

Tracing the Life of Isoroku Yamamoto, a Man of Affection and Integrity

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto Memorial Museum



Isoroku Takano, born to the family of a Confucian scholar in 1884, was an intelligent youth and respected Benjamin Franklin since his junior high school days. He studied very hard and acquired a broad knowledge of various things. Becoming the successor of the family of Tatewaki Yamamoto, a councilor of the feudal lord in the old Nagaoka Domain, Isoroku married a daughter of a *samurai* family of the old Aizu Feudal Domain.

While mastering the arts of both the pen and the sword, working with a spirit of fortitude and vigor, and following a motto that showed the spirit of Nagaoka ("always have the spirit of being on a battlefield"), he focused his attention on petroleum and aviation early on in his career. Inspired by Lindbergh's non-stop transatlantic flight, he especially stressed the significance of aviation. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, his foresight about aviation was proven to the world.

However, Yamamoto firmly opposed the outbreak of the war. Taking the risk upon himself, he strongly opposed the Japan-Germany-Italy Triple Alliance, stating that his spirit would not be defeated even if his physical body were destroyed. His way of thinking may have been a direct result of his sincere love and affection for his hometown and the people.

Despite his objections to joining the war, Yamamoto commanded the unprecedented battle as the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. In 1943, Yamamoto died during an inspection tour over Bougainville Island. We hope to convey the humanity of Isoroku Yamamoto, who lived with a strong yet flexible mind during a turbulent century, to the 21st century.

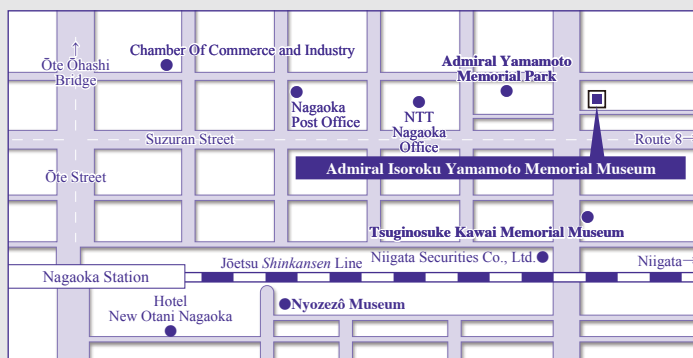


Front View of the Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto Memorial Museum

Contents of Main Exhibits



- Birth of Isoroku Takano ----- History of the Takanos
Interchanges with family members, former teachers, and friends
- Becoming Isoroku Yamamoto --- Traditions of Nagaoka *Han* (a feudal domain)
History and cultural climate of Nagaoka, succession of the Tatewaki Yamamoto Family (the councilor of a feudal lord of Nagaoka *Han*), marriage
- Traveling around the World ---- Internationally-oriented views acquired through serving as a naval attaché for the Japanese Embassy in the USA and attending international conferences, some episodes he experienced overseas
- Integrity and Affection ----- Many people admire his humanity.
- For the Pursuit of Peace ----- Efforts in Naval Arms Reduction Talks and absolute opposition to the Japan-Germany-Italy Triple Alliance
- Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet ----- Fully aware of the USA's national strength and its people's temperament, Yamamoto wished for an earlier peaceful settlement between Japan and the USA.
- Isoroku Yamamoto's Spirit Lives on ----- To convey his humanitarian aspects to future generations



Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto Memorial Museum

1-4-1 Gofuku-machi, Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture
Phone/Fax: +81-258-37-8001

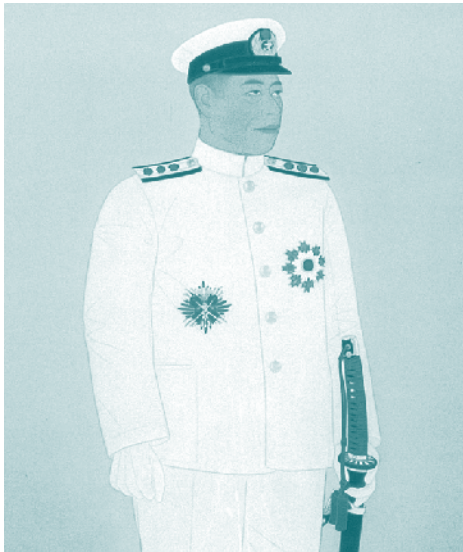
Hours: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Closed: Dec. 28 - Jan. 4

