

HARLEY-DAVIDSON



THE COMPLETE HISTORY

DARWIN HOLMSTROM, EDITOR

CHAPTER 1

THE KNUCKLEHEAD ERA

BY GREG FIELD

A HUSH FELL THROUGH THE BALLROOM AS THE STAGE CURTAINS SLOWLY DREW BACK. DESPITE ALL THE HARDSHIPS BROUGHT BY THE GREAT DEPRESSION, HARLEY-DAVIDSON DEALERS FROM AS FAR AWAY AS JAPAN FILLED THE GREEN ROOM OF MILWAUKEE'S SCHROEDER HOTEL FOR THE FIRST DEALERS' CONVENTION IN FIVE YEARS.



LEFT: Caturorum ora ca et
dum sentiosa mandacit,
quam perquam in det Cat fact



Why go through all that bother when the cash-strapped Motor Company would likely unveil just another year's ration of minor updates and new paint colors to the stale and unpopular flatheads?

RUMORS, HINTS, SIGHTINGS. A BUZZ.

Through the dealer network, word had spread around the world that an all-new Harley-Davidson was ready to make its debut, a motorcycle so new, so bold, and so exciting that it would power the company and dealers into a full-throttle climb out of the Depression.

Chief Engineer William S. Harley and Harley promotions man "Hap" Jameson stood proudly on that stage, like two stone lions flanking a magnificent wrought iron gate. I doubt

ABOVE: Caturorum ora ca et
dum sentiosa mandacit,
quam perquam in det Cat fact
si furbis

BELOW: Caharum ora ca et
dum sentina mandacrit,
quam priquam in det Cat fac
ut turbi.

anyone noticed them, however, because between them was what everyone had come to see.

The hush deepened as the crowd absorbed every detail of the new machine. Even from the farthest corner of the room, dealers could see that the new motorcycle was a masterpiece of style—a bold fusion of Art Deco and streamlining that looked like a motorcycle, not another refinement of Harley's first motorized bicycles.

As the silence held for a long, entranced moment, Bill Harley and the other company founders had to be wondering, "What are they all thinking?"

Seconds later, there was no doubt. From one corner came a whoop of triumph, followed by more, merging with wave after wave of applause. No one recorded whether Old Bill blushed, but certainly we could forgive him a little pride in his new baby's first standing ovation.

That bike was the Harley-Davidson Model E of 1936. The company liked to call its new machine the "Sixty-one" (in honor of its 61-cubic inch displacement) or "Overhead" (in honor of its overhead valves, a first on a Harley production twin).

You and I know it today as the "Knucklehead." That day was November 25, 1935, a defining moment in Harley-Davidson history that marked the real beginning of the Harley mystique. It was the day the Harley-Davidson big twin became more than just another motorcycle.

It was the day the legend began.



A CLOSER LOOK

After their first glimpse of the Sixty-one, the dealers impatiently sat through the rote presentation of the slightly revised flatheads that filled out the 1936 Harley line. The second it was over, they bum-rushed the stage to get a closer look at the Sixty-one.

The sleek styling that was so evident from afar was even more striking at arm's length. The Sixty-one was a looker from any angle. Symmetry defused the new machine. Twin gas tanks straddled the frame's backbone tube, each with its own chrome-plated filler cap and petcock. A new instrument panel with a large, integral, 100-mile-per-hour speedometer (placed front and center, right where it would be easiest to read), an ammeter, an oil-pressure indicator, and the ignition switch bridged the gap between the tanks. Twin down-tubes swept back from the steering head to the rear axle clips. The sweeping V of the cylinders, highlighted on the right side by the gleaming pushrod covers, framed the dramatic slash-cut chrome-plated air intake horn. Polished aluminum rocker housings, each with two round, chrome-plated covers over the ends of the rocker shafts topped those cylinders.

The whole bike had a smooth, streamlined, almost organic look to it, each part so perfectly placed that it seemed the product of divine inspiration. Like the eternal

**A KNOCKOUT
COMBINATION OF
CUTTING-EDGE LOOKS
AND PERFORMANCE.**

THE MYTH OF THE HARLEY & INDIAN "WARS"

By Greg Field

You've read all the Harley books, so you know how Harley and Indian were archrivals, trading blows through the 1910s, 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s until Indian finally folded in the 1950s.

