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Founding of Olympus

The founding of Olympus and the spirit of creation

Olympus was founded on October 12, 1919 as Takachiho Seisakusho. The founder of the company, Takeshi Yamashita, established the company with the financial assistance of his previous employer, with a view to achieving domestic production of microscopes.

Yamashita encouraged his engineers by saying that mere imitations of imported products wouldn't suffice and that it would be necessary to create something truly original. In June 1920, just six months after the company's founding, Yamashita's dream of making a domestic microscope came true with the introduction of the Asahi, the first microscope manufactured by Takachiho.



Founder, Takeshi Yamashita

Three decades later, Olympus successfully developed the world's first gastrocamera for practical use. The spirit of creation that infused the company at its founding has been passed on through the years, from the

release of the company's first product to its breakthroughs in Opto-Digital Technology today.



Asahi



An early prototype gastrocamera

Founding of Olympus

Realizing the dream of making microscopes

Olympus was established on 12 October 1919. It initially specialized in microscope and thermometer businesses.

Takeshi Yamashita became an attorney after graduating from Tokyo Imperial University Law school in 1915. After one year of military service, he joined Tokiwa Shokai, a trading company. He brought considerable profit to Tokiwa Shokai through sugar trading. Tokiwa Shokai then compensated his effort by allowing Mr. Yamashita to establish his own firm, Takachiho Seisakusho with Shintaro Terada, a friend from his lawyer days. The objective of Takachiho Seisakusho was to launch domestic production of microscopes.



Thermometers with the Olympus trademark

Mr. Terada was the first Japanese to build microscopes using industrial techniques in the 1910s. A microscope built by Mr. Terada was exhibited at the Taisho Expo held in 1914 and won the bronze prize. Mr. Matsumoto of Iwashiyama, a long-established medical equipment firm, financially supported him to produce "M&KATERA" microscopes. This name was created by combining the names of the three people involved in the development of this microscope: Mr. Matsumoto, Mr. Kato, and Mr. Terada.

Mr. Terada had been mainly making thermometers in Hongo, Tokyo. He gained sufficient experience in microscopes through building the M&KATERA model. Mr. Yamashita revealed his dream of building microscopes to Mr. Terada and asked him to come work for Takachiho Seisakusho. The manufacturing equipment of Terada Seisakusho was transferred to Takachiho Seisakusho, and Mr. Terada became the chief engineer of the company.

In 1923, the thermometer business was sold off. And most of the proceeds were invested in the microscope business. The company that purchased the thermometer business was authorized to use Olympus as its brand name.

Memorabilia from the Early Days



Appointment letter stating salary details

This document states remunerations for directors. It was issued on 12 October 1919, the day of company establishment.

This is the oldest document existing to this date.

The directors were: Kensaburo Kawakami, honorary president; Takeshi Yamashita, executive director; and Shintaro Terada, chief engineer.

Mt. Olympus - the mountain where gods and goddesses live

In Greek mythology, Mt.Olympus is the home of the twelve supreme gods and goddesses. Olympus was named after this mountain to reflect its strong aspiration to create high quality, world famous products.



"Olympus" has been used as a trademark since the time of Takachiho Seisakusho, the predecessor of Olympus Corporation.

In Japanese mythology, it is said that eight million gods and goddesses live in Takamagahara, the peak of Mt.Takachiho. The name "Olympus" was selected as the trademark because Mt.Olympus, like Mt.Takachiho, was the home of gods and goddesses. This trademark is also imbued with the aspiration of Olympus to illuminate the world with its optical devices, just like Takamagahara brought light to the world.

Takachiho Seisakusho was renamed Takachiho Optical Co., Ltd. in 1942 when optical products became the mainstay of the company. In 1949, the name was changed again to Olympus Optical Co., Ltd. in an attempt to enhance its corporate image.

And in 2003, the company made a fresh start as Olympus Corporation, to show its willingness to establish a dynamic corporate brand by unifying the corporate name and the well-known brand.

In recent years, Olympus Corporation has focused on "Opto-Digital Technology" as its core competence, technological strengths that competitors cannot easily imitate, to maximize corporate value and to become one of the top optical instrument manufactures.

A Brief History of Company Name Changes

Date	Notes
12 October, 1919	Establishment of Takachiho Seisakusho by Takeshi Yamashita, the founder. Founder: Takeshi Yamashita
28 May, 1942	Renamed Takachiho Optical Co., Ltd.
1 January, 1949	Renamed Olympus Optical Co., Ltd.
1 October, 2003	Renamed Olympus Corporation



Takachiho Peak (Miyazaki Prefecture)

Founding of Olympus

Olympus Chronology

Groundbreaking Milestones

The Olympus Logo History

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