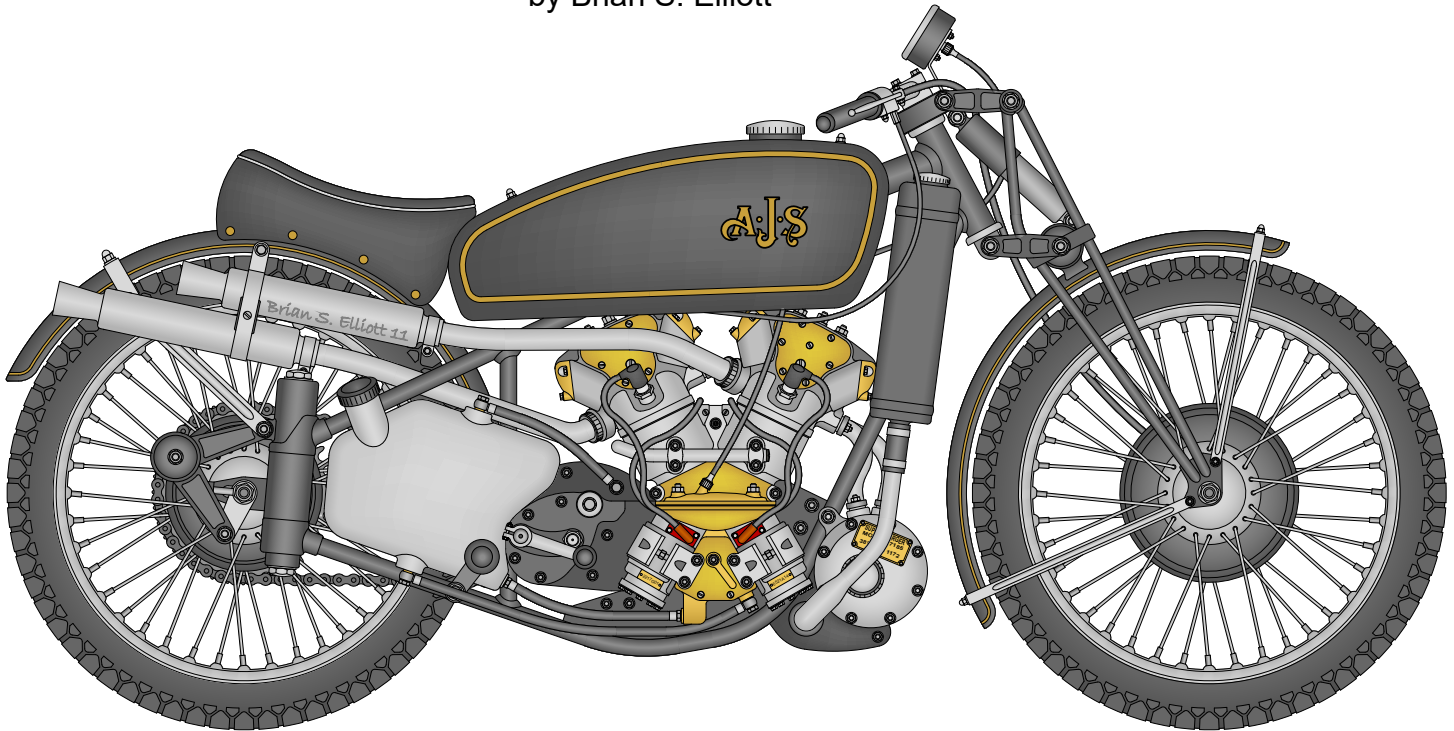


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1939 AJS 500

by Brian S. Elliott



In 1936, the British motorcycle firm of AJS showed its brand-new 500cc V4 road bike to the public for the first time. Although this motorcycle never went into production, it was further developed as a Grand Prix racer. The resulting racer did not perform adequately and was plagued with problems. As a result, the development effort with this bike was finally abandoned. A new ground-up design was started and, in 1939, AJS was finally able to roll out their completely redesigned GP racer. This bike carried a water-cooled 500cc, V4 engine with twin overhead cams and a chain-driven supercharger. The engine produced 55 horsepower @ 7200 RPM. Although this bike showed great promise in its first year out, AJS's timing couldn't have been worse. The outbreak of WWII effectively put a halt to all motorcycle racing until 1946. In the year following the war, the bike was rolled out once again and had some successes on the circuits. However, AJS was in the process of designing a new supercharged race bike, the Porcupine, which easily outperformed the former. As fate would have it, timing reared its ugly head yet again when the race sanctioning body, FIM, decided to ban all supercharged motorcycles from racing. This ruling effectively stopped AJS and others from any further development of supercharged multi-cylinder motorcycle engines.

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