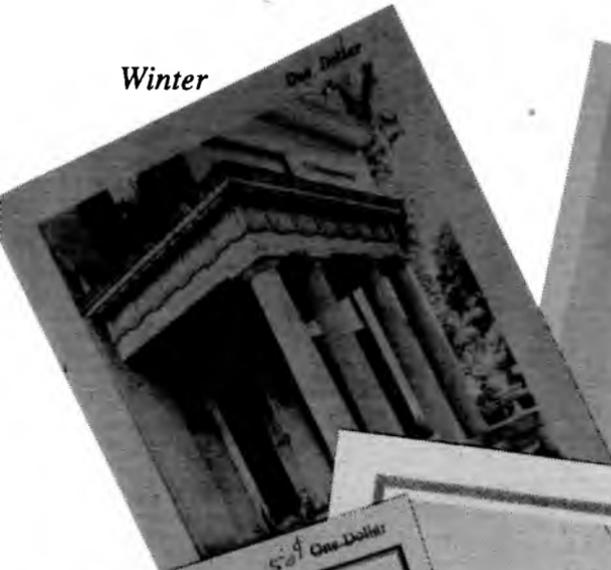


Winter

One Dollar



*Three Dollars
1994*

One Dollar



Two Dollars



One Dollar



Spring/Summer

1983

**THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY**
Of Architecture & Preservation

HUNTSVILLE
ALABAMA

Spring

**THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY**
Of Local Architecture & Preservation

1979

INDEX ISSUE

**THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY**
Of Local Architecture & Preservation

HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION
Founded 1974

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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE

QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation

Vol. XX, No. 4

Winter — 1994

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From the President:

As we start this new year, we can look back on 1994 as a very busy year for the Foundation. The last event which was held, the membership tea at Greenlawn, was very successful. Thanks to Carol Harless and Mary Alice Coulter, who so skillfully chaired this event, and to the Heeschen family, who so graciously opened their beautifully restored home for the tea. The weather cooperated wonderfully and the food was fabulous! Thanks to all who assisted in any way. If you have not yet paid your membership dues for 1995, please send them in as soon as possible so that you will continue to receive your publications and other Foundation materials.

A very special thanks to Elise Stephens, she has been doing such a wonderful job editing this *Quarterly*. We truly appreciate your efforts, Elise!

Remember that this is **your** organization. Please be an active participant in the Foundation's activities. All it takes is a phone call to 539-8737. I'll be waiting for your calls!

Very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Suzanne O'Connor". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

Chairman

From the Editor:

This 20th volume, number 4 is the *Quarterly's* Index Issue—its first. Members keeping old issues will find the index a handy reminder and guide to the rich array of informative articles available to them through their membership over the years.

We close this anniversary year also, with the celebration of the wonderful renovation of the sanctuary building of the Congregation B'nai Sholom. "Dedication" is the word that best describes the work of the Renovation Committee. Thanks go out especially to Alfred Ritter, Revelle Gwyn, Sol Miller and Henry Marks. Harvie Jones' eloquent article truly reflects the beauty of the renovated building. Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw's loving tribute to her great-grandfather; Isaac Schiffman, the chairman of the original building committee, is testimony to one man's service and contributions to this and the broader community and to the brotherhood of all mankind.



The Centennial Renovation

Revelle S. Gwyn

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 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.

