



# Michigan Sport Touring Report

October 2017

Editor – Ian Orr

## Helen Tornquist



Helen Tornquist, adventurer extraordinaire, dropped in at the October MSTR West breakfast meeting and gave a presentation on her incredible motorcycle trip through South America. From learning to ride a 250cc bike just before departing to then soloing through South America, you really have to read for yourself to understand just what she accomplished:

<https://helenmotodiaries.blog/>

## WVR 2017

The WVR ride, held each year at the beginning of October, has served up every imaginable weather condition. From snow to frost to “snain” (snowy rain) to just plain, drenching rain we’ve learned to watch the weather forecast and pack accordingly. But this year we were treated to two sunny, 80 degree days with perfect fall colors everywhere. One riding group was given a roadside refresher course, courtesy of a Virginia state trooper, on Virginia highway law. An all-day rain forecast for Sunday saw most of us put in a 500 mile day

on Saturday – 300 miles of the best twisty roads in the area followed by a 200 mile evening/nighttime dash back to Marietta, Ohio.



Check out the WVR pictures on the MSTR Smugmug photo gallery.

## In the Blink of an Eye!!!

By Bob Primeau

While on my way home from dinner Friday night 9/22/17 in the blink of an eye a young girl shot out of a parking lot right in front of me. I had no time to do anything but slam into the side of her car. All I can remember is it seemed like she just shot out of the parking lot without stopping & apparently not looking as the police report said she didn't see me till I hit her. I remember hearing the crunch & landing on my back in the middle of the road. Fortunately I only broke my left arm below the wrist & my lower back.



After seeing the aftermath of the damage to my bike & the car I can't believe I survived it at all. I have a long recovery ahead of me & plan to get back on two wheels again. I realize I've been blessed to still be here especially in light of the many lost members in recent years as well as the sad news about Ann Redner. I always thought I paid good attention of what was around me & realize that it only takes a second of not paying attention or in the blink of an eye all hell can breakout. I want to wish everyone good luck & hope someone learns something from this so it never happens to you.

On another note though is I believe had I had a brighter jacket & helmet as well as a brighter colored bike this may have never happened!!

Thanks everyone for your thoughts & prayers, they surely worked!

## Flanders

*By Jac Brown*

Motorcycle Manufacturing in Michigan 100 Years Ago

This story will be a little different than the usual newsletter fare. I would like to take you back to the early 1900's and give you a feel for the motorcycle industry through the story of the Flanders motorcycle. I became interested in this era when we started a project to bring a Flanders 4 motorcycle back to Chelsea where it was manufactured. Yes, my little town of Chelsea, Michigan once had a motorcycle factory and thousands of motorcycles were made there between 1911 and 1914. Over the last year, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts in Chelsea have purchased a 1911 Flanders, repaired it, and donated it to the Chelsea Historical Museum. A good part of the last year, I have been spending time working on and supporting the Flanders ... and learning about early motorcycle history. So let me put you in Professor Peabody's way back machine and try to give you a sense of those times.

The first thing to realize is that this was a time of massive change. In the transportation

industry, engine powered transportation was replacing horse powered transportation. Buggies and wagons were being replaced by cars, trucks, even tractors. Many people thought that the motorcycle would replace the rider on a horse. The initial idea was the motorcycle as daily transportation, not just for fun.



Walter Flanders had been Henry Ford's manufacturing expert when building the Model T plant (1906 - 1908). Flanders wanted to take the ideas of mass production and apply them to a motorcycle with the idea of gaining large market share and even competing with the Model T for customers. In other words, a motorcycle equivalent of the Model T. At the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, motorcycle sales were booming. In 1911, there were more than 150 companies making motorcycles in the US. A few were building most of the motorcycle in their own factory. Some were just buying parts and assembling bikes. Others were rebranding bikes made for them by other companies. If you have visited the Wheels Through Time museum in Maggie Valley, N. Carolina, you may have noticed the Elk motorcycle which is a Flanders made for a hardware store owner in Elkhart, Indiana.

