

# Suzuki & Co.'s Towering Industrial Chimneys: Landmarks That Preside Over the Setouchi Region to This Day

## Red Brick Chimney: The Seven-month Long Undertaking in Yamaguchi Prefecture

The second remaining industrial chimney from this period was part of the Nippon Kinzoku Tokuyama Refinery located in Shunan, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The facility was originally known as the Suzuki & Co. Zinc Refinery. The massive chimney was constructed over the course of seven months for the purpose of smelting zinc. Later, Suzuki & Co. faced difficulties with securing the imported raw materials needed for the smelting process, and the refinery was closed in 1920. However, the land where the refinery stood became the site of the Tokuyama Oil Refinery operated by Suzuki & Co.'s subsidiary Teikoku Oil Co., Ltd. (later Asahi Oil Co., Ltd.). Following Suzuki & Co.'s bankruptcy, Asahi Oil merged with Showa Shell Sekiyu K.K. (present-day Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.).



The 72-meter chimney (while in operation)



The industrial chimney today

Today, the land belongs to Nippon Seiro Co., Ltd., a company that was established as a subsidiary of the South Manchuria Railway Company, Ltd. Nippon Seiro's creation was ordered by Jotaro Yamamoto, the then Chairman of the South Manchuria Railway Company. Yamamoto is the same businessman who partnered with Suzuki & Co.'s president Naokichi Kaneko to create Nippon Kayaku Seizo Co., Ltd. (present-day Nippon Kayaku Co., Ltd.).

With Nippon Seiro under Yamamoto's supervision, the company's choice to purchase the former refinery land may have been influenced by the connection between Yamamoto and Kaneko. Many landmarks indicating former Suzuki & Co. and Teikoku Oil facilities can still be found on the land now owned by Nippon Seiro.



Landmarks indicating Suzuki & Co. and Teikoku Oil former facilities on Nippon Seiro's property



On November 11, 1915, Naokichi Kaneko sent his Declaration of Three Kingdoms to Seiichi Takahata at Suzuki & Co.'s London office. The two towering refinery chimneys, which were built near the time this letter was sent, can be seen as symbols of the excitement and momentum that Suzuki & Co. experienced during this period.