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## Looking Back At Canadian Aviation

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### Curtiss-Reid Rambler Mk III

Wingspan: 33'

Length: 24'

Engine: 120 h.p., D.H. Gypsy III

Maximum speed: 126 m.p.h.

**D**ate: July 25, 1931. John C. Webster placed 13th in the King's Cup Race in England flying a Curtiss-Reid Rambler Mk III. The prototype of this design first flew on September 1928 at Cartierville, Quebec. Reid Aircraft Company was founded by W.T. Reid. However in December of that year the controlling interest was purchased by Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company of the U.S. The company's name was changed to Curtiss-Reid Aircraft Co. Ltd. The Rambler was designed with folding wings for economic storage and incorporated Warren truss bracing which eliminated all bracing wires. Structurally the Rambler design was unusual for a light aircraft of the time. It was all metal construction with fabric covering with only the floor boards in the cockpits being of plywood. Even the rudder horn was constructed of metal.

The Mk I and Mk II versions were powered with upright mounted Cirrus and D.H. Gypsy engines. To further improve the Rambler a Mk III version was built with an inverted Gypsy III engine installed, plus some changes to the fuselage and tail assembly. With the 120 h.p. inverted engine the Mk III version was a very trim aircraft (subject of the drawing). Only aileron cables from the upper wing and rudder cables at the rear of the fuselage were exposed. All others were internal. The Warren truss wing struts replaced the usual flying and landing wires.

In the spring of 1931, the improved performance of the Mk III Rambler prompted John C. Webster of the Montreal Light Aeroplane Club to enter the King's Cup Air Race to be held in England in July that year. His Rambler, registered CF-ABZ was colored yellow overall with black struts and registration. It was the only aircraft designed and built outside of the United Kingdom to compete in the King's Cup Race to that date. The race officials carefully inspected the machine to ensure it was made of British materials. As the race was a handicap event, the Rambler started in 35th place in a field of 42. During the race

more than 20 machines dropped out due to mechanical difficulties and poor weather conditions. John Webster and the Rambler finished in 13th place.

The Curtiss-Reid Rambler was the first Canadian designed all metal aircraft as well as the only Canadian designed light aircraft in production during that period. A total of 44 aircraft were produced in the three mark versions.

**References:** *125 Years of Canadian Aeronautics, 1840-1965*, by G.A. Fuller, J.A. Griffin, K.M. Molson. *C.A.H.S. Journal Vol. 8 No. 2, Summer 1970*, "The Curtiss-Reid Rambler," by K.M. Molson. *Canadian Aircraft Since 1909*, by K.M. Molson and H.A. Taylor.

*A model of this aircraft is one of many that can qualify for the Canadian Aviation Historical Society's Special Achievement Award presented annually at the Canadian Nats.* □

