

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Brookstown Mill

Local Historic Landmark #36

200 Brookstown Ave., Winston-Salem

Construction Date: 1836-1880

Adaptive Rehabilitation Date: 1980

Landmark Designation Date: 11/02/1981

The Fries Industrial complex (Brookstown Mill) is the oldest physical reminder of forgotten elements in the history of Winston-Salem. Although the development and reputation of the city were dominated by tobacco manufacturing, its industrial foundations were laid by the textile industry. The Moravian town of Salem is significant for its craft traditions, but it also played an equally important role in the industrial revolution of the 19th century and the transition to industries of mass production. While the contributions of well-known local families such as Hanes, Gray, and Reynolds have long been recognized, the achievements in manufacturing, banking, and transportation of Salem's Fries family were also vital to the development and growth of what is today Winston-Salem.

The roots of Salem's textile tradition go back to the town's founding in 1766. In that year, Gottfried Praezel, a weaver, set up a hand loom in Salem's First House (Local Historic Landmark #1).

Weaving continued as an important craft through the 18th and early 19th centuries. A 1782 roster of the Single Brothers' House listed six weavers and a similar roster made in 1794 noted that the Single Sisters House housed five weavers.



Courtesy of Heather Fearnbach

The invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s increased the supply of cotton for spinning and weaving. However, textile production in Salem remained a small industry until 1815 when a dam was constructed

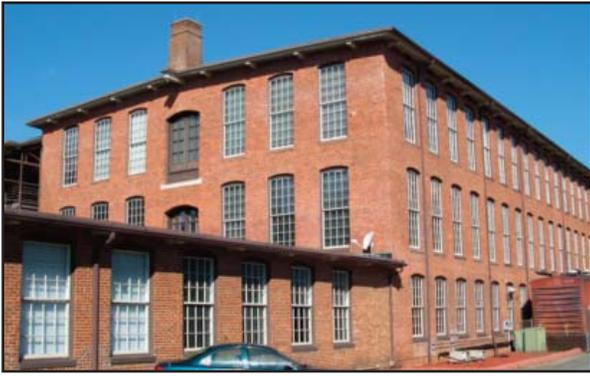


Courtesy of Heather Fearnbach

across Peters Creek and a water-powered, wool-carding machine was installed for custom carding.

The mass production of textiles came in 1835, when Francis Fries and other businessmen organized the Salem Manufacturing Company. The stockholders of the company held their first meeting on July 8, 1836, and decided to construct a factory on the western edge of Salem. Fries supervised the construction of a mill building, which was a brick structure of three-stories with a cupola on the north end. The mill was equipped with spinning frames and an engine purchased from Baltimore, Maryland.

Fries later decided to resign from the company and he built a woolen mill on Brookstown Avenue one block east of the Salem Manufacturing Company.



Courtesy of Heather Fearnbach



Arista Cotton Mill, post 1880
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens

During the 1840s and 1850s, the Salem Manufacturing Company fell upon hard times; however, Fries's business was flourishing. He and his brother, Henry, established the Fries Manufacturing Company in 1846. Ten years later, the Fries brothers acquired the failing Salem Manufacturing Company and fitted it with flour milling machinery. Unfortunately, the Civil War proved to be costly to the family business. Francis Fries died in 1863 at the age of 51.

Following the war, the Fries family slowly rebuilt its industrial empire. The sons of Francis Fries entered the business during this time. It was not until 1880 that the company could undertake a new manufacturing project. That year, Francis H. Fries supervised the construction of a spinning and weaving mill known as Arista.

The Arista Cotton Mill was located one block west of the original Fries woolen and cotton factory and next door to the Salem Manufacturing Company (which had become Wachovia Flour Mills in 1856). This mill was one of the first in the South to use electric lighting. Originally equipped with 3,312 spindles, that amount was doubled within five years. Overall, the mill provided employment for approximately 150 workers. The remaining complex, known as Brookstown Mill, is a visible reminder of one of North Carolina's foremost industries (textiles) and one of its most important families.

In 1980, the complex was rehabilitated in an adaptive reuse project that included an inn, office, and restaurant space.

In 2004, a marker entitled "Salem Cotton Manufacturing Company and Arista Cotton Mill" was placed at Brookstown Mill as part of the City of Winston-Salem's Historic Marker Program.

Today Brookstown Mill continues to house the Brookstown Inn, a restaurant, and the Winston-Salem Visitor Center.



F&H Fries Manufacturing, Date Unknown
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Arista Cotton Mill Complex National Register Nomination
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY0779.pdf>

<http://www.brookstowninn.com/>

<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Buildings/index.php?state=NC&city=Winston-Salem&id=22028>

http://www.cityofws.org/Assets/CityOfWS/Documents/Planning/HRC/Historic_Marker_Program/MarkerSheets/SalemCottonManuf.pdf



This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>