

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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date entered

1. Name

historic Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block

and/or common Thalhimer's

2. Location

street & number 500 West Fourth Street not for publication

city, town Winston-Salem vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state North Carolina code 037 county Forsyth code 067

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (1)First Presbyterian Church (2)Carter Hawley Hale Properties, Inc.

street & number (1)300 N. Cherry Street (2)550 S. Flower Street

(1)Winston-Salem (1)North Carolina
city, town (2)Los Angeles vicinity of state (2)California

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Forsyth County Hall of Justice, Register of Deeds

street & number Main Street

city, town Winston-Salem state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

From Frontier to Factory, An
title Architectural History of Forsyth County has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records N. C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block occupies the south side of Fourth Street between Spruce Street on the east and Poplar Street on the west. The block is named for the building's first major tenants, and it is located at the western end of Fourth Street, Winston-Salem's main downtown retail thoroughfare. The former Sosnik's clothing store building on the southeast corner of Fourth and Spruce Streets also housed Abram Cohn's jewelers and three other retailers. The Morris-Early Building was occupied only by the Morris-Early Furniture store from 1929-1957. Both buildings were constructed in 1929 as investments for Mrs. William N. Reynolds, the former Kate Bitting. Morris-Early's and Sosnik's were designed by Northup and O'Brien, a prominent Winston-Salem architectural firm.¹

During the building boom of the 1920s in Winston-Salem, four architectural firms were based in Winston-Salem.² Willard C. Northup and Leet O'Brien incorporated as the firm of Northup and O'Brien in 1925. It was an outstanding firm which designed buildings across North Carolina including the Durham Life Insurance Building in Raleigh and the Medical School and Hospital at the University of North Carolina.³ Northup and O'Brien designed the Morris-Early building and the Sosnik's building, both with elements from the popular Art Deco style.⁴ It was the first widely popular style in the United States to break with the tradition of reviving earlier styles of architecture. Art Deco was so named because of the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes which emphasized modernity and machine-age precision and expression in the arts.⁵ In America many of the design motifs used in Art Deco styles were taken from Indian art, and parallel straight lines, zigzags, chevrons and floral motifs were popular. In Winston-Salem, the finest example of Art Deco architecture is Shreve and Lamb's 1929 Reynolds Building, the prototype of the Empire State Building which surely influenced other structures built about the same time in Winston-Salem.

Leet O'Brien's design for the four-story Morris-Early store building constructed in 1929 combined both classical elements and Art Deco geometric designs. The brick structure's three-bay Fourth Street facade featured terra cotta ornament, and the building's Poplar Street facade featured a display window outlined in terra cotta cable molding. All of the three-over-three windows on the Fourth Street facade also were outlined in terra cotta cable molding, and terra cotta panels under each window featured a geometric pattern of concentric squares. Stylized Corinthian pilasters rose from the sidewalk to the parapet of the building

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on either side of the Fourth Street elevation, and the cornice featured stylized urns, wave molding and patera with rosettes. The stylized ornament, wave molding and vertical emphasis of the building were all typical of the Art Deco style. The Morris-Early building had two large display windows on Fourth Street on either side of a recessed entrance door with an arched transom. The base of the display windows was marble, and a granite foundation reached around to the Poplar Street side of the building. The rich contrast of the red brick of the building with the white terra cotta ornament was lost when Thalhimer's painted the Fourth Street facade white, but all of the terra cotta Art Deco features of the exterior remain intact.

Most of the interior of the Morris-Early building was completely changed when Thalhimer's expanded into it in 1958, but the office area at the rear of the first floor remains intact. A staircase with turned balusters and a molded handrail rises to a balcony where the offices of Morris-Early were located. Morris-Early used the first floor to display living room suites, the second floor to display dining room furniture, the third floor to show bedroom suites, and the fourth floor to display kitchen equipment.⁶ Sometime in the 1940s Morris-Early expanded into the store front of the Sosnik's building immediately next to it and used the area to display carpets. An access door was cut through to the Sosnik's building in the first floor, east wall of Morris-Early.⁷ Also in the 1940s Shepherd's Art Goods, which had occupied one of the store fronts of the Sosnik's building, was incorporated into the Morris-Early store, and James R. Shepherd became the decorator for the furniture store.⁸ In 1957 Morris-Early's liquidated its stock, and in 1958 Thalhimer's expanded into the building.⁹

