

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Jewish Synagogue Thematic Resources

and/or common

2. Location

street & number See individual structure/site forms \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

3. Classification See individual structure/site forms for more detailed information

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

4. Owner of Property

name See individual structure/site forms

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Weber County Building; Salt Lake City and County Building

street & number 2541 Washington Boulevard; 400 South State Street

city, town Ogden; Salt Lake City \_\_\_\_\_ state Utah

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Central/Southern Survey of Salt Lake City (Salt Lake City buildings only)  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983 \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records Salt Lake City Planning Department and Utah State Historical Society

city, town Salt Lake City \_\_\_\_\_ state Utah

## 7. Description See structure/site forms for more detailed information

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jewish Synagogue Thematic Resources nomination includes four buildings, one of which, the B'nai Israel Synagogue in Salt Lake City, is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1978). The other three buildings are the B'rith Sholem Synagogue in Ogden, the Congregation Monte-fiore Synagogue, and the Sharey Tzedek Synagogue, both of which are in Salt Lake City.

Of the five synagogues built in Utah between 1883 and 1921 there is in all but one structure a very pervasive architectural similarity. B'nai Israel Synagogue, built in 1891, is really the result of both foreign and domestic stylistic trends and does not belong to the regional vernacular of which the others derived. Before examining how these structures are similar it might be worthwhile to illustrate, briefly, the architectural evolution of the synagogue from ancient times to the mid-nineteenth century.

Synagogue is a Greek word in origin meaning assembly. Historically its development has been traced to the period of the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.) when Jews deprived of temple assembly on the Sabbath would assemble nonetheless to discuss affairs. Leopold Low, the scholar of Judeaica has reasoned its development to be an outgrowth of political life. With the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., the synagogue took on even more importance to Jews. These early synagogues became multifunctional institutions to the Jewish people among the nations. Many were hospitals, inns for travelers, schools, religious courtrooms, and community social halls. The development of the synagogue, the sanctity of which does not derive from its location, structure or furnishing, reflected the understanding of the Jewish people that God did not dwell in a particular place but that he dwells everywhere. According to one critic the temple in ancient times was the house of the Lord but the modern and historic synagogue is the house of God's congregants.<sup>1</sup> Thus the synagogue became portable, readily established anywhere, a place of study, a place to pass on laws, customs and learnings during the Diaspora.

The second commandment forbid the making of graven images (Exodus 20:4 - Deuteronomy 5:8), consequently there is an absence of visual representations of God in synagogues. The sages and scholars felt time should be spent studying the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) for truly worthy intellects. Much has been written on this subject, but all agree that theology had played a central part in thwarting synagogue art.<sup>2</sup> The reading of the Torah scrolls, central to the Sabbath services, is done at the Bihma. The scrolls are stored between readings in the ark, The Ark of the Covenant of Children of Israel. In front of the ark is the 'Ner Talmid', the Eternal Light, a reference to the lamp in the second temple. Until the eighteenth century the Bihma and ark bore no relation to one another. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some Italian synagogues had arks located opposite the Bihmas. More typically, the Torah reader would stand in or near the center of the sanctuary with the ark recessed within the front or back wall. It was the Reform Movement of the early nineteenth century that introduced the now standard practice of placing the Bihma in front of the ark along the eastern wall, so the reader would face all of the congregants. The 'Hazzan' or cantor of today's Utah synagogue has pointed out how such a spatial alteration succeeded in making the interior of a synagogue more similar to the interior of a Protestant church.<sup>3</sup> Certainly assimilation was an inevitable result

