

Rebuilt Old Shimbashi Station to Open on 10 April 2003

East Japan Railway Culture Foundation (EJRCF) has rebuilt an accurate replica of the Old Shimbashi Station, a two-storey timber-frame stone-clad building designed by the American architect R. P. Bridgens that was destroyed by fire immediately after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. The original station was the Tokyo terminus for Japan's first 29-km railway line opened between Tokyo and Yokohama in 1872. With subsequent expansion of the nation's railway network, it was the starting point for the Tokaido main line (linking Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe) until 1914 when Tokyo (Central) Station was opened. The old Shimbashi station was then renamed Shiodome Station and became Tokyo's main freight terminal until it was closed in 1986. The abandoned 22-hectare site was sold to the private sector as part of the JNR privatization and has now been reborn as a huge business, shopping and residential complex called *Sio-site*. An archaeological excavation prior to the redevelopment revealed the old station remains; they were designated as an historic site by the government and it was decided to rebuild the station on its original location as a memorial to its important role in Japan's modern history.



Rebuilt Old Shimbashi Station standing among modern offices in the redeveloped *Sio-site* (EJRCF)



Newspaper photograph of Shimbashi Station just before its opening in 1872 (Yokohama Archives of History)



Part of the original station foundations can be seen through a floor window in the newly rebuilt Old Shimbashi Station. (EJRCF)



Overview of excavated remains of Shimbashi Station early 1990s. The dimensions of the new building were determined based on an accurate survey of these remains and 3D computer analysis of period photographs of the original station building including the above photograph. (Tokyo Archaeological Research Center)



A 7-meter length of the original track has been built using period double-headed rails seated in reproduction chairs on new timber sleepers. The first 4 meters from the wooden buffer and Mile Marker Zero show how the ballast was filled up to the rail heads in the early days. (EJRCF)



This artist's impression shows the Railway History Exhibition Hall in one of the upper floors of the station building. A café-restaurant forms a large part of the other facilities. (EJRCF)

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Hiroshige's Images of Shimbashi Station

Although photography was not common in Japan when the first railway line was opened in 1872, we can enjoy some colourful images thanks to the remaining wood-block prints of artists including Hiroshige III who is especially famous for his realism. Some of his works like those below were used to determine the stone and exterior colour of the rebuilt Old Shimbashi Station.

Shimbashi Station opening ceremony on 14 October 1872
35.5 x 73.5 cm
(Minato Library)



Loading freight wagons in station yard with steam train standing at platform
37 x 75 cm
(Transportation Museum)

Japanese and foreigners in various fashionable dress styles waiting to board the train
36 x 72 cm
(Minato Library)



Busy station square with train arriving at platform
37 x 72 cm
(Modern Transportation Museum)

