

Corvette's Iconic Emblems:

A 70-Year History of the Insignias of America's Greatest Sports Car*

The emblems representing “America’s sports car” have been revised many times during the Corvette’s existence. This article – to appear in two parts - will trace those changes, some of which were major, others very subtle.

PART I: C1 - C3

The inaugural 1953 Corvette was to sport a round white emblem containing the iconic crossed flags (see photo #1, where the flag on the right was to be a black and white checkered racing flag, the one on the left to have an American flag). However, this version had to be modified given that it is illegal to use the American flag on a commercial product. The result was one containing the Chevrolet bowtie symbol and the fleur-de-lis (photo #2). (The fleur-de-lis is a French symbol for peace and purity). The flags were set in the middle of the circular emblem with the printed word CHEVROLET at the top and Corvette in cursive at the bottom; three horizontal lines were placed just below the fleur-de-lis.



#1



#2

Chevrolet originally wanted to use a family crest from the French ancestry of Louis Chevrolet (photo #3) but could not locate one, so they settled for the fleur-de-lis because of its French origin (although born in Switzerland, at age 9 Chevrolet and family moved to France, where he later developed his mechanical skills).



Photo credit: American Motors Corp., 1918.

#3

For 1956 and 1957, the front and rear emblems again featured a circular emblem, but instead of being flat white, it was placed on glass above a silver metallic surface. A metallic V symbol (to commemorate the switch to a V8 engine in '55) was placed on top of the crossed flags (#4).



#4

The nose emblems for 1958-1960 (as well as the rear emblems of 1958-1962) still had Chevrolet at top and Corvette at bottom, but the latter was now capitalized and not written in cursive (#4).



#4

This design remained the same until 1961, when the rear emblem remained the same but the nose emblem was no longer a circle emblem; instead, designers chose a cut-out of the flags and V, without any words (#5).



#5

In 1962 the nose emblem was changed again. The V was removed and the flags were featured in front of a circular outline (#6).



#6

1963 brought the C2 generation as well as redesigned nose and rear emblems. The nose emblem was formed by the two flags in a V-shape; inside the V was a triangle with red, white, and blue horizontal stripes. The rear emblem was now placed on the gas lid (a change that would last until the introduction of the C5 in 1997). The entire gas lid formed the emblem, which was a large circle matching the color of the car, with a simple picture of the crossed flags inside (photos #7 & #8)



#7



#8

In 1964 the nose emblem remained the same, but the fuel door emblem no longer matched the color of the car. The same flags were shown inside of a smaller metallic circle, which was inside a larger metallic circle with a ripple-like circle pattern (#9).



#9

1965 saw changes in both rear and nose emblems. The fuel door emblem featured the same crossed flags, this time inside a small white circle inside of larger black and silver metallic decorative circles (#10), while the nose emblem was changed to a simple figure of the crossed flags (#11).



#10



#11

In 1966 the nose emblem stayed the same but the fuel door harkened back to one similar to 1964 - but with lines in the outer circle reaching outward (whereas ripple-like circles had been used in '64) (#12).



#12

In 1967 flags on the nose were changed slightly, from simple crossed flags to a flatter, more horizontal design – a design that would remain through 1972. Also in this year, the fuel door was no longer taken up entirely by the rear emblem. The rear emblem, consisting of the same flags as on the nose, remained a fixed part of the fuel door. Photo #13



#13

In 1968 (onset of the C3 Gen.) the fuel door emblem would appear the same, but it was actually a bolt-on piece rather than a fixed piece. This design would remain through 1973 (#14).



#14

The 1973 model brought a redesigned nose emblem with a circle containing crossed flags on top of a red starburst design. Around the edge were the words CHEVROLET MOTOR DIVISION * CORVETTE * in silver letters on a black surface (#15). This nose emblem was also used in 1974. There was no rear emblem in 1974.



