

# GREAT ARROW news

The Pierce-Arrow Museum Newsletter



## SILVER ARROW DONORS

\$5000 OR MORE

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**WANTED:**  
*Articles, Photos, Ideas*



## CONTACT

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**david.coco@comcast.net**

Newsletter Design & Production

Liz Horne (GA)

# PERCIVAL AND THE PIERCE CYCLE COMPANY

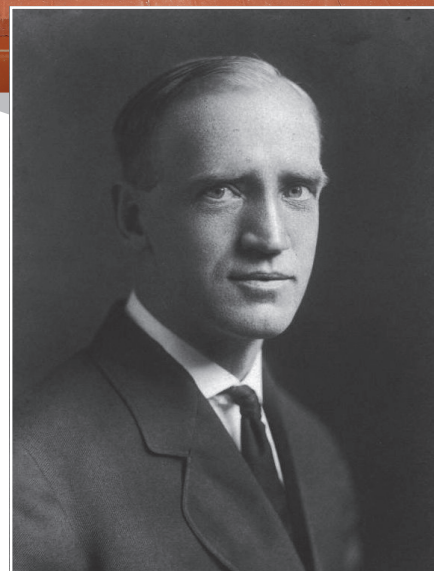


*This original condition 1912 Pierce Four motorcycle was recently donated to the Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore by longtime Pierce-Arrow Society member F. Arnold Romberg of LaGrange, Texas*

*By David Coco*

The Pierce Arrow Foundation Museum is fortunate to have on display a 1912 Pierce Four motorcycle, through the generosity of F. Arnold Romberg of La Grange, Texas. This motorcycle has been on loan to the Museum for a number of years and has now been donated to the museum. It is in original condition and, as is often so desired in today's collector world, has a "delightful patina"! We are very grateful to Mr. Romberg for this generous donation of a wonderful piece of Pierce history.

George N. Pierce founded the Geo. N. Pierce Company, later to become the Pierce Arrow Motor Car Company, and he had a son, Percival Pieronnet Pierce. Percy, as he was known, enjoyed driving Pierce automobiles in competitions, and was very successful in both the United States and Europe in the early 1900's. He was born Febru-



**Percival Pieronnet Pierce (1878~1940)**

ary 22, 1878, so he was a young participant in what were basically endurance tests of the automobiles. He married Lallie Jo Moody, and they had one child, Jeannette Pierce, in 1909. He died August 28, 1940, at the age of 62, while his wife lived to be 88 years old, passing away in 1971.

By 1907, the Pierce Arrow Motor Car Company had moved into a new facility on Elmwood in Buffalo,

*continued on page 3*



#### LIFE MEMBERS

\$1500 or more

Bill Armstrong  
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PAS Great Lakes Region  
PAS New England Region

# PIERCE-ARROW FOUNDATION

*Operating the Pierce-Arrow Museum on the Campus of the Gilmore Car Museum*

August 2019

Dear Friends of the Pierce-Arrow Museum:

Presently our museum is more popular than ever, enjoying a visitation of well over 130,000 persons in 2018! Many Friends of the Museum have worked hard to bring about this success. However, three projects have particularly moved us forward: (1) the Legacy Partnership Program authored by Stu Blair, (2) the Great Arrow News edited by David Coco, and (3) Arnold Romberg's revised Museum Website provides more detailed museum information, online membership processing for both Pierce-Arrow Society and Pierce-Arrow Museum, and a list of parts for sale to benefit the Museum.

A very special thanks goes to Liz Horne whose graphic skills and design talents made all three projects possible. Of course your Museum functions so well because of the tireless efforts of Museum Director Dave Stevens.

I'm excited to announce a new product soon to be available from the Museum website: an equivalent of the valve lubricant used in the Bragg Kliessrath vacuum power brake systems of the 1936 and forward Pierce-Arrow automobiles. In conjunction with the excellent restoration of his 1703, Bob Koch meticulously researched the valve lubricant formula, found an equivalent, purchased it in quantity and repackaged in original-type containers (he even found an expert design artist to duplicate the label....I believe her name is Liz Horne). Thank you Bob and Diana Koch for this donation to the Pierce-Arrow Museum!

