

Frederick Brant Rentschler



Frederick Brant Rentschler (1887-1956)

Frederick Brant Rentschler ([November 8, 1887](#) – [April 25, 1956](#)) was an [American aircraft engine](#) designer, aviation engineer, and industrialist. He was a talented inventor of aviation equipment, Rentschler created and manufactured many revolutionary aircraft engines, including those used in the planes of [Charles Lindbergh](#), [Amelia Earhart](#) and [James Doolittle](#).

Birth

Rentschler was born in [Hamilton, Ohio](#) to George A. Rentschler and Phoebe Schwab, whose family owned the [Republic Motor Car Co.](#) that built Republic cars from [1908](#) until [1914](#).

He graduated from [Princeton University](#) in [1909](#) and worked in his family's businesses as a molder and machinist. When the U.S. entered [World War I](#) in [1917](#), he joined the [U.S. Army](#). As First [Lieutenant](#) and later [Captain](#), he was assigned to inspect [Hispano-Suiza](#) aircraft engines manufactured under [French](#) license at the [Wright-Martin](#) plant in [New Brunswick, New Jersey](#). The armistice of [November 11, 1918](#), ended the contract and caused the reorganization of Wright-Martin.

Aviator

Rentschler left the Army convinced that future aircraft would require lighter-weight engines with much greater power and higher reliability. His proposed design of an air-cooled engine flew in the face of conventional wisdom, which held that heavier liquid-cooled engines would power the future of aviation.

Rentschler became president of the [Wright Aeronautical Corporation](#) and pressed for research into his idea. Unable to convince his board of directors, largely composed of investment bankers with little aviation knowledge, he resigned in [1924](#) and, supported by old friend and Wright chief engineer George Mead, he developed a proposal for a high-powered air-cooled aircraft engine for the [U.S. Navy](#). [Admiral William A. Moffett](#) promised to approve the purchase of such an engine.

Rentschler approached the [Pratt & Whitney](#) Tool Company of [Hartford, Connecticut](#) with his idea and on [July 23, 1925](#) they agreed to fund its development, creating the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company in which Rentschler and Mead had a controlling position.

Pratt & Whitney's first engine, completed on Christmas Eve 1925, was named the Wasp by Faye Belden Rentschler, who Frederick had married [July 25, 1921](#). The 425 horsepower Wasp easily passed its official qualification test in March of [1926](#) and the Navy ordered 200 engines. The speed, climb, performance, and reliability that the engine offered revolutionized American aviation.

In [1928](#) Rentschler formed the [United Aircraft and Transport Corporation](#), the predecessor to [United Aircraft](#) (later [United Technologies](#)), in cooperation with [Vought](#) and [Boeing](#). United Aircraft and Transport completed the first coast-to-coast passenger network in March of that year.

In [1929](#) Rentschler ended his association with the Pratt & Whitney Machine Tool company but was allowed to keep the name Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company.

In the [1930s](#) Rentschler committed Pratt & Whitney to [helicopter](#) experimentation. In 1939 [Igor Sikorsky](#), an associate, designed and built the prototype for the modern helicopter.

Rentschler turned to developing [jet](#) engines after [World War II](#). Pratt & Whitney produced the [J-57](#) jet engine in [1953](#). The engine was used to power the first [B-52 Stratofortress](#) in [1954](#).

Awards

In 1951, Rentschler was made an Officer of the [Legion of Honor](#) "for his contribution to the progress of aeronautical science".

In 1958, the United States Air Force presented him with the Civilian Service Award for Exceptional Service as a pioneer in the development, research and manufacture of aircraft engines.

Death

Rentschler died [April 25, 1956](#) at his winter home in [Boca Raton, Florida](#).

Legacy

Pratt & Whitney's former company airfield, located in [East Hartford, Connecticut](#), was named Rentschler Field in his honor. The airfield was decommissioned in 1995, and the land it was on was donated to the state of Connecticut in 1999. A stadium, also called [Rentschler Field](#), was built on the site and opened in 2003 as the home field for the [University of Connecticut](#) football team. [Renbrook School](#), a private day school, was named after Rentschler and his wife. His wife leased out their estate to create this day school located in [West Hartford](#) on top of [Avon Mountain](#).

Reference

- [Biography](#)
- [\[1\]](#)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Brant_Rentschler"