



Studebaker's Unique Flip-Top Box

-- 1963 - 1966 Wagonaire --

by Fred K. Fox

In the recent TW "First by Far with a Postwar Car" article, this author commented that "No other automobile company traveled down untrodden pathways as many times as Studebaker." Certainly a prime example of this pioneering adventurism was the sliding roof Wagonaire station wagon that Studebaker produced from 1963 through 1966. E.T. Reynolds, father of our club's president and a former high level Studebaker employee, noted in an April 1974 Car Classics article that the Wagonaire was "the biggest advancement made in station wagon design in history."

The styling concept of the Wagonaire was created by Brooks Stevens' industrial design group in Wisconsin. Stevens, as you may know, handled the Hawk facelift that resulted in the 1962-64 Gran Turismo Hawk. He also directed all Lark styling developments from 1962 to 1964. Today, he is best known for producing and selling the Excalibur motor car. The original 1964 Excalibur prototype featured an Avanti engine and all 1965-69 Series I models used Studebaker frames and suspension. — Some of the Wagonaire design ideas were taken from the styling study station wagon prototype that Stevens and Studebaker had built in Turin, Italy in 1961-62. Stevens still has this prototype in his collection.

Of course, much of the final engineering and detail styling work on the Wagonaire was carried on by Studebaker's competent engineering and design departments, which were directed, respectfully, by Eugene Hardig and Randal Faurot. The innovative feature of the Wagonaire was the rear half of the wagon's top. This section was built separately and could be slid ahead under the front half. The advantage of this concept was that it allowed tall objects, such as refrigerators or Christmas trees, to be carried upright in the back of the Wagonaire. This was impossible with any other make of station wagon. Also, it allowed loading of heavy objects into the vehicle in a standing position instead of being all hunched over. The sliding top thus allowed a station wagon to be converted into a pickup.

At first, Studebaker's engineers had a difficult time trying to eliminate leaks and rattles in the sliding top. Since the top moved forward, the rear window could not be hinged to the top as on most other wagons of the period. This meant that the rear window had to be fitted to and retractable into the tailgate. To make this window's operation easier an optional power control for it was offered. For the most part, Studebaker engineers eventually solved the water leak problems. Some Wagonaire owners and a couple of Studebaker biographers have indicated that the leaking problems were never solved, but numerous conscientious SDC members who own Wagonaires report that leaks can be avoided if a system of preventative maintenance is adhered to. If seals, drains, etc. are maintained in good condition, a Wagonaire's sliding top will remain waterproof when fully closed.

Previous page: 1963 Daytona Wagonaire factory photo.

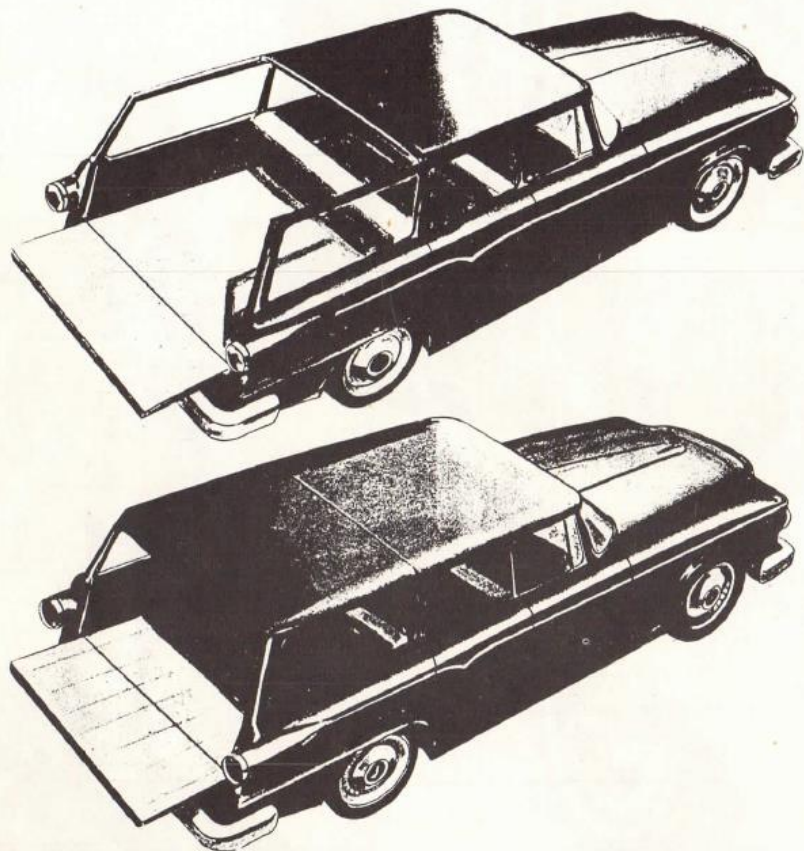
The Wagonaire was available only in four-door form. Studebaker produced its last two-door station wagon in 1961. All Wagonaires from 1963 through 1966 sat on the same 113 inch wheelbase chassis. Also, the basic styling from the cowl back remained the same on all models. An interesting feature of this styling was the high mounted wraparound taillights. These taillights were quite visible from the side as well as the back. Front-end styling followed that of the sedan models.

