

Watanabe House

The Watanabe House is the only remaining samurai residence within the Ginzancho settlement, which during the Edo period (1603–1867) was inside the silver mine's fenced-off central zone. Named after its then owner when it was designated a National Historic Site in 2002, the house was built in 1811 for the Sakamoto family, who were mid-ranking officials charged with the management of the mine. Sakamoto Seizaemon, the first head of the family, was hired in 1604 by the magistrate's office—the local representative of the central government, which exercised direct authority over Iwami Ginzan during the Edo period—and his position was inherited by his descendants, some of whom also operated mining tunnels of their own. Their estate features many of the typical characteristics of a samurai residence, including an imposing gate and fence, a garden between the house and the street, and two entrances: the smaller one on the left was for residents, while the large doors on the right, which lead up to two tatami-mat rooms, were opened only on special occasions and for important guests such as the magistrate and other officials of superior rank. Behind the main house is a two-story *kura* storehouse and a modern building. The Watanabe House is open to the public on some occasions.