

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 10

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Major Bibliographic References

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Cunningham, John T. Newark. Newark, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Society, 1966.

Gordon, Mark. "Rediscovering Jewish Infrastructure: Update on United States Nineteenth Century Synagogues." American Jewish History, March 1996.

Immerso, Michael. Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward. New Brunswick, New Jersey: 1998.

Newark City Directory. Newark. 1920 and 1925.

Urquhart, F. J. History of the City of Newark, New Jersey, 1666-1913. 3 Volumes. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1913.

Newspapers

"A Newark Temple Celebrates A Bar Mitzvah Again." The Star Ledger, 10 May 1997.

Stewart, Angela. *Candles are Still Burning for Jews in Newark.* " The Star Ledger, 17 December 1995.

"Synagogue Ready for Holy Days." Newark Evening News, 8 September 1923, 11:3.

"To Lay Cornerstone for Synagogue." Newark Evening News, 14 September 1922, 9:5.

Miscellaneous Documents

Ahavas Sholom incorporation papers, 1918.

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Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Hollander, Ronald. "The Ark at Ahavas Shalom."

"How the Ark Came to Congregation Ahavas Shalom Chronology" undated.

Rodeph Sholom minutes.

Steinbaum, Robert and Rosemary. "A Short History of Congregation Ahavas Shalom." (Written for the Bar Mitzvah of Marshall Israel Steinbaum, May 10, 1997).

Interviews

Interview with Mark W. Gordon, June 2, 2000.

Interview with Edna Wechsler, daughter of Ada and Leopold Jacobson, May 16, 2000.

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Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Ahavas Sholom occupies Block 441, Lot 42, City of Newark tax map. The building dimensions are approximately 40.0' wide by 90.0' deep. The property dimensions are 40.92' x 111.58'. The total area is .11 acre.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the synagogue.

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Section Number Photos Page 13

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Photographs

The following information is the same for all of the photographs listed:

- 1) Name of property: Ahavas Sholom, 145 Broadway
- 2) City and state: Newark, New Jersey
- 3) Photo taken by: Ulana D. Zakalak
- 4) Photo taken: February 2000
- 5) Location of negative: Zakalak Associates
57 Cayuga Avenue
Oceanport, NJ 07757

6) & 7) Descriptions of views indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 10: West (main) façade, camera pointing east.
- Photo 2 of 10: West (main) façade, camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 3 of 10: West (main) façade, camera pointing northeast.
- Photo 4 of 10: Sanctuary, camera pointing east.
- Photo 5 of 10: Sanctuary, camera pointing east.
- Photo 6 of 10: Sanctuary, camera pointing west.
- Photo 7 of 10: Sanctuary, ark detail, camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 8 of 10: Upstairs gallery, camera pointing west.
- Photo 9 of 10: Basement social hall, camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 10 of 10: Basement social hall, camera pointing west.

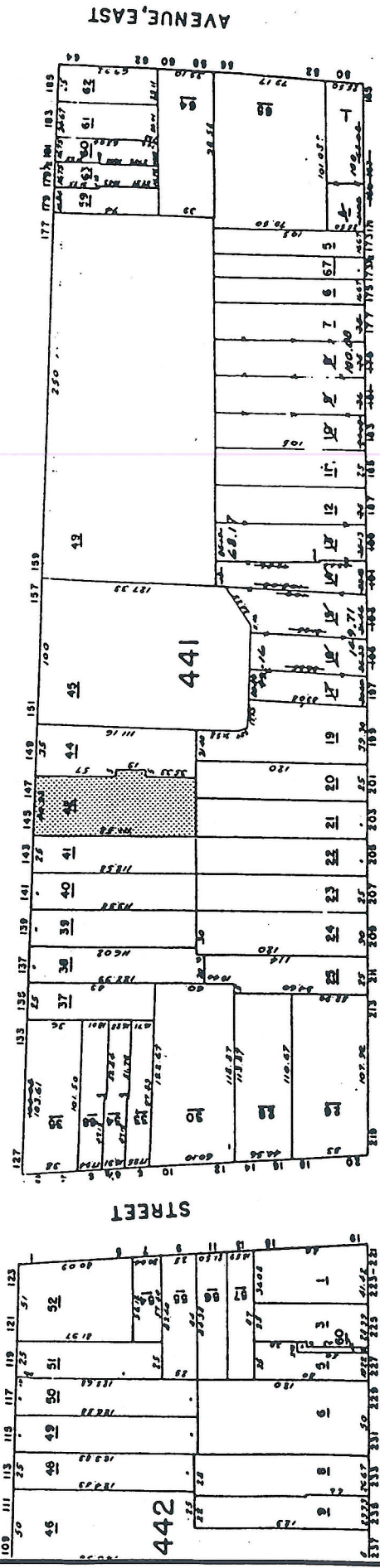
Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

CRITTENDEN ST

12

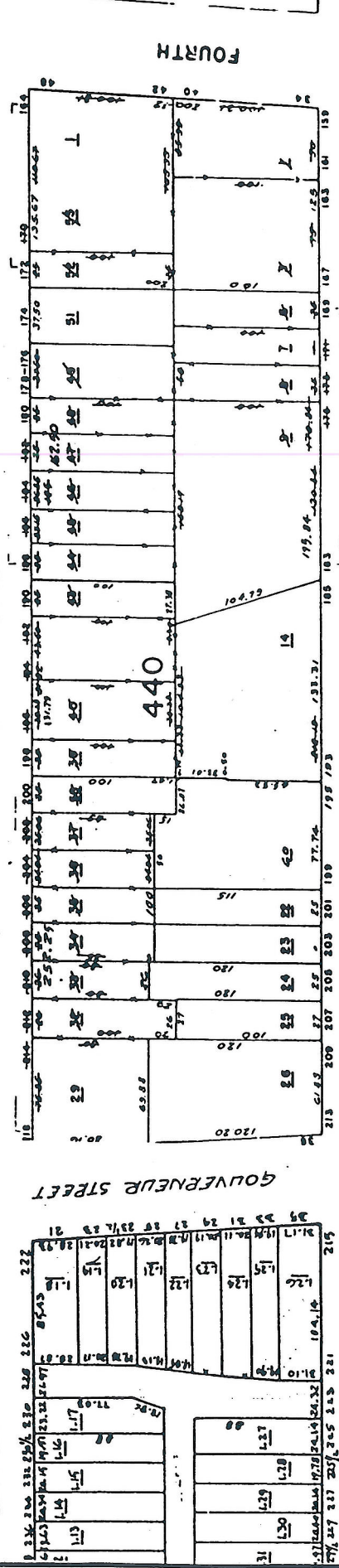


BROADWAY



BROAD STREET

STREET



AVENUE

MT. PLEASANT

AVENUE

Fig. 1: Ahavas Sholom, Newark, Essex County, New Jersey. Existing block and lot map. Prepared by: Zakalak Associates August 8, 2000

