

Former Iwanaga Clock Store

Five generations of the Iwanaga family sold watches and clocks from an elegant two-story stone building on Sakaimachi Street in Otaru's old shopping district. The Iwanaga Clock Store dates from the early twentieth century. It stands out among the other buildings on the street for its ornate details and large balcony on the second floor. Photographs from the early twentieth century show the balcony being used as a stage for regular performances by a brass band employed by the store. The band performed in striking red and white uniforms, likely to attract customers.

Like many of the warehouses and stores built in Otaru in the early twentieth century, the Iwanaga Clock Store was constructed with a timber framework clad with volcanic stone. However, design elements drawn from both Edo-period (1603–1867) merchant houses and European architecture add a sense of affluence. Pairs of ceramic mythical sea creatures (*shachihoko*) decorate the roof ridge of each building. Commonly seen on castles, this motif was believed to protect against fire and was a symbol of wealth. The arched French doors with decorative masonry on the second floor and the stone columns topped with stylized foliage are typical of the Renaissance Revival style that was fashionable in Europe and the United States in the 1890s.

Currently, the property is occupied by the Otaru Music Box Store Sakaimachi, but the Iwanaga family still runs a business selling timepieces and jewelry on Miyako Street, a few blocks away.