The Wagonaire's name, although quite descriptive of its design, is often confused with the Wagoneer name that Jeep affixed to its station wagons.



Famed industrial designer Brooks Stevens stands by a 1964 Daytona. Stevens was the man responsible for the Wagonaire's styling. This photo was taken at the 1964 Studebaker Dealer Announcement Meeting held in Chicago in late 1963.

ADVANCE THINKING AT STUDEBAKER...



**IT'S AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE,
THE STATION WAGON IS OBSOLETE**

Early publicity distributed by Studebaker showed the sliding top feature on a 1962 wagon. As far as we know, a 1962 Wagonaire prototype was never built.

1963

Since the Avanti had been unveiled in April 1962, the all new Wagonaire captured the Studebaker limelight in the fall of 1962 when the 1963 Lark, Cruiser and Hawk models were introduced. The Wagonaire's styling attracted considerable attention from the automotive press (see "Further Reading").

At introduction time, the sliding top was standard on all models. A fixed top was not available. For the domestic market, the Lark Wagonaire could be ordered as either a Regal or a Daytona. In earlier years, the Regal had been the top-line model, but for some reason it was made the low priced model in 1963. A mid-range Custom Wagonaire was offered for certain markets outside the United States. Early in the 1963 calendar year, Studebaker introduced a stripped down series called the Standard. The 1963½ Standard was not as austere as the 1957-58 Scotsman models, but it was directed at the same basic market. Quite a number of Standard models were sold as fleet vehicles. The Standard



This is a photo of a 1963 Wagonaire prototype. Note the odd parking lights placed above the headlights. The side trim is similar to that used on 1962 Daytonas and 1963 Custom models. The 1963 Custom Wagonaire was not offered in the United States, although it was sold in other countries. When the Custom name was used during the fifties, it referred to the very lowest priced models, but in 1963 it was used to represent the model between the Regal and the Daytona.

A young woman expounds on the virtues of a 1963 Lark Daytona Wagonaire at the 1963 Chicago Automobile Show held at McCormick Place. The sporting goods in the Wagonaire were provided by Abercrombie and Fitch. The realistic looking girl standing in the back is actually a mannequin. This show car sports a set of optional Aero Strut (AC-3280) wheel covers.



introduced the option of a fixed top on the Wagonaire. This allowed a small price savings and alleviated any sales resistance that preconceived worries about water leaks may have created. The Standard was promoted as a Studebaker and not as a Lark. The same Studebaker identification concept had already been applied to the 1963 Cruiser, but this sales approach did not stop people from calling them Larks.

