

6 Modern Townships: Accelerating into the Modern Era with Railroads

~A townscape where cultural and industrial development is carried in by the railway~

■ Moving Toward Modern Townships with the Opening of the Railway

Formed as inn-towns along the Hamakaido road in the Edo period, the towns of Haramachi, Odaka, and Kashima were connected to the big cities of Sendai and Mito with the opening of the railway in 1898. This further accelerated the modernization that had been underway since the Meiji Restoration.

■ Townscape of Haramachi

Haramachi is located halfway between Iwaki (Taira) and Sendai, and became a major railway base with the installation of roundhouses and railway turntables. The financial and commercial industries took this opportunity to gain a foothold in the area, forming it into the central distribution site of the Soso region. The urban area of Haramachi was developed around Ekimaedori road, which connected the inn-town's original location along the Hamakaido road to the railway station. Here you can find buildings with various histories, from the traditional storehouses and brick chimneys of the Imamura Soy Sauce Store along the Hamakaido, to Western-style buildings on Ekimaedori like Kobayashi Eye Clinic. This era of lively economic activity overflowed in the townscape and has been passed down to us today.

In addition, the heritage of the 200-meter-high radio tower from the Taisho period

(1912-1926) and the Haramachi Airfield of the Army Flight School from the pre-WWII Showa period (1926-1989) convey the unique history of Haramachi's early modern period.

■ Townscape of Odaka

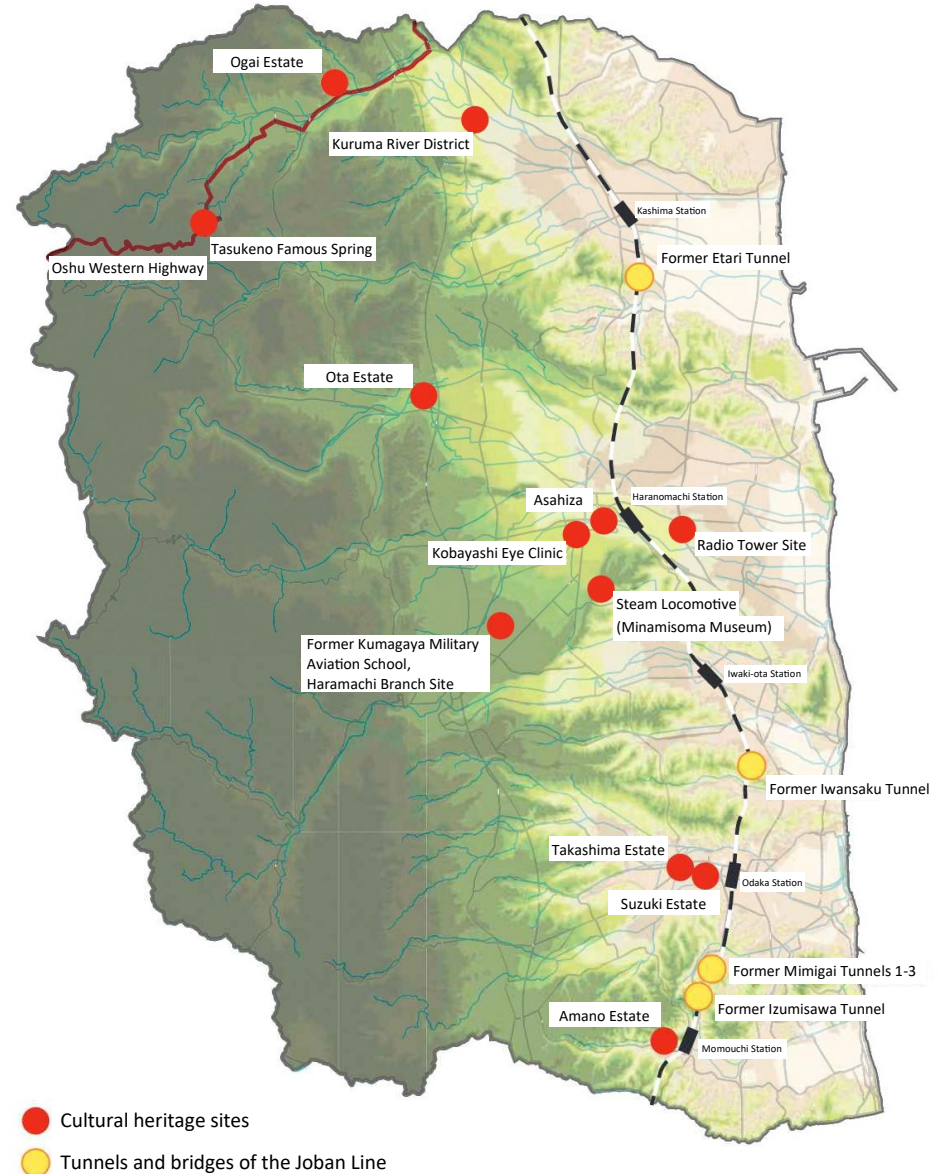
With the establishment of Soma Textile Company in 1887, the traditional industry of sericulture (silkworms) was developed in the early Show period, after which Odaka businessman Hangai Seiju adopted and developed the *habutai* (type of silk fabric weave) industry. Banks and shops lined up against this backdrop of prosperity.

