



# Nishin (Herring)

## The Flourishing of Otaru . Nishin (Herring)

Although it is unclear how far back herring fishing dates, there are records that show herring fishing was a common way of life during the mid-Edo period. Here in Otaru, herring fishing was most prevalent during the 20' s of the Meiji Period and the early Taisho period. Between the Meiji Period and early Showa Period, the scene of herring fishing was a major contributing factor in the formation of Otaru as a city. This has to do with the schools of herring that crowd near the coast around the end of February to lay their eggs, turning the sea white with their spawn. The formation of Otaru as a center for herring fisheries, was also due to the fishermen and their guardhouses that were built along the coast where they gathered from all over Japan during February to spend time eating, sleeping and fishing together. The term Banya derived from the word Ban ie, a shack built to accommodate guardsmen who were sent from the unjoya\*(trading post)during the Edo Period to fish and to keep watch over the fishermen. During the 20' s of the Meiji Period, there were over 90,000 fishermen throughout Hokkaido, 6,000 of them residing in Otaru(Meiji 21). It was common for the captain or boss' s house to be a part of the Banya, and in such cases the dirt floor in the center of the house divided the fishermen' s quarters from the captain' s quarters. The beauty of the building lies in the long and thick wood beams that create an impressive space. The view looking up from the middle of the bunkbeds where the fishermen slept toward the smaller rooms, was especially unique and powerful. Architecturally speaking, this unusual residence expanded into a flat structured dorm where many roomed together was eye-catching. Further, while being an ordinary peasant' s house built in the Japanese architectural structure, the smaller rooms, windows and decorations of residences here in Hokkaido incorporated western elements and design.

\*Tr. note: During the times of the Matsumae clan, the unjoya served as a trading post which evolved later into a customs and administrative post.

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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No. 62

## Shiratori Family Banya (Guardhouse)

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Location:191 Shukuzu 3-chome, Otaru  
Built in the early years of Meiji  
Structure: Wood, one-story

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In the second year of Meiji, in conjunction with the birth of a new government, fishing rights and permanent residency was granted to those who wished to stay near the fishing grounds of Shukuzu. The first generation of the Shiratori family, Kishiro Shiratori, who most likely obtained a fishing right, became the first president of the district in Meiji 10. The Shiratori Banya is the oldest guardhouse of its kind here in Shukuzu. On the left side of the main entrance was the owner's residence with a large sitting room. If you entered from the smaller entrance on the right, there was a space called the daidokoro, where the fishermen stayed, and surrounding the center space, bunkbeds were constructed in an L-shape around the room. The top bunks were hung from the ceiling, a form of construction that was not very common. The rest of the structure was pretty standard for guardhouse construction with the roof hanging on both sides from a large beam, and a chimney which protruded from the roof. Large portions of the interior had been repaired, and due to infrequent use of the building for long periods of time, much damage could be seen. At one point there was even talk of tearing down the building and construct a large public restroom in its place. However, it was renovated into a restaurant with portions of the original building remaining.

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No. 1

## Oie Warehouse

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Location:3-12 Ironai 2-chome, Otaru

Built:1891

Structure: one-story timber framed stone building

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When one imagines an old warehouse in Japan, a gable roof comes to mind, but the exterior of the Oie Warehouse is nothing like what you would imagine, and has a very powerful impact on those who see it. This is due to the large lantern roof and two large arches on the front of the building. The lantern roof is constructed for the purpose of allowing light to enter the warehouse. The two arches on the lower part of the front of the building were added to give the building a more friendly appearance than what normal warehouses look like. Sapporo soft stone is used for the exterior wall siding, and new soft stone is used for the right arch. This is because there used to be an opening for trucks to load cargo, and the arch was restored to its original state. The lines that can be seen above the arch are from a roof that was attached to separate beans(the roof was ordered to be torn down during the war and no longer exists). The “Yamashichi” logo on the front is derived from the fourth generation owner’ s name, Shichibei Oie, who was from Kaga prefecture and who once worked for the Kaetsuno Railway,which played a great role in the development of Otaru during the Meiji Period, and who worked for the marine industry and incorporated steamships into the business.