Not long after the Morris-Early building was constructed, work began on a large commercial building to the east in which Sosnik's clothing store would be the major tenant. This Art Deco commercial building also was commissioned by Mrs. William N. Reynolds and designed by Northup and O'Brien. In addition to Sosnik's retail space, there were four other Fourth Street store fronts in the three-story limestone-faced structure. The Sosnik's part of the building was three stories and consisted of nine bays on Fourth Street and ten bays on Spruce. It featured low-relief geometrical designs with stylized floral motives above the street-level display windows, between the second and third floors, and above the third floor windows to form a parapet around the building. Sosnik's had three display windows on the Spruce Street elevation and four on Fourth Street. Windows in the upper floors of the structure were sash openings with three-over-three panes. The other store fronts in the building featured the stylized floral designs between the display windows and the second-floor windows,

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but the areas between the second and third floor windows and between the third floor windows and the roof were smooth-faced limestone panels. Sometime between 1929 and 1949 this portion of the building may have been raised from two stories to three. The original architectural drawings show this part of the building as two stories, but photographs taken in 1949 show three stories.¹⁰ Between each bay of the entire building rose limestone columns featuring incised parallel lines. This vertical emphasis was typical of the Art Deco style.

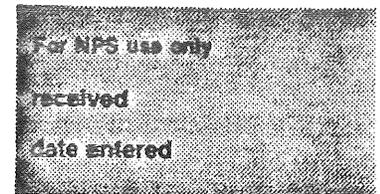
In 1949 when Sosnik's and Thalhimer's merged, the building at Fourth and Spruce took on a different appearance inside and out. Thalhimer's contracted with Raymond Loewy Associates of New York to remodel the building.¹¹ William T. Snaith of Raymond Loewy Associates drafted the plan for the renovation with the assistance of Fritz Koch, Thalhimer's architect.¹² Raymond F. Loewy was best-known for his industrial designs, and his work spans the 1920s through the 1970s.¹³

The newly-renovated Sosnik's-Thalhimer's department store took over the entire commercial building up to Morris-Early's furniture store, and the Fourth Street first-story store front was changed in 1949.¹⁴ Frank L. Blum was the local contractor for the renovation and an October 8, 1949 article in the Winston-Salem Journal pictures Blum's workers tearing away the old storefront.¹⁵ The entire street level of the facade was sheathed with limestone blocks and trimmed in granite. The front entrance was moved to the center of the building, and there were three display windows to the left of the entrance and two to the right. In the Sosnik's-Thalhimer's effort to "modernize" the storefront, all of the Art Deco ornamentation under the second floor windows was eliminated, and the Fourth Street facade became starkly streamlined. In addition, two of the three display windows on the Spruce Street facade were enclosed.

The interior of the building also was changed during the 1949 remodeling by Loewy Associates. The elevators were relocated in the rear of the building and an additional 25,000 square feet of selling space was added.¹⁶ In a May, 1949, newspaper article, Morris Sosnik stated: "As far as the interior is concerned, it will be completely altered, refurnished and redecorated on all floors . . ."¹⁷ Interior Design magazine of September, 1950, featured the remodeled interior of the building in an article entitled, "Backgrounds for Commerce, Raymond Loewy Associates Design for the South." The article stated that Loewy Associates, "specialists in many phases of design, has integrated the

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intimate charm and chic of specialized shops into an efficiently regulated whole . . . "18

On the first floor, William T. Snaith of Loewy and Associates designed the Men's Shop, an Underwear and Neglige Department, a Silverware Department, an Accessories Department and a Gift Department. Chandeliers on the main floor were designed by Loewy Associates and executed by Charles J. Winston & Company. They feature hurricane shades and prisms.¹⁹ Interior Design stated that ". . . the Silverware Department carries out a style influenced by Colonial Williamsburg, which is reflected in its period architectural detail in a modern setting and the entrance to the shop which is framed with a bleached walnut molding incised with a class motif."²⁰ The chandeliers remain on the first floor as well as the "period architectural detail" in the Silverware Department.

