

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAR 2 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic South First National Bank Block

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 241 - 247 Commercial Street NE N/A not for publication

city, town Salem N/A vicinity of Fifth Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Marion code 047

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name John Honey

street & number 247 Commercial Street NE, PO BOX 229

city, town Salem N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97308

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marion County Clerk

street & number Marion County Courthouse

city, town Salem state Oregon 97301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title City of Salem Cultural Resource Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date May 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Department of Community Development, City Hall, 555 Liberty SE

city, town Salem state Oregon 97301

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 N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The remaining two-story unit of the South First National Bank Block, constructed in 1887, occupies a 44.53 by 165-foot lot fronting North Commercial Street, the historic main thoroughfare in Salem, the capital city of Oregon. A discrete module of a building which originally presented a major, 155-foot frontage and seven identical store fronts on Commercial Street, the remaining unit is one of only four examples of High Victorian Italianate commercial architecture standing in Salem today. The building is two stories in height, of brick masonry construction, and the main volume has a ground plan measuring 44 by 80 feet. A later, 60-foot, single-story addition extends to an alley at the rear of the lot. The building is oriented with its main axis east to west, with the facade facing east onto Commercial Street, which runs in a north-south direction parallel with the east bank of the Willamette River. The building's facade is distinctive for its elaborate decoration of cast iron and galvanized sheet metal which, including classical columns, bracketed cornice and a variety of stylized motifs, embodies the characteristics of the High Victorian Italianate style.

Like the five other shop sections of the South First National Bank Block which extended to the north before demolition occurred in 1963, the southernmost double unit consisted of shops in the ground story and apartment suites and offices above. The remaining double unit was financed by Salem merchant-inventor Benjamin Forstner, the only investor in the cooperative development venture to finance more than one shop section. While the five stores on the north have been lost, the Forstner section is provided appropriate context by the Starkey-McCully Building (1867), which adjoins it on the south, and which supports the oldest-known Oregon-manufactured architectural cast iron in situ in Oregon, and by the South Eldridge Block (1889), directly opposite on the east side of Commercial Street. Shop fronts of the South First National Bank Block were traditional in configuration, having plate glass display windows on wooden bulkheads and central, recessed entrances. Cast iron columns marked the three vertical divisions of the ground story. In 1928, the ground story was opened as a single retail space, and the store front was modified accordingly with a single, central recessed entrance and larger display windows. Cast iron columns remain at the ends of the outer walls, but the central column was sacrificed in the alteration. Owing to the comprehensive alteration of the store in the 1920s, little original trim or finish work remains in the ground story interior.

The upper facade is finished with stucco and is organized as two equal sections, each three bays in width, set off by rusticated pilasters. Tall, frameless, straight-topped window openings are fitted with double-hung sash with one light over one. Window sash in the north section are original; those in the south section are replacement sash. Spandrels are decorated with inset panels, and window arch heads are crowned with inset bandings of hob-nail relief work. String courses complete the articulation of the main wall plane. Above the windows, the metal cornice assembly includes large console brackets interspersed with modillions and a pent roof with diamond-patterned relief work. The brick flues and iron cresting which once crowned the parapet have been missing for some years.

When the northerly sections of the South First National Bank Block were demolished in 1963, an interior stair was added at the north end of the remaining unit and the second story was remodeled. However, the wide, segmental-arched doorway in the north wall which allowed interior passage between sections at the second story level is still in place. Plaster finish has been removed from the walls, as has wainscoting, but, in the north section, the 12-foot wide cross axial corridor and corridor skylight remain. Originally, second story space in the south section of the unit was the apartment suite of Benjamin Forstner and his

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family; the four rooms in the north section were occupied by T. J. Cherrington and his photography studio. The rear portion of the lot was occupied by a detached gunsmith's shop of wood frame construction at an early date. In the 20th century a 60-foot, single-story warehouse of brick and concrete block construction was added to the rear of the historic Forstner unit.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1887

