

Outside Tokyo

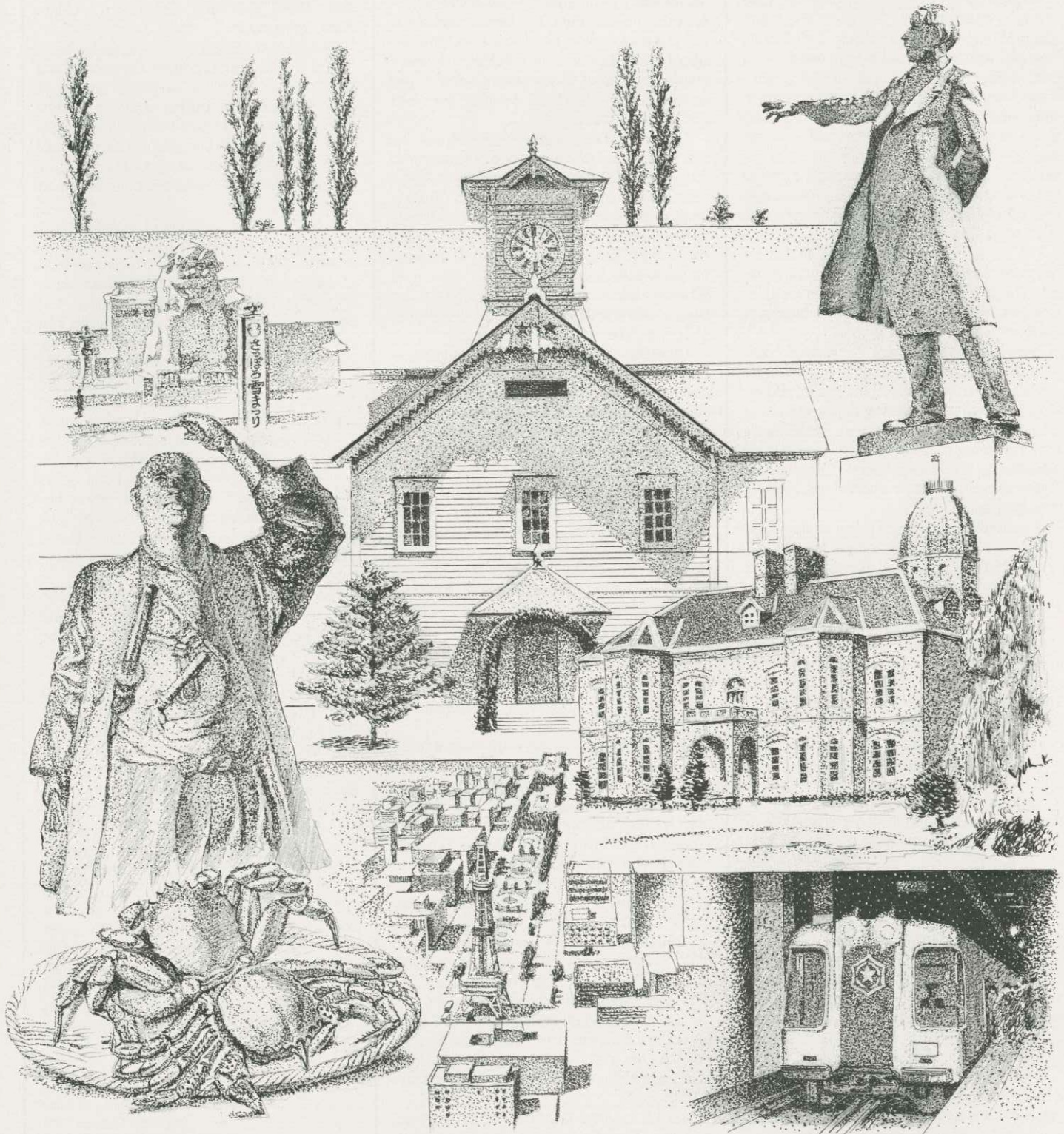
Sapporo: Japan's Frontier

With its vast expanse of forest areas (even today forest area makes up 64% of the city of Sapporo), rich farmland, and uncrowded

towns and cities, it is no wonder many Japanese consider Hokkaido to be a foreign country. The people of Hokkaido are not bound by centuries of tradition and have a pioneer spirit that has helped Hokkaido become one of the fastest developing areas of Japan.

