

## **Warehouses in the Kitahama Area**

After Hokkaido's first railway opened in 1882 to carry coal from inland mines to Otaru's ports, the city's economy and population grew rapidly. Land reclamation efforts created additional areas along the coast to accommodate the needs of the expanding port. The Kitahama district was established on reclaimed land in 1889. Many warehouses were built in Kitahama, which had convenient access to the waterfront and railroads.

Six stone warehouses built by merchant shipowners remain in Kitahama near the north end of Otaru Canal. Three warehouses were built near the Temiya Railway Facility by families from Fukui and Ishikawa Prefectures. These are the Hiroumi Warehouse, built in 1889; the Ukon Warehouse, built in 1894; and the Masuda Warehouse, built in 1903.

The other three warehouses are close to Chuo Street, about halfway along the canal. They are the Otaru Warehouse, built in 1890; the Oie Warehouse built in 1891; and the Shibusawa Warehouse, built in 1895. The warehouses face the canal, where barges moored to unload merchandise from ships in the harbor. Each warehouse has distinctive features, from the decorative double-arched stonework over the doors of the Shibusawa Warehouse to the protective figures of mythical sea creatures on the roof ridges of the Otaru Warehouse buildings.