

Red Brick and Maizuru

Maizuru National College of Technology

Maizuru is a city of red brick buildings. There are about one hundred and thirty red brick buildings in our city. We are very proud of red brick buildings in Maizuru. Red brick structures can be found all over Maizuru. The number of the structures is one of the largest in Japan. Please look at this map. There are so many red brick structures. But they don't attract many visitors. They ought to be noticed by a lot of people. So we would like to begin by talking about some of the red brick monuments in Maizuru.

(No.1) Now look at the slide. Red Brick Warehouses: Red brick warehouses were registered as important cultural property by the Government. They were built at a fast pace one after another for military purposes from 1900 to 1921.

(No. 2) Red Brick Museum: One of the warehouses was remodeled for this museum. Bricks from all over the world are exhibited here. You can go inside the replica of the Hoffman kiln that produced bricks used in Maizuru. You can have some experience about the brick's history.

(No. 3) Red Brick Memorial Hall: This house was remodeled into a multipurpose hall where concerts and lectures have been held.

(No.4) The Old Fortress: The Old Fortress was built on the top of the mountain where you can command a fine view of Maizuru Bay. After the war, it was left untouched for a long time, so the original shape has not been changed.

(No. 5) Filtration plant: Filtration plant had been used for 65 years until 1944. Now, it is used for a public swimming pool.

These red brick buildings are called industrial heritage. Industrial heritage is a kind of cultural heritages which include factories, railways, tunnels and buildings of the past. In Japan most of them were built in the course of modernization and industrialization after the Meiji Restoration. They are important in the history of technology as well as in the history of economy and the history of people's lives. They tell us about the technology of the past and will show us a technological guideline to the next generation. Moreover, industrial heritage gives a city its character. So we should preserve them and hand them down to our children.

Industrial heritage is part of everyday life for many people in Maizuru. For example, a concert called "Red Brick Jazz" is held in red brick warehouses every summer. People enjoy coffee at the Memorial Hall or learn the history of red bricks at the Red Brick Museum. In order to build these buildings, they needed a lot of red bricks. Hoffman kiln in Maizuru, which was built to fulfill the demand, is an important heritage in the process of modernization. So we find it significant to throw a new light on the kiln as an important industrial heritage.

Even in Maizuru, however, few people know Hoffman kiln. That is why we have decided to introduce Hoffman kiln to you.

Hoffman kiln is a tunnel-shaped circular kiln like a donut. It is designed so that fire may go around the kiln many times with only one ignition. It could produce a lot of bricks, and could meet a large demand. In 1951, there were fifty Hoffman kilns all

over Japan. But now there are only four, most of which are going to decay. Why did Hoffman kilns decline in popularity? It is largely because Hoffman kiln has a problem, which is that workers have to work 24 hours a day to feed a fire with charcoal, and to carry burned bricks out of the kiln. It was a very hard work. Hoffman kiln's personnel cost is higher than that of tunnel kiln that is used now. In 1945, Maizuru's Hoffman kiln no longer enjoyed demand for red bricks and had no supply of clay, so it ceased operations.

Now, Hoffman kiln has become antiquated. Its northeast chimney has fallen, and has hit and broken the roof. Please look at this slide. Already half the number of chimneys have broken down. There is a crack in the big chimney, and the kiln is in danger of being broken. The company that owns the property has gone bankrupt. The ownership of Hoffman kiln belongs to nobody. Thus it is on the way of becoming a ruin. We would like to suggest a new way to maintain and reutilize it.

We need much money to keep the Hoffman kiln. But nobody wants to pay that money. So we propose to keep it as a tourist attraction.

In the first place, the rough area around it should be transformed into a park covered with green. The shade of the trees around the kiln will make it a relaxing place. Besides, we plan to light up the park so that it may become a popular place owing to the visual effect based on the difference between day and night. We also plan to build in the park a red brick café and a tower with a sweeping view of the area.

Hoffman kiln in the park will evoke nostalgia in many people. But the biggest problem is that the distance between Hoffman kiln and the nearest station is so long that it is difficult to walk there from the station.

So, secondly, in order to solve the problem, we would like to build a station near the Hoffman kiln and run a lorry from the nearest station to the Hoffman Kiln. In this way, it will be easy to visit Hoffman kiln. Of course, the Hoffman kiln station will be built of red brick and people will find it comfortable. The red brick station will be a symbol of Maizuru. The railroad will be built along the Yura River so that the passengers can see the beautiful river on the way.

Thirdly, we propose that the road to the Hoffman kiln be also made of brick instead of concrete. Then you will find it familiar and enjoy walking along it. We also think it nice to open a rental bike shop so that people may enjoy cycling.

If the lorry and the red brick road are the only means of transportation to Hoffman kiln, the cars won't disturb the calm and we'll be able to maintain a peaceful and nostalgic atmosphere. The profit, of course, will be used for the maintenance of Hoffman kiln.

Finally, we can invite a private company to join the project. For example, while Maizuru city maintains the park and the kiln, a private company will run the café, and a railway company like KTR will run the lorry. If these things are realized, Hoffman kiln will be one the most popular tourist attractions in the northern Kansai Region.