## 8. Significance See individual structure/site forms for more detailed information

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1891-1921 Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The four synagogues included in the Jewish Synagogue Thematic Resources nomination are significant as the center of Jewish religious activities in both Utah and the Intermountain West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jewish settlers first came to Utah in 1854, but it was not until 1883 that a synagogue (now demolished) was erected in Salt Lake City and formal worship services were conducted. Four other synagogues were built between 1891 and 1921 in Utah's two major cities, Ogden and Salt Lake City. While other congregations were formed beyond Utah's borders, such as in Boise, Idaho, regular Sabbath and festival observance led by full-time rabbis has been characteristic only of Utah's synagogues. Established primarily as a result of internal conflict, the various synagogues in Utah illustrate the marked diversity within the local Jewish community, which, both then and now, has been perceived by outsiders as a unified, homogenous group in matters of religious practice and behavior. The major differences were between the German speaking and Eastern European immigrants, and between the Orthodox, Reform and, in this century, the Conservative movements. The synagogues, two of which were constructed with the aid of Mormon church funds, are also obvious examples of the religious pluralism, however limited, that existed at that time in Utah, which has traditionally been too narrowly described as a Mormon monotheocracy. In addition to their historical significance, the B'nai Israel Temple and the Congregation Montefiore Synagogue are architecturally significant as well.

In July of 1847 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) entered the Salt Lake Valley to claim the Great Basin area as a home and refuge from years of religious persecution. Among the leaders of the Church, Apostle Orson Pratt and member of the Council of the Seventy, Alexander Niebaur, were themselves of Jewish descent.<sup>1</sup> Julius Gerson Brooks and his wife Fanny have, however, been long recognized as the first permanent Jewish residents of Salt Lake City and Utah, coming first in 1854. (A reminder of their presence is the Brooks Arcade building in Salt Lake City, listed on the National Register in 1982). After a few years the Brooks left only to return in 1865 from the west coast. By that point there were four Jewish families and several young Jewish bachelors.<sup>2</sup> Most of these individuals were employed in commerce or trade, taking advantage of the presence of both Col. Patick E. Connor's army contingent at Fort Douglas and the attendant needs of the growing mining enterprises. Indeed, many had been previously involved in mining or mining related activities in California and Nevada. While unmarried, many of these pioneer Jews were not without family, since many were related, such as the Watters brothers, the Auerbach brothers and the Topper brothers.<sup>3</sup> Some of these Jews were actively involved in the



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of both the growing social status of Jews during the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment. Most of Utah's synagogues exhibit Bihmas directly in front of the arks.

Sharey Tzedek was the exception to this rule, for its Bihma stands in the middle of the sanctuary. Sharey Tzedek and B'rith Shalom have arks which project from the exterior eastern walls and are polygonal or semi-circular in plan, much like a bay or oriel.

More importantly, all the synagogues contained in this nomination, including the early B'nai Israel, share a common form and plan. Both are extremely simple. All four were constructed as masonry (brick) structures with the gable ends facing the street. The north and south walls were constructed with regularly spaced pilasters between windows. The pilasters are structural devices employed to brace the broad expanses of masonry. Their visual effect was probably only a secondary concern to congregations which had difficulty raising funds for their edifices. Any similarity to church architecture of the period is probably not intentional, but rather, the result of contractors' and builders' familiarity with local Christian designs. The plans of the four synagogues being nominated here share a directness and openness reflective of the three purposes of the Jewish house of worship, prayer, study and assembly. Montefiore has a decidedly theatrical appearance in a Moorish Revival Style, but ultimately, like the first B'nai Israel before it and B'rith Shalom and Sharey Tzedek after it, is a rectangular masonry load bearing structure with its gable end facing the street.

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- 1 Grace Freeman, Inside the Synagogue, (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, n.d.), p. 3.
  - 2 Ibid., p. 3.
  - 3 Lawrence Loeb, Conversation with the Phillip Neuberger, 2/2/85, at the Congregation Kol Ami.

