

The Many Talents of Omachi Keigetsu

Art, Sake, and Natural Beauty

Omachi Keigetsu (1869–1925) was a well-known travel writer and essayist, as well as a talented poet, calligrapher, sketch artist, and songwriter. Among his many passions were taking less-traveled roads and drinking copious amounts of sake. He first visited Tsuta on assignment for a popular magazine in 1908, and was captivated by the charms of the isolated location, its spectacular natural scenery, and the hospitality of the young couple who ran the hot-spring inn. His enthusiastic descriptions of Tsuta and the Towada region, along with some songs he penned, introduced this little-known area to the rest of Japan.

Putting Down Roots

Omachi frequently returned to Tsuta, staying for long periods at the inn in return for sketches and poems he wrote for his hosts. Twice he surprised everyone by staying through the bitterly cold winter months. He eventually decided to settle down in Tsuta, and made it his official residence in 1925. He discovered some lumber that was left over from the construction of a Buddhist hall, and began building a workplace nearby. Sadly, before he could complete it, he passed away on June 10, 1925 at 56 years of age. Omachi's deep affection for Tsuta is celebrated in the death haiku that is engraved on his tombstone, located just behind this rest house:

“On the way to paradise, take a short break for purification in the hot-spring waters of Tsuta.”

Posthumous Support

Even after his death, Omachi's promotion of the area played a part in protecting this pristine natural environment for future generations. The petition he wrote in 1923 to make the Towada area—including the Tsuta Forest—a national park proved instrumental in the designation of Towada National Park in 1936. In 1956, the Hachimantai area was added, and the designation was changed to Towada-Hachimantai National Park.