

## **Gasshozukuri Minkaen Outdoor Museum: Former Yamashita Haruro House**

The Former Yamashita Haruro House is the oldest surviving *gassho*-style farmhouse in Shirakawa. It was built in the mid-eighteenth century in the hamlet of Shima, north of the village of Ogimachi, and has several architectural characteristics that set it apart from newer *gassho*-style houses. One is the use of straw walls to enclose the attic on the gable ends. The walls are thatched in a simple manner instead of using planks, suggesting they were not built by professional carpenters. Inside on the first floor, supporting posts can be seen in the living space. In the more advanced local farmhouse architecture of later times, often seen in prominent *gassho*-style houses, a system of interlocking beams and posts around the perimeter makes for fewer columns in the rooms.

Another feature typical of older houses of this kind is the raised door sill by the room used for sleeping, perhaps employed to keep the straw on which residents slept from being swept into the adjacent room. Unlike large *gassho*-style houses built in the nineteenth century, the Yamashita Haruro House does not have formal tatami-mat rooms or a tokonoma alcove, despite having been the home of a relatively wealthy family. This is because knowledge of these types of furnishing had not yet reached Shirakawa when the house was built.