

Welcome to Omihachiman

The historic district of Omihachiman centers on the old town just south of Mt. Hachimanyama. The building of a castle on the mountain's summit in the late sixteenth century sparked the town's development into a flourishing commercial hub. Between the mountain and the town is the Hachimanbori Moat, formerly a key transportation route between the town and Lake Biwa. Alongside the moat and toward the south stand the residences and storehouses of the merchants who brought prosperity to Omihachiman during the Edo period (1603–1867) by selling local wares throughout the country. Scattered among the traditional townhouses are a number of early twentieth-century Western-style buildings, most of them the work of William Merrell Vories (1880–1964), an American-born architect and missionary who settled in Omihachiman. Vories is remembered for his wide-ranging contributions to local life. The compact old town is laid out in an orderly grid pattern and easy to explore on foot.