

### **【Avalanche Memorial】**

At approximately 11:30 p.m. on January 9, 1918, Mitsumata was hit by the largest avalanche in modern Japanese history. The tragedy resulted in the destruction of 28 households and the deaths of 158 people, including workers who were engaged in construction of a local hydroelectric power station. At the time, Mitsumata had a population of only 609 residents in 101 households.

The avalanche is suspected to have been caused by a lack of trees on the mountainside opposite this monument. The winter of 1918 had been particularly cold and harsh, and the forest on that part of the mountain had been entirely chopped down for firewood. Beginning on January 2, a blizzard dumped over 300 centimeters of snow on the town over the course of a week—double or even triple the amount that Mitsumata normally receives during the entire winter. The resulting avalanche was approximately six meters deep and 200 meters wide, covering an area that stretched from the site of this monument south to the Ikedaya inn. The historic inn survived relatively unaffected, thanks to the elementary school building at the foot of the mountain, which bore the brunt of the avalanche's impact.

More than two thousand rescuers flocked to Mitsumata and worked around the clock for three days in search of survivors. Thanks to their efforts, 22 lives were saved. This monument was erected in May 1919 to honor the victims of this natural disaster.