

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Fort Astoria

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Corner of 15th and Exchange Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Astoria

VICINITY OF

1st

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Clatsop

CODE

007

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENC
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Astoria

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall, 1095 Duane Street

CITY, TOWN

Astoria

VICINITY OF

STATE

Oregon

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clatsop County Court House, County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 178

CITY, TOWN

Astoria

STATE

Oregon

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of original Fort Astoria is located a short distance south of the Columbia River. Most of the fort site has been built over by the modern city of Astoria, but a small plot of clear ground has been preserved and kept free of modern structures. Originally, the log buildings of Fort Astoria consisted of apartments for the proprietors and clerks, with a capacious dining hall for both, extensive warehouses for the trading goods and furs, a trading shop, smith's forge and etc. The complex was surrounded by a stockade fifteen feet high. A gallery ran around the stockades in which loop-holes were pierced sufficiently large for muskets. Two strong bastions built of logs commanded the four sides of the square; each bastion had two stories in which a number of chosen men slept every night. A six pound cannon was placed in the lower story and they were both well provided with small arms.

Today the site is maintained by the city as a park and features a reconstructed blockhouse and explanatory historical sign. The blockhouse, constructed in 1956, is of Wolmanized fir with cedar shake roof; the two rows of pickets extending to the concrete wall are also of Wolmanized fir posts. The backdrop, depicting other buildings comprising the original Fort Astoria, is painted on a concrete wall which forms the north boundary of the historic site lot. A large wooden slab sign outlines the floor plan of the original Fort Astoria and later Fort George.

The site is near the center of the business district, but as the site is so small many travellers by car unwittingly pass it.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1811-1813**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Astoria is one of the most significant sites of the American Fur Trade, symbolizing John Jacob Astor's great bid to break the British monopoly of the northwest trade. It commemorates the powerful commercial and political influences exerted by the fur trade interests. It also represents an important American claim to the Oregon Country even though the effort made in 1811-1813 failed.

Astor was born in Germany but came to the United States in 1784 and immediately entered the fur trade. He exhibited an amazingly keen grasp of the industry and soon extended his operation into the area of the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley. By 1800, Astor had become the leading fur merchant in the United States and also an important ship owner.

Astor was considerably irked by the knowledge that powerful British interests especially the Northwest Company, had a virtual monopoly over the fur trade, not only beyond the border of the United States but within her boundaries as well. Astor, having conceived the idea of his own fur monopoly, received a charter from the New York legislature to organize the American Fur Company. On June 23, 1810, Astor formed the Pacific Fur Company as a subsidiary of the American Fur Company for the expressed purpose of operating in the Oregon Country. He proposed to establish a line of interior trading posts along the Missouri and Columbia Rivers which would create a more direct line of communication between the source of supply and the trading company. At the mouth of the Columbia, Astor planned to establish his chief trading house to be supplied from New York.

The Astor expedition crossed the Columbia River bar on March 22, 1811. A party of men landed and construction of Fort Astoria began on April 12, 1811. This post was located on the south bank of the Columbia, only a few miles from the site of the Lewis and Clark former fort, Fort Clatsop.

Initially the plan of Astor succeeded. In 1811-1812 trapping parties scattered through the Columbia basin and took many furs. The Northwest Company was forced to increase the number of its posts to meet the American challenge. For a time it seemed that the Astorians might get the upper hand, but in 1813 Astor's supply ship failed to arrive with trading goods and the War of 1812 also intervened to decisively end the career of Fort Astoria.

(Continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Faced with the certainty of capture by British naval forces, the Pacific Fur Company sold Fort Astoria and their other fur posts to the Northwest Company on October 16, 1813, thus ending Astor's dream of empire on the Pacific Coast. In November, the British occupied Fort Astoria and renamed it Fort George. Fort George was the principal western depot of the British fur companies from 1813 to 1825. However, in 1829, the Hudson Bay Company reoccupied Fort George and continued to hold the post until American occupation of the Oregon Country in 1846. But even by 1841 Fort George had greatly decayed.

During the entire period of the Oregon boundary dispute, one of the principal arguments which the American government advanced to prove its claim to Oregon was the establishment of the American fur trading post at Fort Astoria in 1811. On June 21, 1850, the United States Army occupied the Fort George site as a military reservation.

