

## **Former Takahashi Warehouse**

The Takahashi Warehouse was built in 1923 to store goods for wholesale trade. In 1989, the building was renovated and opened as a stained glass museum, exhibiting stained glass windows recovered from churches in England and Europe. Most of the windows on display date from the early twentieth century.

Takahashi Naoji (1856–1926) was 18 years old when he came to Otaru from his hometown in Niigata. He worked as a clerk at a dry goods store for three years to learn the trade before establishing his own business. He began brewing miso and soy sauce and set up a business with his younger brother in 1899, handling consignment sales of rice, miso, soy sauce, and marine products.

The Takahashis became wealthy in the early twentieth century through commodity speculation, buying up beans and grains cheaply and storing them until the price rose to sell for a profit. When the war in Europe in 1914 affected the export of beans from major European producers such as Romania and Hungary, Otaru merchants including the Takahashi family took advantage of the situation. Takahashi Naoji bought up much of Hokkaido's adzuki bean harvest for one season and negotiated with one of Japan's largest shipping companies, Nippon Yusen Kaisha (now known as NYK Line), to ship directly to a trading company in London. Takahashi Naoji was known as the "Adzuki Shogun" when he later entered politics—though it is believed he came up with this name himself.