

The History of Seibu in Photos (Part 1)

I The Early Days of Seibu Railway (1892–1969)

Part 5

Post War, Line Names That Continue Today Fell in Place with the Extension of the Line Between Takadanobaba and Seibu-Shinjuku

Following the war, Japan's nation-building experienced a change in direction nearly as drastic as that which accompanied the Meiji Restoration. What pulled the country through reconstruction and subsequent growth was, of course, the railroads. Much countryside remained along Seibu Railway's lines, with war-related damage minimal compared to Tokyo's urban center and eastern regions, and there was thought to be ample room for development. As the post war chaos settled, Seibu Railway embarked on a more aggressive approach.

While damage was minor, stations near terminals were affected, and like many other railways, both railcars and facilities suffered from inadequate maintenance. As waves of housing encroached on the railway lines and railways transported more customers out buying provisions, some private railways for a time resorted to running wooden trains or trains that had been damaged in the war or in accidents, which they took over from the national railway. As the number of people moving from urban Tokyo to regions along its lines, Seibu Railway was said to have taken on a particularly large number of these railcars.

Seibu-Shinjuku Station, originally intended as a temporary measure to facilitate through service to JNR's Shinjuku Station

In 1952, an epoch-making event occurred that is essential in telling the history of today's Seibu Railway: The extension of the line between Takadanobaba and Nishi-Shinjuku. At the time, Takadanobaba was just a mid-scale station on the

Yamanote Line in terms of ridership, and the shopping arcade fronting the station saw less than adequate growth. However, as can be seen from the station's structure, this was never considered a permanent terminal. With the platform adjacent to the east side of the Yamanote Line, both inbound and outbound trains have to make a major detour under the Yamanote Line tracks. It is easy to imagine that access would have been much simpler if the platform had been placed to the west of the Yamanote Line. That was not done because, at the time, the builders envisioned a connection to central Tokyo.

The original plan was to extend the line from Takadanobaba toward Waseda, connecting to the municipal subway and its link to central Tokyo. Because that route was ultimately never realized, Takadanobaba was used as a terminal station, followed by the opening of the section between Takadanobaba and Seibu-Shinjuku. As of 1948, Seibu Railway had obtained a license through to JNR Shinjuku Station, so with future through service to JNR Shinjuku Station's east entrance, the station to the west of Kabukicho was intended to be temporary. While for various reasons that did not happen, it was later remodeled to include a hotel and shopping arcade, becoming the Seibu Shinjuku Building that remains today.

Until the extension to Seibu-Shinjuku Station, this line was known as the Murayama Line. With the opening of the extension, the name was reconsidered, with the section between Seibu-Shinjuku and Hon-Kawagoe called the Shinjuku Line and the section between Ikebukuro and Agano called the Ikebukuro Line.

Aggressive tourism development begun before the war continued during the post war reconstruction period

An aggressive approach to tourism development carried on after the war, with the first effort being the development of the Sayama Hills region encompassing Lake Tama and Lake



The photo at upper left shows the Otoi Train which began service between the Tamako Hotel and Kamientei in 1950. The line was extended to UNESCO Village the following year. In the top center photo is Seibu-Shinjuku Station around the time it opened. The bottom center photo shows the first private railway 10-car train, introduced to meet the increase in commuter transport during Japan's high economic growth period. At bottom right is the 5000 series limited express Red Arrow, which began operation with the opening of the Seibu Chichibu Line.

