

FORT ROSS

STATE HISTORIC PARK

The Warehouse Exhibits

The fur warehouse is the most recent building to be constructed at Fort Ross. This building and the exhibits represent three of the original warehouses used by the Russian American Company.

These warehouses, which were located within the fort's walls, served many functions. One stored valuable trade items and served as a store where employees could purchase goods. Another housed tools and materials for woodworking, blacksmithing and other trades. The third was for storing and processing fur.

As you enter the warehouse, you will see goods from all over the world. These were for trade or employees could purchase them with their wages.

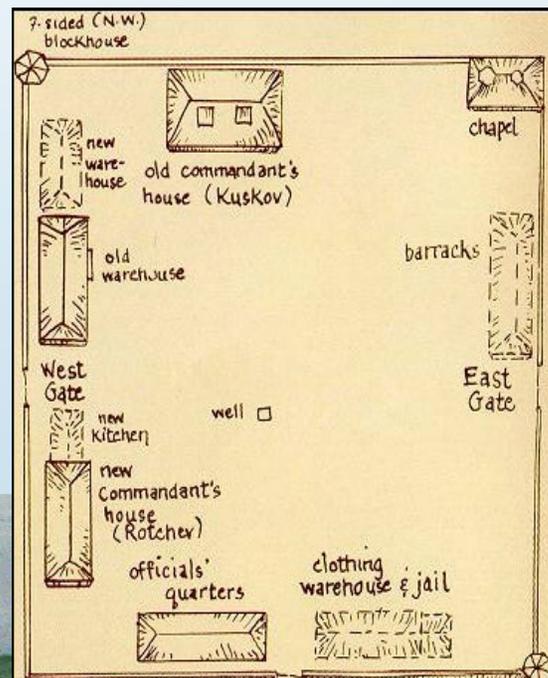
Notice the food and produce, much of which was grown at the fort. Some of the original orchards still exist today. In the second room, touch the furs on the table. Notice the thick, soft sea otter fur that made these animals so valuable.

On the other table, you will see goods company employees made at the fort for trade with the missions. You will also see supplies for the shipyard at Sandy Beach Cove, just below the fort.

In its heyday, Fort Ross was a center of international trade and commerce.



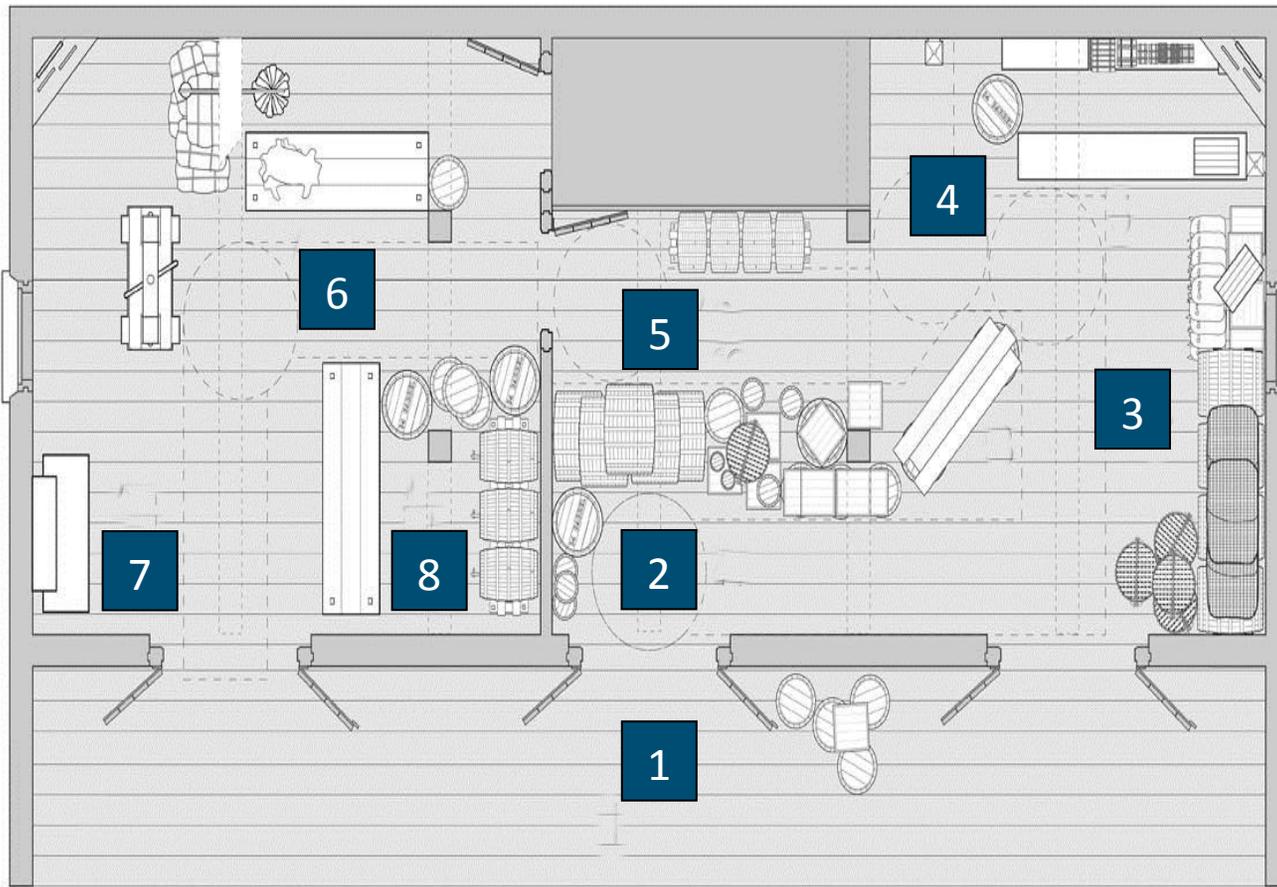
Valuable animal furs were sorted by type and quality. Like modern-day shrink wrap, waterproof hide was used to bale furs for shipment and trade.



