



# PORTSMOUTH-NICHINAN SISTER CITY CHERRY TREES

PORTSMOUTH SIGNED A SISTER CITY AGREEMENT with Nichinan, Japan in 1986 after the mayor of Nichinan contacted Portsmouth's mayor in 1985 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty here. The Sister City agreement continues to this day.

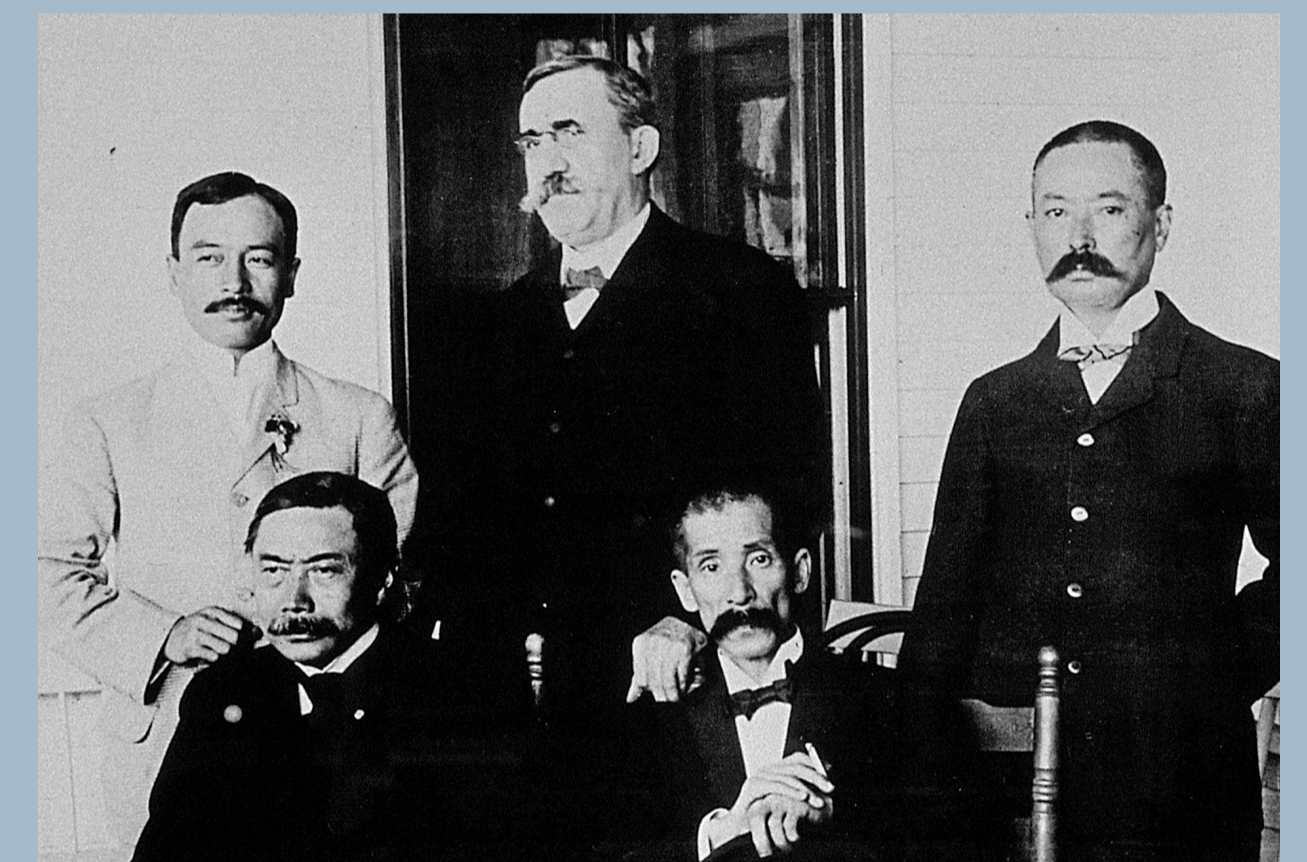
Sister Cities International was created at President Eisenhower's 1956 White House summit on citizen diplomacy, where he envisioned a network that would champion peace and prosperity by fostering bonds between Americans and citizens from different communities around the world. By forming these relationships, President Eisenhower believed that people from different cultures could understand, appreciate, and celebrate their differences while building partnerships that would lessen the chance of conflicts. Since its inception, the Sister Cities International network has played a key role in renewing and strengthening important global relationships. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, "The City of the Open Door," maintains Sister City relationships in Japan, Hungary, Russia, Ghana, Estonia, as well as a Friendship City relationship with Portsmouth, England.



