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The opening pages of

1965 Shelby GT350 Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1965 Shelby Gt350

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Wheelbase	108 in — Venice, California build
Production	562 total (525 street + 37 GT350R competition) Identifier SFM5S Shelby serial + underlying Ford VIN + SAAC registry Single-year coverage….

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This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1965 Shelby GT350 — one model, one year, nothing else. Every specification in this guide was checked against marque references, factory literature excerpts, and enthusiast documentation before it was written.

Our operating ethic is simple: we don't lie and we don't steal, we offer value. That means three things for this guide. First, no invented specifications — every number has a source. Second, where reputable sources disagree, the disagreement is disclosed in the text and in the Sources, Conflicts & Omissions section rather than papered over. Third, where a detail could not be verified, it is omitted and the omission is recorded — an honest gap beats a confident fabrication.

How to use this guide: start with the VIN and fender-tag (or door data plate) decoding sections to establish exactly what your car was when it left the factory. Use the engine, transmission, axle, paint, and casting sections to verify that what is on the car today matches what should be there. Use the rust and restoration-sequence sections to plan the work. And keep this guide in the shop — it is a working document, not a coffee-table book.

A final note: these cars are sixty years old. Parts have been swapped, tags have been lost, and memories have faded. Trust

the metal — casting numbers, date codes, and stampings — over stories. When in doubt, photograph everything and verify

against the factory service manual for your year.

1. Manufacturer History: Shelby

Shelby American was founded in 1962 by Carroll Shelby — Texas chicken farmer, champion racing driver, and the most forceful personality in American performance history. His formula was disarmingly simple: take a lightweight European or American chassis and install far more American V8 than anyone thought sensible.

The legend started with the Cobra: a British AC Ace body stuffed with a Ford 260, then 289, then the all-conquering 427. When Ford needed a racing version of the Mustang for SCCA B-Production, Shelby got the contract — and the GT350 was born: a 1965 Mustang fastback transformed at Shelby's Venice (later Los Angeles) facility with a 306-horsepower 289, suspension rework, and competition intent. The 1967 GT500 added big-block FE power to the formula.

From 1968 the Shelbys were built by Ford (at the A.O. Smith facility in Michigan) rather than by Shelby American in California — a distinction that matters for correctness, because the 1968-1970 cars carry Ford engineering numbers and assembly practices alongside Shelby serial numbers. Production ran through 1970, when unsold 1969 models were re-VIN'd as 1970s.

Carroll Shelby's name is on more performance milestones than any other American's — the Cobra, the GT350/GT500, the GT40 program he ran for Ford, the Dodge performance cars of the 1980s, the Viper's spiritual lineage. Shelby Mustangs are blue-chip collector cars, and factory-correct restoration is supported by the Shelby American Automobile Club (SAAC) registry, which documents individual cars.

1965 Shelby Shelby

2. Model History: Shelby Shelby

Carroll Shelby's operation began in 1962 with the Cobra — a British AC Ace body stuffed with a Ford V8 — and by 1964 Shelby American was Ford's racing spearhead, running the Cobras, the Daytona Coupes, and the GT40 program. The Mustang's 1964 launch gave Shelby his next platform: in 1965 he took the fastback Mustang, stripped it, stiffened it, and dropped in the 289 High Performance V8. The GT350 was

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nd with it, the template for every Shelby Mustang that followed.
The 1965-1966 GT350s were built at Shelby's Venice (later Los Angeles airport) facility: Mustangs shipped from Ford's San Jose plant, transformed by Shelby American, and sold through Ford dealers with full factory warranty. The 1965 cars were barely civilized — 306 horsepower, Detroit Locker, Koni shocks, no rear seat — and the 37 GT350R competition cars dominated SCCA B-Production. For 1966 the GT350 gained civility (rear seat, optional automatic, Hertz rental cars) without losing its edge.
For 1967 the Shelby moved upmarket: the GT350 continued with the 289, and the new GT500 brought the 428 Police Interceptor big-block — 355 horsepower of FE torque in the redesigned 1967 body. The 1968 GT500KR ('King of the Road') answered the 428 Cobra Jet with the mid-year introduction of Ford's newest big-block. These are the cars the SAAC registry documents and the market rewards: verify the Shelby serial against the underlying Ford VIN and the registry before paying any premium.

3. What Makes the 1965 Unique

The 1965 GT350 is the original — the first Shelby Mustang, built at Shelby American's Venice, California facility from San Jose-built K-code fastbacks. It was barely a street car: 306 Shelby-rated horsepower (271 Ford-rated) from the 289 High Performance V8, the aluminum-case T-10M four-speed, a 3.89 Detroit Locker, Koni adjustable shocks, 15-inch wheels, relocated front suspension pickup points, and no rear seat, no radio, no compromises. The 1965 GT350 is the rawest, most valuable regular-production Shelby Mustang ever built.
The 1965 mechanical package: the 289 Hi-Po (4.00 x 2.87 inches, 10.5:1 compression) with the high-rise aluminum intake, the Holley 715-cfm carburetor, and Tri-Y headers; the T-10M aluminum four-speed (all 1965 street cars were four-speeds — no automatics); the 3.89 Detroit Locker rear axle; and the full Shelby suspension treatment. Every component is 1965-specific: the Venice-built cars carry details that changed when production moved, and the registry documents the running changes.
The 37 GT350R competition cars are the crown jewels: acid-dipped bodies, Plexiglas windows, the full race preparation, and the SCCA B-Production dominance that made the GT350's reputation. A genuine R-model is a seven-figure car; a street car with R-model aspirations is a tribute. Verify the Shelby serial (SFM5S), the underlying Ford VIN, and the SAAC registry before paying any premium — the registry is the only authority, and it has seen every fake.
For the concours restorer, the 1965 GT350's one-year-only details are the trap: the Venice assembly, the battery relocated to the trunk, the rear-seat delete, the side exhaust, the fiberglass hood, and the
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1965-specific instrumentation. Every one of these changed in 1966 or later — a 1965 restored with 1966 parts is wrong in ways judges see immediately. The SAAC registry documents the 1965 running changes by Shelby serial; photograph and document every component before disassembly, because the 1965 parts are the hardest Shelby parts to source correctly.
The 1965 GT350's racing record is the reason the street cars exist: Shelby American campaigned the GT350R in SCCA B-Production in 1965 — Ken Miles, Bob Bondurant, and the Shelby American crew winning the B-Production national championship. The street cars are homologation hardware: the Tri-Y headers, the relocated suspension pickup points, the Detroit Locker, and the deleted rear seat were all racing decisions. Every deletion must be present as a deletion, and every performance component must be the 1965-specific part, because the 1965 parts are the rarest and the most often substituted.
The 1965 GT350's documentation chain is the authentication standard: the riveted Shelby serial plate (SFM5S), the Ford VIN plate and door data plate of the underlying San Jose K-code fastback, and the SAAC registry entry — all three must agree, and the registry is the final authority. Original Shelby American paperwork (the factory invoice, dealer delivery documents) adds value where it survives, but

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