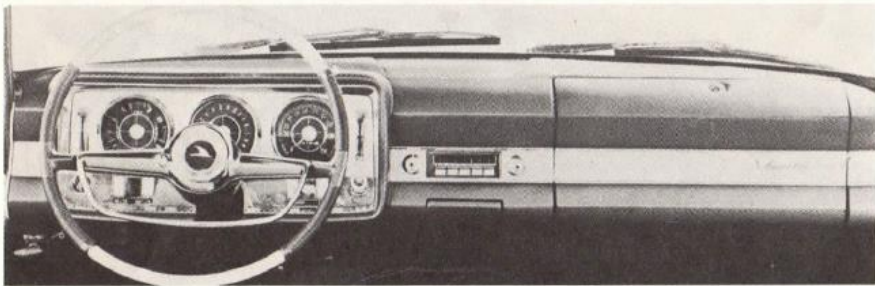
All Wagonaires could be ordered with either a six cylinder or V8 engine. The Skybolt six was the overhead valve version of the old Champion engine. This engine was introduced in 1939 and converted to overhead valves in 1961. In 1963 it displaced 169.6 cubic-inches and produced 112 horsepower. Cracked valve seats eventually developed in

many of these engines, but beyond this, the 170 ohv engine proved to be a very peppy and economical power plant.

The basic V8 was the 259.2 cubic-inch version with a two-barrel carburetor. This engine was rated at 180 horsepower. Studebaker's V8 engine was introduced in 1951 and the 259 model came out in 1955. An optional four-barrel carburetor raised the 259's horsepower to 195. Optional V8 engines on all domestic models except the Standard were the Thunderbolt 289, the Avanti Jet-Thrust R1 289 and the Avanti Supercharged Jet-Thrust R2 289. Horsepower ratings for the Thunderbolt engine were 210 for the two-barrel and 225 for the four-barrel. Studebaker did not initially give out horsepower ratings for the Avanti engines, but eventual-



Shown is a 1963 Lark Regal Wagonaire. This model became the Commander in 1964.



The 1963 Lark instrument panel. In 1963, full instrumentation replaced the idiot lights (warning lights) used on earlier Larks. The vanity-type glove compartment was standard on all models except the mid-year Standard. The Standard simply had a lid on the top side of the glove box. Speaking of the 1963 Lark's panel, *Car Life* said that "it is doubtful if there is a better one in the industry for sheer simplicity and functional design."

ly figures of 240 hp for the R1 and 289 hp for the R2 were released. Another Avanti feature that was optional on the Wagonaire (except the Standard again) was front disc brakes. Old Studebaker standbys such as overdrive, the Hill Holder and Twin Traction were available on all Wagonaires.

The 1963 Wagonaire attracted 11,915 buyers. This was a slight improvement over Studebaker's 1962 station wagon sales figure, but way short of the 26,709 Lark wagons sold in 1959. Of course, when you compare the 1963 Wagonaire's production to Chevrolet's 1963 domestic station wagon figure of 273,816, you begin to realize why Studebaker was

considered a minor automobile company. Fortunately, our dedication to Studebaker products has guaranteed that a higher percentage of Wagonaires have been saved than the contemporary station wagons built by the Big Three.



4-DOOR WAGONAIRE with solid steel top. Low-cost station wagon utility and comfort.

For 1963½ Studebaker introduced the Standard. The Standard Wagonaire could be ordered with a sliding or fixed top. A fixed top example is shown. The fixed top option was expanded to all models in 1964. A sliding top was only available in 1965, but in 1966 the fixed top option was returned. — The Standard was replaced by the Challenger model in 1964.

1963 WAGONAIRE

<u>Model</u>		<u>Base Price</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Standard 6 cyl.	63S-P2	\$2430	3,185 lbs.
Standard V8	63V-P2	2565	3,435
Regal 6 cyl.	63S-P4	2550	3,200
Regal V8	63V-P4	2685	3,450
Custom 6 cyl. *	63S-P6	NA	NA
Custom V8 *	63V-P6	NA	NA
Daytona 6 cyl.	63S-P8	2700	3,245
Daytona V8	63V-P8	2835	3,490

* Not sold in the United States.

Total 1963 Wagonaire production = 11,915

A new front end design was the major Wagonaire styling change in 1964. A new hood ornament, redesigned wheel covers and wraparound bumpers were some of the minor changes made. The Daytona model (shown) received new side trim.