The Big Two were Indian and Harley-Davidson, but others were making names for themselves. Henderson in Detroit made its first 4 cylinder motorcycle producing 7 HP (claimed) in 1911. Excelsior in Chicago introduced its 1 liter V twin in 1910 and became a favorite of police departments. People were just starting to

realize that motorcycle sales were driven by horsepower and speed. This was the scene when Flanders started building his “everyman’s motorcycle”.



The transportation industry was a wild place in the early 20th century. Think Silicon Valley in the 90's and you will get an idea of the entrepreneurial spirit of the time. Companies were started, bought out, sold, or failed at an incredible rate. Using Walter Flanders as an example, he left Ford in 1908. In the 6 years between 1908 and 1914, he was the principle (often the founder) of 7 different companies, 6 making cars and one the Flanders motorcycle.

Most of these failed financially, but two lived a longer life (although not under the leadership of Flanders). One of his car companies, EMF, became Studebaker. In fact, Flanders used part of the buyout money from Studebaker to start the motorcycle company. The other company came from the bankruptcy of Flanders Manufacturing. While in receivership, Flanders made a trade, the motorcycle company in receivership in trade for a car company, United States Motors of Detroit, also in receivership. Flanders then combined US Motors and Maxwell and reorganized them under the Maxwell name. That company became Chrysler when bought out by Walter Chrysler in 1921.

Walter Flanders was an interesting example of the entrepreneurs of the early 20th century. He was the son of a Vermont country doctor. From early in life he loved machinery and left home at 15 to pursue his fortune. At the age of

35, Henry Ford hired him to lead the Model T production line design and he invented machinery, production processes, and an early version of “just in time” manufacturing. However, he and Henry Ford were very different people. Ford was conservative and reserved. Flanders was gregarious, outgoing, and not afraid to throw in a few swear words when talking to line workers. He was a huge man said to weigh 275 pounds. His voice was so strong that it could be heard over the machines in a drop-forge plant. A carouser and hell-raiser of epic proportion, it was said he drank every night, far into the night. He was blessed with immunity from hang-over and couldn't understand other people's weakness the next morning. He was also known to love women and was married 5 times.

One source suggests that Flanders was so popular with the workers, that Ford started worrying about Flanders taking over his company. Whatever really happened, it was clear that Ford and Flanders were very different personalities and Flanders realized that he could never become boss at Ford, so he left in 1908 to pursue his own projects.

### Flanders Manufacturing Company



The Flanders Manufacturing Company was formed by Walter Flanders as President and prime investor. Combined with other investors, the company was capitalized at \$2.25 million dollars (\$56 billion in today's dollars) with the intention of building 15k to 20k motorcycles per year. Five smaller companies were combined to form Flanders with forging, casting, machining, and assembling of the engine

taking place in Pontiac and building of the rest of the motorcycle in the clock tower factory in Chelsea. At the time, it was advertised as the largest motorcycle factory in the world.



Corner in Finishing Room—Flanders-Chelsea Plant

Launched with great fanfare, the Flanders 4 sold for \$175 (\$4350 in today's dollars). The advertising department for Flanders promoted all sorts of activities, from college marching bands to board track racers. One of the more interesting promotions was Cy Woodman. Ms. Woodman was a young, free-lance journalist for the New York Times. She wanted to become the first woman to ride across the country on a motorcycle. In 1913, riding a Flanders 4, she set out from New York, heading for San Francisco. Considering the lack of roads in the west and amount of work required to keep an early motorcycle running, it is an amazing attempt. She got as far as New Mexico when she came down with appendicitis. After the appendectomy she was forced to complete her journey by train.

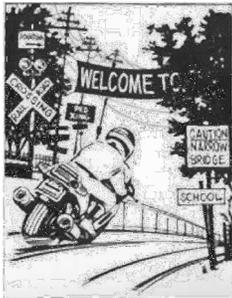


Unfortunately, customers didn't want an inexpensive transportation motorcycle, customers wanted power and speed. Instead of 20k per year, only about 2500 Flanders were built in the first two years. By December of 1912, Flanders was in receivership. The company continued into 1914 under new management, with a V-twin model introduced at the end, but it was too late. In 1914, the plants were closed and assets sold.

