

Evolution of Early Corvette Hood Latches: 1953 to 1967

Dave Zuberer and Rich Mozzetta



Preface:

I was motivated (DZ) to put this information together (with Rich's collaboration) based on a recent thread on the Corvette Forum: (<http://forums.corvetteforum.com/c1-and-c2-corvettes/3477660-1959-hood-latch-info.html#post1587063676>) wherein it was made apparent that the female hood latches on '58 and early '59 Corvettes were considerably different than those on the later '59s and the solid-axle model years that followed ('60 – '62). The photos of the early '59 latches and the '56 latches and information below regarding the early '59 vs. the later '59 latches were supplied by Rich Mozzetta. The photos of the '60 (a February build date) and '65 (an Aug. 64 build date) latches are from my car. I included photos of the '53 - '57 and '63 - '67 latches for added comparisons. The photos of the '56 latches were supplied by Rich Mozzetta.

Rich and I have also included photos of the male hood latches and some information on ways to prevent hood release cable failures; or, at least how to recover from them. We hope you find this informative and perhaps of use to you in the future.

Finally, we are grateful to Sander Van Ballegooij and Don Simons for the photos of the latches and the early '58 cable support on pg. 8 and to John Hinckley for reviewing this document with us.
Dave Zuberer & Rich Mozzetta

As an introductory frame of reference consider this passage from Noland Adams' seminal reference on the 1953 – 1962 Corvettes:

"The 1958 to mid-'59 hood catch arrangement was mechanically similar to the 1953-'57 version. A tapered metal pin attached to the upper hood plate. In the hood's closed position, the upper pin was forced through a hole in a spring-loaded bracket. Therefore, a friction fit kept the hood from opening. In mid-'59, the upper pin and the entire lower bracket were changed. The upper pin gained a large tapered head; the lower catch assembly had a spring-loaded arm that slid into place behind the head of the pin. The 1958 to mid-'59 hood mounted lock assembly was part number 375504. Both sides of the catch assembly were the same. The lower catch was made of several parts, the largest being the bracket assembly, part number 3753471. The other major part was the catch, the spring-loaded bracket which exerted friction on the pin, which was part number 3753469. Individual parts of the catches which were not interchangeable from right to left (or left to right) were the actuating cable retaining brackets. The second type of 1959 hood latch had a hood-mounted upper plate with the part number 3767843. The lower catch assembly, which mounted on the firewall, was parts number 3767849 (left) and 3767850 (right). The 1958-'60 hood hinges were identical, parts number 3740285 (left) and 3740286 (right). These same hinges were used on all 1958-'62 Corvettes."

"Just when did the hood catches change from the first type to the second? The AIM date is 4-1-59, approximately when serial number J59S106100 was being assembled. Another source states the changeover as being "Serial No. 105060. However, a '59 Corvette owner survey found the changeover to be in the serial number range of 108500 to 109500. All 1959 Corvettes prior to these had the first type of hood catch, and all later cars had the second type. Within this rather large range, either type could be installed. Further investigation is required to narrow down the changeover."

Noland Adams
The Complete Corvette Restoration and Technical Guide – Vol. 1 1953 through 1962, 2nd Ed.
1980. Automobile Quarterly