#15

The nose emblem in 1975 was similar to that of 1974 but the words were removed from the edge, allowing for the flags and starburst design to be larger. The word CORVETTE was added in silver under the flags (#16). The same emblem was used on the gas lid. Also, the nose and rear emblems remained the same in 1976.



#16

In 1977, both nose and rear emblems were replaced once again with the basic crossed flags. However, the flags were longer and only one horizontal line was shown under the fleur-de-lis, rather than three (#17).



#17

1978 commemorated the 25th (silver) anniversary Corvette, so the same flags as in 1977 were used but this time set on a decorative metallic circle. The circle featured a starburst design behind the flags, and above the flags was a “25.” Around the edges were the words CORVETTE at top and 1953 ANNIVERSARY 1978 at bottom. This same design was at both nose and rear (#18). The 1979 model returned to the same flags that were used in 1977 for nose and rear.



#18

1980 brought another redesign of both nose and rear emblems. Flags were still used for each but they were even longer and thinner than before. The nose emblem formed a slight V shape with a black outline, while the rear was nearly horizontal across the top and had a chrome outline. #19.



#19

The nose emblem stayed the same in 1981, while the rear emblem got a black outline and darker appearance. (#20)



(#20)

For 1982, the last year of the C3 body style, the emblem again had crossed flags but they were drastically changed from the previous year, being shorter, taller, and very simple. For the first time, the famed fleur-de-lis was removed from the red flag, which now only contained Chevy's bowtie symbol (photo #21). Emblems were the same on both nose and rear - except for those on the 6,759 Collector Edition Corvettes that were produced to commemorate the last year of the C3. These cars had the same rear emblem and on the nose emblem were the same flags surrounded by a black circle outline. On the top of the circle read CORVETTE and on the bottom was COLLECTOR EDITION in yellow letters (photo #22).



#21



#22

*Note that the scope of this article does not include descriptions or images of any trim script or letters, but only those emblems appearing on vehicles' nose and rear sections.

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PART 2: C4 – C8

For the onset of the C4 in 1984 (no Corvettes were commercially available in 1983; only one preproduction model exists, located in its National Museum), designers brought yet another major alteration of the emblem. The flags were still featured, but without the poles (“X”) that had always appeared before; they also lost the “blowing in the wind” rippling effect. Furthermore, the red and checkered flags were reversed, the red now on the right (containing the bowtie) and checkered on the left. These flags formed a very slight V shape and were surrounded by a black circular outline (photo #23). These emblems remained the same until 1991.



#23

In 1991 the emblem basically remained the same, but the red flag with silver bowtie was replaced by a black flag with a red bowtie outline (#24).



#24

These emblems remained the same on both nose and rear through 1996 - exceptions being the 40th Anniversary model (which was ruby red, both inside and out), the Pace Car version, and Grand Sport, which featured the same emblems but with a silver outline where black would normally be (#25), and also on the one-year only, Seibring Silver 1996 Collector Edition, with the right flag being black and the words COLLECTOR EDITION in silver followed by a small silver bowtie outline (#26).



#25



#26

1997 brought the C5 Corvette and, of course, a redesigned emblem. This version harkened back to those emblems prior to the C4 body style, with the red flag present once again and a return to the fleur-de-lis (with one line underneath) beside the bowtie. The poles (“X”) were once again part of the flags, which were also once again rippled. They were set atop a black circle outline. (#27)



#27

The above design was used on both nose and rear through 2004, with exceptions made for the 2003 50th Anniversary model (a silver plate was extended between the tops of the flags and the outline with ANNIVERSARY 50 engraved in black and filled with a light gold color; see photo #28) and the 2004 (celebrating successes in several 24-hour races at Le Mans; #29) commemorative editions. See note under photo #29.