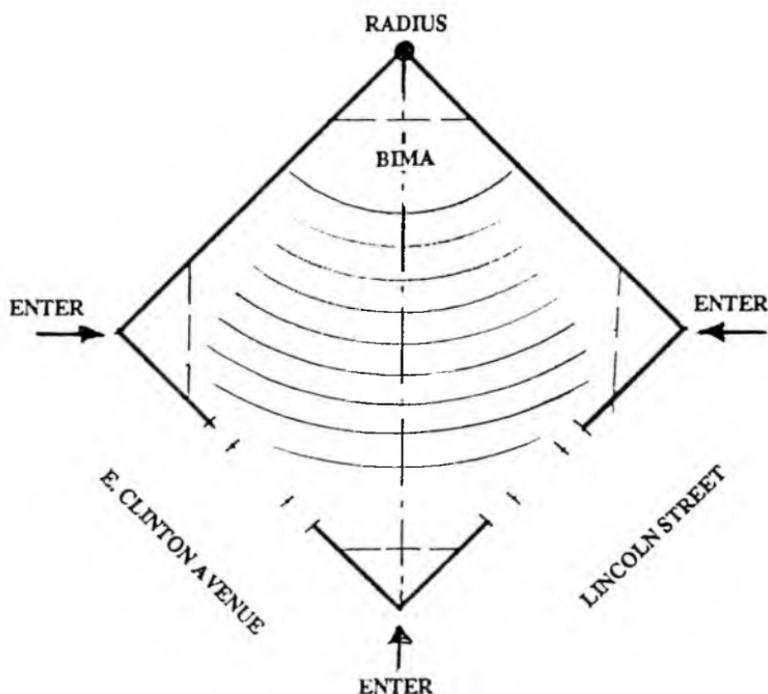
The original rabbi's study on the northeast corner of the sanctuary building has become our Founders' Room, a place for memorials and other items which evidence the life of our Congregation since its founding in 1876. The mantel in the Founders' Room originally surrounded the fireplace (now covered)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

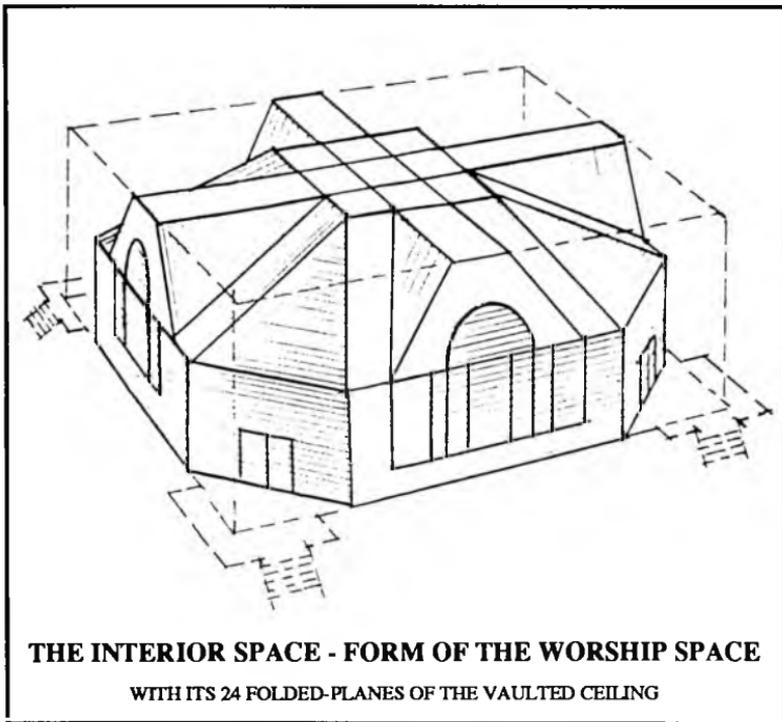
The Architecture of the 1899 Temple B'nai Sholom

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



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.

