

The Matsumoto Castle Firearm Museum

Matsumoto Castle's collection of firearms comprises 141 matchlock muskets and other antique firearms, 283 gun accessories and tools, and over 450 documents relating to firearms and their history. Most of these items date from between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The collection was donated by Akahane Michishige and Akahane Kayoko, a husband-and-wife pair of lifelong gun collectors, firearms scholars, and sport shooters. Though originally from Matsumoto, the Akahanes operated a successful restaurant in Tokyo for many years. During that time, they slowly amassed an impressive collection of firearms, in particular Japanese matchlock muskets.

In 1988, the Akahanes entrusted their collection to the city of Matsumoto. Part of the collection was moved to Matsumoto Castle's Great Keep in 1999 for display; the rest is kept at the Matsumoto City Museum. Even after the display was opened, the Akahanes continued to acquire new guns to expand the collection.

The Great Keep is a fitting location for displaying these matchlock muskets. Constructed in 1593 and 1594, the keep was designed for the age of firearm warfare, as evidenced by its thick walls and numerous loopholes for firing matchlocks. The castle also has its own demonstration team, the Matsumoto Castle Gun Corps, whose members practice traditional samurai gunnery techniques (*hōjutsu*). Akahane Kayoko participated in the corps' first demonstration event in 1990.

Each year, all the muskets in the collection are disassembled and cleaned in accordance with the wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Akahane, who asked that the weapons be kept always ready to defend Matsumoto Castle.