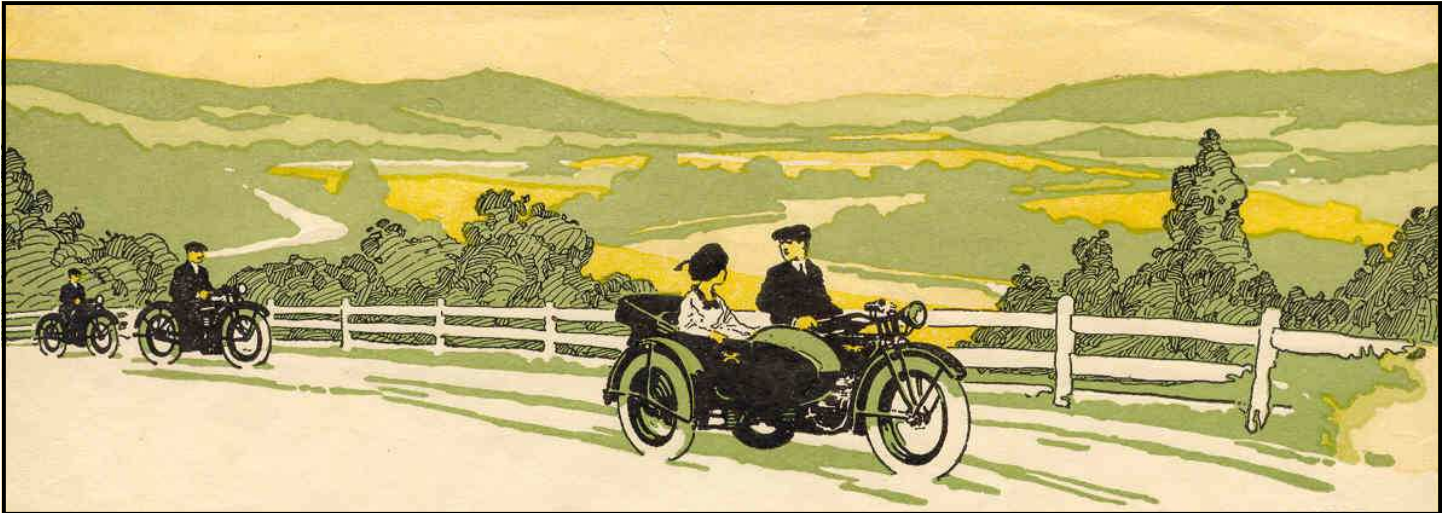




March 2011

THE PERKIOMEN NEWSLETTER



MEMBERSHIP

ORGANIZATIONS LIKE the Antique Motorcycle Club of America (AMCA) and the Perkiomen Chapter exist to provide a camaraderie of like-minded individuals. In our case, the common thread is old motorcycles. Certain entities are provided through the organizations to help bond these persons through membership. Lately we have noticed that a number of members are beginning to fall by the wayside. Some are not renewing their membership in the AMCA for one reason or another, and some have not renewed in the Perkiomen Chapter. One of the by-laws of the national organization is that to belong to any national chapter, the person must first belong to the AMCA.

I've heard recently from several people that they tried to renew with the AMCA and the request never went through or the mail was returned. In their defense, the AMCA did some changes about a year ago and the membership renewals are now handled by Cornerstone Registration Ltd., P.O. Box 1715, Maple Grove, MN 55311-6715. Phone is (866)427-7583 or

email at amca@cornerstonereg.com. Likewise there are members within the Perkiomen Chapter who have not renewed at this writing in early February. One member requested that we send a separate mailer reminding the members for renewal dues. This is fine but it's more work and more expense that shouldn't be necessary. Your dues don't even cover the expense of printing and mailing the newsletter. And there is generally a reminder in most issues of the newsletter. Please send your dues to Bill Walker, 329 Swamp Pike, Schwenksville, PA 19473-1407. Please be sure to include a stamped self-addressed envelop with your \$6.00.

If you find a Post'em note reminder on this newsletter, then according to the records I received, you may be delinquent in either the national or the chapter dues, or perhaps both. Please check your records and if in mistake, contact Bill Walker to correct the problem. We're cheaper than the movies and tons more fun.

