Birth of the Government District

Mishima Michitsune became the first governor of the newly unified Yamagata Prefecture in 1876. He conceived a modern urban plan, designed a government district outside the old Yamagata Castle, and established many modern buildings. The road that now extends north from the Nanokamachi intersection, where the Yamagata Bank main branch stands, to Bunshokan, was opened during the Meiji period (1868–1912). It is said that its width has hardly changed since its establishment. The Yamagata government district, designed with the prefectural office positioned at the far end of a broad main street, was considered highly progressive for the Meiji period and earned the admiration of the English explorer Isabella Bird.

After taking office, Governor Mishima oversaw the construction of many modern institutions and facilities, including: the Yamagata Prefectural Office, Yamagata Prefectural Teachers' College, the Yamagata Prefectural Industrial Museum, Saiseikan Hospital, the Yamagata Prefectural Silk Mill, the Yamagata Prefectural Police Headquarters and its branch offices, a water-powered weaving mill, a textile shrine, Chitose Park, and a prison. However, many of the buildings constructed under Mishima's jurisdiction were destroyed by fires that struck the central city area during the Meiji period.

To chronicle the government district he designed, Mishima commissioned oil painter Takahashi Yuichi, photographer Kikuchi Shingaku, and Ukiyo-e artist Hasegawa Takeji.

Although many buildings were lost, the layout of the district can be observed even today thanks to the works of these artists.