



GEORGE ELIAS NISSEN

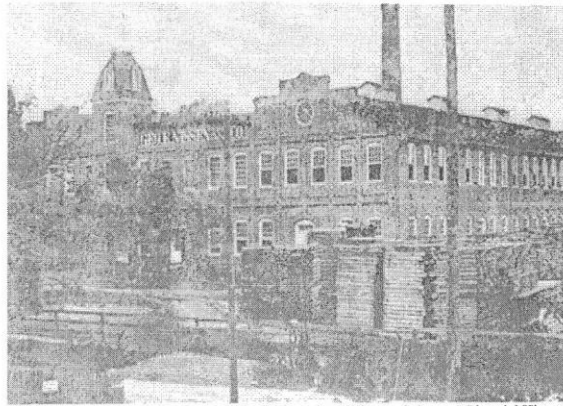
George Elias Nissen (September 27, 1839–September 19, 1913) was born to John Philip Nissen (1813–1874) and Mary Vawter. John began working as a wagon manufacturer at

the age of 21. Five years before George was born, John bought a lot in Waughtown, North Carolina, erected a log cabin, and started his pioneer wagon shop. When North Carolina seceded, the Nissen Wagon Works was converted into a government workshop. Through powered machinery, wagons could be assembled faster and more economically. The Nissen Wagon Works supplied NC regiments with the essential wagons needed to transport supplies. On May 24, 1861, George volunteered with the 11th Regiment, NC Volunteers (which later became Co. E, 21st NC Infantry), at Salem. He was promoted to sergeant of Co. B, 1st Battalion, NC Sharpshooters, on April 26, 1862. After the war, he returned home to Winston, and he and his brother William managed the business under the name of the George E. Nissen Wagon Works. In one year the company produced up to 10,000 wagons. On December 20, 1866, George married Sarah "Sallie" Stafford and they had two children, Mary Estalla and Robert S. Nissen. (PCVM.)

Source: *Piedmont Soldiers and Their Families – North Carolina*

By Cindy H. Casey Arcadia Publishing, 2000

NISSEN WAGON WORKS



Source: Frank Jones Collection, FCPL // Brownlee: Winston-Salem - A Pictorial History

Nissen Wagon Works operated as a family business for 91 years in Forsyth County, NC -- setting a precedent in the transportation industry throughout the United States and the world during the 1800s and early 20th century.

Established by John Phillip Nissen in 1834, the Nissen Wagon Works built superior wagons that transported cotton, wool, and tobacco to the growing towns of Winston and Salem, enabling the textile and tobacco industries to build a prosperous economic foundation in Forsyth County and Piedmont NC.

Son George Elias Nissen operated the business from 1874 to 1910 as the George E. Nissen Wagon Works, spread over a 600 acre tract of land.

1870 Census Largest Industries in Forsyth County, NC:

- 1st - Fries Cotton & Woolen Manufacturing (Winston Township)
- 2nd - Vogler & Pfohl Shoe & Boot Factory (Winston Township)
- 3rd - John P. Nissen Wagon Works (Broadbay Township)
- 4th - George Nissen Grist Mill (Lewisville Township)



Source: NC Div. Of Archives & History / Tursi: W-S A History

George Elias Nissen and his brother-in-law, Lewis Case Laugenour (namesake of Lewisville) operated the Laugenour-Nissen Sawmill during the latter 1800s, which was located at the site of today's Lewisville Town Square.

The Shallowford and Great Wagon Roads passing through Lewisville provided trade routes for Nissen wagons to travel from western lands towards Winston and Salem, and destinations beyond NC.

GEORGE ELIAS NISSEN HOUSE

Lewisville, NC



Source: LHS // Jack J. Kiger Family, circa 1900

Built circa 1876, the George Elias Nissen House has been a spacious home to many families for 132 years.

Architectural features of the house unique to Lewisville include the Italianate and Greek Revival styles: three front gables, two-paneled doors and interior woodwork. There are eight fireplaces in the original structure (4 upstairs / 4 downstairs). Additional rooms and porches have been added through the years.

Source: Taylor: From Frontier to Factory- An Architectural History Of Forsyth County

1870 Census - Lewisville Township of Forsyth County, NC

George Nissen owns the largest acreage among 85 landowners: 1,700 acres (425 acres of woodland / 1,275 acres of improved land), and is operating the only large industry in Lewisville - a grist mill - 4th largest industry in Forsyth County

George Nissen's sister, Elizabeth 'Bettie' Nissen Laugenour & husband Lewis provided land & money in the 1880s to build churches in central Lewisville, encouraging families to live and worship in the growing town.

