

## **Shimonoseki Nabechō Post Office Building**

This building is home to Japan's oldest operational post office. The mortared brick structure was built in 1900 to house the Akamagaseki Postal Telegraph Office, which itself contained the local post office and telegraph station. The architect, Mitsuhashi Shirō (1867–1915), employed a Renaissance-style design with symmetrical left and right wings enclosing an inner courtyard. The arched entrance is topped with a curved pediment and flanked by pilasters.

The history of a formalized, state-run postal service in Japan begins in the early 1600s, but even before then, messages and goods were delivered through a network of couriers called *hikyaku*. The limited public system was supplemented by the introduction of prepaid postage and regular postal delivery between Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto in 1871, and the system was expanded to cover the rest of the nation from 1872. When the Shimonoseki Nabechō Post Office Building was built, the modern postal service was still young and largely modeled on the British postal system. Telegraphs were an important means of communication, and the building's second floor was taken up by a telegraph office that served the surrounding neighborhood.

The red, pillar-type post box made of cast iron in front of the post office is a more modern version of the round, red-painted versions introduced in 1901. Its design was proposed by Tawaraya Takashichi (1854–1912), the postal equipment manager at the Shimonoseki Nabechō Post Office, and the design was later adopted nationwide.