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establishment of the Young Men's Literary Association which in turn built the first non-Mormon church in Utah, Independence Hall. It was constructed in 1865 between Main and West Temple on Third South Street. Although it was a part-time Congregational church, it was here too that many Jewish holidays<sup>4</sup> and festivals were celebrated before the construction of Utah's first synagogue or temple in 1883. Observance of Jewish holidays and festivals, of which the weekly Sabbath or "Shabbat" is central, was often prevented in nineteenth-century western America by the sheer lack of Jews in any given community. Group prayer cannot take place without a "minyan," or ten adult males. By 1866 in Salt Lake City there was a minyan and consequently the first holiday services to mark the ten-day period of penitence defined each autumn by the Jewish New Year, "Rosh Hashonah" and the day of Atonement, "Yom Kippur" were celebrated by Utah Jewry in a commercial building on South Main Street called Daft's Block,<sup>5</sup> now demolished. The president of the Mormon church, Brigham Young, offered space on Temple Square in the Hall of the Seventies to Utah's Jews for the 1867 and 1868 High Holidays. Not only was this a unique act of fraternal hospitality not afforded other so called Gentile groups in the State of Deseret, but it was particularly charitable given the fact that many Jews and other non-Mormon businessmen had recently sent a petition to Young decrying his new policy of instructing Mormons to shop only at Mormon owned institutions. This was the period which saw the establishment of the Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institute, a church operated general store designed to keep Mormon money in Mormon hands. The very seriously adverse affect this had upon Gentile businesses prompted many, including Jews, to leave Utah altogether. In Utah Gentile has come to mean any non-Mormon.

Still the special esteem Young reserved for his Jewish merchant friends is further revealed by his purchase of the Ransohoff Store for the ZCMI Drugstore. In fact, it was Brigham Young who gave the Jews a Hebrew burial ground within the City Cemetery in 1866.

With the coming of the railroad in 1869 and the economic downturn many non-Mormon businesses experienced as a result of the ZCMI movement, some Jews left Salt Lake City for Corrine, where a lively, if brief, Gentile center developed. Undoubtedly it is from these beginnings that some of Ogden's Jewry traces its lineage.

By 1874 in Salt Lake City the first congregation of Jews in the Intermountain West was formed under the name B'nai Israel. The name means "Children of Israel." They had no rabbi but I. Watters or M.C. Phillips, two of the founding congregants, would lead the assembled in the role of cantor.

The vast majority of Utah's Jewry were of German speaking origin. This was typical of early nineteenth century American immigration patterns. By the end of the century and into the first decades of the next, however, the Jewish immigrants to American cities were overwhelmingly of Eastern European or Russian descent.

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It was the German Jews or Askenazim who in the late eighteenth and primarily by the mid-nineteenth centuries who were responsible for promulgating the Reform Movement of Judaism. Until this point, being a Jew meant only one way of observance, one way of prayer, strict dietary laws, a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, and strict observance of the Sabbath on Saturday. The Reform Movement seemed to preserve the essence of Judeaica, the belief in one God, but to delete what were considered outmoded customs and procedures, including the laws of Kashrut (Kosher dietary rules), the daily prayer, the covering of heads in synagogues, the recitation of services in Hebrew, and for some, the observance of Sabbath on Saturday. By its supporters the Reform Movement was lauded as a way for Jews to finally get ahead in a Christian world, to compete financially and to live more comfortably. To its detractors it was viewed as nothing short of assimilation, of forgetting God's special promise to his chosen people, of not remaining faithful. In America the center of the Reform Movement was in Cincinnati where Rabbi Isaac Mayer Weiss became its most visible spokesman, establishing the Reform oriented Hebrew Union Theological Institute for Training Reform Rabbis.

