

Kurume History Walks

No.32 Sakamoto Hanjiro House Sakamoto Hanjiro Seika 坂本繁二郎生家

This house is the only samurai residence existing in our city and was designated a Municipal Cultural Property. Sakamoto Hanjiro (1882-1969), a nationally renowned painter, was born and raised there.

It was opened to the public in 2010 after renovation work of four years.



Completion drawing (The restoration was finished in 2010)



In 1910, Hanjiro sold his house to earn a living in Tokyo. On the back of the photo (right) he wrote that that was the commemoration of parting with it.

In 1909

Hanjiro was born to an ex-samurai class household in Kyomachi, Kurume in 1882. His father was a retainer of Kurume Domain. During his elementary school days, Aoki Shigeru* and he were in the same class. Since then, they had been lifelong friends as well as good rivals.

Hanjiro went up to Tokyo at the age of twenty. He built up his position in the art world and took part of the founding of the Nika Association, which is still one of large independent art groups. At thirty-nine, he went to France. After returning to Japan, he came back to Kurume and lived in Yame. He received the Order of Culture at seventy-four and died at eighty-seven in 1969.

*Aoki Shigeru (1882-1911): Painter of *Youga*-style (Western-style). He had left behind outstanding works such as "Umi no Sachi", "Wadatsumi no Iroko no Miya", which both were designated National Important Cultural Properties.



His last name, Sakamoto 坂本 appears upside down. At that time, the name of homeowners and facilities on the map was written toward the gate or the entrance.

House of the Sakamoto

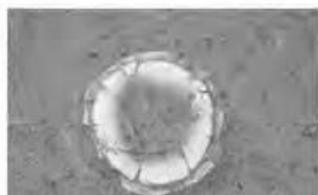
Map of castle town during Tempo Era (1831-1845)

History of Sakamoto (坂本) Family

Originally from Settsu Province (today's Osaka), the Sakamoto family followed their lord Tanaka Yoshimasa, who came to govern Chikugo Province in 1601. But the Tanaka family ended in 1620. Then 25 years later, Sakamoto Hanbee Yoshimasa was taken into the service of Kurume Domain's new lord.

Location of the house - Sakamoto Hanjiro Seika

His family's land was about 1500 square meters and the house was 32.7m long by 45.5m deep.



An Enatsubo* was found from under the floor of the entrance.

*There was a custom that when a child was born, the placenta in a ceramic jar was buried at a frequented place to pray for the healthy growth.



Arranged roof tiles and pebbles on the ground in front of the entrance.



▲Sketch of the house in 1919's according to the result of the research



Passage with arranged roof tiles



Traces of the foundation stones which was removed.

Overview

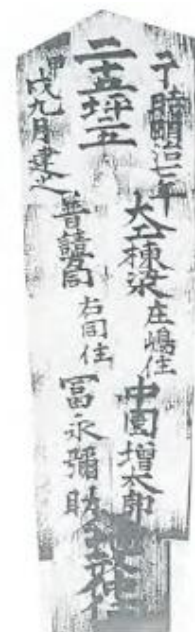
Hanjiro got married in 1910, and he moved to Tokyo with his mother. Then, their neighbor, the Yamada family, bought his house and maintained it until they donated it to Kurume City in 2002. It is a two-story wooden house which is composed of two buildings: one with a straw-thatched roof and the other with a tiled roof.

There is a sketch of the house drawn in the 1920s with some points added according to the memory of Hanjiro's wife. The entrance, the earthen floor, and the tearoom don't exist today, but its basic form as a samurai house remains. It was divided into the living space (living room, living-dining room, and kitchen) and the receiving space (reception room and anteroom).

Incidentally, Shigeru stayed at the tearoom for three months. They drew pictures on the sliding screen which still exist (photo on the next page).

Research and restoration work

The restoration work started in 2006, and the house was open to the public four years later. We studied it during the restoration to the original form of the time when Hanjiro went to Tokyo at the age of twenty in 1902. As a result of the research, we found many things as follows:



Wooden Tag with the names of carpenters and the construction year



Sakamoto Hanjiro House just before restoration



Restoration work tour



Attic



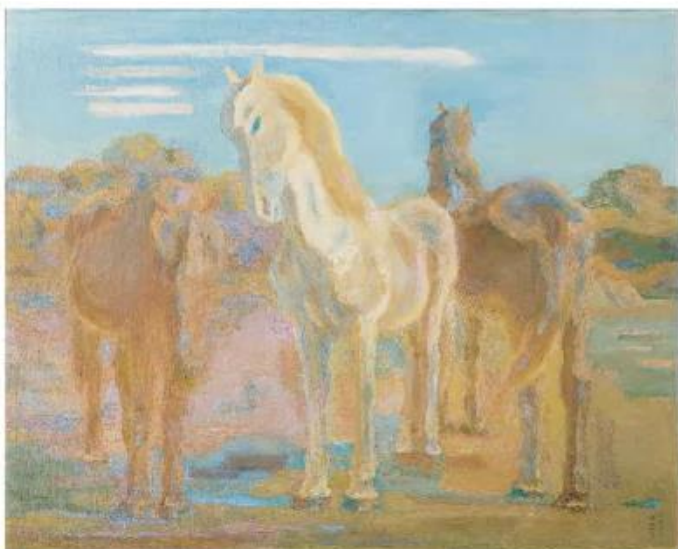
Research of building materials



Wall



Sliding screen painting, seemingly painted by Hanjiro



Three Grazing Horses (*Hoboku Sanba*)

- The house was constructed in three phases: first the reception room and anteroom, next the meeting room, and then the kitchen.
- A wooden tag (photo on the previous page) was found in the kitchen. It was dated from 1874. We estimate that the rest of the house was built before that year.
- The old paper documents of which the one mentioned the Boshin war (a national revolution) in 1868 were discovered from the wall.
- The trace of the foundation stones of the tearoom, where Shigeru stayed, were excavated.
- The passage around the house was paved with the arranged roof tiles. The pebbles for rain drainage were spread under the eaves.
- An Enatsubo pot was buried under the floor of the entrance. There used to be a custom of putting a newborn baby's placenta in a ceramic jar and burying it at a place where people often pass, for praying for healthy growth.

For renovating this house, the old construction materials were reused and assembled by a traditional technique. But some modern facilities were also installed so that anybody could use them for various activities.



ACCESS

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