An organizational change has recently been made at the Foundation level. Eight of our long-time Trustees have been elevated to the newly created status of Trustee Emeritus. This means that their experience and council are still demanded, however, they are relieved of many laborious duties previously performed. This move to honor the past service of older Trustees has made room for the appointment of new younger Trustees who have demonstrated their willingness to serve in the management of your Museum. And we extend a warm welcome to the newest Foundation Trustee, David White!

And I remind you: What better way to "give back" to the hobby we enjoy than to make a special gift to the Pierce-Arrow Museum? This can be done as easily as a museum membership at the sustainer level or greater, or consult the Pierce-Arrow Legacy Partnership Program for many other ways to contribute.

Most cordially yours,

Merlin Smith, Chairman  
Pierce-Arrow Foundation

#### PIERCE-ARROW FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

**MERLIN SMITH**  
CHAIRMAN

**DAVID HARRIS**  
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

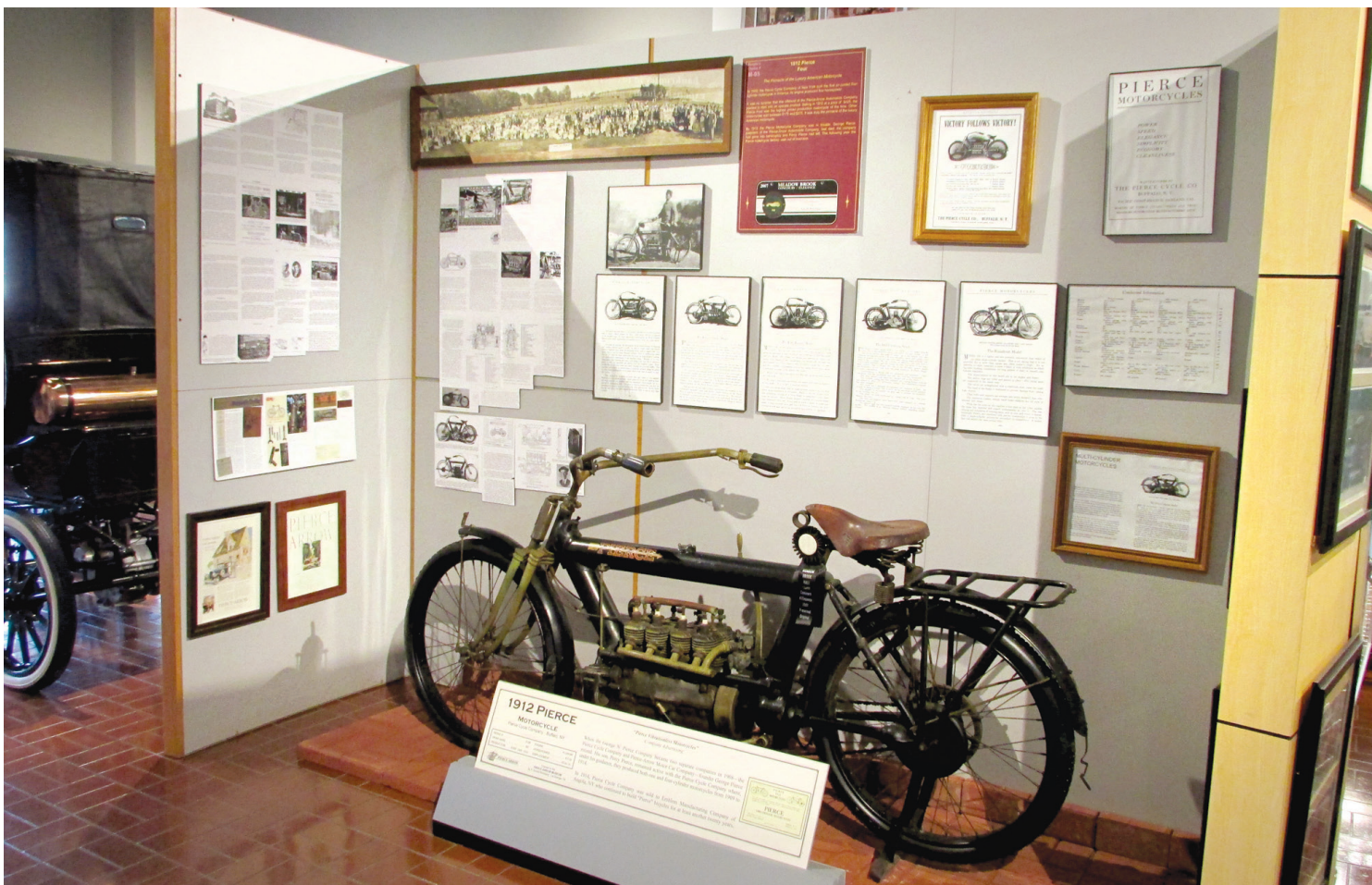
**DAVID STEVENS**  
MUSEUM DIRECTOR

STUART BLAIR  
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ERNEST FOLLIS\*  
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BERNARD WEIS\*  
DAVID WHITE  
JOHN WOZNEY

\*EMERITUS





***This 1912 Pierce Four motorcycle was recently donated to the Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore by Arnold Romberg of LaGrange, Texas.***

New York. This meant the old production facility on Hanover and Prime Streets in that town was no longer producing automobiles, and Percy wanted to not only continue building bicycles, but also start manufacturing motorcycles. Percy was appointed head of the Pierce Cycle Company, shares of stock issued and sold, and developmental work began.