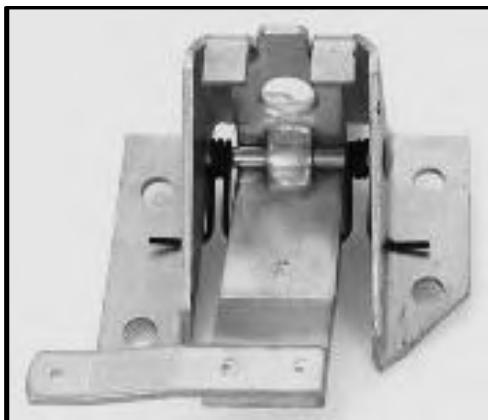
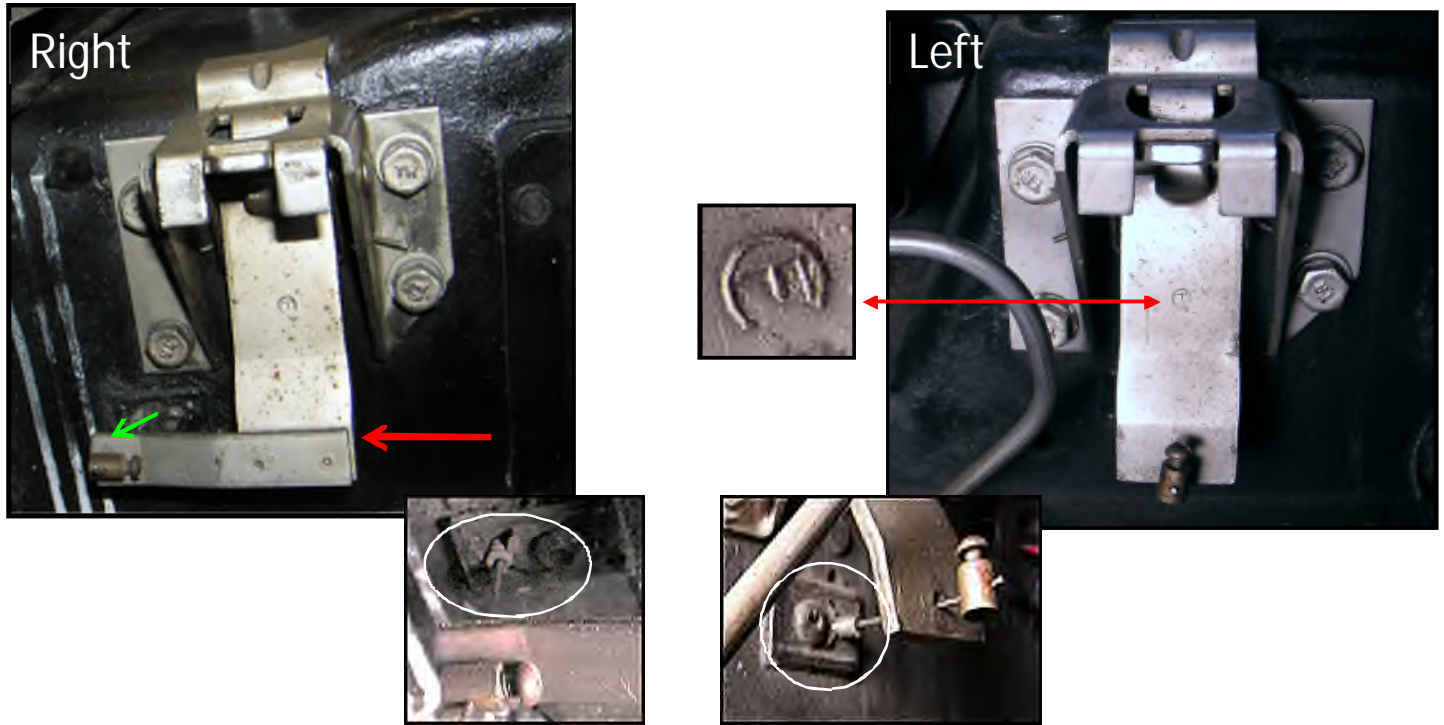
And from the 4th Edition of the 1958-62 NCRS Technical Information Manual and Judging Guide:

Rear Latches & Hood Lock

Rear of hood panel contains two spring-loaded hood lock assemblies. Hood latches are installed at the body firewall. 1958 through about June/July of 1959 used 1st design friction-type latches (as illustrated). (Note that early-1958 models used a shorter lever and different bracing on the latches.) Later production 1959's began using a 2nd design catch (as illustrated) providing better hood retention and greatly reducing lock release pressure. Some overlap of 1st and 2nd design hood lock/latch may have occurred. [Note: see photos top of pg. 9 this document]

Note: We interpret the above info from the TIMJG as early 58's had the latch with the short lock lever and also used the "twisted" cable-support brackets ("bracing") (see pgs. 8 & 9) and the later 58's changed to the long lock lever and the upgraded cable-support brackets. Late 58's and early 59's used the long-lever latches and the upgraded cable supports and in late 1959 the female latches were changed to those that ran through the end of the '62 model year. If anyone has definitive information on these changes and their dates we would like to hear from you. Thanks.

The earlier years: '53 – '57 Female Hood Latches



The female latches for the '53-'57 Corvettes were all the same. Note that the right-side latch has a tab/arm facing outboard for attachment of the cable while the left-side latch does not. The cables exit the firewall behind the latches (insets), pass through the hole in the lock lever and are anchored with brass barrel cable stops. Photos courtesy of Rich Mozzetta.

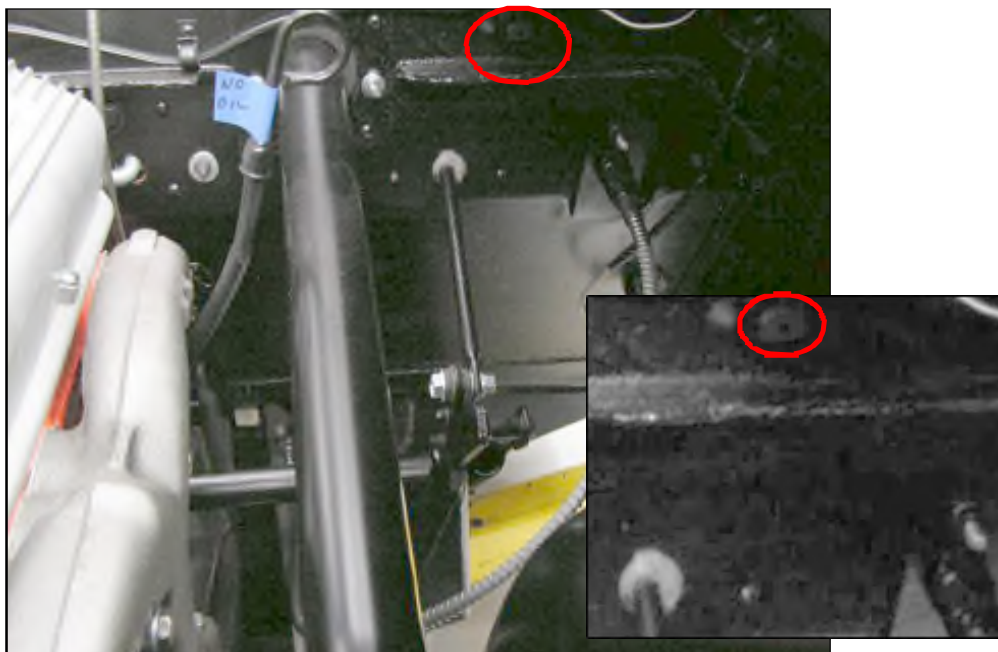
Comparison of female hood catches: early '59 vs. late '59 and later ('60-'67) Corvettes

