

## John Jacob Astor's Biography

*Underline or circle important events as you read through the biography.*

John Jacob Astor was born in 1763 to a butcher in Germany. In the 1780s, Astor immigrated to the United States. He opened a small trading shop for furs in New York City in 1786.

Then in 1794, the US signed a treaty allowing trade with Canada. Astor began to import furs from Montreal, and then sold them in Europe. In 1800, he expanded his fur trade business to China in exchange for tea and other goods. After a US Embargo Act disrupted trade with Canada, Astor founded the American Fur Company in 1808 in order to control trade along the Great Lakes and Columbia River.

In 1811, Fort Astoria was constructed as a trading post along the Columbia River with the help of Astor's fur trappers. Shortly thereafter, the War of 1812 broke out between Britain and the United States, and the fort was under threat of British capture. Astor and his officials agreed to sell the fort to the Canadian North West Company in 1813.

Astor continued in trade after selling Fort Astoria, and tried to monopolize trade in the West. He convinced Congress in 1816 to prohibit non-citizens from owning fur trading operations. This law forced the competing North West Company to sell its holdings south of the Great Lakes to Astor. He lobbied to Congress again in 1822 to close government-operated trading posts. When the legislation passed, the trading posts had to close. Astor's company succeeded in monopolizing the market, controlling the entire Great Lakes region and much of the Mississippi Valley.

In 1834, John Jacob Astor sold his fur company. Astor died in 1848. At the time of his death, Astor was one of the wealthiest men the country. His family's fortune lasted several generations. Astoria, Oregon, is named after his legacy in the fur trade industry.

## Timeline Activity

Add dates to each event listed below. Cut out each event along the dotted lines and rearrange them in chronological order.

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- Sold his fur company

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- Born in Germany

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- Began trading furs for tea with China

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- War broke out between the British and US

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- Died one of the richest men in the country

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- Expanded fur trade to Columbia River and the Pacific Coast

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- Lobbied Congress to close government operated trading posts

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- Opened a small fur trading shop

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- US government created a treaty allowing trade with Canada

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- Sold Fort Astoria to Canadian Northwest Co.

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- Founded the American Fur Company

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- Lobbied Congress to prohibit non-citizens from owning fur-trading operations

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