

Utsunomiya Castle disappeared

The majority of the buildings in Utsunomiya Castle were destroyed by fire in the Boshin War. The moat was gradually filled in, and at present there is almost nothing and no remembrance of the past. However, the fact that Utsunomiya Castle played the major role of evolving Utsunomiya for 800 years should not be forgotten.



The moat and earthen walls in 1935

An excavation of the Utsunomiya Castle

An excavation of the Utsunomiya Castle main enclosure ruins has been taking place since 1989. The location of the moat and its width and depth is discovered, and also presumed the location of the gate and scaffold.



The ruins of moat the Edo period



Excavated structure remains



Massive quantity of excavated earthenware

Utsunomiya Castle revived to modern times

Utsunomiya Castle Park is where the Utsunomiya Castle main enclosure was located in the Edo period. The earthen walls, moat, scaffold, and roofed mud wall have been restored based on the original position, scale, and structures.



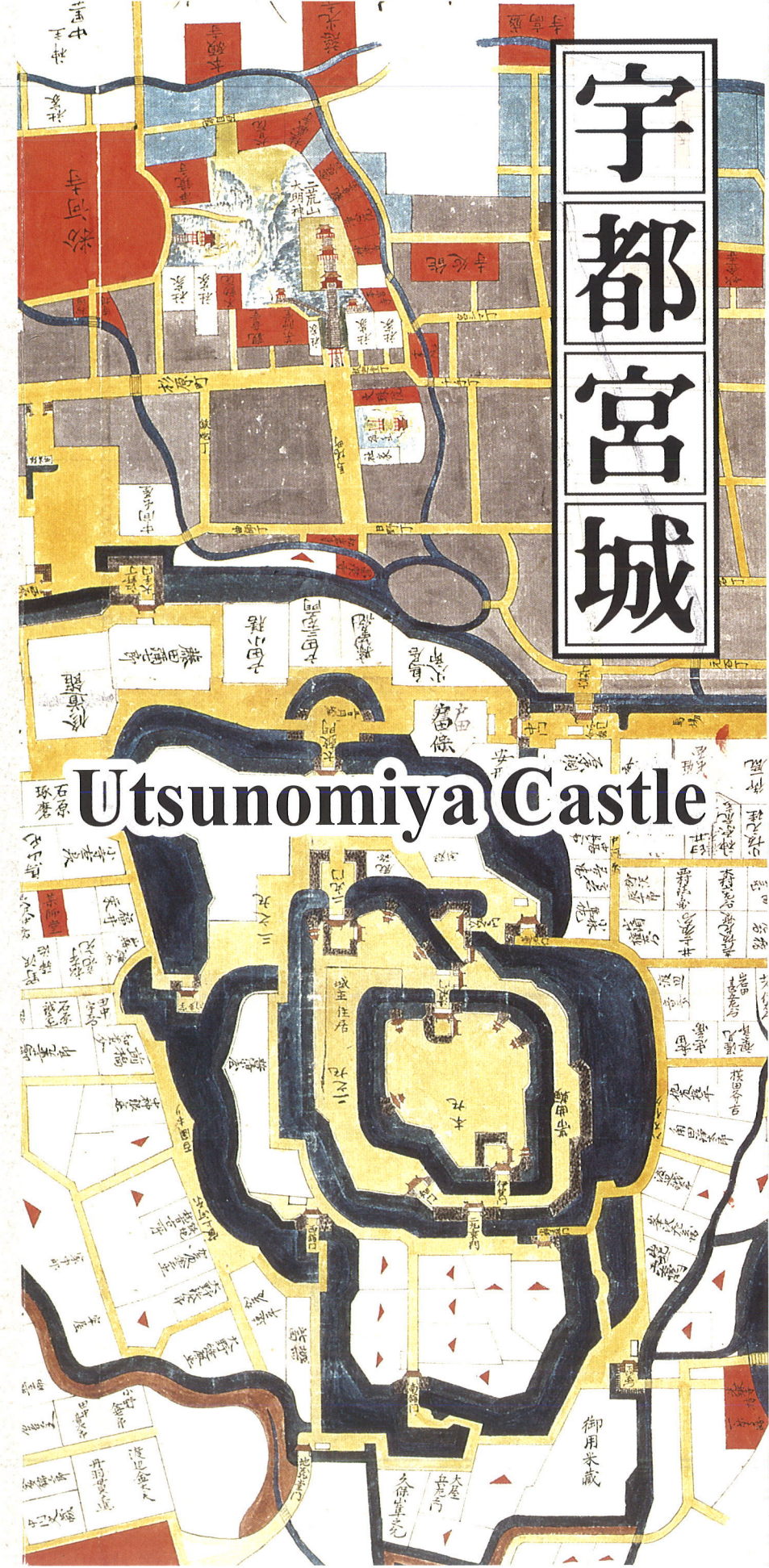
Present Utsunomiya Castle Park

Major events of Utsunomiya Castle

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| Heian period | 11th century Utsunomiya Castle was built around this time. |
| Kamakura period | 1189 Minamoto no Yoritomo stopped Utsunomiya during his advancing troops to Oshu. *Around this time Utsunomiya Yoritsuna (Rencho) was involved in the establishment of Ogura Hyakunin Isshu. |
| | 1341 The Southern Court troops occupied Tobiyama Castle, coming into conflict with the Northern Court of Utsunomiya Castle. |
| Murōmachi period | 1368 Uesugi Noriaki, in charge of the Kanto region, attacked Utsunomiya Castle. |
| | 1380 Utsunomiya Mototsuna fought Oyama Yoshimasa at Mōbara and was killed in battle. |
| | 1423 Utsunomiya Mochitsuna was attacked, defeated, and killed by the Kamakura kubo (shogun), Ashikaga Mochiuji. |