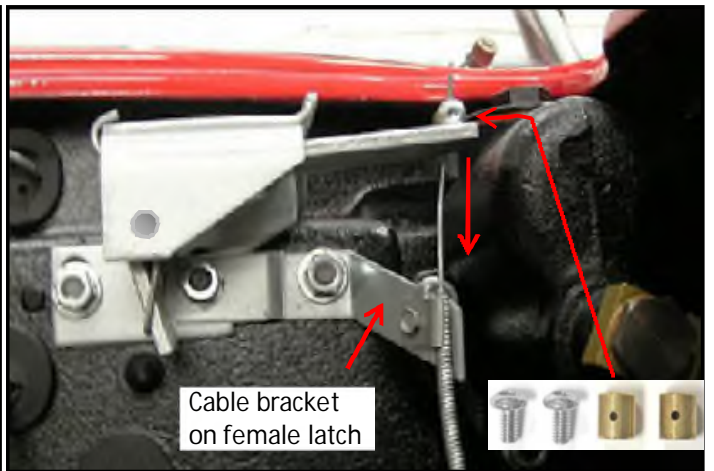
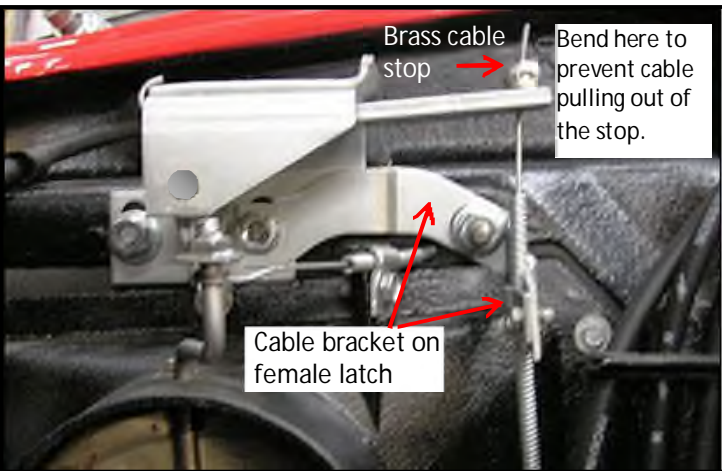
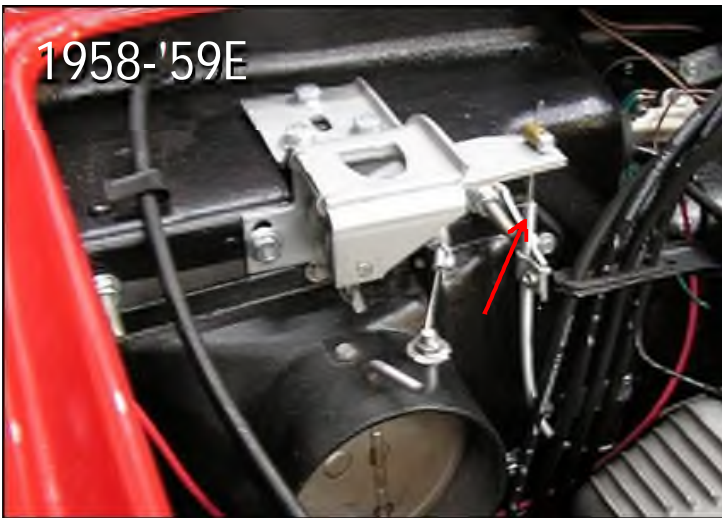
Forum Commentary by Rich:

Early '59s up to about mid production (through #8500) used a different latch. My '59, March 17 build, uses this type. A few years ago I restored a red '59 built a week after mine with the same latches. (See photos on following page).

The cable for the driver side goes through an oval hole in the firewall, fitted with an oval-shaped grommet (red circles). Note it's installed in a particular way so the cable comes through it at the correct angle. The passenger side oval hole is behind the bell housing (below left). The cable is attached with a cable bracket attached to the right-hand female latch on the passenger side of the transmission tunnel (red arrow top left photo next page) and the cable wire passes through the latch release arm where it is attached with a brass barrel cable stop.