George Elias Nissen (1839-1913)

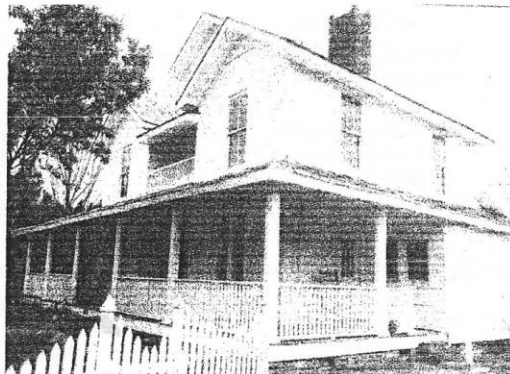
"With the passing of Mr. Nissen, Winston-Salem loses a man who has done much to make the city what it is industrially today, for it was largely through his mechanical genius that the fame of the Nissen Wagon was gradually extended all over this country and into foreign lands.

His life spent almost entirely in Forsyth County, covered a period of seventy-four useful years to the community in which he lived. Quiet and unassuming in his manner, he had a genius for doing things, and especially did he have genius of the mechanical type, that enabled him to put upon the market a wagon that has stood the test of time and whose popularity increases as the years roll by.

Within his lifetime, he saw Forsyth County and Winston-Salem 'unfold like a rose of a thousand leaves.' He was a pioneer in the local business world a great factor in the development of this city "

Source: Winston-Salem Journal - September 20, 1913

The 18-story Nissen Building in Winston-Salem was built in 1927 by George's brother, William Madison Nissen, after selling Nissen Wagon Works to F.B. Reamy in 1925.



Source: Photo by Chris Mackie / Clemmons Courier April 17, 2008

Wagon Maker in Salem

Tycho Nissen (1732-1789)

Nissen Wagon Works in Waughtown

John Phillip Nissen (1813-1874) - Grandson

George Elias Nissen (1839-1913) - Great-grandson

William Madison Nissen (1856-1934) - Great-grandson

"The mission of the George Elias Nissen House is to be an educational, cultural, social and historic resource serving Lewisville, the Piedmont Triad and beyond."

Educational ... student field trips supporting North Carolina & American history studies ... adult lifelong learning classes & experiences ... public access archives for regional historical studies

Cultural ... gallery exhibitions for artists & craftsmen ... performing arts venues for drama, music & dance ... instructional classes in visual & performing arts for all ages

Social ... 19th century rooms with decorative fireplaces to host conferences, meetings & receptions for professional, community & family gatherings

Historic ... 18th & 19th century historic sites located in the heart of Lewisville: the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, Nissen Wagon Museum & George Elias Nissen House ... a destination for tourists traveling the Yadkin Valley wine region & North Carolina Daniel Boone Heritage Trails



Organizational funders & contributors: *Town of Lewisville
Lewisville Historical Society
Lewisville Civic Club
Lewisville-Clemmons Chamber of Commerce
Lewisville Business & Professional Association
Winston-Salem Foundation
BB&T
Marion Stedman Covington Foundation
Historic Preservation Foundation of NC
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Reynolds American
Wells Fargo
John W. & Anna H. Hanes Foundation
Preserve Historic Forsyth*

Restoration Professionals: *Architect: Jon E. Palmer
Contractor: Alfred G. Wilson*

George Elias Nissen's influence upon the village of Lewisville is known through his business operations as a sawmill and grist mill owner, and his service as the 1880 census enumerator in the township. In the 1880 census, the boundaries of the 'village of Lewisville' are defined for the first time, beginning with Lewis Laugenour's house and ending at George Nissen's house on Shallowford Road. Today, over 130 years later, the Shallowford Town Square of Lewisville is built in the heart of the village defined in the 1880 census, established on the land site of the Laugenour-Nissen Sawmill which was located between the Laugenour and Nissen homes.

The Nissen family manufactured superior overland wagons from 1834 to 1925, sold throughout the United States and abroad. Operating as the George E. Nissen & Company beginning in 1874 following the death of father John Philip Nissen, the wagon manufacturing company constructed wagons which transported raw materials and manufactured products which built the tobacco and textile industries in Piedmont North Carolina and beyond.