

2 Together with the Seasons

Inside a Taisho Period Passenger Coach

This shows the interior of a passenger coach heading from Kutchan to Otaru one winter's day during the Taisho Period. Passengers include migrant workers heading to the herring fishing grounds, farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen, office workers, parents, children, and students. The car was heated with a coal stove. The passengers wore traditional garments from rural villages, including *wataire*, *sashiko* and *tsumago*, as well as Japanese-style hoods, large square winter shawls, and overcoats to ward off the cold. You can also see that people had begun wearing Western style clothing such as jackets, school uniforms, overcoats and even leather shoes.

Around the latter half of the 19th century many people emigrated to Hokkaido. Most of these people crossed the Tsugaru Strait in search of a better life. However, with the seasonal environment different from their hometown, not everyone was able to fulfill this dream. In particular, preparing for winter was a serious endeavor that often determined whether you lived or died. People needed to keep their families warm and prepare for ways to clear the heavy snowfall. Yet, even after the start of the 20th century there were still families who depended on hearths or braziers for heat and simply compacted snow instead of removing it. However, during the Taisho period (1912-1926) gradually stoves were introduced and various tools were put into use for clearing and removing snow.

Even in Hokkaido, between New Year's and New Year's Eve, events were held in tune with the work and lifestyle of each season. Nevertheless, there are also many events reflecting Hokkaido's unique culture and tradition. For example, the shimenawa used to decorate the front entrance of a home for New Year's typically uses rice straw in Honshu, but in Hokkaido alternatives such as sedge were used. This is because rice could not be grown successfully in Hokkaido until the Meiji Period (1868-1912) due to its cold climate. In addition, there are communities that celebrate the famous and popular summer star festival called Tanabata on July 7, the traditional date for the festival in Honshu, but others that hold it on August 7. One reason for this diversity is that many emigrants came to live in Hokkaido from other parts of Japan.

As Hokkaido was settled and developed, larger communities created drinking water systems, hospitals, schools, shrines and temples, as well as transportation infrastructure such as railways. This development would eventually spread to more remote farming and fishing villages. The end of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) to the beginning of the Taisho Period (1912-1926) would bring major changes in peoples' way of life. For example, people gradually began to shift from Japanese-style to Western-style clothing, such as heavyweight hand-knit gloves and other cold weather gear. Western-style foods such as tomatoes, cabbage, onions, potatoes, milk, butter and cheese were also produced. Tin roofs and glass windows began to be used in more buildings, while street lights became more prevalent.



Heating Rooms

At the end of the Edo period the kahheru, the first stove ever made in Japan, was made in Hakodate. The stove did not become commonly available to ordinary people until the latter half of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) when a lower priced tin plate wood stove was released. Later the coal stove would also appear. From the end of the Taisho Period (1912-1926) to the beginning of the Showa Period (1926-1989) the magazine stove offering more convenient warmth was mass produced and became widely used across Hokkaido. These stoves formed the beginnings of a warmer life in the frigid cold of winter in Hokkaido.



Snow Removal

Wood and bamboo tools, such as the *kaesuki*, *kosuki* and *jonba*, as well as steel shovels, were used in Hokkaido for snow removal between front doors and streets. On farms and more expansive areas, snow was often compacted using a horse-drawn *sankaku-sori* sled. Later in the 1950s, a tool called *yukioshi* became prevalent for clearing away snow at railway stations. These tools were later commercialized with the names *mama-san dump* or *snow dump* and became popular in snowy areas all around Hokkaido and beyond.