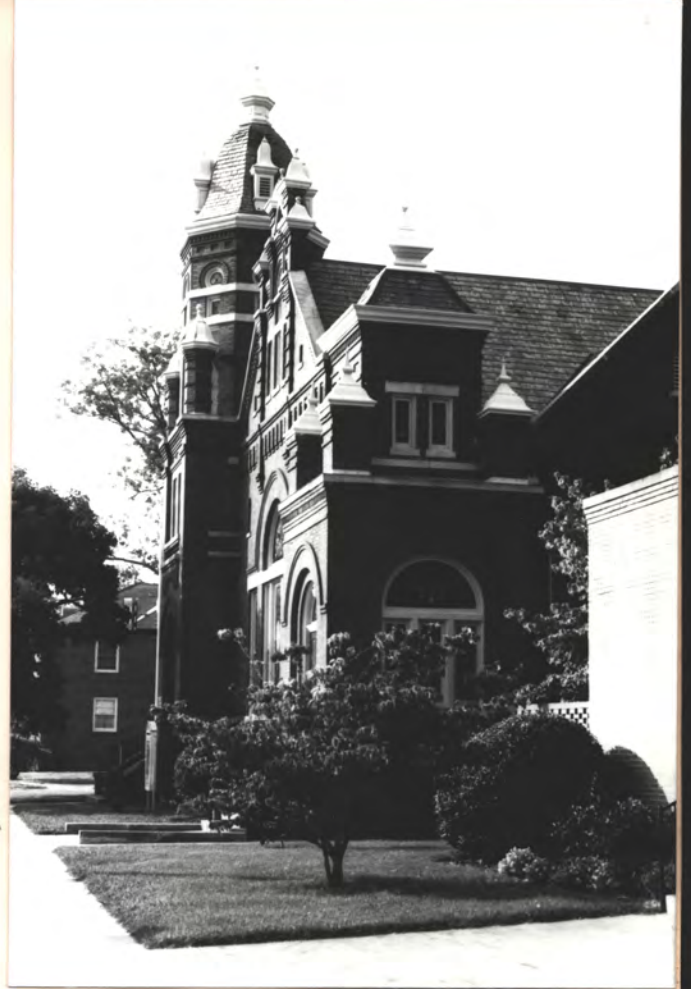
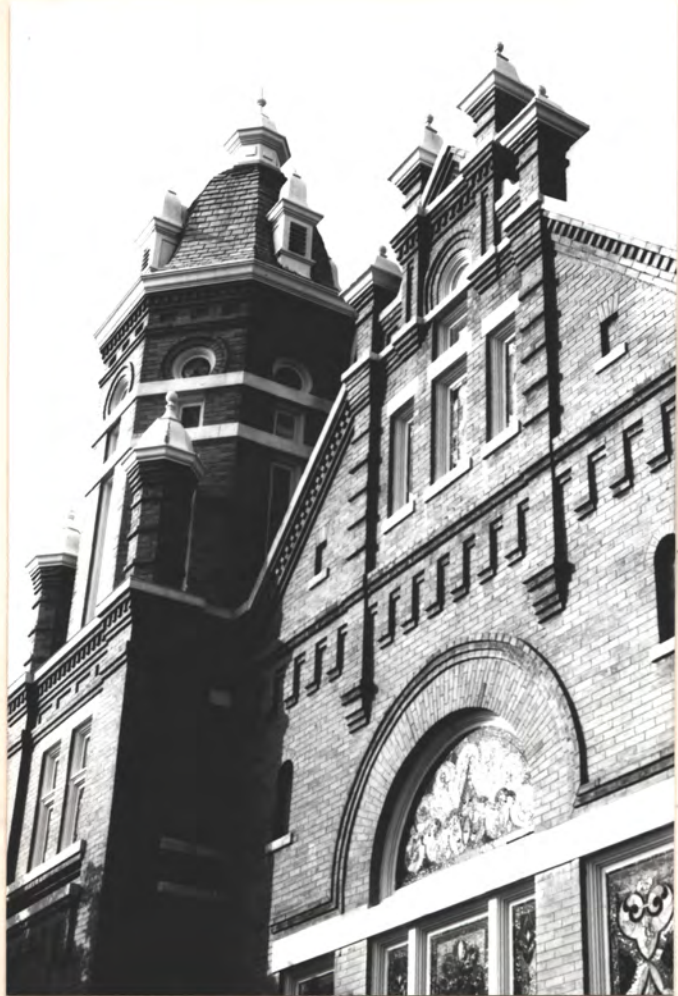




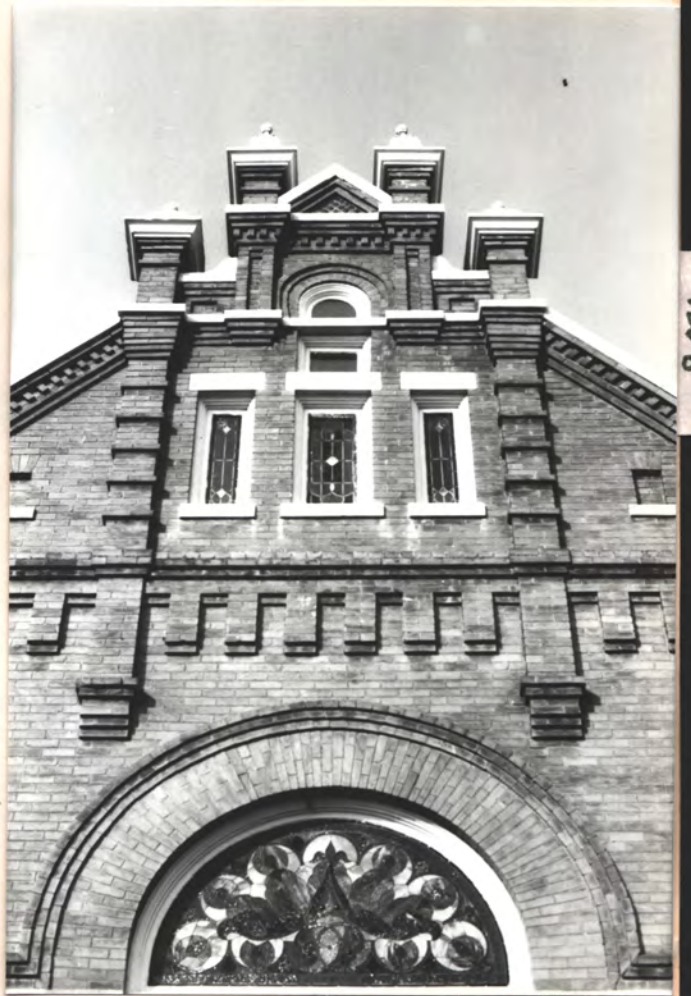
P2



P2



P2



Temple  
B'nei Shalom  
1898

Temple B'nei Shalom photo July 1984 HJ 1898 - Bill Hunt, Arch-Chaff



← S.W. ENTRY DOOR



restored out  
orig. gable  
metal  
finials  
replicated  
in painted  
copper in  
1994  
("Copperwork  
of Decatur")

Orig.  
Slate  
roof.  
Repairs  
in 1980  
& 1994



N.W. Tower

H ←

1898 Temple B'nai Shalom - N. Lincoln St. at E. Clinton Ave, Winterville  
Restored J&H Arch (H) 1980 + 1994



photos  
June  
1998  
HJavo



N  
1

1482



S.W. tower

ds



TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM  
1898  
HUNTSVILLE, AL. MARCH 1980  
JONES & HERRIN, ARCHITECTS, A.I.A.  
PHOTOS - H.P. JONES, A.I.A.

ARCHITECT  
R.H. HUNT, CHATTANOOGA  
per newspaper ad by Hunt  
(Linda Allen research)

N. SIDE



N. SIDE



N.E. CORNER



N.W. CORNER



WEST FRONT



WEST FRONT



Temple = 1898  
 (See construction)  
 S. Wing - c. 1960's  
 Jones, Crow & Mann, Arch

S.W. CORNER



Temple B'nai Shalom  
 photos H. Jones & R. Allen  
 1980 photos  
 for ext. restoration  
 Jones & Hamrin, Arch  
 H. Jones



E. SIDE OF 1960'S BLDG.

Arch. = Edgar Love



WEST FRONT



↑ N



↑ N



N →

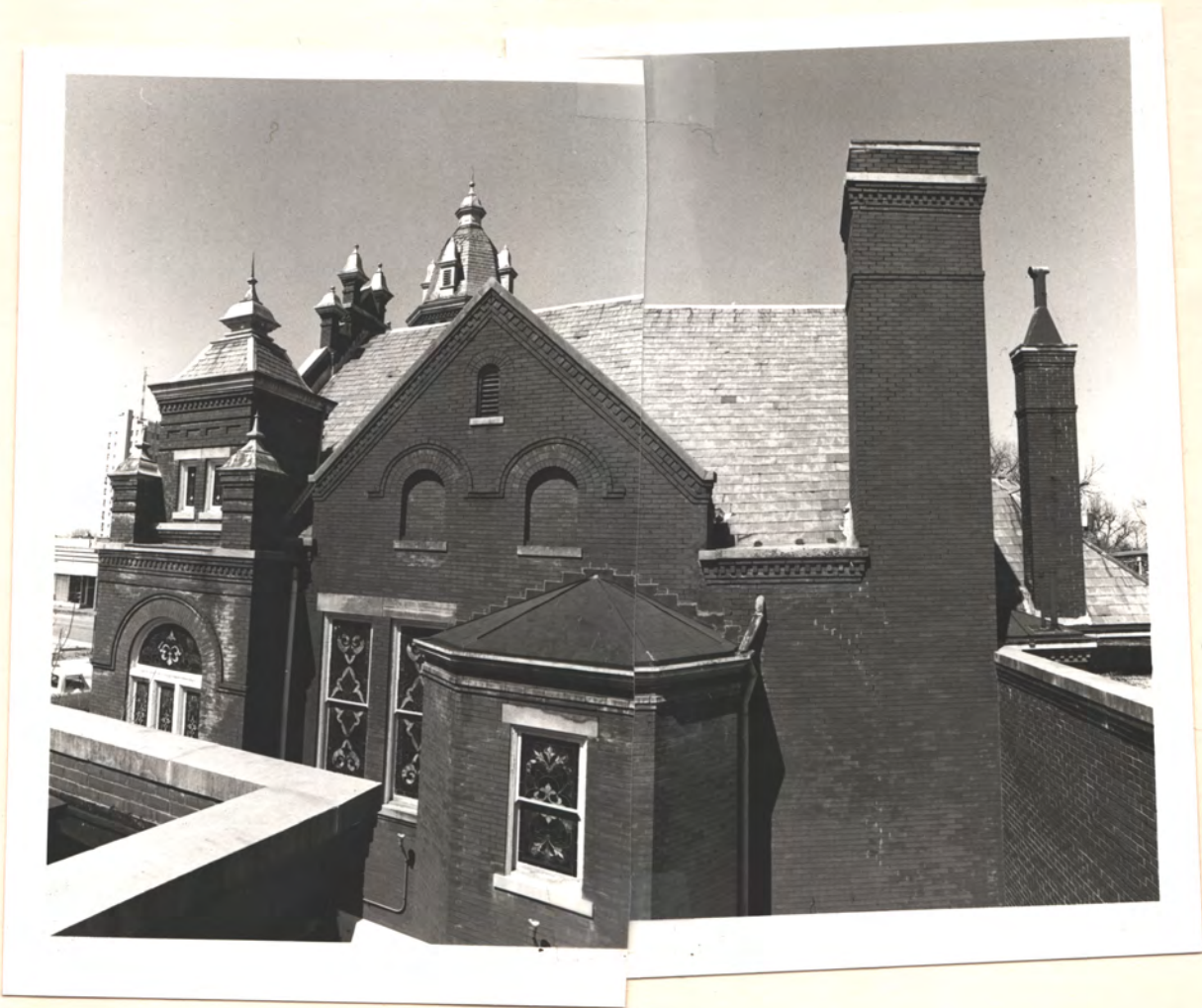


N





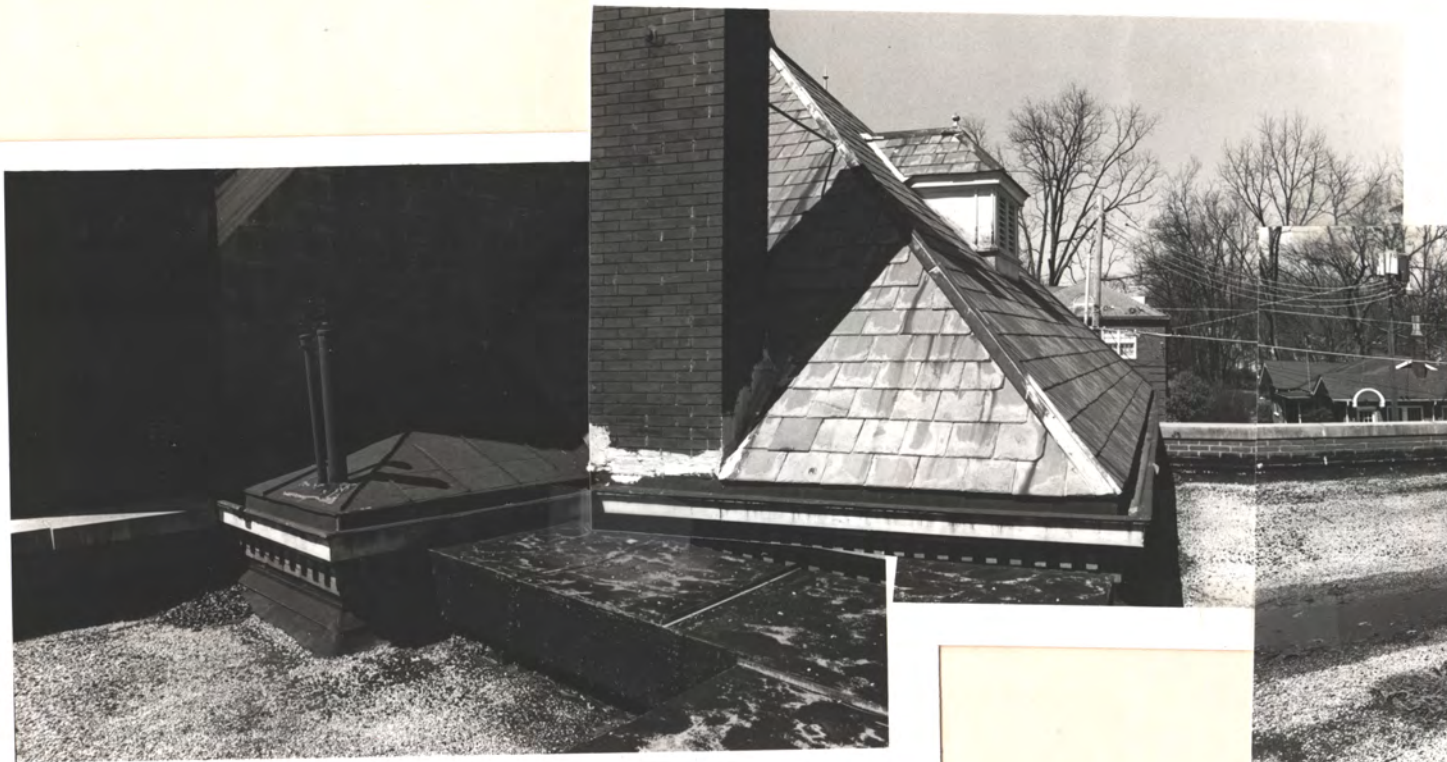
S.W. CORNER



S. SIDE



E. SIDE OF ROOF



LOOKING N. AT E. SIDE OF ROOF





N



N



N

A



24

Film  
C-100



4/82



4/82

4/82



4  
N



TOP

B



14

N  
A



17

N  
A



3

→ Lower



8

→ Lower

→ Lower

10

24



20

↖ N



16

↖ N





13

→ N



18

→ N



7

W

13



10

W

5

I



19



21

~

14

1098



→



→

→

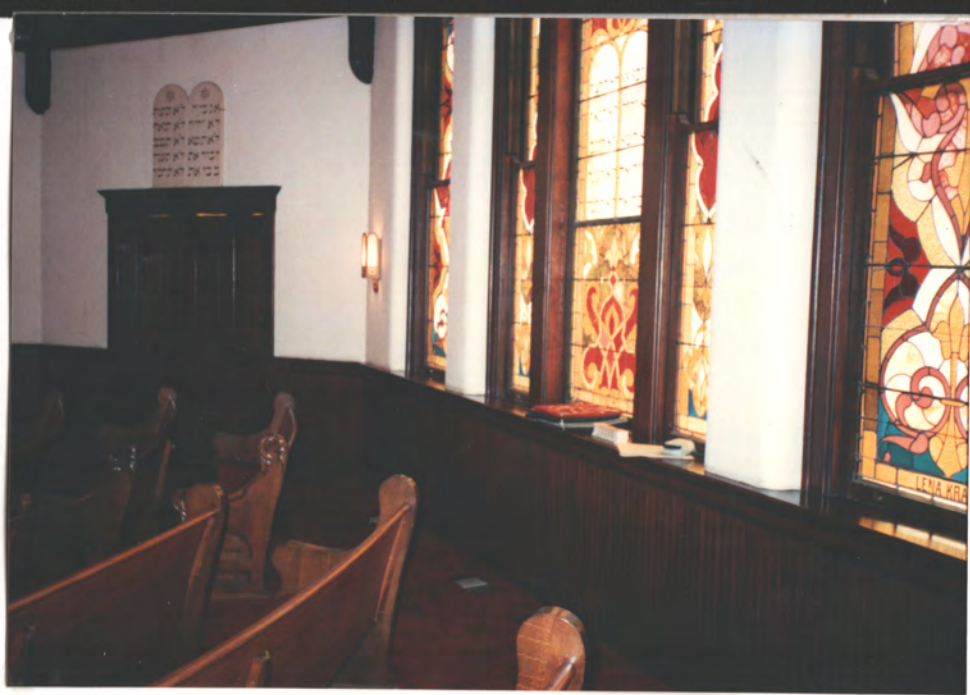
→  
↓  
dropped  
duct  
= c. 1975



Temple B'nai Shalom (1887-91)  
S.E. Corner of E. Clinton & Lincoln St.  
[Eugene Lynn, Arch Episc Dr. Frances Roberts]  
[also see cont. Press. Cl. of Lincoln & Randolph]  
Photos Lou Bates, James & Kerim, Arch. 1993



← orig.  
 lighting  
 (round  
 frosted  
 bulbs =  
 mid 20th c.)  
 Originally  
 clear-glass  
 "Eliam  
 bulbs, most  
 likely



→

→



→



2

east Atrium = orig. CR + overflow seats

308  
N →

Benny

organ



ALCOVE

N → ALCOVE

direct drop  
= modern  
(1975±) +

organ



Sanct. → East alcove  
N →

N →



organ



HS

N →

ALCOVE



Berns

LN.



→  
organ

4

5088

Mod. duct  
drop

N

Smot.

Alcor

N.E. entry



N

S.W.  
Entry (?)



MAIN  
N.W.  
ENTRY

N





ORIG.  
Pews,  
Carpet  
= 1970's  
plush





piano



W → 3 steps up to plat.

N ↘ 1 step dn  
 ↗ 3 steps up to plat



← 3 steps up to plat.