Rich





The left and right latches on the '58s and early '59E are both the same. (Note: 59's built after approx. #8500 use the '59Late - '62 style hood latches; Noland Adams, Corvette Central Cat., Zip Corvette) Note that both latches are actuated by the cable pulling down on the lock lever. The cables are "anchored" with brass barrel cable stops with clutch-head screws. Many owners put a sharp bend in the cable stop to prevent it from pulling through the cable stop should the retaining screw become loose. If the cable comes loose from the latch you have to get to it from under the car (probably after removing the large splash shield(s)). You could also add an auxiliary cable around the lock lever that could be concealed in an "out-of-the-way" location.

Transitioning between early 1958 through late 1959:

The hood latches, male and female, went through several transitions from 1958 to late 1959. The '58s and '59s used the same female latch body but the length of the lock lever changed in early December, 1957. Through early '59 all years used the slender male hood lock pin. In late 1959, the female and male latch changed to the design used through the end of the '62 model year.



Slender, male "pop-up" pin

Female latch assembly: '58 to early '59. Note the long lock lever. This latch uses the slender male pin.



1st design female hood lock lever; short style lever used through approx. 12/11/57.



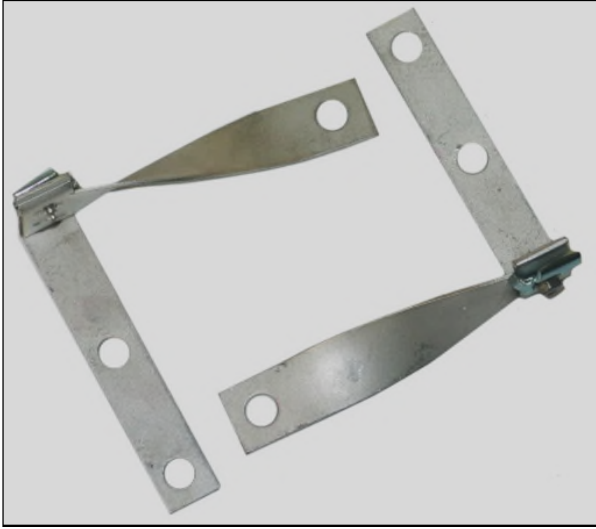
Later '58 and '59 female hood lock lever; long design.



Female latch assembly: Late '59 to '62. Used on 1959 Corvettes after S/N #8500. This latch uses the 1" male "pop-up" pin (above right) found through the 1967 models.

Photos courtesy of Zip Corvette

'58 to '59E Hood-release cable support brackets



The cable support brackets also differed on the '58 to '59E cars. The photos above show the '58 to '59E brackets. The '58 to '59E bracket (with a correct bracket for late a '59 (passenger side) placed under it for comparison) is shown in the photo on the right (courtesy of Mike Coletta). Note that this support only works with the early latches with the short lock levers as shown below (right).

Compare these to the brackets shown in the lower photos on pg. 5.

The photo, below left, shows the early vs. later latches with the long (right) vs. the short (left) lock lever. The cable support brackets shown at the right will only work with latches having the short lock-release lever.

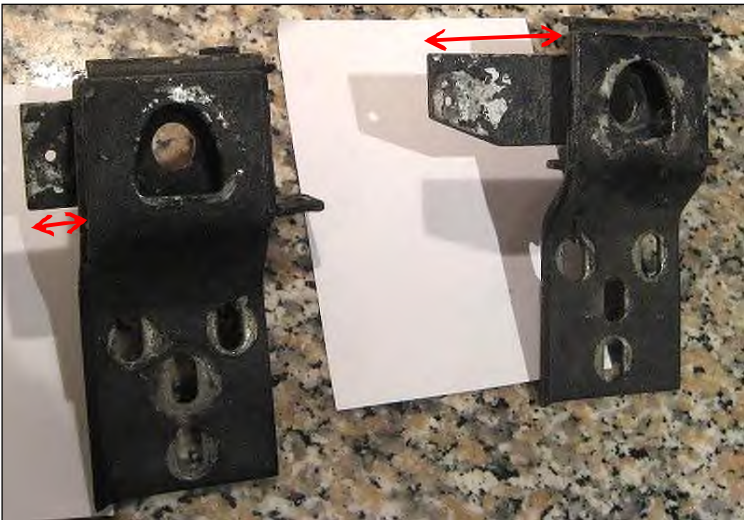


Photo courtesy of Sander Van Ballegooij (NCRS Archives).