Doug

OVERNIGHT MOTORCYCLE TOUR Larry Suglia has organized an overnight motorcycle trip to Cedar Run, PA on Saturday, June 11. He has reserved a book of rooms for anyone who may be interested. In Lycoming county, the Cedar Run Inn has food and beverages on the premises. It's a beautiful area to enjoy your motorcycle in our home state. And you don't necessarily need to ride a vintage bike. Your modern wheels will do. Contact Larry at l.suglia@verizon.net.



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WHERE DOES TIME GO?

THE NEW YEAR has rolled in fast and I never got anywhere with my motorcycle projects. The Norton Commando came into the kitchen long before the first big snow so I would have a warm place to work on the bike. I've barely laid a hand on the project. The Velocette is on the work bench in the garage, and like the Norton, I haven't touched that either. Same thing with the 101 Scout restorations.

So what have I accomplished this winter? I struggled with the artwork for our *Silent Gray Fellow Weekend* theme for the national show. I recently completed the concepts and artwork for the coffee mugs, cloisonné pins and the shirts. It was difficult this year as some of the material required a certain type of original artwork that simply didn't exist for early Harley-Davidsons. Weeks were spent searching for the right material. For the pins, I had to create the artwork from scratch. I also worked on the Daytona 200 Monument artwork and got that material in the mail, just sliding under the deadline. Beyond the Perkiomen Chapter work, I've been helping write the history book for the Reading Motorcycle Club. This is a really neat project and will have lots of old photographs to go along with the club's 100 year history. Make sure you purchase one when they are ready. I also had lots of work for the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum and writing for Bonham and Butterfield auction house.

Next on the list is a well deserved retreat to Eustis and Daytona this year. After a long winter, I need sun!



Bea Fritz at RMC's entrance with Wahoo Wasik and Art Stamm.



While spending time on the Reading Motorcycle Club history book, I located a couple of photos of Beatrice Fritz of Reading's Indian dealership. The dealership began early in the last century by Raymond Fritz, a charter member of the Reading Motorcycle Club in 1911. It was passed on to his son, Horace, who continued in the motorcycle trade to his last days. Horace and Bea were the mainstay of the RMC for many years. The old photos were from perhaps 1954 so I thought it would be fun to reproduce the shirt. If anyone is interested, the shirt program has been saved and shirts are available through the business who made my shirt.



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DAYTONA 200 MONUMENT

TWO MEMBERS from within our chapter have the distinction of racing on the old beach course at Daytona Florida. Rocky Burkhart rode in the 200 Mile National Championship in 1954, as an expert, on a Triumph twin while Bob Markey rode his trusty Indian Sport Scout in the 1956 100 Mile National Championship as an amateur rider. Rocky's Daytona debut was short lived as his Triumph shed it's chain on lap 5, only crediting Rocky with a 90th place finish. Bob finished 30th out of a field of 66 starters for his initial attempt at the tough beach course.



During the last meeting of the Perkiomen Chapter, I introduced an idea that found approval. I wanted to honor both of these members by having plaques installed on the *Daytona 200 Monument*. This monument was the child of Dick Klamfoth who won on the Daytona sands, three incredible times, on Manx Nortons. The plaques will be laser etched granite and will be installed in time for this year's celebration at the Monument on March 9th. I had to hustle to complete the concept art as time was of the essence. And thanks to the consideration and generosity of our fellow Chapter members, this tribute will be a reality for people to enjoy for generations.

his grandson Mark, will have a similar plaque installed honoring his late son, Gary. Gary won at Daytona twice during the 1970's on Yamaha racers and was the second highest points scorer in 1974. In 1973, I was at Daytona, sitting in the grandstands right on the finish line to watch Gary race across the finish line.

On a personal basis, Leon and I didn't stop there. We both privately purchased plaques and paver bricks for the monument site. Leon will be remembered in granite while visitors will be stepping on me and my District Six #682. Somehow I won't mind it. So next time you visit Daytona, be sure to stop by the Monument and enjoy the history, and the two plaques made possible by the Perkiomen Chapter. Oh...and watch your step. *Doug*





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REMINDERS!

A REMINDER to our Chapter members that we will have a work party on **Saturday, April 23rd** to stake out the Oley Fairgrounds for our national meet. Be there no later than 9 AM to help out. We have this down to a science and can knock out the vendor spaces in a few hours. This is Easter weekend so if you're the praying type, then pray for nice weather. The 2011 Perkiomen National AMCA Meet takes place the following weekend, **April 29—May 1**.

