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1970 Shelby GT350 Restoration Guide

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1970 Shelby Gt350

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Production

About 315-319 GT350s among roughly 789 re-VIN'd cars — disputed, see Conflicts Conversion Unsold
1969 cars re-VIN'd by Kar Kraft — not new 1970...

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Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

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About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1970 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 Shelybs 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.

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2. Model History: Shelby GT350

The GT350 was born in 1965 as Ford's answer to SCCA B-Production racing: a Mustang fastback transformed at Shelby American's Venice, California facility with a 306-horsepower solid-lifter 289, a reworked suspension, and competition hardware. The street cars that followed made the formula famous — a small, light Mustang with far more engine and handling than its price suggested.



...ought the first Hertz GT350H rental cars and a more street-oriented package, and 1967 moved the Boss onto the redesigned Mustang body shell. The 1967 cars were the last built by Shelby American in Los Angeles; from 1968, base cars came from Ford's Metuchen plant and were completed by the A.O. Smith facility in Michigan — a change that shows up in assembly details and engineering numbers. The engines tell the decade's story: the high-winding 289 gave way to the 302 in 1968, and 1969 brought both the new SportsRoof body treatment and the 351 Windsor V8. When the 1969 model year ended with unsold cars on hand, Ford had Kar Kraft update them with new 1970 VIN plates, hood stripes, and a front spoiler, and sold them as 1970 models — the end of the original Shelby Mustang line.

3. What Makes the 1970 Unique

The 1970 GT350 is not a newly assembled car. When the 1969 model year ended with unsold Shelbys on hand, Ford had Kar Kraft convert them into 1970 models: new 1970 VIN plates and serials (0F02M48xxxx SportsRoof, 0F03M48xxxx convertible), twin black hood stripes, and a Boss 302-style front chin spoiler, with revised distributor and carburetor details reported as part of the update. The mechanical package is the 1969 M-code 351 Windsor at 290 horsepower (gross) — nothing about the drivetrain is 1970-new. For the restorer, the critical fact is the paper trail: these cars retain 1969 build dates and 1969 component-date chronology. Casting dates, trim tags, and date-coded parts must read as 1969 production — forcing 1970-dated parts onto a re-VIN'd car is a correctness error, not an upgrade. Verify the 0F02M/0F03M serial against the SAAC registry, which documents the re-VIN'd cars individually. Approximately 789 unsold 1969 Shelbys were re-VIN'd and sold as 1970 models (sources vary — see Conflicts). Within that total, later sources account for about 470 GT500s (380 fastbacks and 90 convertibles), leaving roughly 319 GT350s; an older account breaks the total down as 315 GT350s and 286 GT500s. The disagreement is reported in full in the Conflicts section.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Not new production — unsold 1969 cars converted by Kar Kraft and re-VIN'd as 1970s.
- New 1970 VIN plates and serials (0F02M/0F03M, 48xxxx block).
- Twin black hood stripes added.
- Boss 302-style front chin spoiler added.
- Revised distributor and carburetor details reported.

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- Mechanically identical to the 1969 GT350; 1969 build dates retained.

4. VIN Decoding

1970 Shelbys carry new 1970 VIN plates on 1969-built cars: 0 = 1970, F = Dearborn, 02/03 body, M = 351-4V, in the Shelby-reserved 48xxxx block. The 1969 build date underneath is the tell.

Position

Meaning

Codes / Notes

0

Model year

1970 — new VIN plate on a 1969-built car

F

Assembly plant

Dearborn

02 / 03