| | 1455 Utsunomiya Tomotsuna was defeated by the Kōga kubo, Ashikaga Shigeuji, surrendered Utsunomiya Castle. |
| | 1526 Utsunomiya Tadatsuna fought Yuki Masatomo at Saruyama, but lost Utsunomiya Castle to his uncle, Haga Okitsuna. |
| | 1539 Yuki Masatomo and Oyama Takatomo invaded Utsunomiya Castle. |
| | 1549 Utsunomiya Hisatsuna fought Nasu Takasuke and died in battle at Sotomezaka. Utsunomiya Hirotsumi went away to Mōka and then Mibu Tsunatake occupied Utsunomiya Castle. |
| | 1557 Utsunomiya Hirotsumi received support from Satake Yoshiaki and returned to Utsunomiya Castle. |
| | 1584-1585 Hojō Ujinao attacked Utsunomiya Castle. *Around this time Utsunomiya Kunitsuna relocated to Tatesan. |
| | 1586 Minagawa Hiroteru and Mibu Yoshitake attacked Utsunomiya Castle setting fire to the castle. |
| Sengoku period | 1590 Toyotomi Hideyoshi stayed in Utsunomiya Castle, and conducted Utsunomiya post war measures. |
| | 1597 Utsunomiya Kunitsuna's territory was confiscated. |
| | 1598 Gamo Hideyuki became the castle owner and carried out repair improvements on the castle and castle town. |
| Azuchi-Mōyama period | 1600 Tokugawa Hidetada set up camp in Utsunomiya Castle and headed for Sekigahara via Nakasendo. |
| | 1617 Tokugawa Hidetada stayed at Utsunomiya Castle during his shōgun visit to Nikkō. (The first time of shōgun's visit to Nikkō and there were 19 times until the end of the Edo period since then.) |
| Edo period | 1619 Honda Masazumi became the castle owner and carried out major modifications on the castle and castle town. |
| | 1622 Honda Masazumi's territory was confiscated and he was exiled to Dewa. |
| | 1843 Tokugawa Ieyoshi, stayed at Utsunomiya Castle during his shōgun visit to Nikkō. (The last shōgun visit to Nikkō) |
| | 1868 In the Boshin War the buildings inside the castle were destroyed by fire. |

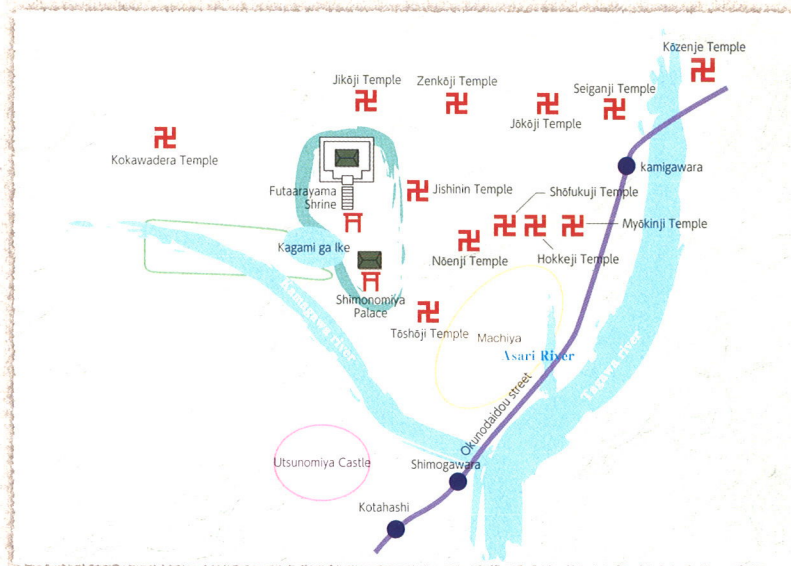
Utsunomiya City Board of Education Culture Division

