

Alone with Her Bike, the First Females to Ride Around the World

Take the story of Bessie Stringfield, the African-American, Harley Davidson-loving female rider of the 1930s who, decades before the Civil Rights Movement, rode across country countless times, and even entered men's motorcycle races (only to be denied the winning prize when they found out she was a woman).

Pursuing her passion on two wheels in a country that made it nearly impossible for black citizens to move freely and where lynching was still legal in most of the towns she passed through, Bessie was putting her life in constant danger.

When motels refused her a room, which happened all too often, her Harley Davidson became her bed, her motorcycle jacket her pillow and gas station parking lots her hotel rooms. She recalled stories of being knocked off her motorbike by white men in pickup trucks and facing discrimination from road police.

Bessie Stringfield, aka, the "Motorcycle Queen" of the 1930s

In spite of it all, Bessie travelled to every state in the country, as well as riding through Europe, Brazil and Haiti. She called them her "penny tours" – a ritual that involved tossing a penny onto an open map. Wherever it landed would be her next destination. Fear, apprehension or excuses, just didn't even come into it.



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