The second floor carried out a Louis XV decorative theme as a backdrop to a fine dress salon, a millinery department, a foundations department and a bridal salon. A mural by artist Jim Patton of New York was featured in the Better Selling Rooms, now the Bridal Salon.²¹ Patton did several murals throughout the store, but the second floor painting is the only one which survives. Snaith designed a stage in the dress salon for fashion shows and other displays, and, according to Interior Design ". . . the antique doors flanking the stage are painted gold and grey, and were seventeenth-century Italian, decorated in the manner of Tiepolo . . ." ²² The stage and doors remain in the Salon, as well as the chandeliers which were described as "satin gold metal."²³ The 1949 Bridal Salon, Foundations, and Sportswear Departments have all been remodeled completely since 1949, and the murals which Patton did for these departments have been obliterated.

The third floor was devoted principally to children's clothing and accessories. Patton painted murals in the Layette Department and the Shoe Department, but both of these have been obliterated. The recessed display cases which remain in the Layette Department feature scalloped borders.

In 1953 Sosnik's-Thalhimer's became solely Thalhimer's as Morris Sosnik retired, and in 1958 Thalhimer's acquired the Morris-Early store on the corner for further expansion.²⁴ An article in the Winston-Salem Sentinel on April 8, 1958, stated that the expansion would cost more than \$250,000 and would almost double the selling space in the department store. Almost all of the existing departments in the store were scheduled for expansion, and new departments to be added included a photography studio, a candy department, a gourmet shop, a book department and a stationery and notions department. The first floor of the former Morris-Early building was to be a "new home store where linens, domestics, ready and custom-made

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curtains and draperies and a bath and shower shop" were to be located.²⁵ A beauty salon employing 15 operators was to be installed on the third floor of the former Morris-Early structure. Thalhimer's continues to occupy all three floors of the former Sosnik's Building and four floors of the former Morris-Early structure.

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Architectural Footnotes

¹Forsyth County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 261, p. 278; Winston-Salem City Directories (Asheville: Commercial Service Company), 1928, 1929, 1930, hereinafter cited as City Directory with appropriate date; author's interviews with Mrs. Lillian Sosnik (notes from interviews in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Sosnik interviews; author's interview with Frank B. Morris (notes on interview in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Morris interview; Northup and O'Brien, "New Home of the Morris-Early and Company, Inc.," architectural rendering in possession of Frank B. Morris, Winston-Salem, N.C.; archival records, Newman, Calloway, Johnson, Winfree, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Northup and O'Brien, "Heating Stores for Mrs. W. N. Reynolds," architectural drawings, July 31, 1929, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.

²Larry E. Tise, Building and Architecture (Winston-Salem: Historic Winston, 1976), 36, as cited in Gwynne S. Taylor, From Frontier to Factory (Winston-Salem: City-County Planning Board, second edition, 1982), 58, hereinafter cited as Taylor, From Frontier to Factory.

³Winston-Salem Section, North Carolina American Institute of Architects, Architectural Guide, Winston-Salem and Forsyth County (Winston-Salem, 1978), 185, hereinafter cited as AIA, Guidebook.

⁴Northup and O'Brien, "New Home of the Morris-Early and Company," architectural rendering; Northup and O'Brien, "Heating Stores for Mrs. W. N. Reynolds," architectural drawings, July 31, 1929, hereinafter cited as "Heating Stores."

⁵S. Allen Chambers, John Poppeliers, and Nancy B. Schwartz, What Style Is It? (Washington: The Preservation Press, 1976), 39, hereinafter cited as Chambers, What Style?

⁶Winston-Salem Journal, "Morris-Early Store Is Opened To The Public Tonight," September 24, 1929, hereinafter cited as Journal, "Morris-Early Store;" Winston-Salem Journal, "New Home of Morris-Early Co. Complete," September 24, 1929.

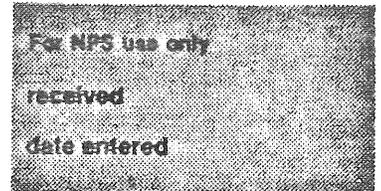
⁷Morris interview.

⁸Morris interview.

⁹Winston-Salem Journal, "Furniture Store Closed," September 29, 1957; Morris interview.