As the capital and largest city in Hokkaido, Sapporo is the administrative, economic, and cultural center of the island. The history of Sapporo is closely interwoven with that of Hokkaido. Hokkaido was first inhabited by the

Ainu, who controlled the entire island then known as "Yezo." The Ainu called the area near the mouth and midstream of the Toyohira River



"sats-poro-bets" meaning "dry-large-river." Later, when the capital city of Hokkaido was built there it was named "Sapporo."

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, development of Yezo became a national priority. In 1869 the name of the island was changed to "Hokkaido," which means "north sea road." A colonization commission was established in Tokyo and Yoshitake Shima was ordered to Hokkaido to complete plans for building a capital city.

He designed Odori Park, a green-belt fire break, to divide the city into north and south along Minami-Ichijo-Dori (South First Street). The city was divided east from west along Otomo-Bori (now Sosei Canal). All government buildings were in the northern section while the amusement quarters, shopping areas, and private residences were in the southern section. Unfortunately, the commissioner did not pay much attention to fiscal policy and when he used up an entire one year's budget in less than three months he was recalled to Tokyo.

The next commissioner, Michitoshi Iwamura, completed the task of founding the city. The first phase of construction was finished in 1871. At that time the population of Sapporo was only 624 persons.

The vice-commissioner, Kiyotaka Kuroda, was responsible for bringing foreign technology into the development process. In 1871 he went to the United States and invited Horace Capron, secretary of agriculture in the Grant Administration, and members of his staff to be advisers to the Colonization Commission. These experts greatly hastened the pace of development in Hokkaido.

Colonization on a much larger scale began in 1874. In 1875 Sapporo Agricultural College, now Hokkaido University, was established and in 1876 William S. Clark of the United States was invited to be the president. Although he stayed only a year, Dr. Clark won the respect of students and teachers alike, and his parting words, "Boys, be ambitious!" have become the motto of Hokkaido youth. Altogether 78 foreigners took part in the Hokkaido Development Project between 1871 and 1884, including 48 Americans, 13 Chinese, five Russians, four Englishmen, four Germans, and one Frenchman.

Beer, steel, *miso* (fermented soybean paste), soy sauce, and thread industries were started by the government. In 1882 the Colonization Commission was abolished. Three years later the Hokkaido prefectural government was established with former commissioner Iwamura serving as the first governor. As the population grew, railroads, highways, schools, and other services were expanded.

In 1887 American missionary Sarah Smith introduced lilacs, the official city tree, to Sapporo. Sapporo was the first Japanese city to have lilacs, and there is a Lilac Festival held yearly in May.

Sapporo was incorporated as a city in 1922 with a population of 127,044. Undamaged during World War II, Sapporo thus became a starting point for the rebuilding of the nation.

Snow festival highlights

The Snow Festival was started in 1950 as a way to get citizens outside during the long six months of Sapporo winter. At first the emphasis was on entertainment rather than the snow statues. Dog sled races, square dances, singing, and fireworks enticed people to venture out of their houses. Festival sites were illuminated only by streetlamps.

The first festival had just six snow statues, sculptured by students from six different high schools, in Odori Park. The largest statue was just five meters high, and the festival attracted about 50,000 people. In contrast, this year's festival will feature 13 giant statues (the largest approximately 40x15x25 meters) and over 290 smaller statues.