Other motorcycle manufacturers lasted longer. Henderson continued until purchased by Ignaz Schwinn in 1917. In 1917 Schwinn also purchased Excelsior and combined Henderson with Excelsior. The combined company continued until failing in the depression. In the end, the only two significant motorcycle makes in the US made it through the depression and they were Indian and Harley-Davidson.

**A special thanks to Jac Brown and Bob Primeau for their articles and pictures featured this month.**

**Remember...** All published articles earn a free breakfast and your articles will be appreciated by your fellow members and the newsletter editor, and you will also earn points toward the **2017 MOTY Award!**



## MSTR Heads Up

Here's a listing of some of the upcoming local events and meetings within the next few weeks. If you know of a local motorcycle event in Michigan or Ontario the MSTR would be interested in send Ian Orr an e-mail, with the details, to

[Communications@mstriders.com](mailto:Communications@mstriders.com).

## MSTR EAST Breakfast Meeting

Saturday, October 28, 2017, @ 9:00 AM

East breakfast meeting is at **Doc's Sport Retreat** in Livonia, MI. Doc's is located at 19265 Victor Parkway. East of I-275, north of 7 mile road and across from Dave and Buster's. Augie Fernandes will be moderating this meeting.

## MSTR WEST Breakfast Meeting

Saturday, November 10, 2017, @ 10:00 AM

West breakfast meeting is at the **Alibi Bar & Grill**, 1394 E. Riverside Drive, Ionia, MI ([www.alibionia.com](http://www.alibionia.com)). Please send an email to Gala ([gschip@me.com](mailto:gschip@me.com)) so she can plan on providing breakfast for everyone who attends. Breakfast will be available for \$11 plus tax & tip. Keith Danielson will be moderating this meeting.



## MSTR 2017 Rides

With the arrival of autumn the temperatures are dropping, daylight riding hours are dwindling and the MSTR organized rides have ended for 2017.

## 2017 MSTR

## Deposed Depots Grand Tour

March 25 – November 19  
Michigan

Keith's 2017 Michigan Deposed Depots Grand Tour is wrapping up. There are 14 checkpoints, with 8 in the Lower Peninsula, and 6 in the Upper Peninsula. Additionally, you can earn up to 3 extra credit points for each checkpoint (42 extra credit points total) for stopping to see other Michigan attractions. These can be other depots, museums, historical points of interest, scenic attractions, tourist attractions, and unique Michigan restaurants. All photo proofs of your visits will be due to Keith by Nov. 19.

Organizer: Keith Danielson  
[keith.danielson@wowway.com](mailto:keith.danielson@wowway.com)

## MSTR Newsletter & Website

The MSTR Newsletter and Website ([www.mstriders.com/](http://www.mstriders.com/)) belong to you, the riders. They both can only be as good and as interesting as you make them. If you've got something to say about a ride, your bike, perhaps a trip you're planning, whatever, send it in for the newsletter and/or website to:

Ian Orr: [Communications@mstriders.com](mailto:Communications@mstriders.com)

## MSTR Photo Gallery

The MSTR maintains a SmugMug photo gallery (<https://mstriders.smugmug.com/>) to allow riders to upload and download pictures of various club events. Upload and download passwords are sent out to participants for each event. Click on the above link or visit the MSTR website and select the MSTR Photo Gallery link to check out all the event pictures.

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## Remembering Ann

On October 12<sup>th</sup>, Ann Redner crashed while riding her motorcycle in Utah. Ann did not survive.

Through the years many of us rode with Ann on HSTA/MSTA and Michigan riding events. While Ann enjoyed the camaraderie of these events she also wanted to tour the world on a motorcycle and went on to riding adventures all over North America, South America, England, Scotland and more.

Ann will be missed by her many fellow motorcyclists and friends.



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