

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

W.F. Smith & Sons Leaf House

Local Historic Landmark #107

406 E. Fourth St., Winston-Salem

Construction Date: c. 1890

Adaptive Rehabilitation Date: 2002

Landmark Designation Date: 12/06/1999

The W.F. Smith & Sons Leaf House is one of the few remaining buildings from Winston's late 19th century tobacco industry. During the early years of the tobacco industry's development, leaf dealers bought tobacco for export or resale to manufacturers and other dealers. Prior to 1890, leaf dealers experienced great prosperity. However, between 1890 and World War I several factors temporarily affected the boom. The dealers sometimes took advantage of their position as "middle-men" and speculated at the expense of both buyers and sellers. Additionally, many small dealers engaged in shady business activities, which when exposed, led to disdain and distrust by both farmers and manufacturers.

Perhaps due to decreased profits as a result of the tarnished reputation of leaf dealers, by 1895, the company changed its name and operations from W.F. Smith & Sons Leaf House to W.F. Smith & Sons Tobacco Factory. The firm made cigarettes, and was one of the first factories in the city to do so. Between 1890 and 1895, a building was constructed across E. Fourth Street, immediately north of W.F. Smith & Sons. The Brown Brothers Tobacco Prizery (Local Historic Landmark #117), a leaf storage company, occupied this new building. By 1900, both Brown Brothers and W.F. Smith & Sons were listed as "tobacco prizeries," warehouses where redried tobacco was stored and packed into large wooden barrels known as hogsheads.

By 1907, both of these companies had been acquired by James B. Duke's American Tobacco Company. This action was typical of the first years of the 20th century, when many small dealers merged into large corporations, such as the American Tobacco Company. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1911 dissolved many of these large trusts, which was met happily by farmers and warehousemen.

In 1912, the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company held storage areas in the building. A wholesale grocer occupied the first and second floor. During the 1920s, Piedmont



Leaf Tobacco took over the building. Piedmont Leaf had been established in 1915. The company bought, redried, and stemmed leaf tobacco.

The W.F. Smith & Sons Leaf House is a rare example in Winston-Salem of a stepped gable roof industrial building. The 4½-story, brick structure is nine bays long and three bays wide. All of the windows of the original structure feature segmental arches and are six-over-six sash.

In 2002, a development company acquired the property and conducted a comprehensive adaptive reuse project for the building.

Today the W.F. Smith & Sons Leaf House, together with the Brown Brothers Tobacco Factory (Local Historic Landmark #117) house residential apartments, condominiums, and commercial space, operating under the name "Piedmont Leaf Lofts."

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

W.F. Smith & Sons
Leaf House & Brown Brothers Company
National Register Nomination
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY0010.pdf>



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