Admission: ¥500 for adults

¥200 for elementary school and junior high school students

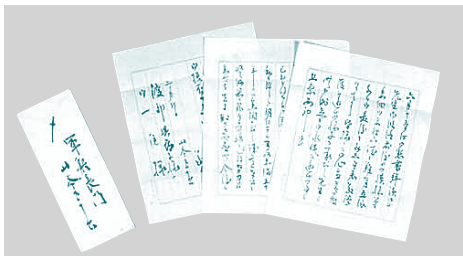
Main Exhibits



Portrait of Isoroku Yamamoto

By Daizaburō Nakamura

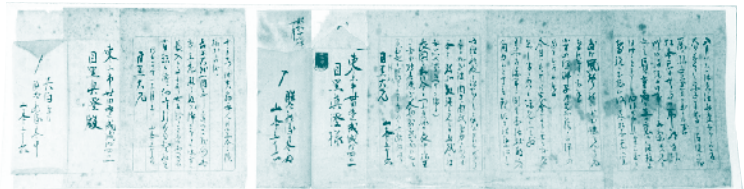
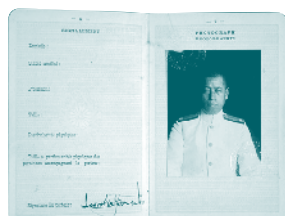
Daizaburō Nakamura (1898-1947) was a Japanese-style painter specializing in painting the beauty of women. It is said that his brilliantly colored Japanese-style paintings fascinated many people. “*Kami* (Hair),” “*Miidera* (Temple),” and “*Nonomiya* (Shrine)” are some of his masterpieces. This portrait of Isoroku Yamamoto is a rare piece by Daizaburō. Nakamura was born in Kyōto and graduated from the Kyōto School of Fine Arts. He taught at his alma mater and became a judge for the Imperial Academy’s Art Exhibition.



A Letter Dated June 20, 1940 to Yokiko Watabe from the Warship Nagato

In appreciation of his teacher’s 50-year-long gracious guidance

The Watabe family did not inform Yamamoto (Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet) of the death of Atae Watabe, Yamamoto’s elementary school teacher, who passed away on May 30, 1940. However, Admiral Yamamoto got the news from some other sources and sent his condolences along with a monetary offering to the bereaved family. Yokiko, the oldest daughter of Atae Watabe, wrote a letter on June 15, 1940 to Yamamoto, describing her father’s last moments. This is the letter that Yamamoto wrote in reply. In his letter, Yamamoto expressed his appreciation for his teacher’s 50-year-long gracious guidance since Yamamoto was a first-grade student at Sakanoue Elementary School. This letter shows us that he was a warm-hearted person who expressed his appreciation for his teacher’s favor toward him and cared for the bereaved family despite his tight schedule.



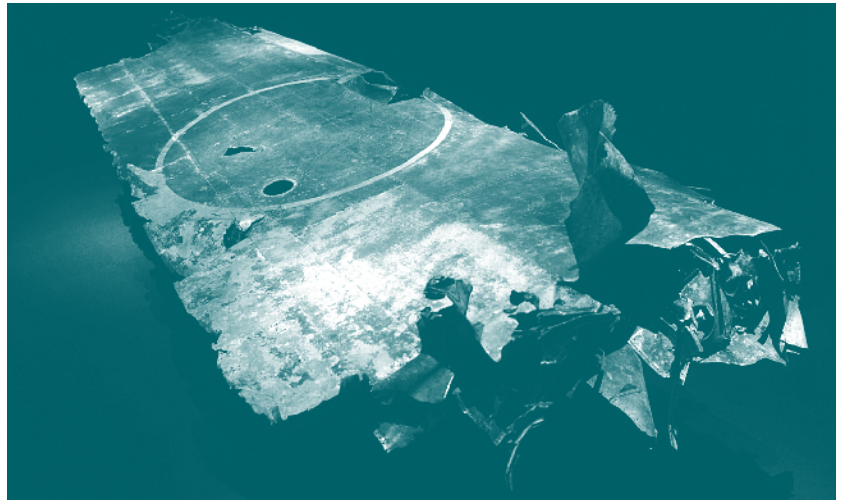
A Letter from October 1942 to Masumi Meguro from the Warship Yamato

“There will be no more excellent leaders from Nagaoka if someone from *Nagachū* (Nagaoka Middle School) with an unfavorable spirit tries to break up *Wadōkai*, the alumni association.”