Present Day Kitaichi Glass Co.,Ltd.

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No. 13

## Otaru Warehouse

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Location:1-20 Ironai 2-chome, Otaru

Built between 1890 - 1894

Structure / Timber framed stone warehouse Office/2 story timber framed brick building

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The Otaru Warehouse is synonymous with soft stone warehouses of Otaru. The first thing that catches your eye is its extremely long structure that stretches along the shoreline of Otaru. The gentle color of the soft stone exterior of the office building in the middle is accentuated with the striking color of the red bricks. There are eight killer whale pikes that adorn the rooftops which are also eye-catching. The structure of timber frame with stone exterior, was a very popular method of construction seen during the mid-Meiji Period in Otaru. At the time of construction during that period, merchants from Kaga, Echizen, and Noto who made up the Kaetsuno Merchants, a new powerful influence eclipsing the former influence of the Omi and Echigo merchants, began to flourish here in Otaru. Magozaimon Nishide and Shohachi Nishitani were both from Kaga prefecture, and their influence is evident even in their architecture. Currently the building is in use as the Otaru Canal Plaza, a central hub for tourism in Otaru and the canal area. In addition to this, the unique layout of the building that provides an inner court is utilized to host events and has become a much appreciated presence in the lives of the citizens of Otaru.

Present Day Otaru City Museum

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No. 21

## Kimura Warehouse

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Location: 7-26 Sakaimachi, Otaru

Built: 1891

Structure: Timber framed 2 story building

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There used to be a large rock near the beach in Sakaimachi known as "tateiwa" which obstructed transportation. The rock was removed in the later part of the Meiji Period, making the entire area a wharf and stores went up along the wharf. Prior to this, Enkichi Kimura owned and operated a chain of warehouses in Sakaimachi. Besides this he was widely involved and successful in other industries such as seafood, marine products, and real estate, and thus built the business related warehouses No. 1 through No. 9. The No.3 warehouse, known as the Kimura warehouse, is still standing and in use to this day. The central interior of the warehouse is divided into two parts by a hallway, and the railway which was used for the trolley to haul in equipment from the docks is still preserved. Glass art, now a signature feature of tourism in Otaru, has been prevalent for many years, and this warehouse which has been used as a glass shop since 1983 has become an iconic representation of the renovated and preserved warehouses in the city of Otaru.

Present Day Kitaichi Glass Co., Ltd.

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No.63

## Shinoda Warehouses

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Location:5-4Minato-cho, Otaru

Built in 1925

Structure: 2 story timber framed brick building

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This warehouse was built by Jihichi Shinoda who was originally from Mino Province(present day Gifu Prefecture), and who started out selling Mino Umbrellas. It is one of the few red brick warehouses that were built in Otaru and stands out against the other buildings that were made of soft stone and concrete.

One of its features is a traditional Japanese style of architecture known as hirairi, where the main entrance is placed on the side that runs parallel to the roof, and another entrance that is place on the side of the building perpendicular to the roof. This is contrary to most of the warehouses in Otaru which have entrances on the side of the building perpendicular to the roof. It is possible that since the entrances are placed on the side of the building, that you see many warehouses that have lots of doors on the canal side as well as the road side. Daido Warehouse with its steel doors was constructed by a group of seven companies who were in business in Arihoro between the later part of the Meiji Period and the early Taisho Period. However, After the war in 1946, the companies were forced to merge into one corporation by the government. In 1996, renovations brought the new brick look to the warehouse, but the bricks were treated to appear aged and weathered.

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第 20 号  
渋澤倉庫

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Location:3-20 Ironai 3-chome, Otaru  
Built:1895(Meiji 28)  
Structure: One-story timber framed stone building

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The impact the Shibusawa Warehouses has on those who see them compares favorably to the Oie and Otaru Warehouses. This is owed to the wings that spread on each side. Although this sort of architecture was seen quite often in the architecture of buildings during the Meiji Period such as the Japan Mail Steamer Co. and former Hokkaido Government Office Building, it was not common for warehouses. The sides of the U-shaped building are comprised of two long warehouses with gable roofs. The two long warehouses were thought to have been built separately judging from the stone and entrance construction used.