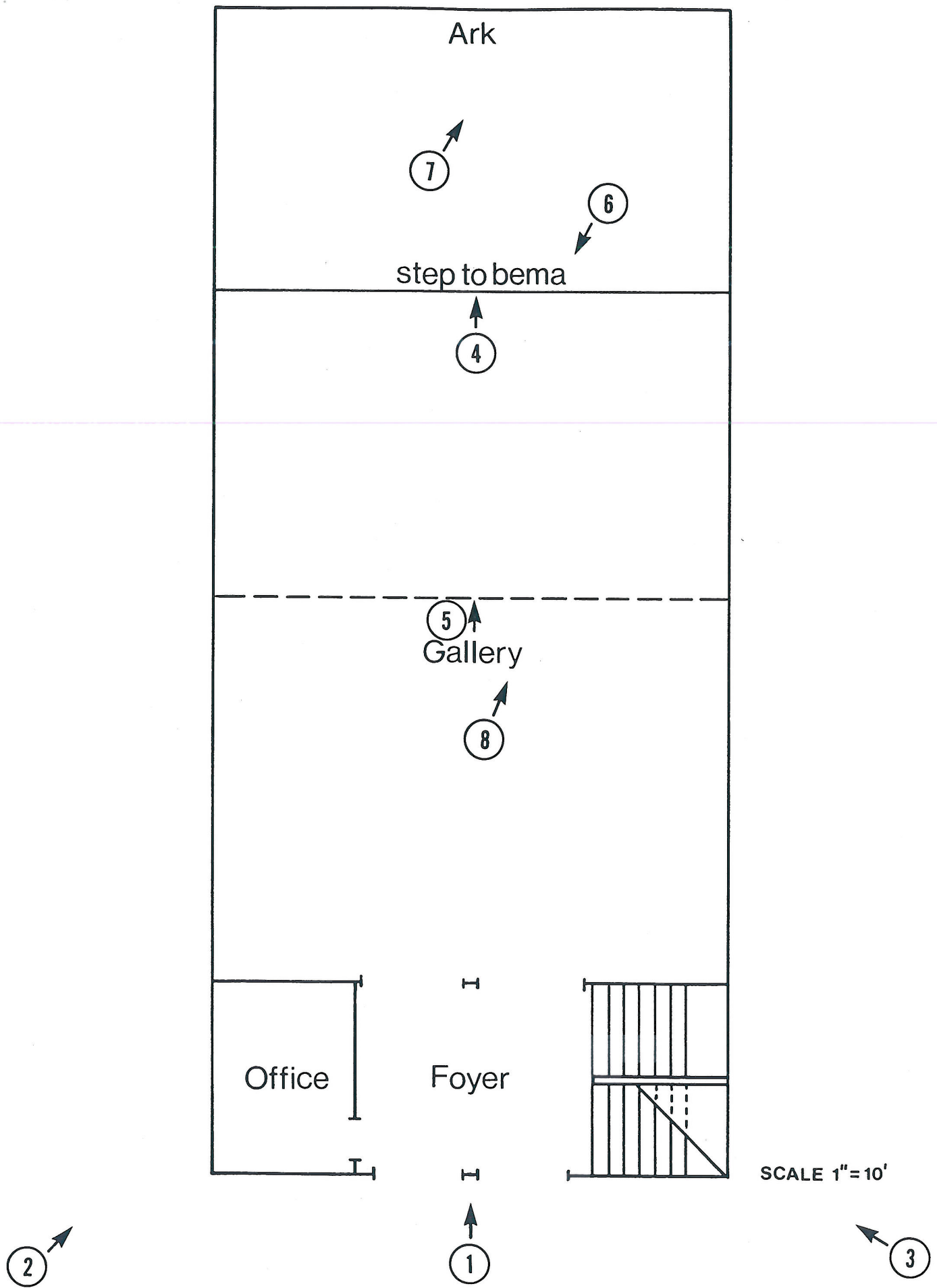


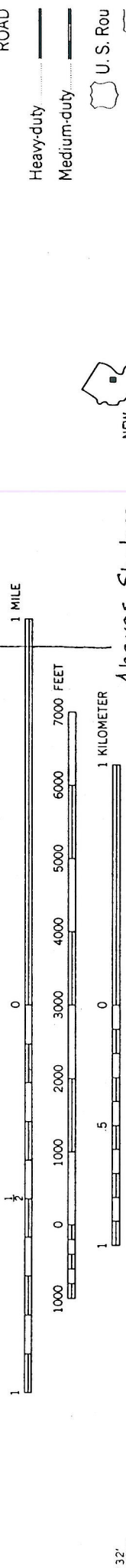
Fig. 2: Ahavas Sholom. Schematic Floor Plan. Photo Locator Map.

**ORANGE QUADRANGLE
NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)**

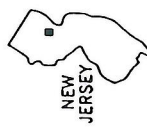
HAYTHORNE 6.4 MI.
PATERSON (CITY HALL) 3.5 MI. 74° 0'



12'30" 567
19 MI. TO N. J. 21
(ELIZABETH) 569
3.4 MI. TO U.S. 7 & 9
10'
(21)
NEWARK (JUNC. N.J. 21)
INTERIOR-GEOLOG.



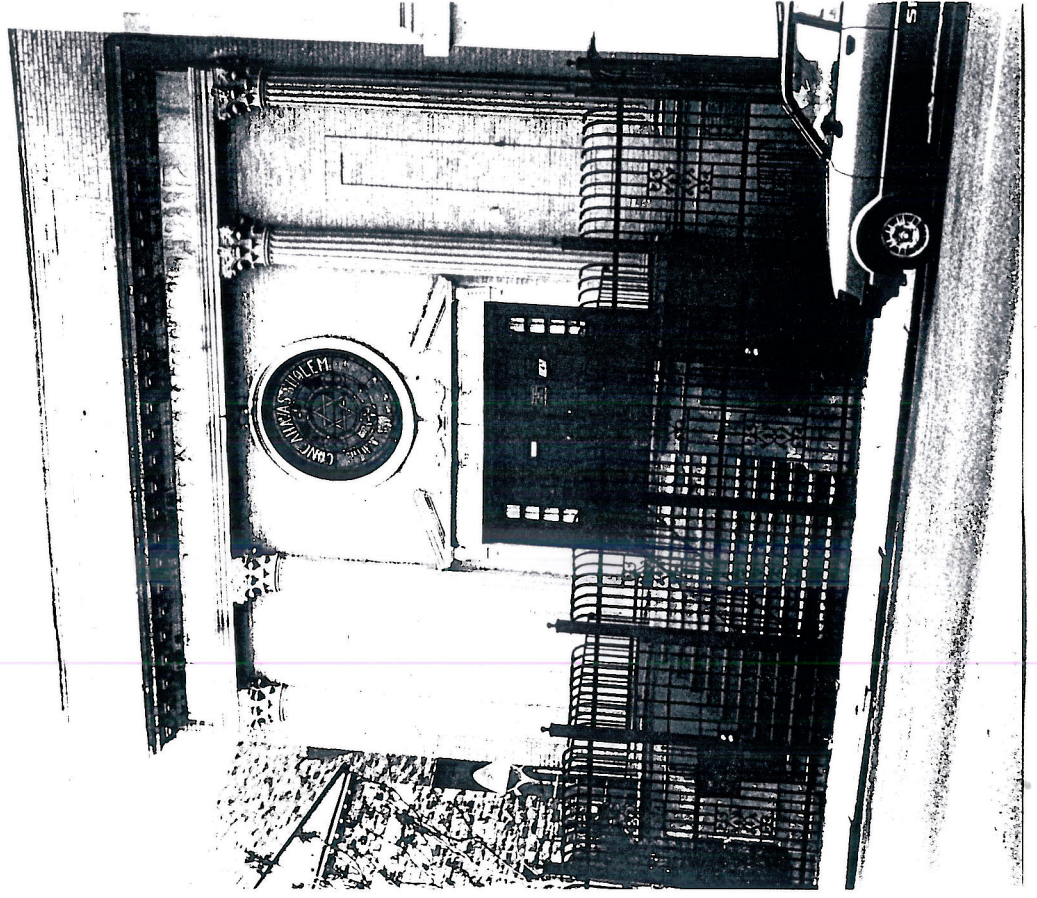
**Ahavas Sholom
145 Broadway
Newark
Essex City, NJ**



