

The Mohri Principal Residence was built in the early twentieth century just as Japan was establishing itself as one of the world's great powers. As a result, the house incorporates a range of modern features that were highly unusual for the time.

### **New Technologies**

The innovations start literally as soon as you arrive. For example, the great gate at the foot of the drive is built on a cement foundation—cement was still a novel material in Japan at the time. The house was also the first in the region to have a telephone, which is why the last four digits of the residence's telephone number even today are 0001. An American-made home generator provided electricity, and there was a boiler to provide hot water.

### **Unusual Imports**

In sharp contrast to the closed country under the shogunate, post-1868 Japan was very much plugged into the global trade network. This is reflected in the fittings of the Mohri Principal Residence. For example, all the lighting fixtures (which incorporate the family's floral crest) were custom made in Germany.

### **Extravagances and Experiments**

Plate glass was still a novelty in Taisho period (1912–26) Japan. Having a lot of glass windows was thus one way to project wealth and status. The two garden-facing floors of the guest wing of the Mohri Principal Residence have no less than fifteen windows. And in a very unusual—and rather impractical—touch, the *amado* shutters that are supposed to protect from wind and rain are actually inside rather than outside the windows! A close look at the glass of the windows reveals a certain number of bumps, bubbles, and other irregularities. This is probably because the glass was handmade—first blown, then rolled out flat—rather than today's machine-made float glass.

### **Huge Rocks and Ancient Trees**

An enormous rock sits beside a Japanese sago palm in the inner garden of the guest wing. For practical reasons, this rock had to be installed first, and then the house built around it! The unpapered sliding doors in the guest wing are made of Yakusugi, Japanese Yakushima cedar from trees over 1,000 years old.