

kitamae-bune

Obama was well positioned not only for overland trade routes but also for sea trade. It was a port of call for the *kitamae-bune* merchant ships, which traveled between Osaka and Hokkaido during the Edo period and the Meiji era (1868–1912). The ships brought kelp and herring into the Wakasa region, and carried roof tiles from Wakasa to northern destinations. These roof tiles were particularly resistant to the cold and were loaded on ships for extra weight to stabilize them as they sailed back northward. Those very tiles from Obama can still be seen today on warehouse roofs along Otaru Canal in Hokkaido.