The mammoth statues have become the highlight of the festival. Just one of these giants requires 2,000-plus cubic meters of snow (about 300 six-ton truckloads) and 1,200 work-shifts over 25 days. Builders first select a theme for each statue from ideas suggested by city elementary school pupils. Next, a wooden frame is built and packed tightly with snow. When the snow is hard enough, rough carving begins with shovels and, after the statue takes shape, a variety of fine carving tools.

The 1986 festival runs from Wednesday, February 5, to Sunday, February 9. It is spread over three sites: the Makomanai base of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, Odori Park, and Susukino. Although two days is more advisable, an efficient way to see the festival in one day is to start at the Makomanai site which is reached by taking the Nanboku (North-South) subway line to the Jieitai-mae Station. This site, with large ice slides ingeniously designed as part of the statues and horse-drawn sleigh rides, is a child's delight. Those with children are advised to get to the Makomanai site when it opens to avoid long lines.

From the Makomanai site take the subway back to Odori Station. This is the eastern end of the Odori festival site. Starting here, pedestrian traffic is regulated in a loop taking the visitor to the westernmost point of the festival and back again.

The UHB Family Square in the West 3 block has a ski jumping exhibition that has become very popular. West 6 is the festival headquarters where a police box, center for lost children, and first-aid station are located. The area around West 9 is known as "Citizens' Square." Here statues made by the general public can be seen. The western end of the festival is at West 11. Located here is the International Snow Statue Competition which was begun during the 25th festival in 1974 with the participation of six teams from six different countries. Now delegates from over 10 nations compete in this activity of international friendship.

A few blocks south from Odori West 3 shining ice sculptures are on display at the Susukino site. An ice sculpting competition held every year helps to bring out the best artists in this specialty.

The 1972 Winter Olympics thrust Sapporo, and the Snow Festival, into the world spot-

light and brought with it many improvements, most notably the inauguration of the subway system.

A winter paradise

Today Sapporo is the fifth largest city in Japan in terms of population (1.5 million) and third largest in area (1,118 sq.km.)

Active internationally, Sapporo has strong sister-city relationships with Portland, Oregon, U.S.A.; Shenyang, China; and Munich, West Germany.

Like Munich, Sapporo is famous for beer, and a trip to Sapporo Beer Garden, where one can eat one's fill of "Jingiskan" and drink beer at reasonable prices, is highly recommended. Jingiskan is a Hokkaido specialty of grilled mutton and vegetables named after Genghis Khan. Other local cuisine includes "Sapporo Ramen" (Chinese noodle soup) and crab dishes.

A good climax to a day of sightseeing is to stop in one or more of the 3,700-plus restaurants, pubs, snack bars, and cabarets in Susukino, the entertainment district since the beginning of the city's history. Unless expenses are not a concern, it is advised that you go with someone who knows the area. Prices range from the reasonable to the ridiculous. If you do not know anyone who can accompany you, try checking the price list posted at the entrance of each establishment.

Many tourists who visit the Snow Festival combine sightseeing with skiing. There are over 60 skigroups within a two-hour radius of Sapporo. Skiers who prefer to stay in hotels near the slopes can take a bus into town and see the Snow Festival. Shuttle buses operate between major ski areas and downtown Sapporo.

Cross country skiers can enjoy their sport on one of over 30 trails within the city. Skis and boots are loaned free by the city. Ski jumping competitions held on weekends at Okurayama Ski Jump are exciting to watch.

Another popular place among visitors to Sapporo is the Clock Tower, the most famous building in Hokkaido, located at North 2 West 1. Originally constructed in 1878, the building has become a symbol of the history of Sapporo. The huge American-made clock was installed three years later and still chimes the hours. The building has been designated as a national cultural treasure and currently houses a museum of local history. Admission is free.

There are four major shopping areas in downtown Sapporo: Odori, from the TV Tower to West 4, where several major department stores are located; Tanuki-koji covered shopping arcade, from South 3 West 1 to West 5; Aurora-Pole Town underground shopping complex located beneath Odori subway station; and the area near Sapporo Station.

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