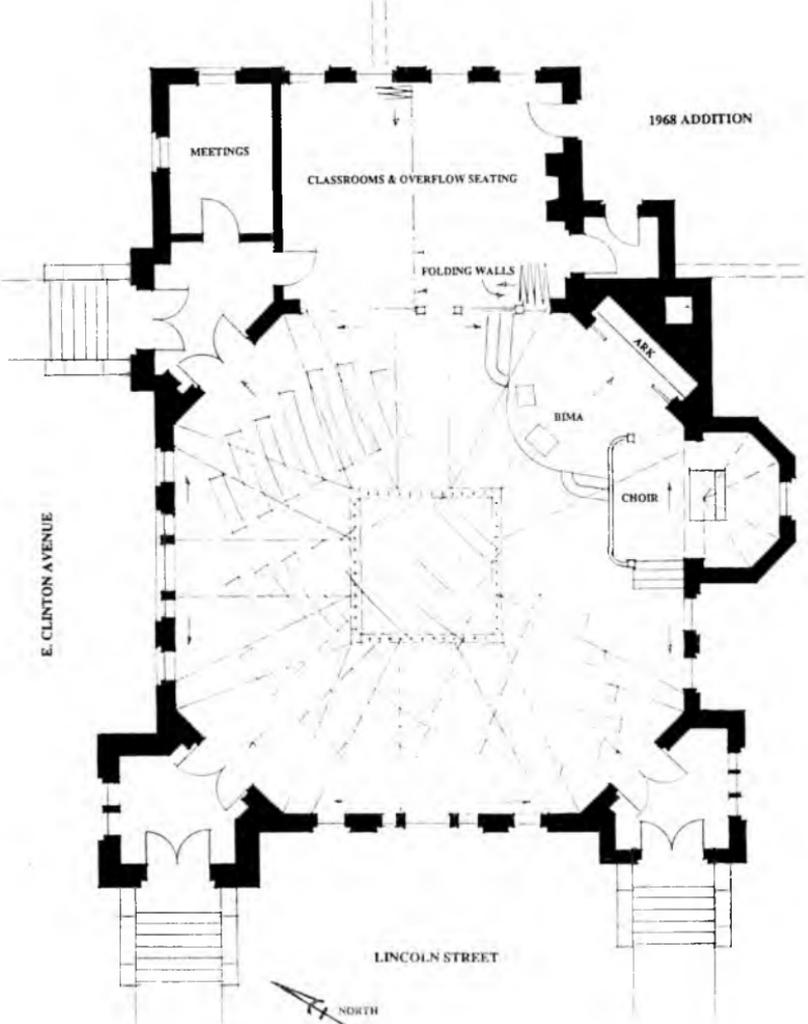
Symmetrically flanking the 45 degree central axis of the worship space are two very large stained glass windows, each about 25 feet wide, positioned so that they throw light toward the bima and not in the eyes of the worshipers. This placement avoids an error frequently seen where windows are placed 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

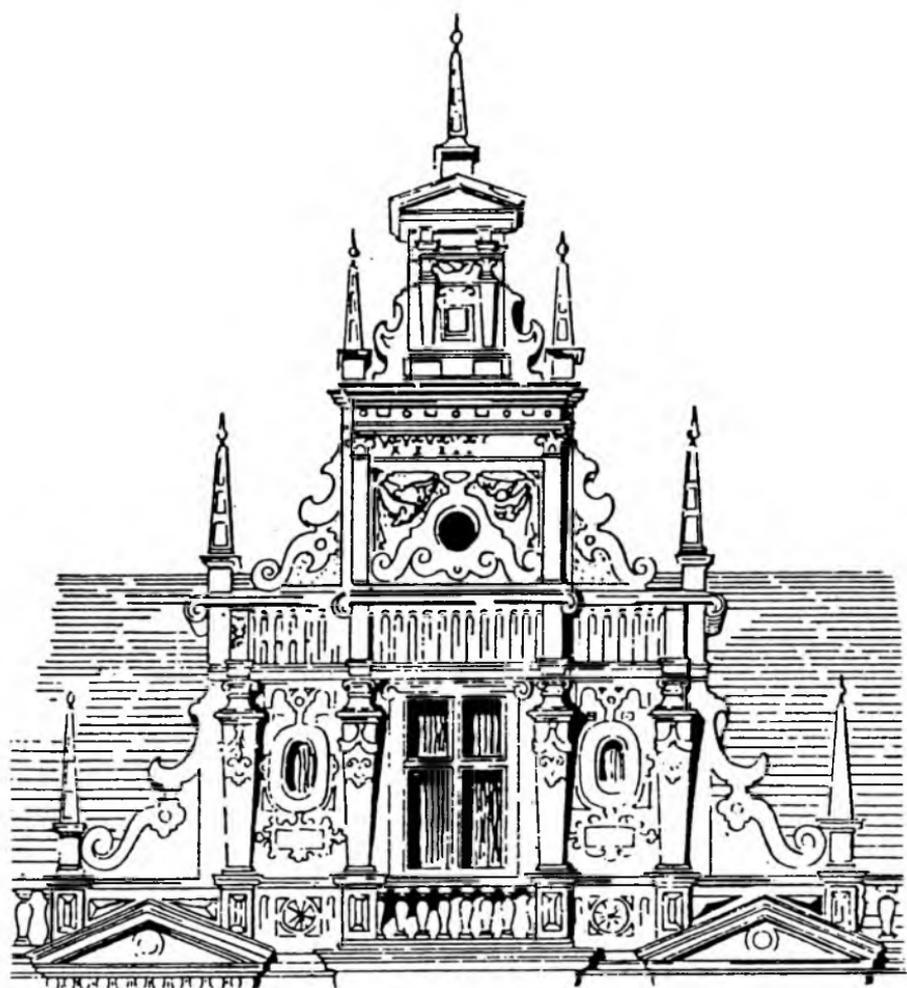
has already outlasted about 6 asphalt-shingle roofs and will probably outlast 6 more. This is a good example of the adage that the cheapest materials is the highest-quality material. The numerous 1899 galvanized metal finials, which had gone beyond the point of being able to be patched anymore, were 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 Sholom 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.

