

Former Aoki Shūsuke Residence

Aoki Shūsuke (1803–1863) was a distinguished physician during the later years of the Edo period (1603–1867). Born the son of a village doctor on the island of Ōshima, in the Inland Sea, he was a practitioner of both Western and traditional Chinese medicine.

Aoki began his studies under the Chōshū domain doctor Nōmi Tōan (1794–1872), who taught him traditional Chinese medicine. At the age of 30, Aoki moved to Edo (what is now Tokyo) to study Dutch medicine and language in Fukagawa under the physician Tsuboi Shindō (1795–1848). Thereafter, he continued his studies in Nagasaki and, in 1851, he was appointed doctor to Mōri Takachika (1819–1871), lord of Chōshū domain. His brother Kenzō (1815–1870) was also a noted physician, and together the two men led a vaccination program against smallpox and cholera in Chōshū.

In 1859, Shūsuke rebuilt the family home in Hagi to receive medical students from all over Japan. Today, the house has been preserved as part of Hagi's historical heritage and displays memorabilia of the Aoki family, including some silver coins (*ichibu-gin*) discovered in a warehouse and inscribed with “Ao Ken,” for Aoki Kenzō.

There is also a display on the life of Kenzō's adopted son, Aoki Shūzō (1844–1914). Known as Viscount Aoki after the creation of the peerage system in the Meiji era (1868–1912), Shūzō was Japan's third foreign minister and Japan's ambassador to the United States from 1906 to 1908.