1964

The 1964 "Different ... by Design" Wagonaire models featured the new Brooks Stevens' front-end styling, and model name changes on all lines except the Daytona. The Standard became the Challenger and the Regal became the Commander, a name Studebaker had not used since 1958. The Custom (P6) series was discontinued. The Lark name was now used only in reference to the Challenger and Commander

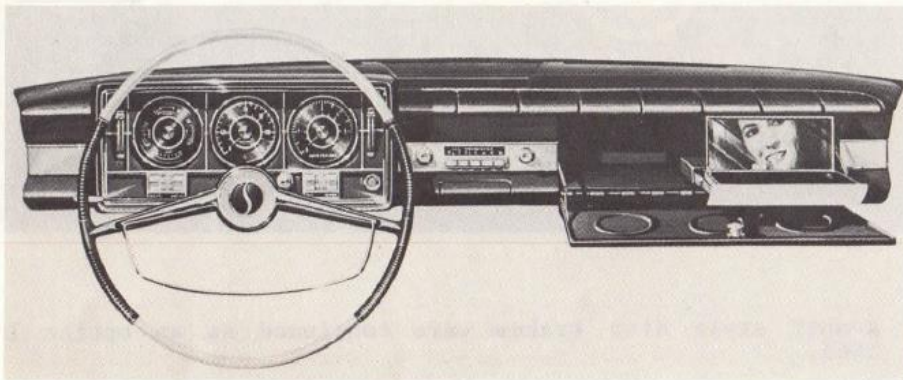
models. Actually, the Lark name did not appear on any 1964 Studebakers, although Lark styled emblems were used on the Challenger sedans. Studebaker's sales department and advertising agency were examining every avenue in an effort to bolster Studebaker's sagging sales. Evidently, they felt the Lark name had become a sales handicap. In retrospect, this conclusion does not seem to have been a wise one.

In contrast to the Standard, the Challenger could be ordered with a 289 V8 or either type of 289 Avanti engine. The all new 304.5 cubic-inch R3 and R4 Avanti engines were listed for most Wagonaire models, but no Wagonaires were

ever sold with these engines. Basic mechanical features remained the same as in 1963, except the South Bend built 1964 Daytona Wagonaires could not be ordered with six cylinder engines. The fixed top option was now available on all Wagonaire models.

A big change for the 1964 models came in December 1963 when the South Bend plant was closed down and all Studebaker production was centralized in the company's Hamilton, Ontario, Canada plant. This change spelled the end of the Challenger series since it was not being produced in Canada. The same fate befell the Avanti, Hawk and truck lines. Also, the Lark name was phased out completely. All models were now referred to as Studebaker "Common-Sense Cars". Fortunately, the Wagonaire did survive in the Commander and Daytona series. The Canadian plant had been building six cylinder Daytona Wagonaires, so this model again became available in the United States. The Avanti series engines were discontinued as optional power plants. As has been discussed in the "Literature in Review" column, the Canadian built 1964 models can be distinguished from their South Bend counterparts by their all white steering wheels. This color of wheel was not used on South Bend cars.

Wagonaire production dropped to less than half of what it was in 1963. This sales drop certainly did not reflect the quality of product that Studebaker was marketing. Some have said that the Canadian assembled cars were actually superior to the South Bend units. Others have said just the opposite. Certainly the 1964 Wagonaire, no matter where it was built, was a fine vehicle. Studebaker's declining sales in 1964 were mainly the result of lost confidence on the part of the buying public.



The 1964 instrument panel. This panel was only slightly changed from the 1963 version. One of the alterations was the reduction in the size of the glove compartment door. In an effort to get away from the Lark image, the horn button medallion was changed from a Lark emblem to an "S". On Wagonaires the vanity tray was now only standard on Daytona models. The 1965 panel was almost identical.

1964 WAGONAIRE

<u>Model</u>		<u>Base Price</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Challenger 6 cyl.	64S-P2	\$2430	3230 lbs.
Challenger V8	64V-P2	2565	3480
Commander 6 cyl.	64S-P4	2550	3265
Commander V8	64V-P4	2685	3515
Daytona 6 cyl.	64S-P8	2700	NA
Daytona V8	64V-P8	2835	3555

Total 1964 Wagonaire production = 5163

1965

Visually Wagonaires were little changed for the 1965 model year, but under the hood a major transplant had been made. Gone were Studebaker's own engines and in their place resided Canadian built GM engines. Although Studebaker purchased many components from outside suppliers, it had always prided itself on the fact that almost every Studebaker built between 1913 and 1964 was powered by engines designed and built in Studebaker's own plants. The only domestic exceptions were the early Erskines, certain large trucks built between 1934 and 1945 and the 1956 Golden Hawk. Studebaker kept its South Bend engine plant open during part of 1964, so that it could supply engines for the Hamilton plant, but such low production proved very unprofitable and the engine plant was closed. The replacement engines were manufactured by the General Motor's McKinnon Industries plant in St. Catharines, Ontario.

