



# Politics and Government

## Politics and Government . The Center of Japan

Otaru, which was an important link in marine transportation from early on, became the central base for Hokkaido and the national economy, as well as for politics. Especially after the Russo-Japanese war, when Japan owned southern Karafuto, Otaru became an important gateway to Russia and Karafuto. For example, the Bank of Japan Otaru Branch (1912;Meiji 45), a recognized tangible cultural asset of Otaru became the fourth branch and first one north of Tokyo to be established. From early on, the government leadership encouraged the installation of the infrastructure system in Otaru. The most important of these facilities were the railway and port, and in 1880(Meiji 13), the Horonai Railway, the fourth in Japan, opened under the administration of the Hokkaido Development Commission. The railway was constructed for the purpose of transporting coal from Hokkaido to the rest of the country; coal from Horonai mine was transported by train, and loaded onto ships from the piers in Temiya. The most significant remains of this history is the Otaru City Museum Temiya Railway Facility, which is recognized as an Important National Cultural Asset. Requests were made to modernize the port which already had a historical background related to the Kitamae\* ships, and in 1896, the decision to grant full funding from the government to rebuild the Otaru Port was made by the Imperial Diet. One point worthy of special mentioning is the construction of the breakwater. Back in the day when breakwaters were nonexistent, the high waves of the Japan Sea were known to wash upon the docks and impede the boarding, loading and unloading of ships, as well as cause damage to the ships. Construction of the breakwater lasted for a period of eleven years, and in 1908(Meiji 41), the northern breakwater was completed. The second leg of construction lasted for thirteen years when finally the southern breakwater (4kilometers long) was completed in 1921 (Taisho10).

\*Tr. note: merchant ships

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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## No. 2

### Kaiyoutei

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Location:4-7 Sumiyoshi-cho, Otaru

Built:1896(Meiji 29)

Structure: 2 story wood building

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Kaiyoutei, a piece of architecture that appears on the set of Japanese history, conveys how important the city of Otaru was to Japan at that time. This Japanese and Western cuisine restaurant Kaiyoutei was established by Katsubei Hasegawa in the early part of the Meiji Period, and was frequented by politicians and economists who were responsible for the advancement of Hokkaido development. An especially famous and important event which took place here was the banquet held on the second floor of the restaurant for guests and politicians, following the border talks between Russia and Japan which were held at the Japan Mail Steamer Company Otaru Branch. The eastern wing of the U-shaped building was built during the Meiji Period, and houses the Akashi Room, a large banquet room on the second floor. The northern side was built during the Taisho Period and houses a main hall. The southern side of the building was one-story, with Japanese rooms and architecture, and was the living quarters of the owner. What is most amazing about the interior of the building is the Akashi-no-Ma(Akashi room), a space of 7.2 meters wide by 27 meters long, which is large enough to host a banquet accommodating up to 150 persons. The coved ceiling structure provided abundant space, and from the glass windows on the veranda visitors can enjoy a commanding view of the Japan Sea.

Present Day Kaiyoutei

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No. 10

## Former Otaru Chamber of Commerce

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Location:6-32 Ironai 1-chome, Otaru

Built:1933(Showa 8)

Structure: 3 story reinforced concrete building

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The decorative appearance of this architecture captures the eye. The front of the building is carved Chitose stone from Ishikawa Prefecture, and large marble from Tosa is used for the entrance. The space created by the concise form of column and beam structure finished with knee wall made from wood used for a president's room, handrails with metal frames and lighting fixtures that date back to when the building was built are all remnants that convey the spirit of Ironai Avenue. Shuji Tomoe(1899 - 1959) who worked for the Otaru Architecture and Buildings Engineering Department, supervised the designing of the building, and construction was carried out by Bansaku Man.

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No. 11

## Otaru Government Office

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Location:12-1 Hanazono 2-chome, Otaru

Built:1933(Showa 8)

Structure: 3 story reinforced concrete building

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A symmetrical facade made of tile and granite from Ibaraki Prefecture contributes to the austere impression of the government offices, while the six columns influenced by Greek architecture, the decorative masonry of the hall and stained glass add a touch of flare. The building was mainly designed by Yoichiro Narita, the head of the Otaru Architecture and Buildings Engineering Department. 100,000 yen out of the total building cost of 260,000 yen was donated by Takichi Tomoe, another example of how the businessmen of pre-war Otaru shaped the architectural culture.

Present Day Otaru Government Office Main Building

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No. 47

## Shiomidai Water Treatment Plant Management Building

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Location:143 Shiomidai 4-chome, Otaru

Built 1927(Showa 2)

Structure: One-story reinforced concrete building

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After a long walk to the thickest part of the forests a little away from the city, the red pointed rooftop of the small and cute management building of the Shiomidai Water Treatment Plant come into view. The seal of Otaru engraved above the archway entrance adds a special touch to the building. The six-pointed snowflake with the Kanji character “小” of 小樽 (Otaru) in the center was set as the city logo when Otaru was still a ward, and not a city. However on the other hand, the building also possesses the certain austerity of a public facility, owing to the triangular part of the gable and columns derived from ancient Greek architecture.

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No. 45

## Takashima Town Hall Building

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Location:1-1 Takashima 4-chome, Otaru

Built:1935(Showa 10)

Structure: 2 story wood building

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Though the architecture of this building is typical of an office building with a symmetrical exterior, the circumstances behind the building leading up to the present day are very interesting. The town of Takashima merged with Otaru in 1940(Showa 15), the building becoming the Otaru City Hall Takashima Branch Office. In 1946, it became the Otaru City Takashima Clinic. In 1962, it was decided that the clinic would close, but Dr. Taro Watanabe purchased the building out of his own pocket money, and thus the clinic stayed opened for almost 50 years until he died in the year 2009(Heisei 21).

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## No. 39

### Hokkaido Government Civil Engineering Department Otaru Chikko Office and Sentry House

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Location:2-2 Chikko, Otaru

Built:1935(Showa 10)

Structure: One-story wood building

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Like the Otaru Canal, the concrete breakwaters of Otaru Port are very valuable modern heritages in the sense of civil engineering. The northern breakwater was completed in 1908, and the southern breakwater was completed in 1921. Overlooking the Otaru Port secured by the breakwater is the small and simple building fit to be called a sentry house, with clapboarding and pavilion roof. It is a valuable community asset that conveys the history of Otaru.

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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