

Kanzeonji Temple

Kanzeonji Temple is an Omori landmark, having watched over the town from its central hilltop location for centuries. The history of this Shingon Buddhist sanctuary goes back to medieval times, but the date the temple was founded is unknown, as Kanzeonji's buildings and records were lost in a fire in 1800 that destroyed most of the town. The temple was one of the three religious sites visited by the Omori magistrate—the central government's representative at Iwami Ginzan during the Edo period (1603–1867)—every New Year to pray for the prosperity of the silver mine. This indicates that Kanzeonji enjoyed the favor and protection of the magistrate's office. Rebuilding the temple after the fire of 1800 took time, however: the current main hall dates to the latter half of the 1800s, and Kanzeonji's distinctive red gate was erected on its present site only in 1878, when it was relocated from the nearby Seisuiji, another prestigious temple. The gate is flanked by a pair of stone warrior statues that were added in 1980. At the bottom of the staircase that leads up the hill to the gate is a covered stone slab dedicated to Yakushi, the buddha of medicine and healing. This stone is believed to have the power to heal eye ailments. Higher up the hill behind the slab stand many small Buddhist statues, placed there to watch over passersby on the street.