↘ W

3 steps dn  
 Temple B'nai Shalom (1890's)  
 Linds of E. Chittos, S.E. corner  
 Huntsville, AL.  
 Aug. 93 photos - H.P. Jones, FAIB



Organ Console  
Pew 57



N →

43 Steps up

→ W



N → Organ Console

1890's Temple B'nai Shalom  
 Huntsville, Al.  
 Arch. said to be Edgar Love (?) (Dr. F. Roberts)  
 Undergoing extensive int. & ext. restoration  
 Jones & Morris, Arch.  
 photos 12 June, Feb 1994 Hs



Restored - out gable, metal finish being replicated in painted copper (excellent job by "Coppersmiths")  
 3 Finishes at tower already repaired in this photo

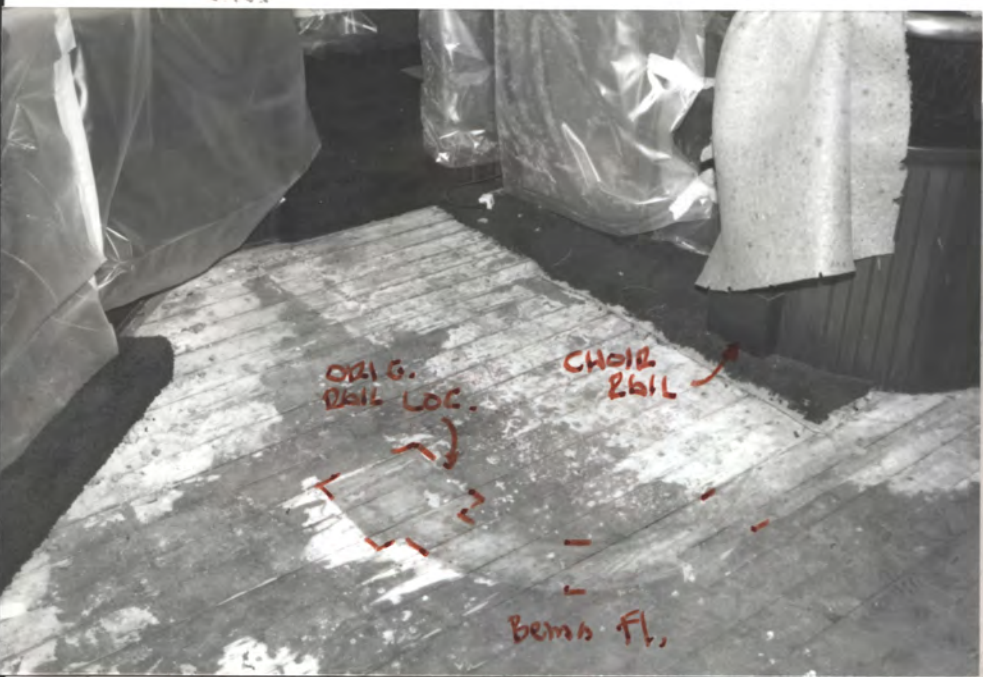
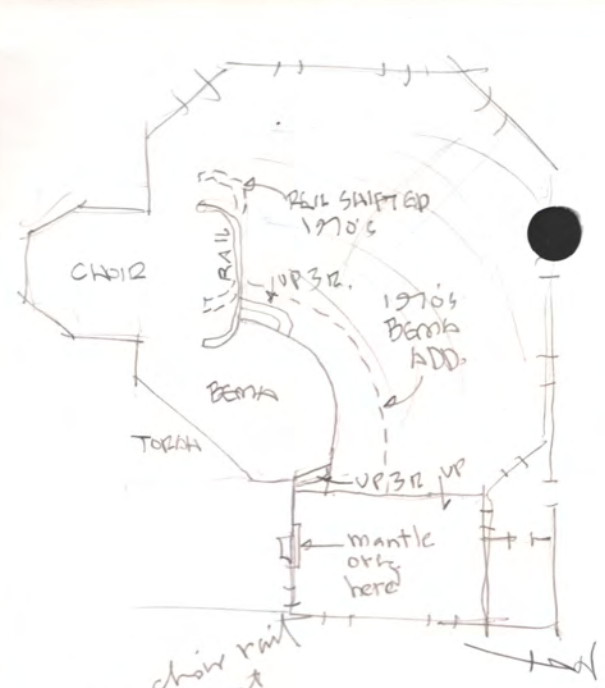
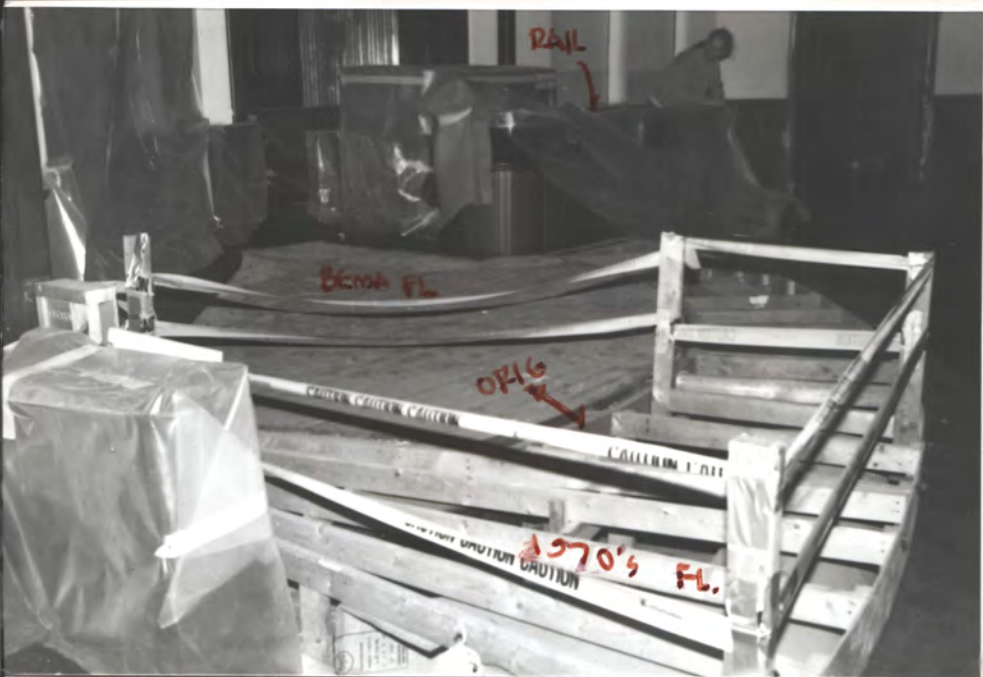


Here in small Hn., N.E. of Sanctuary. Hopefully to be put back in original loc. (HN records.)



"Craftsmen Blues" - cont'd. → N

Mantel originally in exp. space east of Bema



1890's choir rail shifted 4' west in 1970's  
Torah



east steps to orig. Bema  
west steps to 1890's Bema  
N



N ↓



brass →

N ↓

CHOIR RAIL photo for replic. in reduced size at new rail east of Berna platform



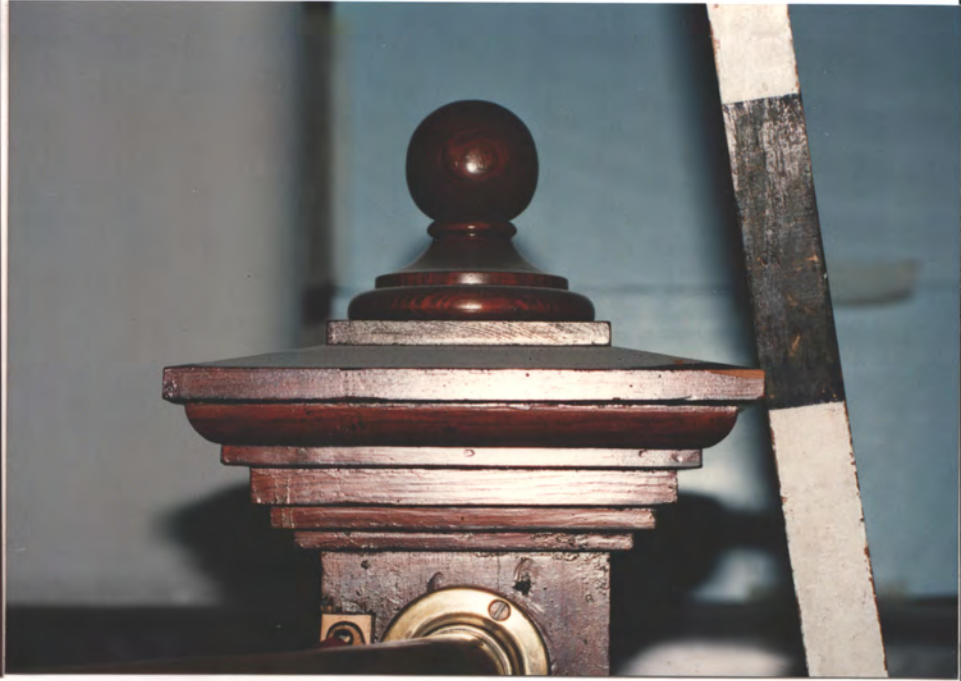
N ↓



N ↓

HN

HN



CHOIR RBIL NEWEL DETAILS



HN

HN

1898 Temple B'nai Shalom, H'vram  
 Mar. 1994 HJ

N  
 ↓

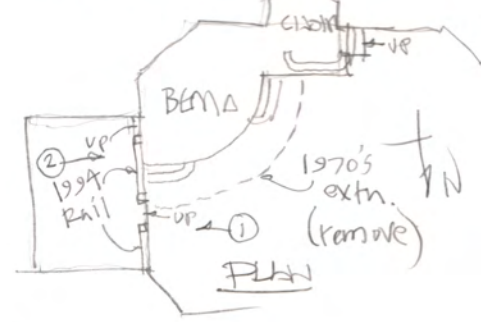
REVELLE AT CHOIR RECESS



"BOSS" AT CELL BEAMS

Revelle  
 Gwynn  
 of Temple

→ BEMA



Original 1970's enlargement  
 Bema of Bema to be removed

H ← ①

tapered step  
 (dangerous) at east  
 side of Sanctuary.  
 New rail to be here.

plus Red carpet = 1970's  
 to be removed

②

N  
 ↓







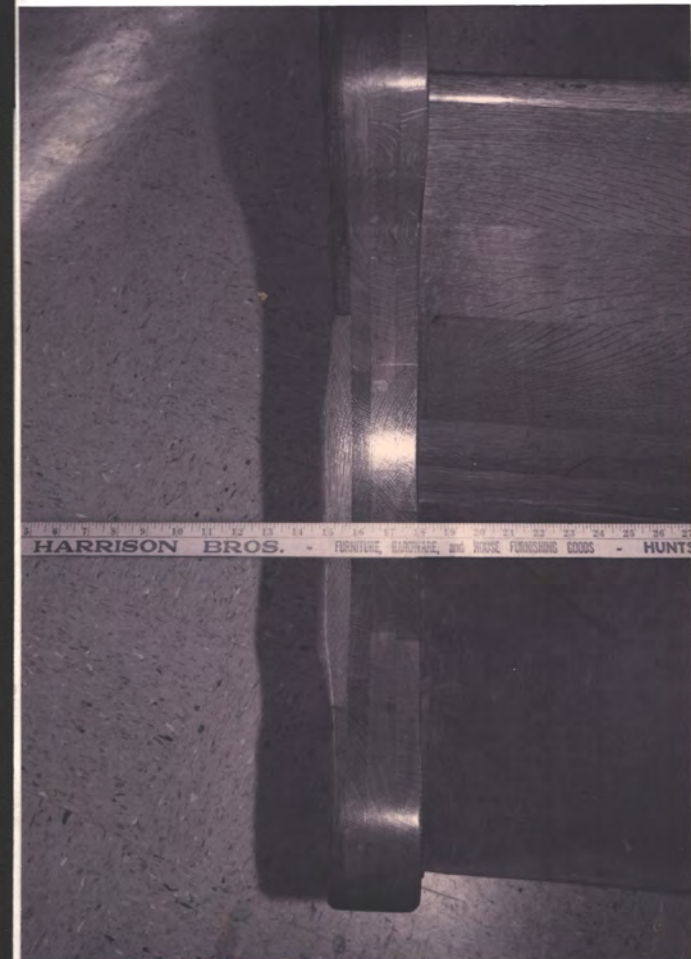
In the 1970's, the Bema (plat.) was enlarged to front, about 4'.  
Viewed orig. in 1994, & restored, as seen here, at urging of AJares.



New Bema (restor.)      ← New Bema  
1890's Temple B'nai Shalom, Huntsville, AL  
Photos JHH, A & N, Walter Hastings  
June '94, during restoration



← Orig. part, to be replicated for East alcove (above photo) →  
 ← New part - J & H, H & J →



1076



12

NA

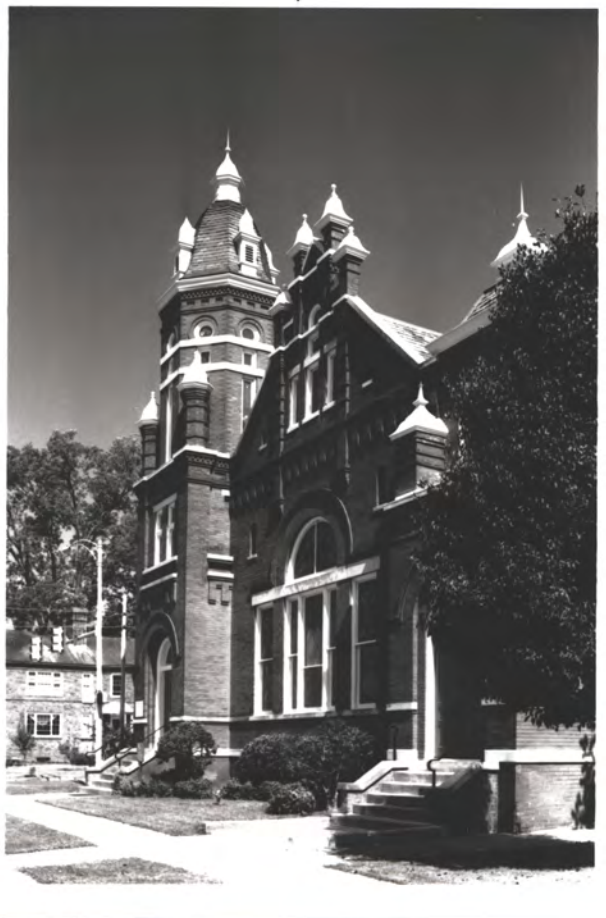
1899 Temple B'nai Shalom, Lincoln & Clinton Sts, S.E. Corner  
 Photos Oct 1994 Harvie P. Jones F.A.I.A.  
 Restor. 1993-4, Jones & Herrin, Architects



112



112



90



90

2



NA



NA



3 of 6

N

© 1994 = 1994, K. J. ...



NA



Ha



Ha

All metal finishes in 1899 = galv. iron.  
Rusted & patched in 1978 (J&H Arch)  
Beyond repair in 1993, so replicated in copper (painted)  
Excellent job by "Copperworks" of Denton, AL  
(German trained craftsmen)  
Cont. 1944 = Craftsmen Builders of H'ville

5046



Z



→ N



Z





1970's  
boxed down  
ducts put  
under fl.  
in 1994



H<sub>2</sub>

1994 rail by J & H's H Jones (replaces choir, yml)

CBank

PSW entry

→ W

Pews (plnt.) restored to its  
1894 config. in 1994. Had been  
enlarged in 1970±

Pews spaced wider apart in 1994,  
± 3 extra pews put in alcove



S.W.  
entry

6 off 6



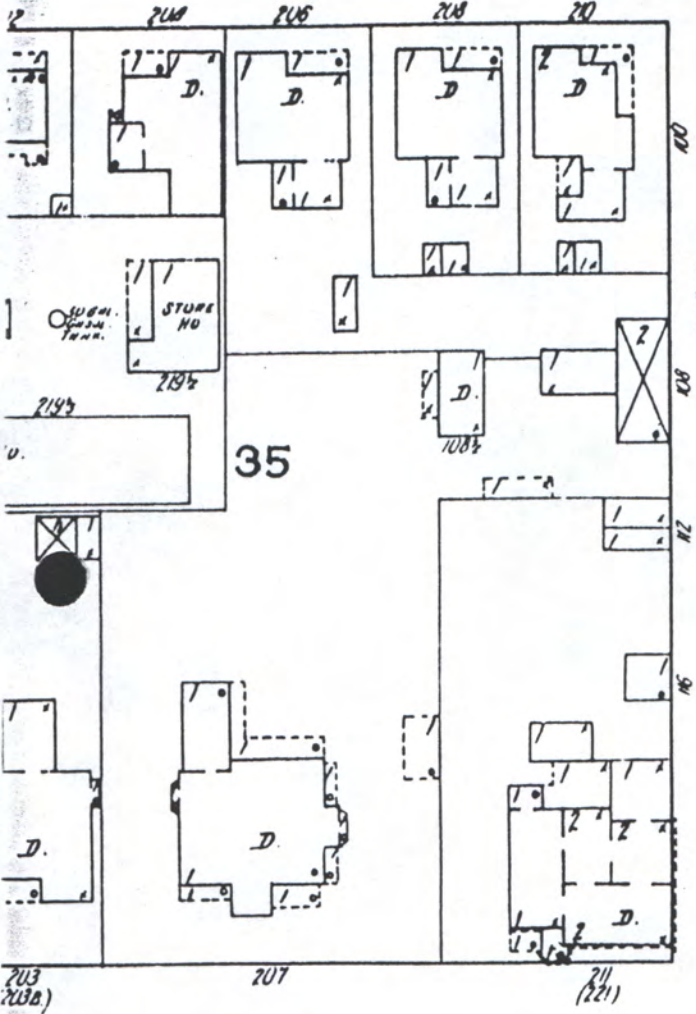
10

SANBORN MAP

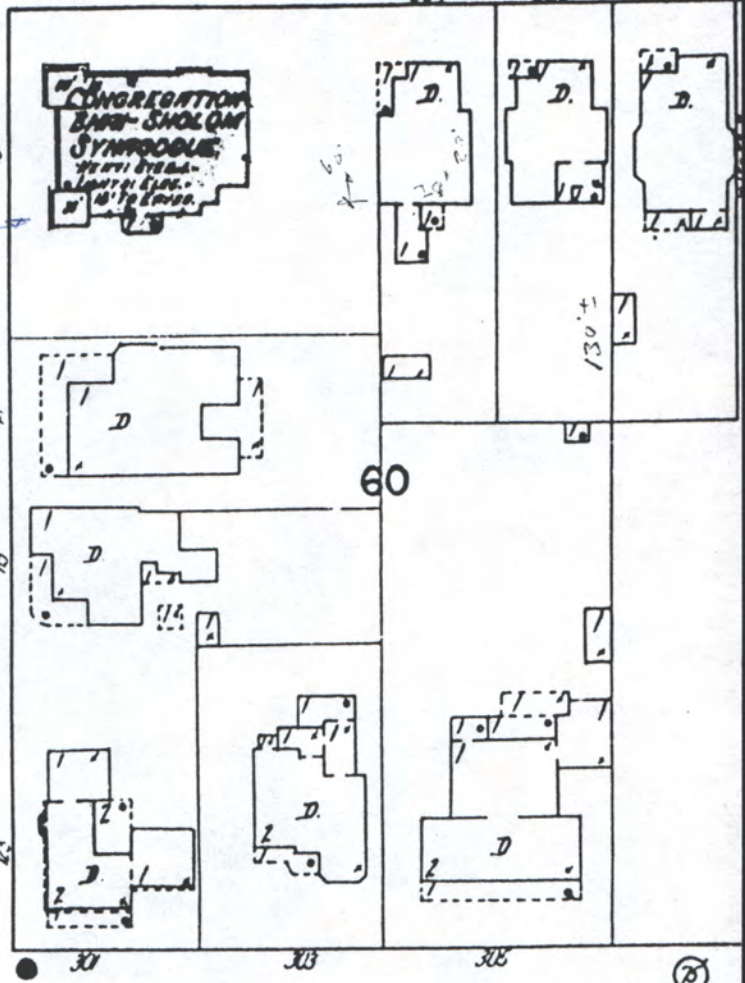
DEC. 1913  
**HUNTSVILLE**  
 ALA.