If you read this one, you'll learn that the "war" fable is just another bit of Harley mythology that should finally go to the grave at the end of Harley's first century.

Far from being bitter rivals, Harley-Davidson and Indian were on the best of terms. Did each try to outdo the other, saying, "Gotcha," with every new model? Not at all. Before each sales season, representatives of the two companies would meet for an opulent meal and discuss each company's new models.

Then, together, they would decide what each company's motorcycles should sell for. That's called "price fixing." I'm not sure it was illegal then, but it sure as hell would be now. And it sure as hell ain't competition, much less "war." Can you imagine Harley and Honda doing the same thing today?

Need more evidence? How about this: Indian founder George Hendee and Harley founder Art Davidson were close friends who visited each other at their homes and bonded over common interests in motorcycles and Guernsey cows.

Need more? When Indian got in financial trouble before DuPont bought the company, the Harley founders discussed ways to help the ailing company, according to Jean Davidson, in her book *Growing Up Harley-Davidson*. And when Indian finally died, there was mourning in Milwaukee.

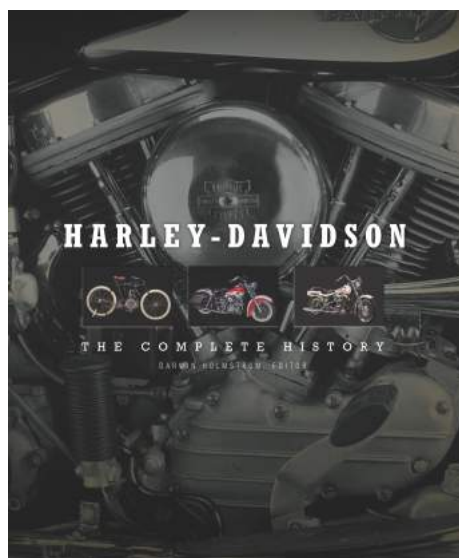
All the competition was at the dealership level, where loyalty to each brand ran high. That spilled over onto the racetrack, where all the battles were really fought, with grit and valor and glorious victories on both sides.



ABOVE: Catorum ora ca et
dum sentiosa manducant,
quam priusquam in det Cat fact



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HARLEY-DAVIDSON THE COMPLETE HISTORY

By Darwin Holmstrom

Cruise through this collection of Harley-Davidson's most iconic motorcycles!

When most people imagine a motorcycle, chances are they picture a Harley-Davidson. That's because Harley-Davidson machines look the way the primordial biker inside each of us feels a motorcycle should look. In short, Harley-Davidson makes mythic bikes. *Harley-Davidson: The Complete History* celebrates these iconic motorcycles, presenting them all in one beautifully illustrated book.

The most beloved and recognizable motorcycles are included here: the Knucklehead, the Panhead, the Peashooter, the KR, the Sportster, the XR750, the Shovelhead, the Evolution, the Twin Cam, the V-Rod, and all the rest. Pages in the book reveal historic images as well as modern photos from the top motorcycle photographers working today. Additionally, there are chapters from some of the most celebrated motorcycle writers of all time-- Peter Egan, Kevin Cameron, Ed Youngblood, Allan Girdler, Steve Anderson, and many more. All of this material combines to tell the story of every major motorcycle that Harley-Davidson has built, from the very first prototype to the Silent Gray Fellow to the latest liquid-cooled CVO Electra Glides and Softails. *Harley-Davidson: The Complete History* is the ultimate history of the ultimate motorcycle company.

Key Points:

- Covers the complete history of Harley-Davidson, from the first prototype to the modern liquid-cooled machines being built today.
- Harley-Davidson is among the top three best-selling transportation subjects.
- Harley-Davidson remains the best-selling motorcycle in America and enjoys tremendous popularity all around the world.

Author Information

Darwin Holmstrom has written, co-written, or contributed to over thirty books on subjects ranging from motorcycles and muscle cars to Gibson Les Paul guitars, including *Indian Motorcycles*, *GTO: Fifty Years*, *Let's Ride: Sonny Barger's Guide to Motorcycling*, *Top Muscle: The Rarest Cars from America's Fastest Decade*, *BMW Motorcycles*, *The Harley-Davidson Motor Co. Archive Collection*, and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Motorcycles*. Darwin is the senior editor for Motorbooks. Prior to that he served as Midwestern editor for *Motorcyclist* magazine.