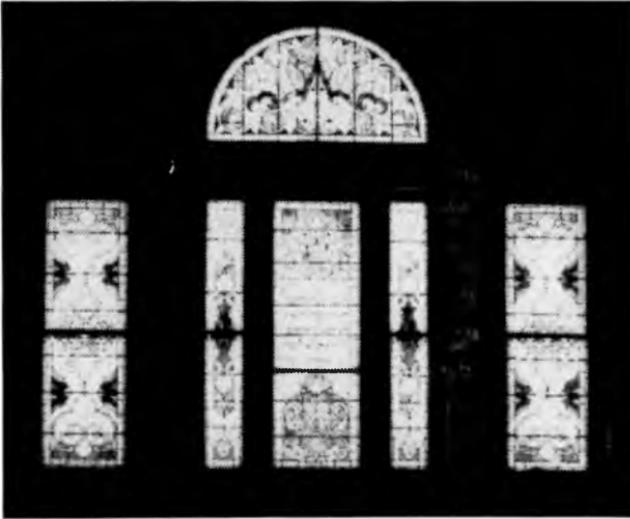


Photo 6: West stained-glass window. The swirling curvilinear patterns reflect the influence of the Baroque (16th and 17th century) period of architecture, typically of glass of the late-Victorian period.

Extracts Contributed from

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, our Board of Trustees, 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 use again 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, she-hecheyanu, 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

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[eeets 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 following 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 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?

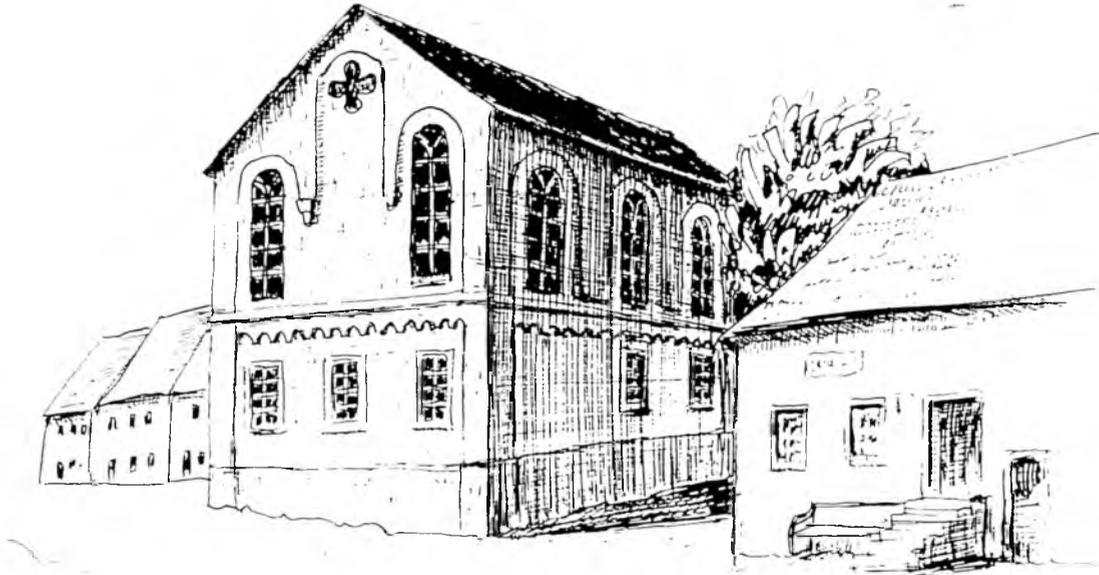
The prominent Chattanooga architect R.H. Hunt (1862-1937) designed scores of churches, hotels, schools, public buildings, and businesses throughout the South. He published a list of references in 1907 which includes, among well over fifty other houses of worship, the "Jewish Synagogue, Huntsville, Ala." 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."

