

Hokkaido University: An Introduction

Video 2 (Length 12:25): The History of Hokkaido University

Hokkaido University has over 130 years of history. As you walk around campus, you can often see that history right before your eyes.

There are five important periods in the history of Hokkaido University. They correspond to the five different names that the university has had: the Sapporo Agricultural College, Tohoku Imperial University, Hokkaido Imperial University, Hokkaido University, and National University Corporation Hokkaido University. For each period I will be introducing some interesting facts about the university that you might not have heard before.

Let's start with the origins of the university. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the settlement of Hokkaido became national policy. Sapporo became the administrative centre of Hokkaido. In 1876 the Sapporo Agricultural College was established. Dr William Clark, then President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, arrived in Sapporo to spend nine months as the Sapporo Agricultural College's Vice-President. He only stayed for a short time, but he had a large impact in his stay in Sapporo. He is especially famous for saying, "Boys, be ambitious". This has become the motto of the university.

This is a picture of the Sapporo Agricultural College when it was founded.

However, did you know that the location of the Sapporo Agricultural College was not the same as the present location of Hokkaido University? The College was at what is now North 1 West 1. And did you know that one of the most famous symbols of Sapporo, the Clock Tower, used to be part of the university? The clock tower was built in 1878 as the college drill hall, although the clock was not added until 1881.

Have a look at this old picture of the drill hall.

Now look at the Clock Tower today. Can you see the similarity? After 1899, the college started its move to the current site at North 8. The clock tower was sold to Sapporo City in 1906.

The second period starts in 1907. Sapporo Agricultural College became part of the Agricultural Department of Tohoku Imperial University. However, the University was short of money. Around this time, the Furukawa family donated a lot of money to the university. One of the buildings built using money donated by the Furukawa family is the Furukawa Hall.

This is a picture of the Furukawa Hall just after it was built. It looks quite different then compared to now. Back in the late Meiji Period it was not surrounded by trees and large faculty buildings.

Also, notice how there is a lake in front of the Furukawa Hall in this photo. This area is now the Chuo Lawn. I will talk more about Chuo Lawn a bit later.

However, did you know that the Furukawa Memorial Hall is not the oldest building on campus? That record belongs to the Old School of Entomology, which was the visitor centre, before the new visitor centre opened next to the main gate.

The oldest concrete building on campus is the Science Faculty. It was built in 1929.

In 1918, Hokkaido Imperial University was founded. Hokkaido University had gone from college, to part of another university, to full university status in its own right. There was an expansion in the number of departments. In addition to the Agriculture Department, departments of medicine,

engineering and science were added in the decade or so after achieving university status.

If you look at old pictures of Hokkaido University students, you will see that almost all are male. This picture is from 1878.

Did you know that the first woman to enter Hokkaido University (then Hokkaido Imperial University) was Kato Sechi. She only studied elective courses. However, in 1930, Yoshimura Fuji became the first woman to pass entrance exams and become a full student. Up until 1947 only 25 women had studied at Hokkaido Imperial University. Even today the number of male students is much larger than the number of female students.

Another important first came in 1936. Dr Nakaya Ukichiro produced the world's first artificial snow crystal. There is a monument to mark this event just outside the Trillium Faculty House in the centre of campus.

Dr Nakaya's achievements paved the way for the establishment of the Institute of Low Temperature Science in 1941.

After Japan's defeat in World War II, Hokkaido Imperial University was renamed Hokkaido University. This fourth period in Hokkaido University's history began in 1947. The university continued to expand. New departments and buildings were added. The university gradually took the shape that it is today. The 1960s were a radical period and there were a lot of student demonstrations on campus. By the 1980s, internationalization was a buzzword in Japan and there was a rapid increase in the number of international students during the 1980s.

Today one of the most recognizable parts of campus is the Chuo Lawn. But, did you know that up until 1935, the stream used to be dammed so Chuo Lawn could be used as a skating rink in winter?

This explains why we saw the lake in front of the Furukawa Hall in this photo, which we saw earlier in the video.

Also, the present appearance of Chuo Lawn only dates from 1994.

