FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1964 Chevrolet Corvette Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1964 Chevrolet Corvette

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Wheelbase	98.0 inches VIN decoding ■ Trim tag ■ Engines ■ Paint & trim ■ Production ■ Casting numbers ■ Torque specs ■ Rust areas ■ Restoration…
Engines	Four 327-ci V8s: 250, 300, 365, and 375 hp VIN format 12-character: 40837S / 40867S + sequence Assembly St. Louis, Missouri
Production	22,229 (8,304 coupes / 13,925 convertibles)

How to Use This Guide

This guide covers one model year -- the 1964 Chevrolet Corvette -- and nothing else. Every specification, code, and production figure applies to cars built for the 1964 model year; where a part or practice carried over from 1963 or continued into 1965, the text says so.

Work in this order: (1) Decode the VIN (Section 4) and the trim tag (Section 5) before you believe anything about the car. (2) Verify the engine, transmission, and axle against Sections 6, 7, and 10 -- the VIN, the pad stamp, the casting numbers, and the dates must all agree. (3) Check the car's colors and options against Sections 8 and 9. (4) Inspect the frame and birdcage (Section 12) before you spend money -- structural repair dwarfs every other cost. (5) Follow the restoration sequence (Section 13) in order; it is written to keep you from doing work twice.

Where the sources disagreed, Section 20 tells you -- this guide reports conflicts instead of hiding them.

1. Chevrolet: The Division That Built America's Sports Car

Chevrolet was founded in 1911 by Swiss-born racing driver Louis Chevrolet and ousted General Motors founder William C. Durant, who needed a new car company after losing control of GM. The bowtie badge appeared in 1913 — Durant claimed he saw the shape on a French hotel wallpaper — and by 1918 Chevrolet was profitable enough for Durant to use it to buy his way back into General Motors. Chevrolet has been GM's volume division ever since: the cars that paid for everything else.

The division's engineering reputation was built on durable, affordable power. The 1929 'Stovebolt' overhead-valve six gave Chevrolet buyers modern valve gear at Ford Model A prices, and the six-cylinder lineage carried the division through the Depression and World War II. After the war, Chevrolet owned the low-price field with the Bel Air and the Tri-Five Chevrolets of 1955-1957 — cars that still define the American automobile in the popular imagination.

The defining moment came in 1955, when chief engineer Ed Cole's small-block V8 debuted: 265 cubic inches, lightweight, compact, and endlessly developable. The small-block grew to 283, 327, 350, and 400 cubic inches and powered everything from family wagons to the Corvette; it remains the most-produced V8 architecture in history. Chevrolet followed with the big-block 'porcupine' heads on the 1961 409, the 348/409 W-series, and the 1965 Mark IV big-block — the 396 that debuted in the 1965 Corvette, then the 427 and 454 that powered the muscle-car era.

By the 1960s Chevrolet was, by far, America's best-selling car brand, and its performance image was engineered as deliberately as its engines. The 1963 AMA racing ban pushed factory competition underground, but engineers like Zora Arkus-Duntov kept building faster Chevrolets through the back door of Regular Production Options — the COPO system, the L88, the ZL1, the ZR-1. The Corvette was Chevrolet's halo: every innovation that mattered, from fuel injection to four-wheel disc brakes, reached production in a Corvette first.

1964 Chevrolet Corvette

All Corvettes of the 1964-1973 era were assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, where fiberglass body production and final assembly shared one roof. The men and women of the St. Louis plant built every car this guide series covers — the peak Sting Rays and the early Stingrays alike — before Corvette production moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky, in mid-1981.

The W-series big-block — the 348 of 1958 and the 409 of 1961 — gave Chevrolet its NASCAR and drag-racing weapons, and the 409's 'porcupine' canted-valve heads pointed directly at the Mark IV. When the 396 debuted in the 1965 Corvette, it was the first of the new big-block family: stronger bottom end, better breathing, and a growth path to 427 and 454 cubic inches. Every big-block in this

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es descends from that 1965 Mark IV.

's performance image was no accident. Product planners understood that a 16-year-old who dreamed about a 425-hp Corvette in 1965 became a Bel Air buyer in 1970 and a Caprice buyer in 1980 — the halo sold the mainstream. That is why the Corvette got the good hardware first and why Chevrolet protected the Corvette's primacy: no other Chevrolet could outrun the flagship, a rule enforced by everything from carburetor sizing to the famous internal ban on the Camaro beating the Corvette.

For the restorer, Chevrolet's scale is the good news. The division built millions of small-blocks and hundreds of thousands of big-blocks, the parts interchange across the Chevrolet line is the deepest in the hobby, and the factory documentation — assembly manuals, parts catalogs, dealer ordering guides — is the best-preserved of any American make. The challenge is not finding parts; it is finding the right parts, with the right numbers and the right dates, for the exact car in your garage. That is what this guide is for.

2. Corvette Model History

The first-generation Corvette (1953-1962) began as Harley Earl's 1953 EX-122 Motorama dream car, rushed into production in Flint, Michigan: 300 hand-built Polo White roadsters with fiberglass bodies and the Blue Flame inline six. At $3,498, the 1953 Corvette was expensive, slow, and crudely finished — and it nearly died. Production moved to St. Louis for 1954, but only 3,640 cars found buyers across 1954-1955 combined.

The 1955 arrival of the 265-ci small-block V8 — 195 horsepower with the optional Power Pack — saved the car from cancellation; Ford's Thunderbird had shown there was a market, and Chevrolet finally had an engine worthy of the fiberglass. The 1956-1957 redesign gave the Corvette its side coves, roll-up windows, and a genuine sports-car stance; the 1957 fuel-injected 283, rated at one horsepower per cubic inch, was the engineering coming-of-age. Four-speeds, limited-slip differentials, and heavy-duty suspensions followed.

The 1958-1962 Corvettes — the quad-headlamp cars — grew into boulevard bruisers: the 283 grew to 327 in 1962, fuel injection peaked at 360 hp, and the 1962's 327/360 remains the ultimate expression of the solid-axle Corvette. By 1962 the Corvette had earned its place; the 1963 Sting Ray 1964 Chevrolet Corvette

would make it immortal. For the restorer of a C2 or early C3, the C1 matters because it established the Corvette's conventions: fiberglass bodywork, the St. Louis plant, the small-block V8, and the Regular Production Option system that let buyers order race-bred hardware on a street car.

The second-generation Corvette — the 1963-1967 Sting Ray — is the car that made the Corvette immortal. Styled under Bill Mitchell with Larry Shinoda's pen from the Q-Corvette and Sting Ray racer concepts, and engineered under Zora Arkus-Duntov, the C2 introduced the coupe body style, hidden headlamps, and — most important — independent rear suspension on the production Corvette. The 1963 coupe's split rear window lasted exactly one model year; Duntov hated the divider, Mitchell loved it, and 1964 got a single piece of glass.

The C2's mechanical evolution reads like a muscle-car arms race. Four-wheel drum brakes gave way to standard four-wheel discs in 1965 — the first American production car so equipped. The 396-ci Turbo-Jet big-block arrived for one year only in 1965 (425 hp), then grew into the 427 for 1966-1967 in 390, 400, 435, and 430 (L88) ratings. Mechanical fuel injection ran through 1965; side exhaust debuted in 1965; Tri-Power 427s and the L88/L89 aluminum-head specials closed out 1967. Every C2 was built in St. Louis, every one on the 98-inch wheelbase, and every one with a fiberglass body over a steel ladder frame.

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