

Moving Image Material at Otaru Museum

The prosperity of Otaru in the Taisho and early Showa eras (1912–1945) is evident in the collection of home movies at Otaru Museum. Footage from more than 200 recordings depicts scenes from daily life: ordinary citizens strolling the shopping streets of Otaru, shoveling snow, hauling herring nets, and watching steam locomotives. The museum shows selections from the archives.

Many of these scenes were filmed with a Pathé Baby movie camera, a relatively inexpensive and easy-to-use amateur film system developed by the French film equipment company Pathé in 1922. The compact, hand-cranked movie camera used 9.5mm film. It was smaller than a standard hardback novel and weighed just over half a kilogram.

Camera shops in Otaru sold film, cameras, tripods, and projectors for showing home movies, but most 9.5mm film would have needed to be sent to Yokohama for developing. Filmmaking would have been an expensive hobby at the time, and the fact that some 200 films remain indicates the economic and cultural prosperity of the city.