

Before Sikorsky

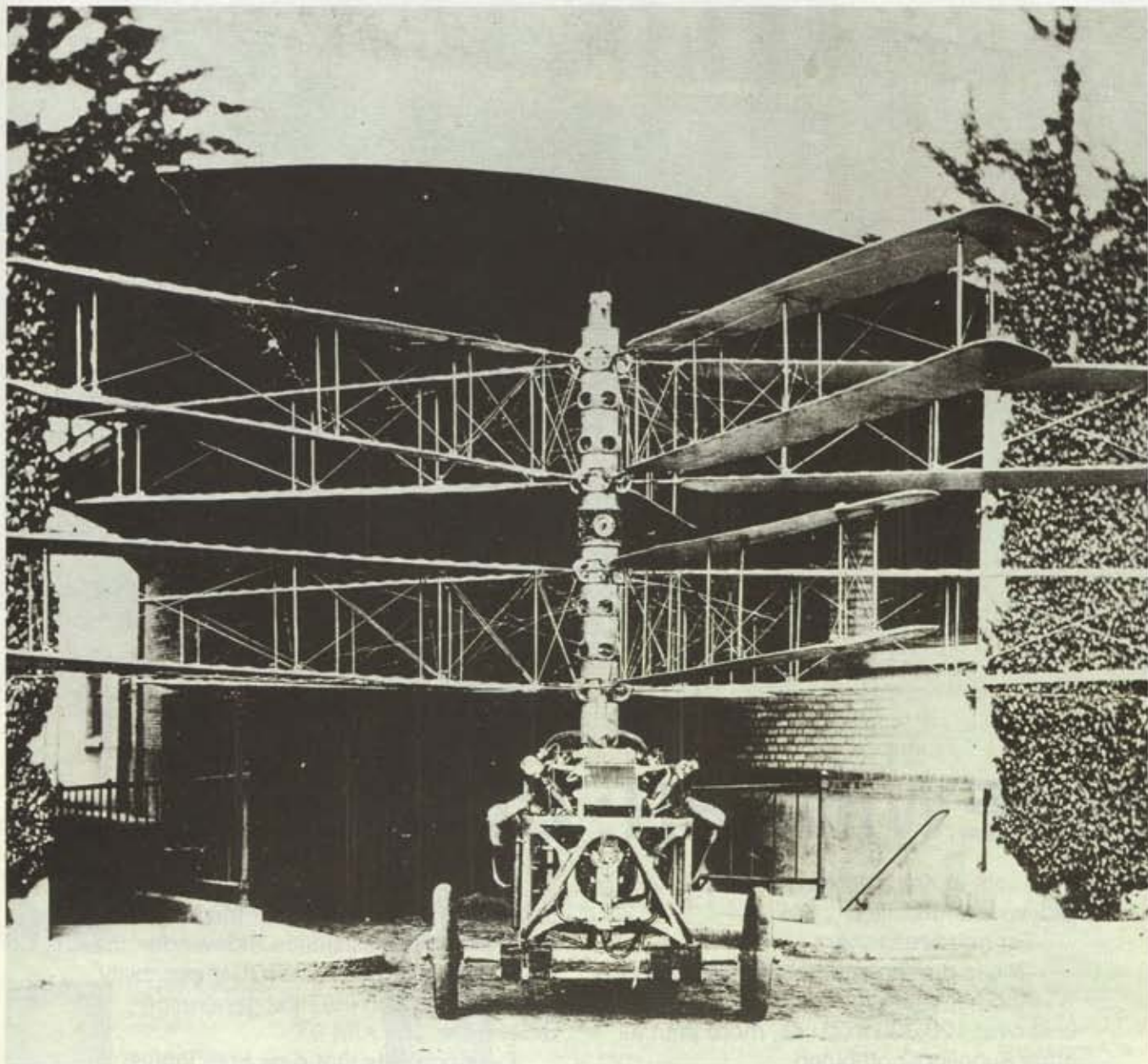


Photo courtesy C. V. Dimes

In the early 1920s, several inventors experimented with vertical flight. Many ideas came off the drawing board of Spanish Marquis Raul Pateras Pescara, including this one. He experimented with various numbers of blades and rotors. This machine had a stick and switch to provide collective control by working the pitch of the blades. A 170-

horsepower Le Rhône rotary engine raised the contraption off the ground. Pescara later tried a more powerful engine and fewer lifting surfaces. In April 1924, his helicopter flew just under half a mile, about eight miles an hour, six feet off the ground, beating the flight record set the day before by rotary-wing pioneer Etienne Oemichen.