The Perkiomen Chapter will have a chapter meeting at the Reading Motorcycle Club on Sunday, **March 13th**, at 11 AM. This meeting will be important to the upcoming national meet.

JANE WAYLAND

ON TUESDAY, February 1, I lost a friend who was a close part of the Perkiomen Chapter for many years. Bob Wayland, a past member of the Chapter, started a "workshop" devoted to restoring motorcycles. Included in that circle were Bill and Doc Patt, and myself. Later Bob Myrick, Bill Walker and Barry Algeo joined in our little group. It was a great time and spent with my favorite friends in the Chapter. Once a week, we descended upon Bob's farm and worked on our projects. A lot of bikes were assembled and restored in that place. Beginning in a chicken coop, this went on for many years. Following each workshop, we were invited to the house for a beer, followed by a hot



beverage, dessert, and lots of BS. That's where the fun started. Bob would always complain to Jane that she gave me the bigger slice of pie, so the ruler came out. Bob and Jane were great people and extremely generous. I missed them both when the workshops had to stop when Bob's health declined. Jane's own health deteriorated later and she moved to Florida where her daughter lived. Jane was an expert quilter making beautiful quilts for her family. One of my treasures is a sampler she made me one year. I keep it hanging in my home and always remember the woman who crafted it. I will miss her greatly as will her other friends in the Chapter.

Doug



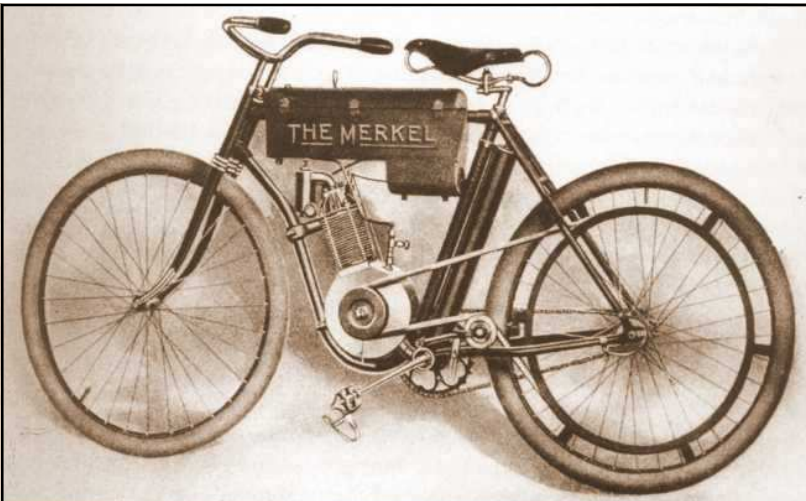
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FLYING WHAT?

I HAVE often wondered how the Merkel motorcycle developed its mystique and appeal to collectors. I've ridden them and they really weren't that powerful. Something however clicked in the minds of riders. Joseph Merkel preferred staying in the background and rarely was seen in photographs of industry leaders. Born in 1872, he began working as an engineer on a logging railroad at the age of 14. A year later he worked in a machine shop gaining practical experience which drove him to enroll at the Michigan Agricultural College to study mechanical engineering. His first job out of college was as a draftsman in Milwaukee for the predecessor to the Allis-Chalmers Company in 1897.

Early in the next century, Merkel began producing bicycle parts and quickly added small engines to bicycle chassis' by 1901. Things evolved quickly from there. While Indian developed lightweight motorcycles for the east coast that appeared more bicycle, motorcycles in the country's mid-section engineered stout machines to handle the pounding of the so-called "roads" in those primitive regions. It is thought that the Harley and