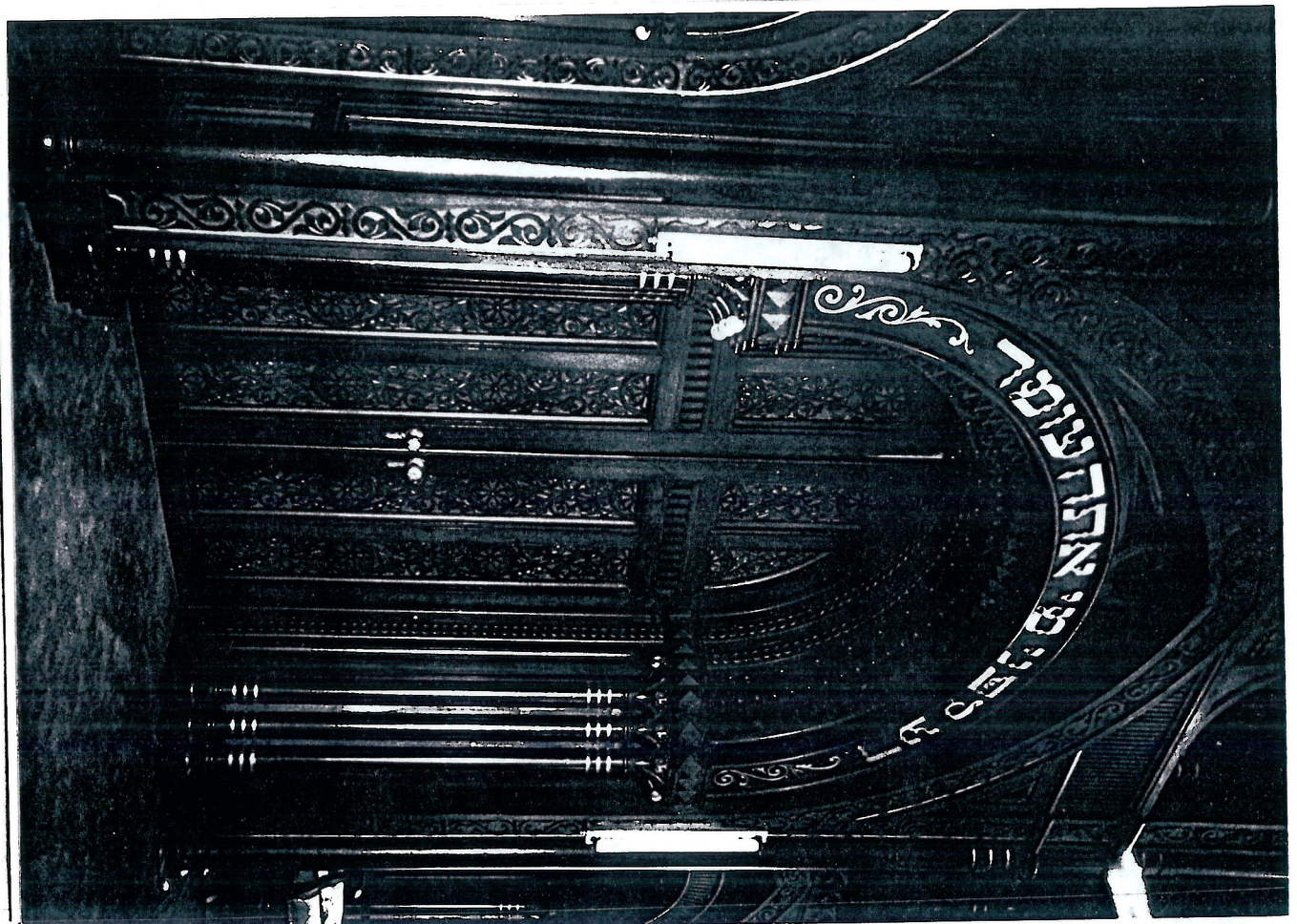
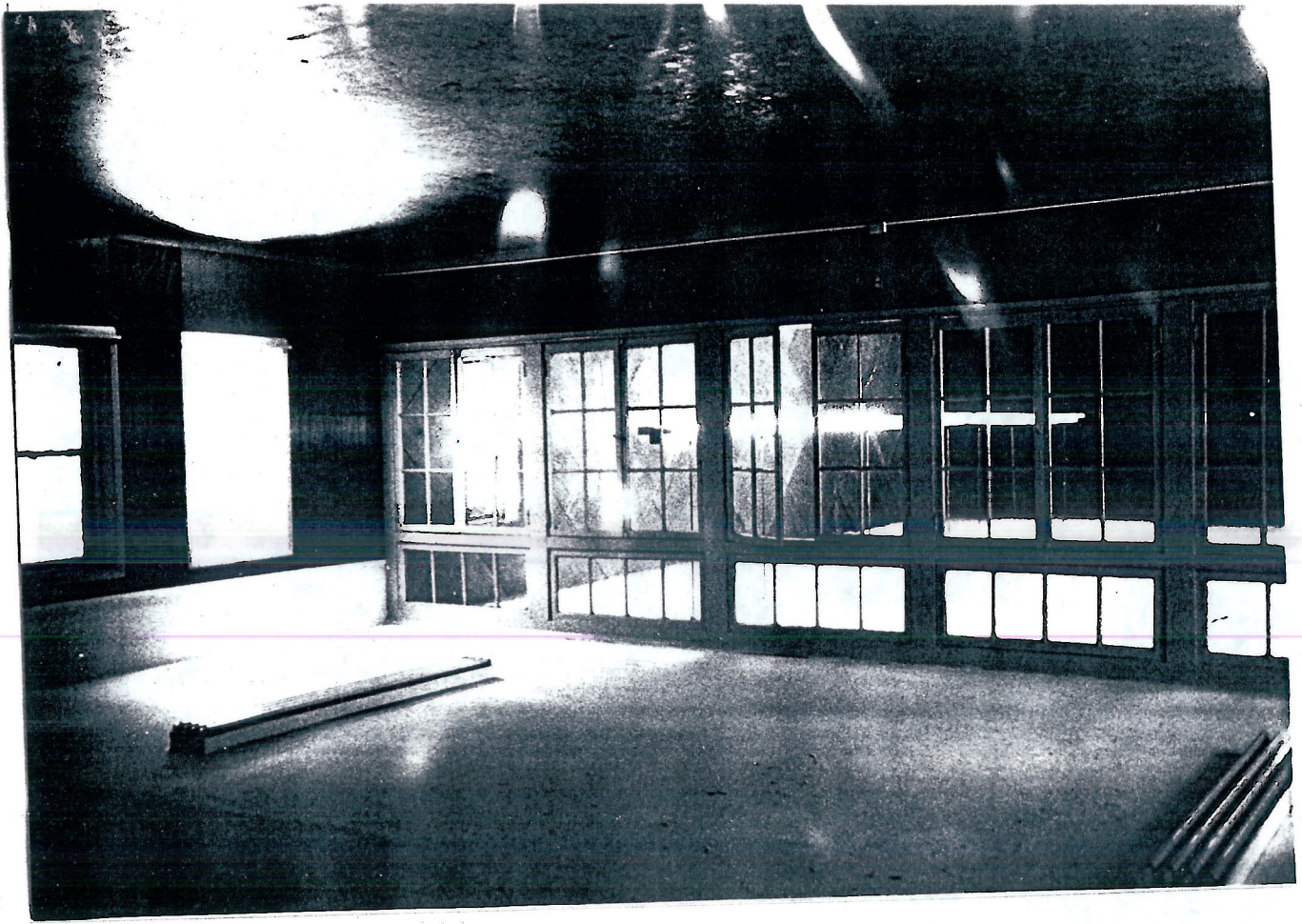
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 5.1 FEET

