue 1953 Skylark deep into No. 5 territory and loaded with raccoon excrement, rust and potential sold for \$25,500 in eastern Wisconsin. One month later, in Los Angeles, singer-songwriter Neil Young sold his red 1953 Buick Skylark, reportedly the first one off the line, for an astounding \$400,000 on Dec. 9. Both of these sales were off the charts.

Old Cars Report Price Guide shows a No. 5 Buick Skylark typically sells in the \$18,000 range, if you can find one. Even if Young's Skylark is in No. 1 condition (pictures show it's at least a No. 3 driver-quality car, if not better), \$400,000 is a record price (\$150,000 is more on the money for a No. 1 Skylark). So why the big bucks?

Any Skylark is valuable since the cars were one of the General Motors 1953 Motorama show cars that were actually built for public consumption, albeit at a hefty price tag. While a top-of-the-line Roadmaster convertible sold for \$3,506 when new, a Skylark sold for an astounding \$5,000. For that price, the Skylark was loaded with every Buick option, plus it featured unique body treatments such as

radiused and enlarged wheel openings, a Darrin-style beltline dip, thinner side trim, a lowered roof and wire wheels, among other features including the original purchaser's name in the steering wheel hub. The buyer of Young's Skylark was paying for the provenance behind the pop culture icon's ownership, and because the "first" of anything tends to raise the price. Had it been any other restored Skylark — not that there are many others since only 1690 were built for Buick's 50th anniversary — the car would likely have sold in the typical range of prices.

The rough Skylark fetched a pretty penny in November because the buyer was getting the chance to be the first to monkey with the unrestored and unmolested car. Skylarks have been treasured for a long time, and there aren't many survivors left awaiting the restorer's touch. Yet another will be crossing the block in April during the VanDerBrink Auctions sale of the Rick Smith Collection in Longview, Texas.

On April 21, VanDerBrink will offer a buildable 1953 Skylark convertible at no reserve. The high bidder will take home a Skylark project that appears to be largely straight and with its rare Skylark components intact. The Skylark is currently

This primed 1953 Skylark, to be sold on April 21 by VanDerBrink Auctions, looks to be a solid, buildable car that will offer the high bidder a lot of potential to restore the car their way. The car was originally white and is body number 1534.



This rough but buildable No. 5 condition Skylark brought \$25,500 at a W. Yoder Auction last November. The blue car is body number 1120.

painted flat black but was originally white. Its body number 1534 indicates it was built toward the end of production. While it appears to be cosmetically complete, the upper end of the engine is missing its heads, intake and carburetor. However, these components are shared with other Buick models fitted with the first-year V-8 engine.

So, what will this third Skylark sell for? With its great potential and strong, buildable condition, and the rare opportunity this example presents to the restorer, we're sure it will far exceed the \$30,000+ book value. In this no-reserve VanDerBrink Auctions sale, we think the Skylark is truly the limit.

More Info

www.skylarkclub.org
www.vanderbrinkauctions.com