

## Takasago History Tour 4

The development of Japan's railway network led to the decline of Kakogawa River transportation, which had been a source of Takasago's prosperity. However, Takasago's location and abundant water resources, along with the efforts of local residents, helped attract new industries.

### *Site of the JNR Takasago Line*

The area's railway history began in 1888 with the opening of the Sanyo Railway (now the JR Kobe Line) in Kakogawa. In 1889, the township of Takasago was established, and in 1901, operations began at the newly constructed factory of the Kobe Paper Mill Company (now Mitsubishi Paper Mills Limited). More than 500 houses were built in the town for workers. In 1906, the Kanegafuchi Spinning Co., Ltd., which already had 17 factories nationwide, established a branch in Takasago.

As railway operations increased, the Banshu Railway went into service between Kakogawa and Kunikane (now Yakujin) Stations in April 1913. The Banshu Railway opened fully in September 1914. This attracted major companies to Takasago, including those in the paper, food, and other manufacturing industries.

The Japan National Railways (JNR) Takasago Line, built in 1914, ran from Kakogawa to Takasago, with dedicated lines to the factories of JNR, Kikkoman, and Mitsubishi Paper Mills. The Takasago Line served as an essential means of transportation in the area for both passengers and freight. But when the number of passengers declined with the rise of the automobile, the line was closed in 1984, bringing its 70-year history to an end.

### *Uomachi Club*

This two-story wooden Western-style pavilion was built in 1904 as company housing for an engineer named M. J. Shay, who was employed at the Takasago factory of Mitsubishi Paper Mills.

The factory's predecessor was the Kobe Paper Mill Company, run by American brothers Thomas and John G. Walsh. Their father died suddenly, making it impossible for them to

continue the business, so in 1898, Iwasaki Hisaya, a friend of the brothers and an investor in the business, took over the company. However, a shortage of water and rising rents led Shay to recommend that the factory be moved from Kobe to Takasago. This residence was built for him to live in after the move.

The residence and its gardens are a blend of Japanese and Western styles. The site, which covers some 110 square meters, was worth ¥2,706 when built: equivalent to around ¥54 million (US\$365,000) today. In 1905, after Shay's retirement, it was moved to its present location in Uomachi, near Inari Jinja Shrine. It now serves as a recreation center for employees.

#### *Ideshio-kan*

This building was erected in 1936 as a club for the management of the Kanegafuchi Spinning Co., Ltd. It features an arc-shaped protruding staircase, stained glass, and second-floor bay windows; it is currently in use as a recreation center by international chemical manufacturing company Kaneka Corporation.

#### *Former Asahi-machi Water Purification Tower*

This tower was the first of its kind built to supply water to Takasago in 1923, when the arrival of two major mills—Mitsubishi Paper Mills and Kanegafuchi Spinning—made it necessary to have a secure water-supply system. The iron-framed tower is 26 meters high and symbolizes the modern history of Takasago's water supply.

In 1966, the water source for the plant was changed, and the tower ceased operations. In 2003, it was designated a National Tangible Cultural Property.