Yamamoto, who had to walk a dangerous path while being well aware of the situations of others as well as his own, wrote to his classmate Masumi Meguro, one of his best friends, in the beginning of October 1942. Yamamoto lamented over his bad luck that resulted from being put in a situation against his will.

It was the time when the Japanese Imperial Navy assumed the defensive after the Solomon Islands campaign. Yamamoto expressed his true feelings, saying “the USA is much more tenacious than Japan in terms of its national strength and the people’s determination.”

At the end of the letter, he regretted the reorganization of *Wadōkai* and its name change and frankly deplored the tendencies that went against his will in that day and age.



The Left Wing of the Plane That Admiral Yamamoto Boarded

A part of the left wing of the Naval First Model Grand Combat Plane that 11 men (including Isoroku Yamamoto, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet) boarded

Besides Admiral Yamamoto, there were 10 men including Noboru Fukuzaki (Lieutenant), Rokurō Takada (Chief Naval Surgeon), Kurio Toibana (Staff Officer), Ritsu Kotani (Chief Pilot) and his crewmen (Akiharu Osaki, Minoru Tanaka, Nobuo Hata, Mitsuo Ueno, Harumasa Kobayashi, and Haruo Yamada).

During the scouting mission headed for Balalae Island of the Solomon Islands, the admiral’s plane was attacked and shot down by an American Army Air Forces Lockheed P-38 Lightning a little after 7:30 a.m. on April 18, 1943. All the men were killed.

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary for Yamamoto’s birth, members of the *Keigyōkai* Association for Admiral Yamamoto walked into a jungle on Bougainville Island and held a memorial service in front of the wrecked plane in February 1984. By courtesy of the Government of Papua New Guinea, the wing made its homecoming in 1989.



Yamamoto, the Naval Attaché for the Japanese Embassy in the USA, in front of the Capitol

On December 1, 1925, Yamamoto was appointed as a naval attaché. He left Japan in January of 1926 and returned to Japan in March of 1928. One of his duties was to supervise the embassy staff members. He encouraged them to tour various kinds of places that they could not otherwise see in Japan, to save money for those trips, and to master English within a few months after arriving in the capital.

Yamamoto worked hard as a Japanese committee member for the International Radio Communication Conference held in 1927. This was the same year in which Lindbergh successfully accomplished the world’s first non-stop transatlantic flight. He made a scientific study on Lindbergh’s great accomplishment and reported his ideas about improving the Naval Air Force, suggesting a change of flight operations from intuition-guided flights to instrument-guided flights.



A Japanese Doll

Yamamoto cherished this doll named Masumi (meaning Pearl Harbor), which he favorably picked out of a bag of comfort gifts from his family. It must have been such a comfort for him to look at this doll every morning and evening. The doll has the Yamamoto family crest on her kimono.

Yamamoto’s Passport

This is Yamamoto’s passport, issued when he was going to attend the Preliminary Negotiation for Naval Arms Reduction Talks in September 1934. Upon leaving Japan, he put on his wall a sheet of paper with Takamori Saigō’s instructive words that read: “International communications should be completed only when taking steps on the right path and with the spirit of sacrificing oneself for one’s country.” He also said to Eiichi Sorimachi, a friend of his from home, “I will fulfill my mission with the same spirit of Tsuginosuke Kawai (the Military General of the Nagaoka Feudal Domain during the 1868 civil war) who went to Ojiya for a peaceful negotiation with his enemy in a friendly manner. Arms reduction must be decided upon for the sake of world peace and the security of Japan.”