16

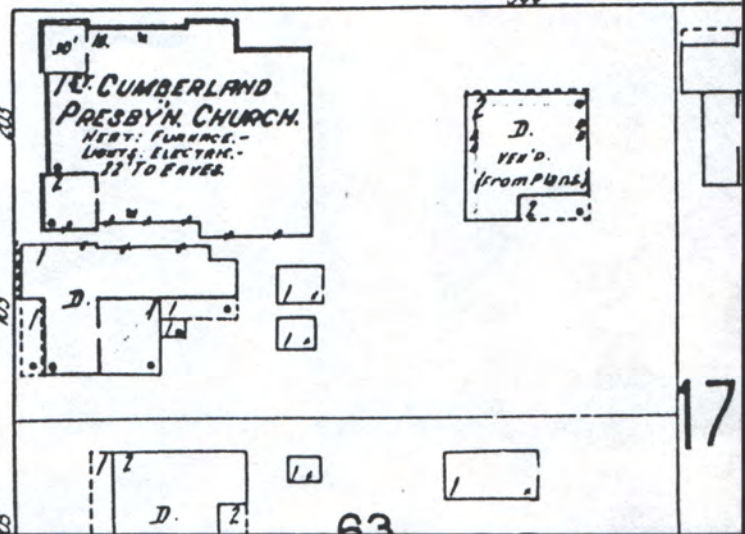
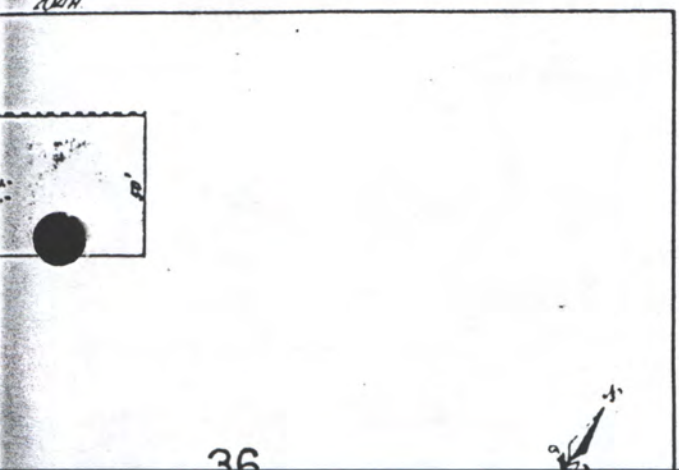
CLINTON



1899  
 ARCH =  
 P.H. LAUNT,  
 CIVIL ENGR.



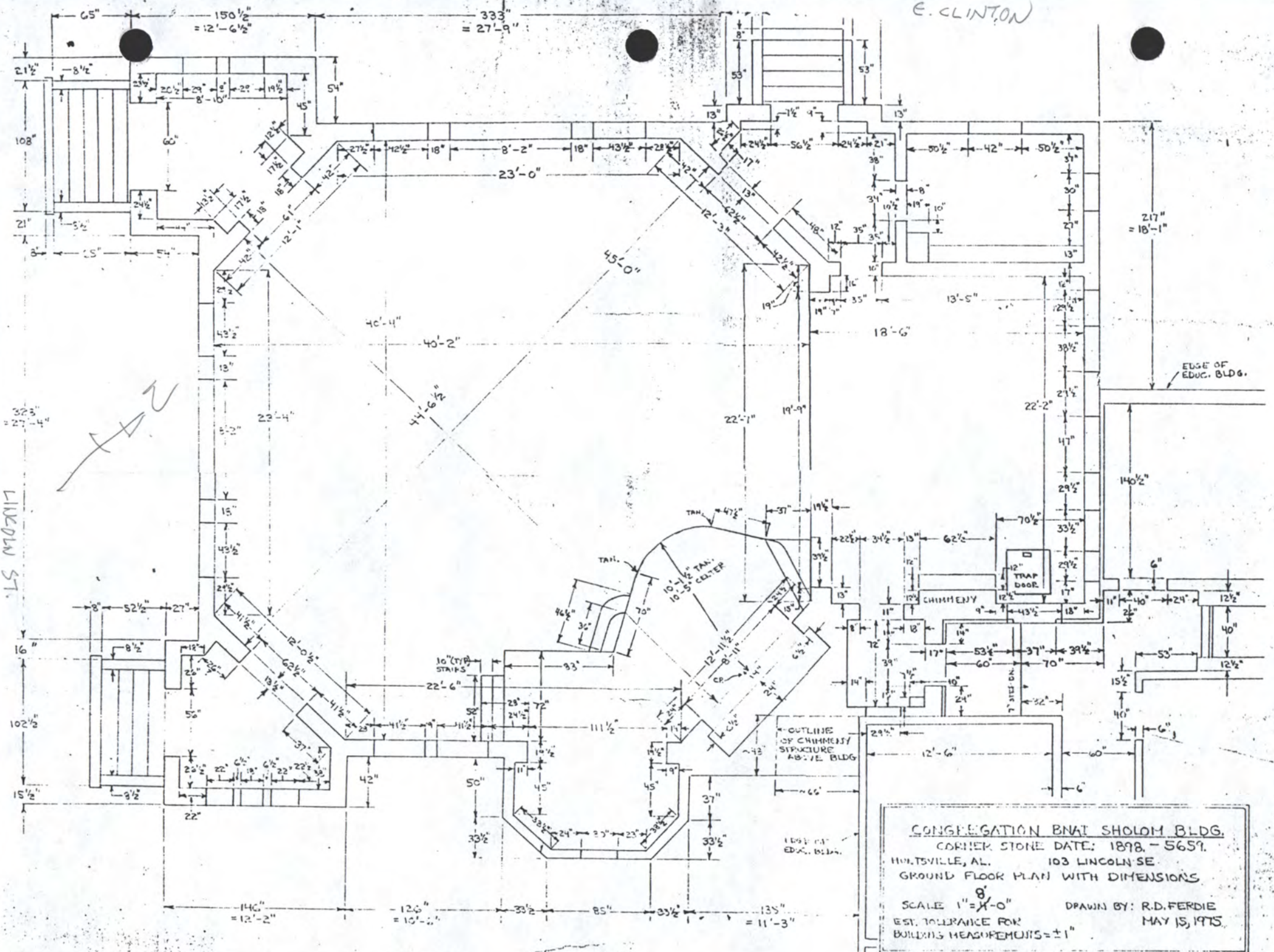
RANDOLPH



LINCOLN

17

E. CLINTON



LINCOLN ST.

EDGE OF EDUC. BLDG.

CONGREGATION BNAI SHOLOM BLDG.  
 CORNER STONE DATE: 1898 - 5659.  
 HUNTSVILLE, AL. 103 LINCOLN SE.  
 GROUND FLOOR PLAN WITH DIMENSIONS.  
 SCALE 1" = 8'-0" DRAWN BY: R.D. FERDIE  
 EST. TOLERANCE FOR BUILDING MEASUREMENTS = ± 1" MAY 15, 1915.

1/8" = 1'

# Dedication Ceremony

—TO BE HELD AT THE—

Congregation *B'nai Sholem,*

of Huntsville, Alabama.

Temple Corner Lincoln and Clinton Streets.

SUNDAY, NOV 26TH, 1899,

KISLEV 24, 5660.

MR. IKE SCHIFFMAN, President.

REV. NATHAN MICHNIC, Rabbi.

#### BUILDING COMMITTEE.

Mr. I. Schiffman, Chairman,

Mr. Herman Weil.

Mr. Oscar Goldsmith,

Mr. Henry Lowenthal,

Mr. Sam Levy.

Services will commence at 10:00 A. M.

ACQUAINTANCE - (1899) = R. H. HUNT, CHART.  
RESTOR. BUIL. (1914) = Jones & Levin (125 mg), HUNT

# Order of Exercises.

1. Organ Voluntary.....Miss Nona Robinson

## Processional.

2. Entry of Sunday School Children and Building Committee.

3. Mr. Herman Weil bearing Sefer Torah, supported by Rabbi.

4. "How Lovely are Thy Dwellings Fair".Choir

5. Opening Prayer.....Rabbi Nathan Michnic

6. Organ Voluntary.....Miss Nona Robinson

7. Reading of Genesis, Chapter 1; verse 1-4, and lighting of Perpetual Lamp.

8. "Let There be Light, Poem,  
.....Miss Retta Vorenberg

9. "Let There be Light".....Choir

10. Presentation of Key and Address to President.....Miss May Wise

11. Response.....By President

12. Duet—"Love Divine, Ul Love Excelling,"  
Miss Grace Russell and Mr. Frank Newman

13. Address of Welcome, Mr. Henry Lowenthal

14. Address—The Significance of this Occasion  
.....Mr. Leo Marshuetz

15. Solo—"The Holy City"....Mrs. Harry Weil

16. Dedication Address, Mr. Ike Schiffman, Pres.

17. "We Bless Thee For This Sacred Day".Choir

18. Solomon's Prayer, 1 Kings, chap. 8.  
.....Read by Rabbi

19. Solo—"Hear Us, O Father,"—By Owen  
.....Miss Grace Russel

20. Sermon.....Rabbi Michnic

21. "Man in His Might and Worldly Skill".Choir

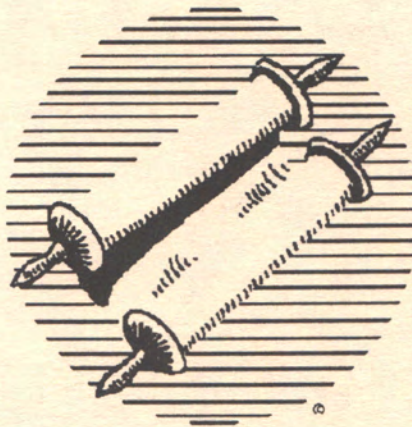
22. Olenu and Kaddish.....Read by Rabbi

23. Closing Hymn.....Choir

24. Benediction.....Rabbi

**TEFILLAH L'EREV SHABBAT  
WORSHIP FOR SHABBAT EVE  
IN CELEBRATION OF OUR SANCTUARY REDEDICATION  
FRIDAY EVENING, 30 SEPTEMBER 1994  
26 TISHRI 5755  
8:00 P.M.**

**TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA**



PRAYER OF DEDICATION

LET US AFFIRM THAT OUR SANCTUARY WILL BE A 'BET HA-TEFILLAH,' A PLACE OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP:

Here we shall come to examine who and what we are in the light of what we should be.

Here we shall come to offer the service of our heart in praise of God from Whom all blessings come.

Here we shall renew our faith seeking comfort and strength.

LET US AFFIRM THAT OUR SANCTUARY WILL BE 'BET HA-MIDRASH,' A PLACE OF LEARNING AND STUDY:

Here we shall come to learn who we are and from whence we have come.

Here we shall come to learn of our past, our present, and our future.

Here we shall come to learn of our Faith, our Heritage, our Tradition and to practice them.

Here we shall come to take what we have learned and to transmit it with love to the next generation.

LET US AFFIRM THAT OUR SANCTUARY WILL BE A 'BET HA-KNESSET,' A PLACE OF GATHERING AND ASSEMBLY:

Here we shall come to share joy and sorrow.

Here we shall come to maintain our 'Brith,' our Covenant with our fellow Jews. AMEN.

WELCOMING THE SHABBAT

שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם. מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרָה. מַלְאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן.  
מִסְפָּד מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Peace to you, O angels of service, angels on high from the sovereign Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of Blessing.

בּוֹאֲכֶם לְשֵׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן.  
מִסְפָּד מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Enter in peace, O angels of peace, angels on high from the sovereign Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of Blessing.

בְּרָכוּי לְשָׁלוֹם. מַלְאֲכֵי הַשְּׁלוֹם. מַלְאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן.  
מִסְפָּד מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Bless me with peace, O angels of peace, angels on high from the sovereign Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of Blessing.

צַחֲתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם. מַלְאֲכֵי הַשְּׁלוֹם. מַלְאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן.  
מִסְפָּד מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Depart in peace, O angels of peace, angels on high from the sovereign Ruler of rulers, the Holy One of Blessing.

#### HADLAKAT HA-NEROT-LIGHTING THE SHABBAT CANDLES

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה. יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ. מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שַׁבָּת.

Praised are You, ADONAI our God, Ruler of the universe, who has hallowed us with commandments, commanding us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

#### YAYYIN L'KIDDUSH-SANCTIFICATION OF THE WINE

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה. יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ. מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַנֶּסֶן.

Praised are You, ADONAI our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

O Lord, let us now praise the good and generous men and women of our Congregation, and supportive friends and family of our Congregation. We are truly grateful for the blessing of their lives. May our Holy God always bless us with such people, leading us by their example from joy to joy and strength to strength.

O Lord, help us always to remember that unless You participate in the building of this House, we who built it, we who care for it, we who maintain it labor in vain. Help us, always, to live by the teachings of the Torah and the sacred literature of our People which flows from it so that this Sanctuary may continue to inspire us with reverence, dignity, comfort, peace, sanctity, and joy. AMEN.

*Sons of Herring, Restoration Arm.  
HP Son*

# TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM

103 LINCOLN STREET  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA



REDEDICATION  
SEPT. 30-OCT. 2, 1994



## REDEDICATION THOUGHTS

Dear Friends:

The Rededication of our Sanctuary building, under the inspired leadership of now past-President Dr. Alfred Ritter and our Board of Trustees, and Ms. Revelle Gwyn and our Renovation Committee, is truly cause for celebration. The commitment of our entire membership to translating dreams and visions into reality marks this entire weekend as one truly precious moment in the life of the Temple B'nai Sholom Family.

Jewish Religious Tradition is replete with moments of high drama both in the lives of individuals as well as the community itself. All are focused, however, on the interconnection between humanity and the Divine. Quite often, in that interplay, time stands still, and we human beings, however briefly, sense the cosmic eternity of which we are truly a part. Unlike the patriarch Jacob who proclaimed at Beth El, "God was in this place and I knew it not," entering our Sanctuary now, we can quite easily proclaim, "God is, indeed, in this place, and we know it well!"

It is, therefore, incumbent upon us as a Congregation, and congregational family, to, again, use this occasion of our celebration to offer the warmest and sincerest of "thank you's" to all those who labored so diligently to accomplish this great task, and to offer, humbly, our prayer of celebration:

**Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech haolam,  
shehecheyanu, v'key'y'manu, v'he'ge'anu laz'man  
hazeh:**

**Praised are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the  
universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and  
brought us to this joyous occasion.**

**Amen.**

**Dr. Steven L. Jacobs,  
Rabbi, D.H.L.**

**30 September 1994  
25 Tishri 5755**

## PROGRAM OF EVENTS

### Rededication Shabbat Service

Steven L. Jacobs, Rabbi, D.H.L.  
Friday, September 30, 1994  
8:00 p.m.

### Havdallah Service

Music & Reception Following  
Saturday, October 1, 1994  
7:30 p.m.

### Open House

Tours & Reception  
Sunday, October 2, 1994  
1-3:00 p.m.

## PROGRAM FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1994

### Welcome & Recognition of Distinguished Guests

Alfred Ritter, Past President & Master of Ceremonies

### Havdallah Service

Steven L. Jacobs, Rabbi, D.H.L.  
Sharon Parker, Cantorial Soloist

### Music

Dr. Frank Contreras--piano  
Joanne Williams--violin

"Israeli Fantasy"  
Ruth Dessau--piano

(Piano Courtesy of A.B. Stephens Music, Inc.)

### Reception

## THE TEMPLE: THE CONCEPT AND THE CONSTRUCTION

[Pres. J. Weil] stated that a Committee of the C.P. Church [desires] to sell their Church to us for a Synagogue...

[T]he Pres. [appointed] a Committee [consisting of H. Weil, H.J. Lowenthal, and O. Goldsmith] to see a builder or architect and find out how much it would cost to build a suitable place of worship & the Committee has the power to buy the C.P. Church if suitable...[Ed. note--The C.P. Church was a George Steele building which stands on the site of the present Central Presbyterian Church at the corner of Lincoln and Randolph streets.]

Temple Minutes  
March 28, 1897

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

It was moved and sec. that the Committee has full power to purchase a lot without further action.

Temple Minutes  
April 10, 1898

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The Committee reported having purchased the lot on Cor. Clinton & Lincoln str[ets at a price of] \$1500.00....The Pres. appointed a Building Comm.: I. Schiffman, H. Weil, O. Goldsmith, H.J. Lowenthal, S.H. Levy with full power to act in all particulars.

Temple Minutes  
May 1, 1898

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The corner of Lincoln and East Clinton St. will soon be adorned by a handsome synagogue to be built by the Hebrew Reform Congregation. This temple of worship will contain an auditorium, Sunday school room and society

room, and will be erected at a cost of about \$12,000. The plans have been accepted and work will begin at once.

The Huntsville Weekly Democrat  
Wednesday, May 25, 1898

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

The officers of the congregation of the Hebrew reform synagogue have let the contract for their new temple of worship to Mr. William Meyers. The brick contract was secured by J.I. and W.L. Jones, who will furnish nearly 300,000 brick. Work will begin within the next few days.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, August 17, 1898

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

The following members purchased...Memorial windows:

Mrs. A. Goldsmith	two windows @ 75.00	150.00
Mrs. B. Schiffman	one "	100.00
" E. Weil	" "	125.00
" Flora Schiffman	" "	75.00
" Emma Mendel	" "	75.00
" R. Herstein	" "	25.00
Mr. E. Brown	" "	<u>25.00</u>
	Total	\$575.00
	Mr. S.H. Levy	<u>50.00</u>
		\$625.00

Temple Minutes  
April 7, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Supt. Meyers is placing the heavy timbers for the roof and towers of the synagogue and will be ready for the roofers next week.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, May 10, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Messrs. Timberlake & Nance...are just finishing the work of putting the beautiful ornaments on the Jewish Synagogue.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, July 25, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

[The Jewish synagogue] will be completed and in use within another month.

The Huntsville Tribune  
Tuesday August 22, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

General meeting for Dedication Nov 26/99. The foll[owing] were appointed...Ushers: Ed Weil, Sam Damson, M.H. Weil & Sam Adler....Moved and sec. that Mr H.J. Lowenthal put Linoleum in the three vestibules. Carried.

Temple Minutes  
November 12, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

# Dedication Ceremony

—TO BE HELD AT THE—

Congregation *B'nai Sholem,*

of Huntsville, Alabama.

Temple Corner Lincoln and Clinton Streets.

SUNDAY, NOV 26TH, 1899,  
KISLEV 24, 5660.

MR. IKE SCHIFFMAN, President.  
REV. NATHAN MICHNIC, Rabbi.

### BUILDING COMMITTEE.

Mr. I. Schiffman, Chairman,  
Mr. Herman Weil,  
Mr. Oscar Goldsmith,  
Mr. Henry Lowenthal,  
Mr. Sam Levy.

Services will commence at 10:00 A. M.

# Order of Exercises.

1. Organ Voluntary..... Miss Nona Robinson
- Processional.
2. Entry of Sunday School Children and Building Committee.
3. Mr. Herman Weil bearing Sefer Torah, supported by Rabbi.
4. "How Lovely are Thy Dwellings Fair". Choir
5. Opening Prayer..... Rabbi Nathan Michnic
6. Organ Voluntary..... Miss Nona Robinson
7. Reading of Genesis, Chapter 1; verse 1-4, and lighting of Perpetual Lamp.
8. "Let There be Light, Poem,  
..... Miss Retta Vorenberg
9. "Let There be Light"..... Choir
10. Presentation of Key and Address to President..... Miss May Wise

11. Response.....By President
12. Duet—"Love Divine, U Love Excelling,"  
Miss Grace Russell and Mr. Frank Newman
13. Address of Welcome, Mr. Henry Lowenthal
14. Address—The Significance of this Occasion  
.....Mr. Leo Marshuetz
15. Solo—"The Holy City"....Mrs. Harry Weil
16. Dedication Address, Mr. Ike Schiffman, Pres.
17. "We Bless Thee For This Sacred Day". Choir
18. Solomon's Prayer, 1 Kings, chap. 8.  
.....Read by Rabbi
19. Solo—"Hear Us, O Father,"—By Owen  
.....Miss Grace Russel
20. Sermon..... Rabbi Michnic
21. "Man in His Might and Worldly Skill". Choir
22. Olenu and Kaddish.....Read by Rabbi
23. Closing Hymn..... Choir
24. Benediction..... Rabbi



The dedication services of the handsome Jewish Synagog[ue] were very impressive and interesting on last Sunday morning, and a large congregation representing every denomination was present....

Rabbi Michnic delivered a fine sermon and several addresses and recitations of the program were creditably rendered and interesting to the congregation. The dedication of this beautiful temple is a triumph to the untiring energy, generosity, and zeal of the congregation.

Huntsville Weekly Democrat  
Wednesday, November 29, 1899



### "HEBREWS IN HUNTSVILLE"

The erection of this temple gives us food for thought regarding the industry of the people who build it. The Jews of Huntsville are examples of industry and thrift. There are about thirty families of Jews in Huntsville, and there is scarcely a residence street that is not adorned with their beautiful homes. There are Jew merchants who came to this town with little more than their clothes, and a small stock of merchandise that could be packed in a goods box, who, by characteristic energy and thrift, have become the leading merchants and desirable citizens. Nor do these people confine themselves to their trade entirely. They have their social circles and beautiful entertainments at the Standard Club rooms or in their own handsomely furnished homes every week, and the men and women are prominent in any movement for charity or public interest. These people also see the necessity of an education, and are giving their children the best advantages for the development of their talents, whether for a professional or commercial career. Teachers who have had them under training, pronounce the children of Jews splendid material to work with. One cannot help but admire a people who through industry have achieved such results in a few years.

The Huntsville Weekly Democrat  
Wednesday, May 25, 1898



**ISAAC SCHIFFMAN**  
1856-1910  
CHAIRMAN, BUILDING COMMITTEE  
PRESIDENT, CONGREGATION, 1898-1901



**OSCAR GOLDSMITH**  
1849-1937  
BUILDING COMMITTEE

## ISAAC SCHIFFMAN

As President of this Congregation during construction and Chairman of the Building Committee, Isaac Schiffman, perhaps most among our esteemed Founders, is responsible for the structure in which we now are privileged to worship. He was born in 1856 in Hoppstaedten, Germany, and came to America as a young man. Memories of the graceful old synagogue in his native town, and the religious training he received there, may have inspired him to his task in Huntsville. We know that Isaac Schiffman never forgot Hoppstaedten. He built a school for Jewish children there, and gave a water system to the town. The old synagogue still stands, but as an apartment house. Its windows were destroyed on Kristallnacht. There are no longer Jews in Hoppstaedten.

