



Press Release, page 1 of 3

Technician, Mobility Pioneer and Entrepreneur: 150th Birthday of Company Founding Father Václav Laurin

- › Václav Laurin was born 27 September 1865 in Kamení, Bohemia
- › With Václav Klement, Laurin founded Laurin und Klement (L&K) the predecessor company to ŠKODA AUTO in 1895
- › In 1905 building the brand's first car – the legendary Voiturette A
- › A tradition of success: ŠKODA AUTO celebrates 120 years in 2015

Mladá Boleslav, 25 September 2015 – Václav Laurin, Bohemian mobility pioneer and one of the two ŠKODA AUTO founding fathers would have turned 150 on 27 September. Working with his business partner Václav Klement, the trained technician founded ŠKODA AUTO's predecessor company Laurin & Klement (L&K) in 1895. L&K initially built bicycles, motorcycles and later, from 1905, automobiles. In 1925, the company merged with Pilsner engineering company ŠKODA. Václav Laurin died in 1930.

"In partnership with Václav Klement 120 years ago, Václav Laurin laid the foundation for our company's success story," says Andrea Frydlová, head of ŠKODA Museum. "Laurin was an outstanding pioneer of mobility in his time, and was also one of the most influential entrepreneurs in early automotive history. The craftsmanship and the engineering spirit of people like Václav Laurin helped to establish the reputation of Bohemia as a cornerstone in European automobile manufacturing that has continued to this day. This reality was born of our founding fathers' visions and dreams. Today, ŠKODA is an internationally established volume manufacturer, and is one of the longest-established car producers in the world."

Václav Laurin's life story is a testament to skill, courage and hard work. From humble beginnings, Laurin was persistent on his path and not discouraged by setbacks. At the age of 30, he seized the opportunity to establish his own bicycle factory in partnership with Václav Klement. This factory would then go on to also produce motorcycles, and from 1905, automobiles. From being a tinkerer, machine fitter and steam engine technician, Václav Laurin became the founder of a company and a successful and respected businessman who, alongside Václav Klement, gave his name one of the most successful automotive brands of the early 20th century.

Václav Laurin was born on 27 September 1865 in the Bohemian village of Kamení near the town of Turnov. Laurin, who came from a modest family, demonstrated his craft skills from an early age. His parents enabled him to do an apprenticeship as a machinist, and following his training he continued his education, working alongside various skilled craftsmen. In 1893, he left for Dresden where he would examine the operation of steam



Press Release, page 2 of 3

engines. After returning to Turnov, Laurin began working on bicycle construction with business partner Josef Kraus.

When the partnership agreement with Kraus had ended, Václav Laurin settled in today's Mladá Boleslav. Then, in December 1895, he took a decisive step in his professional life: Collaborating with Václav Klement, he founded a bicycle repair shop in Mladá Boleslav under the name of Laurin and Klement. As an excellent technician and ever the visionary tinkerer, he was the ideal complement to enterprising businessman Václav Klement.

The repair shop quickly became home to bicycle production. In the early years, the young company built bicycles with the trademark 'Slavia' – the slogan: 'only the best is good enough for our customers'. By 1898, the company already had a workforce of 40, and in 1899, L&K presented the fruit of their labour: a motor-assisted bicycle, the so-called Motocyclette. Motorcycles would go on to drive the development of the company.

In 1905, the company then made the crucial leap into automobile production: L&K built the first automobile, the legendary Voiturette A. The small 7-horsepower car marked the initial spark for a yearlong, successful corporate development under the name of L&K. Due to the pressures of war and economic crisis, the company's trade drew to a close in the early 1920s. However, the company was rescued in 1925 through the merger with the ŠKODA Works in Pilsen – the largest Czech company at that time.

After the merger with ŠKODA, Václav Laurin worked for some time as the Technical Director for the new company. Over the following years, however, he gradually withdrew from active professional life due to his failing health. Václav Laurin died in Mladá Boleslav on 4 December 1930 at the age of 65.

In addition to the 150th birthday of Václav Laurin, ŠKODA is celebrating two other important anniversaries this year: 120 years since the company was founded by Laurin and Klement, and 110 years of automobile manufacturing in Mladá Boleslav, making ŠKODA one of the longest-established vehicle producers in the world. What Laurin and Klement began in 1895 has since grown into an internationally successful volume manufacturer with 7 model series and about 40 model versions. Producing more than 17 million vehicles since 1905 proves the strength of the ŠKODA brand.

For more information:

Vítězslav Kodym,
Sponsorship & Classic Communications
P +420 326 8 11784
vitezslav.kodym@skoda-auto.cz



Press Release, page 3 of 3

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Significant anniversary: ŠKODA commemorates the 150th birthday of ŠKODA founding father Václav Laurin on September 27.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA AUTO

- > is one of the longest-established vehicle production companies in the world. In 1895, the Czech headquarters in Mladá Boleslav began producing bicycles, followed by the production of motorbikes and cars.
- > currently offers the following models in the range: Citigo, Fabia, Roomster, Rapid, Octavia, Yeti and Superb.
- > in 2014 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide for the first time in a single year.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful automotive groups in the world. ŠKODA, in association with the Group, independently manufactures and develops vehicles, as well as components, engines and gear transmissions.
- > operates at three locations in the Czech Republic, produces in China, Russia, Slovakia and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs over 25,900 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.