

Former Temiya Railway Facility

The Temiya Railway Facility in Otaru was built in the late nineteenth century to house and maintain Hokkaido's first locomotives. It is now part of the Otaru Museum and explains the history of Hokkaido's early railways through scale models, photographs, and original rail cars and steam locomotives. Some original features including a locomotive depot are still in use and are open to the public. Several structures at the facility are designated Important Cultural Properties.

American railway engineer Joseph Crawford (1842–1924) was hired to develop the railway from the coal mine at Horonai (present-day Mikasa) to Otaru via Sapporo. Crawford ordered American-made steam locomotives for the line from H.K. Porter & Co. in Pennsylvania and passenger cars from Harlan & Hollingsworth in Delaware. The first section of the line between Temiya and Sapporo opened in 1880, and the full line was completed in 1882. Several of the engines and carriages that Crawford ordered are displayed at the facility, along with railway stock from later periods.

Locomotive Depot No. 3

This is the oldest extant brick depot in Japan and was completed in 1885, with bays to accommodate three locomotives. The depot is both functional and elegant, with decorative brickwork, a bow roof, arched windows with keystones, and herringbone-patterned wooden doors.

Engines enter through large wooden doors at the front of the fan-shaped building. Sash windows on both sides and at the back of the building, and windows above the front doors provide light for maintenance staff to inspect and repair the locomotives. Clerestory windows along the roof monitor admit extra light, and the three chimneys on the roof discharge smoke produced during engine inspection.

Locomotive Depot No. 1

The No 1. depot held five locomotives and was completed in 1908. It currently houses

the oldest working steam locomotive in Hokkaido, known as The Iron Horse (Porter 4514). The two bays on the right side (when viewed from the turntable) are original, but the three bays on the left were restored in 1996, resulting in a subtle variation in brick coloration. It has arched windows above the doors, a row of high windows on the front, and sash windows at the back to provide lighting and ventilation.

Turntable

Since steam locomotives only travel forward, turntables are needed to change direction. The steel turntable in front of the depots was manufactured by Yokogawa Bridge Engineering Works in Tokyo in 1919. It was originally manually operated but converted to compressed air later. It is now used to operate The Iron Horse (Porter 4514), which makes several runs a day on a section of track on the museum grounds.

Water tank

Steam locomotives consume a large amount of water and fuel (wood or coal). Some haul a rail vehicle called a tender, containing water and fuel to keep them running over long distances. The steel tank in the rail yard was built around 1916 to supply water for the tender. A long spout from the tank filled the tender with water, and the brickwork base acted as insulation against freezing weather.

Dangerous goods storage

The stone warehouse was built around 1898 for storing flammable goods such as paint and petroleum. It is one of the few remaining buildings from the nineteenth century.

Retaining wall

To facilitate loading coal onto cargo ships, the Temiya Coal Pier, an elevated pier 313 meters long and 20 meters high was constructed at the port in 1911. Trains accessed the pier via tracks running along a gradient, which was supported by a brick retaining wall. Once a coal wagon reached the pier, its load would be emptied via a hatch in the underside of the wagon, down chutes onto the ship waiting below. Although the pier was dismantled in 1944, this 85-meter-long section of the retaining wall remains.