Founders of Congregation B'nai Sholom-1876

B.W. Wise, President	J. Weil, Vice-President
Daniel Wise, Sec'y	Simon Katz, Treasurer
Adolph Adler	F. Lang
H. Adler	N. Newman
Isaac Adler	S.J. Schaumack
Henry Barnard	Solomon Schiffman
Philip Berg	Daniel Schiffman
Morris Bernstein	Isaac Schiffman
Simon Emrich	Philip Schwartz
B. Frankfeld	David Tschopik
Nathan Herstein	Herman Weil
Robert Herstein	Herman Weil, Jr.
S. Herz	Isidor Weil
Joseph Klaus	Abe W. Wise
Max Krauz	Meyer B. Wise
Max Laudauer	Herman Wind

Presidents of Temple B'nai Sholom

1876-1880	B.W. Wise	1956-1958	L.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.
1893-1989	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		



Jewish school in Hoppenstaden, Germany, built with funds donated by Isaac Schiffman.

The Spirits of My Ancestors Are in Loving Hands

Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw
(Shares her 1994 trip to Hoppstadten Germany, the
ancestral home of the Schiffman family of Huntsville)

Thank you for the amulet you had made for me, it is wonderful and a great surprise. It must have been telepathic that you sensed that I would like the three pines as a motif. When I wear the amulet I think of you and Bobbie for it is a beautiful symbol and sign of our spontaneous and wonderful friendship. The fossilized ivory from which it was carved too is meaningful to me in that it belonged to a creature that lived on a different continent long ago. Your ancestors lived many years ago on a different continent, ancestors with whom you are now better acquainted.

Margaret Anne, the more I learn about your religious, cultural and social background, the more I am realizing how fatal it can be not to know or to ignore other peoples' backgrounds. One can avoid many misunderstandings and conflicts by knowing and accepting other people's wants and opinions. That's why it feels so good to be able to talk to you, to share our experiences and to feel that we understand each other.

The above are excerpts from a letter to me from Lissy Bamback written six months after I met her in Hoppstadten, Germany, birthplace of Isaac Schiffman, my great-grandfather. It is also the train stop from where all my Schiffman relatives who did not escape to America were deported to Auschwitz during the War.

Early last summer my daughter, Bobbie, and I traveled through Germany, visiting cemeteries, museums and former sites of Jewish presence including the villages and towns where our ancestors once lived. Although no remaining family survived the War,

we sensed the presence of their spirits which seemed to guide us. It was in Hoppstadten, home of the Schiffmans, where we made our strongest connection with our roots and our past.

On a warm July morning we took the train from Frankfurt and traveled southwest through the rolling hills of wine growing countryside to the village of Hoppstadten, a town of two thousand located near the River Nehe Nehe. It was noon when we arrived, lunch time, and all the stores were closed. Luckily, the door to one shop was open and we went in to ask for the location of the Jewish cemetery in a mixture of few words and sign language since the proprietor did not speak English. He said, "Moment," while he phoned his daughter. Within five minutes a lovely young woman appeared on her bicycle and greeted us with a warm "Hello," followed by an offer to be our guide for the day.

