

## **Saikoji Temple**

Saikoji is the oldest temple in the former castle town of Taketa and has played an important role in the city's history. Its present grounds encompass a main temple building, a gate, and a bell tower, in addition to a graveyard that extends across a hill overlooking the city.

Saikoji is an ancestral temple of the Nakagawa family, which governed what is now Taketa during the Edo period (1603–1867). The family came from Hyogo Prefecture in central Japan, which is where Saikoji was originally located. When the Nakagawa relocated to Taketa in the late sixteenth century on the orders of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), the de facto ruler of Japan at the time, the temple was also moved. Saikoji was initially located within the castle town, near where the city library stands today, but it was moved to its current site on the edge of town in 1679.

The current main building has a number of distinctive features. On the second floor are small windows that served as defensive ports through which arrows and bullets could be fired. The main building is not open to the public, but the grounds can be viewed freely. Both the gate and bell tower are original structures from the late seventeenth century.