Unquestionably Utah's nineteenth century Jews were aware of these developments. Yet while there were in all likelihood differences in approach among them, none of these differences were serious enough to prevent the tiny congregation from raising the necessary energy and funds to construct a synagogue, the first in Utah. This building would stand as an outward symbol of the dedication of the Covenant between God and the Israelites, reformed or not. Consequently, a lot at Third South and First West in Salt Lake City was purchased with the purpose of erecting a Jewish temple. The building was designed by Henry Monheim, an experienced local architect/builder. By Spring 1883 the congregants moved into the one story brick structure which has long since been destroyed. About this time the congregation took a calculated step to become a Reform synagogue by passing a resolution to write Isaac Meyer Wise requesting a rabbinical leader for Utah. Wise recommended Mr. Leo Strauss of Bellville, a recent graduate of the Theological Institute. B'nai Israel's board offered Strauss \$62.50 per month, payable in advance if the congregation was satisfied. Strauss' first and only High Holy Day (New Year and Yom Kippur) services were conducted in 1884. The services were to a much greater extent than before in English and congregants were instructed to pray with their heads uncovered, typical of Reform liturgy. While the Reform aspects were pleasing to a majority of members, several prominent members were irreconcilable to the changes. Later, though still in 1884, Issidore Morris resigned his membership and M. C. Phillips soon followed. By summer 1885 the dissent had left a dwindling number of regular worshipers. Caught in the middle of what appears to have been a very uncomfortable and frustrating experience, Rabbi Strauss left in July, with his contract two months short of being fulfilled. This dissenting group of individuals led by Morris and

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Phillips continued to meet in private homes as a decidedly traditional sect. Not until 1895 did they incorporate as another congregation.

B'nai Israel operated until 1889 at a subsistence level. Funds were so limited that the rooms were rented out to the Congregational Church for Sunday school classes.<sup>6</sup> But in 1889 with an offer of \$20,000 for their property on Third West, the congregation made plans to begin anew as part of the Reform Movement. A young graduate of the Hebrew Union Theological Seminary of Cincinnati, Mr. Heiman J. Elkin, was hired to minister to the congregation and ably assist in the erection of a new synagogue from the sale of the old property. Thus a lot on the Fourth East between Third South and Second South was purchased and in 1891 the Congregation erected their second synagogue in less than a decade. The Auerbach brothers, leading merchants in Salt Lake City, donated the money for the services of their nephew, the German Kaiser's architect, Philip Meyer. A model of the Great Synagogue in Berlin, the building was home to the congregation until 1976 when the two remaining Salt Lake City synagogues merged to form the present Congregation Kol Ami (All of My People). (For a more complete description of B'nai Israel please consult the National Register listing dated November 16, 1978.)

Describing the mentality and sensibility that was part of B'nai Israel, one contemporary scholar has said:

Some whole heartedly embraced the adventure that was early 20th Century America. Their deepest instincts were identified with the inexorable, forward moving spirit of this country. Their rebellion or defiance of traditional Judaism was an act of emotional and intellectual enlightenment. Their very futures depended upon their abilities to slough what they saw of the archaic self-limiting superstitious aspects of Jewish Life.<sup>7</sup>

The beginnings of the Congregation Montefiore near the end of the nineteenth century was part of a larger national reaction to the Reform Movement, and a noted increase is observed in orthodox congregations at the time in major U.S. cities. Curiously, also during this time "almost all German-Jewish congregations that originally were Orthodox joined the Reform Movement."<sup>8</sup> These conditions combined with national trends toward increased Russian and Eastern European immigration by the turn-of-the-century brought greater interest and members to the tradition oriented Jews of Utah.

Congregation Montefiore was established in 1895, and was donated by a congregant. The building was erected in 1903 to the plans of prominent Utah architect Richard Neuhausen. Present at the groundbreaking was LDS Church President Joseph Fielding Smith. Of particular interest is the fact the L.D.S. Church later gave \$2,000 to Montefiore toward defraying construction costs.