The GM engines were available in only two types with no four-barrel carburetor options. The two engines were a 194 cubic-inch, 120 horsepower, overhead valve six and a 283 cubic-inch, 195 horsepower, overhead valve V8. The company continued to identify the new engines by the old Studebaker Skybolt and Thunderbolt names. Both engines were lighter than the Studebaker engines they replaced. Whether they were better engines or not has created much debate. One thing we know for certain is that these engines created much sales resistance among loyal Studebaker owners. Since the engines were similar to the Chevrolet engines used in the states, people quickly started calling the 1965's Chevys. The passing of time has proven that most of the prejudice against the 1965's and subsequent 1966 models was unfounded.

Shown is a 1965 Daytona Wagonaire. The 1965 Daytona could be identified by its side trim which had its colors reversed from 1964. The Commander was tougher to distinguish from its 1964 counterpart. The best way to tell them apart is to lift the hood and see if it has a Studebaker engine (1964) or GM engine (1965).



The Wagonaire lineup was reduced again in 1965. The Daytona six cylinder model was discontinued, so only the Commander 6 and V8 and Daytona V8 were offered. The fixed top option was discontinued on all models.

Interestingly, two R3 Avanti inspired features were adopted by Studebaker during 1965. First, was an optional transistor ignition system. The other, a mid-year addition, was flanged rear axles. This type of axle prevents the wheel from coming off if an axle is broken. Also, the

Avanti style disc brakes were continued as an option in 1965.

Wagonaire sales in 1965 took another disastrous plunge to only 1824 units. The Hamilton plant, although making a small profit, was not reaching the production level hoped for by the board of directors. The plant had the capacity to turn out many more cars, but most American dealers had difficulty selling "imported" Studebakers. The Canadian market remained strong and a few hard working, dedicated U.S. dealers, such as SDC member Fred Bartz, were successful in promoting "Canada's Own Car."



An independent company made this custom camper to fit on Studebaker's Wagonaire. It was a slick idea, but very few were actually sold. The example shown is mounted on a 1965 Daytona Wagonaire.

1965 WAGONAIRE

<u>Model</u>		<u>Base Price</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Commander 6 cyl.	S-P4	\$2620	3294 lbs.
Commander V8	V-P4	2760	3505
Daytona V8	V-P8	2890	3545

Total 1965 Wagonaire production = 1824

1966

Several different minor changes were made to the Wagonaires in 1966. First off, the Wagonaire was made a model in its own right. Gone were the Commander and Daytona prefixes. The selections were now limited to a Wagonaire six or a Wagonaire V8. The trim series identification was P8, the same as used for the Daytona Wagonaire in 1965.

A new larger GM six was added as an option, first only on models with automatic transmissions and later on all models. This engine displaced 230 cubic-inches and produced 140 horsepower.

Continuing their game of "musical chairs", Studebaker decided to return the fixed top option again. A good percentage of the 1966's were fitted with the solid top.