## WHO WAS THE ARCHITECT OF THE TEMPLE?

The prominent Chattanooga architect R.H. Hunt (1862-1937) designed scores of churches, hotels, schools, public buildings, and businesses throughout the South. He published a list of references in 1907 which includes, among well over fifty other houses of worship, the "Jewish Synagogue, Huntsville, Ala." Hunt also designed a synagogue in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, as well as the "Van Valkenburg Block" in Huntsville. Hunt's obituary in The Chattanooga Free Press extols him as "the outstanding architect in the entire South."

## THE CENTENNIAL RENOVATION

Our Congregation continues to enjoy the beautiful legacy of our founders--our sanctuary--almost a century after its construction. Our Centennial Renovation honors these men and women, their faith and their labor.

The renovation of our sanctuary building proceeded in two phases: exterior and interior. The exterior work began in November 1993, and included repairing our original slate roof, removing the original galvanized metal ornaments on the spires and roof line, duplicating them in copper (for durability), painting them to replicate the original color, pointing-up the brick and limestone facade, installing new copper gutters and flashing, stabilizing the roof decking where needed, and sealing our chimney and towers from birds and other winged creatures. Our efforts were met with frustration at several points. We could not find commercially available mortar to match our tinted original. We spent hours making our own recipe from a variety of unlikely ingredients. The press-molded brick which gives our facade its unusual uniformity is no longer made in this area, and repair and replacement of broken and damaged brick became a game of scrounging appropriate brick from unseen areas to use where visible and replacing them with new or non-conforming brick.

Weather conditions always make exterior construction work interesting. When the winter and early spring rains came and would not leave, we thought that we would never finish. But we did, only to evict the Congregation from the interior and begin work there.

The complicated roof structure of our sanctuary is an architectural treasure. All of the rafters and beams are Southern heart pine--there are no steel or other metal supports. Overall, water damage has been the building's chief enemy over the years. The patchwork roof repairs finally became inadequate and in the process much of the interior plaster became loose and unsalvageable. We knew that our late nineteenth-century electrical system was dangerously wanting, our heating and cooling system was inefficient, and that we needed a security and fire alarm system. The growth of our membership resulted in crowded seating, and our carpet and other decorative appointments needed freshening. Our interior renovation addressed all of these areas and more.

We have installed insulation in the large attic which extends over the entire interior of the sanctuary and improved access to the attic so that routine maintenance can be undertaken more easily. We now have a system of ladders

design by H-H Jones '94

which extends to the full height of the inside of our tallest spire, making inspection for water and other damage easier. All of the plaster in the sanctuary is new, as is the electrical wiring, and we have a security and fire alarm system. We removed exposed heating and cooling ducts and opened the raised seating area on the east side of the sanctuary.

The casual observer is challenged to guess what of our woodwork is new and what is original. If you determined that the low wall, railing, and steps which separate the raised seating area on the east from the main sanctuary is new, you have a good eye. The prior bima was removed during the heating and cooling work, and we discovered the original bima substantially in place underneath. To give our Congregation more space for the original pews and temporary seating for special events, the bima was returned to approximately its original size, a reduction of 24 inches around its exterior perimeter. We discovered the original heart pine flooring still in place and refinished it in the vestibules. Many in the Congregation wanted wall-to-wall carpet in the sanctuary for decorative and acoustical purposes, and so we have it.

One of the vestibules had been converted to a temporary storage area. This was opened, and all of the exterior doors were rebuilt, with original and additional hardware repaired and installed. The woodwork has been repaired, stained, and cleaned. The original pews have been refurbished, their backs braced and new upholstery installed. The sanctuary lighting has been improved. The furniture on the bima has been repaired and the ark has been relined. New covers grace our lecterns.

The original rabbi's study on the northeast corner of the sanctuary building has become our Founders' Room, a place for memorials and other items which evidence the life of our Congregation since its founding in 1876. The mantel in the Founders' Room originally surrounded the fireplace (now covered) between the two doorways on the southeast side of the raised seating area.

All this has been done, but our work is not complete. In the near future will be improvements to our Educational Building, new landscaping, and the renewal of our courtyard as a place for meditation and events.

## IN RETROSPECT

(This an update of an article written on the occasion of the Congregation's Centennial Celebration in 1976.)

Huntsville is the second oldest city in Alabama as well as the oldest English settlement in the state. The first permanent settlers arrived before 1810 and Huntsville was incorporated in 1811.

(1805)

Jewish people began to arrive in Huntsville in the 1840's and Jewish marriages occurred here at least as early as 1849. These first pioneers were primarily merchants and cotton factors. They quickly began to prosper in the ante-bellum period, some acquiring important real estate in Huntsville and the surrounding area. Some owned slaves, and there are records of sales transactions involving slaves before the Civil War, the papers of which are still in the hands of present members of the Congregation.

During the Civil War, the Jewish population generally supported the Confederacy and at least one member served with the Confederate military forces.

After the war, a number of Jews moved to Huntsville from Cincinnati. Earlier they had emigrated to the United States from Central European states, principally the Germanies. In the 1870's they took steps to form a congregation. On July 30, 1876, dreams became reality and thirty-two men formed B'nai Sholom Congregation. At this time there were approximately 230,000 Israelites and 270 congregations in the United States.

The constitution, submitted at the founding meeting, contained laws and standing rules similar to those of Congregation B'ne Yeshurun of Cincinnati, led by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. The mode of worship was to be in accordance with Wise's radical prayer book *Minha-Amerika*, written in Hebrew and German. The membership set up finance, school, and choir committees. The religious functions of Hazzan (the title was later changed to Rabbi) and Shamas were performed by members of the Congregation. The Rabbi performed all the duties of a Hazzan, conducted regular and special services, performed funerals, led the Sunday School, and taught the students. Another man trained the choir and instructed in liturgy.

It is possible that Divine Services had previously been held at the Opera House, but for the High Holy Days of 1876, they were conducted in a

newly refurbished room rented at the Masonic Lodge. The Congregation purchased an organ and hired a choir. There was mixed seating and hats were worn "with due respect to the service."

In June 1877, a motion was approved to apply to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for membership. However, at various times in the future, the Congregation would be required to withdraw from the organization due to lack of funding.

In order to compel unaffiliated residents of the community to join, Temple admittance was restricted to contributing members. They were charged 25¢ a visit, or \$5.00 a family or \$3.00 for a single person during High Holy Days, although out-of-town visitors were welcomed at no charge. The Congregation also maintained and controlled the Jewish section of the cemetery, established soon after the Congregation. The Congregation charged a fee for the burial of Jewish non-members in this section. A chapter of B'nai B'rith was formed on March 1, 1875.

The Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, organized soon after the establishment of the Congregation, was the bulwark of the Congregation, and was called upon and volunteered to assist on numerous occasions. They raised funds and held social functions, sometimes inviting the general community.

After the death of a faithful lay leader, the Congregation in 1890 decided for the first time to seek the services of a full-time rabbi. An advertisement which ran in Wise's *The American Israelite* called for a rabbi who spoke English fluently and offered an annual salary of \$1000.00, with traveling expenses paid only to the successful candidate. A student rabbi conducted High Holy Day services in 1890, and an older rabbi served in 1891. On November 23, 1892, the Congregation secured the services of its first ordained religious leader, Rabbi A.M. Bloch, whose contract was terminated by a dissatisfied congregation before the year had passed. I.E. Wagenheim assumed the pulpit in 1894 and remained until 1897. He provided firm and progressive leadership. He was the first in a series of seven rabbis who remained from one to three years and then moved to larger congregations. In February 1898, the Congregation adopted the *Union Prayer Book*, published in 1894.

Perhaps the longest step forward for the Congregation occurred on May 1, 1898, when it purchased land at the corner of Lincoln and Clinton streets for \$1500.00. A building committee contracted with William Meyers

of New York to construct a house of worship for \$16,000. The building was dedicated on Sunday, November 26, 1899, and later there was an auction of pews. Rabbi Nathan Michnic was spiritual leader of the Congregation at this time.

During the illness of one Rabbi, in 1905, Rev. Claybrook of the Episcopal Church offered his services to the Congregation on Friday nights. His offer was accepted. Rabbi Jacob Z. Lauterbach served the Congregation from 1910-1911. While here he wrote several scholarly books. He later served for many years as a professor at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Rabbi Lauterbach proudly showed his students a gold pocket watch presented to him by the members of Temple B'nai Sholom upon his departure from Huntsville. There had been a recurring problem in obtaining and maintaining a Rabbi, and so in May 1913, the Congregation decided to use lay readers instead of a full-time rabbi, but to assume a Rabbi's expenses in the event of a death. Some lay readers over the years were Gustav Marx, Leo Cohen, Abe Goldstein, and Sam Alexander. In the early decades of this century, most of the Jewish newcomers to Huntsville were of Eastern European origin.

Sidewalks were constructed in 1922, and in 1923 the Jewish section of the cemetery was extended. The Congregation had the normal financial worries of periodic repairs and maintenance of the Temple building. As hard times began to be felt in Huntsville during the Depression, the Temple was hit by a wave of dues reductions among its members. In 1935, the Rabbi engaged for the High Holidays was paid by subscription.

World War II marked the revitalization of this country and especially that of Huntsville. Redstone Arsenal was developed from a combination of two Army arsenals established in 1941 for the production of chemicals and explosives. In 1948, Redstone Arsenal was designated the center for rocket research and development. The Marshall Space Flight Center officially began operations in mid-1960. The vitally important space and defense activities attracted private contractors and Huntsville grew rapidly. The Jewish population of Huntsville also grew as scientists, engineers, and other professional people were attracted to the city. Many of these new arrivals joined the Congregation, and Religious School enrollment increased to the point that new classrooms were required. In June 1956 the Congregation bought the Carlisle Davis house, located next to the Temple, for \$18,500. The Temple Sisterhood held Holland bulb sales, rummage sales, and numerous card parties and dinners to help pay off the mortgage on this property.



## FOUNDERS OF CONGREGATION B'NAI SHOLOM-1876

The Congregation engaged student rabbis to conduct High Holy Day services from 1948 to 1952. Student rabbis were employed on a bi-weekly basis from 1953 until August 1963. At that time Rabbi Sherman Stein became the first full-time rabbi since 1913. The Congregation purchased a house for the Rabbi for the first time in its history. He served through August 1966, after which Dr. Abraham Feinstein, Rabbi Emeritus of Mizpah Congregation in Chattanooga, began to commute to Huntsville on a weekly basis to serve the needs of the Temple. He retired in June 1969, and was succeeded by Rabbis Michael Eisenstat, Charles Emanuel, Robert Scott, Sherwood Weil, and Dr. Steven Jacobs, the Temple's current Rabbi.

The Congregation became so large in the 1960's that it was necessary to hold High Holy Day services in the post chapel at Redstone Arsenal. It also became necessary to enlarge existing Temple facilities. The Davis home was demolished and in 1967 construction was begun on the Educational Building. It was completed in 1968 at a cost of \$100,000.

Almost from the beginning of the Congregation, its young people have served it well. The first Confirmation was held in 1897, and this was one ceremony reinstated in the early 1950's. The first Bar Mitzvah was held in 1958, and the first Bat Mitzvah in 1967. Coleman Balisok trained all Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates until his death in 1968. The Temple Brotherhood was formed in 1962 and our fine volunteer choir has served us since 1963.

In 1975, renovation of the sanctuary was undertaken and completed in time for the Congregation's centennial celebration. Later High Holy Day services were transferred to the new, larger Bicentennial Chapel on Redstone Arsenal. This was necessary due to the continued growth of the Congregation, which in 1994 maintains a membership of over 170 families. Continual problems with the structure of the Temple sanctuary forced a complete renovation in 1993 and 1994. The Congregation is extremely proud of its "new" house of worship.

Our Temple is truly a house of living Judaism. A house of worship, a house of study, a house of joy, and a house of sorrow, it is the living link among the past, the present, and the future.

Henry S. Marks  
Doris Kirshtein

B.W. Wise, President  
Daniel Wise, Sec'y

J. Weil, Vice-President  
Simon Katz, Treasurer

Adolph Adler  
H. Adler  
Isaac Adler  
Henry Barnard  
Philip Berg  
Morris Bernstein  
Simon Emrich  
B. Frankfeld  
Nathan Herstein  
Robert Herstein  
S. Herz  
Joseph Klaus  
Max Krauz  
Max Landauer

F. Lang  
N. Newman  
S.J. Schaumack  
Solomon Schiffman  
Daniel Schiffman  
Isaac Schiffman  
Philip Schwartz  
David Tschopik  
Herman Weil  
Herman Weil Jr.  
Isidor Weil  
Abe W. Wise  
Meyer B. Wise  
Herman Wind

## PRESIDENTS OF TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM

1876-1880	B.W. Wise	1956-1958	I.B. "Buddy" Miller
1880-1881	J. Weil	1958-1959	Milton Frank, Jr.
1881-1882	Nathan Herstein	1959-1960	Henry L. Solomonson, Jr.
1882-1893	B.W. Wise	1960-1964	Mort L. Weil, Jr.
1893-1898	J. Weil	1964-1966	Richard Jess
1898-1901	Isaac Schiffman	1966-1968	Seymour Gordon
1901-1908	Herman Weil	1968-1970	Paul R. Kunitz
1908-1910	Isaac Schiffman	1970-1972	Jerome Averbuch
1910-1913	S.H. Levy	1972-1974	Charles Bauman
1913-1915	Isidor Wind	1974-1976	Richard Lapidus
1915-1918	Julius Jacoby	1976-1978	Edgar Gollop
1918-1921	Elias Brown	1978-1979	Henry L. Solomonson, Jr.
1921-1922	Aaron Metzger	1979-1981	Barry Berman
1922-1926	Isidor Wind	1981-1982	Morton Banks
1926-1927	Samuel Schiffman	1982-1984	Buster Frank
1927-1928	Bert Abraham	1984-1986	Barbara Lapidus
1928-1929	Julius Jacoby	1986-1988	Peggy Averbuch
1929-1931	Isidor Wind	1988-1990	Victor van Leeuwen
1931-1936	Samuel Schiffman	1990	Susan Moyer
1936-1953	Isidor Wind	1990-1992	Susan Gilbert
1953-1954	Leo P. Cohen	1992-1994	Alfred Ritter
1954-1955	Mort L. Weil, Jr.	1994-	Joel B. Denbo
1955-1956	Abe Goldstein		

The Rededication Weekend Steering Committee gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following persons and institutions in the preparation of this pamphlet:

Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw

Henry Marks

City of Huntsville Planning Department (LINDA BAYER ALLEN)  
Huntsville-Madison County Public Library

## **TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES**

President  
Vice-President  
Treasurer  
Assistant Treasurer  
Recording Secretary  
Corresponding Secretary  
Trustees

Joel Denbo  
Michael Ledbetter  
Bradley Lapidus  
Ira Miller  
Pat Braunstein  
Marsha Gould  
Robert Atallo  
Leonard Farbman  
Solomon I. Miller  
Revelle Gwyn  
Philip Kirshtein  
Regina Dembo  
Sharon Parker  
Henry Grass  
Alfred Ritter  
Steven L. Jacobs, D.H.L.

Sisterhood President  
Brotherhood President  
Immediate Past Pres.  
Rabbi

### **RENOVATION COMMITTEE**

Chairman  
Members

Revelle Gwyn  
Robert Atallo  
Michael Dembo  
Philip Kirshtein  
Elizabeth Dembo Miller  
Solomon I. Miller  
Alfred Ritter

### **REDEDICATION WEEKEND STEERING COMMITTEE**

Pat Braunstein  
Regina Dembo  
Revelle Gwyn  
Solomon I. Miller  
Alfred Ritter

*Printing of program donated in memory of Louis and Elsie Miller*

## PROGRAM OF EVENTS

### Rededication Shabbat Service

Steven L. Jacobs, Rabbi, D.H.L.  
Friday, September 30, 1994  
8:00 p.m.

### Havdallah Service

Music & Reception Following  
Saturday, October 1, 1994  
7:30 p.m.

### Open House

Tours & Reception  
Sunday, October 2, 1994  
1-3:00 p.m.

## PROGRAM FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1994

### Welcome & Recognition of Distinguished Guests

Alfred Ritter, Past President & Master of Ceremonies

### Havdallah Service

Steven L. Jacobs, Rabbi, D.H.L.  
Sharon Parker, Cantorial Soloist

### Music

Dr. Frank Contreras--piano  
Joanne Williams--violin

"Israeli Fantasy"  
Ruth Dessau--piano

(Piano Courtesy of A.B. Stephens Music, Inc.)

### Reception

1899 Temple B'nai Shalom  
Huntsville, AL.

## THE TEMPLE: THE CONCEPT AND THE CONSTRUCTION

Arch. for Restoration - James J. Homin  
(H. Jones)

[Pres. J. Weil] stated that a Committee of the C.P. Church [desires] to sell their Church to us for a Synagogue...

[T]he Pres. [appointed] a Committee [consisting of H. Weil, H.J. Lowenthal, and O. Goldsmith] to see a builder or architect and find out how much it would cost to build a suitable place of worship & the Committee has the power to buy the C.P. Church if suitable...[Ed. note--The C.P. Church was a George Steele building which stands on the site of the present Central Presbyterian Church at the corner of Lincoln and Randolph streets.]

Temple Minutes  
March 28, 1897

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

It was moved and sec. that the Committee has full power to purchase a lot without further action.

Temple Minutes  
April 10, 1898

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The Committee reported having purchased the lot on Cor. Clinton & Lincoln str[ee]ts at a price of] \$1500.00....The Pres. appointed a Building Comm.: I. Schiffman, H. Weil, O. Goldsmith, H.J. Lowenthal, S.H. Levy with full power to act in all particulars.

Temple Minutes  
May 1, 1898

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The corner of Lincoln and East Clinton St. will soon be adorned by a handsome synagogue to be built by the Hebrew Reform Congregation. This temple of worship will contain an auditorium, Sunday school room and society

room, and will be erected at a cost of about \$12,000. The plans have been accepted and work will begin at once.

The Huntsville Weekly Democrat  
Wednesday, May 25, 1898

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The officers of the congregation of the Hebrew reform synagogue have let the contract for their new temple of worship to Mr. William Meyers. The brick contract was secured by J.I. and W.L. Jones, who will furnish nearly 300,000 brick. Work will begin within the next few days.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, August 17, 1898

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The following members purchased...Memorial windows:

Mrs. A. Goldsmith	two windows @ 75.00	150.00
Mrs. B. Schiffman	one "	100.00
" E. Weil	" "	125.00
" Flora Schiffman	" "	75.00
" Emma Mendel	" "	75.00
" R. Herstein	" "	25.00
Mr. E. Brown	" "	<u>25.00</u>
	Total	\$575.00
	Mr. S.H. Levy	<u>50.00</u>
		\$625.00

Temple Minutes  
April 7, 1899

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Supt. Meyers is placing the heavy timbers for the roof and towers of the synagogue and will be ready for the roofers next week.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, May 10, 1899

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Messrs. Timberlake & Nance...are just finishing the work of putting the beautiful ornaments on the Jewish Synagogue.

The Huntsville Mercury  
Wednesday, July 25, 1899

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[The Jewish synagogue] will be completed and in use within another month.

The Huntsville Tribune  
Tuesday August 22, 1899

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General meeting for Dedication Nov 26/99. The foll[owing] were appointed...Ushers: Ed Weil, Sam Damson, M.H. Weil & Sam Adler....Moved and sec. that Mr H.J. Lowenthal put Linoleum in the three vestibules. Carried.

Temple Minutes  
November 12, 1899

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

11. Response.....By President
12. Duet—"Love Divine, Ul Love Excelling,"  
Miss Grace Russell and Mr. Frank Newman
13. Address of Welcome, Mr. Henry Lowenthal
14. Address—The Significance of this Occasion  
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PRESIDENT, CONGREGATION, 1898-1901



**OSCAR GOLDSMITH**  
1849-1937  
BUILDING COMMITTEE

## ISAAC SCHIFFMAN

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Our Congregation continues to enjoy the beautiful legacy of our founders--our sanctuary--almost a century after its construction. Our Centennial Renovation honors these men and women, their faith and their labor.

The renovation of our sanctuary building proceeded in two phases: exterior and interior. The exterior work began in November 1993, and included repairing our original slate roof, removing the original galvanized metal ornaments on the spires and roof line, duplicating them in copper (for durability), painting them to replicate the original color, pointing-up the brick and limestone facade, installing new copper gutters and flashing, stabilizing the roof decking where needed, and sealing our chimney and towers from birds and other winged creatures. Our efforts were met with frustration at several points. We could not find commercially available mortar to match our tinted original. We spent hours making our own recipe from a variety of unlikely ingredients. The press-molded brick which gives our facade its unusual uniformity is no longer made in this area, and repair and replacement of broken and damaged brick became a game of scrounging appropriate brick from unseen areas to use where visible and replacing them with new or non-conforming brick.

