

# GEORGIA MOTORCYCLE HISTORY

THE FIRST 60 YEARS: 1899 - 1959

CHRIS PRICE

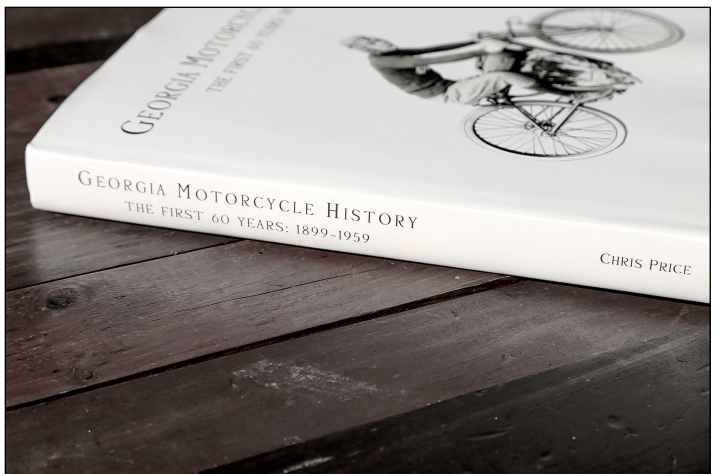
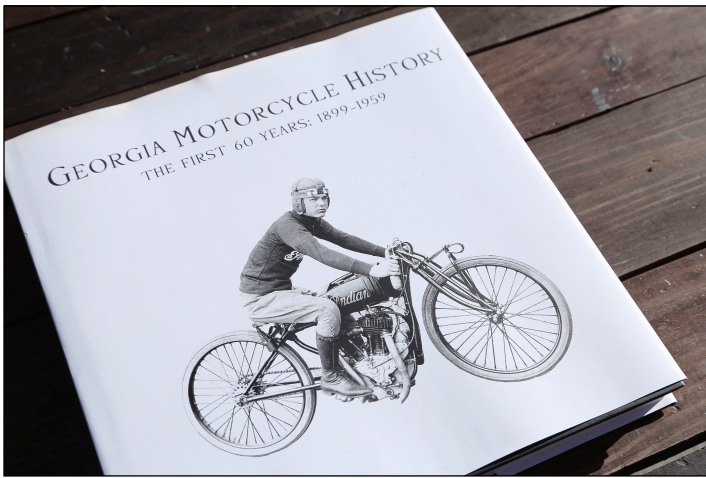
*Georgia Motorcycle History* is the culmination of tireless research, pouring over hundreds of archives, articles, family collections, books, and interviews. This stunning, 270-page, cloth-bound, hardcover coffee table book illuminates the earliest days of American motorcycling culture through the photographs and stories of Georgia. The exclusive collection contains nearly 250 black and white archival photographs, each image methodically researched and captioned in vivid detail. While several key figures in American motorcycling history are featured, the book also explores topics such as the motorcycle's role as it was used by enthusiasts, businesses, military and service departments, and professional racers.

The book begins with an introduction of the motorcycle at the turn of the century. From there, the first chapter presents the story of Georgia's first motorcycle and expands into colorful stories of America's earliest enthusiasts and pioneering spirits. The second chapter recounts the exhilarating and dangerous tales of motorcycle racing, from its origins on horse tracks and the infamous board track motordromes to the later industrialized and professional sport that we know today. It wasn't all fun and games though. In chapter three, the book looks into the motorcycle's role in both WWI and WWII, as well as its indispensable place in various municipal service departments. In the last chapter, *Georgia Motorcycle History* steps back and reviews the motorcycle's evolution from a bicycle with a clip-on motor to an advanced technological mode of transportation, from a simple utility to a member of the family.

The pictures and stories included in *Georgia Motorcycle History* reach far beyond a simple documentation of local history. They embody the American spirit and represent a cornerstone of our nation's culture. Hundreds of copies of *Georgia Motorcycle History* have been sold to a variety of enthusiasts in 20 different countries within the first 2 years of its release, and copies are now being carried by exclusive retailers and world-class museum gift shops. For more information about the book as well as a consistently maintained "Ongoing Discoveries" page, please visit the website [GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com](http://GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com).