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¹⁰"Heating Stores."

¹¹Author's interview with Jim Jenkins, Store Planning Department, Thalhimer's Inc., Richmond, Va., (Loewy drawings in possession of Thalhimer's Inc., Richmond, Va.), hereinafter cited as Jenkins interview.

¹²Winston-Salem Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation to Change Sosnik's Into Large Department Store," May 20, 1949, hereinafter cited as Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation."

¹³Raymond Loewy, Industrial Design (Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1979), 10,248, hereinafter cited as Loewy, Design.

¹⁴Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation."

¹⁵Winston-Salem Journal, "Sosnik's to Get Longer Name After Sunday," October 28, 1949, hereinafter cited as Journal, "Longer Name."

¹⁶Journal, "Longer Name."

¹⁷Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation."

¹⁸Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce, Raymond Loewy Associates Design for the South," Vol. 21, No. 9, September 1950, 48, hereinafter cited as Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce."

¹⁹Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce," 51.

²⁰Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce," 82.

²¹Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce," 86.

²²Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce," 84.

²³Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce," 84.

²⁴Winston-Salem Sentinel, "Thalhimer's Buys Sosnik's Stock for \$491,036," March 17, 1953; Winston-Salem Sentinel, "\$250,000 Expansion Begun by Thalhimer's," April 8, 1958, hereinafter cited as Sentinel, "\$250,000 Expansion."

²⁵Sentinel, "\$250,000 Expansion."

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929

Builder/Architect Northrup and O'Brien

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block in Winston-Salem consists of two structures on the south side of Fourth Street between Spruce Street on the east and Poplar Street on the west. The buildings carry the names of their first major tenants. Both the three-story Sosnik's clothing store building and the four-story Morris-Early furniture store building were constructed in 1929, and both were part of Winston-Salem's late 1920s building boom.¹ The Morris-Early building and the Sosnik's building were designed by the firm of Northrup and O'Brien and are two of only seven Art Deco-influenced buildings which remain in downtown Winston-Salem.² In addition, the buildings are the only pair of Art Deco structures in the city, and their side-by-side orientation makes them contribute even more strongly to the Fourth Street streetscape. Both Sosnik's and Morris-Early's were built as investments by Mrs. William N. Reynolds, the former Kate Bitting.³ In 1949 Sosnik's expanded and merged with Thalhimer's, and it hired the New York design firm of Raymond Loewy Associates to remodel the building.⁴ In 1958 Thalhimer's acquired the Morris-Early building and added 25,000 square feet of retail space to its existing operation.⁵ The Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block has remained one of the retail anchors on the western end of Winston-Salem's downtown, and the entire block is now occupied by Thalhimer's department store.

Criteria Assessment

A. The Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block is associated with the boom period of the 1920s in Winston-Salem when the tremendous wealth generated by tobacco, textile, and other industries enabled businessmen and others to finance and invest in the construction of downtown commercial buildings.

B. Both Sosnik's and Morris-Early's embody the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco architecture of the late 1920s, and as a pair they present an impressive block of unified facades on Fourth Street - the principal shopping avenue. The Morris-Early building and Sosnik's were the work of the prominent architectural firm of Northrup and O'Brien. In addition, the noted design firm of Raymond Loewy Associates remodeled and expanded Sosnik's in 1949.

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During the period from about 1915 to 1930, Winston-Salem was the largest city in North Carolina. This population growth and "era of success" was precipitated by the phenomenal growth of industry in the Twin City and the accompanying wealth which it engendered. For example, on October 19, 1913, the first "modern-type" tobacco blend, known as Camel cigarettes, went into production by R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. Camel cigarettes revolutionized the marketing of tobacco and became the number one selling cigarette in America.⁶ In addition, concerns such as P. H. Hanes' Knitting Company and Hanes Hosiery Mills also prospered. In 1918 Hanes Hosiery Company converted to the manufacture of women's cotton hosiery which led to the company's becoming one of the largest hosiery manufacturers in the world.⁷

