

The Senshintei Tea House

The Senshintei is a tea house in a tranquil corner of Nihonmatsu Castle's grounds just west of Minowa Gate. It has three rooms for entertaining and serving tea, a small kitchen area for preparations, and toilet and bath facilities. It is the oldest extant building on the castle grounds, dating from the seventeenth century.

From Tranquil Retreat to Fishing Cabin

Today the Senshintei stands on raised ground on the western edge of the castle park. The shoji panels on the north and east side open to reveal a traditional Japanese garden below, with paths winding past trees, ponds, and flowers that offer a variety of blooms with the seasons. At the far end of the garden is the Senshin Waterfall, which is fed directly by the Nigoda Conduit that brings water to Nihonmatsu from the mountains 18 kilometers away.

The word *senshin* literally means “heart-cleansing,” and the Senshintei and its surroundings were evidently designed as a peaceful retreat inside Nihonmatsu Castle. It may originally have been known as the Sumie no O-chaya (ink-painting tea house), one of many tea houses known to have existed on the castle grounds. In 1837, the collapsed Senshintei was relocated to the banks of the nearby Abukuma River, where it was used as a fishing cabin by the daimyo. This is why the Senshintei survived even as the rest of the castle burned down in 1868 during the Boshin War.

The Senshintei and the Former Samurai

After the war, the aging cabin was completely renovated by former domain samurai Nakazawa Agata. When the domain system was abolished by the Meiji government, the structure passed into the hands of the Aioi Company, a financial association of former samurai and merchants. Finally, in 1907, it was moved back onto the castle’s old grounds by Yamada

Osamu, another former samurai who was also entrusted with building the silk mill that operated on the grounds for a time. Yamada gave the Senshintei its current name, after the Senshin Waterfall nearby.

Today the Senshintei is used on occasion by local tea ceremony groups for tea preparation and other activities on weekends during events like the Chrysanthemum Festival and Sakura Festival.