

## Seki Machinami (Townscape) Museum

This museum occupies a restored house from the late nineteenth century. The building was acquired in 1985, one year after Seki Juku was designated a conservation area; it opened as a museum in 1988 after a three-year restoration. The museum is designed to give an idea of what a typical house of its era would have been like in Seki Juku.

The layout of the house is standard for a merchant's dwelling in Seki Juku. A long *doma* (packed-earth) corridor runs from the front to the back on the east side, while the raised tatami rooms are all on the west side. The main house has a street frontage 4 *ken* (7.2 m) wide, but it extends back 9 *ken* (16.2 m), meaning that it is much deeper than it is wide. Both the front and inner doors feature a smaller wicket door known as a *kugurido*.

There are no glass windows at the front or back of the house; protection from the elements is provided only by fold-down shutters known as *shitomido*. In the ground-floor front room, some items from shops and houses of the Edo period (1603–1867) and Meiji era (1868–1912) are on display, among them a lockable cash box, a large chest for Chinese medicine, and a step-chest (*hako-kaidan*). The exhibits in the middle room are mainly of official certificates recording the town's status as a conservation area. The innermost reception room at the back of the house has formal touches such as a tokonoma alcove for the display of artworks and a *chigaidana* stepped shelf.

The two low-ceilinged rooms at the front of the second floor, which might have been used by the homeowner/merchant for business meetings, are also open to visitors. Besides offering an opportunity to peer out on the street through the *mushiko-mado* lattice windows, these rooms contain a display cabinet with Edo-period coins and pottery that were dug up when the nearby Hyakurokuri-tei park was being built.

Behind the house is a storehouse (*kura*) with thick earthen walls covered in plaster. Exhibits here include an official 1761 map of the town that records the size of the individual houses and the names of their occupants. The upper floor of the *kura* features a series of three photographs of all the houses on either side of Seki Juku's main street, taken in 1984 (the year conservation efforts got underway), then again in 1997 and 2007. These are arranged in parallel, illustrating how sensitive restoration has improved the appearance of the town over the last 40 years.

The hinoki cypress bark covering the back of the main house presents another unusual architectural detail. Once inside, the enormous attic space (*tsushi*) can be seen above the *doma* corridor. This would have been used for storage or possibly for the cultivation of silkworms.

The Seki Machinami Museum is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. There is a discount for purchasing a joint entry ticket to all three museums: the Seki Machinami Museum, the Sekijuku Hatago Tamaya Historical Museum, and the Seki no Yama Kaikan.