At the time, some European manufacturers were building automobiles and motorcycles more advanced than what was being produced in the United States. Following a Pierce factory tradition, Percy went to Europe to steal, that is, investigate, the latest in motorcycle technology. It was not the first time that inspiration for a Pierce named vehicle was sought overseas. Acquiring a 1908 FN four cylinder motorcycle was the first step in the design of the *Pierce Four*, a high end motorcycle which would be sold along with a *Pierce Single*.

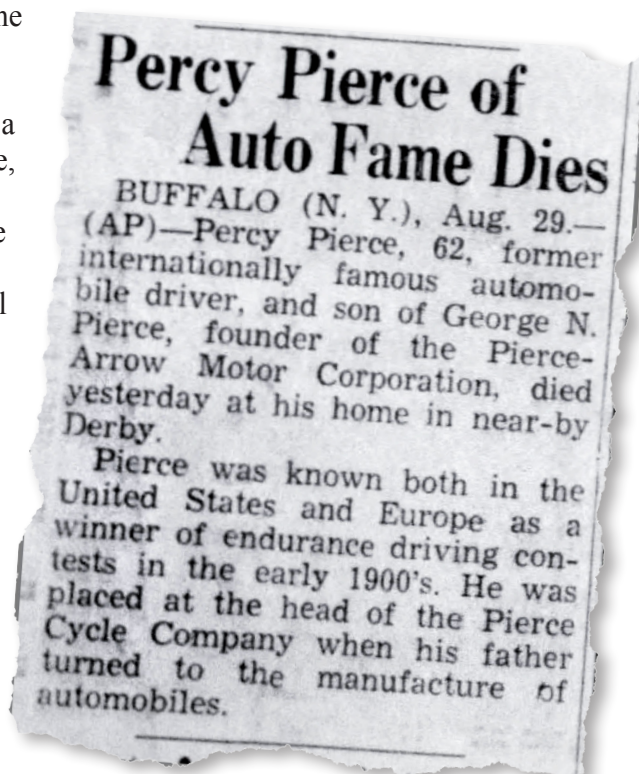
Sales of the *Pierce Four* began in

1909, and it was a high quality bike. It was not only the first four cylinder motorcycle built in the United States, but also the first shaft drive motorcycle this side of the pond. Power was a T-head engine which displaced about 42 cubic inches. The engine was a structural member of the frame, the remainder of the frame consisting of tubes which were cleverly used as oil and gasoline storage and to hide control cables.

It was an expensive bike, and it was rumored that the sale price was less than the cost at the factory to build it. While Percy may have been a great competition driver, apparently his business sense was somewhat lacking, and The Pierce Cycle Company went out of business in 1913.

Soon after, the Pierce

bicycle business and name was sold, and production of those two wheelers moved to Angola, New York.





