

Former Kaneko Motosaburo Store

The Kaneko Motosaburo Store was built around 1895 after the previous store building burned down. The sturdy stone construction and fireproof features indicate the importance that local merchants and traders placed on protecting their merchandise. Kaneko Motosaburo (1869–1952) was a prominent trader who sold marine products on consignment and moved into shipping, farming, and other fields of business. He was elected the first head of Otaru Ward in 1891 and went on to a career in politics at the local and prefectural level.

The store is one of five along Sakaimachi Street that has *udatsu* firewalls at the front of the building. These stone walls, capped with roof tiles, were designed to prevent fire from spreading from one property to the next in cities where buildings were built close together. The second floor of the building was used for storing merchandise, and its windows were protected by fireproof plastered shutters. The building is a typical example of a Meiji-era (1868–1912) store in Otaru. Today, the building is occupied by an accessories store.