Left:  
Cherry trees at City Hall.  
Photograph courtesy of  
Japan-America Society of NH.

## BARON JUTARO KOMURA OF NICHINAN, JAPAN

Jutaro Komura (1855-1911) was born in Nichinan. After graduating from Tokyo University he received a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1878. He then returned to Japan, serving in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Privy Minister for China, Vice Minister and subsequently Minister of America, Russia, and China. In 1901 Komura became Foreign Minister in the Katsura Cabinet. In 1902 he negotiated the Anglo-Japanese Agreement and in 1905 he negotiated the Russo-Japanese Treaty in Portsmouth formally ending the Russo-Japanese War. His distinguished service as a diplomat ended with his premature death at the age of 56.



Above: Baron Jutaro Komura (seated and looking at camera), with lead Japanese diplomats and an American advisor to the delegation, at Wentworth By the Sea. Courtesy of the Portsmouth Athenaeum.

## NICHINAN, JAPAN & THE PORTSMOUTH CHERRY TREES

The cherry trees along both sides of the South Mill Pond near City Hall are part of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty Living Memorial. The larger cherry trees on the banks of the pond were planted in 1985, thanks to a gift from Nichinan, Japan. Portsmouth's Sister City and the hometown of Baron Jutaro Komura, the lead Japanese diplomat at the 1905 peace conference that ended the Russo-Japanese War.

In 2012 the Japan-America Society of NH arranged for Portsmouth to be one of 36 cities to receive grafts of the iconic cherry trees in Washington, D.C. that had been given in 1912 by Japan in recognition of the United States' role in bringing the Russo-Japanese war to an end. These descendants were planted at a variety of sites in the city, including a number that played key roles in the Peace Treaty Conference.



The Nichinan Chamber of Commerce & Industry building in Nichinan, Japan (right) was designed to resemble Building 86 at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (left), where the Portsmouth Peace Treaty was signed. Chamber presidents and mayors of Nichinan have frequently led delegations of Japanese citizens to Portsmouth to celebrate Treaty anniversaries. In 1992, Portsmouth officials helped Nichinan celebrate the opening of the Komura Memorial Hall and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry building in Nichinan.



Above left: Building 86 at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, Postcard, 1905. Courtesy of Portsmouth Athenaeum.  
Above right: Nichinan Chamber of Commerce & Industry building modeled after Building 86. Photograph courtesy of Japan-America Society of NH.



## STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH NICHINAN

In 1997 Nichinan Gakuen Junior-Senior High School joined Portsmouth High School in establishing a Sister School relationship. They have maintained an active homestay exchange program ever since. Delegations of students from Portsmouth have visited the school in Japan, where the central campus building is named Portsmouth Hall. Nichinan Gakuen students travel to Portsmouth each year and have participated in Peace Treaty anniversary celebrations as well as cherry tree plantings.

Above left: 110th Portsmouth Peace Treaty Anniversary with Nichinan students attending. Photograph by Ioanna Raptis for Seacoast Media Group.  
Above right: Nichinan Gakuen and Portsmouth High School students with cherry trees. Photograph courtesy of Japan-America Society of NH.

Funding for this historic marker was provided by the City of Portsmouth, 2018.

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