# How To COPYCAT A PIERCE FOUR MOTORCYCLE

*By David Coco*

Percy Pierce had a problem. He wanted to take over the old Pierce factory at Hanover and Prime Streets, and build motorcycles. A single cylinder motorcycle was an easy design in 1907, the year the Pierce Cycle Company was incorporated, but he also wished to build a high end in-line four cylinder. But where to start?

The Pierce Motor Car Company had a slight history of borrowing designs of foreign origin. When the first Motorette was built in 1901, it used a De Dion-Bouton engine. In 1903, when Pierce built it's own engine for the Motorette and Stanhope models, it was an engine based very closely on the DD-B design.

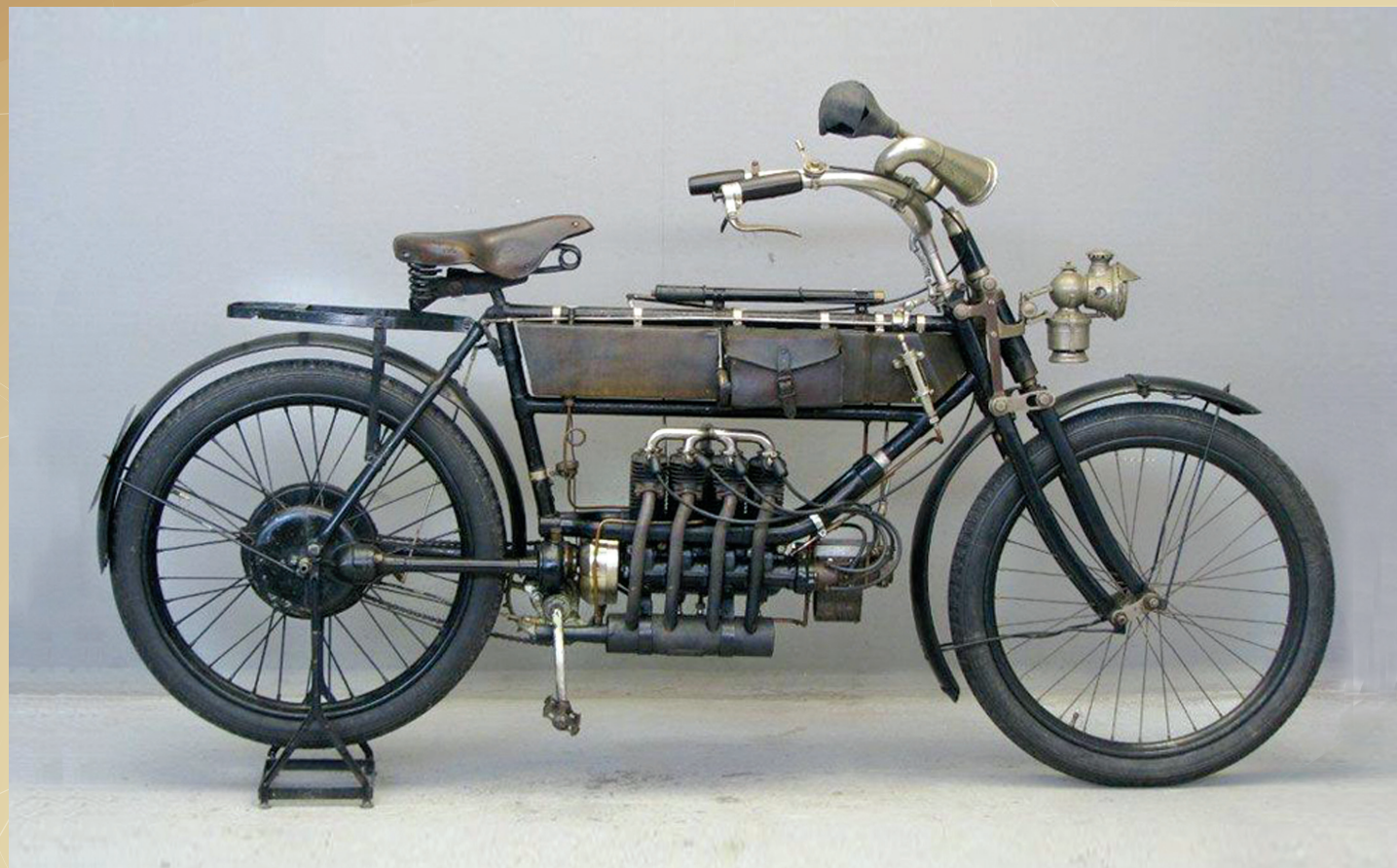
In 1905, the FN Four, manufactured by a Belgian company of the same name (FN), became the world's first four cylinder motorcycle. FN had been established in 1889 to make arms and ammunition and began manufacturing motorcycles as early as 1900.

