

Architectural History and Overview of Takayama-sha Sericulture School

Takayama-sha Sericulture School was the brainchild of one man, the visionary silkworm producer, educator, and entrepreneur Takayama Chōgorō (1830–1886). He created the *seion-iku* method of raising silkworms and began formally teaching students by 1884. The school was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2014, as part of Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites. The Takayama-sha buildings are a reminder of Japan's "Silk Revolution," showcasing the key role that people from Gunma Prefecture played in developing the sericulture and silk-reeling technologies that still underpin the global silk industry today.

Takayama Chōgorō was passionate about his research into improving the quality and volume of silkworm cocoons. His *seion-iku* method required a redesign of the traditional nurseries used to raise silkworms. To make it easier to control humidity, temperature, and ventilation, braziers were built into the floor and small monitor roofs were built into the ridge of the roof. Large sliding doors took the place of exterior walls making it easy to clean the nursery and keep it cool.

For many years, the buildings on the site of the Takayama family's ancestral home were used as training facilities. Chōgorō accepted students from all across the Japanese Empire, including the Korean Peninsula. He dispatched teachers across the empire, and his system became the standard throughout most of Asia. Today his home has been fully restored. The two-story nursery that Chōgorō built and the architecturally significant Nagayamon Gate have been beautifully preserved, ensuring that Takayama Chōgorō's legacy will inspire future generations.