As we strolled up a hillside on the edge of town, Lissy chatted away as though we were old friends. She told us how she often goes to the Jewish cemetery to pick hazelnuts and to sit and think about the fact that there are no Jews left in Hoppstadten to visit the graves. It makes her sad, she said, so she visits them. Through her visits Lissy has developed a connection to and a sense of guardianship for the spirits of the past. When we reached the hilltop, Lissy pointed out three pine trees which, like three sentinels, guard the gates of the cemetery. The gate was locked, but Lissy showed us a place where we could slip through the wooden fence. The old gravestones, made of local rock, are weathered and many have lost the metal plaques identifying the graves. However, we easily found the brown marble headstone of great-great-grandmother Caroline Schiffman, the largest gravestone in the cemetery, purchased undoubtedly by Isaac for his mother. We did not find great-great-grandfather Gustav's grave; however, near Caroline's marker we did find Lob Schiffman's grave, my great-great-great-grandfather. The children of Joseph, Isaac's brother, all came to America during the thirties. There are no graves for the children of Isaac's sister Johanna. My grandfather helped one child escape to America, another escaped to Israel, the others died in deathcamps.

Just outside the fenced "1870-1937" section of the cemetery is a much older section hidden in the woods that dates back to the

sixteen hundreds when Jewish settlers first came to the village. Nature is reclaiming this part of the cemetery with many of the headstones broken, half buried, and covered with moss. We sat there in the shade sharing our bread and cheese while I told Lissy about my Schiffman ancestors and what I knew about my great-grandfather Isaac.

Isaac Schiffman came to Huntsville, Alabama, from Hoppstadtten, Germany, in 1875 to work for his uncles, Solomon and Daniel Schiffman, who had come from Hoppstadtten to America in 1857. They settled in Huntsville sometime before the Civil War. Solomon and Daniel had a dry goods and clothing store on the north side of the Square, identified today by the municipal numbers 117-119. Perhaps young Isaac asked to join his uncles. They probably needed him to help in the store. Whatever the reason, young Isaac joined his uncles in 1875 and went to work for them in their mercantile business. In 1885, Isaac married Bettie Herstein, the eldest daughter of Robert and Rosa Herstein. Robert Herstein had immigrated to Huntsville from Germany before the Civil War and married Rosa Blemline of Baltimore. Isaac and Bettie had three children, Annie, my grandmother, Irma and Bob. After his uncles died, Isaac remained in the mercantile business until 1905, at which time he became engaged in the investment and cotton business. In 1908, his son Robert and his son-in-law, my grandfather, Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr., joined him in business and a partnership was formed. In 1905, Isaac bought the wonderful limestone faced building on the Southeast corner of the East side of the Square that today bears his name on the facade, to house his growing business interests. Isaac died from diabetes in 1910, relatively young; for during those days there was no treatment for that condition.

The other facts I knew and shared with Lissy about Isaac were that he was chairman of the building committee for Temple B'nai Sholom constructed in 1899, and I knew too that Isaac had returned to Hoppstadtten around 1900 with his family for a visit. By then he had become a successful businessman. On the occasion of that visit, I had been told that Isaac had given the village of Hoppstadtten funds to build a water system. Later he sent funds to the Jewish community for a school building. During his visit Isaac granted each of his nieces and nephews a request or gift. One neph-

ew, Leo, asked to come to America. Isaac granted his request and Leo lived with his aunt and uncle until adulthood.

Until that July day in Hoppstadten, surrounded by family graves dating back to the sixteen hundreds and talking to my new friend Lissy Bamback, this was all that I knew about the handsome, elegantly dressed middle-aged man with graying brown hair, kindly eyes, whose portrait hangs in the front office of the I. Schiffman Building. I knew that he had religious training for I have his certificate of confirmation from the synagogue in Hoppstadten, which marks the completion of his religious education. I told Lissy that I have often wondered about the influences during his young life that molded his character and led during his adult life to his philanthropy and generosity toward his family and his communities, both Hoppstadten and Huntsville.

We returned to Lissy's home where she made several telephone calls. The calls led to two visits to Hoppstadten residents. First we went to see Lissy's 80 year-old great-aunt Luzia, whose childhood home was next door to Leo Schiffman's family, all of whom Cousin Leo brought to America during the 1930's.