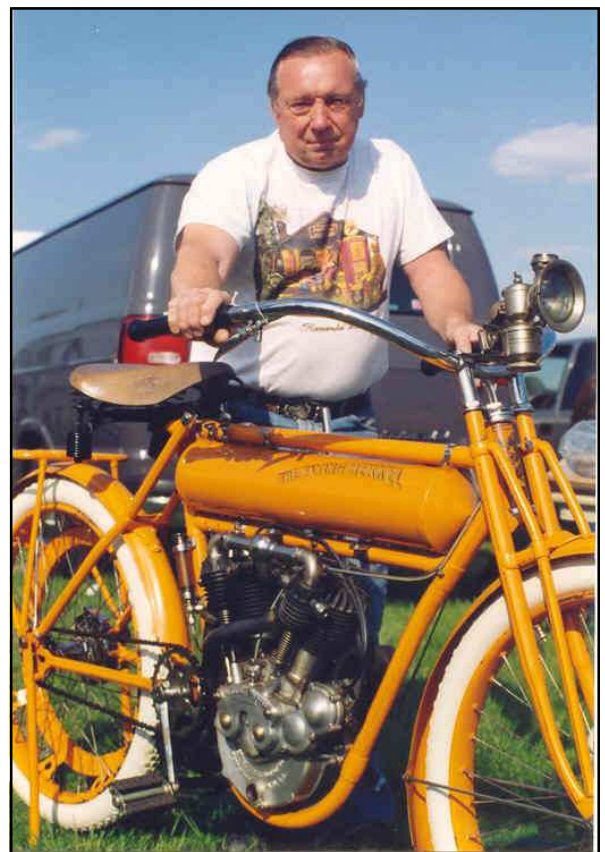
Davidson boys used a Merkel loop frame to test their engines which didn't appear too different from the ones Merkel was marketing in 1901. The first Harley-Davidson, which was touted as having the right configuration and



This 1901 Merkel prototype looks remarkably similar to the first Harley-Davidson.

engineering from the very start, really looked a lot like a Merkel.

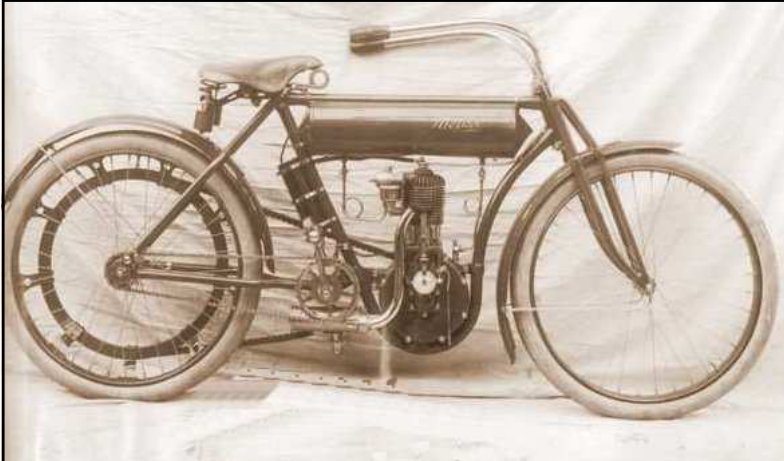
For reasons unknown, in 1908 Joe Merkel merged his company with the Light Motor Company in Pottstown, PA. Manufactured at the Light Foundry building, which still stands, the Merkel-Light made two distinctly different motorcycles initially. On one hand, they sold the almost antiquated Thor based machines which were merely left over Light motorcycles, and on the other, the new Merkel featuring the familiar cylindrical gas & oil tank. The new Merkel-Light also featured a triangulated and sprung front fork as well as dual springs in the rear frame section just like Vincent and Yamaha in later years. At the time, it was far better chassis engineering than any other motorcycle in America. The fork was so good that it was used



Charlie Petty showed off his gorgeous Flying Merkel at Wauseon many moons ago.



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An early Merkel made in Milwaukee that could pre-date the first Harley-Davidsons sold.

by many racers long after the Merkel faded into the sunset. Ace used one on their record setting speedster in 1923.

In 1909, the last of the old Thor-based motorcycles were sold and the modern Merkel-Light, finished in blue became the sole marketed machine. And in a stroke of genius, Joe Merkel made some subtle cosmetic changes that made the Merkel an icon. First he introduced a bright orange finish and then capitalized on the comet craze over Halley's Comet that would appear in 1910. He emblazoned the name

"Flying Merkel" in a comet's tail on the gas tank. A legend was made!

Operations in Pottstown didn't continue very long and in 1911, the Miami Cycle and Mfg. Co. bought out Merkel-Light and moved everything to Middletown, Ohio. Joe Merkel stayed with his company until 1914 when he sold his interest to Miami Cycle. Joe went on to manufacture the Merkel Motor Wheel which later was manufactured by Hendee Manufacturing in Springfield. While Joe Merkel continued in the industry for



The last of the Thor-based Merkel-Lights.