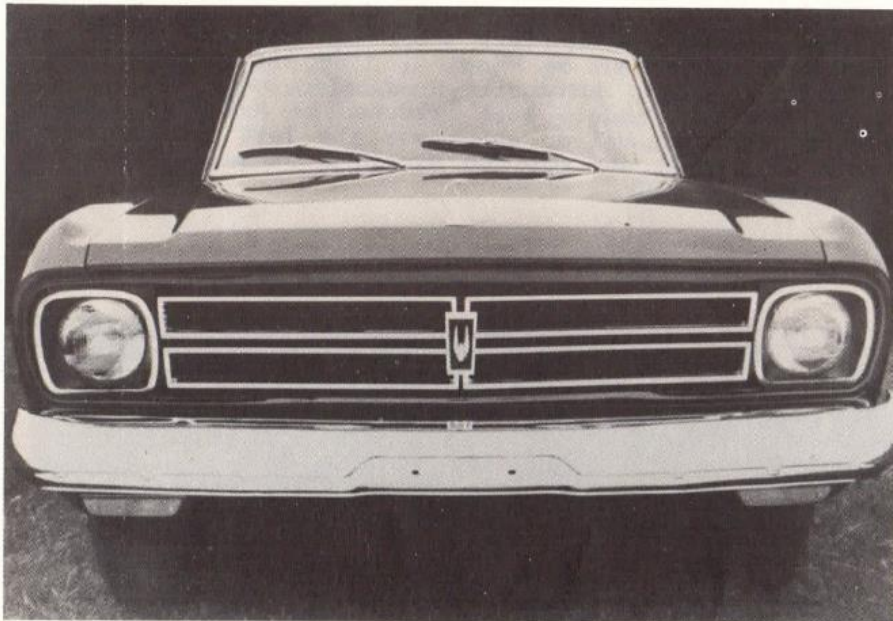
A number of styling changes, including a new grille, side trim and wheel covers, made it easy to distinguish the 1966 models from earlier versions.

Sales continued to fall short of what the board of directors desired, so on March 4, 1966, it was announced that all Studebaker automobile production would be discontinued. The last models were produced on March 17, 1966. The very last Wagonaire, which was the last six cylinder Studebaker built, was sold to Harrah's Automobile Collection in Reno, Nevada.



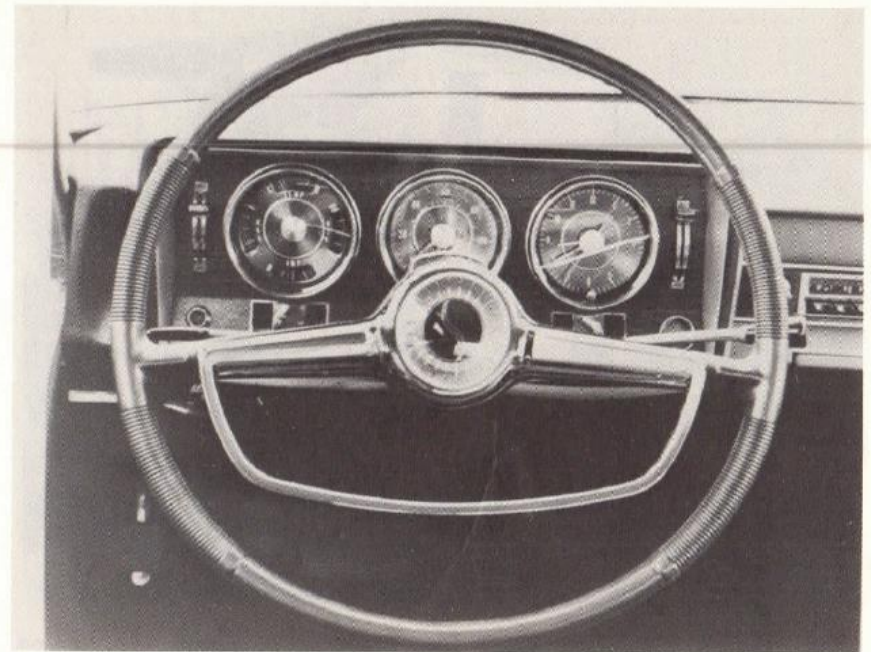
Studebaker reduced its Wagonaire line to one series in 1966. Rather than a Daytona or a Commander, it was known as simply the Wagonaire. In addition to the new grille, styling changes for 1966 included new wheel covers with Hawk emblems, lowered side trim and cubic-inch ID emblems on the front fenders. Owners of Wagonaires claim the loading advantage depicted in this photo is very beneficial. Even a child must duck its head when loading items in a regular station wagon.

A total of 940 Wagonaires were built for the 1966 model year. Considering that the 1966 year was cut short, this was actually a little better showing than in 1965. Of course, a figure of 940 was hardly feasible for a company trying to compete with Detroit. A speciality company, such as the Avanti Motor Corporation, might have continued producing the Wagonaire as a luxury wagon, but this approach was not logical for Studebaker and its remaining dealers.



