

Honjo Castle Town Explanation board 1 “Honjo Castle and Castle Town”

Honjo Castle was built in the 18th year of Keicho era (1613) as the residential castle of Mitsushige Honjo, a senior vassal of Yoshiaki Mogami who was a feudal lord of Yamagata Prefecture. After Mogami clan was deprived, Masazumi Honda took over till the 9th year of Genna era (1623) when Masanori Rokugo from Hitachi-fuchu (Present Ishioka City, Ibaraki Prefecture) entered the area. It remained as the residential castle of Rokugo clan until the 4th year of Meiji era (1871), when the clan was abolished. The castle's Honmaru (main citadel) and Ninomaru (second citadel) are located at Mt.Ozaki, which is located at the northern edge connected to the foot of Mt.Chokai. The northeastern foot is the Sannomaru (third citadel) which is a Hirayamajiro (a castle built in such a way that it combines the advantages of the heights and those of the plain). It is a famous castle which is also called as “Ozaki Castle” or “Tsurumai Castle.”

During the Honjo clan period, the outer moat was constructed near to the present Nakadatemachi and was used as a castle area, but the castle was destroyed when the Mogami clan was deprived. Rokugo clan who entered the area in the 9th year of Genna era (1623) reduced the size of the castle and the castle town, making the present Honjo Park and City Hall area as the castle area. In the latter half of the 17th century, the residence which belonged to the lord of the castle and the domain office which was located at the Honmaru were moved to the Sannomaru (Honjo Park Plaza) to serve as the center of government affairs.

The castle town was built integrally with the castle. The Bukemachi (samurai town) was arranged to surround the castle and the present Sakurakoji, Omoteozakimachi, and Uraozakimachi which are located close to the castle were residences of important vassals. From the east bank of the Osawa River to the present Taniyamakoji, Mikuramachi was the site of Ashigarumachi (towns for foot soldiers). In addition, Choninmachi (merchant town) is separated from the Bukemachi by the large gate located at the northwest of the castle and they are placed systematically from the current Kamiyokomachi and Nakayokomachi areas to Omachi, Sakanamachi, Hikijimachi, Furuyukimachi, and other areas. Besides the unique discrepancy of crossroad, T-junction, cranked-shaped hooked road, and strip-shaped houses that remained, the names of the towns as artisan towns such as Ryoushimachi, Kajimachi, Okeyamachi, etc. show traces of the castle town period, indicating that the present urban area is based on the castle town.

This explanation board is was founded by the East Japan Railway Culture Foundation for local cultural activities.