

## Ōyama Family Residence

The Ōyama Family Residence was the home of a rich landowner and is an excellent example of a high-status Akita farmhouse from the mid-1800s. The house was designated a Tangible Cultural Property in 1973 and has a number of interesting architectural features. One of these is the grass growing along the central ridge of the roof. The turf lengthens the roof's lifespan by absorbing rainfall that would otherwise seep through the gap where the sides of the roof meet. The home also contains an indoor stable.

The Ōyama residence is an L-shaped structure built in the *chūmon-zukuri* style—a design marked by one or more side wings (*chūmon*) connected by outer passageways to the central rooms. The residence has three sections, and their arrangement reflects the strict class structure of the Edo period (1603–1867). One section was for the servants and farm workers, who slept above the stable. The central rooms were for the family and included a room for receiving guests. In the *chūmon* located along the right side, a separate set of rooms was kept in readiness for use by the lord of nearby Hiyama Castle, who stayed there a few times each year while traveling. The *chūmon* has its own entrance, an honor accorded to guests of high status.

When the house was occupied and fires were lit in the sunken hearths (*irori*), their smoke helped preserve the thatched roof by removing humidity and repelling vermin. No one has lived in the residence since around 1980, and the roof is therefore decaying more quickly than it once would have. The thatch must now be replaced every 15 to 20 years, and there are few people left with the skills to carry out the work.

More might be known about the history of the Ōyama Family Residence if not for an unusual incident. The original owner of the house suffered from poor health, and a diviner told him it was caused by living around old objects. Consequently, he burned many items and records relating to the house.