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# PerkinElmer

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## Introduction

PerkinElmer: The Story of An American Company is a detailed exploration of one of America's most innovative and enduring scientific enterprises. Founded in 1937 by Richard Perkin and Charles Elmer, the company's origins lie in the pursuit of optical precision—a foundation which would soon prove vital, not only to the scientific community but to the broader society navigating the challenges of the 20th and 21st centuries. Spanning more than eighty-five years, the story of PerkinElmer is one of relentless innovation, resilience, and transformation, mirroring the evolving landscape of American industry and global scientific inquiry.

This book traces the arc of PerkinElmer's development from its modest beginnings in a Manhattan office to its rise as a globally recognized leader in diagnostics, life sciences, environment, food, and applied markets. Drawing on pivotal moments such as the company's crucial contributions to the United States' World War II efforts, its pioneering role in optical and scientific instrumentation, and its enduring commitment to technological progress, we uncover how PerkinElmer has continually reinvented itself to meet the world's changing demands.

Crucially, the company's journey has been shaped not only by scientific and commercial milestones, but also by complex challenges and bold decisions. From its early diversification into new scientific frontiers and subsequent listing on the New York Stock Exchange, to the setbacks encountered with the Hubble Space Telescope project and the necessary course corrections that followed, PerkinElmer's story exemplifies the difficulties and aspirations that define America's spirit of enterprise. Each chapter of this book brings into focus how the company's adaptability became instrumental to its survival and success.

In the 21st century, PerkinElmer's strategic focus shifted towards health sciences, diagnostics, and sustainability. Through a series of key acquisitions and divestitures, the company has streamlined its operations, aiming to provide integrated solutions that improve human and environmental health. With a notable commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, PerkinElmer has redefined itself for a new era, balancing profitability with purpose, and innovation with responsibility.

Today, following a significant corporate restructuring that resulted in the formation of the new Revvity, Inc. and the transition of legacy businesses to private ownership, PerkinElmer stands at a crossroads—poised to accelerate scientific outcomes with greater focus and agility. As the company faces new challenges, such as rapid technological change and the rising importance of ESG, its legacy provides both a

roadmap and an inspiration for what the future of science-driven enterprises can be.

Through this comprehensive account, readers will gain insights not only into the history of PerkinElmer as a business, but into the evolution of American scientific and technological leadership itself. The company's influence on global health, industrial standards, environmental safety, and the very fabric of scientific progress is a testament to the power of innovation unleashed in the service of society.

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## CHAPTER ONE: The Founders: Richard Perkin and Charles Elmer

Every great endeavor begins with an idea, but it takes the right people to bring that idea to life. For PerkinElmer, Inc., that genesis came from an unlikely pairing: Richard Perkin, a young, ambitious investment banker with a passion for the cosmos, and Charles Elmer, an experienced court reporter nearing retirement, whose shared fascination with astronomy ignited a spark that would eventually lead to a global corporation. Their story began in the early 1930s, a time when the world was grappling with economic hardship, yet still held an unyielding curiosity for scientific advancement.

Richard Scott Perkin, born in 1906, was a man of diverse interests and an innate drive. Though he briefly studied chemical engineering at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, he soon found himself drawn to the fast-paced world of Wall Street, embarking on a career as an investment banker. Yet, the allure of the stars and the intricacies of optical instruments remained a powerful, almost gravitational, pull. From an early age, Perkin cultivated a keen interest in astronomy, even crafting his own telescopes and meticulously grinding lenses and mirrors. He was not merely an observer but a hands-on enthusiast, driven by a desire to understand and build the tools that unlocked the universe's secrets.

On the other side of this burgeoning partnership was Charles Wesley Elmer, born in 1872. For much of his life, Elmer had honed a different kind of precision as a court reporter. While his profession demanded meticulous attention to detail in documenting legal proceedings, his true passion lay in the celestial. He was a devoted amateur astronomer, deeply engrossed in the study of optical telescopes. It was this shared astronomical pursuit that brought the two men together. Perkin, still an ardent science enthusiast despite his Wall Street pursuits, would occasionally give public lectures on various scientific topics. It was at one such lecture on astronomy, held at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts & Sciences, that the seasoned court reporter and the eager young banker crossed paths.

Their mutual interest in astronomy quickly blossomed into a friendship, and soon, a shared vision began to take shape. They recognized a unique opportunity to transform their hobby into a viable business venture focused on precision optics. This was not merely about building telescopes for fellow enthusiasts; it was about addressing a broader need for high-quality optical design and consultation. They envisioned a company that could provide instruments of unparalleled accuracy for a variety of scientific and industrial applications, a foresight that would prove incredibly valuable

in the decades to come.

To kickstart their ambitious undertaking, the duo pooled their resources. Richard Perkin, leveraging his connections, raised \$15,000 from his relatives. Charles Elmer, despite being closer to retirement, contributed \$5,000, demonstrating his unwavering belief in the nascent company's potential. On April 19, 1937, the partnership officially formed, marking the birth of Perkin-Elmer. Their initial operations were modest, housed within a small office in Manhattan, where they focused on optical design and consulting. However, their entrepreneurial spirit and the growing demand for their specialized expertise quickly necessitated an expansion. Within a year, they had established a production facility in Jersey City, New Jersey, a clear signal that their venture was rapidly moving beyond simple consultation and into the realm of manufacturing. The groundwork was being laid, brick by optical brick, for a company that would soon become synonymous with precision and innovation.

As their operations grew, so did their formal structure. On December 13, 1939, the partnership officially incorporated, solidifying Perkin-Elmer as a legitimate corporate entity. This legal step was a testament to their early success and their commitment to building a lasting enterprise. From those humble beginnings in a small Manhattan office, Perkin and Elmer had, in just over two years, transformed a shared hobby into a burgeoning business, poised to make significant contributions to the world of optics and beyond. Richard Perkin would serve as the company's president until 1960, later becoming chairman of the board, a role he held until his passing in 1969. Charles Elmer, for his part, served as secretary-treasurer of the company until his retirement in 1949, and passed away in 1954 at the age of 83. Their names, etched into the company's very identity, would forever be linked to its pioneering spirit and its relentless pursuit of scientific excellence.

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