Weather conditions always make exterior construction work interesting. When the winter and early spring rains came and would not leave, we thought that we would never finish. But we did, only to evict the Congregation from the interior and begin work there.

The complicated roof structure of our sanctuary is an architectural treasure. All of the rafters and beams are Southern heart pine--there are no steel or other metal supports. Overall, water damage has been the building's chief enemy over the years. The patchwork roof repairs finally became inadequate and in the process much of the interior plaster became loose and unsalvageable. We knew that our late nineteenth-century electrical system was dangerously wanting, our heating and cooling system was inefficient, and that we needed a security and fire alarm system. The growth of our membership resulted in crowded seating, and our carpet and other decorative appointments needed freshening. Our interior renovation addressed all of these areas and more.

We have installed insulation in the large attic which extends over the entire interior of the sanctuary and improved access to the attic so that routine maintenance can be undertaken more easily. We now have a system of ladders

design by JH-N-H-Jones:94

which extends to the full height of the inside of our tallest spire, making inspection for water and other damage easier. All of the plaster in the sanctuary is new, as is the electrical wiring, and we have a security and fire alarm system. We removed exposed heating and cooling ducts and opened the raised seating area on the east side of the sanctuary.

The casual observer is challenged to guess what of our woodwork is new and what is original. If you determined that the low wall, railing, and steps which separate the raised seating area on the east from the main sanctuary is new, you have a good eye. The prior bima was removed during the heating and cooling work, and we discovered the original bima substantially in place underneath. To give our Congregation more space for the original pews and temporary seating for special events, the bima was returned to approximately its original size, a reduction of 24 inches around its exterior perimeter. We discovered the original heart pine flooring still in place and refinished it in the vestibules. Many in the Congregation wanted wall-to-wall carpet in the sanctuary for decorative and acoustical purposes, and so we have it.

One of the vestibules had been converted to a temporary storage area. This was opened, and all of the exterior doors were rebuilt, with original and additional hardware repaired and installed. The woodwork has been repaired, stained, and cleaned. The original pews have been refurbished, their backs braced and new upholstery installed. The sanctuary lighting has been improved. The furniture on the bima has been repaired and the ark has been relined. New covers grace our lecterns.

The original rabbi's study on the northeast corner of the sanctuary building has become our Founders' Room, a place for memorials and other items which evidence the life of our Congregation since its founding in 1876. The mantel in the Founders' Room originally surrounded the fireplace (now covered) between the two doorways on the southeast side of the raised seating area.

All this has been done, but our work is not complete. In the near future will be improvements to our Educational Building, new landscaping, and the renewal of our courtyard as a place for meditation and events.

## IN RETROSPECT

(This an update of an article written on the occasion of the Congregation's Centennial Celebration in 1976.)

Huntsville is the second oldest city in Alabama as well as the oldest English settlement in the state. The first permanent settlers arrived before 1810 and Huntsville was incorporated in 1811.

(1805)

Jewish people began to arrive in Huntsville in the 1840's and Jewish marriages occurred here at least as early as 1849. These first pioneers were primarily merchants and cotton factors. They quickly began to prosper in the ante-bellum period, some acquiring important real estate in Huntsville and the surrounding area. Some owned slaves, and there are records of sales transactions involving slaves before the Civil War, the papers of which are still in the hands of present members of the Congregation.

During the Civil War, the Jewish population generally supported the Confederacy and at least one member served with the Confederate military forces.

After the war, a number of Jews moved to Huntsville from Cincinnati. Earlier they had emigrated to the United States from Central European states, principally the Germanics. In the 1870's they took steps to form a congregation. On July 30, 1876, dreams became reality and thirty-two men formed B'nai Sholom Congregation. At this time there were approximately 230,000 Israelites and 270 congregations in the United States.

The constitution, submitted at the founding meeting, contained laws and standing rules similar to those of Congregation B'ne Yeshurun of Cincinnati, led by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. The mode of worship was to be in accordance with Wise's radical prayer book *Minba-Amerika*, written in Hebrew and German. The membership set up finance, school, and choir committees. The religious functions of Hazzan (the title was later changed to Rabbi) and Shamas were performed by members of the Congregation. The Rabbi performed all the duties of a Hazzan, conducted regular and special services, performed funerals, led the Sunday School, and taught the students. Another man trained the choir and instructed in liturgy.

It is possible that Divine Services had previously been held at the Opera House, but for the High Holy Days of 1876, they were conducted in a



newly refurbished room rented at the Masonic Lodge. The Congregation purchased an organ and hired a choir. There was mixed seating and hats were worn "with due respect to the service."

In June 1877, a motion was approved to apply to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for membership. However, at various times in the future, the Congregation would be required to withdraw from the organization due to lack of funding.

In order to compel unaffiliated residents of the community to join, Temple admittance was restricted to contributing members. They were charged 25¢ a visit, or \$5.00 a family or \$3.00 for a single person during High Holy Days, although out-of-town visitors were welcomed at no charge. The Congregation also maintained and controlled the Jewish section of the cemetery, established soon after the Congregation. The Congregation charged a fee for the burial of Jewish non-members in this section. A chapter of B'nai B'rith was formed on March 1, 1875.

The Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, organized soon after the establishment of the Congregation, was the bulwark of the Congregation, and was called upon and volunteered to assist on numerous occasions. They raised funds and held social functions, sometimes inviting the general community.

After the death of a faithful lay leader, the Congregation in 1890 decided for the first time to seek the services of a full-time rabbi. An advertisement which ran in *Wise's The American Israelite* called for a rabbi who spoke English fluently and offered an annual salary of \$1000.00, with traveling expenses paid only to the successful candidate. A student rabbi conducted High Holy Day services in 1890, and an older rabbi served in 1891. On November 23, 1892, the Congregation secured the services of its first ordained religious leader, Rabbi A.M. Bloch, whose contract was terminated by a dissatisfied congregation before the year had passed. I.E. Wagenheim assumed the pulpit in 1894 and remained until 1897. He provided firm and progressive leadership. He was the first in a series of seven rabbis who remained from one to three years and then moved to larger congregations. In February 1898, the Congregation adopted the *Union Prayer Book*, published in 1894.

Perhaps the longest step forward for the Congregation occurred on May 1, 1898, when it purchased land at the corner of Lincoln and Clinton streets for \$1500.00. A building committee contracted with William Meyers

of New York to construct a house of worship for \$16,000. The building was dedicated on Sunday, November 26, 1899, and later there was an auction of pews. Rabbi Nathan Michnic was spiritual leader of the Congregation at this time.

During the illness of one Rabbi, in 1905, Rev. Claybrook of the Episcopal Church offered his services to the Congregation on Friday nights. His offer was accepted. Rabbi Jacob Z. Lauterbach served the Congregation from 1910-1911. While here he wrote several scholarly books. He later served for many years as a professor at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Rabbi Lauterbach proudly showed his students a gold pocket watch presented to him by the members of Temple B'nai Sholom upon his departure from Huntsville. There had been a recurring problem in obtaining and maintaining a Rabbi, and so in May 1913, the Congregation decided to use lay readers instead of a full-time rabbi, but to assume a Rabbi's expenses in the event of a death. Some lay readers over the years were Gustav Marx, Leo Cohen, Abe Goldstein, and Sam Alexander. In the early decades of this century, most of the Jewish newcomers to Huntsville were of Eastern European origin.

Sidewalks were constructed in 1922, and in 1923 the Jewish section of the cemetery was extended. The Congregation had the normal financial worries of periodic repairs and maintenance of the Temple building. As hard times began to be felt in Huntsville during the Depression, the Temple was hit by a wave of dues reductions among its members. In 1935, the Rabbi engaged for the High Holidays was paid by subscription.

World War II marked the revitalization of this country and especially that of Huntsville. Redstone Arsenal was developed from a combination of two Army arsenals established in 1941 for the production of chemicals and explosives. In 1948, Redstone Arsenal was designated the center for rocket research and development. The Marshall Space Flight Center officially began operations in mid-1960. The vitally important space and defense activities attracted private contractors and Huntsville grew rapidly. The Jewish population of Huntsville also grew as scientists, engineers, and other professional people were attracted to the city. Many of these new arrivals joined the Congregation, and Religious School enrollment increased to the point that new classrooms were required. In June 1956 the Congregation bought the Carlisle Davis house, located next to the Temple, for \$18,500. The Temple Sisterhood held Holland bulb sales, rummage sales, and numerous card parties and dinners to help pay off the mortgage on this property.

The Congregation engaged student rabbis to conduct High Holy Day services from 1948 to 1952. Student rabbis were employed on a bi-weekly basis from 1953 until August 1963. At that time Rabbi Sherman Stein became the first full-time rabbi since 1913. The Congregation purchased a house for the Rabbi for the first time in its history. He served through August 1966, after which Dr. Abraham Feinstein, Rabbi Emeritus of Mizpah Congregation in Chattanooga, began to commute to Huntsville on a weekly basis to serve the needs of the Temple. He retired in June 1969, and was succeeded by Rabbis Michael Eisenstat, Charles Emanuel, Robert Scott, Sherwood Weil, and Dr. Steven Jacobs, the Temple's current Rabbi.

The Congregation became so large in the 1960's that it was necessary to hold High Holy Day services in the post chapel at Redstone Arsenal. It also became necessary to enlarge existing Temple facilities. The Davis home was demolished and in 1967 construction was begun on the Educational Building. It was completed in 1968 at a cost of \$100,000.

Almost from the beginning of the Congregation, its young people have served it well. The first Confirmation was held in 1897, and this was one ceremony reinstated in the early 1950's. The first Bar Mitzvah was held in 1958, and the first Bat Mitzvah in 1967. Coleman Balisok trained all Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates until his death in 1968. The Temple Brotherhood was formed in 1962 and our fine volunteer choir has served us since 1963.

In 1975, renovation of the sanctuary was undertaken and completed in time for the Congregation's centennial celebration. Later High Holy Day services were transferred to the new, larger Bicentennial Chapel on Redstone Arsenal. This was necessary due to the continued growth of the Congregation, which in 1994 maintains a membership of over 170 families. Continual problems with the structure of the Temple sanctuary forced a complete renovation in 1993 and 1994. The Congregation is extremely proud of its "new" house of worship.

Our Temple is truly a house of living Judaism. A house of worship, a house of study, a house of joy, and a house of sorrow, it is the living link among the past, the present, and the future.

Henry S. Marks  
Doris Kirshtein

## FOUNDERS OF CONGREGATION B'NAI SHOLOM--1876

B.W. Wise, President  
Daniel Wise, Sec'y

J. Weil, Vice-President  
Simon Katz, Treasurer

Adolph Adler  
H. Adler  
Isaac Adler  
Henry Barnard  
Philip Berg  
Morris Bernstein  
Simon Emrich  
B. Frankfeld  
Nathan Herstein  
Robert Herstein  
S. Herz  
Joseph Klaus  
Max Krauz  
Max Landauer

F. Lang  
N. Newman  
S.J. Schaumack  
Solomon Schiffman  
Daniel Schiffman  
Isaac Schiffman  
Philip Schwartz  
David Tschopik  
Herman Weil  
Herman Weil Jr.  
Isidor Weil  
Abe W. Wise  
Meyer B. Wise  
Herman Wind

## PRESIDENTS OF TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM

1876-1880	B.W. Wise	1956-1958	I.B. "Buddy" Miller
1880-1881	J. Weil	1958-1959	Milton Frank, Jr.
1881-1882	Nathan Herstein	1959-1960	Henry L. Solomonson, Jr.
1882-1893	B.W. Wise	1960-1964	Mort L. Weil, Jr.
1893-1898	J. Weil	1964-1966	Richard Jess
1898-1901	Isaac Schiffman	1966-1968	Seymour Gordon
1901-1908	Herman Weil	1968-1970	Paul R. Kunitz
1908-1910	Isaac Schiffman	1970-1972	Jerome Averbuch
1910-1913	S.H. Levy	1972-1974	Charles Bauman
1913-1915	Isidor Wind	1974-1976	Richard Lapidus
1915-1918	Julius Jacoby	1976-1978	Edgar Gollop
1918-1921	Elias Brown	1978-1979	Henry L. Solomonson, Jr.
1921-1922	Aaron Metzger	1979-1981	Barry Berman
1922-1926	Isidor Wind	1981-1982	Morton Banks
1926-1927	Samuel Schiffman	1982-1984	Buster Frank
1927-1928	Bert Abraham	1984-1986	Barbara Lapidus
1928-1929	Julius Jacoby	1986-1988	Peggy Averbuch
1929-1931	Isidor Wind	1988-1990	Victor van Leeuwen
1931-1936	Samuel Schiffman	1990	Susan Moye
1936-1953	Isidor Wind	1990-1992	Susan Gilbert
1953-1954	Leo P. Cohen	1992-1994	Alfred Ritter
1954-1955	Mort L. Weil, Jr.	1994-	Joel B. Denbo
1955-1956	Abe Goldstein		

# JONES & HERRIN

Architecture/Interior Design

15 June '93 Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

to Revelle Gwynn  
re - Temple Brian Shelton

Dear Revelle —

Dr. Frances Roberts says  
the architect Edgar Love  
designed both the Temple  
of the Central Presb. Ch.

I had always felt they  
were by the same arch.

Please make sure this info.  
gets in the Temple records.

Dr. Roberts can give you  
the source.

H. Jones

104 Jefferson Street  
Huntsville, Alabama 35801  
Telephone 205/539-0764  
Fax 205/534-2289

W. Long  
R.H. Hunt  
Chattanooga designed  
both the Temple of  
the Central Presb Ch.  
12/10/94

correct

Some evidence  
is to the contrary  
HW

# JONES & HERRIN

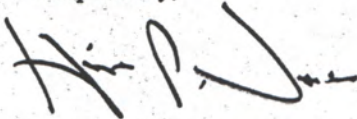
Architecture/Interior Design

October 3, 1994

Temple B'nai Sholom  
103 Lincoln Street, S.E.  
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

The Congregation of Temple B'nai Sholom is to be complimented on your beautiful restoration of the 1899 Temple. It is always tempting to do something new and different, while losing sight of the virtues and quality of what is old. Your Congregation has avoided this trap, and all of Huntsville is the benefactor.

Respectfully,



Harvie P. Jones, FAIA  
HPJ/tm

copy: HJ

A. RITTER, INC.  
*Aerospace Consulting*  
10148 DUNBARTON DRIVE  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35803

ALFRED RITTER, PH.D.  
PRESIDENT

TELEPHONE  
(205) 881-7310

March 24, 1995

Mr. Harvie Jones  
Jones & Herrin  
104 Jefferson Street  
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Dear Harvie:

I was delighted to read the enclosed Huntsville Times article which chronicled your "passion for the past". I now fully appreciate the meticulous detail that you demanded in connection with the renovation of Temple B'nai Sholom.

Moreover, I am pleased to learn that you're a Ramblin Reck. I was at Tech during, and just after, the war years --- BS(Aero.E.)'43 and MS(Aero.E.)'47.

Best regards,

*Al Ritter*

CLEMSON  
UNIVERSITY

August 8, 1997

Mr. Harvie P. Jones, FAIA  
Jones & Herrin, Architects  
104 Jefferson Street  
Huntsville, AL 35801

RE: Reuben Harrison Hunt - Architect

Dear Harvie:

Please allow me this opportunity to thank you for your hospitality, gracious assistance and insight into the architecture of Reuben Harrison Hunt in Huntsville, Alabama.

I have been trying to travel to Alabama to document Hunt's work for many years, having only visited Mobile in 1986. I read with interest, your well written article on the Temple B'nai Sholom. It is, in my opinion, one of Hunt's most significant architectural designs. Your study of the building's geometry is a welcome addition to the limited literature of R. H. Hunt.

The additional information you recently forwarded was also helpful to my study of Hunt. I hope the Historic Huntsville Foundation was pleased with my brief presentation. I was most impressed with the group's concern with maintaining R. H. Hunt's presence in the city.

I hope to continue my research on placing Hunt's work in Huntsville into the broader context of his work in the south between 1880 and 1932. Your information has added a great deal to this understanding. Perhaps we can meet once again in Huntsville later this year.

Yours faithfully,



Martin A. Davis, AIA  
Professor



SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

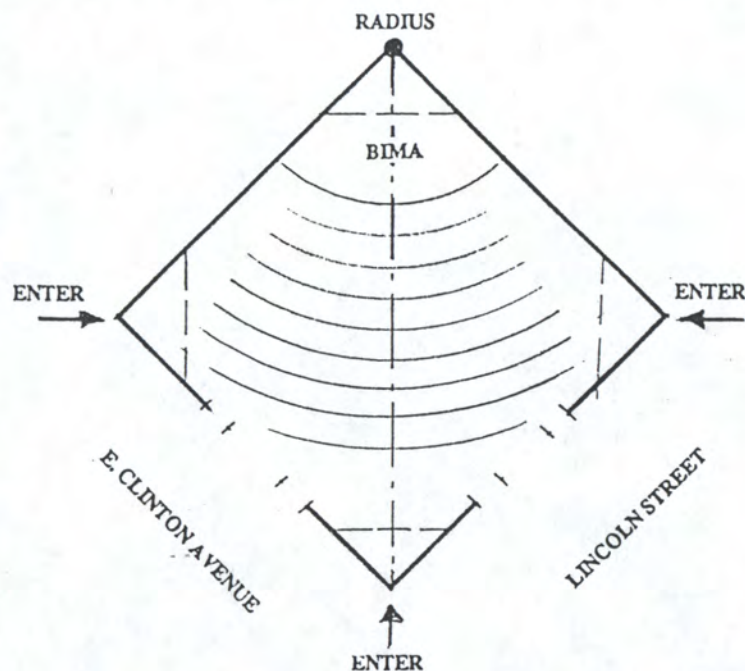
College of Architecture, Arts & Humanities 145 Lee Hall Box 340503 Clemson, SC 29634-0503

864.656.3896 FAX 864.656.1810

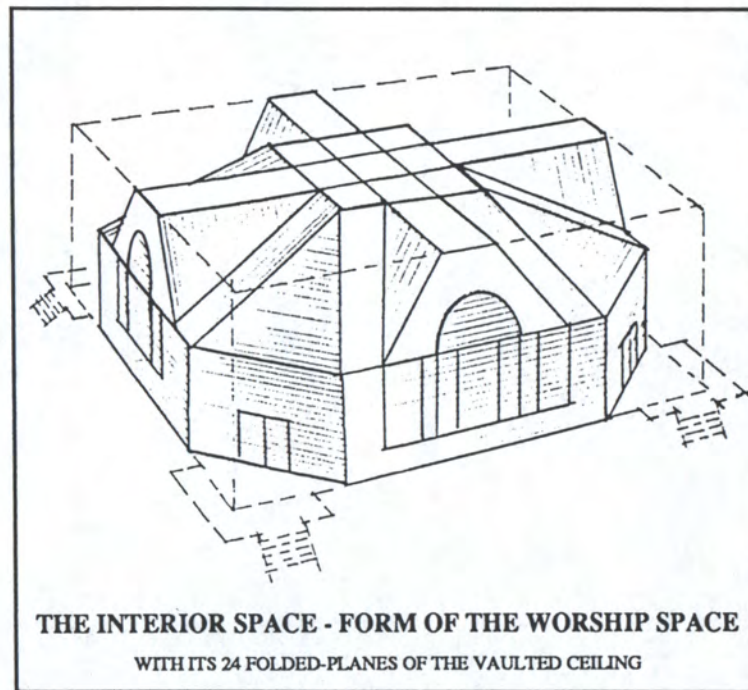
# The Architecture of the 1899 Temple B'nai Sholom

Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

It is a truism that the essence of architecture is the space contained within it. This is particularly true for houses of worship. The interior space of Temple B'nai Sholom is unusual, unexpected, and beautiful. It is a sophisticated exercise in the use of geometry for symbolism and vitality. The worship space is a perfect square in plan, a classical architectural shape suggesting stability and dignity. The four corners of the square are beveled-off to make a sort of octagon, a shape suggesting a unit, or coming-together. The primary axis of the entry, seating and bima (platform) is on the 45 degree diagonal of the square, an unconventional and unexpected device that enlivens the space. The high, timber-vaulted ceiling is a truncated pyramid of 24 folded sloping planes, finished in natural



THE ESSENTIAL GEOMETRY OF THE PLAN



THE INTERIOR SPACE - FORM OF THE WORSHIP SPACE  
WITH ITS 24 FOLDED-PLANES OF THE VAULTED CEILING

wood. It is seemingly complex but has a strong sense of unity while being enlivened by the folding back and forth of the wood-clad planes. The flatwood square at the top of the truncated pyramid is ringed with 48 bare-bulb electric lights, twelve to a side, giving a beautiful effect, and one that would have been high-tech in 1899.