Luzia's recollections of the Schiffman family were that her mother would exchange eggs for motza with Leo's mother, Lina, during Passover. I realized the family undoubtedly was observant and traditions were followed even though it must have been difficult to get motza in this small village away from the mainstream of Jewish life in the cities. Luzia also recalled that when Lissy's father was baptized, the rabbi at the synagogue down the street was praying so loud that his prayers could be heard along with the priest's. She added that Hoppstadten was actually the center of Jewish life for the surrounding towns because of the synagogue. She remarked that the mayor insisted that the entire community, both Jewish and Catholic, sweep and clean the streets just before the sabbath out of respect for the out-of-town people who would come to town for services. Of course, Aunt Luzia was curious about us and so we answered her questions with the help of Lissy who did our translating. Before we left Aunt Luzia gave us big hugs and a wonderful box of chocolates. We gave her our promise to return to Hoppstadten.

We then visited Mr. Karl Rumpel, an engineer by profession, who moved to Hoppstadten during the 1950's. Mr. Rumpel, a Catholic, is fascinated by the Hoppstadten Jewish community's history and has been researching the history of that community since his move to the town. We wondered what precipitated his interest. Mr. Rumpel explained that when he moved to Hoppstadten it was just after the last Jewish resident had died, a woman the town was able to save from the Nazis because she was married to a non-Jew. Mr. Rumpel was intrigued by the town's sense of loss, as if with Fannie Loc's death the village residents were reacting as though an entire community had been lost. Mr. Rumpel then began to research the Jewish community's history and today his bookshelves and files house a store of information sufficient to write a book, a project he hopes to achieve after he retires.

According to Mr. Rumpel, Jewish settlers first came to Hoppstadten during the sixteen hundreds. As boundaries shifted through the years, Hoppstadten, once part of France, became German. Through the centuries France's treatment of its Jewish community was more hospitable than Germany's, and even after Hoppstadten became part of Germany, that hospitality was continued by the local authorities so that Jews were allowed to farm and have stores when their co-religionists in nearby Frankfurt were living in ghettos. This was the reason that Hoppstadten, although a small town, had a proportionately high percentage of Jewish residents. In fact, the synagogue for the entire Burkenfeld region was located in Hoppstadten and remains there today, used now as an apartment house. I asked Mr. Rumpel how it had escaped destruction during Crystal Night, when synagogues were destroyed all over Germany. He said that the local non-Jewish community persuaded the Nazis to only break the windows and not burn the building.

Mr. Rumpel shared with us records of our family, when members emigrated to America, and also articles he had found about Isaac Schiffman. We learned that when Isaac returned to Hoppstadten around the turn of the century, the community had asked for his help to build a water system which he generously funded. During 1910, we learned from Mr. Rumpel that the German government forbade Jewish children from going to school with the Christian community. The Jewish community had no funds for

a building and according to Mr. Rumpel's research, the elders wrote, "to Isaac Schiffman, a successful businessman in America to ask for funds to build a Jewish school." Isaac sent the money, apparently just before he died, while he was quite sick. Now I began to better understand the influences that had molded the character of young Isaac and led to his accepting the responsibility to act as chairman of the building committee for Temple B'nai Sholom as well as his generosity towards family and community. These influences included having been surrounded by the sensitive caring larger community of Hoppstadten with tolerance for its co-religionists plus the exposure to religious devotion both within Isaac's family and within the local Hoppstadten Jewish community.

Today Mr. Rumpel lives by design three doors from the old synagogue. He feels a personal custodianship for the building. In fact, he had a local artist make an ink sketch of the synagogue as it once was, a copy of that original drawing he gave us when we said goodbye. He is proudest of the plaque that was recently presented to him by the regional Jewish community for his research and his commitment to the history of the Jewish community of Hoppstadten. The plaque indicates that a grove of trees were planted in Mr. Rumpel's honor in a forest in Israel, a country he hopes to visit one day after he has published his book on the Hoppstadten Jewish community.

Lissy then took us home for a late dinner with her family and showered us with wine and cakes for the long train ride back to Frankfurt. As we embraced and said good-bye at the train stop, I asked Lissy how I would find the Jewish cemetery if I returned to Hoppstadten and she no longer lived there. She smiled and pointed to the hill and said, "just look for the three pine trees."