Generally speaking Montefiore's congregations were the newly arrived, Yiddish speaking (language of the Shtetl, the Jewish Ghetto), less affluent

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who lived within the central city within walking distance of the synagogue. One contemporary Jewish Utahn who attended both synagogues, but associated himself with B'nai Israel gave the following account:

I was upset at services I went to with my Dad. When I heard Rabbi Krikstein give the sermon in Yiddish--Where was I? I felt left out. Meanwhile back at the Reform Congregation our sanctuary was quiet, well mannered, well-ordered. We had decorum. Montefiore had bedlam. They were spontaneous. They were responsive. They were noisy. And they were walking around in the good old traditional European way. To say that the two groups of Jews in Salt Lake City were not different in the 20's and 30's is really to be insensitive to what was going on.<sup>9</sup>

There were in fact three synagogues in Salt Lake City during this period. Apparently the rather spontaneous and intense nature of Montefiore and probably the gradual waning of truly orthodox behavior for what was coming to be known of as "modern orthodoxy," or today's conservative movement, encouraged several congregants to form yet another Utah congregation.

Founded in 1916, Congregation Sharey Tzedek purchased a lot on Second East between Eighth and Ninth South, in the neighborhood where a good number of the non-German Jews then lived. Construction of the synagogue was begun in 1919 and was entrusted to a local builder named John E. Anderson. It was dedicated the following year in the presence of Utah Governor Simon Bamberger, a member of B'nai Israel. Rabbi Joseph Strinkomsky served the congregation until 1925. The synagogue was constructed so as to reflect orthodox practices of worship where the women were separated from the men in a gallery. Several sources indicate that its limited longevity (the congregation sold the property in 1948 after perhaps more than a decade of inactivity or extremely limited activity) was a direct result of its failure to attract younger members. The very obvious ethnicity inherent in Sharey Tzedek was not considered desirable by the many who had hoped to assimilate into American culture in the twentieth century.

In Ogden, Jews have long existed as merchants and professionals. The Corrine incident of the 1870's and the fact that the railroad brought in many outsiders gave Ogden its decidedly Gentile leanings. Jews in Ogden, while coming to Salt Lake City for many festivals and holidays, began to meet under the name of Ohab Shalom in 1890. Perhaps with the urging of a rabbi present for the first time during the 1917 Holy Days, Ogden's Jewry purchased a lot on Grant Street between 27th and 28th Streets under the name Congregation B'rith Shalom. In 1921 a one-story brick synagogue was erected. The following year the synagogue was incorporated for orthodox worship. It has functioned ever since with a member of the congregation acting as rabbi leading Friday night services. Saturday morning sabbath services are now conducted for all Utah's Jewry at Congregation Kol Ami in Salt Lake City, marking an end to the divisive factionalism that was all too characteristic, while marking the renewal of a unified community of Jewry in Utah.

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Notes

- 1 Leon Lazier Watters, "Some Notes on Early Jews in Utah," Utah Humanities Review, Vol 2: No.1,(January 1948), pp. 1-16.
- 2 Moses P. Jacobson (Rabbi), "Sketch of the Jewish Community in Utah," in World's Fair Ecclesiastical History of Utah (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1893), pp. 301-2.
- 3 Watters, "Notes," pp. 1-16.
- 4 Leon Lazier Watters, The Pioneer Jews of Utah (New York: Jewish Historical Society, 1952).
- 5 Jacobson, "Sketch," p.302.
- 6 Watters, The Pioneer Jews of Utah, pp. 80-81.
- 7 Leslie Kelen, "In Our Time: An evening of personal reminiscences, historical exploration, and discussion by long time Jewish residents of Salt Lake City." The Oral History Institute, University of Utah, 1983.
- 8 Laura Weingarden Rader, Faith & Form Synagogue Architecture in Illinois, (Chicago: Spertus College of Judeaica Press, 1976), p. 15.
- 9 Joel Shapiro, In Our Time(edited by Leslie Kelen).

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Loeb, Lawrence. Interview with Phillip Neuberg, February 2, 1985, Salt Lake City.

Rader, Laura Weingarden. Faith and Form Synagogue Architecture in Illinois.  
Chicago: Spertus College of Judeaica Press, 1976.

Watters, Leon Lazier. "Some Notes on Early Jews in Utah," Utah Humanities Review  
Vol. 2: No. 1 (January 1948).