The bima is in the southeast corner and has a rounded front edge corresponding to the curve of the radial original pews. The center of the radius for the pews is exactly in the southeast corner of the primary square of the room, a nice (and logical) geometrical touch to this intriguing architectural exercise in geometry and symbolism of spaces and forms. The wood floor slopes in a radial plane (a conic section), adding to the geometric liveliness of the space and improving the view of the bima at the same time.

The fan-shaped radial seating arrangement and sloped floor have the advantages of putting the congregation as close as possible to the Rabbi and also imparting a feeling of "congregation" which

a typical 90 degree rectangular seating pattern does not accomplish. This plan is sometimes called the "Akron Plan" after a Methodist Church in late 19th-century Akron, Ohio, that popularized it. Other local examples of the Akron plan are the early 20th-century New Market Presbyterian Church and the nearby 1899 Central Presbyterian Church.

*Methodist*

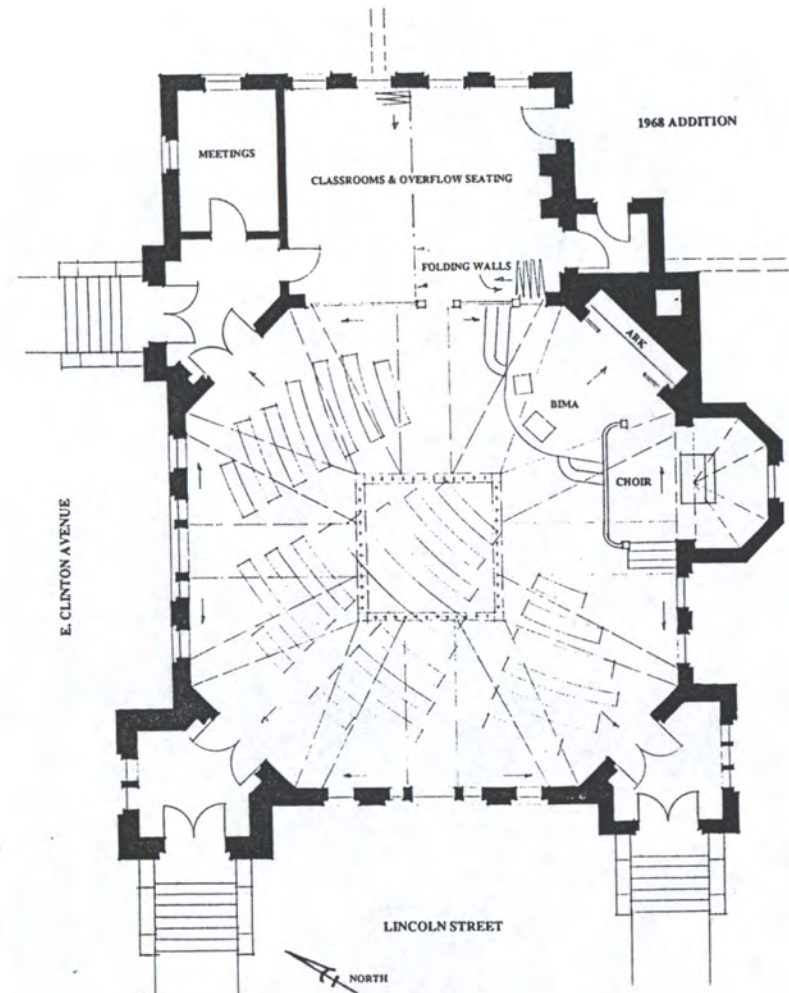
Symmetrically flanking the 45 degree central axis of the worship space are two very large stained glass windows, each about 25 feet wide, positioned so that they throw light toward the bima and not in the eyes of the worshipers. This placement avoids an error frequently seen where windows are placed in front of the worshipers, blinding their view of the platform and making everything appear as dark silhouettes due to the strong light behind the platform.

The dark brown of the natural-wood ceiling and trim contrasts with the light-colored plaster walls and the brilliant colors of the large stained-glass windows, whose glass colors predominate in gold and other warm tones.

Adjacent to the main worship square is a space that until the 1970's was separated by large folding wood partitions to form two classrooms which could be opened into one room, or opened to the worship space for overflow seating. The idea of "multi-use" spaces is not a mid-20th century one, as we might think. Examples of folding wood partitions are known at least into the 18th century (Whitfield House, Connecticut). A local 1850's example of folding partitions is at the Lanford House (c. 1850) on Old Madison Pike, where the entry hall, parlor and dining room can all be opened together by folding partitions (not just wide doors, but complete partitions). The classrooms also served as a social hall and contained a cozy fireplace and mantel. This mantel is now nearby in the original rabbi's study. It may return to its proper place, in time.

Originally, the alcove off the south wall of the main seating space was framed by wood scrollwork similar to that existing at the ark alcove, and this alcove contained a small pipe organ with gold-colored pipes beside the alcove window. The wood choir rail was centered on the alcove. About 25 years ago this rail was shifted 4-

1/2 feet west to provide a larger bima, the scrollwork was removed and the pipe organ was replaced with an electric organ.





The exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom gives only a hint of the geometrical sophistication and liveliness of the interior. The basic form of the exterior is that of a gable-roofed, central 90°-axis-structure with twin unequal-height towers flanking the west-facing front gable. The architect has prepared many pleasant surprises for us upon entering what appears on the west front exterior to be a conventional central-90°-axis worship space. The larger tower announces that this is the primary entrance, with secondary entrances at the smaller towers flanking the internal 45 degree main axis.

The primary design influence on the exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom is the Romanesque style of 9th to 12th century Europe, revived in the mid-19th century. An earlier Huntsville example is the First Methodist Church, where round-arched windows (complete with gargoyles) and former tourelles (removed in the 1960's) at the corners of the bell-tower spire base are hallmarks of this stylistic influence. The key word here is "influence," for neither of these structures is even close to a literal reflection of the medieval Romanesque style, nor are they intended to be. In so-called "revival" styles, the ancient style is always merely a point-of-departure to creating a new and modern style. In 19th-century architecture books, the current revival style is always referred to as "modern" architecture, and indeed that is what it is. If a 10th-century European could somehow be time-machined to Temple B'nai Sholom, it would appear to him as something totally different and radical, which indeed it would be.

Some of the Romanesque-inspired elements of the exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom are the octagonal tower with small tourelles (turrets) at each corner of the octagon-base, the round masonry arches above many of the windows and doors, and the multitude of finials at the parapets and towers. The "machicolations" (large brick dentil-like projections) at the base of the west gable are another reinterpretation of medieval architecture. The several windows consisting of a central round-top window flanked by narrow rectangular windows is a revision of a "Venetian" ("Palladian") window popularized in 16th-century northern Italy by Andrea Palladio and others, a Renaissance device totally different from the Romanesque style but here beautifully and successfully integrated into a harmonious whole.

The basic design of the west front gable of Temple B'nai Sholom is highly reminiscent of Baroque-style buildings of 16th-century Holland. The 1579 Town Hall of Leyden, Holland, is one example of many strikingly similar (in general flavor) gables.

Still another Baroque stylistic influence is found in the stained glass, whose sweeping curvilinear patterns recall the Baroque style.

In the last quarter of the 19th century many American buildings of all types were built of masonry in a way that attempted to de-emphasize the brick joints and tried to make the walls appear to be monolithic. Temple B'nai Sholom is one such example. Others are the 1899 Halsey House at Eustis and Lincoln and the 1905 Dunnivant Building at Washington and Clinton. This monolithic appearance was made possible by the manufacture of "pressed brick," which was a brick of very close dimensional tolerance, unlike bricks made before or since. To make "pressed bricks," high-quality, finely-ground clay was mixed with an absolute minimum of moisture and then "pressed" in a mould under very high pressure. The small amount of moisture meant that when baked, the bricks would not shrink and distort as do ordinary bricks whose clay mix contains much more water and is not highly compressed. "Pressed bricks" can be laid with mortar joints only of 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide because of the uniformity in size of the bricks, whereas ordinary bricks require 3/8 inch joints because the bricks vary much more in size tolerance.

To reinforce the monolithic look, the red-brown pressed bricks were laid in red-brown mortar with narrow, nearly-flush joints, as they are at Temple B'nai Sholom. There are cases where this monolithic effect has not been understood and owners have later ground-out the narrow, red-brown joints to install wide white joints, thus spoiling the appearance of the building. Temple B'nai Sholom went to considerable effort to keep the monolithic effect.

The original Temple roof of gray-green slates is still in place and serving after 95 year. A number of cracked slates have been replaced in the past 12 years and all of the galvanized metal flashings replaced by long-life copper in 1994. Thus, this beautiful roof

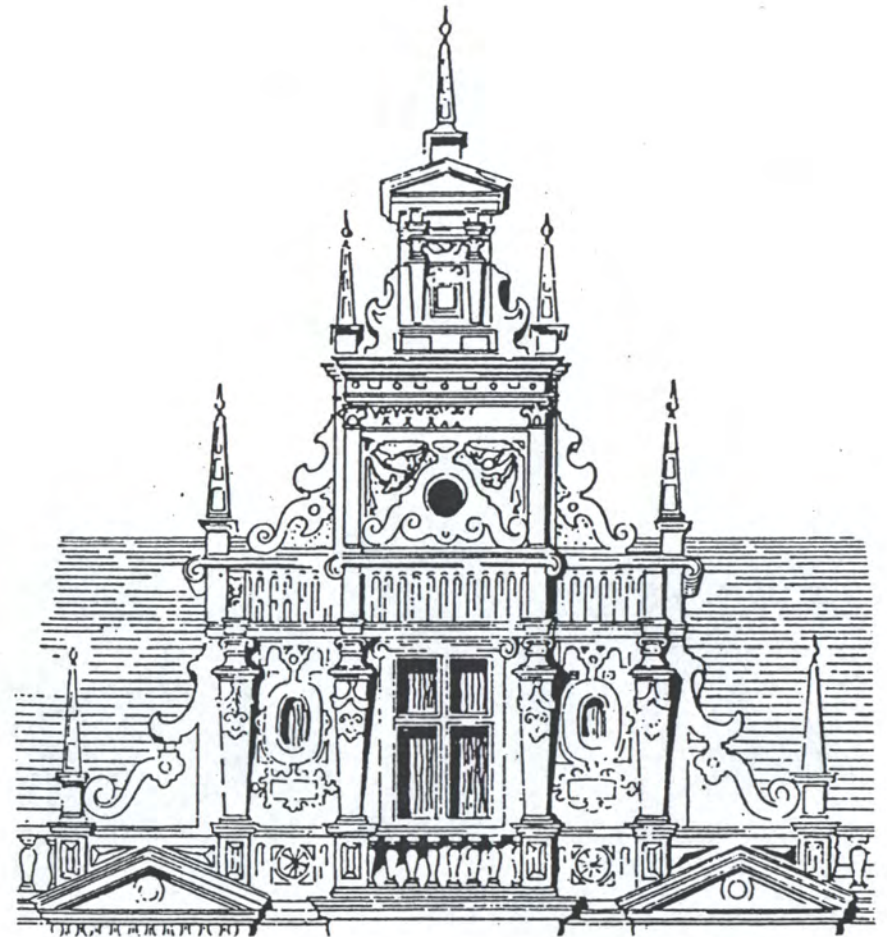
has already outlasted about 6 asphalt-shingle roofs and will probably outlast 6 more. This is a good example of the adage that the cheapest materials is the highest-quality material. The numerous 1899 galvanized metal finials, which had gone beyond the point of being able to be patched anymore, were also in 1994 expertly replicated in copper by "Copperworks" of Decatur. These should outlast the 95 year-old originals. Since the design intent of the finials was to represent stone carvings, the copper was painted a warm-gray off-white limestone color (as were the originals) to match the numerous limestone sills and lintels on the building.

The last remaining restoration item is to plant several hardwood shade trees along Lincoln and Randolph Streets, so that the Temple will again be softened in appearance as it was in early 20th-century photographs and was until the last ancient maple died this year.

The architect of the Temple was B. H. Hunt of Chattanooga, who had an extensive practice in several southeastern states that included many religious structures of various denominations. Hunt also did the turn-of-the-century First Baptist Church here that stood at Clinton and Church Streets. While appearances might indicate Hunt also did the nearby Central Presbyterian Church (1899), it is not on his list of projects that shows the above two contemporaneous structures.

In 1968, a one-story, red brick, modern addition was made to the south of the Temple. It is properly reticent, low in profile and simple, avoiding the frequent mistake of many modern buildings which attempt to upstage the old buildings. The architects were Jones, Crow & Mann of Huntsville. The contractor for the 1994 Temple restoration was Craftsmen Builders of Huntsville.

Since 1945, many religious buildings have been insensitively repaired or remodeled. The congregation of Temple B'nai Shalom is to be commended for its commitment and work in preserving and restoring this excellent and sophisticated work of architecture, not only for the congregation's use but for the historical and architectural benefit of all of Huntsville.



Upper Facade of the Baroque-period 1579 Leyden Holland) Town Hall



Photo 1: Lincoln Street (West Front) facade.



Photo 2: N.W. main tower with hand-worked sheet-copper finials replicated in 1994 to match the deteriorated 1899 galvanized-roof finials. The roof is gray slate.



Photo 3: West front gable. Compare with the illustration of the 1579 Leyden (Holland) Town Hall gable.



Photo 4: Interior, looking S.E. toward the bima and ark. The wood ceiling is in 24 separate folded planes. The original lighting was apparently bare clear-glass "Edison" bulbs.



Photo 5: Interior, looking west. The bima is in the left foreground.

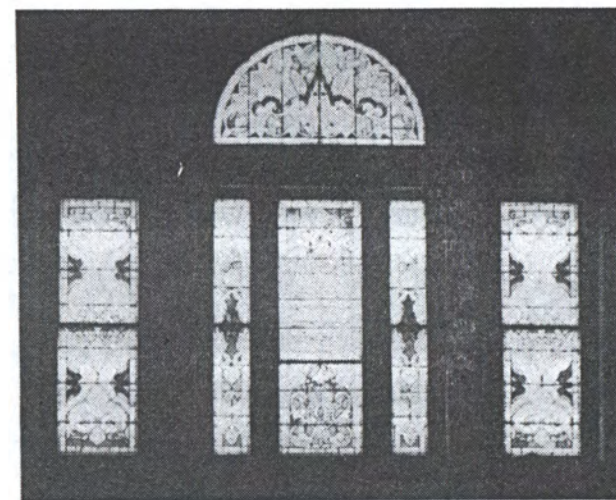


Photo 6: West stained-glass window. The swirling curvilinear patterns reflect the influence of the Baroque (16th and 17th century) period of architecture, typically of glass of the late-Victorian period.

## The Temple: The Concept and the Construction

[Pres. J. Weil] stated that a Committee of the C.P. Church [desires] to sell their Church to us for a Synagogue...

[T]he Pres. [appointed] a Committee [consisting of H. Weil, H.J. Lowenthal, and O. Goldsmith] to see a builder or architect and find out how much it would cost to build a suitable place of worship & the Committee has the power to buy the C.P. Church if suitable... [Ed. note—The C.P. Church was a George Steele building which stands on the site of the present Central Presbyterian Church at the corner of Lincoln and Randolph streets.]

Temple Minutes  
March 28, 1897

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It was moved and sec. that the Committee has full power to purchase a lot without further action.

Temple Minutes  
April 10, 1898

\*\*\*\*\*

The Committee reported having purchased the lot on Cor. Clinton & Lincoln str[ee]ts at a price of] \$1500.00... The Pres. appointed a Building Comm." I. Schiffman, H. Weil, O. Goldsmith, H.J. Lowenthal, S.H. Levy with full power to act in all particulars.

Temple Minutes  
May 1, 1898

\*\*\*\*\*

The corner of Lincoln and East Clinton St. will soon be adorned by a handsome synagogue to be built by the Hebrew Reform Congregation. This temple of worship will contain an auditorium, Sunday school room and society room, and will be erected at a cost of about \$12,000. The plans have been accepted and work will begin at once.

*The Huntsville Weekly Democrat*  
Wednesday, May 25, 1898

\*\*\*\*\*

The officers of the congregation of the Hebrew reform synagogue have let the contract for their new temple of worship to Mr. William Meyers. The brick contract was secured by J.I. and W.L. Jones, who will furnish nearly 300,000 brick. Work will begin within the next few days.

*The Huntsville Mercury*  
Wednesday, August 17, 1898

\*\*\*\*\*

The following members purchased...Memorial windows:

Mrs. A. Goldsmith	two windows @ 75.00	150.00
Mrs. B. Schiffman	one window	100.00
Mrs. E. Weil	one window	125.00
Mrs. Flora Schiffman	one window	75.00
Mrs. Emma Mendel	one window	75.00
Mrs. R. Herstein	one window	25.00
Mr. E. Brown	one window	<u>25.00</u>
	Total	\$575.00
	Mr. S.H. Levy	<u>50.00</u>
		\$625.00

Temple Minutes  
April 7, 1899

\*\*\*\*\*

Supt. Meyers is placing the heavy timbers for the roof and towers of the synagogue and will be ready for the roofers next week.

*The Huntsville Mercury*  
Wednesday, May 10, 1899

\*\*\*\*\*

Messrs. Timberlake & Nance...are just finishing the work of putting the beautiful ornaments on the Jewish Synagogue.

*The Huntsville Mercury*  
Wednesday, July 25, 1899

\*\*\*\*\*

\* [The Jewish synagogue] will be completed and in use within another month.

*The Huntsville Tribune*  
Tuesday, August 22, 1899

\*\*\*\*\*

General meeting for Dedication Nov. 26/99. The foll[owing] were appointed...Ushers: Ed Weil, Sam Damson, M.H. Weil & Sam Adler...Moved and sec. that Mr. H.J. Lowenthal put Linoleum in the three vestibules. Carried.

Temple Minutes  
November 12, 1899

\*\*\*\*\*

The dedication services of the handsome Jewish Synagogue[ue] were very impressive and interesting on last Sunday morning, and a large congregation representing every denomination was present...

Rabbi Michnic delivered a fine sermon and several addresses and recitations of the program were creditably rendered and interesting to the congregation. The dedication of this beautiful temple is a triumph to the untiring energy, generosity, and zeal of the congregation.

*Huntsville Weekly Democrat*  
Wednesday, November 29, 1899

## Dedication Ceremony

—TO BE HELD AT THE—

*Congregation B'nai Sholem,*

of Huntsville, Alabama.

Temple Corner Lincoln and Clinton Streets.

---

SUNDAY, NOV 26TH, 1899,

KISLEV 24, 5660.

---

MR. IKE SCHIFFMAN, President.  
REV. NATHAN MICHNIC, Rabbi.

---

**BUILDING COMMITTEE.**

Mr. I. Schiffman, Chairman,  
Mr. Herman Weil,  
Mr. Oscar Goldsmith,  
Mr. Henry Lowenthal,  
Mr. Sam Levy.

---

Services will commence at 10:00 A. M.

## Hebrew's in Huntsville

The erection of this temple gives us food for thought regarding the industry of the people who built it. The Jews of Huntsville are examples of industry and thrift. There are about thirty families of Jews in Huntsville, and there is scarcely a residential street that is not adorned with their beautiful homes. There are Jew merchants who came to this town with little more than their clothes, and a small stock of merchandise that could be packed in a goods box, who, by characteristic energy and thrift, have become the leading merchants and desirable citizens. Nor do these people confine themselves to their trade entirely. They have their social circles and beautiful entertainments at the Standard Club rooms or in their own handsomely furnished homes every week, and the men and women are prominent in any movement for charity or public interest. These people also see the necessity of an education, and are giving their children the best advantages for the development of their talents, whether for a professional or commercial career. Teachers who have had them under training, pronounce the children of Jews splendid material to work with. One cannot help but admire a people who through industry have achieved such results in a few years.