The following is an excerpt from a letter I recently wrote to Lissy. It expresses what I feel and what the experiences of my trip to Hoppstadten meant to me.

I received your loving letter and am happy to hear that you are pleased with the amulet with the three pine motif that I had made for you. At the time I first spoke to the artist, I thought of the symbolism of the

pine trees which mark the physical spot where you, our guide and our friend, joined Bobbie and me to our past and our roots. Our roots, like the roots of the three pines, give meaning to our lives and support us. Now you have embellished that image with still another metaphor—that of the fossilized ivory, the material from which the amulet is carved. In your last letter, you called my attention to the fact that the ivory belonged to a creature that lived on another continent, long ago. Similarly, in a symbolic way, you have brought Bobbie and me close to the lives of the people who are our ancestors who lived long ago on another continent. We have met your aunt who knew them and has shared stories with us of their lives. Mr. Rumpel knows and has shared with us their personal history and the history of their community. Through this process our Schiffman ancestors have become more vivid and alive than ever before and for this I thank you. Lissy, most importantly I am comforted now, that although there are no family members left in Hoppstadten to visit the cemetery, that the spirits of my ancestors hovering on a hillside on the edge of town guarded by three pines are in the loving hands of my friends.

From the Files of Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw

March 13, 1895

“The Specifications for the Building and Loan Offices Received” The front on the Square will be built of stone, splendidly arched over the vestibuled entrance and the large window opening into the President’s office which will be in front. The Eustis Street side of the building will not be changed very much except four windows will be cut for the lower floor and stone casements will be placed in the others. The building will be a credit to the Association and an ornament to the East Side Square. The interior finish and furnishings will be the prettiest and most serviceable that can be purchased.

April 5, 1901

Isaac Schiffman acquired from J. Henry Landman and family Lot #52 beginning at the south side of the open alley and leading from Madison to Franklin as laid down in the Hartley Drayton map including the Landman & Co. warehouse.

According to an advertisement in our files dated 7/15/01 and a picture of a #750 American Beauty End-Spring Buggy, Isaac, still operating under the name of S. Schiffman & Co., advertised a new department added to his business operation "consisting of buggies, scurries, carriages of all kinds, wagons and harnesses to be shown at his warehouse on Franklin Street."

February 26, 1904

Isaac acquired from William J. Pulley & Co., of New York their warehouse located on Lot #51 adjacent to Lot #52, the property extended from Madison to Franklin. The Pulley Co. had been engaged in hardware business including wagons, buggies, and farm implements.

After Isaac's death, the family business then known as I. Schiffman Co., continued in the buggy business until the early teens, at which time a showroom and car repair shop were built for transition to the automobile business. During the 1960's, the automobile business was discontinued and the property rented for a drugstore and later a theater. The back lot was rented for parking. On August 28, 1967, the Housing Authority acquired the property by eminent domain for the construction of Constitution Hall Village.

September 30, 1905

The Southern Building and Loan Association (S.B.& L.A.) building located on the East Court Square was purchased for \$9,000. Some furnishings, such as the upright desk, predate 1895, when the building was sold to S.B. & L.A.



Isaac Schiffman—Born 1856, Hoppenstadten, Germany; Emmigrated to America, 1873; Died June 12, 1910, Huntsville, Alabama.



Solomon Schiffman



Schiffman Building, East Side Square



Interior views of the I Schiffman Building, South Side Square
(c. 1990).





Further interior views of the I. Schiffman Building, South Side Square (c. 1990).





Franklin Street, Constitution Hall location as seen in 1819.



Old S. Schiffman & Co. Store, Huntsville, Alabama (about 1893). Persons identifiable are: Solomon Schiffman (1), Israel Schiffman (2), Leon Lehman (3), Ike Schiffman (4), Bob-Lee Schiffman (5), small boy, Sam Weil (6), Will Falk (8), Albert Jacoby (9), Sam L. Garner (10), Jessie C. Va.... (11), and John F. Smith (12)

In Retrospect from Redication

Henry Marks, update by Sol Miller

(This is 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.

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 antebellum 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. 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 member 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 dur-

ing 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 populations 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 biweekly 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

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