

Taikomon Gate

This imposing gate was the main point of entry to the castle's second bailey (*ninomaru*). Attackers who managed to breach the fortified embankments surrounding the third bailey (*sannomaru*) would then have faced the outer moat and a deadly bottleneck here at the Taikomon Gate.

The Taikomon consists of two gates at opposite ends of an enclosed square. This is called a *masugata*-style gate, after the square *masu* boxes used to measure quantities of rice. Enemies who breached the outer gate would have to cross the square to assault the larger, inner gate. Meanwhile, defenders along the walls and inside the gatehouse could fire down at them with bows and muskets.

The Taikomon Gate is named for the drum tower that once overlooked the square from the northern wall. The tower held a *taiko* drum and a bell used to signal the hour. In emergencies, the drum and bell could also be used to sound the alarm or relay signals to defenders over the noise of battle.

Another notable feature of the gate is the enormous rock that forms part of the wall near the inner entrance. This is the Genba Stone, a 4-meter-tall, 22.5-ton boulder that is associated with Ishikawa Yasunaga (1554–1642), the second lord of Matsumoto Castle. According to legend, Yasunaga rode atop the massive rock as it was dragged to the castle from the mountains. When one of the laborers complained, Ishikawa jumped down, cut off the man's head, and stuck it on the end of a spear. Climbing back onto the rock, he hoisted the spear high in the air and bellowed for everyone to start moving again.

The Taikomon Gate was constructed shortly after the Great Keep, in the final years of the sixteenth century. The gate was torn down sometime around 1871, along with many of the castle's outer fortifications, but part of the original western wall (including the Genba Stone) remained in place. It was rebuilt in 1999 based on an illustration from the early eighteenth century. The original stonework forms the lower part of the wall and is distinguishable from the lighter sections around it.

Red Pine Stumps

These large stumps are from two 140-year-old red pines used during the reconstruction of the Taikomon Gate, which was completed in 1999. The trees were made into the crossbeams that support the roof of the gatehouse.

Former Pillar Foundation Stone

This stone is one of the original foundation stones that supported the pillars of the Taikomon Gate. When the gate was torn down, two of the stones was given to the Imori merchant family, who had served the last lord of Matsumoto Castle. The Imori family used one of the stones in their own residence, but in 1973, they returned this one to the city so that it could be displayed as part of the castle's history.