

Cherry Trees Saved by People's Love

Shokawa Zakura

Natural Treasure of Gifu Prefecture

莊川桜



Shokawa, Takayama City, Gifu Pref.



莊川桜

Shokawa Zakura Cherry Trees stand beside the Miboro dam, located in the Shokawa area of Takayama.

These ancient cherry trees would have been engulfed by water after the construction of the dam. However, the Shokawa Zakura Cherry Trees were transplanted to their current site by those who would preserve the cherry blossoms.



Location

Shokawa, Takayama, about 50km from central Takayama (1 hr drive)

The Age of the Trees

About 500 years old

Season

Cherry blossoms are in full bloom from the middle to the end of April

Background

In the years after the Second World War, Japan progressively recovered, beginning the process of rebuilding the nation. Insufficient electric power was a chronic problem, as supply could not meet demand. The government initiated the Electric Power Development Company (EPDC) to expedite the generation of electricity, and the Miboro area of Shokawa Village was included in this plan. Due to the heavy snowfall and snow pack of the region, the Shokawa area is blessed with abundant resources, and the plan was to construct a large reservoir in the upper reaches of the Shokawa River to tap these resources.

Most of the area selected to be flooded for the large reservoir was Shokawa Village and other adjacent villages, in which about 1,200 people lived at the time. With the construction of the dam,



The Cherry Tree at Kourinji Temple Before Transplantation



The Cherry Tree at Shorenji Temple Before Transplantation

when Tatsunosuke Takasaki, the first president of the EPDC, visited the area, he happened to visit Kourinji Temple. There, he found a large and ancient cherry tree. At that time, the tree was already well over 400 years old. The tree was a witness of the daily life of the local community for many generations. The village children had played under this great tree and it was a place of relaxation and enjoyment for the older residents. Mr. Takasaki was overwhelmed with powerful emotions and he spoke to the local people, to find a way to save the tree, as well as another tree located at Shorenji Temple.

Transplantation

On November 15, 1960, the transplantation process began. This was a joint operation including the EPDC, a landscape gardening company (headed by Mr. Niwa), and Kobe's "Sakura Doctor" Mr. Shintaro Sasabe.

On December 24, over a month after the transplanting had begun, the project was completed.



Mr. Sasabe (left) and Mr. Niwa (right), consulting in front of Shokawa Zakura, towering around the temple

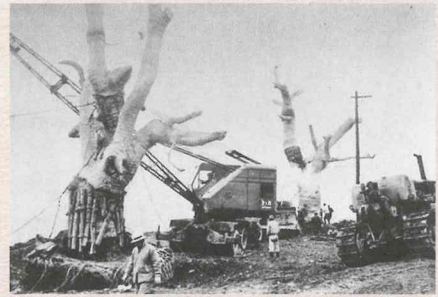
This was the first large-scale undertaking in the history of tree transplantation, worldwide. About 1,000 people were involved in this project. In the eagerly awaited spring of the following year, which comes late in this area, young buds began to appear on the transplanted ancient cherry trees. As time passed, the trees became more and more vigorous and more cherry blossoms appeared. These ancient cherry trees miraculously survived this incredible transplantation process and were named the Shokawa Zakura (sakura) Cherry Trees. They stand overlooking the Miboro Lake on the Nakano Panoramic Point and have become a symbol commemorating the lost villages of the former residents.



The branches and the roots, which were about 100 meters long, were cut off to get ready for the transplantation.



Shokawa Zakura being dragged up the hill by bulldozer. The sad appearance of the tree was not what it used to be.



Shokawa Zakura being transplanted to this present site.

People Who Rescued the Cherry Trees



Tatsunosuke Takasaki



Shintaro Sasabe



Masamitsu Niwa

Tatsunosuke Takasaki (1885~1964)

Born in Takatsuki City, Osaka Prefecture, he successively held various posts such as the First President of J-Power, the Secretary of Economic Planning Agency, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Japan Delegate to Japan-U.S.S.R Fishery Negotiations etc. He was a man of noble and sincere character.

Shintaro Sasabe (1887~1978)

Born in Osaka City, he was a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University (current University of Tokyo). He devoted his life to research on cherry trees. His collections of cherry tree related art pieces, literature, documents and other things are stored in Hakushika Kinen Shuzo Museum in Nishinomiya City.

Masamitsu Niwa (1908~1965)

Born in Toyohashi City, he was the best gardener of the Tokai area.



**Remark of
the revered
Mr. Takasaki**

“Old things gradually disappear in the name of development.
However, we must make efforts to save what human power can save.
Old things are irreplaceable because they are old.

Spring



Summer



Our Home is Now
Under the Lake
Moved to a New Home
These Old Cherry Trees

Winter



Bloom Forever

Poem by
Tatsunosuke Takasaki

Autumn



Named as Shokawa Zakura

This tearful ceremony was held on June 12th, 1962. In attendance were five hundred people including Mr. Takasaki, Mr. Sasabe, Mr. Niwa, the president of J-Power and locals who had to leave their home because of the construction of the dam. The cherry trees were named as Shokawa Zakura at this ceremony.



Extend Symbols of the Past
Even when Buried
Live on Forever
In the name of the
Shoshirakawa

Poem by Nobutsuna Sasaki
Calligraphy by Tatsunosuke Takasaki

Designation as a Precious Natural Treasure of Gifu Prefecture

These trees were designated as above on December 13th in 1966.

Information

Shokawa Region Office Tel.05769-2-2211
<http://www.city.takayama.lg.jp/>

Shokawa Tourism Association Tel.05769-2-2272
<http://www.shokawa.net/>

Traffic Information