The rise of Odaka's culture at that time can be seen in the buildings with appearances that are unusual even a national scale, such as the Takashima family home's concrete storehouse furnished with a rooftop area.

■ Rural Landscape

Even in rural areas, regional bases such as the Ogai household in Tochikubo, Kashima, were created. You can see small townscapes with unique shopping buildings in these rural areas, as in Kashima's Kuruma River district. Large-scale sericulture farmers populate the area, and the history of industrial and distributional development from the early modern period onward is spread across the landscape of Minamisoma.

Modern Development as Told Through Our Cultural Heritage



H Asahiza

Asahiza (旭座) was built in 1923 as a theater for plays and moving pictures, and the structure of the playhouse continues to be preserved. In 1951, the name was changed to Asahiza (朝日座) and it became a movie theater. Although it was closed in 1991, it is being used mainly by residential groups to show films, and is well known as a retro movie theater.



H Kobayashi Eye Clinic

A two-story wooden Western-style building from the Taisho period. Few Western-style buildings from the Taisho period remain in Minamisoma, making this one extremely valuable. In the inpatients' ward, there are tatami-mat hospital rooms as well as the director's room which was fitted with delicate fixtures. During that period, patients came from areas like Namie to this eye clinic. It also features open staircases at both ends of the ward.

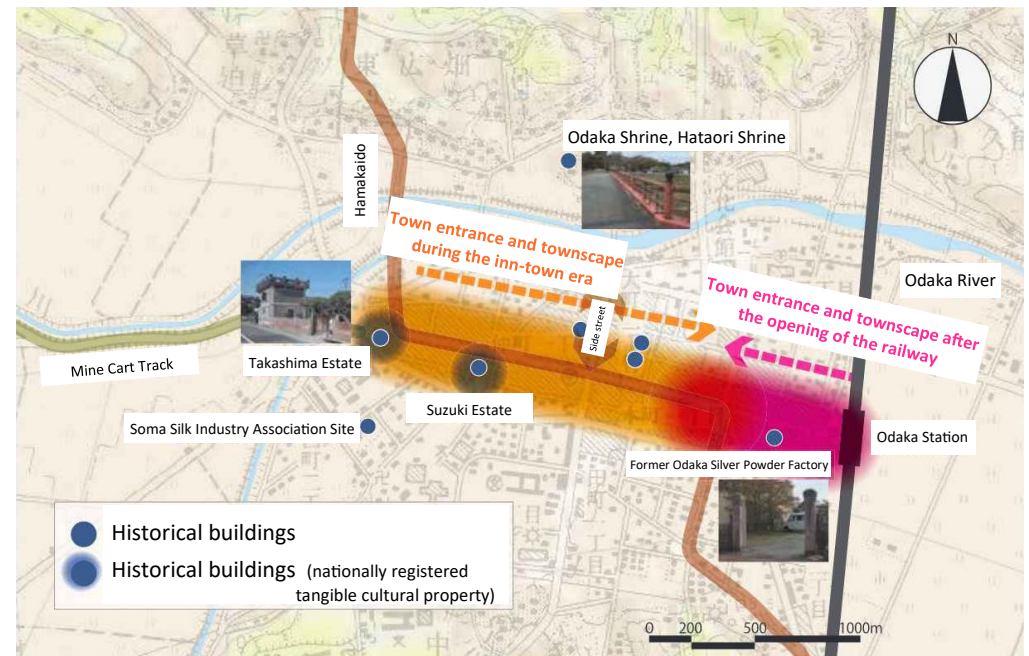


H Features Related to the Former Kumagaya Military Aviation School, Haramachi Branch

After opening as Hibarigahara Airfield in 1936, it opened as a branch school of the military's flight school in 1940, and special attack training was held here at the end of World War II. Currently, the reinforced concrete foundation of the hangar, the main gate, and the Hibarihara Shrine remain. The site of this airfield is now a residential area, but you can see the influence of the airfield in the area's road planning.



Hangar foundation



O Takashima Estate

A reinforced concrete building with a rooftop area built in the early Showa period. An interesting design runs around on the overhanging section of the roof. The building features a unique blending of Japanese and Western styles, as seen in the combination of Western-style interior design and the tatami mats on the second floor. The Takashima family initially ran a blacksmith's shop, before moving on to occupations like paper making, pig farming, and a kimono shop.



O,K Joban Line Tunnels

Brick tunnels that were discontinued due to the electrification of railways, completed in 1967. Many such tunnels remain in Odaka. The former Mimigai Tunnels 1-3 and the former Izumisawa Tunnels, which run parallel to the current Joban Line, have decorated entrances that are shaped like horsehoes. There are also tunnels in Kashima, Etari, all of which are valuable as some of the few railway heritage sites on the Joban Line.



