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Corvette

The Early Years

1953-59

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CORVETTE

The Early Years: 1953-1959



Rocky Wright

1953 Corvette roadster

1953

The new 1953 Corvette had a fiberglass body, chrome-framed grille with 13 heavy vertical chrome bars, rounded front fenders with recessed headlights with wire screen covers, no side windows or outside door handles, a wrap-around windshield and protruding, fender-integrated taillights. The interior featured a floor-mounted shifter for the Powerglide two-speed automatic transmission and oil pressure, battery, water temperature and fuel gauges, plus a tachometer and clock. Each 1953 Corvette was virtually hand-built and a lot of minor changes were made during

the production run. All of the first-year cars were Polo White with Sportsman Red interiors. All had black canvas convertible tops which manually folded into a storage space behind the seats. Other 1953-only features included special valve covers, a one-piece carburetor linkage and a small trunk mat. Short exhaust extensions were used on all '53s (and early '54s) because they were prone to drawing exhaust fumes into the car through the vent windows. A black oilcloth window storage bag was provided to protect the 1953 Corvette's removable plastic side windows when stowed in the trunk.

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 1953 models. The second and third symbols indicated the model year, for example 53 = 1953. The fourth symbol identified the assembly plant as follows: F = Flint, Michigan. (All 1953 Corvettes were made



1953 Corvette roadster; note the factory mesh-covered headlights.

in Flint). The last six symbols were digits representing the sequential production number. Corvettes for 1953 were numbered E53F001001 to E53F001300. Engine numbers were found on the right-hand side of the crankcase behind the distributor. The engine numbers for 1953 models used the prefix LAY. 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. Carburetor: Three Carter Type YH one-barrel Model 2066S (early models); Model 2055S (later models).

CHASSIS FEATURES

Wheelbase: 102 inches. Overall length: 167 inches. Front tread: 57 inches. Rear tread: 58.8 inches. Steel disk wheels.



1953 Corvette 235.5-cid 150-hp inline six-cylinder engine



1953 Corvette roadster interior



Nicky Wright

1953 Corvette roadster, all models came with whitewall tires and two-spinner hubcaps



Jerry Heasley

1953 Corvette roadster, all models were Polo White with Sportsman Red interiors

Tires: 6.70 x 15. Front suspension: Coil springs, tubular shock absorbers and stabilizer bar. Rear suspension: Leaf springs, tube shocks and solid rear axle. Drum brakes. Axle ratio: 3.55:1.

OPTIONS

Signal-seeking AM radio (\$145.15). Heater (\$91.40). White sidewall tires.

HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES

The first Corvette was built on June 30, 1953 at the Flint, Michigan, assembly plant. In addition to being the first, it is the rarest Corvette. Model year production peaked at 300 units. About 200 of the 300 Corvettes made in 1953 are known to exist today, although the first two cars built are missing. The

'53s were constructed in an area at the rear of Chevrolet's customer delivery garage on Van Slyke Ave., in Flint, Michigan. Calendar-year sales of 300 cars was recorded. By early 1954, Chevrolet announced that 315 Corvettes had been built and that production of the model had been shifted to the assembly plant in St. Louis, Missouri. Programming, at that point, called for production of 1,000 Corvettes per month in St. Louis by June 1954. The company predicted that 10,000 per year could be built and sold. Zora Arkus-Duntov joined Chevrolet Motor Division in 1953 and would become chief engineer of the Corvette.

1953 CORVETTE					
Model Number	Body/Style Number	Body Type & Seating	Factory Price	Shipping Weight	Production Total
2934	2934	2-dr Rds-2P	9498	2705	300



Nicky Wright

1953 Corvette roadster, all models came with AM radios