With the development of Sapporo city, the Sakushukotoni River, which ran through Chuo Lawn, largely dried up. But, in 1994 a pump was built near the location of the University Cooperative. The pump ensures that we can once again enjoy a stream flowing through Chuo Lawn.

From the mid-1990s parts of campus were managed as if they were a park. Benches were placed around the Ono Pond, which is now a popular rest area; signs were put around campus to tell visitors about the interesting places on campus; and the University Museum was opened in 1999. All these things show that by the 1990s, Hokkaido University's campus was not only a place of learning. It had become one of the key tourist attractions in Sapporo.

The final and current period in Hokkaido University's history began in 2004. The university was effectively privatized by the government. It now has more freedom to develop its own research and teaching identity. But in the twenty-first century, universities are facing more and more competition to be recognized as leading centres of learning, not only on a local scale, but on a global scale.

One the biggest events of the period since 2004 was typhoon number 18 in 2004. This typhoon knocked down many trees around campus. The scars are still visible, in Chuo Lawn, and the Poplar Avenue. However, did you know that wood from the knocked down Poplar trees was used to make a harpsichord? In this way, a tree that was knocked down is still able to give pleasure to people in concerts at the university.

But the most significant event in Hokkaido University's recent history is the Nobel Prize in Chemistry awarded to Emeritus Professor Suzuki Akira in

2010. This great scientific achievement has played a huge role in making the name of the university known around the world. It is an inspiration to those who work and study here and reminds us to always remember the university motto: “Be ambitious”.

Finally, let’s look at the changing face of campus and see some pictures from 1937.

Today, Hokkaido University is in the middle of the bustling city of Sapporo. But in 1937, this area was still very rural.

This photograph shows the view from campus toward Okurayama. As you can see, there are no large buildings. Nor is there the Okurayama ski jump, which was used in the Sapporo Olympics in 1972. Now let's look at the scene today.

Or how about this view towards Mt Teine? Again there are few buildings in 1937, but today the city stretches as far as the eye can see.

This next photo is the view northeast from the southern end of campus. The big building is the Science Faculty, where the University Museum is located. This is the view northeast in 2008. Not only the campus but also the city is very built up in comparison.

And can you guess what these buildings are? Perhaps not. In fact, this is the old university hospital. It is very different to the large hospital building today.

This is the view north. Can you see the Poplar Avenue to the left of the picture? Now, here is the view today.

Poplar Avenue has not changed that much since 1937. Of course, many trees were knocked down in 2004, but from ground level the tunnel of trees still

looks similar.

Finally, can you guess what this building is? It is the old Department of Engineering. This is the modern building.

As you can see, campus has changed a lot over the years.

If you are interested in learning more about the history of the university, go to the university bookshops and you will find a number of books on sale, or visit the University Museum.

(Credits): Hokkaido University has over 130 years of history. How will the students at the university today be remembered in the coming years? "Boys and Girls, be ambitious!"

Questions

Of the five periods in the history of Hokkaido University, which one was the longest?

First

Second

Third

Fourth

Fifth

Answer Fourth: 1947-2004, 57 years.

If you stand at Hokkaido University's main gate today, in which direction must you travel to reach the original site of the Sapporo Agricultural College?

North West

North East

South West

South East

Answer: South East. The current main gate is North 8 West 5, the SAC was at North 1 West 1. You must travel in a South East direction to get to it (i.e. the current location of the Sapporo Clock Tower).

Which of these is NOT correct about Chuo Lawn?

In the past it was called a park.

It used to be used as a skating rink.

The river running through the lawn dried up.

A pump was built in the 1990s.

Answer A. The text says, "From the mid-1990s parts of campus were managed as if they were a park."

After Kato Sechi became the first woman to study at Hokkaido University, there was a rapid rise in the number of female students. True or False?

Answer: False. Up until 1947 only 25 women had studied at Hokkaido Imperial University.

A harpsichord was made using the tree knocked down in Chuo Lawn. True or False?

Answer: False (it was using Poplar trees).

Which of the following statements about the section "The Changing Face of Campus" is False?

Mt Teine is visible in some of the pictures.

It compares photos from 1927 and today.

There are photos of the university hospital.

The last photographs in that section are of the Engineering Department.

Answer B. The old photos are from 1937.