

The History of Seibu in Photos (Part 1)

II Initial Period of Seibu Group Real Estate Development (1893–1969)

Part 2

A Pioneering Concept for a Large Amusement Park, Part of the Hakone Tochi Prospectus

“Large-scale facilities, accessible in a few hours by train, automobile and rickshaw; a refined place of scenic beauty with geographic variety to ensure visitors never tire of being there even for longer stays; convenient transportation from every direction and within the region; seasonal views, a moderate climate, and healthy surroundings effective for convalescing; cool abundant water and hot springs; a supply of fresh provisions from the mountains and the sea; historic sites. Given these conditions, Hakone is absolutely an ideal candidate location.”

These words were contained in the prospectus for Hakone Tochi, which Yasujiro Tsutsumi established in 1920. What catches one’s attention is the fact that nothing is mentioned about Karuizawa, one of two major project sites on par with Hakone. The great stock market crash that occurred the same year had much to do with that omission.

In the preparation phase prior to Hakone Tochi’s establishment, the company—as the name indicates—was to intended to specialize in development of a large amusement park in Hakone, but faced a worsening economic climate. Tsutsumi then dissolved Sengataki Yuenchi, a company he had established earlier for the purpose of development in Karuizawa, and transferred its assets to Hakone Tochi, making it, at the time, a major new start-up.

Incidentally, the “large amusement park” noted here means something different from modern amusement parks. The large amusement parks being proposed at the time offered hot springs and overnight accommodations, along with gardens, boating, horseback riding, dance halls, baseball diamonds, billiards, swimming pools and a variety of other “amuse-

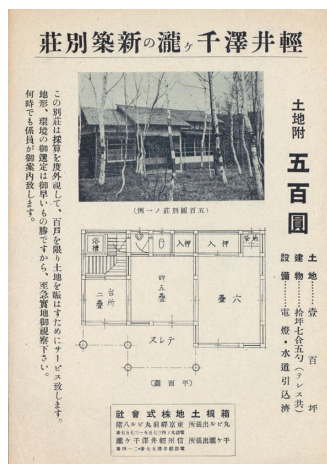
ment” facilities, and the term was used to refer to large resort facilities of considerable size. Tsutsumi focused on Hakone not only for its hot springs and views, but because he saw the potential for achieving a large amusement park that could include Lake Ashinoko and other features of the area.

Why choose barren land over an already widely-known summer home resort?

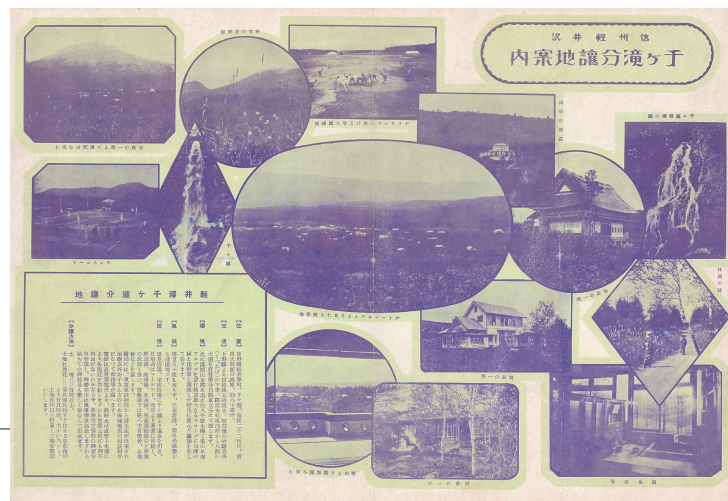
The development of summer homes took place simultaneously at Hakone and Karuizawa. The concept of a second home to escape the summer heat started sometime in the mid- to late 19th century, with the habit of visiting foreigners of spending the hot, humid summers in Japan in the highlands where it was cool. In the late 19th and early 20th century, economic development brought a greater awareness of health, and as incomes also improved, the concept of a summer home was gradually popularized.

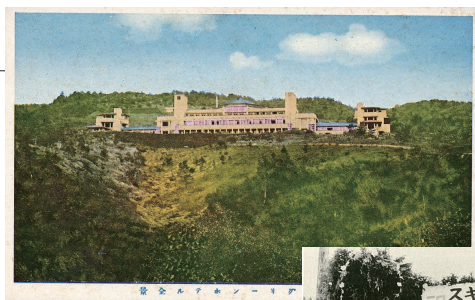
In 1917, prior to the establishment of Hakone Tochi, Tsutsumi purchased land in Karuizawa’s Kutsukake district, and the following year work began to lay the Shichiken Road between Kutsukake and Sengataki Road. He had taken the first step in developing a summer home resort. This land development in Kutsukake was an excellent example of Tsutsumi’s approach.

In 1893, a cog railway employing the Abt system began operating over Usui Pass. While this brought even more active summer home development to Karuizawa, development first progressed in a district known as Kyu-Karuizawa. Streets lined with poplars were laid down, and the lots offered for sale were planted with acacia and Japanese larch



A pamphlet introducing summer home property in Sengataki, Tsutsumi’s first development in Karuizawa. At left is a leaflet for the so-called ready-built homes, which were priced at 500 yen for 100 *tsubo* (about 330 m²) of land with a house measuring about 35 m². Below is a pamphlet with interior and exterior photos of the Sengataki district’s tourist spots and summer homes.