Builder/Architect

Holly A. Cornell, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The two-story, stuccoed, brick commercial building at 241-247 Commercial Street NE in Salem, Oregon, is the southernmost 44 feet and all that remains of the 155-foot long First National Bank Block of 1887. As originally constructed, the Italianate business block combined with the three-story High Victorian Gothic First National Bank (c. 1884-1885) at the corner of Commercial and Chemeketa Streets and the 120-foot long Starkey-McCully Building (1867), which extended south to the opposite end of the block, to create a street facade of exceptional extent and continuity. While the once impressive block-long facade on the historic main throughfare of the capital city has eroded over the years, the southernmost section of the First National Bank Block has integrity as a single unit because it is a discrete module of the original composition and it has the distinction of being one of only four examples of High Victorian Italianate commercial architecture now remaining in Salem. The other buildings of comparable type, date and style are the remaining portion of the Bush-Breyman Block (1889), the Bush-Brey Block (1889), both listed in the National Register, and the South Eldridge Block (1889), which, like the others, stands on Commercial Street. The remaining unit of the South First National Bank Block thus meets National Register criterion c as a rare building type in Salem in which cast iron and sheet metal form an elaborate facade. It possesses integrity of location, design, workmanship and materials and also is significant locally under criteria a and b for the historic role it has played in local economy and for its association with merchant-inventor Benjamin Forstner.

Design of the South First National Bank Block has been attributed to Holly A. Cornell, an architect-contractor who built at least two important houses and other buildings in Salem before pursuing a career chiefly as a sash and door manufacturer in Portland. The seven stores making up the block replaced a series of fire-susceptible wooden buildings between the bank building at the north end of the block and the Starkey-McCully Building on the south. The construction project of 1887 was undertaken as a cooperative venture by local businessmen headed by W. N. Ladue, president of the First National Bank. Whether or not the same hand was at work in the design of the First National Bank and the South First National Bank Block is as yet unknown. In any event, the two-story block of seven stores was much in harmony with the three-story bank building owing to its similar three-bay serial composition and the use of cast iron columns, sheet metal cornice and pents, parapet cresting, and spandrel ornament of identical patterns. The source of the architectural cast iron for these buildings is as yet undocumented. Both buildings were of brick construction, stucco-surfaced, and had rusticated pilasters. The two-store unit which is the subject of this nomination was financed by Benjamin Forstner, a one-time member of the Christian communal colony at Aurora, Oregon, who arrived in Salem in 1874 and achieved recognition for his invention and refinement of a specialized drilling bit, or auger. Forstner and his family occupied an apartment above his general store in the southernmost section of the two-store unit. In 1928, the ground story was consolidated as a single store. In 1963, the five stores to the north and the bank building on the corner as well were demolished. At that time, an interior stair was added at the north end of the remaining unit. Despite the loss of iron parapet cresting and chimneys and the modification of the ground story shop front, the south unit of the First National Bank Block conveys sufficient feeling and fabric of the historic period to meet National Register criteria.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Salem West, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

3	10	4	9	16	9	16	10	4	19	7	16	3	12	10
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

The South First National Bank Block occupies the North half of Lot 3, Block 49, in the Original Plat of Salem, Marion County, Oregon. The lot measures 44.53 by 165 feet.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David C. Duniway

organization N/A date September 20, 1982

street & number 1365 John Street South telephone 503/581-2338

city or town Salem state Oregon 97302

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 

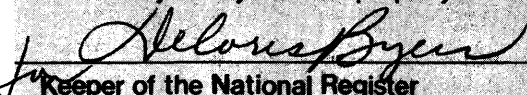
title Deputy SHPO date February 25, 1983

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

Entered in the National Register

date 3/31/83


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Salem dates its founding to 1840, when the principal station of the Methodist Mission in Oregon was relocated to Mill Creek on Chemeketa Plain. An Indian Manual Labor Training School was established by the missionaries in 1841, and the town was laid out in 1846, partly as a means of supporting the Methodist academic enterprise which was chartered as Willamette University in 1853.

In 1851, the Oregon Legislature named Salem the Territorial capital, but the designation did not become permanent until 1855. With the advent of statehood, in 1859, Salem was the undisputed capital. While its early growth owed to education and government, Salem's situation on the Willamette River was an advantage in terms of commercial development. Flour and woolen mills were among the earliest manufactories to be established at Salem. Businesses grew up along Commercial Street, which paralleled the east bank of the river. Always a waypoint along the main corridor of travel up and down the broad Willamette Valley, Salem was reached by the Oregon and California Railroad in 1871, and a new age of commercial growth was ushered in. The flour and woolen industries were joined by an iron foundry, and banking and retail enterprises flourished. Thereafter, Salem was the center of commerce in the mid-Willamette basin.

