

Former Ryotei Hotoro: First-Floor Parlor and Garden

This part of the building was added in the Taisho era (1912–1926) and contains a spacious parlor for entertaining guests. Like the other rooms, the space utilizes high-quality materials and interesting design elements befitting a respected luxury restaurant (*ryotei*). For example, windows near the tokonoma alcove have a rhombus pattern with thin lines that seem to converge or separate when viewed from different vantage points. The large table in the center was made from a single piece of Japanese horse chestnut and is trimmed with oak, and the metallic-looking light fixture above the table is, in fact, made of wood coated with glossy lacquer.

Decorations and Works of Art

The parlor contains a variety of artwork and decorative items. One is a painting from the Meiji period (1868–1912) titled *Inchu hassen-zu (Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup)*. The scene is based on a poem by the influential Chinese poet Du Fu (712–770) that describes a group of eight Tang-dynasty scholars with a love of alcoholic beverages. A scroll with a landscape painting hangs in the tokonoma. Calligraphy on the opposite wall presents a poem said to have been recited by the northern Chinese general Cao Cao (155–220) just before the momentous Battle of Red Cliffs in 208.

The Garden

The hallway outside the first-floor parlor runs alongside the *ryotei*'s main garden. The view is largely unobstructed, as the sliding doors are set with glass panels that are rare and valuable examples of expertly blown glass from the Meiji period. The garden itself is centered on a small pond surrounded by artfully placed plants. On the far side of the pond is a small shrine dedicated to Konpira Gongen, a deity related to seafaring. The presence of a Konpira shrine in a *ryotei* is rather unusual, but considering that Obama used to be a lively port town, the deity was likely worshipped by many of the guests.