

Atomic Bomb Dome

It is hard to imagine the A-bomb Dome as just another city building, and in a sense it never was. At the time it was built in 1915 as the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, the Hiroshima skyline was still dominated by traditional two-story wooden buildings. The three-story reinforced-brick structure stood out, its five-story central tower topped by a copper ceiling. It was designed to face the river to the west, and so had a large number of windows to maximize natural light. Its exterior was decorated using stone and mortar, and the central staircase beneath the dome would have been a striking sight even for visitors who were familiar with Western-style buildings. The staircase was completely destroyed in the bombing.

Perhaps the most surprising part of the A-bomb Dome's design is the central courtyard, the outline of which is still visible; a twisted iron spiral staircase marks the south side of it. Inside, the walls were plastered, and there were even some basement rooms—a novel concept at the time.

The Industrial Promotion Hall's grand design suited its purpose as a venue for displaying and promoting products from Hiroshima Prefecture, as well as hosting art exhibitions and other large-scale events. The site originally belonged to the Hiroshima Prefecture local government, but ownership was transferred to the city of Hiroshima in 1953.