

A Fly-Fishing Mecca

Fly fishing in Japan began in Okunikko in the early 1890s, largely due to the influence of Westerners who spent their summers at Lake Chuzenji. Scottish businessman Thomas Glover (1838–1911) first fished on the lake in 1889 and built a house on the lakefront in 1893. He was instrumental in stocking the lake and the Yugawa River with fish suitable for British-style fly fishing. He financed the importation of brook trout eggs from Colorado in 1902, which were hatched and then released into the Yugawa River. Unfortunately, all the fish died in a severe storm later that year, but more eggs were imported in 1904 and the second try was successful.

Fly fishing in Okunikko was initially a summer pastime for the many wealthy Westerners that used to vacation on the shores of Lake Chuzenji. It has since become a popular activity in Japan for people from all walks of life.

Photographs

Top right: Glover's lakeside house at Osaki

Bottom right: Glover and Oshima Kyuji (1881–1966) with their catch, around 1898

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Tokyo Angling and Country Club and the Nishi-Rokuban Villa

The house that Glover built in 1893 was commonly known as “Nishi-Rokuban,” a nickname reflecting its address: “West, Number Six.” After Hans Hunter (1884–1947) bought it in 1927, the house became the headquarters of the Tokyo Angling and Country Club, which Hunter had established two years earlier. The club was an important social hub for the community of foreign residents and diplomats who spent their summers at Lake Chuzenji. Its membership also included Japanese officials and businessmen, as well as some members of the imperial family. As a place for elites to gather, the club was said to have played an important role in international diplomacy during the early twentieth century. The house burned down in 1940, and only the brick fireplace remains. The grounds have been turned into a public park.

Images

Top left: a topographic map that shows the location of the Nishi-Rokuban Villa at Osaki

Center left: the villa and an employee

Bottom left: a floor plan of the property drawn up for restoration purposes