Fueled by commercial successes, expansion of both commercial and residential areas continued unabated until 1930. In 1915 the value of building permits issued was \$501,379, but by 1928 a peak of \$8,531,028 was attained.⁸ Winston-Salem's commercial district experienced a marked change in its buildings' appearance during the 1920s. Motives from Neo-Classical to the modern Art Deco were interpreted in the city's first skyscrapers as well as in many smaller-scale commercial buildings. The competition for the tallest building in Winston-Salem started in 1911 with the construction of the seven-story Wachovia Building, at the corner of Third and Main, and continued with the eight-story O'Hanlon Building in 1915. In 1917 the Wachovia Bank added another story to its building to create a tie with the O'Hanlon Building, but the Hotel Robert E. Lee outdid them all with its twelve stories built in 1921. The contest continued when W. M. Nissen built his office building with eighteen stories in 1926, which was nearly equaled by the eleven-story Carolina Hotel in 1928. All of these "skyscrapers" and most of the smaller commercial buildings constructed during this period, however, were eclectic; they retained design motives from earlier periods of architecture. In 1929, however, the finest in modern design, the Art Deco Reynolds Building won the annual award of the American Institute of Architects, and Shreve and Lamb were then commissioned to design the Empire State Building in New York in 1931.⁹

During the building boom of the 1920s six architects representing four firms considered Winston-Salem their base of operation.¹⁰ Willard C. Northup and Leet A. O'Brien were two of these architects, and the firm of Northup and O'Brien was an outstanding one. It designed buildings across North Carolina including the Durham Life Insurance Building in Raleigh, the Medical School and Hospital at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and a large body

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of residential work.¹¹ Willard Northup (1882-1942) was a native of Michigan and was educated at the University of Pennsylvania. Northup was president of the North Carolina State Board of Architectural Examiners and was a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects.¹² Leet Alexander O'Brien (1891-1963) was a native of Winston-Salem, and attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1913 O'Brien joined Northup in his architectural practice, but the firm did not become Northup and O'Brien until 1925. O'Brien served for two terms as president of the North Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects.¹³ Among the many buildings which Northup and O'Brien designed in Winston-Salem are the City Hall, the Forsyth County Courthouse, the O'Hanlon Building, and the Pepper Building.

In 1929 Kate Bitting Reynolds asked the firm of Northup and O'Brien to design the Morris-Early building and the Sosnik's building in the 500 block of West Fourth Street between Spruce and Poplar Streets.¹⁴ Kate Bitting Reynolds was the daughter of J. A. Bitting of Winston-Salem who was president of the First National Bank and also of Bitting and Hay, tobacco manufacturers.¹⁵ She married William Neal Reynolds on March 6, 1889. Reynolds was the brother of tobacco magnate R. J. Reynolds. In 1918, after the death of his brother, W. N. Reynolds became president of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. He held that position until 1924 at which time he became chairman of the board, remaining in that office until 1931 and then continuing as a director until 1942.¹⁶

In 1929 Frank B. Morris, J. Harold Early and Early L. Parrish moved their furniture store from its location at 609 N. Liberty Street into the new building on the corner of Fourth and Poplar Streets next to Sosnik's and Cohn's Jewelers.¹⁷ Leet O'Brien designed the four-story structure, and it featured combined geometric Art Deco-style ornament and Neo-Classical elements.¹⁸ The structure was brick; the white terra cotta ornament stood out in marked contrast. The stunning Art Deco architecture of the 1929 Reynolds Building obviously influenced local architecture during this period.

The Morris-Early Company began with a small furniture store at 609 N. Liberty Street in 1927.¹⁹ Frank B. Morris had been general manager of the Huntley-Hill-Stockton furniture store, and J. Harold Early had been the assistant manager. Early was president of the Morris-Early company, E. L. Parrish was vice president, and Frank B. Morris was secretary-treasurer.²⁰ The firm carried quality furnishings,

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and on September 24, 1929 it sponsored a large open house to celebrate the move to its new building on West Fourth Street. Mayor George W. Coan, Jr. took part in the opening ceremonies, as did the American Legion Band.²¹ The first floor of the building was filled with living room furniture and the rear was occupied by the firm's offices; the second floor carried dining room furniture; the third floor featured bedroom suites, and the fourth floor displayed kitchen equipment.²² After several years, Morris-Early expanded into the Sosnik's building next door by opening the common wall between them on the first floor and installing a carpet shop. After thirty successful years in business, the Morris-Early company liquidated its holdings and closed its doors on December 31, 1957.²³

