



The U.S. Army Air Corps' first helicopter, the Platt-LePage XR-1A (S/N 42-6581), was based on the German Fa 61. While being repaired following a crash at Wright Field, an order for seven YR-1As was canceled. The aircraft was sold to Helicopter Air Transport, which overhauled it and sold it to Frank Piasecki, one of its designers. (Author's Collection)



The Army's second rotorcraft was Kellett's KD-1 Autogiro, procured as the YG-1 (S/N 35-278). This aircraft, along with a YG-1A, crashed, leading to an order for seven YG-1Bs powered by 225-hp R-755-3 engines. The sustained power of an autogiro's rotor made it one step from being a helicopter. (Author's Collection)



Although the autogiro's performance did not surpass that of light liaison airplanes, the Army, in its search for an aircraft with near vertical takeoff capability, in 1942 ordered seven Kellett XO-60s, which were improved YG-1Bs. This YO-60 (S/N 42-13609) was powered by a Jacobs R-915-3 engine. The auxiliary shaft from the engine to the rotor accelerated the rotor to allow jump takeoff. In flight, the rotor was disengaged to prevent torque from spinning the aircraft. The YO-60's maximum speed was 125 mph at its gross weight of 2,250 pounds. (Author's Collection)



The beginning of the long line of Army helicopters continued with Kellett's XR-8, which followed Sikorsky's XR-4, -5, -6, and -7 models. The Kellett brothers favored German helicopter designer Flettner's intermeshing rotor, which ruled out the need for a tail rotor to counter torque. This aircraft (S/N 44-21908) was one of two prototypes built before rotor stability problems ended the program. (Author's Collection)



Kellett's final helicopter design for the Army was this XR-10. An enlarged version of the XR-8 able to carry six litters, it was powered by two 450-hp R-985-AN-5 engines. External engine mounting allowed full use of the cargo area. This example (S/N 45-22793) was one of two prototypes built before a production order for 10 machines was canceled. (Author's Collection)