

# LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

## S.J. Nissen Building

Local Historic Landmark #123

310 E. Third St., Winston-Salem

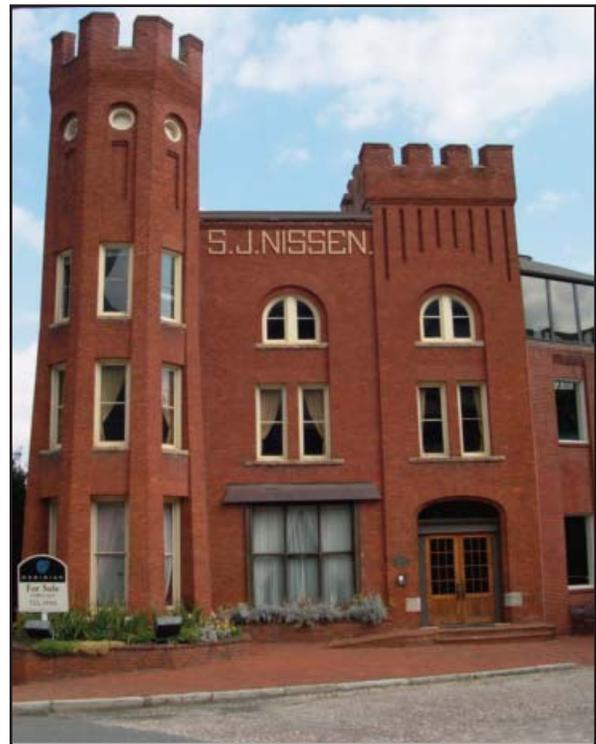
Construction Date: 1895, 1953

Landmark Designation Date: 10/04/2010

The S.J. Nissen Building was constructed for Samuel Jacob Nissen, who operated a wagon building and repairing company. From the 1880s through the 1920s, industrial development grew at an extremely rapid pace. Tobacco manufacturing became the predominant industry, over which the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company reigned supreme. During this time, other industries also flourished, such as textile, furniture, and wagon manufacturing. The production of wagons was an important early industry in Forsyth County, with three wagon works beginning in the 1830s in the Waughtown community. The most prominent of these were the wagon works operated by the Nissen family. John Phillip Nissen began the production of wagons in 1834, and his sons followed him into the business, establishing companies of their own. His youngest son, Samuel Jacob Nissen, determined that the rapidly growing tobacco manufacturing area in Winston would be profitable for wagon production. Wagons were essential to agriculture during this time, but the tobacco industry was entirely dependent on wagons.

In 1890, S.J. Nissen purchased a lot on the corner of E. Third and Depot (now N. Patterson Avenue) Streets, which was strategically placed at the converging lines of the Northwestern North Carolina and the Roanoke and Southern Railroads. In 1895, he completed the building, which was used as a wagon-making and repair shop and a carriage repository. For more than 20 years, Nissen's business was closely tied to the needs of the tobacco industry, as well as others. By the end of the 1920s, the truck had overtaken the wagon as the primary mode of transportation for all manufactured goods, and in 1929, Nissen sold the property.

The S.J. Nissen Building is a brick, industrial building composed of an original 1894-1895 primary structure with a 1953 south, side addition. The Romanesque Revival-style original building consists of three stories above two basements. The building's most dominant exterior feature is the four-story octagonal corner tower, which is crowned by a crenellated parapet with a corbelled



Courtesy of Heather Fearnbach

base and corbelled caps. Of particular note is that the heavy brick walls of this tower splay outward, which increases its fortress-like appearance. The secondary square tower originally housed the building's large freight elevator, which has been removed. In addition to the towers, the heavy, flat-arched and round-arched windows with granite sills are highly significant elements to the design of the building. Across the top of the center bay and set beneath a simple corbelled cornice, are raised bricks that spell "S.J. Nissen."

The 1953 addition has two stories and one basement, and is simpler in design. It is angled back from the original façade line. As such, the addition does not have an adverse effect on the original structure. Overall, the S.J. Nissen Building exhibits outstanding mill construction of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and is architecturally distinctive. Its noteworthy crenellated towers and strong use of arched windows give it the appearance of a medieval Romanesque fortress that makes it stand out from all other industrial building in Winston-Salem.

Today the S.J. Nissen Building is commercially used as a photography studio.



*Nissen Wagon, Date Unknown*  
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens via Digital Forsyth  
(<http://www.digitalforsyth.org>)

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

**S.J. Nissen Building National Register Nomination**  
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY0753.pdf>



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