Present Day Otaru Cruise Service

No.22

## Masuda Warehouses

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Location: 10-9 Ironai 3-chome, Otaru

Built:1903(Meiji 36)

Structure: 2 story timber framed stone building

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Masuda, Hiroumi and Ukon Warehouses are located on the north side of the Otaru Canal and appear in their near original form even today. They all have entrances perpendicular to the roof on the canal side, and are timber framed stone buildings built between the 20' s and 30' s of the Meiji Period. Compared to the Ukon and Hiroumi Warehouses that have arches and lantern roofs, the Masuda Warehouse has a clean modern exterior except for the gable roofs that add an original charm.

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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No.23

## Tomokichi Kamise Store

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Location:1-5 Irifune 1-chome, Otaru  
Built:1920(Taisho 10)  
Structure: 3 story stone building

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Following the end of the Meiji Period, 3 story stone office buildings were being built in Otaru. Like the Otaru News Paper Company(built in 1906, presently moved to the Hokkaido Historical Village), the Tomokichi Kamise Store was a rare example of such construction. As was mentioned earlier, the majority of the stone warehouses in Otaru were built with timber frame structures. This however, was built without the timber frame, and consists only of large stones that were placed on top of each other. For this very reason, this building is highly valuable.

Present Day Yume Kobo

No.42

## Shimatani Warehouses

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Location: 2-17 Ironai 1-chome, Otaru

Built:1892(Meiji 25)

Structure: One-story timber framed stone building

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This small and quaint warehouse was built like the other historical warehouses in the area, with timber frame structure and stone. The walls show evidence that other buildings were once attached. The narrow street in front is known as the “Denuki Komichi” and acted as the borderline between Kitahama and Ironai during the Meiji Period. Presently it is sandwiched between Ironai Street and Otaru Minato-sen Ave., giving it the appearance of an alley, but the warehouses that crowd together here give one a feeling of the atmosphere of an era that has passed.

Present Day Kita No Ice Cream Ya San

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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No.43

## Sakusabe Store Storehouse

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Location: 15-3 Sumiyoshi-cho, Otaru  
Built: Early Meiji Period  
Structure: 2 story clay building

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Many of the timber framed stone warehouses seen in Otaru were built during the middle of the Meiji Period. Prior to this, in the early part of the Meiji Period, clay storehouses and warehouses known as “kura” were commonplace. This clay kura or storehouse is one of the few clay structured storehouses left in Otaru, and is considered very valuable. The roof and exterior walls are constructed with clay for fire prevention, then the exterior wall is protected with wooden panels. The method of incorporating wooden panels into the construction of the wall exterior can also be found in the clay kuras of Esashi, Hokkaido, which also faces the Sea of Japan. The roofs of these kuras are made with steep rafters.

Present Day Sea Boat

No.51

## Takahashi Warehouses

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Location:2-17 Ironai 1-chome, Otaru

Built:1923(Taisho 12)

Structure: 2 story timber framed stone building

It is said that Naoharu Takahashi, the man who built the warehouse, was a grain merchant who exported azuki beans to the West during the first world war and made a fortune, which even affected the London stock market. This warehouse was used to store the azuki beans. Takahashi was also a famed politician who became the first member of the House of Representatives from Otaru, and later was selected to be a member of the House of Lords. In 1989, the warehouse was renovated and reopened, but there were few tourists at that time in the area, so the preservation and reuse of warehouses like this one along the Otaru Canal became a valuable endeavor of its time.

Present Day Ishihara Yujiro Memorial Hall Photo Studio

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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No.53

## Nippon Oil Corporation Co., Warehouse

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Location:6-18 Ironai 3-chome, Otaru

Built:1920(Taisho 9)

Structure: one-story timber framed building

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Because this warehouse is presently used as a rest area for a park, visitors can enjoy the opportunity of taking a good look at what they normally can't see, the inside of the warehouse. A queen post truss, a type of Western structure was used for the roof, and creates a large square right in the middle of the triangle formed by the roof. The building was rebuilt in 1998(Heisei 10), prior to the opening of the Canal Park.

