

Portraits of the Castle Benefactors

These two portraits in bronze relief depict Ichikawa Ryōzō (1844–1908) and Kobayashi Unari (1855–1914), two Matsumoto citizens whose tireless efforts saved Matsumoto Castle from destruction. During the widespread push for modernization and Westernization that marked the Meiji era (1868–1912), these men saw the castle as a priceless piece of Japanese history and not as a relic of the defunct feudal regime.

Ichikawa Ryōzō (1844–1908)

Ichikawa Ryōzō (left) was born to a wealthy family in what is now the Shimoyokota area of Matsumoto. In 1871, he was appointed a municipal official, and the following year he founded a local newspaper. In October of 1872, Ichikawa learned that Matsumoto Castle had been auctioned off and would soon be torn down. Determined to postpone this, he used his own newspaper to raise awareness of the castle and petitioned for permission to hold museum exhibitions inside the Great Keep. Through these exhibitions, Ichikawa was able to raise popular support for the castle's preservation.

Kobayashi Unari (1855–1914)

Kobayashi Unari (right) was born to a samurai family from what is now southwestern Osaka. He studied physics in Tokyo, then came to Matsumoto in 1885 as the first principal of Nagano's prefectural middle school.

By the start of the twentieth century, Matsumoto Castle was showing significant signs of disrepair, and Kobayashi was moved to take action. In 1901, he founded the Matsumoto Castle Preservation Society and launched a nationwide fundraising campaign. The society's efforts raised ¥20,000 in donations, a considerable sum at the time and enough to finance a large-scale restoration of the castle.