



History of Innovative German Watchmaking

1923 On 1st April the merchant Philipp Weber, ex-manager of the Marabu factory in Tamm and the clockmaker Jakob Aeschbach founded the WEBER & AESCHBACH company in Pforzheim. The aim: to assemble pocket and wrist watches. The company was based in two spacious attic rooms on 6 Tal and 53 Güterstraße.

Since Pforzheim, famous for its jewelry trade, had almost no watch assemblers Jakob Aeschbach set about training specialists. At the same time Philipp Weber concentrated his efforts on obtaining import licenses for the necessary Swiss clock movements.

At the end of 1923 when the German currency had stabilized and was once again respected abroad, Philipp Weber was able to notch up his first successes. WEBER & AESCHBACH became the first Pforzheim-based company to import and assemble watches using Swiss movements.

1930 Philipp Weber then approached his Pforzheim colleagues with a new idea: in future, they should consider supplying the wholesale trade with finished watches so allowing it to concentrate on its trading activities. Philipp Weber wasted no time: almost over night he set up a cooperative consisting of three assembly workshops and a watch case factory.

1931 By this date the "Pforzheim Collection" was ready and was presented to the most important German watch wholesalers. The success was immediate because the collection offered a wide range of attractive models. The Pforzheim-based company became the preferred business partner of the most dominating wholesalers in the industry. This spurred Philipp Weber to expand his business from being a watch assembler for other companies to introduce his own watch brand, which he had registered in 1924. It was called "ARCTOS", the Greek word for the Great Bear constellation.

1932 Philipp Weber, Jakob Aeschback and the technical expert Wilhelm Rentschler founded the RENTSCHLER & CO factory to manufacture watch cases, especially from gold. The number of ARCTOS watches being produced per day had reached 320 units. Despite Philipp Weber's excellent relations with the Swiss watch movements suppliers he encouraged the growth of home-based watch part manufacturers in order to free himself, at least partially, from the Swiss monopoly. Halfway through the year he acquired a 20% stake in the watch movements manufacturer "UROFA –Glashütte AG" and was named deputy chairman of the board of directors.



*Arctos Manufacturer around 1936
Museumstrasse 6, Pforzheim*

1934 His activities in the rest of Europe had reached new heights, which were to be of crucial importance to the German watchmaking industry:

On 5th April he achieved the signing of a contract between the "Reichsverband" and the Swiss watch movements holding "Ebauches SA.", which guaranteed the import of watch parts and sought to avoid price dumping by other Swiss suppliers. Other agreements were added later on. This laid the basis for fair competition between the Swiss and German watchmaking industries, and significantly contributed to the growth of the Pforzheim watchmaker.

1943 20 years after being founded WEBER & AESCHBACH had 8 assembly workshops in the city which employed 900 people.

1944 On 21st November Philipp Weber took another step to lessen his dependence on the ever dwindling supplies of watch parts by buying up the watch jewel factory LUCIEN JEANNERET.

1945 On 23rd February the city of Pforzheim had to pay part of the price caused by political megalomania. The Allied bombers carried out their task with ruthless efficiency: the city lay in ruins in 20 minutes. WEBER & AESCHBACH continued to exist only in name.

Just 3 months after this terrible event the will to live prevailed over the air of pervading resignation. Philipp Weber remembered both with gratitude and surprise that the impetus to start again did not come from within himself but from his fellow workers. This is a simple but poignant indication of the personal bond that united the head and his employees.

1947 Reconstruction work was well under way. A number of valuable factory machines were restarted. The sister company A. STEUDLER & CO. was working intensely to produce the necessary product range and regulator mechanisms. The JEANNERET company had also begun to operate. But resourcefulness and the best of wills could do very little in the face of the acute lack of materials. This is borne out by the fact that the Bureau of Economic Development only granted a limited number of production licenses which meant that a maximum of 500 watches, 5000 single watch spare parts and 50,000 watch jewels could be produced.

On 21st October WEBER & AESCHBACH was renamed ARCTOS-UHRENFABRIK PHILIPP WEBER.