[www.GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com](http://www.GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com)







# SAMPLES

## CONTENTS

1	THE FIRST DAYS OF FREEDOM utility, pleasure, speed	3	ORDER AND DEFENSE pride of the force
2	Bobby Walthour and the Orient	152	The Fulton County Popes
11	Ben T. Epps	156	World War I
14	1909 Atlanta Auto Show	179	World War II
18	Motorcycle Clubs	194	The Harley-Davidson Servi-Car
26	Harry Glenn		
36	Package Trucks		
2	SPLIT THE WIND the evolution of racing	4	BELOVED MACHINE an American lifestyle is born
49	Piedmont Park	202	Vivian Bales
59	The Atlanta Speedway	208	Young Stribling
68	The Black Streaks	212	The Chatham County MC
73	The Atlanta Motordrome	216	Thrill Shows
91	Endurance Racing	234	Ted Edwards
92	Savannah 1913	246	Al Rodi Motorcycles
102	Savannah 1914		
110	Birmingham Ledger 1914-1915	254	DEALER INDEX
121	Stewart Ave. Hill Climb		
122	Bremen Sykes	258	PHOTO CREDITS
124	Milton Hall		
126	The Lakewood Speedway	259	BIBLIOGRAPHY
132	Hammond Springs		

*A motorcycle is a bicycle with a pandemonium attachment and is designed for the especial use of mechanical geniuses, daredevils, and lunatics.*

-George Fitch, Atlanta Constitution, 1916.

# INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 20th century, an exciting modern world had begun to take shape, and the United States was leading the transition. The industrial barons of the Gilded Age had inflated American infrastructure and made space for a rising middle class. As a result a new breed of innovators pushed the boundaries of technological accessibility. The Machine Age was on the horizon. With it, came countless innovations, machines that formed a new modern culture.

In the mid-to-late 1800's, the bicycle was a marvel in Europe, and in 1876, the exciting new vehicle made its way to the U.S. Though cumbersome at first, with the front wheel being significantly larger than the rear, the bicycle quickly evolved. It provided the most efficient and economical form of transport, bested only by one's own feet. As the bicycle gained acceptance, a new culture arose centering around it.

The new industry boomed. Countless manufacturers suddenly appeared while local shops and parts suppliers feverishly tried to keep up with demand. Bicycle-specific clubs formed and began promoting social and competitive events. Group rides, long-distance touring, hill climbs, and bicycle socials became popular activities. Meanwhile, bicycle racing emerged as the predominant, fanatical sport around the globe. Racing became an industry in and of itself, and with manufacturer sponsorships and heavy promotion, the most popular riders became international superstars. Although the bicycle created a frenzy and captivated the public, it was another invention taking shape in Europe that would elevate bicycle culture to new heights.

Experiments were underway in Germany, France, and the U.K. in an effort to devise an internal combustion engine that ran on gasoline. One of the first and most successful designs came from a Parisian by the name of De Dion-Bouton. The Frenchman developed a single cylinder, 1.3 horsepower, 4 stroke engine powered by a battery and coil and fueled by gasoline. Initially, the engine was developed for manufacturing machinery, but it was soon adapted to fit onto three- and four-wheeled carriages. As the bicycle's popularity was at its peak, clipping on an engine seemed only logical. Intrepid businessmen on both sides of the Atlantic placed orders for the early engines and began experimenting with configurations of their own. A Massachusettsian man by the name of Charles H. Metz, maker of the Orient bicycle line, successfully mated one of these European engines onto one of his Orient tandem bicycles in 1898. With this, America acquired its first motorcycle.

The motorized tandem pacer, like the one Metz developed, was initially used for bicycle racing. Just as tandem bicycles had done for years before, the new motorized tandem would ride in front of the cyclist to create slipstreams, allowing the racers to achieve higher speeds in the draft. Upon introduction, the new motorized pacing machines were a sensation, often outshining the bicycle races themselves. Development continued and the tandem pacer gave way to single rider machines as well as more manageable consumer versions. Soon, almost every American bicycle manufacturer was getting into the new motorcycle business. With such competition, the evolution of the technology skyrocketed.

The motorcycle burst onto the scene and found fertile ground in an already thriving bicycle culture. Within the first two decades of the motorcycle's existence companies sprung up left and right as did parts suppliers, garages, dealerships, clothing brands, magazines, and books. Farmers, police, military, and businesses purchased motorcycles as valuable equipment while families happily bought motorcycles with sidecars as their sole means of transportation. A new profession opened to those daring men who wanted to race the specialized machines, many of whom already had found success as professional bicycle racers. By the mid-1920's, this cultural explosion had laid its foundations deep into American life.

The people of Georgia took to the motorcycle quickly after having been some of the first to witness the birth of new machine. Atlanta was home to Bobby Walthour, one of the cycling world's brightest stars. Georgia's capitol city was also the site of one of the country's newest indoor bicycle race tracks, Jack Prince's Velodrome at Piedmont Park. These two factors brought one of the earliest made American motorcycles to the state in 1899, and before the first decade of the 1900's closed, the sounds of motorcycles roared throughout the state.