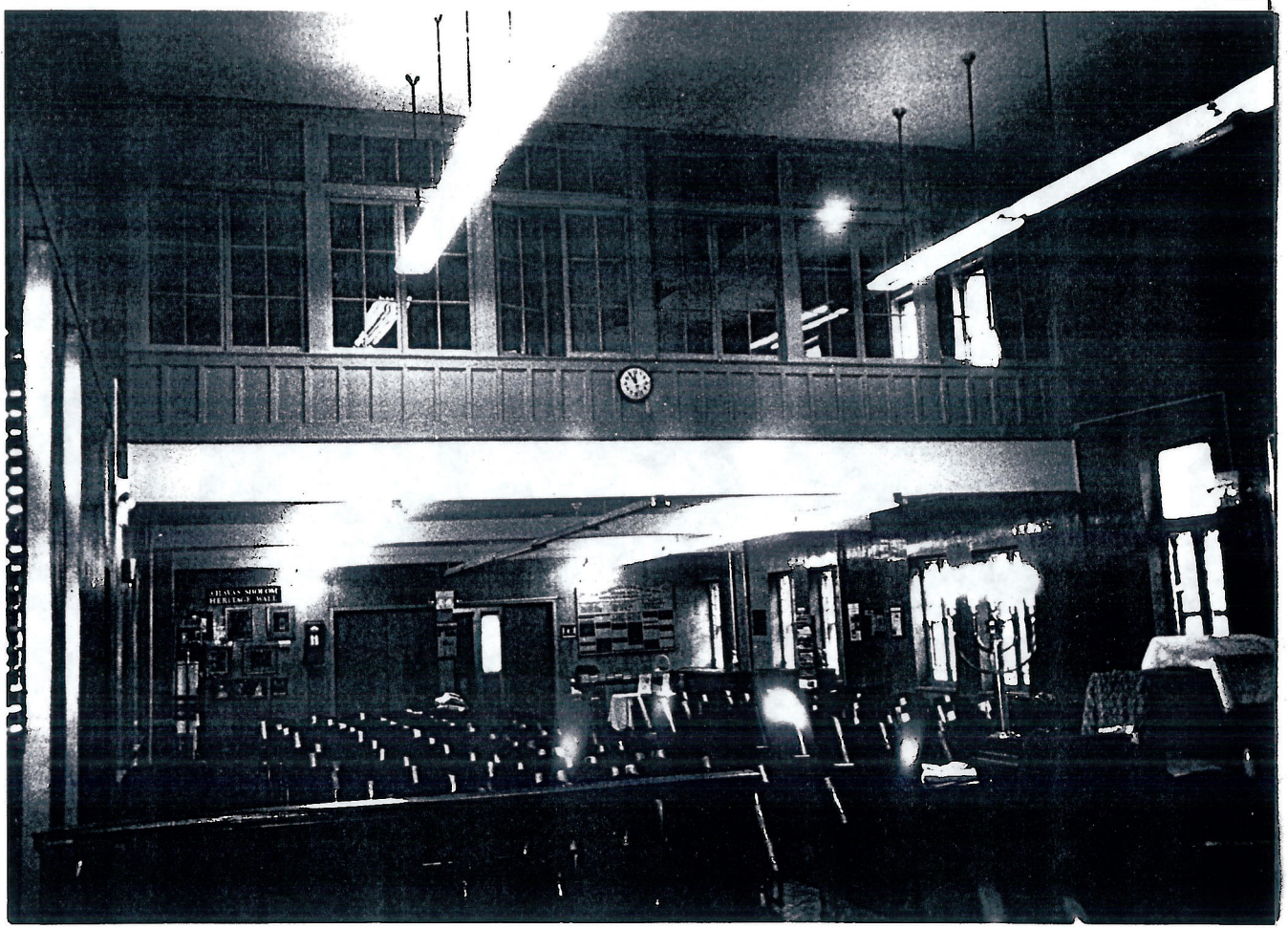
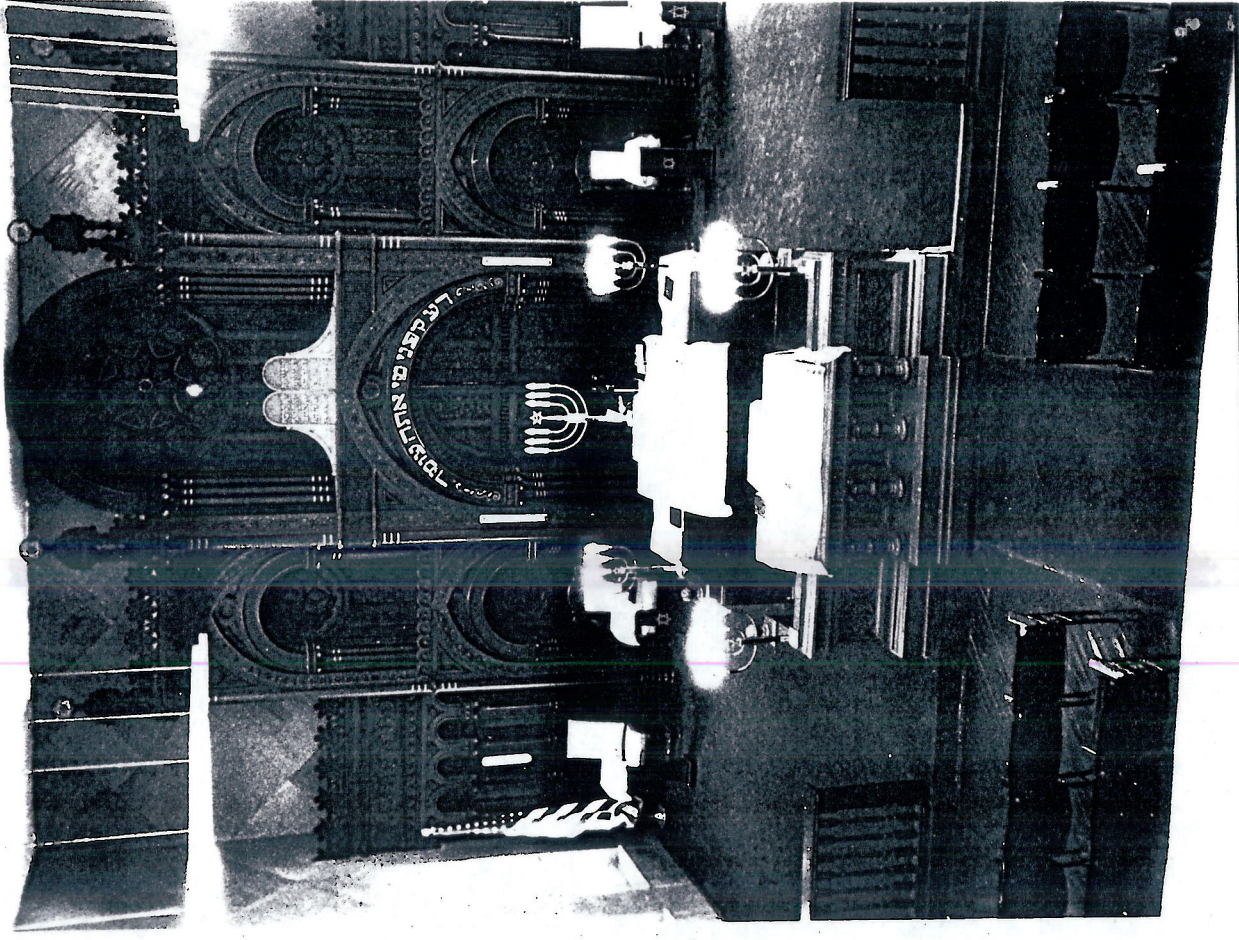
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