1949 A really memorable year for the wrist watch industry: the first German watch cooperative was constituted thanks mainly to the efforts of Philipp Weber. It was called "PARAT". The activities planned and carried out by this cooperative in the years that followed bring to mind a concept that was only imported from America many years later: "marketing". Recognizing the need to catch up the PARAT group developed an extensive collection of good quality watches at modest prices. It offered retail outlets help on decorating and displaying their wares and used radio advertising to channel customers to them. The slogan "Immer pünktlich früh und spat mit der Armbanduhr PARAT" ("always on time, in the morning or in the afternoon, with wrist watches PARAT") became a catch phrase.



ARCTOS- Horometer

1956 At the Hannover trade fair ARCTOS caused a sensation with its world time watch "ARCTOS- Horometer". It was available either as a table clock or as an automatic wrist watch. "The ARCTOS- Horometer is the only watch which shows the correct time in any place in the world no matter where you are", wrote the press. Not only were German television cameras whirring away to capture the event, US camera teams were also there to report on the Pforzheim world time watch, and so inform its discriminating audience back home about the new sensation from the Old World.

During the show an additional line was introduced: ARCTOS ELITE. These watches were targeted specifically to the more affluent consumer and offered a German watch of highest quality to compete against Swiss brands in leading retail stores.

1962 On 27th August, at the age of 72 years Philipp Weber passed away. The watch maker pioneer from Pforzheim was not only mourned by his immediate family and the company's entourage but far beyond. The pages of the newspapers were filled with tributes and obituaries.

The junior chef Werner Weber took over management of the enterprise, and received active and friendly support both from the company's legal representative and from senior employees.

1971 Years of research were over and the result was another sensation: on 11th February, in the presence of the trade and consumer press, Werner Weber presented the prototype of the first quartz wrist watch made in Germany. The surprise was considerable, more so as it was known that much larger concerns had been striving to be the first to produce a German-made quartz wrist watch. The press covered the story in great detail and length.

1973 All German wholesalers and watch specialty stores received a large, colorful catalogue which detailed the range of ARCTOS-QUARTZ. On 21st February the "Frankfurter Allgemeine" newspaper wrote: "ARCTOS has won the race to be the first German producer of quartz wrist watches."



*Official NATO Chronograph
Supply number 6645-12-194-8642*

1982 Based on the need for a watch of highest reliability, the German Department of Defence had asked ARCTOS to produce and supply a chronograph for pilots and submarine commanders. ARCTOS watches became official standard equipment of NATO and the German Armed Forces under the NATO reference and supply number 6645-12-194-8642.

1994 Financial circumstances forced the ARCTOS-UHRENFABRIK PHILIPP WEBER to temporarily close its doors. Hans Ilg, who had started as a watchmaker apprentice in 1946 retired from his now Executive position as director of wrist watch production after his 48-years of watch making legacy. Such know-how being in high demand, he continued to work as consultant to the Pforzheimer watch industry.

2002 Hans Ilg was introduced to Dorothea Bachmann, a retired business woman. The proposed idea to continue the manufacture of watches under the ARCTOS and ARCTOS ELITE brand intrigued Mrs. Bachman. Fascinated by Mr. Ilg's past and his well established connections in the German watch industry Mrs. Bachmann funded the capital to re-establish the manufacturer. Mrs. Bachmann was not new to watch making and the German watch brands either. She had been in circles of other major German watch manufactures in the past. Additionally, she had been influenced by her husband and son, who have been avid watch collectors and enthusiast since the 1980s and strongly supported such endeavor.

2004 81 years after the WEBER & AESCHBACH company was founded in Pforzheim the ARCTOS Präzisionsuhren e.K. was created in Aarbergen, a small town close to Pforzheim. Together with decades of watch making experience from Hans Ilg and successful entrepreneurship and business experience from Mrs. Bachmann a new line of Military watches was born in the tradition of ARCTOS: the ARCTOS ELITE Marine Diver, Black-Wave, NATO, and GMT model were introduced to watch aficionados world wide.



*ARCTOS ELITE GPW K1
Made from zirconium oxide (ZrO2)*

2007 Continuing the path of innovation, ARCTOS is the first German watch company to introduce an automatic watch made of zirconium oxide (ZrO₂), also know as high-tech ceramic, and titanium.