


CLASSIC DRIVER

1953 Chevrolet Corvette - Roadster

Roadster

- Estimate
USD 180 000 - 220 000
- **Year of manufacture** 1953
- **Chassis number** E53F001214
- **Lot number** 507
-
- **Drive** LHD
- **Interior colour** Other
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
-

Description

To be OFFERED AT AUCTION at Auctions America's Fort Lauderdale event, April 1-3, 2016.

Chassis No.
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The early 1950s found a team of GM engineers, headed up by Harley Earl, going to work in creating a fiberglass-bodied car that had the appeal to compete with European sports cars. Harley Earl had excelled at swooping designs since the 1920s and designed aircraft-type features into the car, including round dials blended into a curved dash, all of which were sheltered under a roofline that stood just under 47 inches tall. The six-cylinder engine was positioned rearward, which provided the flat hood a long, sleek look. At the time of its unveiling, it is reported that GM had spent over \$1.5 million on the project; this sum would translate to approximately 13.2 million in today's currency value.

This car was dubbed as the Corvette "Dream Car," and it debuted at the GM Motorama, which was held at the sophisticated Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, and it realized amazing results. Following the first weekend of the Motorama, over 300,000 people had seen the car and spent \$800,000 on GM products. At the conclusion of Motorama's U.S. tour, GM stated that over four million people had seen the car in person.

Production of the two-seat roadster started in June 1953, and by year's end, a total of only 300 Corvettes rolled off the assembly line. This first year of Corvette production signified an important technical milestone: GM was the first major American car manufacturer to successfully mass-produce a vehicle whose underpan and body shell were made entirely of fiberglass.

The Corvette featured GM's 235 cubic inch "Blue Flame" inline six-cylinder engine, which featured triple Carter carburetors and a dual exhaust that is tastefully routed through the rear bodywork at approximately

the same height as the rear bumpers. The engine's respectable 150 horsepower was transferred to the road through a two-speed Powerglide automatic transmission. All 300 Corvettes that were built in 1953 were visually identical; all being finished in Polo White with a Sportsman Red interior. The car was fitted with subtle pieces of chrome trim, which ran along either side, as well as distinctive wire mesh covering the headlights.

When compared to the Jaguar XK 120 and the MGA of the time, the Corvette was proportionally smaller, yet it was more responsive and superior in handling. Unable to resist its appeal, many auto enthusiasts felt compelled to get behind the wheel of the new Corvette. Even though its initial success was impressive, it is doubtful that even those at GM could have thought the Corvette would achieve the success it has over the six-plus decades it has been in production.

The car being offered is reported as the 214th Corvette produced. The car has been owned by the same individual since 1980 and received a restoration in the early 1990s. The Corvette received all of its correct factory finishes during the refurbishment and also has the proper bias-ply wide whitewall tires mounted on steel rims (in red) with the factory two-eared spinner hubcaps. The factory installed Wonder Bar radio, a center-mounted tachometer and speedometer, side curtains and under dash heater. This is a clean and lovely example of a rare car that every Corvette enthusiast would enthusiastically welcome into their collection.

Chevrolet's 1953 Corvette sales literature assured its prospective buyers "outstanding performance... amazing acceleration and very low center of gravity." It further proclaimed that the Corvette was "The American Sports Car of the Future." How right they were in this optimistic prediction, as the Corvette continues to be a force on the world motoring and racing stage to this day. The 1950s were the beginning for America's sports car, and it all began right here.

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