Soon after the construction of the Morris-Early building, Mrs. Reynolds commissioned Northup and O'Brien to design a second commercial building on the block, with Sosnik's clothing store planned as the major tenant. In 1930 Sosnik's moved into the Art Deco building.²⁴ The Spruce and Fourth Street facades of Sosnik's featured low relief geometrical designs with stylized floral motives between rows of three-over-three sash windows. In addition, limestone columns rose between each bay carrying incised parallel straight lines, giving the building the vertical emphasis typical of the Art Deco style. Sosnik's was a ladies ready-to-wear store which catered to Winston-Salem's affluent citizens, and it was the major tenant in the new building.

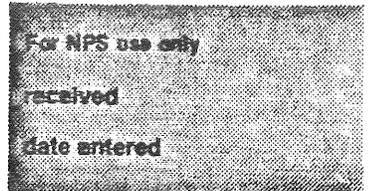
Samuel and Morris Sosnik, brothers-in-law, began their clothing store in March, 1914, at Liberty and Main Streets. In 1930 the firm became Sosnik's and Sosnik's when it moved to 420 N. Liberty Street in Winston-Salem.²⁵ Samuel Sosnik had come to Winston-Salem from New York around 1911, and Morris Sosnik followed shortly thereafter.²⁶ Morris Sosnik was born and educated in Pinsk, Russia, and fled that country when he was 21 years old in 1913 to escape impressment into Czar Nicholas' army. He married Miss Lillian Shapiro of Winston-Salem in 1923.²⁷

After ten years at their 420 N. Liberty Street location, Sosnik's and Sosnik's moved to its new store at Fourth and Spruce Streets. On September 30, 1930, the store, now known as Sosnik's, invited the public to its formal opening in the new location. According to a newspaper account which appeared the following morning:

An unestimated number of people running into the thousands last night attended the formal opening of Sosnik's new department store at West Fourth and Spruce Streets. An unending line of women, accompanied by a considerable number of men, streamed

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through the long aisles of the edifice . . .

The novel parking space in the basement was filled with cars to its capacity of seventy-five . . .

The store, owned and operated by Morris and Samuel Sosnik, is said to be one of the finest of its kind in the entire South. Approximately forty-five people will be employed in the store.²⁸

Sosnik's was very successful in its new location, and in 1949 the store merged with Thalhimer's, Inc., of Richmond, Virginia. The merger represented Thalhimer's first venture outside the state of Virginia since the store's founding in 1842 in Richmond.²⁹ When Sosnik's and Thalhimer's merged, the store added more than 25,000 square feet of selling space by encompassing areas of the building formerly occupied by Cohn's Jewelry Store, the American Red Cross office, International Business Machine Corporation, and Associated Electronics.³⁰ The business operated as Sosnik's-Thalhimer's until 1953, when Morris Sosnik retired and the store became solely Thalhimer's.³¹

When Thalhimer's came to Winston-Salem, it commissioned the famed New York design firm of Raymond F. Loewy Associates to remodel the store in 1949.³² Loewy is best-known for his industrial designs, and his work spans the 1920s through the 1970s. He was born in France in 1893 and came to New York in 1919. He was trained in France as an engineer, but when he arrived in New York he began his American career as a fashion illustrator. In 1929 Sigmund Gestetner, a British mimeograph manufacturer, asked Loewy to design a new machine for him, and based on the new design, sales skyrocketed. This launched Loewy into an industrial design career during which he designed items such as automobiles, radios, television sets, household appliances, toothpaste tubes, buses, oceanliners, furniture, office equipment and space stations. He designed countless logos for stores and businesses such as Neiman-Marcus, and his clients included Coca-Cola (for which he designed the Coca-Cola bottle), American Tobacco (for which he designed the Lucky Strike cigarette package), and Shell Oil (for which he designed the shell logo).³³ William T. Snaith of Loewy's firm was retained to draft the remodeling plans for Thalhimer's, and Fritz Koch, Thalhimer's architect, also assisted in the work. Edgar J. Mandel of the New York firm of Edward E. Ashley was the consulting engineer, and H. E. Glave, director of operations for Thalhimer's, also helped to carry out the remodeling effort.³⁴

Raymond Loewy Associates' interior design for the Winston-Salem Thalhimer's was featured in Interior Design magazine in

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September, 1950. The article observed:

. . . that many department stores tend to emphasize in their design and arrangement the aims and character of the community they serve. The Sosnik-Thalhimer Department Store, a high quality women's shop in Winston-Salem, is such a store, combining gracefully all the aforementioned qualities yet representing a new departure in store design. Its services are addressed to the more affluent customers in this rich tobacco country . . .