A 1910 racer that was found in storage in Newport News, VA. I got to start it!

several more years, associated with the Cyclomotor Corporation, he also was recognized for his successful efforts to reduce fees on motorcycles in New York state because they created less wear on the highway system. The motorcycle gained a beautiful streamlined gas tank, heavier forks and a stronger engine. The last ones featured a new spring activated step starter, still in its popular orange finish. However the end was in sight with World War I. The famous Flying Merkel did not reappear after the cessation of fighting.



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Benchracing With Rocky

March 12, 2011. Saturday. 10AM to 7 PM. **The Modern Classics.** Martin Motorsports. 567 Route 100 (At the Walmart), Boyertown, PA. (610)369-3120.

March 13, 2011. Sunday. 11AM **Perkiomen Chapter Meeting.** Reading Motorcycle Club, Oley.

March 27, 2011. Sunday. **Reading Super Swap 2011.** Greater Reading Expo Center, 2525 N. 12th St.

April 23, 2011. Saturday. 9AM **Stake Out Day.** Oley Fairgrounds.

April 29—May 1, 2011. Friday thru Sunday. **Perkiomen AMCA National Meet.** Only in Oley!

THE MODERN CLASSICS

DENNIS MARTIN of Martin Motorsports long had a dream of putting on a motorcycle show at his dealership. After many years of careful thought, his idea is becoming reality. A one-day show will be held at his Boyertown showroom (located next to the Walmart in Pottstown). *The Modern Classics* will feature 100 motorcycles from the 1960's and 1970's, machines that everyone of us is familiar with. I've known Dennis for 25 years and can assure you that this motorcycle exhibit will be one great show that you don't want to miss. You can get more information on the web at www.martinmoto.com/modernclassics-bike-show.



BRAIN STORMING FOR 2012

IT'S THAT time of year again to put heads together for next year's national meet theme. Some of you wonder why I would even think about it when this year's show hasn't even happened. But that is what it takes to put on shows. I'm already working on next year's program and need to firm up our plans by the time I write up the report on this year's show. Here's some of the ideas floating around. **One.** The Henderson guys have been talking about doing something at Oley in 2012 for the 100 year anniversary of their favorite 4 cylinder bike. We could do a Henderson "Time Line" as a different touch. **Two.** Café Racers were mentioned at the last meeting. This is a good theme that would attract newer riders and collectors. **Three.** Going one step further, we could have the "Mods versus Rockers" harkening back to the 1950's when the café racers were pitted against the scooter boys. It could be great fun where we could even have a rock-a-billy band perform during the day or evening. This could also become an annual mini-theme and make Oley the center of café racer shows in the United States. So bring your thoughts and ideas to the table at the March 13th meeting. Time's a wast'in.



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MORE STUFF

Airborne Al—Rest in Peace

AL WILCOX had to be one of most unique characters to grace the motorcycling scene on the east coast. I'm disappointed that I was not able to have Al inducted into the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum while alive. In my book, he certainly deserved it...in spades!

Al was a tough little racer who became the first amateur rider to obtain a factory ride from Harley-Davidson. In AMA District 6, he won numerous championship titles, 15 in all. But his real fame came from flagging races in the 1950's where his signature jump into the air became his trademark. And at 92 years of age, he was prepared to flag races again this year. We lost him on February 1. He was a true ambassador to the sport.



BOB MARKEY, during the past Old Timers Banquet in Gilbertsville, commented on the bike display outside as "all these machines and only one motorcycle" referring to the sole Indian. He was quick to blame the comment on his son, Robin's influence.



Ed Fisher

ED FISHER, a long time Perkiomen member, has recently become ill from cancer. Ed was a top national motorcycle racer from the 1950's with initially a factory Indian ride during the vertical twin period, and later with Triumph, a brand he would be associated with his entire racing career and business life. Please wish him well.

MARCH 27TH, the Reading Super Swap 2011 will be held at the Greater Reading Expo Center. The Chapter has been offered a free area to display our motorcycles and promote the Perkiomen Chapter. Complimentary passes will be given to members and their guest if they display a bike. If interested, please contact Doug at 610-683-5855 or AMCAdoug@aol.com for details. More info at <http://www.cyclefish.com/event/9739/>. Or phone 315-472-7937.

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