**Eight Views of Omi: Evening Bell at Miidera Temple**

Miidera Temple at the foot of Mt. Nagara is one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Otsu. Miidera has a tumultuous history and was destroyed by fire on multiple occasions, but rebuilt each time. Among the many designated Important Cultural Properties at the temple is the *bansho* (evening temple bell). It is considered one of the “three best bells” in Japan, and its sound was the inspiration for one of the Eight Views of Omi.

Rather than depict the bell itself, woodblock artists including Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) instead painted the temple grounds from a distance, evoking the sound of the bell ringing out through the valley. In the Hoeido edition of Hiroshige’s print, the farms in the foreground and the mountains in the distance are more visible than the temple itself.

Today, there are shops and houses in place of the farmland, but a more noticeable difference is the Lake Biwa Canal. It was dug half a century after Hiroshige produced his print and connects Otsu to Kyoto by a system of water channels including tunnels under the mountains. A number of cherry trees line the canal and the road leading to the temple and turn the neighborhood a brilliant pink in spring.