

Gas Museum

ガスミュージアム



Welcome to the Gas Museum. Here you can learn about how gas—now a common energy source for heat—first came to Japan and revolutionized the daily lives of the Japanese people. You can also see the many ways gas has been used over the years.

We hope you enjoy your visit!

The House of Gas Lamps

The House of Gas Lamps traces the history of gas lighting in Japan, from the discovery of gas in Europe to the popularization of gas lamps in households across the country. Let's take a look!

The “Wild Spirit”

People didn't always know gas was an energy source. When Belgian scientist Jan Baptist van Helmont first discovered that burning coal emitted gas in 1609, he called it a “wild spirit.” In 1840, Japanese chemist Youan Udagawa was researching the many uses of gas discovered by Dutch scientists and compiling these results. Udagawa created much of the chemistry vocabulary still used in Japan today.



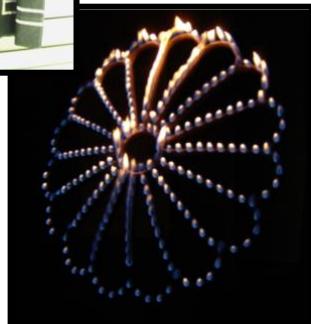
Udagawa's
Journal



Pelegrin's gas
pipe plan for
Tokyo



Tenshokata uniform.
Tenshokata were
responsible for gas
lamp maintenance.



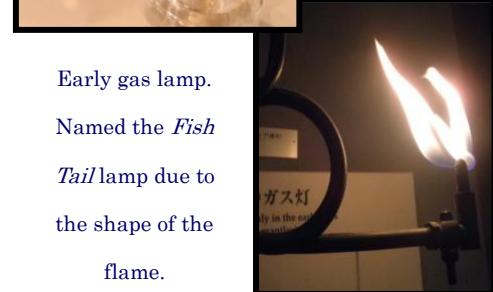
Chrysanthemum
lamp
(first shown in
Ueno in 1887)

Henri Pelegrin and the Japanese Gas Industry

The Japanese gas industry owes many thanks to French engineer Henri Pelegrin. Pelegrin studied the burgeoning gas industry in Shanghai before coming to Japan, and learned much about both the science and the business of gas. Upon arriving in Japan, he introduced this business structure and helped establish the Japanese gas industry. Under Pelegrin's guidance, Kaemon Takashima installed the first street lamp in Japan in Yokohama.



Lighting
used prior
to the gas
lamp.



Early gas lamp.
Named the *Fish Tail* lamp due to
the shape of the
flame.

Before gas street lamps came to Japan, people burned candles, wood, animal grease, etc, to battle the darkness. Many cities burned oil to light their streets, but with a controlled flame, a covering (via the mantle lamp), and a brighter light, the gas lamp proved to be a safer and more powerful technology. When the gas lamp first appeared, many people were astounded by its power. At first, gas lamps only lined the streets, but soon they could be found in theaters (allowing performances to go on later in the evening), shops, and even homes, freeing the country from the darkness of night.

The House of Gas for Life

The House of Gas for Life shows the many ways in which gas has been used through the years. You can see just how the technology used by families changed over time to develop into the ovens, heaters, and other gas-powered systems we use today.



1868-1904

Gas has started to become an energy source for heat, but isn't yet a popularized product. Only the wealthy own gas goods, such as this large cooker from a palatial residence.



1905-1934

Gas-powered heating and cooking (heater shown here) are becoming more popular, especially after the 1923 earthquake when there is a rapid growth in population and a shift toward the suburban lifestyle.



1935-1949

During wartime, restrictions on speech, food rationing, and a limited supply of material goods abounds. Families put up with these inconveniences, facing the limitation on gas use by using smaller heaters and cookers.



1950-1972

The post-war economic boom leads to a shift toward city life and an increased standard of living across Japan. A wide range of new gas products is introduced, including this bath heater.

1973-Present

After the 1970s oil shocks, gas began to switch from heavy oils to natural gasses. Many of the gas products we now use are powered by this earth-friendly energy source. To the left are three gas range cookers from different generations, allowing you to see just how much technology has changed.



Range Cookers

1930s-1960s-Present



Fun Facts

- Many of the gas lamps in the herb flower garden are Meiji-era lamps from Tokyo and Yokohama. These lamps, however, are not just from Japan. Some came from foreign countries, like England and Spain.
- While the museum buildings are now located in Kodaira, the buildings weren't originally from here. The House of Gas Lamps was originally the Tokyo Gas Hongo Branch Office, built in 1909, and the House of Gas for Life was the Tokyo Gas Senju Factory Meter Room, built in 1912. When these buildings were taken down, much of their structure was brought to Kodaira where the buildings were restored in order to host the Gas Museum. They are thus recognized as historical buildings in Tokyo.
- The organ in the House of Gas for Life (pictured above) is a gas organ. Make sure to listen to the videos of it being played in the museum!

Access

Higashi-Kurume Station (Seibu-Ikebukuro Line): Take the 21 Bus toward Musashikoganei. Get off at Gas Museum stop.

Hana-Koganei Station (Seibu-Shinjuku Line): Take the 21 Bus toward Higashi-Kurume. Get off at Gas Museum stop.

Musashi-Koganei (JR Chuo Line): Take the 21 Bus toward Higashi-Kurume. Get off at Gas Museum stop.

Kodaira Station (Seibu-Shinjuku Line): 20 minute walk

Hours

Tuesday-Sunday 10:00-17:00 (Admission till 16:00)
Closed on Mondays (if Monday is a public holiday, the museum will be closed the following day) and New Year's Eve & Day

Contact

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