

1. The Rise of Kawasaki as an Industrial Capital (Mid-19th century to 1930s)

Overview of Kawasaki

The City of Kawasaki is a long and narrow municipality that traces an arc across the northeastern edge of Kanagawa Prefecture. In the north it is bounded by the Tama River, with Metropolitan Tokyo on the other side, and in the south it adjoins the City of Yokohama. In commuting terms, the JR Nambu Line runs the entire length of the City from north to south, with multiple rail lines traversing it from east to west. Access to Haneda Airport from Kawasaki is excellent, and has just become even more so with the opening of the Tamagawa Sky Bridge in March 2022.



A City of Flourishing Agriculture and Fisheries

During the Meiji era (the reign of the Meiji Emperor: 1868 to 1912), the area that is now the City of Kawasaki was divided into numerous towns and villages. Most of these were farming villages, growing rice as the principal crop. Nearer the seashore, rice-growing was supplemented with cultivation of fruits such as pears and peaches, along with salt-making. Along the coast, expansive shoals supported rich catches of seafood, including Japanese littleneck clams, common orient clams and orange clams. In 1871 cultivation of laver, an edible seaweed, began. This littoral area soon became known as the largest producer of *Daishi* laver, named for the renowned Kawasaki Daishi temple, in Kanagawa Prefecture. Coastal inhabitants made a living producing sheets of laver in the winter and growing fruit and rice in the summer.



Harvesting *Daishi* Laver
Kawasaki Port Management Center



Sun-drying laver
Kawasaki Port Management Center



A clam-catching boat in Tokyo Bay
off the Kawasaki shore
Kawasaki Port Management Center

Kawasaki and the Railways

Kawasaki and railways go back a long way. In 1872, when a railway connecting Shinbashi with Yokohama opened, a station for Kawasaki was erected between the two. In 1899 service began on eastern Japan's first electric railway, Daishi Denki Tetsudo (now the Keikyu Daishi Line), followed in rapid succession by Keihin Denki Tetsudo (changed from Daishi Denki Tetsudo, later this name was changed to today's Keikyu Corporation), Musashi Denki Tetsudo (now Tokyu Railways Co., Ltd.), Keio Denki Kudo (now Keio Corporation), Odawara Kyuko Tetsudo (now Odakyu Electric Railway Co., Ltd.), Nambu Tetsudo (now the JR Nambu Line) and Tsurumi Rinkai Tetsudo (now the JR Tsurumi Line). Notably, the "government line" (now the JR Tokaido Line) and Keihin Denki Tetsudo brought many people to Kawasaki from places such as Yokohama and Tokyo, while Nambu Tetsudo brought sand from the Tama River and cement from Okutama. These railways that criss-crossed Kawasaki lent their strength to carrying not only passengers but also raw materials and manufactured products. Their contribution to the development of Kawasaki was enormous.



Keihin Denki Tetsudo
Kawasaki City Museum

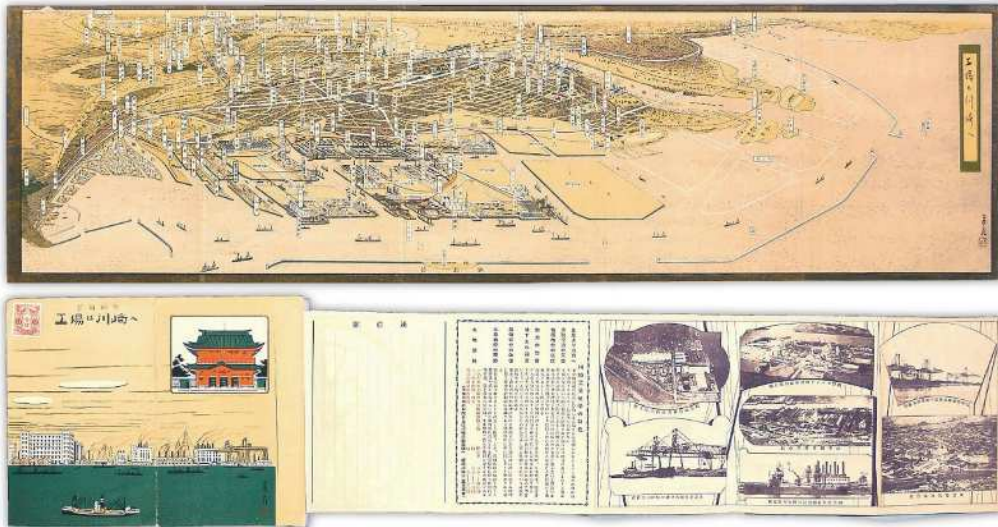


Nambu Tetsudo
Kawasaki City Museum

1. The Rise of Kawasaki as an Industrial Capital (Mid-19th century to 1930s)

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat for Factories

In the closing years of the Meiji period, the Town of Kawasaki (as the City of Kawasaki was then known) began inviting factories to set up shops there, to vitalize the economy of the region. A host of factories were soon built along the banks of the Tama River, taking advantage of the excellent water-borne transportation and railway links available there. In 1913 land reclamation began along the seashore, expanding the area available for factories, and quickly began filling the reclaimed land. From about 1935 onward, the zone extended to the Nambu Tetsudo (now the JR Nambu Line) trackside. Kawasaki was attracting plenty of attention from Japanese industry. It was a production site close to major consumer markets, such as Tokyo and Yokohama and available of transportation by water and land. Land was cheap, electricity was cheap and groundwater was plentiful. Kawasaki was the ideal place to build a factory.



Brochure, 1934: "Bring your factories to Kawasaki!" Kawasaki City Museum

Birth of the City of Kawasaki

As a result of efforts attracting companies, major companies advanced into Kawasaki one after the other, quickly followed by people looking for work, and the population burgeoned. Upgrading of infrastructure such as waterworks and roads was urgently needed, and waterworks were installed in the Town of Kawasaki in 1921. Coinciding as it did with a series of recovery plans following the Great Kanto Earthquake, the development boom intensified moves to merge Kawasaki with neighboring towns and villages. So it was that on July 1, 1924, the Towns of Kawasaki and Daishi and the Village of Miyuki merged and the City of Kawasaki was born. Kawasaki's municipal area continued to grow, absorbing nearby towns and villages. With the absorption of the Villages of Kakio and Okagami in 1939, Kawasaki reached its present extent. The City of Kawasaki had 260,000 residents at that



Bird's-eye view of the City of Kawasaki: "Handbook of the Vigor of the City of Kawasaki," 1933

Growing Problems of Soot, Smoke and Wastewater from Factories

The City of Kawasaki had now grown into a capital of industry. But as factories discharged soot and smoke day and night, air pollution worsened, while wastewater caused problems of water pollution in the rivers and sea. The dirt and pollution caused by adjacent factories took a heavy toll on gave damages to agriculture and fisheries within the City, sparking friction between factories and nearby residents. At this time the solution reached was to agree individual compensation from the factories as perpetrator to the residents as victim.



Ogishima public beach with factory belt in the background, 1930
Kawasaki City Museum