

Former Ringer House

In the mid-nineteenth century, Nagasaki was a place where an enterprising foreigner could make a fortune. Of the three ports in Japan opened to foreign trade in 1859, Nagasaki was the closest to the bustling port of Shanghai, portal to the booming worldwide tea trade. Frederick Ringer (1838–1907) was a successful tea inspector with almost a decade of experience when Thomas Glover (1838–1911) invited him to come from China to Nagasaki and supervise the tea business at Glover & Co. Three years later, Ringer started his own business, Holme, Ringer & Co., with Edward Z. Holme (1836–1909) and took over Glover & Co.'s tea trade. Ringer would go on to achieve great success in Nagasaki, having a hand in shipping and insurance agencies, newspapers, a hotel, and consular duties. The house was built in 1868, and six years later Ringer acquired the property.

Ringer moved into the house in 1883 and lived there until his death during a trip to England in 1907. Ringer's second son, Sydney (1891–1967) moved into the house with his family and, except for the period surrounding World War II, lived there until 1965 when he sold the house to Nagasaki City. In 1966, the Japanese government designated the house an Important Cultural Property. The house was restored to its original appearance in 1973.

Architectural Features

The Ringer house is a one-story bungalow, a style that originated in British-controlled India. It has a wooden frame, and its exterior walls are made of Amakusa sandstone. The roof is covered with traditional Japanese tiles, and the veranda is paved with granite from Vladivostok, Russia. Coal-burning fireplaces kept the house warm in winter and high ceilings and large windows kept it cool in summer. Like many bungalows built during the late 1800s, the front entrance leads to a corridor with rooms to both the left and right. The kitchen and servants' quarters are in a separate building behind the house.