**Suenomatsuyama Hill and Oki no I**

These two sites, located just one street away from each another, have both featured prominently in the work of some of Japan’s greatest poets, including the haiku master Matsuo Basho (1644–1694).

Suenomatsuyama is a hill with several towering pine trees, some over 400 years old, which shelter rows of tombstones at their base. This contrast, a beautiful view with reminders of the impermanence of human life, is said to have brought Basho to tears. His thoughts are immortalized in his literary collection *Oku no hosomichi* (The Narrow Road to the Deep North).

Nearby Oki no I, with large rocks and small pine trees rising out of a pond, resembles a tiny island in Matsushima Bay. It is thought to be an early example of a man-made sightseeing spot. It was long protected by the Date family who once ruled the Sendai domain (which encompassed present-day Miyagi Prefecture), and the fourth Sendai lord, Date Tsunamura (1659–1719), even appointed local village leaders as protectors and caretakers of this spot so beloved by poets.