Thus it was that Percy decided to acquire an FN in 1908, while traveling in Europe to see latest trends in motorcycle construction. The cycle was shipped back to Buffalo, then torn apart and inspected to see what had been done well on the cycle design, and what he thought he and his engineers could do better. Looking at an FN and a Pierce side by side, it's easy to see the influence on the American company that the foreign cycle had. Very similar shaft drive and front suspension,

slightly bent exhaust pipes ending in a collector/muffler, magneto placement, and so forth.

Percy did make some improvements in his design, of course. The Pierce frame was made with large diameter tubing, parts of which became reservoirs for gasoline and oil. The Pierce had a T-head engine with a camshaft activating all valves, slightly different than the FN's inlet-over-exhaust (F-head) design with atmospheric intake valves.

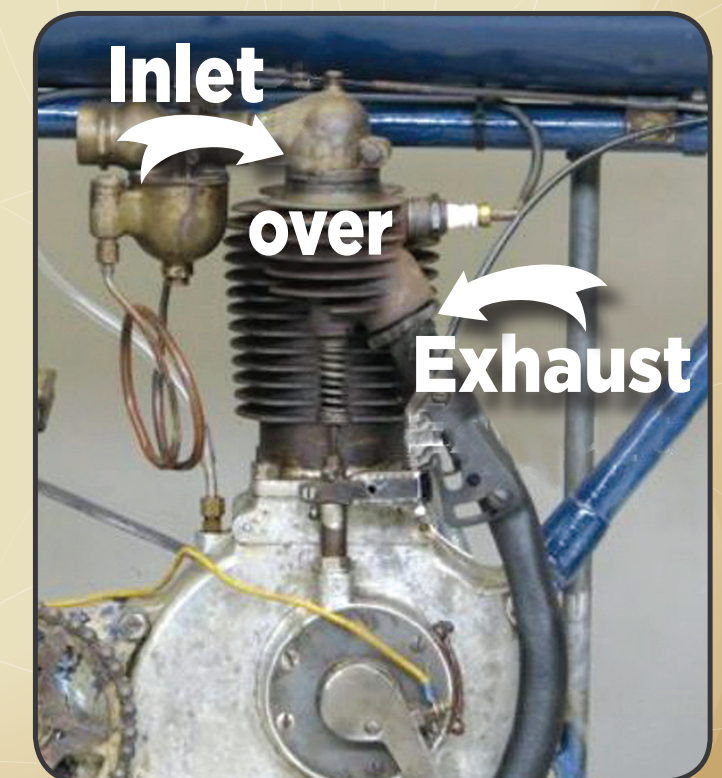
The Copycat Pierce Four was introduced in 1909, and became the first four cylinder motorcycle manufactured in the United States.



