

【History of Mitsumata】

Mitsumata is now a popular ski resort, but it was once a post town tucked in the foothills of the Mikuni Mountains, which separated the capital at Edo from the northern region of Echigo. The road through Mitsumata took on new importance under the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603–1868) when it became a section of the Mikuni Road, the route taken by daimyo and their retinues when they made obligatory trips to Edo every other year. During its history as a post town, Mitsumata regularly hosted daimyo from the surrounding region, including Uesugi Kenshin (1530–1578), the much-celebrated daimyo of Echigo Province.

Travelers from Edo (today Tokyo) traversed the treacherous terrain through the Mikuni Mountain Pass into the Kiyotsu River flatlands, staying at the post towns of Asagai, Futai, and Mitsumata. Mitsumata was the largest and most prosperous of these towns, and it had four different buildings that were equipped to serve as lodging for daimyo. Of these, only the Ikedaya has survived. With the abolition of the system that mandated regular trips to Edo in 1862 and the shift toward transporting goods using horse-drawn wagons rather than saddlebags, traffic along the highway decreased significantly. During the Boshin War (1868–1869), Asagai and Futai were razed by retreating samurai as they fled defeat at the hands of the imperial forces. In 1872, the Mikuni Road, Mitsumata, and the inns for daimyo went into further decline when the government's post-town system was abolished. By the early twentieth century, Mitsumata's prosperity had greatly declined.

During the Edo period (1603–1868), the town's main industry was wooden products made from local Japanese cypress. This was replaced by charcoal-making from the mid-nineteenth century until World War II. In 1955, Mitsumata was incorporated into the larger town of Yuzawa.