

Fukuya Hatchobori Store

The Fukuya department store was the talk of Hiroshima when it first opened in 1938 on Chuo-dori Avenue, in the heart of the city. Unusually modern for its time, the eight-story building attracted crowds eager to see its bold, steel-framed reinforced concrete facade, together with an interior that represented the height of comfort and convenience—its full air conditioning, for instance, was still very uncommon. Before long, however, Japan had entered World War II, and by the war's final years the once-thriving department store was closed, the building having been commandeered for use by the Japanese military.

Located 710 meters from ground zero of the A-bomb blast, the Fukuya Hatchobori Store was almost completely destroyed by fire on August 6, 1945. The building's outer shell, however, withstood the blast, and in the days and weeks following the bombing, the once-thriving department store was put into service as an emergency relief station. Fukuya Hatchobori finally reopened for business in 1951, and flourished during the high-growth period of the 1960s and '70s that saw Japan become an economic powerhouse. Major rebuilding work has been undertaken several times, with the outer walls having been completely replaced in 1972, and Fukuya continues to do business here today.