

## The Old Soma House

This was the home of Soma Teppei (1833–1921), one of Hakodate's most prominent merchants. Soma was born in what is now Niigata Prefecture and came to Hakodate at the age of 28. He worked as a rice and seafood trader, and subsequently founded a bank. By the time he was 39 years old he was the city's most successful merchant. Soma strived to promote the development of Hakodate, and funded the reconstruction of the Old Public Hall of Hakodate Ward in 1908.

Soma built this residence in the same year. It is a fusion of Western and traditional Japanese architecture in both its interior and its exterior. Its front entrance has a curved, tiled roof, which is unusual in Hokkaido. The European Room features a distinctive green exterior, elaborately carved window frames, ornate ceiling moldings, and a chandelier. The Living Room is a traditional Japanese space with tatami mats, a floor hearth (*irori*), and a small Shinto shrine (*kamidana*) in the wall above the sliding doors. The stone storehouse (*kura*) adjacent to the main building houses an art collection that includes folding screens featuring scenes of Ainu people and Hokkaido from the Edo period (1603–1868).