

Wilhelm Maybach Biography

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Biography

The German inventor Wilhelm Maybach was born on February 9, 1846, in Heilbronn, Württemberg, Germany. From his teenage years he was a great friend and associate of another renowned German inventor, Gottlieb Daimler. About 1882, Maybach and Daimler formed a partnership to develop the internal combustion engine. In 1885, they patented an efficient, light four-stroke engine, which was to be one of their most important engineering feats. That same year, they mounted the engine first on a bicycle to produce perhaps the world's first motorcycle, and about a year later they used the engine to propel a modified horse carriage.

At the 1889 Paris Exhibition, Daimler and Maybach exhibited a two-cylinder V-shaped engine, perhaps the first engine to use the "V" design. In 1890, they together formed the Daimler Motor Company, setting their factory in Cannstatt to manufacture automobiles. It was as the company's technical director that Maybach invented the float-feed carburetor (circa 1893), which made it possible to use gasoline to power internal combustion engines. (Previous to his invention, these engines were fueled by "illuminating" gas, which was a vapor, not a liquid.) Maybach's carburetor used screws to vary the amount of gasoline that was sent to the carburetor in a fine spray and mixed with air to form a combustible mixture. The gasoline carburetor was a revolutionary invention in the early development of the internal combustion engine. It in large part made the automobile a practical choice for transportation.

Maybach designed the world's first Mercedes automobile, which was named after Mercedes Jellinec, the daughter of an influential associate of the Daimler firm. The automobile was first run in 1901. Maybach was also responsible for the development of the internal expanding brake, and, with the possible collaboration of Daimler's son, Paul, the invention of the efficient honeycomb radiator.

In 1907, Maybach left the Daimler firm to establish his own factory, which supplied engines for Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin's airships. After a long and inventive engineering life, Wilhelm Maybach died on December 29, 1929.