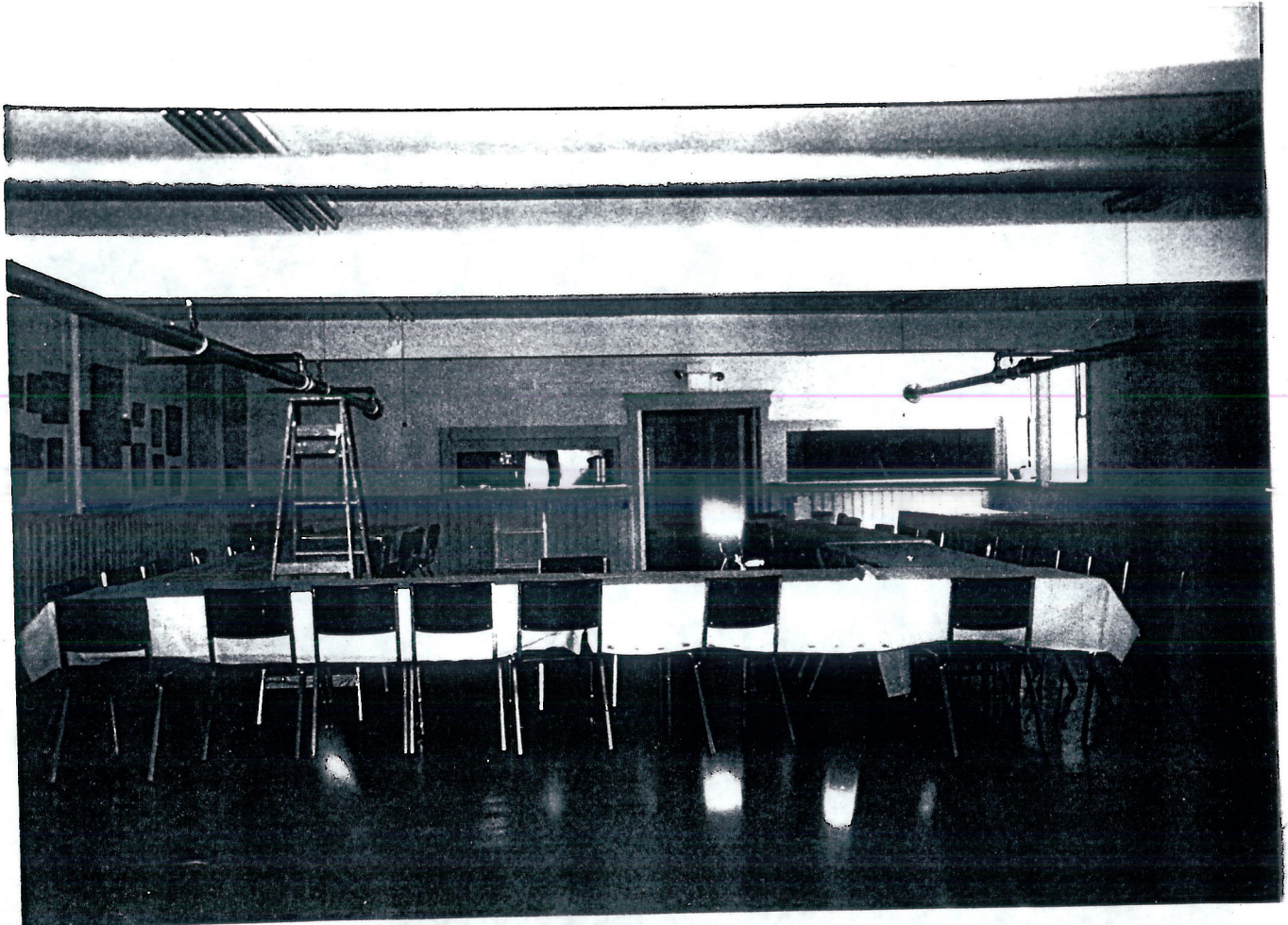
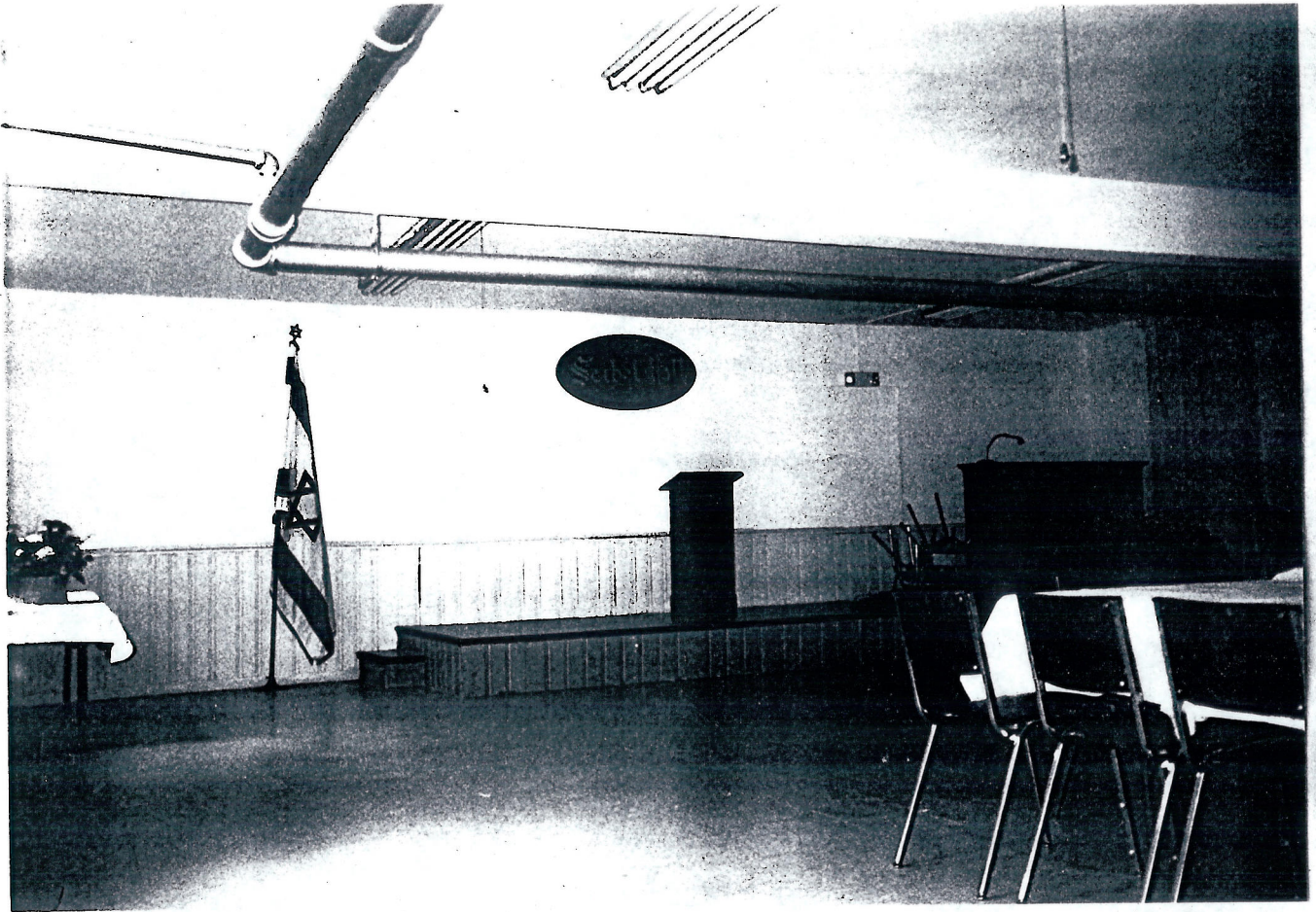
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled by the Geological Survey from aerial photographs taken 1976 and other sources
This information not field checked. Map edited 1981
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