The FORT

about 1841

The fur warehouse is located on the site of the Old Warehouse.



1 Welcome

Russian American Company clerks kept detailed records of trade transactions, employee salaries and supplies for the fort. California State Parks used their records as the basis for the warehouse exhibits.

2 Incoming Shipments

The Russian American Company traded with merchants as far away as China and Chile. As you enter the warehouse through the center door, you see boxes, barrels, crates, and sacks piled high. Notice the labels in different languages. Can you guess which countries these goods came from?

3 Warehouse

As you walk through the first room, you see a shipment in the process of being unpacked and sorted. Precious silk and tea arrived from China and spices from India. Tobacco, pottery, and other goods came from the eastern United States. Woolen clothing, gin, wine, and fineries were imported from Europe and coconut oil from Hawaii.

4 Company Store

One of the warehouses in the fort functioned as a company store where employees could purchase goods with their wages, paid in "scrip." Rank and ethnic background determined a person's salary. Employees would purchase items they could not grow or make. What would you buy with your salary?

5 Agriculture and Food Products

Walk past the stairs and you see barrels on a wooden rack and salted meat hanging from the beams. Apples, pears, peaches, grapes, and potatoes were among the different types produce grown by the Company. Goods like wine, gin, rum, coffee, tea, spices, salt and sugar were imported. While some of these items were consumed here, much of it was shipped to the Alaskan colonies or traded with the missions.

6 Fur Processing

As you enter the second room, you see a table with hides and furs sorted and laid out. Touch the different furs on the table. Fur was sorted and weighed before baling. You can see the type of scale and weights that they used. After weighing, the furs were then baled in waterproof hide for shipment. Lead seals indicated the type and quality of the furs in the bales. *Not installed yet: fur press.*

7 Clerk's Area

Walk past the fur processing area to the clerk's desk. On the desk are ledgers showing incoming and outgoing shipments, account transactions from the Company store, employees' wages, and "bills of lading" from ships.

8 Materials Store

On the table opposite the clerk's desk, you see items made at the fort. Tin and copper cups, iron tools and agricultural items for the missions, and other trade items are ready to be packed inside barrels and crates. Also stored here are raw materials and tools the craftsmen would use for their work. These tools and materials would have been checked out and returned on a daily basis.