


CLASSIC DRIVER



Flying Merkel Other

Stafford, 17 October

Lot sold	USD 20 950 - 26 187 GBP 16 000 - 20 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Engine number	FORM-W-SNO.5484	Location	
		Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

Description

c.1911 Flying Merkel 498cc 'Racing' Motorcycle

Engine no. FORM-W-SNO.5484

- * Pioneering American marque
- * An extremely rare survivor
- * Restored condition

Joseph Merkel founded the Merkel Motor Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1902, its first product being a bicycle powered by a 'clip on' engine attached to the front down tube. In 1908 Merkel merged with the Light Manufacturing and Foundry Company of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, which had been making motorcycles since 1901. Merkel production shifted to Pottstown and the range - marketed as 'Merkel-Light' - expanded to include chain-driven types and large v-twins. The latter were among the most advanced designs of their day, featuring telescopic forks and cantilever rear suspension at a time when most of the opposition offered girder forks and rigid frames. Motive power was provided by a 45-degree v-twin with inlet-over-exhaust valve gear.

The move to Pottstown signalled a serious commitment to racing and the hiring of factory supported riders, while the slogan 'Flying Merkel' began to appear in the company's advertising. And fly they did, winning countless races over the next few seasons before new owners the Miami Cycle and Manufacturing Company of Middletown, Ohio pulled the plug on the factory's racing program in 1911. Limited support continued for employees that wanted to go racing, and the 1915 catalogue contained a list of 1914-season race wins extending to a page-and-a-half. When Miami ceased production of Merkel motorcycles in 1915, Joseph Merkel designed and patented the 'Merkel Motor

Wheel'.

Finished in the marque's distinctive 'Merkel Orange', this restored Veteran-era American classic is powered by a 30.39ci (498cc) inlet-over-exhaust engine with 'atmospheric' inlet valve. Merkel made much of its use of ball bearings: 'The celebrated Merkel Ball-Bearing Motor is our sure foundation; a motor which has never been equalled in its simplicity and durability; a motor which will develop more actual horsepower under accurate test than any other motor of its size in the world.' Given the Flying Merkel's racing record, this seemingly extravagant claim may not have been too far from the truth. It is perhaps worth noting that Margaret Gast, reputedly the only lady board-track rider of her day, rode a single-cylinder Flying Merkel like that offered here.

There are no documents with this Lot.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1793

Title Mr

First name Jamie

Last name Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

Phone +44-02089632817

Fax +44-2074477401

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