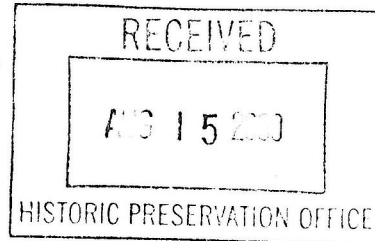








SAMPLE



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ahavas Sholom

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 145 Broadway not for publication

city or town Newark vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Essex code 013 zip code 07104-3840

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:) _____

Ahavas Sholom
Name of Property

Essex County, NJ
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone
walls Brick
roof Asphalt
other Stained Glass

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Religion

Art

Period of Significance

1923-1950

Significant Dates

1923

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Ahavas Sholom
Name of Property

Essex County, NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .11 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ulana D. Zakalak, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization Zakalak Associates date August 8, 2000

street & number 57 Cayuga Avenue telephone (732) 571-3176

city or town Oceanport state NJ zip code 07757

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ahavas Sholom

street & number 145 Broadway telephone (201) 792-6478

city or town Newark state NJ zip code 07104-3840

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Section Number 7 Page 1

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Congregation Ahavas Sholom, located at 145 Broadway (formerly Belleville Avenue), in the City of Newark, is a two story, three bay, rectangular plan, beige brick and limestone, detached, synagogue building, designed in the Neo-Classical style. Located on one of the main commercial thoroughfares of Newark's North Ward, immediately north of the City's Central Business District, the building was originally constructed in 1922-1923. The building design derives from the Roman temple form of a single compositional unit encompassing two to three stories, and spanned by an attached portico of colossal Ionic columns. Rectangular in plan, the building is approximately 40 feet wide by 90 feet deep (see Photos 1-3). Its narrow urban lot regulates the plan of the synagogue, with most of the interior space devoted to a sanctuary with a second story gallery, and a full basement. Except for the paneling of the interior plaster walls, the synagogue retains its original appearance and continues its historical association with its congregation. The synagogue also contains the oldest remaining ark in the State of New Jersey, an elaborate mahogany screen originally built for a synagogue in New York City in 1872, and installed in Ahavas Sholom in 1929.

The butter-joint laid brick entrance façade is composed of three vertical bays delineated by colossal order, engaged Corinthian columns, and set on a limestone base containing the stair podium. The center bay, containing the entrance to the building, is approached by a podium of ten steps. This limestone podium is flanked by projecting stair sidewalls with separate projecting bases and entablatures. Wrought iron railings ornament the tops of the sidewalls. The entablature of the stair sidewalls continues along the front of the façade as a water table, and supports the engaged Corinthian columns spanning the façade. Beneath the stairs is the exterior entrance to the basement.

The main entrance consists of a pair of paneled wood doors with sidelights, enclosed by a primary limestone surround with a broken bonnet pediment (see Photo 1). The secondary wooden door surround consists of pilastered piers separating the doors and the sidelights. The limestone surround is composed of limestone-paneled pilasters supporting a classicizing entablature with a festoon-ornamented frieze and dentillated cornice. Brackets at either end support the broken bonnet pediment. Immediately above the pediment is a rose window set in a projecting limestone surround. The stained glass window within features the Star of David encircled by the name of the congregation. A simpler, circular window is located in the eastern elevation, but the ark blocks it on the interior.

The flanking side bays are narrower than the center bay and contain a rectangular brick panel projecting very slightly from the surface of the façade.

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Section Number 7 Page 2

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

The colossal order of fluted Corinthian columns spans the entire façade and supports a classic limestone entablature. The architrave is composed of two fascias, surmounted by a cyma recta. The frieze is ornamented with carved Hebrew letters. The cornice is composed of an egg-and-dart ovolo, modillions supporting a fascia, and a cyma recta. A plain brick parapet extends above the entablature.

The side and rear walls of the synagogue are brick and utilitarian in appearance (see Photo 2). Vertical brick buttress strips create individual bays in the sidewalls. Between these piers are paired casement stained glass windows for the first three bays from the façade, and paired casements with transoms for the remaining three bays. A segmentally arched lintel created from brick headers tops each window, and a plain brick header sill finishes the bottom of the window. An exterior door placed mid-way across each sidewall is approached by a metal fire escape. A parapet wall with a ceramic tile coping borders the flat, bituminous roof.

A wrought iron fence spans the width of the property at the front of the building; a chain link fence surrounds the remaining yard (see Photo 1).

Interior

The elevated basement contains a large meeting room with a small, low stage at the east end, restrooms, kitchen, storage areas and a boiler room. The basement is accessed either through two doors underneath the exterior staircase, or by the interior staircase from the first floor. A small stair hall leads into a corridor off of which are the restrooms, kitchen, boiler room and storage area. The end of the corridor opens into the large meeting room (see Photos 9-10). This room is used as a social hall and is named after the Seibel family, prominent members of the congregation and local men's clothing merchants in the 1920s.

The first floor consists of a narrow foyer with a staircase on the southern end leading to the upstairs gallery and office, and a small office on the north side. Directly in line with the main entrance doors are doors leading into the main sanctuary. The sanctuary is a large open space, approximately twenty-five feet in height, with an elaborately carved wooden ark at the east end, the traditional location for the ark (see Photos 4-7). The bema, the raised platform for the reading of the Torah, is located immediately in front of the ark. Both the ark and the bema are set off from the sanctuary by a single step delineated by a turned-spindle balustrade with an opening directly in front of the bema. Except for the ark and bema, the sanctuary space is rather simple in appearance, with plastered walls and ceiling, and a wooden floor.