Style was another important consideration, and in deciding upon the elimination of the stark, cold phases of modern and concentrating upon a scheme of Louis XV and mellow eighteenth-century Italian, combined with the more pleasing and friendly phases of modern, a style was evoked that has won acclaim from the clients and their customers alike.³⁵

Artist Jim Patton painted murals throughout the store, and Loewy Associates designed chandeliers especially for the first floor main area and the silverware department.³⁶ The silverware department remains intact and the three first floor chandeliers with hurricane globes and prisms remain. The only mural by Patton which remains is in the present Bridal Salon, formerly the Better Selling Rooms. Most of the Louis XV and Italian decor remains on the second floor, but the scalloped-frame recessed display cases on the third floor are all that remain of Loewy Associates' design on that floor.

The exterior of the building also was remodeled by Loewy Associates. A new first-story front along Fourth Street covered the original details of the building up to the sills of the second floor windows and changed the main entrance. The new facade turned the corner at Spruce Street, and two of the original display windows were enclosed.

The 1949 remodeling of Sosnik's-Thalhimer's did not affect the Morris-Early Building, but in 1958 Thalhimer's purchased the structure with the intention of adding 25,000 square feet of retail space to the existing store.³⁷ Except for the office area on the first floor, the interior of the Morris-Early Building was completely changed, and the exterior was painted a neutral color to blend in with the limestone exterior of the former Sosnik's building. Thalhimer's continues to occupy the entire block of commercial buildings.

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The pair of Art Deco structures now occupied by Thalhimer's contributes strongly to the architectural character of Winston-Salem's downtown, particularly as reminders of the modernism and exuberance of the late 1920s. In addition, the buildings' significance is heightened by the fact that they were designed by the outstanding firm of Northrup and O'Brien during a period of Winston-Salem's history when building and business were at a pinnacle of success. Although no studies exist on the subject, it is quite possible that Winston-Salem's downtown contains some of North Carolina's most outstanding early twentieth century commercial architecture, and the renovation of the Sosnik's/Morris-Early Commercial Block will help to maintain the city's reputation in the preservation and appreciation of art and architecture.

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Significance Statement
Footnotes

¹Winston-Salem City Directories (Asheville: Commercial Service Company) 1928, 1929, 1930, hereinafter cited as City Directory with appropriate date; author's interviews with Mrs. Lillian Sosnik (notes from interviews in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Sosnik interviews; author's interview with Frank B. Morris (notes on interview in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Morris interview.

²Northup and O'Brien, "New Home of the Morris-Early and Company, Inc.," architectural rendering in possession of Frank B. Morris, Winston-Salem; author's interview with Tony Wrenn, librarian, American Institute of Architects headquarters, Washington, D.C.; archival records, Newman, Calloway, Johnson, Winfree, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Northup and O'Brien, "Heating Stores for Mrs. W. N. Reynolds," architectural drawings, July 31, 1929, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, N.C.

³Sosnik interviews; Morris interview; Winston-Salem Sentinel, "Local Store Gains Control of City Block," April 1, 1950; Forsyth County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 261, p. 278.

⁴Author's interview with Jim Jenkins, Store Planning Department, Thalhimer's, Inc., Richmond, Va., (Loewy drawings in possession of Thalhimer's Inc., Richmond, Va.), hereinafter cited as Jenkins interview.

⁵Winston-Salem Sentinel, "\$250,000 Expansion Begun by Thalhimers," April 8, 1958.

⁶Adelaide L. Fries, Stuart T. Wright, J. Edwin Hendricks, Forsyth, the History of a County on the March (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1976), 234, hereinafter cited as Fries and other, Forsyth.

