

This is the 1920 Model Excelsior "X" motorcycle (made in 1919) and owned and ridden by famous aviator Charles A. Lindbergh. The photograph shows the machine restored to its original colors of blue and gray with gold striping. Photos from the collection of Theodore A. Hodgdon, except where otherwise noted.

The Charles A. Lindbergh Excelsior Motorcycle

and How It Was Restored

Upon visiting the Henry Ford Museum quite a number of years ago, I noticed the motorcycle which had belonged to Charles A. Lindbergh sitting there in unrestored condition. It seems that before presenta-

tion to the Museum, the motorcycle had been sandblasted, then varnished. I felt that this representation of the Lindbergh machine could be improved and also noticed that some parts were missing.

I did nothing about the matter at the time but thought, in the back of my mind, that I should speak to the Ford authorities and offer my help. My chance came unexpectedly some years ago in London, at the

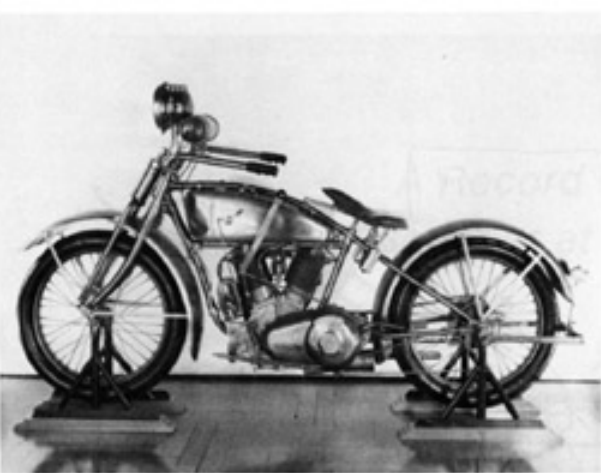
time the AACA tour was in England. I happened to be there on business unconnected with antique cars. Upon entering the living room of friends of mine in London, I was pleased indeed to meet Leslie Henry (Curator of Transportation, Henry Ford Museum), who was seated by the fireside.

This was my opportunity to tell him about the Lindbergh motorcycle. I produced from my pocket pictures of some of my antique motorcycles (which I carry constantly along with pictures of my wife, my son, and several of my antique cars)—showing him exactly what that 1920 Excelsior of Charles Lindbergh's should really look like. He asked me to send him color photographs and upon my return to America, I did so.

Several months later I heard from Les stating that he had found no one to restore the machine and asking if I would take on the project. I agreed, and in due course the machine arrived in Nutley, New Jersey in a large box.

Restoration was started in the BSA shops where the writer was president of the BSA Motorcycle U.S. Factory Branch. Several vital parts were missing. The large tool box which you see right behind the engine was missing as was the guard over the rear chain. I sent out a clarion call to a few members and presto! . . . a tool box arrived in the mail from Earl Chalfant and the chain guard came from John Scharle, who had rescued it from a basement in Brooklyn! A further missing piece, the oval guard, shown just beneath the tool box, could not be located anywhere, so this was made up by hand.

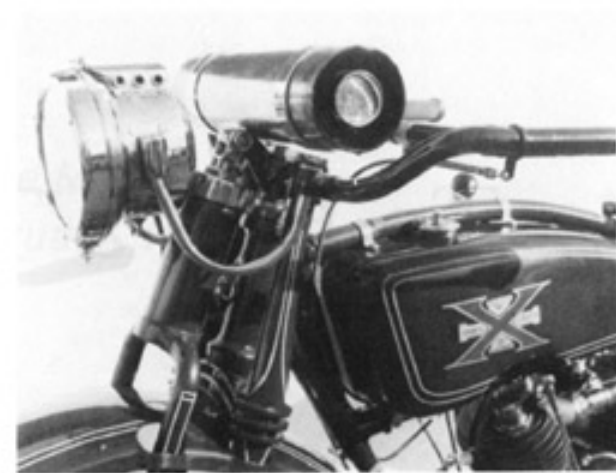
Many, many hours went into the resto-



The 1920 Excelsior motorcycle before being restored to its original appearance and colors. Photo courtesy of the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.



Front view showing wide mudguards, with double gold striping and small "X" Excelsior transfer supplied by restorer Hodgdon from his collection.



Nickel plated gas headlamp, Prest-o-lite tank. Note large "X" decal.

ration job, with a lot of the work performed by the writer in his spare Saturdays and Sundays. Finally, all of the nickel plating was done, the painting was finished in the original shade of deep blue for the machine and Excelsior gray for the wheels, and there were genuine "X" decals on the tank and mudguards. The fine old "X" was finished and shipped back to Leslie Henry at Dearborn.

The pictures on these two pages show the Lindbergh "X" after restoration. The motorcycle now reposes right beneath the nose of the "Spirit of St. Louis" replica aircraft in the Ford Museum. After Col. Lindbergh had seen the photographs of the restored machine, Les Henry telephoned me that his comment was, "That Excelsior looks just the way it did when I first saw it and it was delivered to me at Martin Engstrom's Hardware Store in Little Falls, Minnesota, in 1919."

And such a remark from so great a man was ample reward for all of us who had a hand in the restoration.

Gas tail lamp, small gold "X" decal and striping on rear guard.



View showing striping on tank, forks, tool box, chain guard and frame.

