

Toyoda Kiichiro's Former Residence

Toyoda Kiichiro (1894–1952), the founder of Toyota Motor Corporation, had this house built as a villa in 1933, on the outskirts of Nagoya. The three-story building was designed by Suzuki Teiji (1870–1941) in an eclectic style that combines elements of Western and Japanese architecture. The semi-basement ground floor clad in rough plaster evokes the work of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). The second-floor exterior is more akin to traditional Japanese houses of the period, while the uppermost part shows the half-timber structure in the German style. Inside, the second floor has a Western-style kitchen, living room, and dining room with hardwood floors, while the third floor is a Japanese-style room with tatami mat floors. The house is only open to the public once a year, in October.

The large greenhouse is a distinctive feature, highlighting Toyoda's passion for flowers. When first built, the house was known as Minamiyama Farm, because there were several other greenhouses around it.

Toyoda held meetings here to discuss the early Toyota car models and used the residence as a vacation home until he moved to Tokyo in 1936. Later, his son moved in after getting married. In the aftermath of World War II, the US Army requisitioned homes around Nagoya to house officers. The Americans preferred Western-style buildings without Japanese features such as tatami flooring, and since the Toyoda family used tatami mats to protect the wood flooring on the second floor, the house escaped being requisitioned.

In 1999, the house was restored and relocated beside the Toyota Kuragaike Commemorative Hall. Its flower garden features a range of blooms, each with its own meaning; for example, a cherry tree was planted in 2011 to symbolize Toyota's fresh start after a series of vehicle recalls.