1908 FN Four, Percy's "Copycat" Motorcycle



1909 Pierce Four, note similar front forks, magneto placement, shaft drive, and exhaust pipe design (albeit reversed)

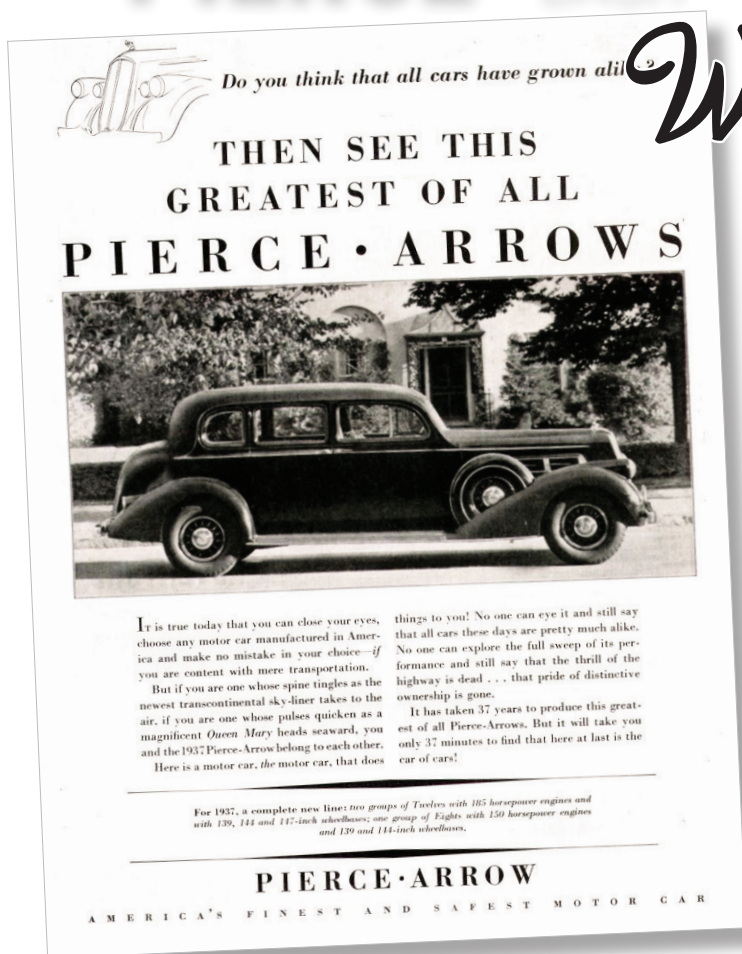


FN engine type, with atmospheric intake valves



# The PIERCE “DASH” ARROW

## What's in a dash?



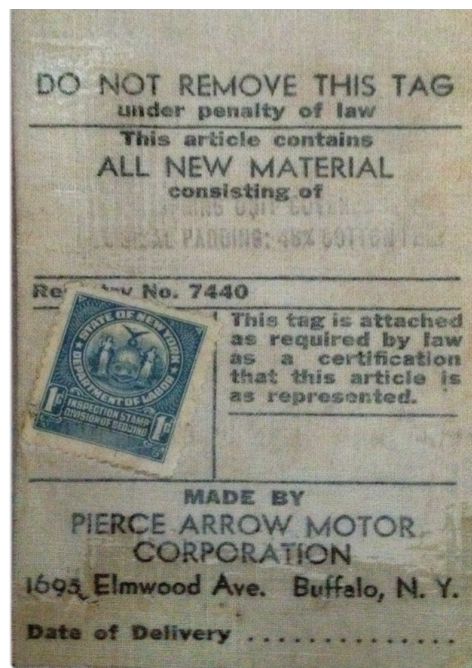
Do you think that all cars have grown alike?

THEN SEE THIS  
GREATEST OF ALL  
PIERCE · ARROWS

It is true today that you can close your eyes, choose any motor car manufactured in America and make no mistake in your choice—if you are content with mere transportation. But if you are one whose spine tingles as the newest transcontinental sky-liner takes to the air, if you are one whose pulses quicken as a magnificent *Queen Mary* heads seaward, you and the 1937 Pierce-Arrow belong to each other. Here is a motor car, the motor car, that does things to you! No one can eye it and still say that all cars these days are pretty much alike. No one can explore the full sweep of its performance and still say that the thrill of the highway is dead. . . . that pride of distinctive ownership is gone. It has taken 37 years to produce this greatest of all Pierce-Arrows. But it will take you only 37 minutes to find that here at last is the car of cars!

For 1937, a complete new line: two groups of Twelves with 165 horsepower engines and with 129, 144 and 147-inch wheelbases; one group of Eights with 150 horsepower engines and 139 and 144-inch wheelbases.

PIERCE · ARROW  
AMERICA'S FINEST AND SAFEST MOTOR CAR



**Left: Late 1930's advertising where a “dot” appears instead of a dash; Above: A Travelodge cushion tag with no dash, but, even then, there was legal advice to leave the tag attached!**

► We've all heard that it's not the dates on a tombstone that matter, it's the dash between the dates, or, in other words, the life that was lived.

