

Magasin at Fort Ross

At the old Russian settlement in the Fort Ross State Historic Park, there were plans to construct a replica of the Russian era *Magasin* or Warehouse that once dominated the western side of the stockade area. It was a two story building, approximately 56 feet long by 28 feet wide (8 *sazhens* by 4 *sazhens* in the Russian measures). It was one of the first buildings constructed at Fort Ross in 1812 when the settlement was founded by Ivan Kuskov.

Click on thumbnail below for full-size image.



Archaeological work on the site was previously undertaken by Cabrillo College (in 1975-1977) directed by Rob Edwards and by the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1981 under the direction of Glenn Farris. The project architect, Manoushan Azam, has worked closely with Russian architectural historian Igor Medvedev to take the historical and archaeological evidence to create a scale model of what the building probably looked like. The building was described in the final inventory of sale prepared for John Sutter as follows:

Le vieux magasin a deux étages fait de poutres, long (eur) 8 t. (toises), larg (eur) 4 t. (toises), entouré de péristyle. [The Old Warehouse has two stories, built of logs, length 8 *toises* (fathoms), width 4 *toises*, surrounded by a peristyle (open gallery)]. Note: the Russian fathom (*sazhen*) was 7 feet long rather than the English 6 foot fathom.

In the late 1830s there was apparently an additional warehouse structure added to the original "Old Warehouse" on the north end. The Cabrillo College work had focused on what we now believe to be the "New Warehouse" while the 1981 project uncovered evidence of the "Old Warehouse." In preparation for the reconstruction, a Sonoma State Archaeological team co-directed by Michael Newland and Michael Meyer has been trying to resolve some unanswered questions about the site layout.

Although there were relatively few artifacts from the Russian era found at the site, some of them were very important to our knowledge of the structure. Small glass trade beads were found in the north half of the Old Warehouse site, suggesting that this room was used for storage of this important trade good. These small beads probably sifted through the floor boards and thus left their evidence for the placement of this room. Being a warehouse that was not destroyed by a disaster, it was most certainly cleaned out before the departure of the Russians in 1841.

Collections are housed at the State Archaeological Collections Research Facility in West Sacramento.

