

Former Ubukata House

The Former Ubukata House was the home of a wealthy merchant family that operated a pharmacy in the castle town of Numata. The family was also the designated supplier of medicines to the daimyo lord of the Numata domain throughout the Edo period (1603–1867). Their traditional wooden house is thought to date from the late seventeenth century and was originally located in the center of the town. It was relocated to Numata Park in 1973 for preservation.

The single-story house is now open to the public as a museum. Its thick earthen walls are plastered, and its gabled roof is covered with wood shingles held down by stones. The front side of the building has shutters that slide upwards, opening the space for use as a shop. The shop area consists of two raised-floor tatami-mat rooms, the one on the left for ordinary patrons and the more ornate room on the right for high-ranking samurai customers; and an earthen-floor area where customers would stand

while interacting with the shopkeeper. The protruding eaves in front of the shop entrance protected customers from the elements.

The small door to the left of the shop was used by residents of the house. It opens onto an earthen-floor corridor that extends through the building, past a living area with a wooden floor and a sunken hearth (*irori*), and to a kitchen in the back. On the right side of the house are four tatami-mat rooms where family members slept. Servants were accommodated in two small rooms above the shop, which were accessed by a ladder.

Pharmacist's tools, spoons and bowls, medicine drawers, and other historical artifacts are on display inside the house. It is considered the oldest extant merchant's house in eastern Japan and has been designated an Important Cultural Property. Across from the main house is a small

museum dedicated to the life of Ubukata Sei (1894–1978), a politician and the 26th head of the family. He studied pharmacy in the United States and was an enthusiast of such arts as literature, painting, and theater. His wife,

Tatsue (1904–2000), was a noted poet whose achievements are detailed at the Ubukata Memorial Museum in central Numata.