The Studebaker grille was redesigned in 1966 by the Michigan design firm of Marcks, Hazelquist and Powers. Partner Bob Marcks had worked for Studebaker during the 1950's. The standard dual headlights of 1965 were replaced by single units. Although there was no longer a Hawk model, Hawk emblems were used extensively in 1966. A Daytona Sport Sedan front-end is shown. The Wagonaire used bright metal instead of black painted metal for the grille background and headlight surrounds.

1966 WAGONAIRE			
<u>Model</u>		<u>Base Price</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Wagonaire 6 cyl.	S-P8	\$2645	3246 lbs.
Wagonaire V8	V-P8	2815	3501
Total 1966 Wagonaire production = 940.			



A woodgrain background, and black, instead of white, knobs and switches were the main instrument panel changes in 1966.

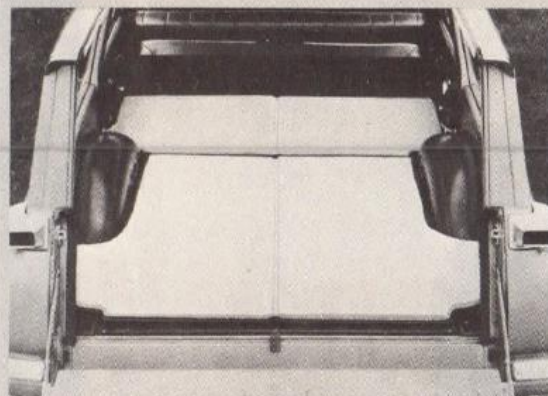
The Wagonaire, like so many Studebaker innovations, could have been quite successful if it had been promoted and sold by one of the more popular automobile companies. Studebaker's quality control problems in 1953 and near demise in 1956-58 made it very hard for the company to attract new buyers. Loyal Studebaker owners continued to buy new Studebakers, but there were not enough of them to keep Studebaker in the black. The 1959 Lark attracted quite a number of converts, but as soon as the Big Three responded with their new compacts in 1960, the battle was lost.

The great irony of the whole situation is that the Studebaker Drivers Club is now one of the largest single marque organizations in the world. Through our efforts, Studebaker vehicles, especially those produced during the last 15 years, are gaining ever increasing acceptance. Earlier Studebakers did not suffer from many of the unfounded prejudices that were levied against the company's final products.

Today, the sliding top Wagonaire is a very desirable Studebaker to own. They always attract a lot of attention at shows and their versatility is a never ending benefit. They are a prime example of Studebaker's blue ribbon innovativeness.

Accessories & Options

The accompanying photos depict some of the special Wagonaire accessories and options. The fold away rear-facing third seat took up the spare tire space when folded down, so models fitted with this option were equipped with Captive-air tires, a sort of tire within a tire that supposedly eliminated the need for a spare.



STATION WAGON REAR DECK CUSHIONS

Provide comfort and utility for children, sportsmen and campers, on local trips as well as extended trips. Available in two sections for greater flexibility, easy handling and storage.



CARGO COVER

Especially designed for use by travelers and salesmen for covering and protecting luggage and samples in the cargo area. Custom fitted, durable vinyl construction and easy snap-on installation.



STA-BAR KIT

Protect children and pets from accidentally falling from open tail gate window. Can also be used to prevent loads from shifting in the cargo area. Easily removed when not needed.

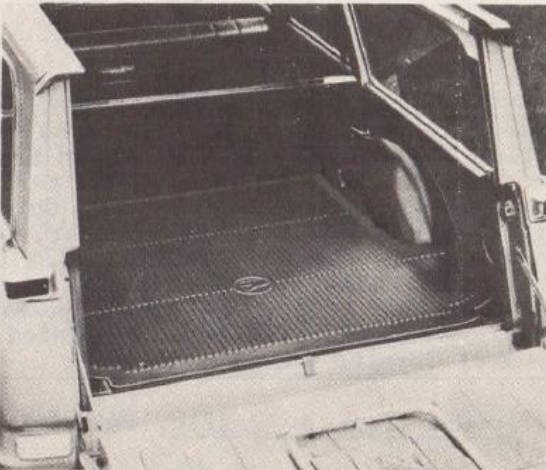


TAIL GATE STEP

Permits easy access to the cargo area.

