

Shimizu Family House

During the Edo period (1603–1867), *ashigaru* (foot soldiers) typically lived in long ranges of tenement housing called *nagaya*. They had little choice but to endure cramped living conditions. When compared to this standard that existed throughout the country, however, *ashigaru* in the Kaga domain (feudal-era Ishikawa centered on Kanazawa) enjoyed more comfortable quarters: each family was given a completely detached house with its own garden.

The Shimizu Family House, like the Takanishi Family House next door, is one of the oldest remaining *ashigaru* houses in Kanazawa. It was moved to this location in the 1990s to become a part of the Kanazawa City Ashigaru Museum. Until it was moved, descendants of the original *ashigaru* owners continued to live there. Its previous location was in the residential district assigned to *ashigaru* that served as “fast feet” (*hikyaku*). *Hikyaku* were couriers known for their speed and unique running style.

The Shimizu Family House is an excellent example of *ashigaru* houses of the time. Visitors can experience something of the life of these foot soldiers by walking through the rooms of the house. The interior is divided into a guest reception area comprising of an entryway (*genkan*) with an entrance hall (*genkan no ma*), and a formal reception room (*ashiki*), and private areas reserved for family use. These were the kitchen (*nagashi*), living room (*cha no ma*, literally “tea room”), and sleeping room/work room (*nando* and *kagi no ma*).

More information on *ashigaru* life and residences is on display next door, in the Takanishi Family House.