

Former Glover House

Thomas Blake Glover (1838–1911) was one of the first Westerners to arrive in Japan after the country opened to foreign trade in 1859, and one of the first to find success in the port of Nagasaki. He lived in this house, which was built for him in 1863 by master carpenter Koyama Hidenoshin (1828–1898). Koyama had also built the British Episcopal Church in Higashiyamate, and he would later build the Former Alt House located farther up the hill.

Glover came to Nagasaki in September 1859 to work for Jardine, Matheson & Co., but within three years he had started his own company, Glover & Co. In 1861, he acquired the lots at No. 3 and No. 1 Minamiyamate, where he set about building a mansion overlooking the harbor. His company quickly grew, exporting tea, timber, and other goods to the West while importing guns, machinery, and steamships into Japan.

Glover's main connections were in Satsuma (now Kagoshima Prefecture) and Chōshū (now Yamaguchi Prefecture), two domains where there was high interest in acquiring Western technology and overthrowing the shogunal government. Despite the shogunal prohibition, Glover helped young samurai travel abroad, and he was lifelong friends with Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), Japan's first prime minister and a leader in drafting the Meiji Constitution.

After the emperor was restored to power in 1868, Glover took a more active role in supporting the industrialization of Japan's shipbuilding and mining industries. He helped construct Japan's first modern coal mine, in Takashima, as well as its first steam-powered slip dock, which was imported from Scotland.

Glover lived in the house with his wife, Awajiya Tsuru (1851–1899), and his two children, Kuraba Tomisaburō (1871–1945) and Hana Glover (1876–1938). In 1876, Glover moved to Tokyo with his family to work as a consultant for the Mitsubishi Company, and he remained there until his death in 1911. In 1939, his son sold the house to Mitsubishi, and it was donated to Nagasaki City in 1957. The house was designated an Important Cultural Property in 1961 and became a World Heritage Site in 2015.

Architectural Features

The Former Glover House is one of the oldest surviving Western-style buildings in Japan. Architecturally, it resembles a bungalow, a style that originated in British-controlled India as a blending of British and Bengali architecture. Bungalows quickly spread throughout the British Empire, and Glover probably saw them while in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Although the house's design is Japanese, in particular the post-and-beam frame set on boulders, it incorporates many Western features such as hardwood

floors, coal-burning fireplaces, French windows, and a stone-paved veranda.

The house was known for the huge pine that stood beside it, and Glover nicknamed the house “Ipponmatsu” meaning “lone pine.” The tree died and was cut down in 1905.