#28



#29

NOTE: the above photo shows the words HEURES DU MANS 2 GTS WINS in white and 24:00 in the middle in red. Combined they mean “24 hours of Le Mans,” while the “2 GTS wins” celebrates the fact that the C5-R Corvette had won the Le Mans twice in the GTS class - once in 2001 and once in 2002 - as well as taking other several other top spots from 2000-2003.

Also note that C5 models no longer featured the rear emblem on the gas lid. The emblem was still placed in the same area, but the gas lid was moved to the side of the car.

The C6 body style, introduced in 2005, saw yet another new design for the Corvette emblem. This emblem was once again the two flags but without a circle outline. The red flag featured both a brighter and darker shade of red, with the brighter red extending down the pole of the flag. The fleur-de-lis remained beside the bowtie (no horizontal lines were underneath) and in gold (as was the bowtie). A chrome outline accented the flags. This design – sometimes termed the “waterfall” emblem - continued for both nose and rear emblems through 2013 (photo #30).



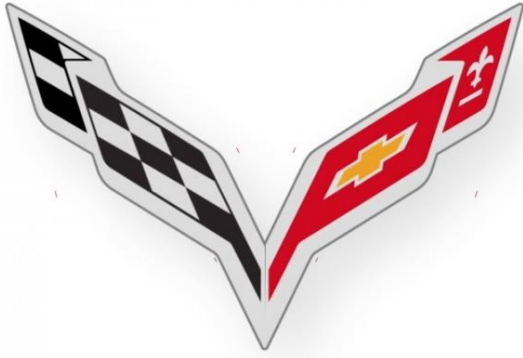
#30

The Chevrolet Motor Company, founded on November 3, 1911, announced in April 2011 that it would celebrate its 100th anniversary by introducing a “Centennial Edition” in 2012. The package was offered in all models and had a Carbon Flash Metallic finish with satin black graphics, special badging, red calipers, and other accents. Its emblem had the number 100 replacing the traditional fleur-de-lis symbol (#31).



#31

The C7 generation, from 2014-2019, brought a continual merging of the two flags along the same Y axis, with the bowtie; however, the emblem became much more angular, with the flags at a 60-degree angle with a light-colored border and the edges sharpened to points; the fleur-de-lis also received a different look (#32a). This emblem was available in either a bright traditional version or a Carbon Flash variety with blacked-out accents (32b), often termed “stealth mode.”

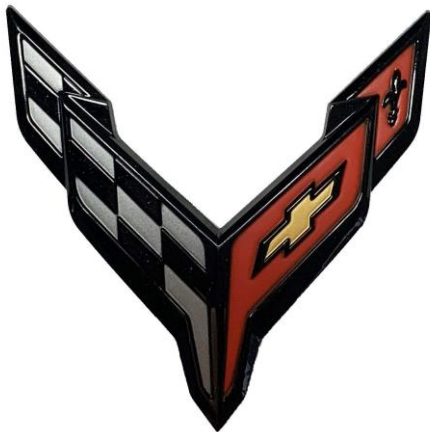


#32a



#32b

The C8 emblem, beginning in 2020, still contained two flags – one with the Chevrolet bowtie and a fleur-de-lis, the other a checkered flag. But the C8 emblem’s appearance was more aggressive than the C7, with the flags closer together and the point where they meet more pronounced (#33a). Like its predecessor, the C8 emblem was made available in either a bright traditional version or a Carbon Flash (“stealth”) variety with blacked-out accents (#33b).



#33a



#33b

SUMMARY

This 70-year retrospective of the iconic Corvette symbol demonstrates that its intended purpose was always to embrace its racing-inspired objectives (i.e., the checkered flag) as well as the origins of the company's founder - a visual emblem of a brand that would become known the world over. It has always been a logo that flies forward, representing speed and power. Although designers would often change emblems' slope angles and inscriptions, these Corvette speed and power messages can be said to have endured over the Corvette's 70 years of existence.

*Note that the scope of this article does not include descriptions or images of any trim script or letters, but only those emblems appearing on vehicles' nose and rear sections.

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