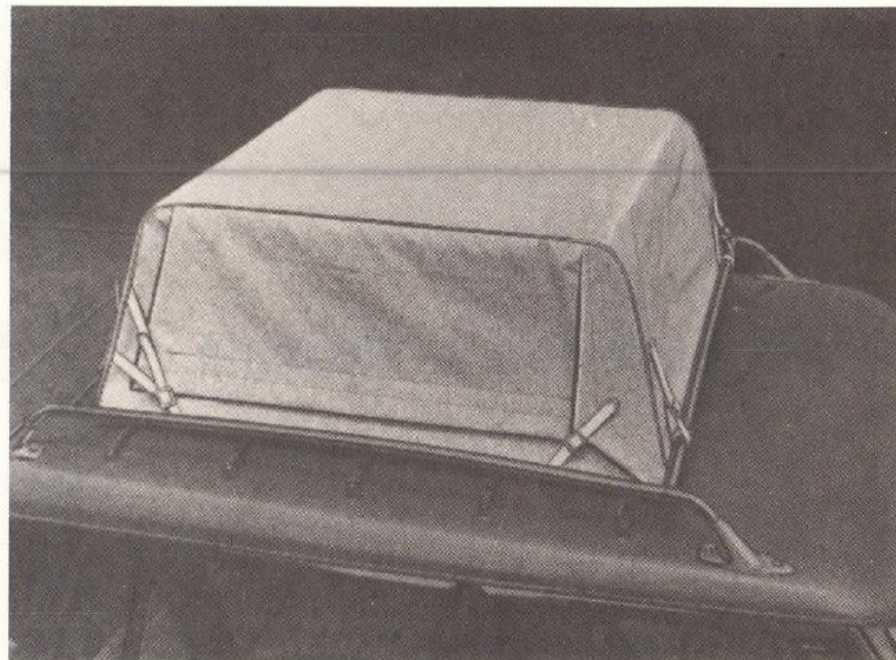
STATION WAGON CARGO MAT

Protect the cargo area of your Studebaker Wagonaire from dirt, grime and scuffing when carrying loads. Heavy duty ribbed construction to resist wear and tear.





Optional rear-facing third seat.



Luggage rack fitted with a "Car-Go-Pak".

FURTHER READING

1. Motor Trend, January 1963, pages 68-73.

Presented in this article is a major road test of a 1963 Daytona Wagonaire. The test wagon has a 259 V8 and automatic transmission. Options on the test car include a luggage rack, tailgate step, rear facing third seat, Twin Traction, Captive-air tires, radio, heater, clock and Aero Strut wheel covers. The thin fellow shown in the pictures is none other than Michael Lamm, founder of Special Interest Autos magazine and author of the popular Camaro and Firebird books. — This article is reprinted in the September 1979 issue of Turning Wheels.

2. Canada Track & Traffic, February 1963, cover and pages 29-31.

This Canadian magazine includes a road test of a Canadian assembled 1963 Custom Wagonaire. The Custom model is the one that was not sold in the U.S. The test car also has a 259 and automatic.

3. Science and Mechanics, April 1963, pages 86-88.

This is a test of another 259 with automatic transmission. Interestingly, this Daytona Wagonaire test reports a 0-60 mph acceleration time of 12.2 seconds, while the Motor Trend's time was 15.6 seconds and Track & Traffic's was 14.9 seconds. All three cars were fitted with the basic 180 horsepower V8 and standard 3.31:1 final drive. This article also is reprinted in the September 1979 Turning Wheels.

4. Car Life, June 1963, page 20-27

In contrast to the aforementioned road tests, this Car Life report gives a thorough examination of a Daytona Wagonaire powered with a supercharged R2 Avanti engine. This hot wagon, with an automatic transmission, recorded a 0-60 time of 7.8 seconds!

5. Road Test, ?, 1965, pages 21-25

This is a report on a 283 powered 1965 Daytona Wagonaire. This article, along with a couple of minor Wagonaire items, is also reprinted in the September 1979 Turning Wheels. □