

## **Usui Sensei 1865 - 1926**

Mikao Usui was the originator of what we today call Reiki. He was born on August 15th 1865 in the village of 'Tani-mura' in the Yamagata district of Gifu prefecture Kyoto.

Mikao Usui probably came from a wealthy family as at that time only children from wealthy families could get a good education. As a child he studied in a Tendai Buddhist monastery school entering at an early age. He was also a student of different martial arts. His memorial states that he was a talented hard working student, he liked to read and his knowledge of medicine, psychology, fortune telling and theology of religions around the world, including the Kyoten (Buddhist Bible) was vast. He married and his wife's name was Sadako, they had a son (born 1907) and daughter.

Usui sensei studied and traveled to western countries and China several times, this was encouraged during the Meiji Era and later, to learn and study western ways.

During his life Mikao Usui held many different professions such as public servant, office worker, industrialist, reporter, politician's secretary, missionary, supervisor of convicts. He also worked as a private secretary to a politician Shimpei Goto, who was Secretary of the Railroad, Postmaster General and Secretary of the Interior and State.

At some point in his life he became a Tendai Buddhist Monk/Priest (what we in the west call a lay priest). On several occasions he took a form of meditation lasting 21 days. On his memorial it says that at one time this took place on Mount Kurama (Horse Saddle Mountain). This is where he is supposed to have been given the inspiration for his system of healing - Reiki. It is very likely that he incorporated ideas and knowledge about healing from other systems, both spiritual and physical, like Chinese Medicine, other Eastern healing systems like Chi Gong, the Japanese equivalent Kiko, acupuncture

and others.

Mikao Usui found that the healing techniques contained within his spiritual system worked well on various ailments. In April 1922 he opened his first school/clinic in Harajuku Tokyo. Usui had a small manual which is now translated into English and published by Western Reiki Master living in Japan, Frank Arjava Petter, under the title ["The Original Reiki Handbook of Dr Mikao Usui"](#)

Mikao Usui's skills as a healer and teacher must have been very good and his fame spread very quickly throughout Japan. This was a time of great change in Japan, opening up to the West and changes both in government and religion. His teachings became popular among the older people who saw them as a return to old ideals and spiritual practices.

His school/clinic was formed not just for the spiritual teachings but it was also a way for people to obtain healing. As people in general at this time in Japan's history were very poor, healing sessions were very cheap or free. According to Japanese history articles, healing and other similar practices at that time would be given for a minimal cost or more likely for free.

Reiki students seem to have worked with the teacher as a sort of payment (a small monetary fee might also have been involved).

The Usui teachings included teaching people how to heal themselves (a very central point still in Reiki of today). Healing would be given to them, then they were taught how to heal themselves.

In 1923 on the 1st of September an earthquake shook Tokyo and Yokohama, measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was 50 miles from Tokyo. Over 140,000 deaths were reported. The majority were killed in the fires started by the earthquake. It was the greatest natural disaster in Japanese history. Mikao Usui and his students started to give healing in the

area and the demand and need for Reiki was enormous and as a result of his work he became even more famous.

In 1925 Usui had become so busy that he had to open a new larger school outside Tokyo in Nakano. As he traveled widely his senior students would continue with his work when he was away from his school/clinic.

Dr Mikao Usui passed away on March 9th 1926 at the age of 62. He is buried in Saihoji Temple in Suginami-Ku, Tokyo. Later his students created and erected a large memorial stone next to his grave describing his life and work. Much of the new information about Usui Sensei comes from the translation of this memorial.