

Key Point: Carved Wooden Doors

The paneled wooden doors of the Former Kaichi School Building were taken from nearby Jōrinji Temple. The elaborate carvings of soaring, dragon-like beasts and crashing waves on the upper panels of eight of these doors are thought to be the work of a carver named Harada Sōkei (1835–1907). Similar motifs can be found in the decorative elements of the main entrance porch.

In their original locations at the temple, the doors were fixed to socketed pillars that allowed the doors to swing open and closed. At the Kaichi School, the pillars and sockets were replaced with imported metal hinges and doorknobs to fit the modern, Western style.

A second, less obvious change was made to the temple doors to “Westernize” them: because staining was not common in Japan, the doors were instead given a protective coat of paint, which covered the natural wood grain that was characteristic of Western design. To compensate for this, the wood grain was then meticulously reproduced by hand-painting each line onto the surface of the already-painted doors. This time-intensive process illustrates the skill of the craftsmen who built the school.