

HAGI • THE STORY OF THE CITRUS ORANGE

~ You can enjoy early summer of Hagi ten times as much! ~

Early in summer, the city of Hagi is covered with the sweet fragrance of the orange blossoms, and tinted with the golden fruit. With pleasure you surely rediscover the citrus orange and the streets of Hagi through the forgotten story of the history of the cultivation of the citrus orange and the relation between the citrus orange and the sightseeing of Hagi. The citrus orange has been one of Hagi's special products.

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The Hagi Museum

355 Horiuchi, Hagi City, Yamaguchi 758-0057

The Specially Created Exhibition

The Story of the Citrus Orange

The Origin of the Citrus Orange in Hagi

The citrus orange is one of Hagi's special products. To our disappointment, the original home of the citrus orange tree has been unknown to us. At present the seeds or the young trees raised from the seeds are thought to have been brought to Hagi in the early 1800's in the Edo period from Ohibi, Omishima, Nagato city, Yamaguchi prefecture. In the beginning, the fruit juice was used as vinegar. Later, people found that the fruit matured in the former year could be eaten deliciously. The citrus orange came to be called "Natsudaidai" because it was eatable in summer and got to be popular as fruit.



The Beginning of the Economic Cultivation

After the Meiji Restoration, samurai were no longer paid any salary from the domain. In the castle town of Hagi, they began to have difficulty in earning a living. It caused the economy of Hagi to be stagnant.

Takamasa Obata had been a samurai in the domain of Hagi and formerly served the domain as a domain official. He contributed greatly to the political and economical stability of the domain. He advised that big samurai premises with no master of the house should be turned into orange fields. Thanks to his efforts, samurai could overcome their hardships and Hagi's economy also improved. The economic cultivation, which began in 1876 (in the 9th year of Meiji) originated for the first time in Japan.



Takamasa Obata

The Citrus Orange Having Supported Hagi's Economy

About 10 years after the economic cultivation, the citrus orange brought to market in Osaka became very popular because they could be eaten in summer. They began to go on sale at a good price. The price of the three oranges to five was sometimes equivalent to one sho (=0,477 U.S. gallon) of rice. The yield of the oranges kept on increasing. The citrus oranges and fisheries supported Hagi's economy for a long time.



The Relation Between Mud Walls and the Citrus Orange

Hagi city has been highly related to mud walls and the citrus orange. Therefore, speaking of Hagi, the city is associated with “mud walls” and “the citrus orange.” This fine appearance of the city has been formed since the Meiji period. The citrus orange trees were planted in the samurai premises, but the wind caused some of the fruit to drop. The fruit needed to be protected against the wind. Around the samurai premises which were turned into the orange fields, mud walls and a tenement house were built. These facilities helped protect the fruit from dropping by the wind.



The Citrus Orange as Sightseeing Resources

In 1970's people began to have great interest in beautiful Japan, and they were eager to go sightseeing in search of rich nature, history and tradition, and delicate humane feelings. Young people liked to visit the area with the old look of houses and the place where they could come into touch with nature such as the sea and mountains, in a small group or alone. Above all, Hagi became popular as a castle town with the exciting appearance full of tradition. The citrus orange trees laden with fruit beyond half ruined mud walls have been a symbol of the castle town with a long history, and a beautiful sight dear to the heart of every Japanese.