Present Day Canal Park Rest Area

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photo Makoto Iwanami, photographer

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No.54

## Japan Mail Steamer Co. Otaru Branch Cargo Warehouse

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Location:7-6 Ironai 3-chome, Otaru  
Built:1906 (Meiji 39)  
Structure: one-story stone building

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Though unnoticeable at first glance, this warehouse built right next door to the glamorous Japan Mail Steamer Otaru Branch is historically very valuable. The warehouse was built at the same time as the CEO residence, designed and constructed by Shichijiro Satachi and Iwakichi Yamaguchi. For this reason, there are similarities between the president's residence and the warehouse. Evidence shows that the soft stone used was most likely from Tenguyama, Otaru, and the size of stones and method of stacking the stones are alike. The buckling roof and queen post trusses are also seen in both the residence and the warehouses.

Present Day Otaru Natori Co.

No.64

## Okazaki Warehouse

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Location: Warehouse 1: 2-2 Nobuka-cho, Otaru Warehouse 2, 3: 2-24 Nobuka-cho, Otaru  
Built: Warehouse 1, 1905 (Meiji 38), Warehouses 2,3, 1906 (Meiji 39)  
Structure: One-story timber framed stone house, with partial second floor

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Nobuka-cho, the first area in Otaru to be urbanized between the end of the Edo Period and beginning of the Meiji Period, was one of the eight towns in Otaru to be named by the Hokkaido Development Commission in 1870. This warehouse built in the later part of the Meiji Period was constructed with a couple roof, in which no cross beams are used and the rafters are not tied or bound together. In order to prevent the beams or the foundation from rotting, bricks were used for the foundation for all three warehouses, and soft stone on top. The walls have been repaired in 1996 (Heisei 8).

Present Day Tanaka Sake Brewery Co., Kikkogura

No.65

## Ukon Warehouse

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Location:10-18 Ironai 3-chome, Otaru

Built 1894(Meiji 27)

Structure: One-story timber framed stone building

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This warehouse was built by Kenzaemon Ukon, the owner of a Kitamae trade ship. The [//] logo on the gable wall of the warehouse represented a pair of chopsticks, and was used for the ship's ensign as well. A queen post truss was used for the lantern roof. You can see that the color of the soft stone on the bottom of the front is different, and this is due to repairs that were made to the warehouse following the damage done due to high winds in 1995 (Heisei 7). The front of the building indicates that the building is asymmetrical, with an archway entrance in the middle and on the left side, a unique characteristic of the building.

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photo Makoto Iwakabø, photographer

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第 66 号  
広海倉庫

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Location:10-19 Ironai 3-chome,Otaru

Built:1889(Meiji 22)

Structure: One-story timber framed stone building

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Built by Nisaburo Hiroumi, a Kaga merchant, who dealt in marine products of the North, salt and sugar. The shoreline has receded considerably from its original area, where a railway once passed in the back, and it was a very convenient location for loading and unloading cargo. The roof has what is called a lantern roof which is built a little higher at the top to allow sunlight inside the warehouse. The archway entrance on the front is also an attractive characteristic.

Present Day Kitaichi Glass Co., Ltd.

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photo Makoto Iwakabō, photographer

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No.73

## Mukai Formal Wear Branch Warehouse

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Location:4-13 Inaho 1-chome, Otaru  
Built:1907(Meiji 40)  
Structure: Brick, 4 story building

One of the few brick warehouses seen in Otaru, with an atmosphere unlike the other warehouses. This tall four-story warehouse fits in perfectly with city construction. These dark colored bricks known as clinker bricks do not take in much water and are very durable, while adding a touch of variation to the exterior. A mud-plastered fireproof door has been installed on the inside, after a large fire swept through Inaho in 1904(Meiji 37).

Present Day Cafe and Bar CANAL