

# Old Cars

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## EXPRESS

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# Corvette

## The Early Years

### 1953-59

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Jerry Heasley

1954 Corvette roadster with Powerglide transmission

# 1954

For all practical purposes the 1953 and 1954 Corvettes were the same. Minor changes were made to the window storage bag, air cleaners, starter and locations of the fuel and brake lines. Unlike the previous year's model, 1954s were available in Pennant Blue, Sportsman Red and Black, in addition to Polo White. The soft top was now offered in beige. A new style of valve cover was used. It was held on by four bolts through the outside lip instead of two center studs. The valve cover decals were different with larger lettering. The optional radio had Conelrad National Defense System icons on its face. In early 1954, the original two-handled hood latch was changed to a single-handle design. Six-cylinder Corvettes after serial number E54S003906 had integrated dual-port air cleaners. A clip to hold the ventpanes closed was added in late 1954 and also used on all 1955 models.

## I.D. NUMBERS

The Corvette used the standard Chevrolet Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) coding system. A tag located on the left-hand front door hinge pillar consisted of 10 symbols. The first symbol was an E for Corvette. The second and third symbols indicated the model year, for example 54 = 1954. The fourth symbol identified the assembly plant as follows: S = St. Louis, Mo. The last six symbols were digits representing the sequential production number. Corvettes for 1954 were numbered

E54S001001 to E54S004640. Engine numbers were found on the right-hand side of the crankcase behind the distributor. The engine numbers for 1954 models used the suffix YG. Since the Corvette bodies were virtually handmade, they did not carry standard Fisher Body Style Numbers as did other GM cars. The Corvette model number consisted of the four digits 2934, which also served as the body style number for the early production years.

## ENGINE

Inline. Six-cylinder. Overhead valve. Cast-iron block. Displacement: 235.5 cid. Bore and stroke: 3.56 x 3.96 in. Compression ratio: 8.0:1. Brake hp: 150 at 4200 rpm. Single breaker-point ignition system. Four main bearings. Carburetor: Three Carter Type YH one-barrel Model 2066S.

**NOTE:** Later in the model year a new camshaft upped



Nicky Wright

1954 Corvette interior, the speedometer reached 140 mph





Nicky Wright

**1954 Corvette roadster, note the exhaust extensions not found on 1953 models.**

horsepower to 155.

**CHASSIS FEATURES**

Wheelbase: 102 inches. Overall length: 167 inches. Front tread: 57 inches. Rear tread: 58.8 inches. Tires: 6.70 x 15. Front suspension: Coil springs, tube shocks and stabilizer bar. Rear suspension: Leaf springs, tube shocks and solid rear axle. Drum brakes. Steel disk wheels. Axle ratio: 3.55:1.

**OPTIONS**

RPO 102A Signal-seeking AM radio (\$145.15). RPO Di-

rectional signals (\$16.75). RPO 101A Heater (\$91.40). RPO 422A windshield washer (\$11.85). RPO 420A parking brake alarm (\$5.65). RPO 313M Powerglide automatic transmission (\$178.35). RPO 290B 6.70 x 15 white sidewall tires. RPO 421A Courtesy light (\$4.05)

**HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES**

Production of 1954 Corvettes began December 23, 1953. Approximately 80 percent of 1954 Corvettes were painted White. About 15 percent had a Pennant Blue exterior with Shoreline Beige interior. About three percent were Red with a Red interior and some Black cars with Red interiors were built. In addition, Metallic Green and Metallic Brown cars are thought to have been built. The 1954 Corvette did not achieve its sales target of 10,000 cars. In fact, over 1,100 were unsold when the year ended. A 1954 Corvette could go from 0 to 60 mph in 11 seconds and from 0 to 100 mph in 41 seconds.



1954 CORVETTE					
Model Number	Body/Style Number	Body Type & Seating	Factory Price	Shipping Weight	Production Total
2934	2934	2-dr Rds-2P	\$2,774	2,705 lbs.	3,640



Nicky Wright



*1954 Corvette roadster, all models were built with windshield washers*



*1954 Corvette roadster, all models were available with beige tops*