**Shōwa-era Restoration**

**The First in 350 Years**

The most extensive repair work in the history of Himeji Castle began in 1956 and lasted almost eight years. Known as the Shōwa-era Restoration, after the Shōwa imperial era (1926–1989), this massive project involved the complete dismantling and reassembly of the main keep.

Many historical and architectural discoveries were made along the way, thanks to inscriptions left on parts of the structure by its original builders. From 1956 to 1958, the entire keep was dismantled under a giant roofed scaffold. Workers then spent several years cleaning, repairing, and—where necessary—replacing the building’s posts, beams, and other components, before painstakingly reassembling the entire structure. The small adjoining keeps, connecting galleries, and kitchen were repaired as well. By the end of the project in 1964, the equivalent of over 250,000 working-days had been spent on the project.

**Timeline of the Shōwa-era Restoration**

1934 - Restoration work begins. The collapse of part of the West Bailey gallery after years of inadequate upkeep demonstrates the need for a major overhaul. Work is suspended after only a few years by the outbreak of World War II.

1945 - With the end of the war, the black camouflage cover that had protected the castle from air raids is removed. The castle becomes a symbol of postwar reconstruction, standing tall amid the rubble of the surrounding city.

1949 - The White Heron Castle Restoration Association is formed to lobby the national government to renew the restoration work.

1950 - Work resumes, beginning with the towers and earthen walls of the Second Bailey and including the Hishi Gate.

1956 - Restoration of the keep begins. The main keep is entirely dismantled, repaired, and reassembled.

1964 - Work is completed, and the keeps are opened to the public for the first time in eight years, attracting more than 1.7 million visitors from in and around the city.

Scaffolding

Timber: more than 10,000 Japanese cypress beams (each at least four *sun*, or 12.12 centimeters, in diameter)

Bolts: 120 tons

Material Delivery:

A 200-meter wooden ramp

Construction Work

Dismantling, repair, and reassembly

Time required: 8 years (1956–1964)

Himeji Castle protected from air raids with black camouflage

Collapse of the connecting gallery of the West Bailey

The main keep with its roofed scaffolding

The main keep with its scaffolding and ramp for material delivery

Intact amid a city in ruins, Himeji Castle became known as the “miracle castle.”