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Utsunomiya Castle is said to have built in the late Heian period. It was the castle where the Utsunomiya clan resided since the Kamakura period. The Utsunomiya clan used this castle as a base for their operations, conducting rituals at Futaarayama Shrine, and ruling over the surrounding area.

The appearance of the castle at the time is not well known, but Futaarayama Shrine was located to the north, and Utsunomiya Castle in the south, across the waterfront, called Kagami ga Ike. During festivals and other events, it is likely that the castle owner headed for the shrine from the castle in a dignified manner.



Utsunomiya in the middle ages

From the Nanbokucho period to the Sengoku period, all of Japan was caught up in war, and Utsunomiya Castle and the surrounding area were often the arena for battles. Around the end of the Sengoku period, there was even a time when the castle town was burnt down in an attack from the Gohojo clan.

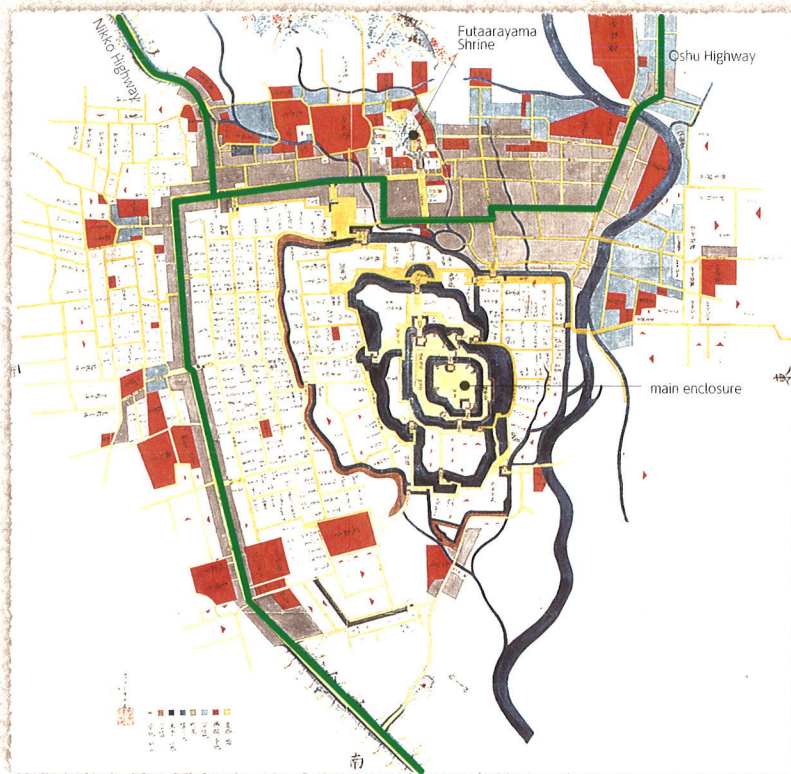
To prepare for the attack from enemies, Utsunomiya Castle was a castle which had a strong defense with its deep moat and high earthen walls (banks).



The Sengoku period moat and dug-standing pillar buildings

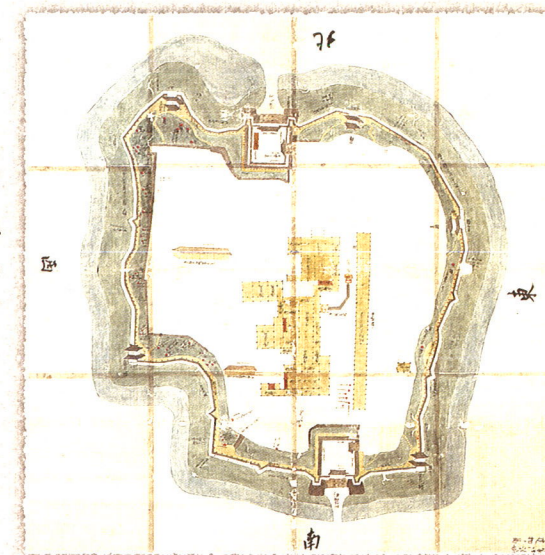
The Utsunomiya clan, whom ruled Utsunomiya for approximately 500 years, was destroyed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. During the Edo period, the castle became the residence of fudai daimyo, among them Honda Masazumi carried out of castle and castle town renovations. The framework of present central Utsunomiya City is said to have been created at this time.

