



(/)

# Hilltop Farm

Managed by the Friends of the Farm at Hilltop



[HOME \(/\)](#) ▶ [ABOUT \(/ABOUT\)](#) ▶ [THE FARM \(/ABOUT/THE-FARM\)](#) ▶

GEORGE MALLORY HENDEE

## George M. Hendee

### Hilltop Founder & Noted Motorcycling Pioneer

In 1897 George Mallory Hendee, a former highwheel bicycle champion, founded the company that would later launch the Indian motorcycle. Introduced in 1901, Indian was the first commercially successful, gasoline-powered motorcycle in the U.S. The company was known as Hendee Manufacturing Co., until 1923 when it was renamed Indian Motorcycle Co.

George Mallory Hendee with his highwheel bicycle

Hendee with his bicycling medals

The Bicycle Years



Born in Watertown, Connecticut, in 1866, Hendee had a keen curiosity and taught himself to ride a highwheel bicycle at age 15. He won the U.S. Amateur Champion title at age 16 in 1882 and held it until 1886. During his racing career, Hendee won 302 out of 309 races. In his last race in 1897, he won the World Championship.



Hendee was a prominent figure in bicycling, holding positions in local, state and national organizations. He also sponsored racers and races, which lead to his interest in developing a motorized pacing bike.

## Indian Motorcycle

In 1900, Hendee met engineering wizard Carl “Oscar” Hedstrom and witnessed the superior performance of Hedstrom’s pacer. He recognized the commercial potential of the bike for the general public. In January 1901 Hendee recruited Hedstrom to join his company in Springfield, as chief designer and engineer of a “motorized bicycle for the masses.”



Hendee in his Indian Motorcycle Office



Advertisement for Hendee's Safeties

In May 1901, the Indian prototype was successfully tested on a steep hill in Springfield. Hendee Manufacturing eventually became the largest employer in Springfield with 3200 employees. Despite competition from 200 other motorcycle brands, by 1913 the company was the largest motorcycle company in the world with annual production of 32,000 units.

Hendee stepped down as president of Hendee Manufacturing in 1915 and as chairman in 1916.

## Retirement on the Farm

Hendee retired to his 500-acre Hilltop Farm and 17-room Hilltop Manor in after retiring in 1916. He raised a prized herd of Guernsey cows known as Hilltop Butterfats, which became well-known throughout the cattle breeding industry. He also established a model poultry plant for the breeding of while leghorn chickens. Hilltop Farm became an important producer of milk, dairy and poultry products.

During WWI, Hendee was the volunteer postmaster of the YMCA in France and oversaw delivery of mail to troops in the front lines.

Hendee, a noted philanthropist, was instrumental in bringing a Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children to Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1925. He generously supported many other Springfield organizations.

After many years of failing health, Hendee died in 1943 at the age of 76. He and his widow Edith Hale Hendee had no children.

Hendee was inducted into the **AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame** (<http://www.motorcyclemuseum.org/halloffame/detail.aspx?RacerID=68>) in 1998 and the **U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame** (<http://www.usbhof.org/inductee-by-year/125-george-mallory-hendee>) in 2010.



George Mallory  
Hendee, Mason



(/VOLUNTEER)

VOLUNTEER



(/DONATE)

DONATE



(/VISIT)

VISIT



(/CONTACT)

CONTACT

The Friends of the Farm at Hilltop, Inc. • P.O. Box 372 • 1616 Mapleton Avenue • Suffield,  
CT 06078-0372

©2017 The Friends of the Farm at Hilltop • All rights reserved • Site design by **Starstruck  
Design (<http://www.starstruckdesign.com>)**

© 2018 Hilltop Farm, Suffield, CT