Georgia became a southern hub both for manufacture distribution and regional racing. Dedicated dealerships doled out every brand imaginable and Purpose-built racetracks of every type sprung up. Careers were built and local youths grew into national stars. Given the predominantly rural area, many police departments developed motorcycle squads early in order to effectively patrol larger and larger jurisdictions. Additionally, as a

growing number of people traveled greater distances, a new push for better quality roads began.

In the 20 years after the motorcycle first debuted in Piedmont Park, the landscape of the state had changed. There were better roads, thriving businesses, home delivery, social clubs, nationally promoted races and events, and more effective municipal services. In wartime, Georgians saddled up their machines and shipped out, and when the wars were over, riders gathered in motorcycle clubs around the state. Men started businesses based on motorcycles and raised families who came to love the machines too.

As the automobile became more affordable, motorcycles occupied a more recreational role. Weekend getaways, social gatherings, entertaining thrill shows, and a culture of customization became our new relationship with the machine. The motorcycle would still serve as a workhorse for businesses and police departments, but the civilian use of the machines had changed from that of an essential to that of a luxury. However, there are still some who consider the motorcycle a necessity, a way to connect to the past, live in the present, and look forward to a future of splitting the wind.



# TESTIMONY

*This is much more than just another motorcycle book. It gets to the story of the people, the towns, the culture of the area. It makes me think that somehow every state needs to discover all of its motorcycle history and publish it. If Price publishes the 1961 to current Georgia motorcycling history, I will have a copy in my library.*

~ The National Motorcycle Museum

*I got my copy of GMH from Chris at Barber (Museum's Vintage Festival) and have already gone through it several times. It is incredibly well researched and written. Get your copy before they are gone.*

~ David Morrill, historian/writer

*I am really impressed with my copy of GMH, information I have never seen before. Just the info on the black board track racers is worth the price of admission.*

~ Jon Szalay, TV Personality, restorationist, historian.

*This book is highly recommended, well researched with many previously unseen photographs. Not just of interest to Georgians, but anyone interested in old motorcycles.*

~ Brad Kenyon, avid antique motorcycle enthusiast.

*All of this is a long lead to saying how impressed I was with the efforts of AMCA member, historian, and author Chris Price, whose book manages to bring the history of motorcycling in Georgia to life even if you've never visited the state. ... Chris has assembled a number of these interesting vignettes, but the real accomplishment of this book is in the period photographs he found and the research he did to tell the stories of the people in them.*

~ Greg Harrison, Editor of The Antique Motorcycle Magazine

*One serious piece of research. I know how long it takes to find good pictures and then research the story behind them.*

~ Jim Mahoney, historian/writer

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chris Price

Born and raised in Rome, Georgia Chris is driven by a passion for understanding, documenting, and sharing the remarkable stories of early American motorcycle culture. His focus on the smallest, most intimate details, and utilization of specific, appropriate, and rare photographs to illustrate these moments provides a unique perspective, rich with context and detail.

Through weekly articles distributed at ArchiveMoto.com and the corresponding social media pages, Chris explores detailed accounts of the machines, manufacturers, events, and characters that pioneered this rich and diverse culture. Currently, an actively engaged audience of over 12,000 unique readers per week with an extended audience of 104,000 enthusiasts via indirect sharing results in a considerable and growing visibility within a wide variety of communities. As a result Chris and Archive Moto have become a go-to resource for authors, publishers, journalists, bloggers, and tv/film producers.

His research has been utilized and/or featured in a number of internationally distributed publications and high profile radio, film, and television series, including projects for the Discovery Channel, Velocity Channel, and the BBC. Chris has also contributed material, performed research, and curated exhibits at events like The Race of Gentlemen, the Barber Motorsport Museum's Vintage Festival, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's Brickyard Invitational, as well as a number of world renowned museums from New York to Brisbane.

Lastly, as an active participant in various national clubs and consistent presence at most major motor-culture events Chris is continuously engaged with the enthusiast community which he loves. (He has been an AMCA member for several years and recently co-founded a local chapter, the Smoky Mountain Chapter in which he currently serves as the secretary and newsletter editor). With a marketing and promotions background rooted in two decades of active employment in the music industry, professional experience in graphic design, a strong footing within the American motorcycle community, expansive web presence, participation in highly visible events, a passionate interest for sharing this history, and a number of titles set for future publication Chris and Archive Moto continues to be a resource for all interested in American motorcycle culture.



Chris Price

[chris@GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com](mailto:chris@GeorgiaMotorcycleHistory.com)

[www.ArchiveMoto.com](http://www.ArchiveMoto.com)

(706) 766-7334

OR FIND ARCHIVE MOTO  
ON THE WEB