But what about the dash sometimes found between the words Pierce and Arrow? Is there any significance or meaning to that dash?

The story of George N. Pierce is well known to Pierce-Arrow enthusiasts. The Heinz, Pierce and Munschaur Company was started in 1865 to manufacture household items, the most well known of which are bird cages. In 1872, George N. Pierce bought out the other two gentlemen, and changed the name to George N. Pierce Company. Manufacture of ice boxes followed, and in 1896 bicycles were added to the product offerings.

Many bicycle companies at the turn of the century were soon expanding into new-fangled automobile construction. Among them were Pope Manufacturing Company with the

makes Pope-Hartford, Pope-Toledo, Pope-Robinson, Pope-Tribune, and Pope-Waverly, the Duryea brothers, and the Winton Bicycle Company (renamed the Winton Motor Carriage Company in 1897).

The head badge of the Pierce bicycles featured an arrow as part of the design, although the word “arrow” was not used in the badge. Motor car manufacture began in 1901 with a single cylinder vehicle, and it was not until 1903 that a Pierce model was marketed as an “Arrow”, a new two cylinder vehicle. In 1904, a much larger, four cylinder, car was marketed, and designated as a Great Arrow. There was still no dash in the name, however. The “Arrow” (and slightly later the “Great Arrow”) was being used as a model designation, not part of the marque name, which remained Pierce.

The company was very successful, but working out of a smaller manufacturing facility at 622 Hanover

Street in Buffalo, where the bicycle manufacturing had grown. The noted architect Albert Kahn designed the Pierce Arrow factory complex in 1906, and the 132,970 square foot structure was built at 1695 Elmwood Avenue. There seems to be no mention of the pace of construction, but it must have been forthwith, as the building itself is featured in 1908 advertising.

In 1907, George N. Pierce was 61 years old, and sold all rights to the company. He would pass away from a heart attack three years later. In 1908, the company was renamed The Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company, seemingly the first time the now-famous dash appears. As one studies the period advertising, it can be seen that the dash is not used in ads that are by the George N. Pierce Company, but do start to appear in post-1908 advertising. For the first few years after 1908, however, there's no consistency of the dash use.

The dash does not appear in any



motorcycle advertising, of course, because it was not a “Pierce Arrow” motorcycle, but rather just a Pierce motorcycle. As has been mentioned, the name of the new organization was the Pierce Cycle Company, so no dash is needed.

The dash seems to become evident in the majority of advertisements starting around 1911, but examples of “no dash” can be found in ads of the 1920’s. By the 1930’s, the dash seemed to be in every advertisement. However, in the late 1930’s, an ad shows up with no dash, but a dot.

Stock certificates of the 1930’s have the dash, both in the name and the printed seal, so it would seem it was official by then that the dash should be used.

Then, in the late 1930’s when the Travelodge was built, the dash disappeared again, as shown on upholstery tag from a trailer sofa cushion shown on page 6.

dot-dash-dot-dash-dot  
(Morse code for “finish”, or The End)

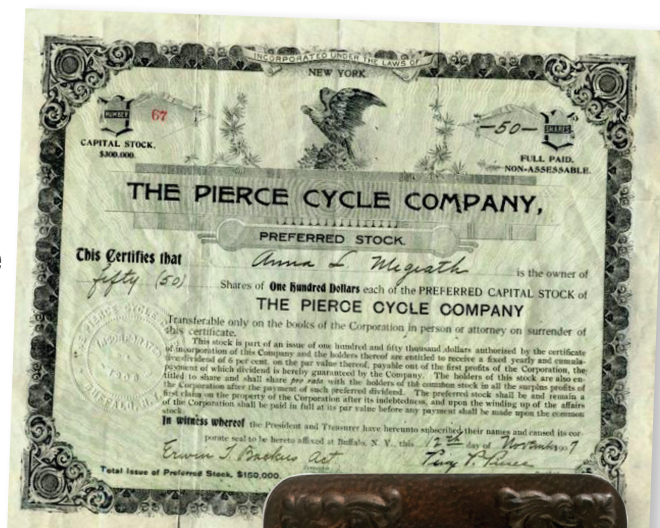
## Pierce Cycle Company Memorabilia

Well, this will be a short article concerning Pierce Cycle Company (motorcycle) memorabilia. There is none.

