

## **Preserving a National Treasure**

### **Becoming a National Treasure**

Matsumoto Castle was first designated a National Historic Site in 1930. Six years later, it was designated a National Treasure.

The National Treasure Preservation Act of 1929 established the criteria for qualification and the process of designation. This law was replaced during the restructuring of the legal system that followed World War II. As a result, any site designated under the previous framework is sometimes referred to as an “Old National Treasure” to prevent confusion.

Matsumoto Castle’s designation in 1936 was comparatively late. Sixteen castles had already been designated National Treasures in 1930, the year Matsumoto Castle was made a National Historic Site. The 16 castles that preceded Matsumoto Castle were Nagoya, Himeji, Okayama, Hiroshima, Fukuyama, Sendai, Kumamoto, Shuri, Maruoka, Kōchi, Uwajima, Inuyama, Kanazawa, Wakayama, Matsue, and Matsuyama Castles.

Sadly, many castles were destroyed by air raids during World War II, but Matsumoto Castle survived. A new “Cultural Properties Preservation Act” was established in 1950, and Matsumoto Castle was redesignated a National Treasure just two years later. Matsumoto was the second castle to receive this designation, after Himeji Castle. At the time of its designation, Matsumoto Castle was undergoing the most extensive repairs in its history.

## **Preserving Matsumoto Castle**

### **(1) Expansion and Repairs in the Edo Period (1603–1867)**

#### **Expansion**

The castle’s Great Keep, the Northwest Tower, and the Roofed Passage were built in 1594 under the rule of the Ishikawa family. At this same time, the Ishikawa family also fortified the three concentric baileys that surround the castle. The Southeast Wing and the Moon-Viewing Tower were added to the castle 40 years later, under Matsudaira Naomasa (1601–1666).

The resulting castle consists of the Great Keep and two joined towers. The Northwest Tower is joined via a connecting structure (a “linked keep”) and the Moon-Viewing Tower and Southwest Wing are joined directly (a “compound keep”). This combination of designs is unique among the castles that survive today. It is said that Naomasa may have added an additional tower to the north of the Kuromon Gate, and he also constructed two large storehouses for rice in the second bailey, but those structures are no longer standing.

#### **Repairs**

It seems that repairs and upkeep of the castle were carried out quite frequently during the Edo period, but few detailed records of these repairs exist. For example, it is known

that when Matsumoto was governed by the Toda family from around the middle of the Edo period onward, repairs were conducted in 1733, 1758, 1779, 1781, 1782, 1802, 1817, 1826, 1832, and 1842. However, the specifics of these repairs are unknown.

## **(2) Repairs in the Meiji Era (1868–1912)**

Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan began to adopt many aspects of Western culture, including stone architecture. As a result, wooden castles such as Matsumoto Castle came to be seen as outdated relics of a war-torn age. Many castles throughout the country were torn down to make room for civic infrastructure or other new construction. Although Matsumoto Castle was spared, it quickly fell into disrepair: roof tiles cracked, walls began to collapse, and the distinctive, black-lacquered weatherboard faded. The castle might have ultimately collapsed where it stood, if not for Kobayashi Unari (1855–1914), the principal of the local middle school. Witnessing the state of the castle, Kobayashi established the Matsumoto Castle Preservation Society. This organization raised funds and gained the necessary government approval to repair the castle.

Renovations began in 1903 and were completed in 1913, following a brief pause during the Russo–Japanese War (1904–1905). One of the master carpenters involved in the project, Sasaki Kijū, later went on to design the Yamabe School, a unique pseudo–Western style school building in Nagano Prefecture.

Detailed records of the castle repairs do not exist, but it is thought that workers restacked some of the interior stone stairs, added diagonal support beams and an additional layer of plaster to the walls, shored up the frame with metal supports, and corrected the tilt of the castle. As a result, the castle was saved from further dilapidation, although the addition of new windows meant that its appearance changed substantially. These repairs would not have been possible without the support of local residents, whose donations covered roughly 70 percent of the renovation costs.

明治修理の状況	Repairs in the Meiji era
明治修理後の天守	Matsumoto Castle after repairs in 1913

## **(1) Repairs in the Showa Era (1926–1989)**

After the end of World War II, in the autumn of 1946, an advisor for the Arts and Monuments Division of the Civil Information and Education Section under the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) visited Nagano Prefecture. His name was Charles F. Gallagher. Seeing the condition of Matsumoto Castle, Gallagher recommended that repairs be carried out as soon as possible.

Motivated by his recommendation, Ōoka Minoru (1900–1987), a director at the Tokyo National Museum, and Fujishima Gaijirō (1899–2002), a professor at the University of Tokyo, conducted preliminary surveys. In 1948, the Matsumoto Castle Scenic Landscape Preservation Society was formed, fundraising efforts were begun, and a petition to allow construction was submitted to the national government. As a result of their efforts, large-scale repairs began on June 8, 1950.

The project was unprecedented in its scope and involved the complete disassembly of Matsumoto Castle. The overall objective of the repairs was to restore the Edo-period appearance of the castle. However, the renovations also allowed the builders to conduct a thorough investigation of the foundation, and it was determined that the underground wooden posts should be replaced with reinforced concrete to improve the durability of the structure.

1950	June 8	Groundbreaking Ceremony
	August	Deconstruction begins
	August 15	Management of the project is transferred from the Matsumoto City Museum to the Matsumoto Castle Preservation and Construction Office
1952	June 11	<i>Chōna-hajime</i> (“first adze”) Ceremony, which marks the start of reconstruction
1953	October 3	Ridge-Raising Ceremony
1955	October 1	Completion Ceremony
	October 8	enshrinement of Nijūroku-yashin, a guardian deity of the castle, on the sixth floor of the Great Keep
	October 15	Continued management of the castle is transferred back to the Matsumoto City Museum

Partway through the project, the city government of Matsumoto reached out to staff at Himeji Castle and Matsue Castle and took the first steps toward establishing the National Castle Preservation Council. A provisional planning meeting was held on September 18, 1951. Later in November, other cities with castles joined the council, and its first full meeting was held in Himeji. While this organization was eventually dissolved, it served as the basis for the current Japanese Castle Management Council.