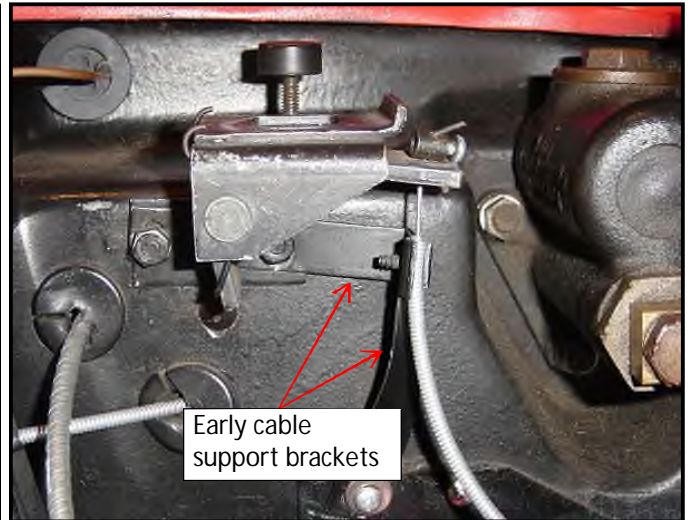
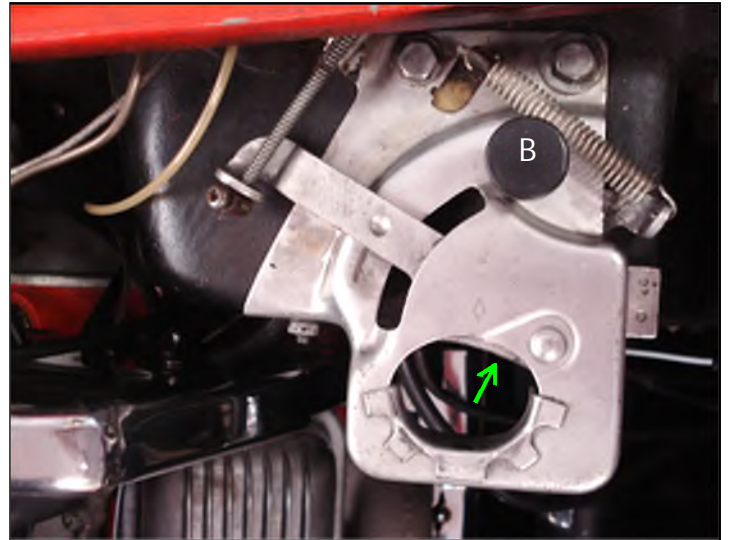
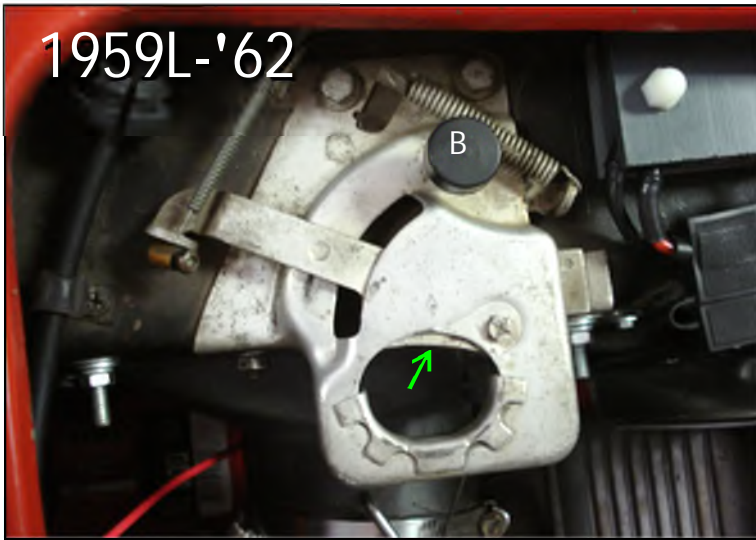


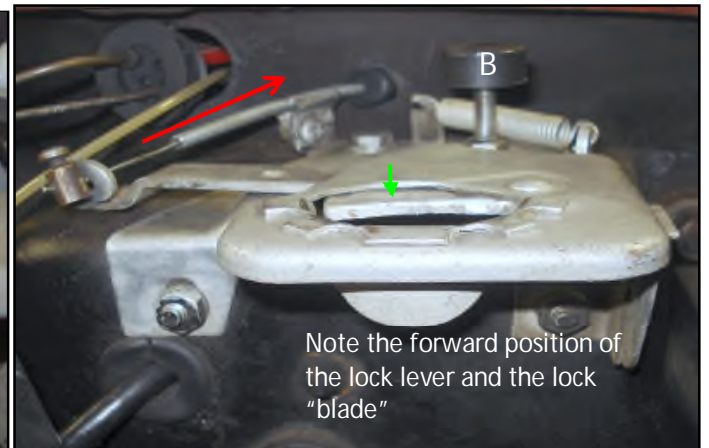
Photo courtesy of Donald Simons – NCRS archives

Both photos above found at: <http://www.ncrs.org/forums/showthread.php?59343-1958-early-style-hood-catch&highlight=1958+hood+release>

The late '59 through '62 latches:

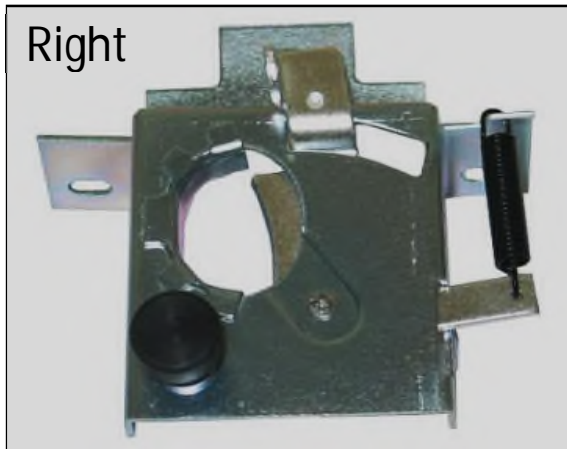
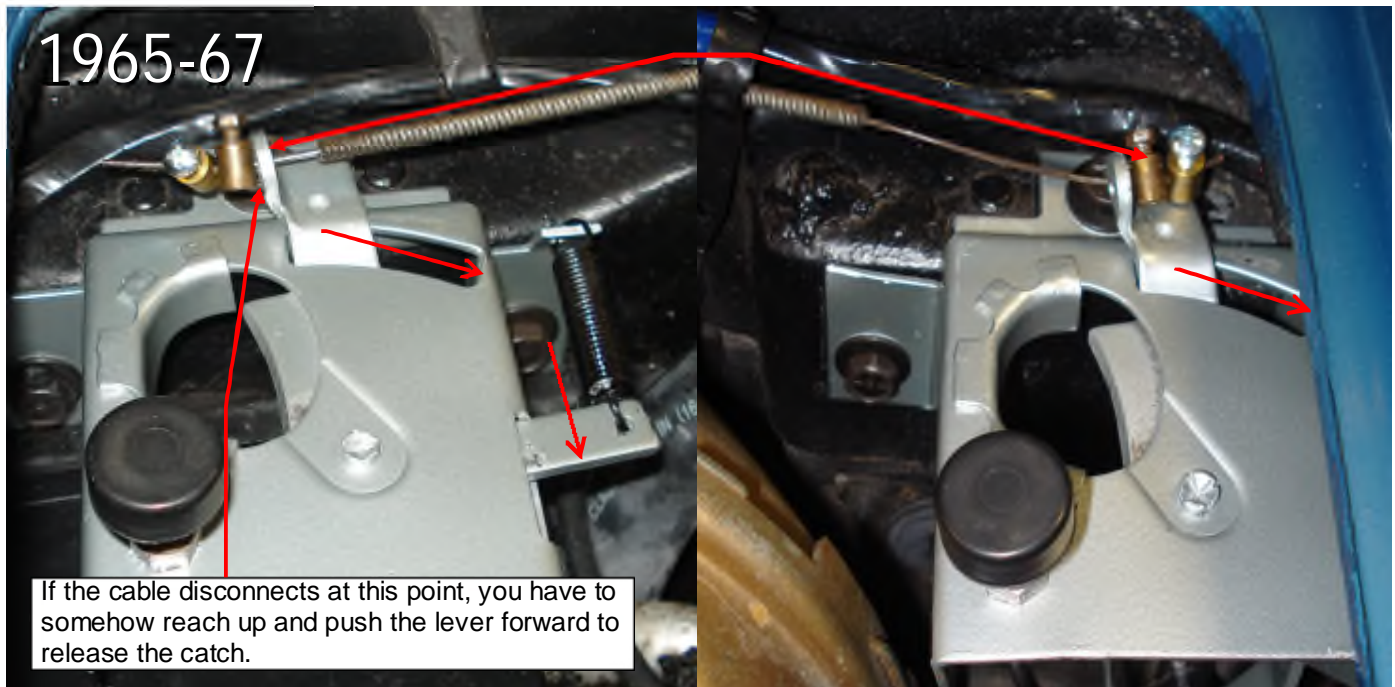


Both latches (top views) shown here in the "open" position. Note the retracted blade catches.



On the later '59s and the '60 - '62 cars, the latches are both the same right and left (but considerably different than the early '59), and the latches are actuated by the cable pulling the pin release lever toward the firewall. If the cables pull out of the barrel stops, you have to come up from the bottom of the car and somehow pull the release lever(s) toward the firewall. Again, bending the cable wire, attaching a second barrel stop or adding auxiliary cables can reduce or eliminate the possibility of cable failure at the latch. Note that the hood adjusting bumpers (B) are now part of the female latch assembly.

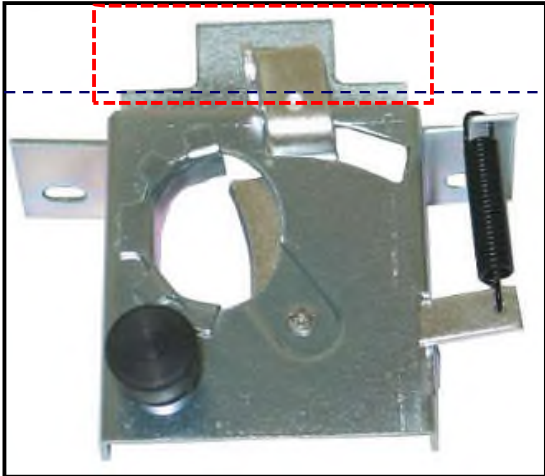
The '63 – '67 latches:



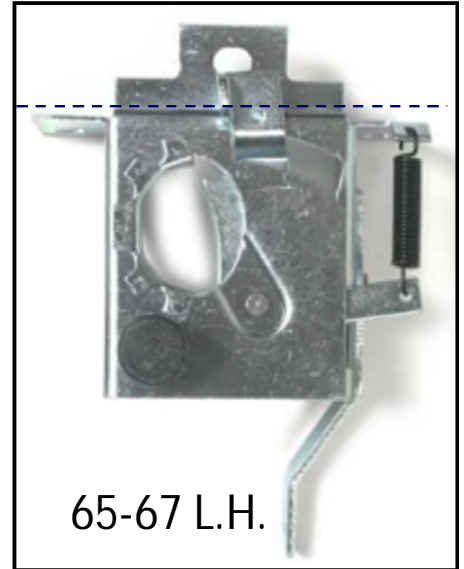
Pulling the hood release handle pulls this lever back which actuates both right and left hood catches.

On the '63-'67 cars, the left and right catches differ in that the left-hand latches have the lever which actuates both of the latches when the inside hood-release handle is pulled. The two latches are connected by a cable which crosses the firewall (long red arrow above). The '63 & '64 latches differ from the '65-'67 latches mainly in the "tabs" for mounting them on the firewall and the cable-pull lever.

'63-'64 vs. '65-'67 female hood latches

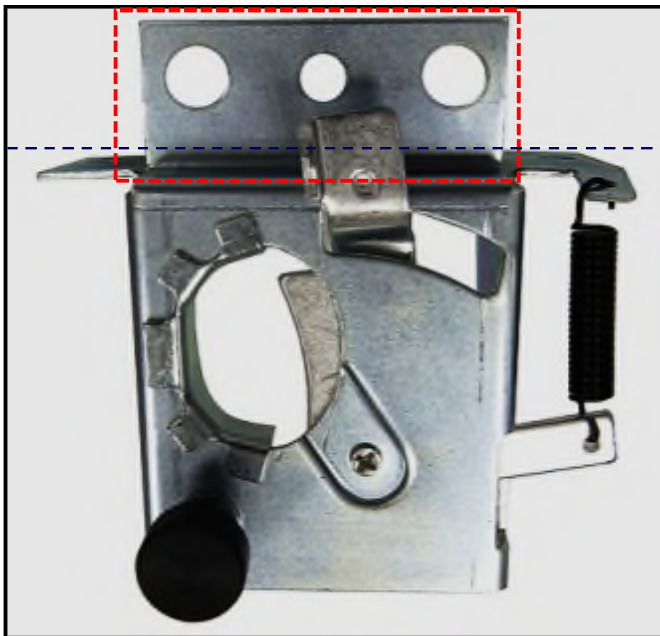


65-67 R.H.

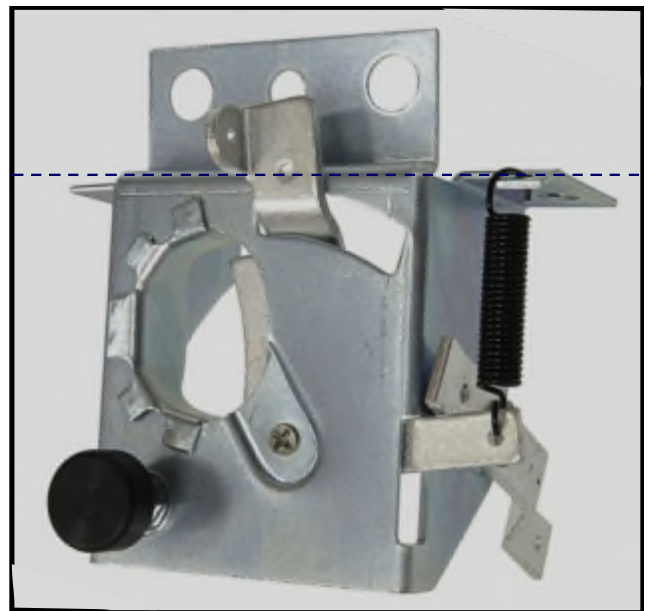


65-67 L.H.

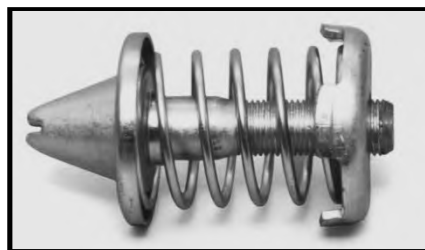
Note the difference in the firewall mounting "tabs" (red outlines) between the 63-64 and 65-67 female latches.



63-64 R.H.

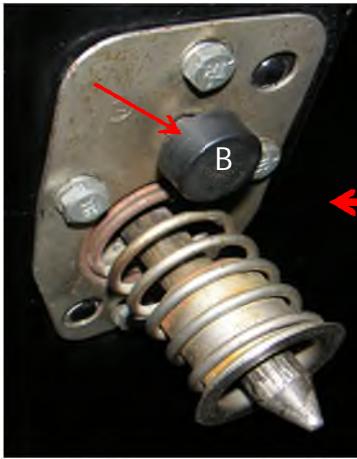


63-64 L.H.



