

## **Petitions by Ichikawa Ryōzō**

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 brought about wide-reaching political and social changes that decided the fate of the country's castles. The creation of a new, centralized government required the daimyos to surrender their land, and their domains were restructured under a new prefectural system (the precursor to the one used today). At that time, castles were seen as outdated symbols of feudalism, and many castles were torn down so the land could be repurposed.

The documents shown here are replicas of letters sent by Ichikawa Ryōzō (1844–1908) to the prefectural governor as part of his efforts to save Matsumoto Castle. Ichikawa was an activist for popular rights and the founder of a local newspaper. He was troubled by the news that the land might be auctioned off and the castle demolished. He petitioned the governor to postpone the sale for at least 10 years, during which public exhibitions would be hosted in the main bailey.

Although his petition was initially rejected, Ichikawa persisted, and his request was granted in 1873. The first exhibition was held later that year. A wide variety of objects were displayed at the castle, ranging from fine art and traditional crafts to fossils, tools, and weapons. It was Ichikawa's belief that people learn more from a single day of seeing new things than through 10 years of reading. The displays proved to be tremendously popular, and four additional exhibitions were held over the following three years.