

### **Former Alt House**

This large home was built for the British merchant, William John Alt (1840–1908) starting in 1865. Alt had made a fortune trading tea and other goods. In 1864 he married Elisabeth Earl (1847–1923), the daughter of the Magistrate of Province Wellesley (now Penang, Malaysia). His lavish home was one of the largest in the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement, and included a veranda, entrance, drawing room, dressing room, four bedrooms and four bathrooms. The kitchen and servants' quarters are in a brick building behind the house, and behind the kitchen is a small warehouse and a storage chamber dug into the hill behind the house. Alt even added an Italianate fountain, the same one that stands in front of the house today.

In 1868, however, Alt and his family left Nagasaki and the house passed through a number of hands. It was, at different times, a Methodist women's school and the American consulate before it was acquired by the Ringer family in 1903. Members of the Ringer family lived here until Japan's official entry into World War II on December 8, 1941. Kawanami Industries Co. Ltd. purchased the house in 1943. During the Allied Occupation following the end of World War II, it was requisitioned by the American forces, but returned to Kawanami in the early 1950s. After a period of neglect, the house was purchased by the city of Nagasaki in 1970. The Japanese government designated it an Important Cultural Property in 1972.

### **Architectural Features**

Most Western-style houses in the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement were built by Japanese carpenters. Structurally they resembled the colonial-era bungalows of British India, but with some Japanese features of design. For example, the Former Alt House was built by Koyama Hidenoshin (1828–1898) a carpenter from Amakusa in Kumamoto Prefecture. The house was built in the Japanese fashion, but to Western specifications. On a floor plan from 1863, the names of the rooms are written in English and Japanese and the specifications include both imperial and traditional Japanese measurements. The exterior walls of the house and the Tuscan pillars around the veranda are made of Amakusa sandstone, and the roof is clad with Japanese-style clay tiles.

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