A postcard depicting the Green Hotel, which was built in a section of the Sengataki summer home resort. It was a three-story wooden building in a modern, Western style.

Hakone Tochi went on to expand its development from Karuizawa to the Tsumagoimura and then to Manza Onsen. In 1956 it opened a ski area. Tsutsumi is at center.

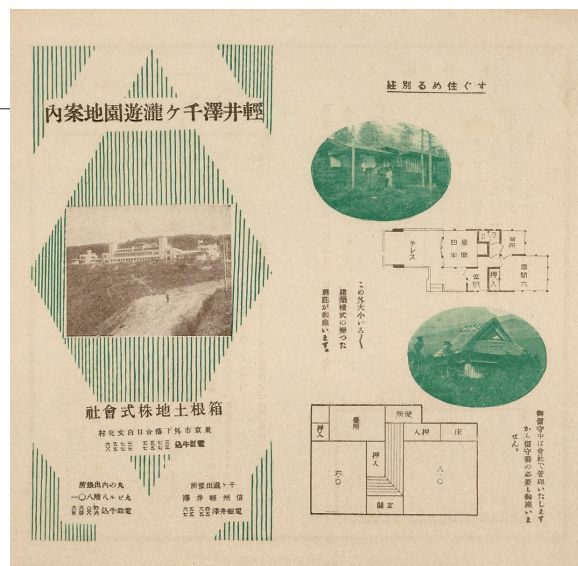


trees, creating a landscape in which the summer homes appeared scattered among the trees. Most of the properties were purchased by the so-called upper class, including members of the imperial family and other nobility, politicians and others. In contrast, the land Tsutsumi had purchased in the Kutsukake district was entirely untouched by development, in other words, barren land.

Finding a way to offer summer homes to more people, rather than allowing them to be monopolized by the wealthy

This was Tsutsumi's strategy: He would choose relatively inexpensive land adjacent to summer home resorts that were already built and had gained a certain reputation. This was because he wanted to make summer homes more than something that just a portion of the upper classes could enjoy, making them affordable for the new middle class that had sustained the so-called "Taisho Democracy" era of the early 20th century. He also devised a new sales method: Hakone Tochi was the first to incorporate a ready-built system for summer homes, where the land was offered for sale along with the building. More precisely, it was called the "simplified fee-simple summer home sales system," and at the time was well-received under the popular moniker of the "500 yen summer home." Naturally, he did not just sell the lots, but added value to the undeveloped land by putting in infrastructure such as gas, electricity, and plumbing, establishing new roads at the same time.

He also proposed another kind of added value from the perspective of culture. In both Karuizawa and Hakone, he built clubs to serve as community centers, adding culture and sports facilities that further increased the value of the summer home resorts. In 1919, Tsutsumi purchased 100,000 *tsubo* of land (about 330,000 m²) in Gora, Hakone, which he then expanded to include Sengokuhara, Hakonemachi on the banks of Lake Ashinoko, Moto-Hakone and Yunohanazawa. While development of summer homes for the upper class was already underway in Gora, here again he chose to sell simplified summer homes to the new middle class, and worked to expand the enjoyment of spending leisure time in comfort.



This pamphlet refers to the "Karuizawa Sengataki Amusement Park," but as on the left page it describes the Sengataki summer home resort. The Japanese-style thatched roof gives a sense of the period.

Tsutsumi proceeds with bullish development in Hakone and Karuizawa immediately following the company's launch

Tsutsumi, who believed that transportation infrastructure was crucial to land development, looked for a number of ways to provide that infrastructure, including by dedicated expressway and air. In building toll roads in Hakone, he had numerous discussions with the (then) Ministry of Home Affairs and other relevant authorities, talks which, in part, led to revisions to the Road Act. Surprisingly, in 1926 he had already begun operating sightseeing flights by plane over Hakone's Lake Ashinoko. He also built an airfield in Karuizawa, and nearly 30,000 people came to see its maiden flight take off. While Tsutsumi had intended to offer regularly scheduled flights, there was no way to do it profitably, and he abandoned the idea.

Following its establishment in 1920, Hakone Tochi expanded its business through an aggressive management approach. That year, it acquired a tract of land in Onioshi-dashi, and in the following year, hot springs extraction rights and leaseholds in Tsumagoimura. Beyond that, Tsutsumi had his eye on the Manza Onsen (hot springs), and even spoke of drawing Manza's hot springs to Karuizawa to create the world's finest hot spring summer resort. The Green Hotel also opened around this time, and with its modern Western architecture, offered an elegant place for the nobility who gathered in Karuizawa to socialize.

In 1922, Hakone Tochi acquired Hakone Yusen and the Ferry Union, which operated pleasure boats and ferries on Lake Ashinoko in Hakone. This gave the company a monopoly on the Lake Ashinoko tourist business. In 1923, they also made the Sunzu Railway a subsidiary. The railway's primary lines included a railway between Shuzenji and Mishima and track between Mishima City and Numazu. It also ran bus lines between Shuzenji and Ito, Shuzenji and Yugashima, and Izu-Nagaoka and Mito. Subsequent expansion focused particularly on the bus lines, which played a significant role in the development of Izu and Hakone.