

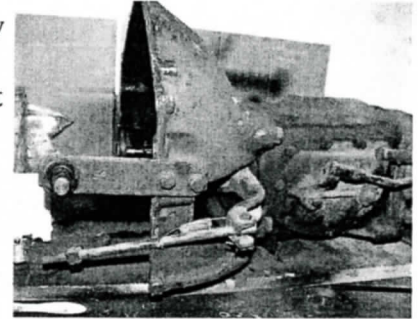
1st article

Bell Housing Production Codes

John Yglesias, Fairfax, VA

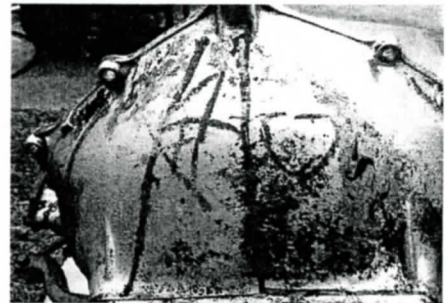
(This article may not be reproduced without the express permission of the author)

Job numbers on firewalls and door panels and color codes in green crayon behind the passenger seat are things I have heard about for years and actually experienced, but production codes on a C-1 bell housing? I have owned a base motor 1962 for thirteen years that has been in the family since the day it was purchased. I was sitting in the passenger seat when my dad drove home from the dealership. In the on-going, snail-like pace of my restoration, I started cleaning 45 years of grime off my bell housing, transmission and tail shaft, helped along by the road draft tube I am sure.



A friend and I used a power washer (not recommended) to remove the non-typical finish. The bell housing showed signs of overspray which I expected to find and some paint runs which I thought was definitely more typical than usually seen on the judging field. What we didn't expect to find as shown below was the number 4 in Chevrolet orange and several characters in brown. The first character looked like a "J" but we were less certain about the second character. Could be a "J", or a "U" or maybe the whole thing was a "W". Well, I had never heard of any kind of production codes on bell housings so I started researching. My first stop was the NCRS Discussion Board and Archives. In June 2004, Peter Lindahl responded to the topic, "C1 Bell housing/Engine Suffix Handwritten Codes", stating in part, "...The bell housing was painted about half way and quite uniformly and the writing is both on (under) the painted and on the unpainted surface." This was exciting but reading through the thread it became apparent that the discussion was focused on engine suffix codes and not bell housing codes.

In "Corvette by the Numbers", Alan L. Colvin states that 1961-1962 used only one bell housing – cast # 3779553 with the number hidden by the transmission when attached. A review of the relevant sections of Noland Adams' "The Complete Corvette Restoration & Technical Guide – Vol. 1 1953 through 1962" shows many stands with assembled engines and bell housings (completely painted). There is no discussion under RPO 685 Four-speed transmission regarding the bell housing. The Assembly Instruction Manual wasn't any help either. The fifth edition of the "1961-62 Corvette Technical Information Manual & Judging Guide" didn't mention anything useful under Bell housing. However, in a table on the prior page it mentions a tag code attached to the lower front side cover bolt for 1962. Calvin's book in the Transmission Section also states that Warner started attaching a tag code to identify the usage and gear ratio in 1962. The codes in the NCRS Manual and Calvin's book are stated as B-B, C-C, D-D, K, J, J-L, or M.



Looking at the codes again I can see that the second character is also a "J". The final interpretation is a "4-speed" with "J-J" gears of 2.54, 1.89, 1.51, and 1.1. In 1961, there were two ratios (standard and close) that can be differentiated by the tail housing (iron and aluminum). In 1962, there were four different ratios offered for the 4-speed so it makes sense for a production code to be located somewhere. Since the engine, bell housing and transmission were assembled prior to attaching to the frame, it makes sense that the code would be on the bell housing.

Have other chapter members discovered similar production codes? Do the Bowtie judges know about these codes?