

Motomachi-Suehirocho Architectural Preservation District

The port of Hakodate partly opened to foreign ships in 1855 following the Treaty of Kanagawa, the first trade agreement between Japan and the United States. The port, along with Nagasaki and Yokohama, was fully opened to foreign trade in 1859. After Hakodate was devastated by fires in the Meiji era (1868–1912), the Motomachi-Suehirocho area evolved into a townscape of buildings with Japanese, Western, and mixed architectural styles, in addition to religious, public, and residential structures. A movement to protect the area's architectural heritage developed around 1975 and lasted till 1989. In 1988, the city designated Motomachi-Suehirocho an official preservation area, and in 1989 the Japanese government added the area to a list of districts with important traditional buildings.