⁷Gwynne S. Taylor, "Shamrock Mills," National Register Nomination, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1977, as cited in Gwynne S. Taylor, From Frontier to Factory, (Winston-Salem: City-County Planning Board, second edition, 1982), 58, hereinafter cited as Taylor, From Frontier to Factory.

⁸Larry E. Tise, Building and Architecture (Winston-Salem: Historic Winston, 1976), 34, hereinafter cited as Tise, Building, as cited in Taylor, From Frontier to Factory, 56.

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⁹Tise, Building, 41, as cited in Taylor, From Frontier to Factory, 58.

¹⁰Tise, Building, 36, as cited in Taylor, From Frontier to Factory, 48.

¹¹Winston-Salem Section, North Carolina American Institute of Architects, Architectural Guide, Winston-Salem and Forsyth County (Winston-Salem, 1978), 185, hereinafter cited as AIA, Guidebook.

¹²AIA, Guidebook, 184.

¹³AIA, Guidebook, 185.

¹⁴Morris-Early rendering; archival records, Newman, Calloway, Johnson, Winfree.

¹⁵Winston-Salem City Directory (Yonkers: E. F. Turner and Company), 1889, 35.

¹⁶Nannie M. Tilley, Reynolds Homestead 1814-1970 (Richmond: Robert Kine and Co., 1970), 125-127.

¹⁷Morris interview; City Directories, 1928, 1929, 1930.

¹⁸Morris-Early rendering; Morris interview.

¹⁹Morris interview.

²⁰Morris interview; City Directories 1929, 1930.

²¹Winston-Salem Journal, "Morris-Early Store Is Opened to the Public Tonight," September 24, 1929, hereinafter cited as Journal, "Morris-Early Store."

²²Journal, "Morris-Early Store;" Morris interview.

²³Winston-Salem Journal, "Furniture Store Closed," September 29, 1957; Morris interview.

²⁴Winston-Salem Journal, "Sosnik's Has Great Opening," September 4, 1930, hereinafter cited as Journal, "Sosnik's Opening."

²⁵Winston-Salem Journal, "Morris Sosnik Dies at 75," December 21, 1967, hereinafter cited as Journal, "Morris Sosnik Dies."

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²⁶ Sosnik interview.

²⁷ Journal, "Morris Sosnik Dies."

²⁸ Journal, "Sosnik's Opening."

²⁹ Authors interview with Sherwood Michael, Vice President for Stores, Thalhimer's, Inc., Richmond, Va., notes on interview in possession of author.

³⁰ Winston-Salem Sentinel, "Million-Dollar Renovation to Change Sosnik's Into Large Department Store," May 20, 1949, hereinafter cited as Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation."

³¹ Winston-Salem Sentinel, "Thalhimer's Buys Sosnik's Stock for \$491,036," March 17, 1953.

³² Jenkins interview.

³³ Raymond Loewy, Industrial Design (Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1979), 10, 248, hereinafter cited as Loewy, Design.

³⁴ Sentinel, "Million Dollar Renovation."

³⁵ Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce, Raymond Loewy Associates Design for the South," Vol. 21, No. 9, September, 1950, 46-88, hereinafter cited as Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce."

³⁶ Interior Design, "Backgrounds for Commerce."

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheets)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Winston-Salem east

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	7	56	71	76	3	9	9	4	2	0	8
Zone	Easting		Northing								

B

Zone	Easting		Northing								

C

Zone	Easting		Northing								

D

Zone	Easting		Northing								

E

Zone	Easting		Northing								

F

Zone	Easting		Northing								

G

Zone	Easting		Northing								

H

Zone	Easting		Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax Block 81; Lots 102, 110, 111; Forsyth County Tax Maps

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gwynne S. Taylor

organization Preservation Consultant date 12/5/83

street & number 827 Westover Avenue telephone 919-725-9000

city or town Winston-Salem state North Carolina 27104

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. King, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 12, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest

date

Chief of Registration

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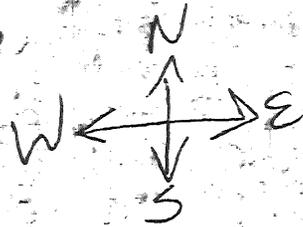
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Sosnik's / Morris - Early Commercial Block