*Huntsville Weekly Democrat*  
Wednesday, November 29, 1899

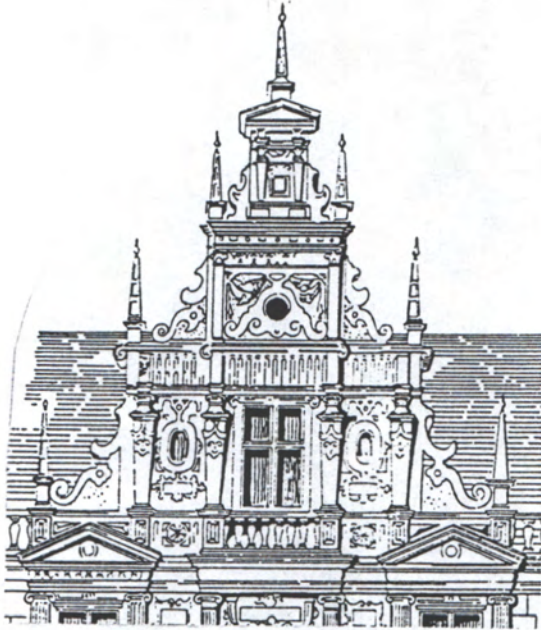
## Isaac Schiffman

As President of this Congregation during construction and Chairman of the Building Committee, Isaac Schiffman, perhaps most among our esteemed Founders, is responsible for the structure in which we now are privileged to worship. He was born in 1856 in Hoppstaedten, Germany, and came to America as a young man. Memories of the graceful old synagogue in his native town and the religious training he received there, may have inspired him to his task in Huntsville. We know that Isaac Schiffman never forgot Hoppstaedten. He built a school for Jewish children there and gave a water system to the town. The old synagogue still stands but as an apartment house. Its windows were destroyed on Kristallnacht. There are no longer Jews in Hoppstaedten.

## Who was the Architect of the Temple?

The prominent Chattanooga architect R.H. Hunt (1862-1937) designed scores of churches, hotels, schools, public buildings, and businesses throughout the South. He published a list of references in 1907 which includes, among well over fifty other houses of worship, the "Jewish Synagogue, Huntsville, Ala." Hunt also designed a synagogue in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, as well as the "Van Valkenburg Block" in Huntsville. Hunt's obituary in *The Chattanooga Free Press* extols him as "the outstanding architect in the entire South."





UPPER FACADE OF THE  
BAROQUE-PERIOD 1579 LEYDEN (HOLLAND) TOWN HALL

Would be better to get the printer to do the caption

UPPER FACADE OF THE BAROQUE-PERIOD 1579 LEYDEN (HOLLAND) TOWN HALL

- PHOTO 1 LINCOLN STREET (WEST FRONT) FACADE
- PHOTO 2 N.W. MAIN TOWER WITH HAND-WORKED SHEET-COPPER FINIALS REPLICATED IN 1994 TO MATCH THE DETERIORATED 1899 GALVANIZED-ROOF FINIALS. THE ROOF IS GRAY SLATE.
- PHOTO 3 WEST FRONT GABLE. COMPARE WITH THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE 1579 LEYDEN (HOLLAND) TOWN HALL GABLE
- PHOTO 4 INTERIOR, LOOKING S.E. TOWARD THE BIMA AND ARK. THE WOOD CEILING IS IN 24 SEPARATE FOLDED PLANES. THE ORIGINAL LIGHTING WAS APPARENTLY BARE CLEAR-GLASS "EDISON" BULBS.
- PHOTO 5 INTERIOR, LOOKING WEST. THE BIMA IS IN THE LEFT FOREGROUND.
- PHOTO 6 WEST STAINED-GLASS WINDOW. THE SWIRLING CURVILINEAR PATTERNS REFLECT THE INFLUENCE OF THE BAROQUE (16TH AND 17TH CENTURY) PERIOD OF ARCHITECTURE, TYPICALLY OF GLASS OF THE LATE-VICTORIAN PERIOD.

Photos are numbered in red on the back.  
DO NOT CROP, except no. 6, as marked.

Return photos to H.P. Jones

## The Architecture of the 1899 Temple B'nai Sholom

by Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

It is a truism that the essence of architecture is the space contained within it. This is particularly true for houses of worship. The interior space of Temple B'nai Sholom is unusual, unexpected, and beautiful. It is a sophisticated exercise in the use of geometry for symbolism and vitality. The worship space is a perfect square in plan, a classical architectural shape suggesting stability and dignity. The four corners of the square are beveled-off to make a sort of octagon, a shape suggesting a unity, or coming-together. The primary axis of the entry, seating and bima (platform) is on the 45 degree diagonal of the square, an unconventional and unexpected device that enlivens the space. The high, timber-vaulted ceiling is a truncated pyramid of 24 folded sloping planes, finished in natural wood. It is seemingly complex, but has a strong sense of unity while being enlivened by the folding back and forth of the wood-clad planes. The flat wood square at the top of the truncated pyramid is ringed with 48 bare-bulb electric lights, twelve to a side, that gives a beautiful effect, and one that would have been high-tech in 1899.

The bima is in the southeast corner and has a rounded front edge corresponding to the curve of the radial original pews. The center of the radius for the pews is exactly in the southeast corner of the primary square of the room, a nice (and logical) geometrical touch to this intriguing architectural exercise in geometry and symbolism of spaces and forms. The wood floor slopes in a radial plane (a conic section), further adding to the geometric liveliness of the space, and improving the view of the bima at the same time.

The fan-shaped radial seating arrangement and sloped floor have the advantages of putting the congregation as close as possible to the Rabbi and also imparting a feeling of "congregation", which a typical 90 degree rectangular seating pattern does not accomplish. This plan is sometimes called the "Akron Plan" after a Methodist Church in late-19th century Akron, Ohio that popularized it. Other local

examples of the Akron plan are the early 20th century New Market <sup>Methodist</sup> ~~Presbyterian~~ Church and the nearby 1899 Central Presbyterian Church.

Symmetrically flanking the 45 degree central axis of the worship space are two very large stained glass windows, each about 25 feet wide, positioned so that they throw light toward the bima and not in the eyes of the worshippers, thus avoiding an error frequently seen where windows are placed in front of the worshippers, which blinds the view of the platform and makes everything on the platform be seen as dark silhouettes due to the strong light behind the platform.

The dark brown of the natural-wood ceiling and trim contrasts with the light-colored plaster walls and the brilliant colors of the large stained-glass windows, whose glass colors predominate in gold and other warm tones.

Adjacent to the main worship square is a space that until the 1970's was separated by large folding wood partitions to form two classrooms which could be opened into one room, or opened to the worship space for overflow seating. The idea of "multi-use" spaces is not a mid-20th century one, as we might think. Examples of folding wood partitions are known at least into the 18th century (Whitfield House, Connecticut). A local 1850's example of folding partitions is at the c. 1850 Lanford House on Old Madison Pike, where the entry hall, parlor and dining room can all be opened together by folding partitions (not just wide doors, but complete partitions).

The classrooms also served as a social hall and contained a cozy fireplace and mantel. This mantel is now in the nearby original Rabbi's study. It can hopefully return to its proper place, in time.

Originally the alcove off the south wall of the main seating space was framed by wood scrollwork similar to that existing at the ark alcove, and this alcove contained a small pipe organ with gold-colored pipes beside the alcove window. The wood choir rail was centered on the alcove. About 25 years ago this rail

was shifted 4-1/2 feet west to provide a larger bima, the scrollwork was removed and the pipe organ was replaced with an electric organ.

The exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom gives only a hint of the geometrical sophistication and liveliness of the interior. The basic form of the exterior is that of a gable-roofed central 90-degree-axis structure with twin unequal-height towers flanking the west-facing front gable. The architect has prepared many pleasant surprises for us upon entering what appears on the west front exterior to be a conventional central-90 degree-axis worship space. The larger of the towers announces that this is the primary entrance, with secondary entrances at the smaller towers flanking the internal 45 degree main axis.

The primary design influence on the exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom is the Romanesque style of 9th to 12th century Europe, revived in the mid-19th century. An earlier Huntsville example is the First Methodist Church, whose round-arched windows (complete with gargoyles) and former tourelles (removed in the 1960's) at the corners of the bell-tower spire base are hallmarks of this stylistic influence. The key word here is "influence", for neither of these structures is even close to a literal reflection of the medieval Romanesque style, nor are they intended to be. In so-called "revival" styles, the ancient style is always merely a point-of-departure to creating a new and modern style. In 19th century architecture books, the current revival style is always referred to as "modern" architecture, and indeed that is what it is. If a 10th-century European could somehow be time-machined to Temple B'nai Sholom, it would appear to him as something totally different and radical, which indeed it would be.

Some of the Romanesque-inspired elements of the exterior of Temple B'nai Sholom are the octagonal tower with small tourelles (turrets) at each corner of the octagon-base, the round masonry arches above many of the windows and doors, and the multitude of finials at the parapets and towers. The "machicolations" (large brick dentil-like projections) at the base of the west gable are another

reinterpretation of medieval architecture. The several windows consisting of a central round-top window flanked by narrow rectangular windows is a revision of a "Venetian" (or "Palladian") window popularized in 16th century northern Italy by Andrea Palladio and others, a Renaissance device totally different from the Romanesque style, but here beautifully and successfully integrated into a harmonious whole.

The basic design of the west front gable of Temple B'nai Sholom is highly reminiscent of Baroque style buildings of 16th century Holland. The 1579 Town Hall of Leyden, Holland is one example of many strikingly similar (in general flavor) gables.

Still another Baroque stylistic influence is found in the stained glass, whose sweeping curvilinear patterns recall the Baroque style.

In the last quarter of the 19th century many American buildings of all types were built of masonry in a way that attempted to de-emphasize the brick joints and tried to make the walls appear to be monolithic. Temple B'nai Sholom is one such example. Others are the 1899 Halsey House at Eustis and Lincoln and the 1905 Dunnivant Building at Washington and Clinton. The method of achieving this monolithic appearance was made possible by the manufacture of "pressed brick", which was a brick of very close dimensional tolerance, unlike bricks made before or since. To make "pressed bricks", high-quality, finely-ground clay was mixed with an absolute minimum of moisture and then "pressed" in a mould under very high pressure. The small amount of moisture meant that when baked the bricks would not shrink and distort as do ordinary bricks whose clay mix contains much more water and is not highly compressed. "Pressed bricks" can be laid with mortar joints only of 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide because of the uniformity of size of the bricks, whereas ordinary bricks require 3/8 inch joints because the bricks vary much more in size tolerance.

To reinforce the monolithic look, the red-brown pressed bricks were laid in red-brown mortar with

narrow, nearly-flush joints, as they are at Temple B'nai Sholom. There are cases where this monolithic effect has not been understood and owners have later ground-out the narrow, red-brown joints to install wide white joints, thus spoiling the appearance of the building. Temple B'nai Sholom went to considerable effort to keep the monolithic effect.

The original Temple roof of gray-green slates is still in place and serving after 95 years, with a number of cracked slates replaced in the past 12 years and all of the galvanized metal flashings replaced in long-life copper in 1994. Thus this beautiful roof has already outlasted about 6 asphalt-shingle roofs and will probably outlast 6 more. This is a good example of the adage that the cheapest material is the highest-quality material. The numerous 1899 galvanized metal finials, which had gone beyond the point of being able to be patched anymore, were also in 1994 expertly replicated in copper by "Copperworks" of Decatur, and these should outlast the 95 year-old originals. The copper was painted a warm-gray off-white limestone color (as were the originals) to match the numerous limestone sills and lintels on the building, since the design intent of the finials was to represent stone carvings.

The last remaining restoration item is to plant several hardwood shade trees along Lincoln and Randolph Streets, so that the Temple will again be softened in appearance as it was in early 20th century photographs, and was until the last ancient maple died this year.

The architect of the Temple was B. H. Hunt of Chattanooga, who had an extensive practice in several southeastern states that included many religious structures of various denominations. Hunt also did the turn-of century First Baptist Church here that stood at Clinton and Church Streets. While appearances might indicate Hunt also did the nearby 1899 Central Presbyterian Church, it is not listed on his list of projects that shows the above two contemporaneous structures.

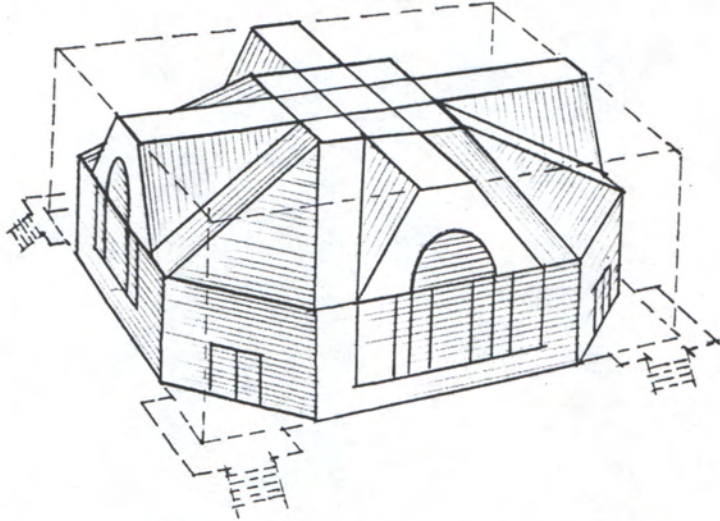
In 1968 a one-story red brick modern addition was made to the south of the Temple. It is properly

reticent, low in profile and simple, avoiding the frequent mistake of many modern buildings which attempt to upstage the old buildings. The architects were Jones, Crow & Mann of Huntsville.

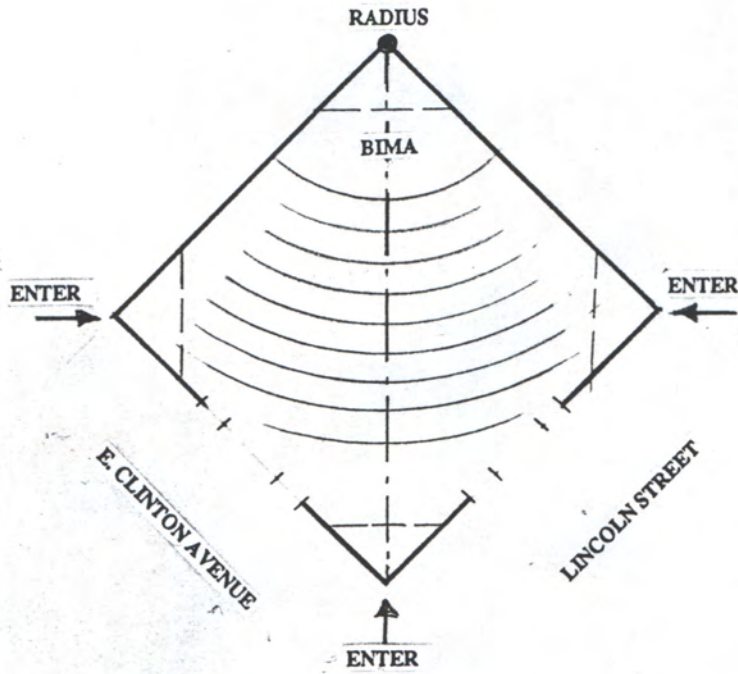
The contractor for the 1994 Temple restoration was <sup>Craftsman</sup>~~Craftsman~~ Builders of Huntsville.

Since 1945, many religious buildings have been insensitively repaired or remodeled. The congregation of Temple B'nai Sholom is to be commended for their commitment and work in preserving and restoring this excellent and sophisticated work of architecture not only for the congregation's use but for the historical and architectural benefit of all of Huntsville.

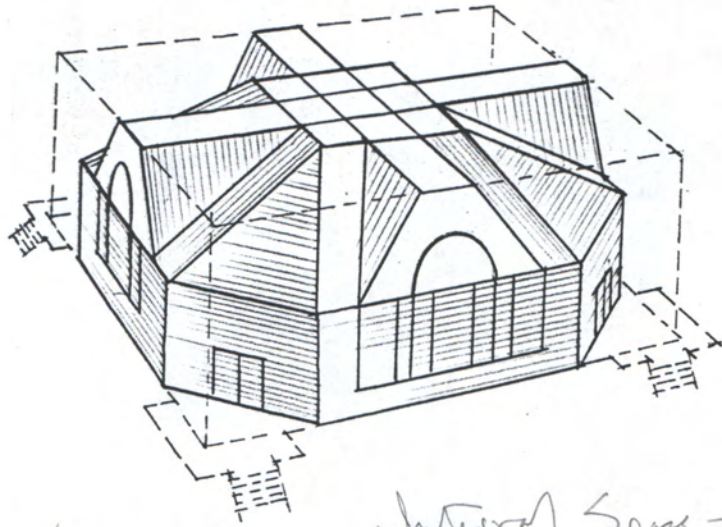




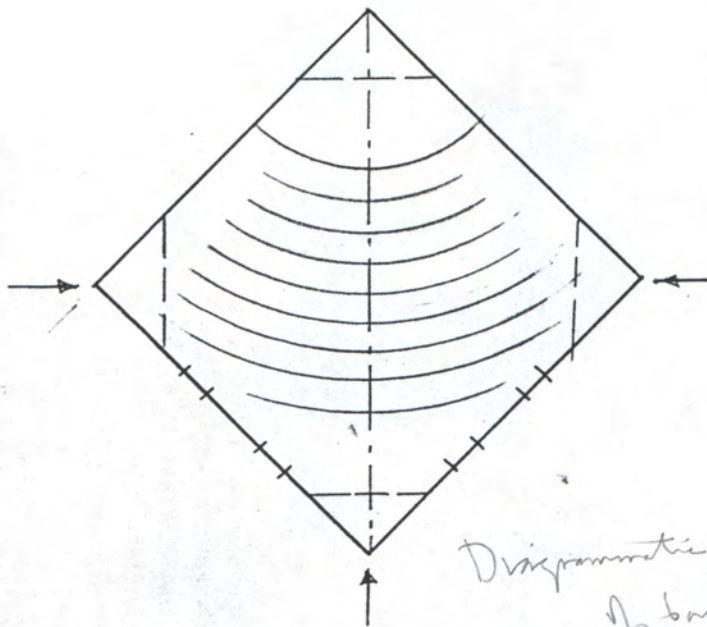
**THE INTERIOR SPACE - FORM OF THE WORSHIP SPACE**  
**WITH ITS 24 FOLDED-PLANES OF THE VAULTED CEILING**



