

New Japanese Railway Scenery 3



JR East's Series *Kiba* 58 DMU running near Uzen Matsuoka Station on snowy Yonesaka Line in northern Honshu. The line was first opened in 1926 between Yonezawa and Imaizumi (23 km) in Yamagata Prefecture. In 1931, Sakamachi–Echigo Shimoseki section (11 km) in Niigata Prefecture and the Imaizumi–Tenoko section in Yamagata Prefecture were opened. Further gradual extension continued until 1936, when the whole line (90.7 km) was completed. There used to be direct express services via this line between Sendai and Niigata, but traffic declined with the growth of motor transport. Today, JR East runs only five trains in each direction serving the whole line, with additional five on the Yonezawa end. One of the whole-line trains is a Yonezawa–Niigata direct rapid service, a descendant of the former Sendai–Niigata express services
 (Photo: M.Mashima Photo Office)



The photograph shows people dressed as 16th-century *samurai* warriors for Uesugi Festival at Yonezawa City in Yamagata Prefecture. The festival starts from 29 April, as the commemoration of the famous warrior lord Uesugi Kenshin (1530–78), with the so-called *Musba Gyoretsu*, a procession of warriors in the costume of those days. The reproduction of the Battles of Kawanakajima takes place on 3 May with about 700 disguised warriors. Each year, there are more than 50 thousands spectators to observe the battle. The Battles of Kawanakajima between Uesugi Kenshin (then based at today's Joetsu City in Niigata Prefecture) and Takeda Shingen (1521–73, based at today's Kofu City in Yamanashi Prefecture) was one of the most severe fightings in Japanese history. The five major battles took place in 1553, 1555, 1557, 1561 and 1564. The best known and the severest among them was fought on 10 September 1561. The battles started after Shingen conquered Shinano province (today's Nagano Prefecture) and feudal lords of the territory subsequently turned to Kenshin for help. In 1564, it is said that Shingen and Kenshin met for the fifth and final time on the plain of Kawanakajima. In 1601, the descendant of Uesugi Kenshin was ordered to move to Yonezawa by the Tokugawa Shogunate.

(Photo: Yonezawa City Commerce and Tourism Section)