In Oregon, the first iron produced from locally-mined ore came from the blast furnace south of Portland which commenced operation as the Oswego Iron Company in 1867. Between 1854, which marked the first use of architectural iron in commercial buildings in Oregon, at Portland, and the advent of the Oswego Iron Company, the construction of iron-fronted buildings in Portland, Oregon City and Salem depended upon San Francisco foundries. By 1867, however, four Portland foundries were meeting increasing demands for architectural iron. Among these was the Oregon Iron Works, which manufactured the ground story front and second story cornice and window cornices for the Starkey-McCully Building of 1867 in Salem, the neighbor of the nominated property. The Oregon Iron Works had been established in Portland in 1863. Shortly after the Starkey-McCully Building was completed, a foundry and iron works was organized in Salem. The Salem Iron Works began operating in 1868.

Whether the architectural iron for the South First National Bank Block was of local manufacture has not been documented to date, but, in any case, the remaining unit is significant as a rare remaining example of a once prevalent type. Owing to massive waterfront clearances in Portland before and after the Second World War and owing to the general trend of re-development in the 1960s and early 1970s, there has been severe attrition of the once extensive array of late 19th century, iron-fronted commercial buildings in the older communities of the Willamette Valley. The Starkey-McCully Building was nominated to the National Register, in part, because it supports the oldest-known Oregon-manufactured cast-iron architectural elements still in situ anywhere in the state.

Architect and contractor Holly A. Cornell (1859-1911) was a native of Oregon and worked in Salem for several years before moving to Portland. He designed two important houses in Salem which no longer stand: the Werner Breyman House and the Governor Zenas Mood House. In addition, he is reported to have designed other Salem business blocks, none of which has yet been identified. In November, 1887, he became foreman of the John C. Carson Sash, Door and Blind factory in Portland, where he served for five years. In 1894 he had opened an office as architect in Portland. Then he became president and superintendent of the North West Door Company from 1895 through 1902, and vice-president of the Pacific Coast

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Milling Company. From 1903 to 1907, he was superintendent of G. Ainslie and Company, Sash and Doors. The last two years of his life he was estimator for the Parelius Manufacturing Company, which operated a planing mill. The South First National Bank Block is the only known building in Salem designed by Cornell which is still standing.

The design problem with which Cornell was confronted was the addition of a block of seven stores to the First National Bank building at the SW corner of Commercial and Chemeketa Streets. The latter had pointed arched windows on the third story and a pyramidal corner tower. Cornell extended the straight-topped second story fenestration to the new block of stores and the elaborate bracketed cornice, pents and flues as well. At the time of construction, the Statesman reported: "the style of architecture is original with Mr. Cornell, although corresponding in a degree to the front of the National Bank building. The many variations in iron and brick work cause the whole to present a most pleasing general appearance."

The First National Bank Block was the first co-operatively financed redevelopment project in Salem. Those involved were W. N. Ladue, president of the Bank, who spearheaded the project, Benjamin Forstner, John Hughes, E. Lamport, Tilman Ford, and Mrs. A. A. Wheeler. As the Salem Statesman reported: "For several years the need of a building to fill up the yawning space between the Starkey block and the First National Bank building, on Commercial Street, was apparent. The two brick buildings mentioned are handsome structures, but the old wooden buildings between the two caused the entire block to present an ensemble that was not in the highest degree prepossessing."

Benjamin Forstner (1834-1897) was the only partner in the venture to build two stores. One on the southernmost end he used for his own general store from 1887 to 1891 or 1896. The one adjacent the southernmost store was first leased to J. J. Dalrymple for a dry goods store, 1887-1889. A contemporary description of the Dalrymple store extolls the handsome shelving and fixtures and the gallery around the whole store.

Thomas J. Cherrington arrived in Salem in November 1886, and arranged to lease rooms for a photographic gallery in the new Bank Block. He had a suite of four rooms above the Dalrymple store at 299 Commercial (now 247) with a sky-light for his studio in the north-west corner. Many of his fine pictures provide major evidence of the nature of life in Salem in the 19th century.