**THE ESSENTIAL GEOMETRY OF THE PLAN**

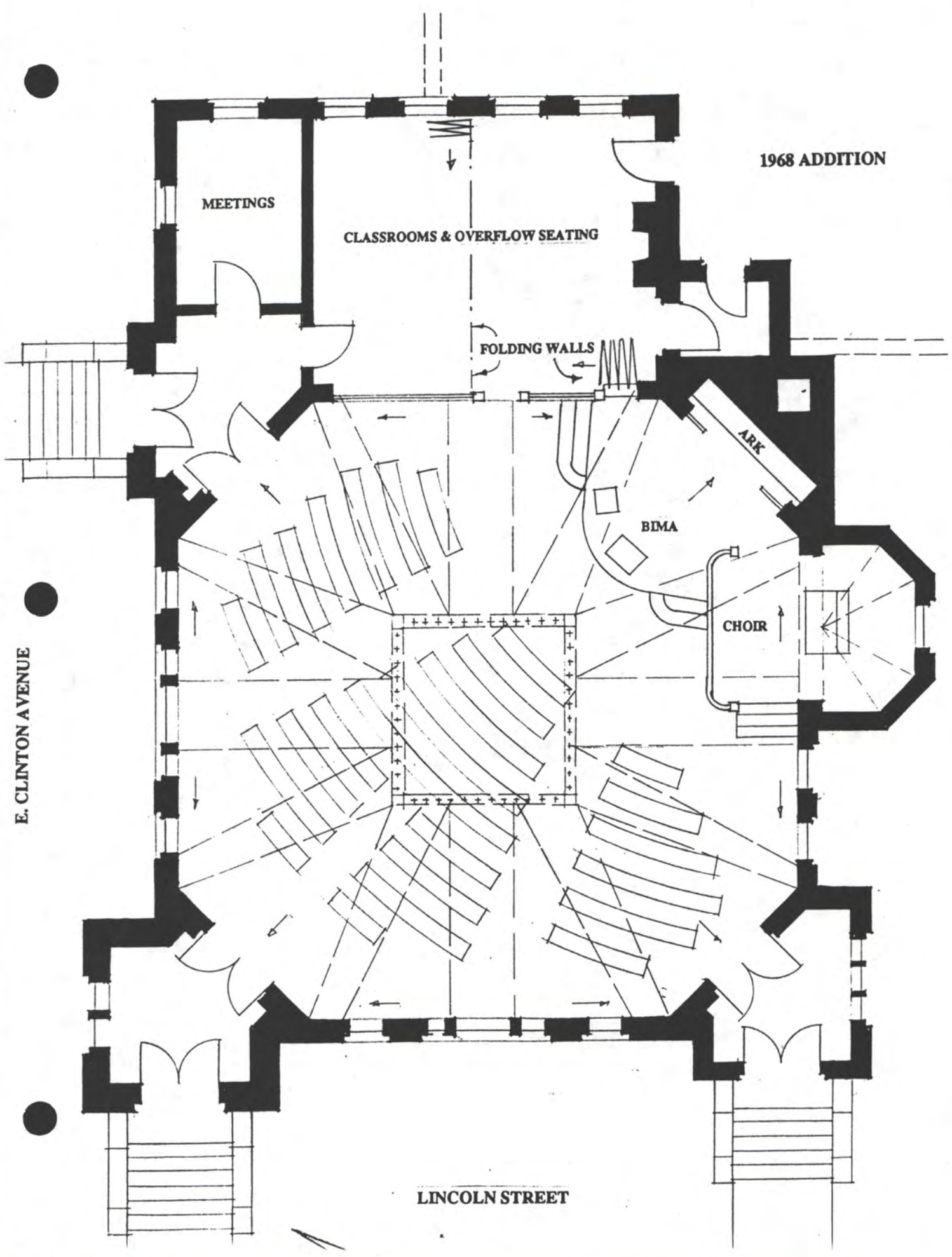


Internal Space-form



Diagrammatic plan  
of basic geometry

1899 Temple Brain School, Hsinchu  
02/17-98 HJ



E. CLINTON AVENUE

1968 ADDITION

MEETINGS

CLASSROOMS & OVERFLOW SEATING

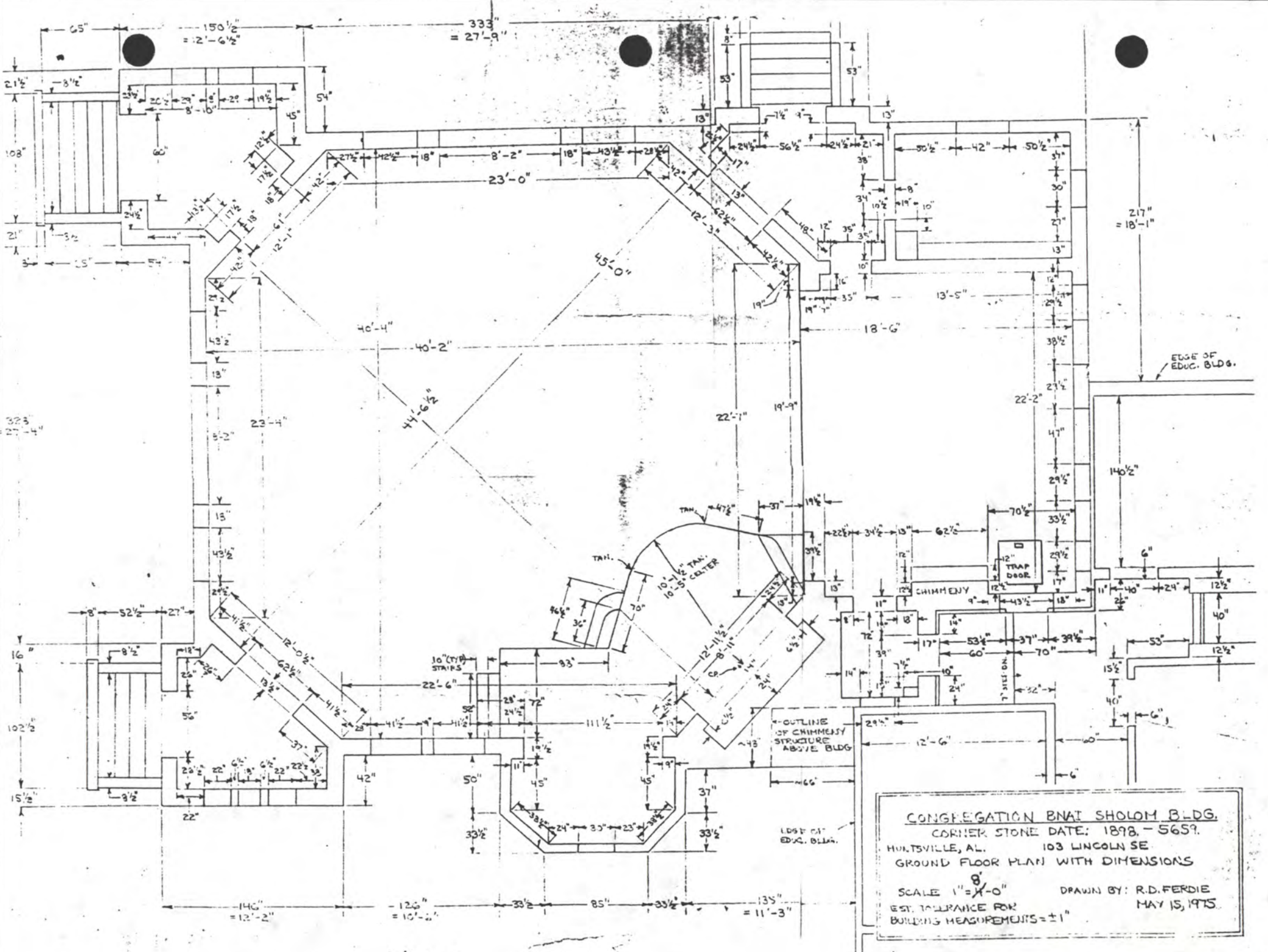
FOLDING WALLS

ARK

BIMA

CHOIR

LINCOLN STREET



**CONGREGATION BNAI SHOLOM BLDG.**  
 CORNER STONE DATE: 1898 - 5659.  
 HUNTSVILLE, AL. 103 LINCOLN SE.  
 GROUND FLOOR PLAN WITH DIMENSIONS  
 SCALE 1" = 8'-0" DRAWN BY: R.D. FERDIE  
 EST. TOLERANCE FOR BUILDING MEASUREMENTS = ± 1" MAY 15, 1975.

1/8" = 1'

E. Clinton St

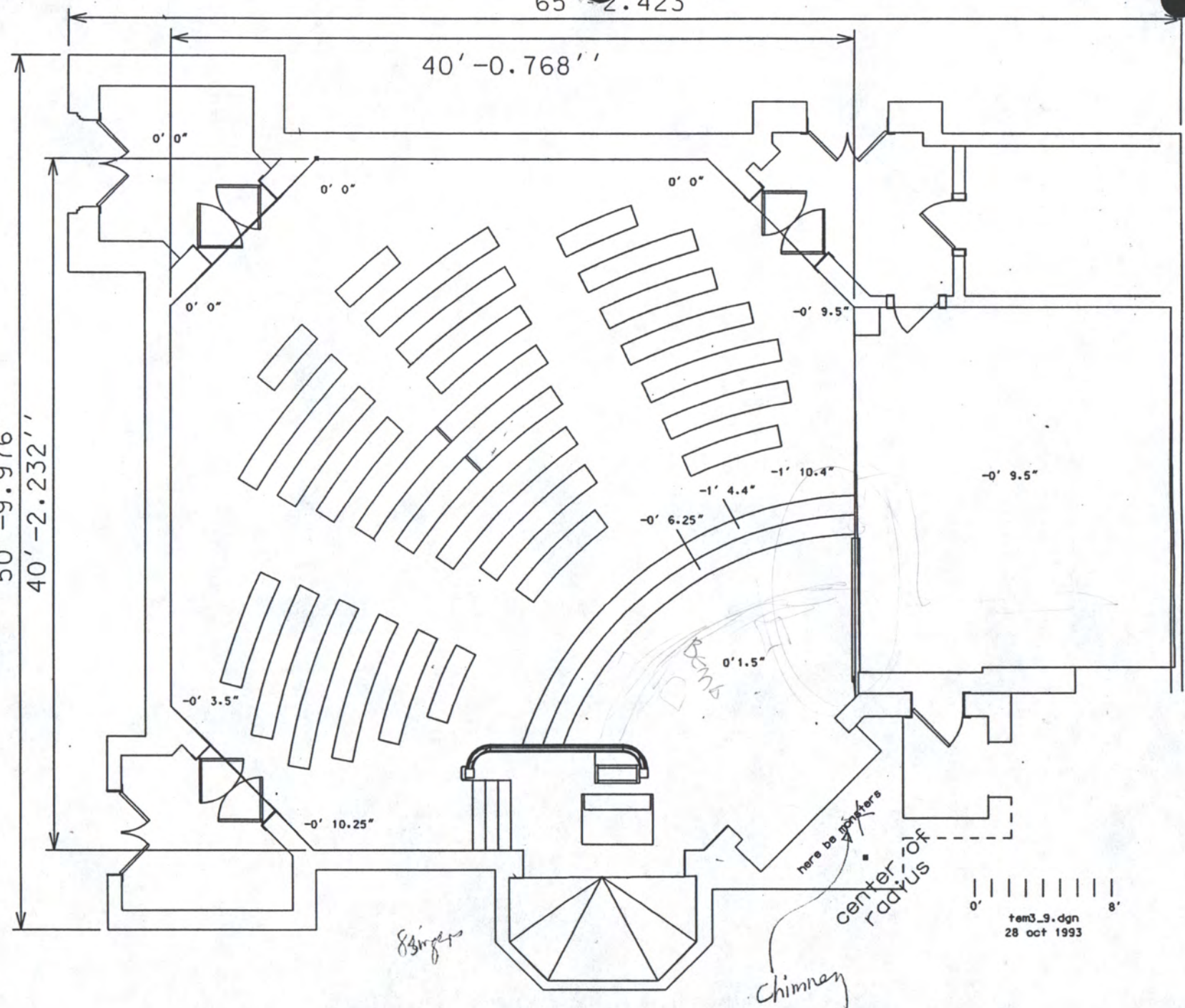
65'-2.423''

40'-0.768''

50'-9.976''

40'-2.232''

Lincoln St



Huntsville, AL

Temple B'nai Shalom - rd by JHT - Rev 12/07/93 DJ

# Religion

Section  
**B**

ion Editor: 532-4419

Saturday, November 13, 1993

## Temple B'nai Sholom gets a face lift

By **YVONNE WHITE**  
Times Religion Editor

Temple B'nai Sholom is being torn apart.

And members of the downtown Huntsville Jewish congregation are happy about it.

After years of fighting to keep dry when it rains, not to mention other problems in

a building that is nearly 100 years old, the temple is undergoing a \$250,000 renovation project, which will include a new roof.

"The temple is in a bad state of disrepair," said Dr. Alred Ritter, president of Temple B'nai Sholom. "We've been talking about doing this for a long time, but we had to get approval from the Huntsville Historical Society before we could do anything since it is a designated historical site."

"The wiring is from the early 1900s and when it rains hard, people get wet. Our highest priority is to try and address some of those things."

The congregation approved a fund-raising project earlier this year with an initial goal of \$250,000. Thus far, 93 percent of the "Centennial Campaign" goal has been reached through five-year pledges.

"We just want to make people aware of what we are trying to do, which is partially the preservation of a historical site," said Ritter, president of Aerospace Consulting.

"We want everyone (in the congregation) to participate according to their means and this is a good opportunity for the congregation to put the structure in good shape for the next century."

Revelle Gwyn, chairwoman of the building committee, said the temple is believed to be the only one in Alabama built in the 19th century that is still used.

"We have a very strong commitment to our temple and we look at this as our responsibility to do this project and we all share in it," said Mrs. Gwyn, a local attorney. "We look at it as a commitment to our roots. The cornerstone reads 1898 and there has never been a substantial overhaul since it was built."

Mrs. Gwyn said non-Jews often think the temple is a church because the architectural design is similar to the Central Presbyterian Church just up the street.

"The architect who designed Central Presbyterian may have also designed the



Michael Mercier/The Huntsville Times

Guenther Huber-Delle carries finial taken off Temple B'nai Sholom.

temple," she said. "We really don't have any records who designed it, but the two buildings look similar. But we are not a church. We are a temple."

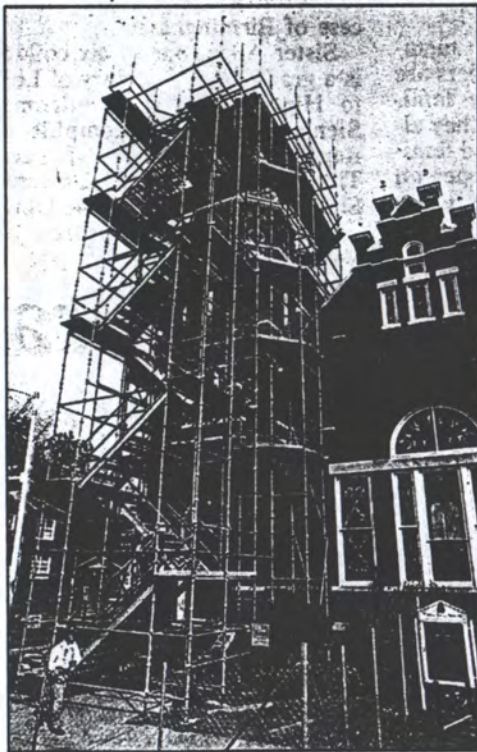
The congregation will hold a meeting Sunday to discuss the remaining amount needed for the sanctuary. Following the renovation, the temple will start plans for its educational needs, which is estimated to cost about \$1.2 million.

Temple B'nai Sholom's congregation is an active member of the Interfaith Mission Service and participates in most religious activities involving communities of faith throughout Huntsville, including the downtown Thanksgiving Service and the Crop

Walk, which raises money for food for the hungry. The congregation also lends a hand at Christmas to Huntsville Hospital by working for volunteers so they can spend time with their families during the holidays.

The Jewish High Holy Days services of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashonoh are held each year at the Bicentennial Chapel at Redstone Arsenal.

There are 160 families who are members of Temple B'nai Sholom, a reformed congregation and one of two Jewish congregations in Huntsville. The other is the conservative synagogue, Etz Chayim, located on Bailey Cove Road.



Michael Mercier/The Huntsville Times

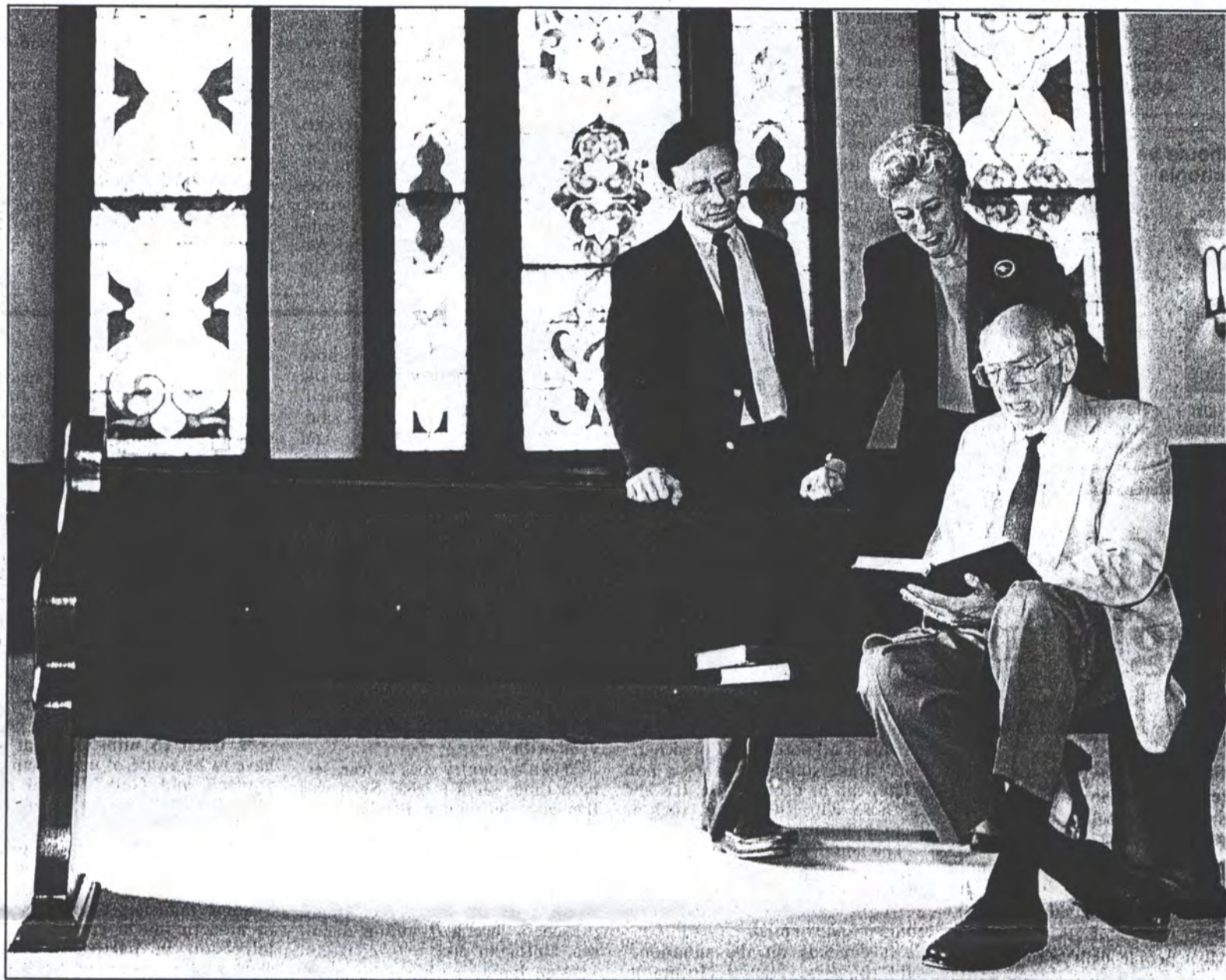
Workers prepare to start renovation work on Temple B'nai Sholom.

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James H. Herring, Pastor: DMB-HH

# Religion

ditor: 532-4419



Eric Schultz/Huntsville Times

Preparing for Sunday's dedication of the newly renovated Temple B'nai Sholom are renovation committee members, from left, Sol Miller, Revelle Gwyn and Dr. Alfred Ritter.

## Timely rain inspired renovation

### Services dedicate face lift of Temple B'nai Sholom

By YVONNE WHITE  
Times Religion Editor

When the congregation of Temple B'nai Sholom met last year to discuss the renovation of the historic building, many members opposed the idea.

Temple President Dr. Alfred Ritter was one of the key people

behind the move to refurbish the building, beginning with the roof, which he said leaked badly during storms.

But many people resisted the proposed project.

Suddenly, a heavy rainstorm moved in and water began dripping down the walls of the temple and from the ceiling, soaking the people sitting under the holes.

Ritter looked up and said, "God, you do good work."

The decision to refurbish the Temple passed unanimously.

The temple has undergone a \$250,000 face lift, and a three-day program in honor of the refurbished building began Friday night and will conclude Sunday.

Friday night, the Torahs were carried from the social hall, where they have been kept since the renovation began, outside and around the building and returned to the refurbished Ark. That was followed by a dedication service for temple members.

There will be a Havdallah ser-

vice and reception for special guests and dignitaries today at 7:30 p.m. On Sunday, the temple will hold open house from 1 until 3 p.m. for the public. It will include tours and a reception.

The downtown Huntsville landmark, built for about \$12,000, is nearly 100 years old. It included an auditorium and a "society" room.

The temple was originally dedicated Nov. 26, 1899. The temple congregation was organized July 30, 1876, when 18 men met in

Please see RENOVATION on B2

## Renovation

Continued from page B1

the Huntsville Masonic Lodge. For the next 23 years, their families gathered for worship in rooms they rented before erecting the permanent building at Lincoln Avenue and Clinton Street.

After the renovation began, the congregation had to cram into its social hall for worship services.

The renovation project, which was under the direction of Revelle Gwyn, a local attorney, began last November with the exterior of the building. It was scheduled to be completed in May, but several hitches prevented it from being

"Our efforts were met with frustration at several points," said Mrs. Gwyn. "We could not find commercially available mortar to match our tinted original (exterior). We spent hours making our own recipe from a variety of unlikely ingredients. The press-molded brick which gives our facade its unusual uniformity is no longer made in this area, and repair and replacement of broken and damaged brick became a game of scrounging appropriate brick from unseen areas to use where visible, and replacing them with new or nonconforming brick."

After many weather-related delays, the exterior was finally completed and the inside work began.

"All of the rafters and beams are Southern heart pine (and) there are

said Mrs. Gwyn. "Overall, water damage has been the building's chief enemy over the years. The patchwork roof repairs finally became inadequate, and in the process much of the interior plaster became loose and unsalvageable."

The temple's late 19th-century electrical system was in desperate need of updating, along with an inadequate heating and cooling system. In addition to those improvements, a security and fire alarm system has been installed, along with new carpet and furnishings, said Mrs. Gwyn.

Money was also donated to refurbish the pews by the Temple Sisterhood organization. Several of the pews were done in memory of Ethel McAnally, an integral member of the Temple congregation for

spring.

The Founders' Room includes a mantel from the old fireplace which used to heat the building. When a heating system was put into the building, the mantel was put into the basement for storage and was recently discovered and refurbished.

The Founders' Room is located just off the sanctuary and can be used by brides or bar mitzvah celebrants, or for counseling and other small group meetings.

The temple also has future plans for updating its educational building along with new landscaping and other outside improvements, said Mrs. Gwyn.

For more information on Temple B'nai Sholom or the dedication activities, call 536-4771.