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Section Number 7 Page 3

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Due to moisture infiltration and subsequent crumbling, the walls were covered with glazed sheets of plywood in the 1960s. The paired casement stained glass windows all depict a menorah as a central motif with simple floral designs at the tops and bottoms of the windows. The windows beyond the second floor gallery, closer to the ark, also feature a transom with a Star of David motif. The iron and wooden, auditorium-style, sanctuary seats appear to have been recycled from a music hall or movie theater. They are numbered, have shared armrests and are ornamented at the ends with panels depicting musical motifs (see Photos 4-5).

The second floor is a windowed gallery space overlooking the sanctuary (see Photos 6, 8). Originally constructed to separate the women from the men, the gallery was converted into classroom and office space. It is currently empty and awaiting renovation.

The Ark

The elaborately carved, mahogany, Victorian Gothic-inspired ark spans the entire width and height of the eastern wall of the synagogue (see Photos 4-5). It is a creation characterized by intricate and picturesque massing, complicated three-dimensionality, textural richness, and opulent detail. Originally designed to complement the Victorian Gothic synagogue in New York City in which it was housed, its overall appearance is a stark contrast to the plain neoclassical simplicity of Ahavas Sholom. It is a five bay, two-story structure composed of ogee and round-headed arched openings and inset rosette motifs. The center three bays form the main part of the two-story screen; the end bays are single story. The mid-point of the screen is an oversized ogee arch containing a pair of elaborately patterned and paneled doors, behind which are stored the rolls of the Law (see Photo 7). The two tablets containing the Ten Commandments surmount this arch, behind which rises a massive wooden "rose window" motif set in a round-headed, arched moulding. This mid-point in turn, is flanked by vertically stacked, ogee-arched panels. The end bays are composed of a round-arched blind arcade. The entire screen is topped by an entablature with a highly ornamented frieze and a parapet composed of wooden tracery. Four turned post-supported baldachins with a Star of David ornament at their apex mark the vertical divisions of the central bay.

The ark was originally built as part of Anshe Chesed at Lexington Avenue and 63rd Street in New York in 1872 (see Statement of Significance). It was donated to Ahavas Sholom in 1929 after the New York synagogue was demolished. In order to fit the smaller space of Ahavas Sholom, Leopold Jacobson, a

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Section Number 7 Page 4

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Newark cabinetmaker and synagogue trustee, trimmed the ark down to fit the new space. Although some of the top and side ornament was removed, the ark has retained a significant degree of integrity.

The wooden, rectangular bema is constructed of two sections with an opening in the middle approached by either end. It is decorated with rosettes and colonettes that match those of the ark. Leopold Jacobson probably constructed the bema from pieces left over from trimming the ark.

Site

The site on which the synagogue is located is on the easterly side of Broadway, Block 441, Lot 42. The building dimensions are approximately 40.0' wide by 90.0' deep. The property dimensions are 40.92' x 111.58'. The total area is .11 acre.

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Section Number 8 Page 5

Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Statement of Significance

Congregation Ahavas Sholom is significant in the areas of religion and social history as the last existing synagogue with a congregation in the City of Newark, a city that once had a Jewish population of more than 70,000 and boasted of having over thirty synagogues. It is the one of the last remnants of over 150 years of Jewish history in Newark, and is the last remaining neighborhood synagogue. It is also significant in the area of art; its carved mahogany ark is unique in the City of Newark. Dating from around 1872, it is the oldest existing ark in the State of New Jersey, and one of the oldest in the metropolitan area.

Newark's Jewish history dates back to 1844, when Louis Trier arrived to found a tannery on New Jersey Railroad Avenue. Others followed, many becoming peddlers on Newark streets or in outlying areas. They sold stockings, thread, needles and cheap crockery, quietly accumulating small savings in hopes of buying a horse and wagon or renting a small store. Before 1860, Jews owned the leading dry goods stores in Newark, a meteoric rise in fortune in less than fifteen years (Cunningham 1988: 137).

Most of Newark's Jews lived in boardinghouses near Springfield Avenue and Prince Street on the western edge of town. In August of 1848, they organized Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun, the first Jewish congregation in New Jersey, and worshipped in an attic in Catherine (now Arlington) Street. By 1858, members were affluent enough to build a synagogue at Washington and William Streets, the first in the city. The congregation was composed mostly of Germans and Bohemians. When increasing numbers of Polish Jews came to Newark, members of the original congregation aided the Poles in establishing Congregation B'Nai Abraham in 1853 (Cunningham 1988: 137).

Newark's third congregation began in 1860 when Oheb Shalom split away from B'Nai Jeshurun to pursue the traditional form of worship (versus the Reform which was being adopted by many German congregations). Services were held in a home on the west side of Prince Street, until a building could be constructed. The new synagogue, located on the west side of Prince Street, was dedicated on September 14, 1884 (Urquhart 1913: 1010).

As more and more Jewish immigrants settled in Newark, they built synagogues to accommodate their specific needs. Those Jewish immigrants, who settled in neighborhoods away from the existing large synagogues, organized neighborhood synagogues, where they could feel a part of their community. Because they were Orthodox Jews, they also required their synagogue to be within walking distance of

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Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

their homes. Ahavas Sholom was organized in 1905 as a neighborhood synagogue, and services were first held in a wood frame house adjacent to the current building. Local merchants, who had settled along Belleville Avenue, living above their stores, purchased the house as a temporary home until funds could be raised for the construction of a proper building.

Most of the merchants in the area were immigrants from Eastern Europe. In the 1880s, they had fled from oppressive regimes or forced conscription to the Russian army. They found sanctuary in Newark, and settled along Belleville Avenue from Broad Street to Bloomfield Avenue, opening shops selling furniture, household foods, groceries, clothing, produce and meats. They serviced the large Italian community to the north and west as well as their own neighborhood. The merchants also supplied Forest Hill, a wealthy residential section of the North Ward.

Although the immigrants came from diverse places in Eastern Europe, and spoke a variety of languages, they were united by the need for a local synagogue where they could feel comfortable and their needs could be met. The larger city synagogues were well established by this time and had wealthier, more-Americanized, or second, and third generation-American congregants. They were located in the city's Central Ward, where the bulk of the Jewish community resided. Many of these Central Ward congregations were drifting towards, or already practicing, Reform Judaism. The merchants of Belleville Avenue wished to retain their Old World traditions and their Orthodox faith, as well as learning American ways in their own setting. They considered themselves middle class people and felt uncomfortable worshipping with the more established city merchants. Additionally, the geographic distance from the Central Ward synagogues further enhanced their isolation from the established Jewish community, fostering a pioneering spirit in a frontier outpost of the Diaspora.

In the early 20th century, Belleville Avenue was a very well traveled street. As the northern extension of Broad Street, the main downtown street of Newark's Central Business District, Belleville Avenue was serviced by several trolley lines, including one which connected downtown Newark with Forest Hill and Mt. Prospect Cemetery. Belleville Avenue also edged Newark's Little Italy, the largest settlement of Italians in Newark. The area settled by eastern European Jewish immigrants at the turn of the 20th century was located adjacent to the Delaware and Lackawanna train station with a direct connection to New York City. Some of the first Jewish pioneers of the area were Leopold and Ada Jacobson. They settled in the area in the late 1890s, after emigrating from Latvia via Baltimore. Leopold was a cabinetmaker and antique furniture dealer. The Jacobsons chose the area due to its proximity to both New York City and Forest Hill, where many of their customers could be found. Abraham Bienstock and his family came from Germany. He established a home furnishings business on Seventh Avenue, and

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Ahavas Sholom
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

was an especially popular merchant due to his ability to speak German, English, Yiddish, and Italian, particularly useful due to the proximity of Newark's Little Italy. By 1910, both sides of Belleville Avenue were lined with shops owned by eastern European Jewish immigrants.

