

Former Hokkai Millet Company

The Hokkai Millet Company opened on Sakaimachi Street in 1907 and engaged in consignment sales and trade of millet and other grains until they went out of business in 1931. The building was restored and repurposed in 2022 as a glass gallery, which offers glass craft workshops.

The two-story building occupies a corner of Otaru's busy Sakaimachi shopping street and combines Japanese and European architectural styles. The shape is similar to a typical wooden merchant house of the Edo period (1603–1867) but is clad in volcanic stone. The external stonework of the building is carved with geometric designs, likely influenced by the Renaissance Revival architecture popular in Europe in the late nineteenth century.

It stands out from earlier buildings on the street for its *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 firewalls were adopted by property owners on Sakaimachi Street following a fire in 1902 that destroyed many commercial buildings in the area.