

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Single Brothers' House

Local Historic Landmark #46

600 S. Main St., Winston-Salem

(Original Salem Lot 62)

Construction Date: 1769, 1786

Restoration Date: 1964

Landmark Designation Date: 12/06/1982

The Single Brothers, a group of single men (the Moravians referred to such groups as “Choirs”), lived and worked in this impressive structure located at the southwest corner of S. Main and Academy Streets. They produced and sold much of the goods in Salem, and while they paid required fees to the Church, they also kept a share of the profits for their own organization. The Single Brothers’ craft shops, distillery, brewery, and slaughterhouse comprised a manufacturing enterprise unlike anything found in the Carolina backcountry.

At the age of 14, Salem boys left their parents to live in the Single Brothers’ House – this was the age they were expected to begin training for their ultimate professions. Those who appeared to have a strong academic aptitude were usually sent to the Moravian School in Nazareth, Pennsylvania for an advanced education to prepare for work as teachers, ministers, and business leaders. However, most of the boys were steered into a craft; each boy was apprenticed to a master craftsman. Following the apprenticeship, which was usually a seven-year period, boys would achieve the rank of journeyman. Once that status was achieved, young men remained in the house to practice their craft, as long as they remained single. Once married, a man had to immediately leave



Single Brothers' House – Lot 62, c. 1890
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens
via Digital Forsyth (<http://www.digitalforsyth.org>)



the house and go into business for himself, giving up all rights into the affairs of the Single Brothers’ “Choir.”

The Single Brothers’ House was designed by Fredric William Marshall, the Administrator of Wachovia. Once the house was designed, a decision was made to initially build only half the structure. Construction began in 1768, four years prior to Salem’s formal occupation. The Single Brothers’ House was the first institutional building in Salem. Master carpenter Christian Triebel and master mason Melchoir Rasp supervised construction and the building was completed in 1769.

The second half of the Single Brothers’ House was constructed in 1785-1786. Johann Gottlob Krause served as the mason on this southern portion, incorporating a Flemish bond brick pattern, with glazed header detail that was to become a trademark of late 18th and early 19th century Salem construction.

When the second portion was added, it necessitated alteration of the original building’s floorplan. The completed building had a meeting hall, dining room, sleeping hall, prayer hall, and kitchen in the southern half. The upper story sleeping hall of the original building was converted to four smaller rooms and a central hall, and the former saal (a room to hold worship services) turned into two smaller rooms and a central hall.

Unfortunately, economic problems, due in part to a breakdown in internal discipline, forced the closure of the Single Brothers’ House in 1823. After it briefly housed the Boys’ School, the house primarily served as an apartment building for the next 100 years. In 1842,

the occupants of the Widows' House in Salem moved into the southern portion of the house. The Single Brothers' House continued to provide housing to widows and unmarried Moravian women until 1961, when it was leased to Old Salem, Inc.

The Single Brothers' House experienced exterior physical alterations during the 19th and 20th centuries. Weatherboards were installed over the timber-frame portion of the building in 1826. During 1889-1890, the Main Street elevation was raised for the new streetcar system. This raised the sidewalk elevation as well, covering the front steps and cellar windows. In the 20th century, Moravian hoods were installed over the entry doors, and dormers were added to the new tile roof.

The Single Brothers' House is the largest half-timbered building in North Carolina. As previously mentioned, the house was constructed in two phases. The first portion is a six-bay, double-pile, 2½-story, half-timber building with a double-leaf entry with a five-light rectangular transom above. The infill material between the heavy timbers is brick and mortar. Windows are six-over-six. A pent roof finished in wood shingles and supported by exposed joist

ends is constructed directly beneath the second-floor windows. This roof wraps around the northeast corner of the building and continues across the north façade. The side-gable roof with flared eaves is finished in tile.

The second portion, added to the southern elevation of the original building, is a five-bay, double-pile, 2½-story, side-gable, Flemish bond brick building with flared eaves. The double-leaf entry with a five-light rectangular transom is repeated on this building, set into an arched opening. The six-over-six windows feature stone sills and elliptical arches. The red tile roof of the original building extends across this southern addition. There are three interior chimneys that have corbelled caps.

Once the structure was leased to Old Salem, Inc. in 1961, plans were made for its restoration. By 1964, the restoration was complete and included the removal of the siding, dormers, and hoods, and the reconstruction of the pent roof.

Today the Single Brothers' House is an exhibit building of Old Salem Museums and Gardens, and the upper floors serve as the organization's offices.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

<http://www.oldsalem.org/single-brothers-house.html>



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