Male hood-latch pin. 59L-62 & 63-67
(see next pg.) Head diam. - 1"

Male hood latches 1953 - 1967



'53 - '57 Male Hood Latches



On the '53-'57 cars the adjusting "bumper" is attached to the male latch assembly.

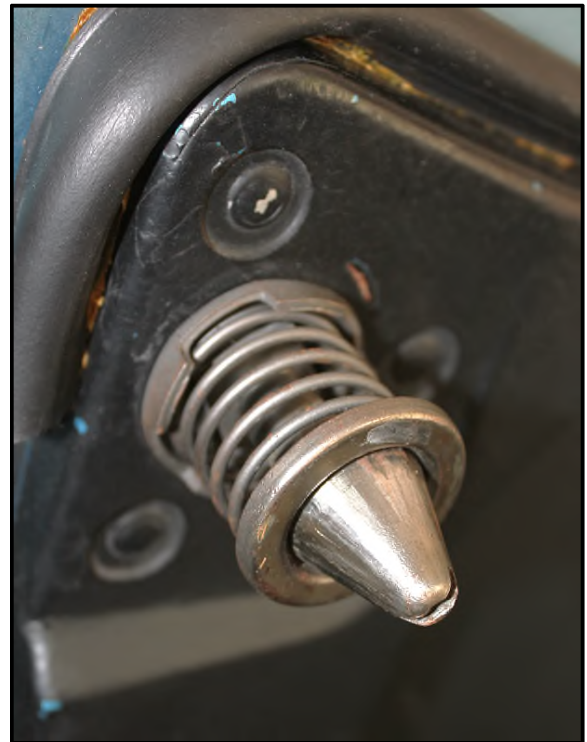


Late '58 to early '59 male hood latch. Note the slender pin like the '53-'57 but no provision for the bumper



1960-1962

The '60 - '62 male latch "pins" are mounted on a plate on the hood. The late '59s use the 1" pop-up pin shown here as well.



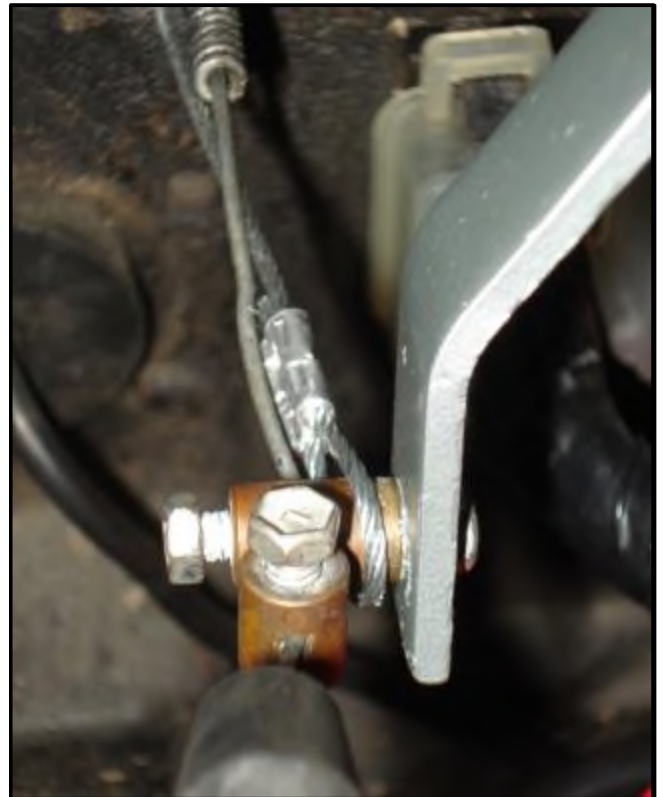
1963-1967

The '63 - '67 male latch "pins" are screwed into a nut plate mounted in the hood assembly.

Some Tips for Preventing Hood-release Cable Failures.



A "fail-safe cable" can be installed through the firewall alongside the grommet for the hood-release cable. The cable above is connected to a drilled piece of ½" aluminum rod with cable crimps on both sides (below). The cable is tucked up under the dash out of sight and with a little luck will never be needed. But ... Note that it can be easily removed for judging.



Fail-safe cable is looped around the main barrel. Note the extra "insurance" brass stop. It can also be looped around the lever itself in case the main barrel stop comes loose from the lever. The installation shown here is on a '65 but the same principal could be used on earlier cars as well. If the cable disconnects at the main lever you have to reach up past the steering column near the master cylinder and push back on the bottom catch lever. You will probably have to remove the larger splash shield to get in there.

To prevent the hood-release cables from pulling out of the brass barrel stops, you can do one of several things:

1. Add an extra barrel stop as shown here or,
2. Bend the cable sharply where it exits the brass barrel stop
3. Add an auxiliary cable to the release lever at the female latch assembly