Mimigai Tunnel

H Steam Locomotive Model C50103

This is the 103rd steam locomotive of the 158 C50-type locomotives manufactured from 1929, and is an improved version of the standard passenger locomotive manufactured according to designs specific to Japan.

It is preserved adjacent to the Minamisoma City Museum and can be visited at any time.



K Ogai Estate

The household served a post office for generations since the Meiji period, and now operates a simple post office in the warehouse. It is located in an environment full of nature, facing the highway known as "Shio no Michi" (salt road), which leads to Nakadori. It features two large storehouses built from the Meiji period to the Showa period with gates lined up between them.



K Oshu Western Highway

This is the road leading to Nihonmatsu, said to have been used when the Nakamura feudal lord traveled for *sankin-kotai*, an Edo-period policy requiring daimyo to alternate spending years in their own territory and in Edo serving the shogunate. It was once used to circulate a variety of goods, so it was also called "Shio no Michi" (salt road). In the mountains, there is the Tasukeno Famous Spring that is still well-known, and in the adjacent Tasukeno Kannondo Hall the Hayagriva Kannon is enshrined, which was used to wish for safety along the road.



Tasukeno Kannondo Hall

K Townscape of Kuruma River District, Kashima Ward

The Kuruma River district is located far from the city center of Kashima, but it is a townscape filled with shops with unique designs. Many such small towns were built on the side of the highway and supported the lives of agricultural people. The townscapes that remain in each region convey the culture and history nurtured there.



O Amano Estate

This is the birthplace of Amano Hidenobu, a researcher of Italian music who composed many of Minamisoma City's school songs. Built from the Meiji period to the early Showa period with a storehouse and a concrete wall, this structure displays a certain social standing. Built with a lot of soul, the main building in particular is extremely of high quality, and the interior is an elaborate masterpiece of modern Japanese-style architecture.



O Suzuki Estate

This is the birthplace of Suzuki Yasuzo, a constitutional scholar who is considered to have drafted the Constitution of Japan. It is a residence with a store built in the latter half of the Taisho era which conveys the way of life for merchants at that time. The interior of the building has been decorated with various features. The building remains in good condition, including all of the fittings, giving it the air of Taisho-Showa culture.



O Ota Estate

This is a magnificent group of buildings, including the main building built by Ota Akinosuke, a politician and businessman who promoted the land reclamation of the Ida River Inlet.

The main building is a typical private residence from the Taisho period, showing consideration for visitors and guests by planning of the roof's eaves and securing the line of flow in each room.

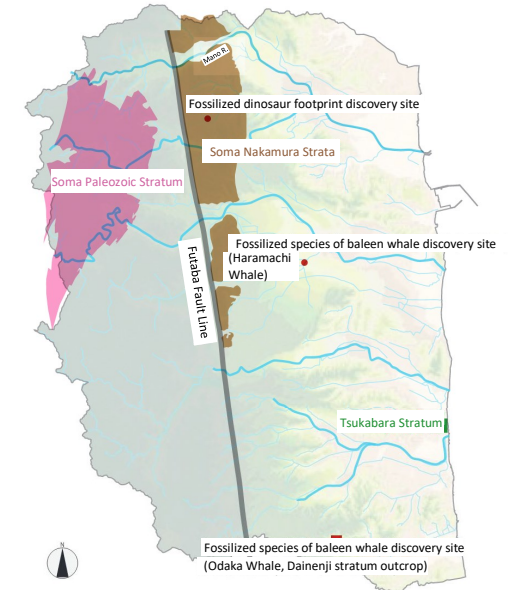
Along with the main building, there is also a rice storehouse, miso storehouse, and tool storehouse, which conveys the lifestyle of early modern farmers.



Column 2: Minamisoma, a Treasure Trove of Fossils

Follow history back 300 million years

Strata of all geological ages can be found in Minamisoma, dating back from the Paleozoic Era about 380 million years ago well into the Cenozoic about 120,000 years ago. Interesting finds have been made, such as Paleozoic trilobites in the Soma Paleozoic stratum, Mesozoic dinosaurs (footprints) and ammonites in the Soma Nakamura group of strata, and whales in the Cenozoic Dainenji stratum among other mammals. In this way, Minamisoma City has yielded a bounty of fossils that are representative of each era, encompassing all geological ages in one town.



Minamisoma fossil discovery sites

The land of Minamisoma where new species sleep

Fossils are the remains of creatures from long ago that escaped decay and decomposition by chance, and upon discovery, they tell us of unimaginable ancient creatures. So to speak, fossils are time capsules that tell a part of the history of the earth. In Minamisoma, you can observe the history of the earth over hundreds of millions of years. In recent years, new species of brachiopods, cycads, ammonites, crabs, bivalves, and other creatures have been discovered and reported by local and foreign researchers, drawing attention towards the town as a "treasure trove of fossils."



New species of Ammonite
Early Cretaceous period, Oyamada stratum



New species of Cycad
Late Jurassic period, Tochikubo stratum