In the Edo period, Utsunomiya Castle was a large castle, about 1km east to west and north to south. There was no castle tower, and only a portion of stone wall was placed, but there were many kinds of facilities lined up, including the castle owner's estate and a two-story scaffold.



Utsunomiya Castle interior and exterior drawing

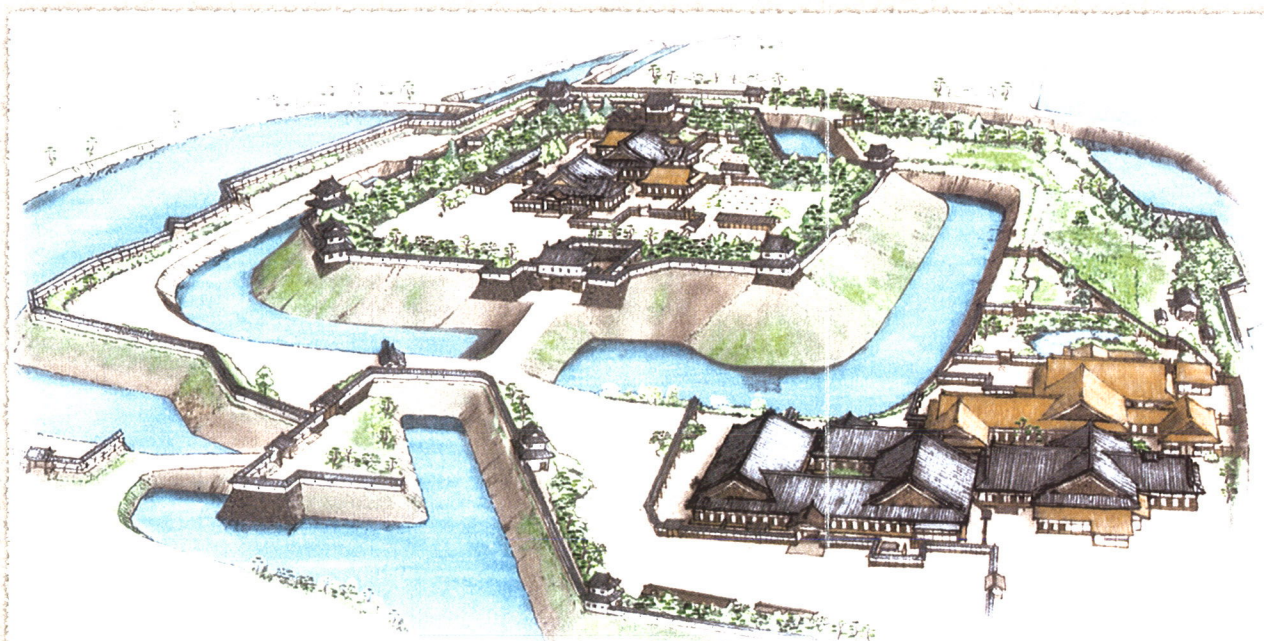
Utsunomiya Castle's greatest feature is that it was where the shoguns stayed during their visit to Nikko. The shogun's procession had a considerable number of people in it, so the castle and castle town were quite bustling with activity. In pictorial drawings that still remain today, there are some drawing of large buildings in the main enclosure, which are said to be the palace where the shogun stayed. There were 19 times of shogun's visit to Nikko in total.



Shogun family lodging facility in Utsunomiya Castle main enclosure drawing

What is the "Suspended ceiling incident?"

It was an incident that Utsunomiya Castle owner Honda Masazumi planned to assassinate the shogun returning from his visit to Nikko by making a false ceiling that would collapse. Of course this is not a true fact. The incident was created by Masazumi who was suddenly taken away the Utsunomiya Castle, and being exiled to Dewa (Akita Prefecture). Thereafter it became the subject of stories and plays, and spread nationwide.



Utsunomiya Castle estimated drawing in the Edo period

This is the view of the main enclosure and outer areas from the north. The area surrounded by the moat in the upper half of the drawing is the main enclosure, with the guest palace where the shogun stayed. To the lower right is the outer area palace, a building where the castle owner resided and the official functions and other events took place.