**WAIT!** Yes, there’s clock! A very rare clock, possibly the only one extant, mentioning Pierce motorcycles. This clock showed up on Ebay a number of years ago and was acquired by our own Ed Minnie.

**OH!** There’s a stock certificate out there too, for 50 shares of the Pierce Cycle Company dated 1907 and signed by our own Percy Pierce.

There may be other motorcycle memorabilia out there, other than the occasional catalog, but it’s very, very scarce. There were a lot of dealer “give aways” from Pierce Arrow car dealers, but apparently very little from the Pierce motorcycle dealers.



## Have you considered a Legacy Partner Gift?

A Legacy Partner gift allows you to perpetuate your support for our Pierce-Arrow Museum and to preserve the history of the Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company for future generations. Anyone can make a gift, and no amount is too small.

Many PAS members choose to make a gift through their wills, trusts, retirement accounts or life insurance policies. Some members have chosen to make a gift today through gifts of stocks or cash or donations of automobiles. We have established a very successful Museum during the past 20 years; now is the time for all of us to ensure its permanence.

*There are many ways to leave your legacy for the future of our Pierce-Arrow Museum; to learn more about how you can make a Legacy Partner Gift, please contact:*

**MERLIN SMITH**  
Chairman,  
Pierce-Arrow Foundation  
(318) 599-8128  
merlin.smith@comcast.net



**DAVE STEVENS**  
Director,  
Pierce-Arrow Museum  
(231) 740-6610  
davenstevens@msn.com

### SPECIFIC BEQUEST

**Wills a specific dollar amount or a specific piece of property**

*"I give to the Pierce-Arrow Foundation, a not-for-profit corporation, in Hickory Corners, MI, the sum of \$10,000 for its general endowment or other general purposes."*

*"I give to the Pierce-Arrow Foundation, a not-for-profit corporation, in Hickory Corners, MI, my 1932 Pierce-Arrow Model 54."*

### CONTINGENT BEQUEST

**Wills a specific amount, percentage or residue of the Estate if other conditions cannot be met, ensures that property will pass to a desired recipient rather than unintended beneficiaries**

*"I give to my Nephew, John Doe, of Buffalo, New York, the sum of \$10,000 and my 1933 Pierce-Arrow model 1247. If John Doe is not living at the time of my death, I direct that the amount and item(s) due him be paid/given to the Pierce-Arrow Foundation, a not-for-profit corporation, in Hickory Corners, MI, for its museum endowment or other general purposes."*

### BENEFICIARY OF INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS

**Life Insurance Policy | Trust | 401(k) Accounts  
Annuities | IRA / Roth IRA | Foundation**



# Pierce-Arrow Museum *at Gilmore*

Visit America's finest public exhibit of Pierce-Arrow vehicles  
in the only museum devoted exclusively to  
Pierce-Arrow motor cars, motorcycles, bicycles and history.



In 2018, nearly 140,000 visitors learned about the  
Pierce-Arrow motor car and the Pierce-Arrow Society at  
this world-class automotive history destination –  
the beautiful Gilmore Car Museum Campus.

*Come see what we've accomplished!*

## SUPPORT OUR MUSEUM!

**Our \$40 Annual Membership**  
includes admission to the entire  
Gilmore Car Museum campus with  
over 400 vehicles including the  
museums of our neighbors -  
CCCA, Franklin, Model A Ford,  
Lincoln and Cadillac-LaSalle.

The Pierce-Arrow Foundation is a 501(c)3  
Educational Non-profit Corp.

The Pierce-Arrow Society  
and Pierce-Arrow Museum...  
*Partners in preserving Pierce-Arrow history.*  
[www.Pierce-ArrowMuseum.org](http://www.Pierce-ArrowMuseum.org)

**Museum Hours:**  
Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm  
Saturday – Sunday: 9am – 6pm  
*Open April thru November*

**Location:**  
6865 W Hickory Rd.  
Hickory Corners, MI 49060  
*Only 13 miles north of I-94*