

Nagayamichi Road

This narrow alleyway once led to a single-story building called a *nagaya* (“longhouse”), which served as military barracks. It housed up to 16 *ashigaru*, low-ranking foot soldiers who reported to the town magistrate. Over time, the path leading to the barracks came to be known as the Nagayamichi, or “road to the *nagaya*.” Although the building itself no longer exists, the alleyway retains its historic name.

Ashigaru soldiers were usually involved in various military campaigns, but in the relatively peaceful Edo period (1603–1867) they were often employed for public service work like patrolling the town and guarding gates. Though no records remain to describe the duties carried out by the *ashigaru* stationed in Kumagawa-juku, it is assumed that they assisted the town magistrate on domain business. They might have handled shipments of rice sent as annual tax payments to the nearby government-managed storehouses or stood watch at the Kumagawa Guardhouse, where travelers paid taxes on transported goods and were inspected for weapons or banned items.