



Going to America With a Broken Heart

**First Decade of the Twentieth Century: Amanohashidate,
on the Tango Peninsula, Japan**

For a distance of two and a half miles, pine trees form a canopy over what appears to be a bridge crossing the quiet waters of Miyazu Bay in Japan. This place of scenic beauty has been called Amanohashidate, or Bridge of Heaven, since ancient times, and it is mentioned in a famous poem composed by Koshikibu no Naishi (active early eleventh century):

大江山
いく野の道の
遠ければ
まだふみもみず
天橋立

*Ōe-yama
Ikuno no michi no
Tōkereba*

Mada fumi mo mizu
Amanohashidate

Distant is the road that goes
To Mt. Ōe and to Ikuno;
So I have not yet stepped upon,
Nor seen a letter from,
The Bridge of Heaven.

The Confucian scholar Ekiken Kaibara (1630–1714) visited Tango Province, where Amanohashidate was located, in 1689. He declared that the experience “was much like crossing a bridge over the sea” and that “naming Amanohashidate one of the three notable views of Japan [Nihon *sankei*] was appropriate.”

Thrusting into the Japan Sea at the northern end of Kyōto Prefecture is the Tango Peninsula. From the southeast shore of the peninsula a sandbank extends across Miyazu Bay—this is Amanohashidate.

Amanohashidate exemplifies the ideal Japanese landscape with its white sand, green pines, and blue waters of the sea. Surrounding it are several good locations that offer commanding views of this marvelous sight, but among them one is known only to locals. It is Mt. Kanabiki, which rises to the southwest of the commercial center of the town of Miyazu. This mountain, which from ancient times has been regarded as a sacred peak, is 869 feet in height. On a ridge near its summit is a boulder that thrusts upward with a mantra of the Nichiren Sect of Buddhism engraved on its side. For this reason, the mountain is most commonly known as Daimoku-san (Mantra Mountain) by the people of Miyazu.

Shortly after the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), a young couple was observed by the local residents strolling together along a path through the forest on the slopes of this Daimoku-san. He was named Sukeji Morikami; she was Hatsu Onizawa. Sukeji was the eldest son of a farming household in the neighborhood of Takiba, just downhill from the path through the forest. Born in 1886, he was eighteen or nineteen years of age. He had graduated from the local elementary school, afterward studying at an agricultural school and following



The scenic sandbank called Amanohashidate in Miyazu Bay, ca. 1925 (courtesy John Gregersen).

in the family business. Sukeji had a kindly face with downward slanting eyes, and although short in stature, he had a muscular physique.

Hatsu's home was located in the same neighborhood as Sukeji's, somewhat downhill from his. Five years younger than Sukeji, she was fourteen or fifteen years old. Tall and slender, she was a young woman with clear, unblemished features. If she indeed was fourteen years old, she was probably attending the Miyazu Girls Sewing School. When this school reorganized in 1906 with an expanded curriculum as the Yosa District Girls High School, it was the first such school for girls established locally. Hatsu matriculated there as a first-year student.

At the time, Takiba was part of Shirohigashi-mura, a village in Yosa District. The town of Miyazu, also in Yosa District, bordered the village. Miyazu was the castle town for the former Miyazu Domain under the feudal system. Through its business district the Ōte River flows from the south toward Miyazu Bay. About a mile and a half upriver, the Ōte is fed by a tributary, Hijiri Creek. Here, on the slopes above the Hijiri, Takiba is situated. Although the neighborhood shrine commands a fine view of the countryside, climbing farther up the slope soon puts one at Kanabiki no Taki, the picturesque waterfall after which the

neighborhood is named. Surrounded by ancient pines and cedars, water cascades in several streams over the face of a rocky outcropping nearly 130 feet in height, sending spray billowing into the air. The coolness experienced here beside the pool beneath the cascade is delightful in summer, and the site is enjoyed as a place of relaxation and recreation that is well known in the area.

Taking the path to the right just before reaching the waterfall leads one past Mt. Kanabiki and soon to an open area. When Sukeji Morikami was much younger, this had been an excellent site for wrestling and other activities that he and the other children of the neighborhood enjoyed. From here the young couple apparently strolled deeper into the forest, delaying their return home until quite late. Hatsu's family became so worried at their tardiness that they considered calling in a *kitoshi* (a kind of shaman) to consult on the matter.

Although the two young people had been friends since childhood, in those days, young women had fewer freedoms than their male counterparts, and the eyes of the world could be a harsh judge of even minor deviations in behavior. Around the same time a boy at the middle school in Miyazu had been punished simply for accompanying a girl on a walk.

The episode probably gave Sukeji and Hatsu, who were mindful of what others might say, reason for concern. As a result, Sukeji asked for Hatsu's hand in marriage. He was well aware that there were others who had feelings for Hatsu and considered her quite attractive. Because of this he decided to act quickly and ask her to marry him before it was too late. Sadly, Hatsu's father, a master carpenter by trade, opposed the match on the basis of Sukeji's occupation as a farmer. In the end, Sukeji was turned down, his hopes shattered.

Seeking His Fortune in America

Not long afterward, a man living in the area approached the broken-hearted Sukeji and began talking to him about emigration abroad. The man said, "A friend of mine is raising pineapples in America," adding, "Maybe he could use you. You could come over." The man's friend had started a colonization project that was bringing colonists from Japan to