

Nagaya-mon (“Longhouse Gates”)

In the Kaga domain (feudal-era Ishikawa centered on Kanazawa) during the Edo period (1603–1867), samurai residences were surrounded by earthen walls (*tsuchi-kabe*) with one or more entrance gates. A samurai’s rank determined the type of entrance gate he was allowed, and one type was a structure called a *nagaya-mon* (“longhouse gate”—basically a gate set into a range of building). The *nagaya-mon* was permitted for samurai of middle rank and above and contained living space.

The *nagaya-mon* owes its name to its form, which resembled a traditional Japanese *nagaya* (literally “longhouses”—a term applied to long ranges of ancillary buildings and row houses), but with a transverse passage through it incorporating a gate. Servants often lived within this structure, and it was their duty to guard the entrance to the residence and closely monitor who came and went.

It is believed that the Takada family’s *nagaya-mon* was originally built between 1861 and 1864. It is now owned by the city of Kanazawa and has been restored to its original layout based on traces of changes visible on the faces of its old posts. On either side of the entrance gate are servants’ quarters and a stable. The wood-floored servants’ quarters contain a built-in hearth, while the stable was constructed with a floor of rammed earth (*doma*).

At that time, the only style permitted for constructing the stone walls to either side of the *nagaya-mon* was the *nozura-zumi* (“field-stone bedding”) style, in which stones are roughly laid without cutting or shaping them. The style is easily distinguished by its uneven lines. However, in practice, this rule was not strictly obeyed. The walls of the restored *nagaya-mon* have decorative facing blocks set in them carved in the shape of turtle shells to show how they would have looked during the Edo period, when they were built with carefully laid blocks of cut stone (a style known as *kiri-ishi-zumi*).