For six years, the store at 247 Commercial was leased to a series of music stores: Jacob Wenger in 1905, Sherman Clay Co., 1907, and the Salem Music Store, 1909-1911.

Later general merchandize stores at 297 Commercial (later 241) include those of J. W. Thomas, 1893, and E. E. Neff, 1897. At 299 (later 247), were the Farmers Cash Store, 1920. Later drygoods stores included the Salem Woolen Mills Store, which was to become Bishops, at 299, 1893-1897, and David W. Fraser, 1902. In this building second-hand goods were sold by William Lubke in 1920 and by the Liberty Exchange, 1924-1927, both at 241. The Capital Hardware and Furniture Company occupied both stores from 1942 to 1945. The ground story was occupied by the Capital Furnishing Company, 1954-1955, and by St. Vincent de Paul, a Roman Catholic charity, 1958-1976, one of the longest tenancies. S. C. Stone was a physician and druggist at 297 (later 241) from 1902 through 1917, and was another of the

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long-term tenants. Electric supplies and equipment were sold at 247 by C. M. Lockwood, 1942-1945. The stores were combined as a single, large, ground-story retail space for Piggly-Wiggly, one of the first great cash and carry food chains, 1928 through 1941. The Bligh Billiards and Coffee Shop, or Restuarant occupied the property, 1949-1954. The Oregon Carpet Warehouse has occupied the ground story since 1977.

Benjamin Forstner and his family were members of the Aurora Colony, a Christian communal society founded by Dr. William Keil. Organized in Pennsylvania from the Rapite colony in Harmony, the colony first settled at Bethel, Missouri, and then four groups of the colony came to Oregon, the first in 1855. The Forstner family appears to have been represented in the second migration of 1863. By 1874, Benjamin was in Salem. His participation in a co-operative development project to eliminate the early wooden business buildings appears to be a logical step for one who had lived in a co-operative society. H. A. Cornell, the architect, was the son of William Cornell, Oregon Trail immigrant of 1852 and a leader in the Methodist Church. Thus, both men associated with the South First National Bank Block were of pioneer stock.

Benjamin Forstner's obituary reported: "Mr. Forstner was the inventor of the celebrated Forstner flange, bit, or Webfoot auger, which is now manufactured by the Colt company of Bridgeport, Connecticut; this company was paying him a large royalty for the right to manufacture and sell the bit. He was awarded the premium for it at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 and the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893. He also invented an electric motor." Actually, he obtained three patents: one in 1874 for an auger (No. 155-142) "with cutting rim" surrounding the blade; in 1883, one for a spoon boring bit (No. 280-026); and in 1886, one for a second auger (No. 336-709) which was more sophisticated. In each case, Forstner assigned a half interest in his invention to someone else, the last being James Walton of Salem.

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Sanborn Insurance Map, Salem, Oregon, 1888.

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 Aug. 19, 1886, "The New Block"
 Jan. 1, 1887, "Improvements..."
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Forstner, Benjamin

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U. S. Patent Office, Official Gazette, Sept. 22, 1874; June 26, 1883, Feb. 23, 1886. Benjamin Forstner patents.

Salem, Oregon Statesman, Feb. 28, 1897. Obituary, Benjamin Forstner.

Marion County Clerk. Probate Records, File 1690. Estate of Benjamin Forstner (Microfilm reel 52).

Daughters of the American Revolution, Cemeteries of Marion County, Oregon. Inscriptions of Tombstones, Odd Fellows Cemetery, p. 14.

Cornell, Holly A.

Salem, Oregon Statesman, Nov. 11, 1887, "Going to Portland".

Polk, R. L., Portland City Directories, 1888-1911.

Offen, Karen M., and David C. Duniway, eds., "William Cornell's Journal, 1852, with his Overland Guide to Oregon", Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. 79, No. 4, (1978), 359-366.

Offen, Karen M., "Descendants of William Cornell, Oregon Pioneer", Section E. Genealogical tables privately produced for the family.

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Cornell, Barbara. Scrapbook, including obituary articles for Holly Austin
Cornell, who died Jan. 15, 1911, in Portland, Oregon.