

An Origami History Timeline

By Julia Bloom

2560-2550 BCE: Papyrus first developed in Egypt.

140-87 BC: Basic felt-like paper developed in China.

Around 110 AD: Paper made from tree bark and pulp developed.

Around 550 AD: Papermaking introduced in Japan.

610AD: Improved thin paper developed by the Buddhist monk Doncho.

Around 751: Papermaking spreads to Arab countries.

1101-1200: Folded astrological charts become common in Europe.

Mid 1100's: Papermaking common in Arab world, spreads through Europe.

1401-1500: Napkin folding becomes popular for European nobility and royalty.

1612-1613: The play "The Duchess of Malfi" by John Webster mentions paper prisons for catching flies.

1639: "Le Tre Trattari," a primer on napkin folding, published in Italy.

1797: Senbazuru Orikata and Chusingura Orikata published in Japan, containing illustrations and methods for folding Origami.

1837: Friedrich Froebel starts his kindergartens, teaches a paperfolding system with three types of folds: "The Folds of Truth," "The Folds of Life," and "The Folds of Beauty."

1850: The Kayaragusa is published in Japan, with examples for folding recreational and ceremonial origami.

Around 1860: Japan's isolationism ends. Japanese magicians begin touring the world, showing tricks with Origami figures such as the "Flapping Bird."

1922: Harry Houdini publishes "Paper Magic," showing tricks with paper including paperfolding.

1928: British magicians William Murray and Harry Rigney publish "Fun With Paperfolding."

1938: Asociación Española de Papiroflexia founded in Spain. It is the oldest Origami club in the world.

Around 1950: Lillian Oppenheimer is first introduced to Origami when a friend shows her the “Flapping Bird” model.

1952: Akira Yoshizawa becomes famous in Japan for his Origami animals folded for an issue of “Asahi Graf” magazine.

1953: Gershom Legman, an American folder, contacts Yoshizawa, and the two begin corresponding.

1955: An exhibit of Yoshizawa’s Origami held at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

1956: Sam Randlett and his friend Robert Harbin publish “Paper Magic,” establishing the Yoshizawa-Randlett system of diagramming Origami folding methods.

1956: Lillian Oppenheimer receives a copy of “Paper Magic,” and is inspired to learn all she can about Origami.

1956: Lillian starts Origami classes at the Japan Society in New York. The class series is named “The Origami Center.”

June 27th, 1958: Lillian Oppenheimer’s interview about Origami appears in Meyer Berger’s column in the New York Times, raising the popularity of Origami in the United States.

Early 1960’s: Lillian provides some Origami models for the exhibit “Plane Geometry and Fancy Figures” at the Cooper Union Museum in New York.

1964: Alice Gray, a friend of Lillian’s, decorated the first Origami Christmas Tree at the American Museum of Natural History.

1970’s: Modular and mathematically based Origami models and techniques are first developed.

1980: The Friends of the Origami Center is incorporated as a nonprofit organization.

1987: Friends of the Origami Center purchases Lillian’s supplies business to mail Origami materials to members.

Late 1980’s- Early 1990’s: The “Bug Wars,” a series of competitions on excellence in folding Origami insect figures, leads to new innovations in folding methods and techniques.

July 1st 1994: Friends of the Origami Center becomes OrigamiUSA.