

Stock Was . . .

9. The Data Plate and VIN Plate

By Steven Spilatro

In this edition of Stock Was . . . we will look at the cowl data plate, located on the cab cowl below the fuse box, and the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) plate, located on the driver-side doorjamb. And since I will be discussing the VIN, we'll crawl under the FC and look for the hidden VIN, stamped on an undercarriage sill.

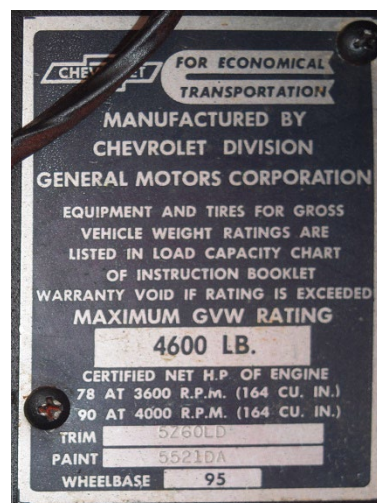
Cowl Data Plate

The data plate, located on the cab front wall below the fuse box, identifies the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) rating, trim code, paint code, wheel base ("95"), and engine horse power. Data plates of '61 - '63 models were usually blue (black rarely) and stated the Horsepower as "65 at 3600 R.P.M. (145 CU IN)". Beginning in '64 the plate showed "68 at 3600 R.P.M. (164 CU IN) 90 at 4000 R.P.M. (164 CU IN)", reflecting ratings for the newly introduced stock 95 HP engine and the performance 110 HP RPO. The new plate used a different text font size and black plates now became dominant, with blue plates used periodically.

'61 - '63 #3785498



'64 - '65 #3844960



I used data collected with the FC registry to track the type of fastener that attached the plate to the cowl wall. The plates in early '61 FCs were riveted in place, but later screws were used. The transition occurred first in St Louis where the earliest serial number currently in the FC registry that used screws is S116490, which would have been assembled in January '61. The lowest serial number from Flint with screws is F113674, which came off the line in June '61. Through the end of the '61 production clutch-head screws were most commonly used but Philips-head screws are sometimes found; but from '62 - '65 Philips-head screws were used, although occasionally clutch head screws were still used on early '62 FCs.

Trim codes were either “STD” (standard) or the Custom Equipment RPO number, “431” for ’61 – ’62 or “Z60” from ’63 – ’65. The paint code presented the exterior paint RPO, which occurred in a 7xx series (e.g., “721”) in ’61 and a 5xx series (e.g., “521”) other years. Beginning in 1963, the RPO codes were preceded with the number “5” (e.g., “5Z60” and “5528”). Usually, special non-RPO paint or trim were specified with a paint code of “SPC” or “SPEC”; however, there are examples of other paint codes being engraved instead of the standard FC RPOs.

RPO codes were followed by Exception Control Letters (ECLs), such as “431N”. I have written elsewhere about the meaning of these letters and will not go into the details here. From ’61 – ’63 each RPO would be followed by a single letter, and then expanded to two letters in ’64. The Flint assembly line ceased to include the paint code ECL in 1962 and the trim code ECLs in 1964.

Characteristics of Corvair 95 Data Plate of different years

Year	Plate color	Engine displacement	Paint codes ¹	Trim codes ²	ECL ³	Flint ECLs ⁴
1961	blue	145 CU IN	7xx	431 or STD	One letter	With both codes
1962			5xx			Z60 or STD
1963				164 CU IN		
1964	---					
1965						

¹ Custom commercial and fleet paint jobs were coded typically as “SPC” or “SPEC”.

² Occasionally commercial vehicles had a trim code of “SPEC”

³ ECLs were included with the RPO trim codes but not “STD” code.

⁴ The Flint assembly line ceased to include ECLs with the codes.

Data Plate Errors.

While engraving mistakes on the data plates are relatively rare they did occur, and the figure shows several examples. Three are errors to the trim codes: the early RPO as “4E1” instead of “431”, the late RPO as “Z70” instead of “Z60”, and standard trim given as “XTD” instead of “STD”. A paint codes error is illustrated by the pure white RPO written as “52I” instead of “521”. One of the images shows a paint code Exception Control Letter error – “530J” instead of the “530G” appropriate for a Rampside.



Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)

The Corvair 95 Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) was embossed on a chrome plate mounted on the driver-side door jamb and included the year, model, site of assembly, and serial number. It was presented in three different forms. From 1961 – ’63 “CHEVROLET” was centered above the VIN written in the format “yR12ms1xxxx” (e.g., “3R125F10001”) where “y” is the year (1, 2, or 3), “R12m” is the model (R124, R125, or R126), “s” is the assembly site (S or F), and “1xxxx” is the serial number. Note that the truck code “R124” did not distinguish a Rampside and Loadside.

On June 19, 1963, the home office notified Dealers about a new policy of stamping a vehicle delivery date on the VIN tag. Some late ’63 VIN plates have the month and year stamped on the plate. The VIN plate was modified in 1964 with the “CHEVROLET” name left-justified and followed by “DD”, for “Delivery Date”. Additionally, spaces were added before and after the factory designation letter (e.g., “4R124 S 100001”). Dealers were supposed to stamp the vehicle delivery date (month and year) on the plate to document initiation of the warranty period. When done, dates were

Typical '61-'63



'63 with Delivery Date



'64 with Delivery Date



'64 without Delivery Date



1965



Government Contract



often stamped haphazardly most anywhere on the plate, and sometimes including the day also. But evidence shows that dealers generally didn't want to be hassled doing this, and most plates are undated. The third VIN plate in the Figure shows that, at least in Flint, the early style VIN plates were not discarded but still occasionally used well into the '64 production model.

Chevrolet changed its corporate mind again in 1965. The font size for "Chevrolet DD" was diminished, the spaces in the VIN were removed, and the code was rearranged such that the year followed the assembly site. Since at that time assembly was limited to Greenbriers in St Louis, all 1965 VINs begin with "R126S5". Beginning with the 1965 model, VIN plates for all Corvairs were attached via rivets instead of spot welds. The industrial standard was to use special "rosetta head" rivets that had a hexagonal head and not available to the general public. Apparently, arrival of the rosetta head rivets was delayed and initially round head rivets were used instead, and quite possibly production of Corvair 95 ceased before any received the special rivets.

A number of vehicles have been found with an additional code formatted as "C" – "two digit year" – "number". These are believed to be government contracted vehicles. The number appeared to refer to a particular contract and increased sequentially beginning with each production year. The FCs that share the same code may have been fleet vehicles.

Hidden VIN

As protection against vehicle fraud, lest the VIN plate be removed or switched with one from another vehicle, the VIN, or part of it, was also stamped elsewhere on the vehicle. The hidden VIN (also known as the "confidential VIN" or, by GM, as the "Frame VIN") consists of the assembly plant single letter abbreviation plus the vehicle serial production number. Thus, if the VIN were 2R124F101410, "F101410" would be the hidden VIN. It is located on the front underbody left side outer rail, approximately parallel to the position of the relay (boomerang) arm.