In 1903, the Jacobsons were blessed with a son, Saul. Unfortunately, there was no synagogue for his bris (ritual circumcision). The Jacobsons invited some of their fellow merchants to their home to form a minyan (ten Jewish adults, required to conduct prayer services), and in 1905, they organized formally as a congregation. The members started social organizations such as the Ladies Auxiliary of Congregation Ahavas Sholom, organized in 1910 by Ada Jacobson, and the Newark Chapter of Hadassah, Forest Hill Group. A mutual aid society was formed to provide medical and burial services for members. The congregation began fund-raising for the purposes of building a synagogue. The children of the congregation bought bricks and some of the wealthier members contributed windows and the cornerstone. In 1918, the congregation incorporated and five years later built a new synagogue at 145 Belleville Avenue. The building was constructed at a cost of \$75,000 and was ready for the Holy Days services of 1923 (*Newark Evening News*, September 8, 1923: 11).

In 1929, Leopold Jacobson heard that a magnificent ark was available from a demolished synagogue in New York City. The ark had been in storage for a number of years and the congregation who owned it was anxious to dispose of it. Although it was given away without cost, Jacobson had to raise \$200 to pay for the cartage fees. Jacobson, who was a master cabinetmaker, moved the ark to Newark, and succeeded in trimming the ark to fit the smaller space of Ahavas Sholom, transforming the synagogue's simple interior and providing a glorious focus for worship services.

During the 1920s through the 1940s, the congregation was very active. The social hall saw children's plays, adult dinner dances and card games. They were rural camping retreats in the summertime. Zionists Sydney Liss and Sadye Gerson campaigned and collected money for the nascent State of Israel. Religious education and Hebrew classes occupied the second floor gallery, and in the evening, English classes were available to new immigrants.

Yet during the time that the congregation was most active, the Jewish out migration from the City of Newark had already begun. The bulk of the Jewish residents resided in the old Third Ward (now the Central Ward). In the 1920s, Jews began moving from the Third Ward to new neighborhoods, first to Clinton Hill, in the City's South Ward, and then to the Weequahic section. As the Jewish merchants of Belleville Avenue increased their wealth and became more Americanized, they too sought the newer, less urban neighborhoods at the perimeter of the City. During the Second World War, the merchants

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found it impossible to find help for their stores. By 1950, many of their original immigrants were in their seventies and began retiring. Many of their children were professionals who had moved away and were not interested in carrying on their parents' businesses. A major blow to the area came with urban renewal in 1953, when the First Ward's Little Italy was demolished. The Newark Housing Authority demolished 46 acres of Little Italy to provide public housing. On June 15, 1952, the *New York Times* labeled the forty-million-dollar urban renewal plan "the largest slum clearance and development project in New Jersey" (Immerso 1998: 140). About 1,300 families were displaced, many of whom shopped on Belleville Avenue. High-rise, low-income towers labeled the Christopher Columbus Homes, replaced the community, which hastened the deterioration of the remaining neighborhood. The final blow came with civil disturbances in 1967.

During this time, except for Ahavas Sholom, all of the Jewish congregations left Newark for the outlying suburbs, or merged with other congregations. Ahavas Sholom went through a very stressful period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the congregation dwindled to a few members. Some members wanted to close the synagogue, while others fought to save it. In the end, the determined efforts of attorney Ben Arons, sisters Bessie Fried and Sadye Gerson, and Sydney Liss, saved the congregation and the building. Today, Ahavas Sholom is "almost thriving" in a city that has almost no trace of Jewish life. The congregation holds services every Saturday morning, from September to June, and celebrates the High Holy Days and the other holidays that require Yisgor prayers for the dead. Individuals throughout New Jersey and elsewhere, some alumni of the synagogue and some with no connection except their interest in its story, donate the money that pays the operating expenses (Steinbaum 1997: 3). Busloads of Jewish and non-Jewish tourists regularly visit the synagogue, thanks to the Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Educational Association, and the Newark Museum.

History of the Ark

The history of the ark parallels the history of the Jewish immigration in the metropolitan area. Originally, the Jewish immigrants in the New York area settled in the poorer, more densely populated areas of the cities such as Newark's Central Ward and New York's Lower East Side. As the immigrants accumulated wealth and became Americanized they moved to more prosperous areas of the cities and eventually to the suburbs. Along with their Americanization, many left their Old World faith and became more progressive in their traditions. Successive generations wanted to break away from the immigrant life of their parents; older synagogues were sold or demolished.

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The ark at Ahavas Sholom began its life as a part of the synagogue of Anshe Chesed, a congregation formerly located at 172 Norfolk Street in New York's Lower East Side. Their original building, which still stands and is today used as an art studio, was built in 1849-1850, and is one of the oldest synagogues in the country. In their break with their immigrant past, the congregation bought land uptown at Lexington Avenue and 63rd Street, where they built a magnificent Victorian Gothic synagogue with a matching ark, seating 1,400 worshippers. Anshe Chesed dedicated the synagogue on September 12th, 1873, with Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of the Reform movement, present at the ceremonies.

In December of 1873, Anshe Chesed and Adas Jeshurun began talks to merge the two congregations. The merged congregations took the name Beth-El, and took formal possession of the synagogue on March 7, 1873.

In 1891, Beth-El moved again, this time to Fifth Avenue and 76th Street, and later merged with Temple Emanu-El. Congregation Rodeph Sholom moved to the original Anshe Chesed synagogue at Lexington Avenue and 63rd Street, leaving behind their 1853 synagogue at 8 Clinton Street in New York.

In October of 1926, Rodeph Sholom vacated Lexington Avenue synagogue, temporarily holding services in the Mecca Temple at 130 W. 56th Street while its new uptown sanctuary on Central Park West and 83rd Street was being built. The Lexington Avenue synagogue was sold to Peerless Realty Corp for \$770,000 and was demolished. The ark, pews, chairs and other furnishings were put in storage at Manhattan Storage Warehouse, Seventh Avenue and 52nd Street, for possible use in their new synagogue. On December 4, 1927, Rodeph Sholom's Board of Trustees voted to dispose of all woodwork being held in storage, except for the ark and the four large pulpit chairs. The following year, heated debates ensued over the architect's plans, none of which included the old ark. Their new synagogue was going to be a complete break from their past, and the trustees looked for a way to dispose of the ark. The Rodeph Sholom Board of Trustees voted to give the ark, gratis, to Congregation Ahavas Sholom in Newark. (*New York Times*, July 3, 1872: 3; September 13, 1873: 5; March 8, 1874: 5; Rodeph Sholom minutes, 1929).

In his study of nineteenth century Jewish infrastructure remaining in the United States, Mark Gordon identifies seventeen buildings originally built as synagogues before 1873. Approximately two-thirds of these buildings have relatively intact arks. Additionally other arks have been saved from buildings before they were demolished. Mr. Gordon hypothesizes that Ahavas Sholom has one of the fifty oldest arks in the United States.