

Battle of Iwaki: 150 Year Anniversary of the Boshin War

This year marks a milestone 150 years since the Boshin War that saw the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of imperial rule in Japan – otherwise known as the Meiji Restoration. Conflict broke out in Iwaki during this period, with many historical ruins and monuments commemorating important battles located around the city.

What was the Boshin War?

Over 250 years of military rule by the Tokugawa shogunate came to an end when the 15th shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, stepped down and transferred authority to the emperor in November 1867. This meant that power now rested in the hands of domains like Choshu and Satsuma who had resisted the shogunate and supported imperial rule; however, there were many other domains that still supported the ousted Yoshinobu and tried to prevent this change. As a result, the Boshin War broke out in January 1868 beginning with the Battle of Toba-Fushimi in Kyoto before the Imperial Army soon advanced towards Edo and further north. In response, the Northern Alliance was formed which consisted of many domains in the Tohoku region, including Aizu, Sendai and Soma, who still fought for the shogunate.



Hirakata Fishing Port where the Imperial Army landed on 16 June



Monument of Izumi Castle which is now Izumi Community Hall



Monument of Yunagaya Castle Site which is now Iwasaki Junior High School



Site of Iwakitaira Castle Ruins which is located a six minute walk north of Iwaki Station

Battle erupts in Iwaki

The war soon reached Iwaki in June when the Imperial Army embarked on the port of Hirakata (Ibaraki Prefecture) and fought against the shogunate-supporting Northern Alliance which was mainly led by the Sendai domain. The Imperial Army gradually advanced north, destroying Izumi and Yunagaya Castles, before the Northern Alliance's stronghold at Iwakitaira Castle found itself under siege on three occasions and ultimately fell at midnight on 13 July after 16 hours of intense battle. The three Iwaki domains of Iwakitaira, Yunagaya and Izumi officially surrendered to the imperial forces on 24 September.

- ### Timeline of the Boshin War in Iwaki - 1868
- (All dates are according to the old Japanese lunisolar calendar)
- January: Battle of Toba-Fushimi (Kyoto)
 - 16th June: Imperial Army lands at Hirakata Port
 - 17th June: Battle of Kokozura (present day Nakoso Fishing Port)
 - 28th June: Fall of Izumi Castle
 - Battle of Shinden Hill
 - 29th June: Battle of Futatsubashi Bridge
 - Fall of Yunagaya Castle
 - 1st Siege of Iwakitaira Castle
 - 1st July: 2nd Siege of Iwakitaira Castle
 - 10th July: Battle of Shichihonmatsu (present day Kashima)
 - 13th July: 3rd Siege and fall of Iwakitaira Castle
 - 24th Sept: Iwakitaira, Yunagaya and Izumi domains surrender

