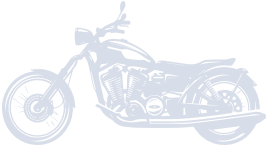


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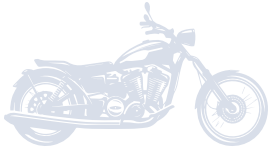




Harley-Davidson



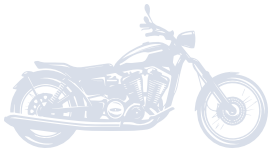
Do you love the sound of motors? Do you like to take things apart and put them back together? Bill Harley and Arthur Davidson did. They loved to work with motors. They loved it so much that they became world-famous for building a better motorcycle.



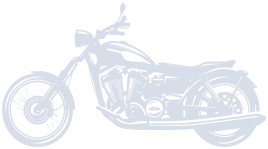
Bill and Arthur were close friends and grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They did what many kids still do. They fished, went to school, and rode their bikes. But pedaling a bike wasn't easy. They wondered, was there a way to "take the work out of bicycling"?



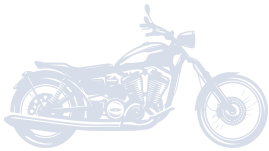
In 1895, E. J. Pennington drove one of the world's first motorcycles down the streets of Milwaukee. Even though it didn't run very well, it was enough to spark ideas in the heads of the two friends.



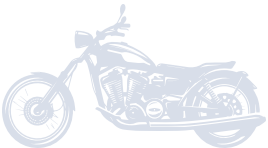
As young adults in their twenties, Bill and Arthur began to make their dreams into reality. Bill went to work as a draftsman at an electrical motor shop. Arthur worked at the same shop as a pattern maker. In 1901, Bill Harley came up with plans for a bicycle with an engine. He and Arthur moved their work into a shed in the backyard of Arthur's family home and got to work. They were on their way to building a better motorcycle!



Bill and Arthur were joined by Walter Davidson, Arthur's brother and a machinist. Walter had access to the special tools needed to create motorcycle parts. It took years to get it right. Other Wisconsin inventors like Ole Evinrude helped them make their motor work better. When they had the motor just right, they started selling motorcycles. The Harley-Davidson Motor Company was born! Though they had only five motorcycles to sell in 1903, better times weren't far off. William Davidson, Arthur's oldest brother, joined the friends in 1908, and the Harley-Davidson team was complete.



Walter Davidson was not only a talented machinist. He was also an excellent motorcycle rider. Walter loved to race his Harley-Davidson motorcycle. His race wins made people want to buy their motorcycles.



The team had come a long way from the Davidson family shed in the backyard. Bill and Arthur both stayed with the Harley-Davidson Motor Company for the rest of their lives. Bill died in 1943, and Arthur died in 1950. Their company made thousands of motorcycles every year. Today, people all over the world ride Harleys! Bill Harley and the Davidson brothers built a better motorcycle, and the world noticed.

To learn more about Harley-Davidson, check out the resources below:

Curator's Favorites Exhibit: [Harley-Davidson Knucklehead](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2732)

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2732>

[Harley and the Davidsons](https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/harley-and-the-davidsons-motorcycle-legends-2) Badger Biography

<https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/harley-and-the-davidsons-motorcycle-legends-2>

