

# Old Cars

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Weekly News & Marketplace

## EXPRESS

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# Corvette

## The Early Years

### 1953-59

P. 10



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Jerry Heasley

**1955 Corvette roadster, one of only 700 built**

# 1955

Corvette styling remained the same as last year's model. The big news was the availability of a V-8 engine. An enlarged gold "V" within the word "Chevrolet" on the front fenders was a quick way to tell the V-8 powered (12-volt electrical system) cars from those with a six-cylinder engine (and six-volt electrical system). On the 1955 V-8 cars the frame was modified to allow room for the fuel pump.

## 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 55 = 1955. 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 1955 were numbered VE55S001001 to VE55S001700 (1955 six-cylinder cars had no "V" prefix). Engine numbers were found on the right-hand side of the crankcase behind the distributor. The engine numbers for 1955 six-cylinder cars used the same YG suffix as 1954 models. The engine numbers for 1955 V-8 cars used the suffix FG (Powerglide automatic transmission) or GR (manual transmission). 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.

NOTE: Total production of both models was 700. At least a half dozen six-cylinder Corvettes were built as 1955 models.

## ENGINES

**SIX:** Inline. Six-cylinder. Overhead valve. Cast-iron block. Displacement: 235.5 cid. Bore and stroke: 3.75 x 3.00 in. Compression ratio: 8.0:1. Brake hp: 155 at 5000 rpm. Single breaker-point ignition system. Four main bearings. Solid valve lifters. Carburetor: Three Carter one-barrel Model 3706989.

**V-8:** Overhead valve. Cast-iron block. Displacement:

265 cid. Bore and stroke: 3.56 x 3.96 in. Compression ratio: 8.0:1. Brake hp: 195 at 4200 rpm. Single breaker-point ignition system. Five main bearings. Solid valve lifters. Carburetor: Rochester four-barrel Model 7008005.

### TRANSMISSIONS

**MANUAL TRANSMISSION:** A three-speed manual transmission became standard late in the model year. A single dry-plate clutch was used with manual transmission.

**AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION:** A two-speed Powerglide automatic transmission was optional.

### CHASSIS FEATURES

**Wheelbase:** 102 inches. Overall length: 167 inches. Front tread: 57 inches. Rear tread: 58.8 inches. Tires: 6.70 x 15. Frame: Welded steel box-section type. 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 Directional signals (\$16.75). RPO 101A Heater (\$91.40). RPO 102A Signal-seeking AM radio (\$145.15). 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 (\$26.90). RPO 421A Courtesy light (\$4.05).

### HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES

Production of 1955 Corvettes began October 28, 1954. New-for-1955 Corvette colors included Copper with a Beige interior and Harvest Gold (yellow) with a Green and Yellow interior. Cars with a Red exterior now featured a Light Beige interior. The interior material was called Elascofab. Soft convertible tops were offered in canvas and vinyl. New top colors included White and Dark Green. A V-8 powered 1955 Corvette could go from 0-to-60 mph in 8.7 seconds; from 0-to-100 mph in 24.7 seconds.

1955 CORVETTE					
Model Number	Body/Style Number	Body Type & Seating	Factory Price	Shipping Weight	Production Total
Six-Cylinder					
2934	2934	2-Dr-2P	\$2,774	2,705 lbs.	Note 1
V-8					
2934	2934	2-dr Rdo-2P	\$2,969	2,870 lbs.	Note 1
NOTE: Total production of both models was 700. At least a half dozen six-cylinder Corvettes were built as 1955 models.					



1955 Corvette roadster with 265-cid/195-hp V-8 engine

Jerry Hensley