

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Sons of Israel Synagogue  
other names/site number B' Nai Yisrael Synagogue

### 2. Location

street & number 420 S. William Street  not for publication  
city or town South Bend  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46601

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility: synagogue

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: specialty store

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE: Granite

walls: Brick

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE: Limestone

METAL: Tin

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Sons of Israel Synagogue is an orange brick building constructed in the Romanesque Revival Style with influence of the Polish Brick Gothic Style in 1901. The building fronts William Street south of downtown South Bend. It was constructed in an area once at the heart of the city's Jewish neighborhood and is the city's oldest extant synagogue. The building retains a significant amount of architectural integrity, both inside the building and on its exterior. Today the area around the building has been largely redeveloped with parking west, north, and east of the building and the Coveleski Baseball Stadium is located to its south. William Street terminates immediately south of the synagogue. The building was renovated in 2012 by the owner of the minor league baseball team for use as a team gift shop.

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### Narrative Description

#### *Exterior Description (photographs 0001-0003)*

The Sons of Israel Synagogue is a tall one-and-a-half story gable-front building. The building has a neatly fitted random coursed dressed fieldstone foundation. The building's walls are constructed out of reddish-orange brick in a common bond. The front and back walls have a parapeted gable. The windows are primarily wood lancet windows with a single piece of blue stained glass in the small triangular pane centered at the top of the upper sash except for a piece of red glass in the easternmost window in the south wall. The roof has a 12/12 pitch and is covered with fiberglass shingles installed in 2012. Aluminum gutters and downspouts are located on the building's side (north and south) walls. The brick walls and windows were restored in 2012.

The front façade (photo 0001 and 0002) is formally arranged with only the front doors breaking the façade's otherwise symmetrical design. A concrete sidewalk and handrail is located on the front of the building; steps and a ramp are at the north end of the sidewalk. A modern metal and glass canopy is above the doorway and a pair of light sconces is on each side of the door.

A rusticated limestone water table is located on top of the stone foundation and a rusticated limestone sill course is located at the base of the windows. A smooth limestone cornerstone is located at the north corner of the front façade in the row of blocks that forms the water table; it has 1901 carved into it. The front wall is dominated by three tall full round arched windows. The windows consist of a large square wood bottom window. The bottom window is a new wood window that is divided into three panes of glass. Above the bottom window is a metal panel pressed into a design with four pointed arches. This panel is located at the balcony floor level in the west end of the building. The tops of the large window openings have wood lancet windows; the bottom sash is divided into two panes of glass and the top sash is divided into three panes of glass with two pointed arches. The window openings have a smooth limestone arch hood with limestone corbels at the bases of the arches. Above the corbels is a rusticated limestone belt course that also extends across the façade, interrupted only by the windows. The north window opening has a new wood door and side-lite in the bottom half at the stoop level rather than a square window. The door has two panels in its bottom half and a window in its top half. A short transom window is located above the door.

Square brick tourelles are located on each outside corner of the front façade and frame the base of the gable wall. The bases of the tourelles are corbelled and they terminate at the stone belt course located at the bases of the windows' arches. The tops of the tourelles have steeply pitched pyramidal shaped metal roofs whose surfaces are pressed to form a stepped appearance. A metal Star of David finial is at the top of each tourelle. The gable wall of the front façade has a large stone arch composed of smooth limestone with a rusticated limestone trim band on the outside edge of the smooth stones. Smooth limestone blocks connect the base of the arch and form the building's name block; it has the name of the congregation carved in Hebrew letters. Limestone corbels are located at the base of the arch below the row of stones that creates the name block. Centered in the brick field within the limestone arch is an oculus window with art glass. The window has a surround composed of brick rowlocks. The gable wall has a tall arched brick parapet wall at its center that forms an acroterium. The base of the wall rests on a rectangular field of brick that meets the angled top of the gabled

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parapet wall. The top of the parapet wall has pressed metal coping that follows the acroterium; the coping also creates the base for the tourelles' roofs.

The east (back) façade (photo 0003) of the building has three arched openings into the basement. They have been filled in with stones. A single story shallow rectangular projection was once centered on the façade; this was the "ark" for storing the tablets. It had a concrete foundation, brick walls, and a low sloped hipped roof. It was removed in 2012 and the opening was filled in with bricks. The back wall has four windows that are tall, narrow full round arched wood lancet windows with rusticated limestone sills and three courses of brick rowlocks that compose the arches over each window. The windows have a bottom sash divided into two panes of glass and a top sash divided into three panes of glass with two pointed arches. Brick corbels are located at the tops of the outside corners and face north and south; they form the base of the gabled parapet wall. The gable wall of the east façade is unadorned and has no windows. Metal flashing covers the top of the parapet wall.

The north wall (photo 0003) of the building has an arched basement opening at its east end; it has been filled in with stones. There are four wood windows on the north façade. The three easternmost windows are identical; the westernmost window is located near the center of the north façade. The windows are tall and narrow with full round arched wood lancet windows. They have rusticated limestone sills and brick arch hoods composed of three courses of rowlocks; the bases of the arches rest on brick corbels. The windows have a bottom sash divided into two panes of glass and a top sash divided into three panes of glass with two pointed arches. The fourth window was modified c. 1955; it is located west of the center of the façade and has a brick arch hood matching the tops of the other windows on this façade. However, the upper portion of this opening has been filled in with brick and the lower portion of the opening has a 1/1 rectangular wood window. The window has a rusticated limestone sill, but it is slightly lower on the façade than the other windows' sills. The window also has a smooth limestone lintel. The top of the north façade has two brick courses that step outward and form a belt course. Above it are five brick courses that form the top of the wall.

The south wall (photo 0001) of the building has an aluminum and glass door located near the center of the wall. A modern metal and glass canopy is above the door. Three windows that match the tall, narrow full-arch lancet windows on the north side of the building are located east of the door. A modified window and former opening that match the modified window on the north side of the building is located west of the door. The top of the south wall has two brick courses that step outward and form a belt course. Above it are five brick courses that form the top of the wall.

#### *Interior Description (photographs 0004-0010)*

The interior of the building is divided into three main spaces. The assembly hall is located in the east half of the building. The balcony overlooking the assembly hall is located in the west half of the building. There is one main room beneath the balcony in the west half of the building (photo 0007-0008). Three small rooms are located off this main room. A vestibule encloses the front entry door in the northwest corner of the room (seen at left in photo 0008). A small bathroom is located off the room's northeast corner (seen in the middle of photo 0008). A room that encloses the staircase to the balcony (photo 0006) is located off the north side of the main room. The rooms located beneath the balcony have been recently reconfigured during work in 2012. Their walls are covered in drywall and the doors are new wood doors with simple wood casings and crowns. The ceilings of these spaces are composed of acoustic tiles. Prior to recent renovations the wall configuration was similar and dated to a c. 1950s renovation. The large room beneath the balcony originally opened into the assembly hall and had dividers that were used to enclose classrooms.

The stairway to the balcony (photo 0006) has two wood steps that face south that lead to a landing with winders that turn toward the west. The stairs continue west up to another landing with winders that turn toward the south with a final step to the balcony floor. The stairway is composed of wood risers and steps, simple square wood newel posts at each landing, and simple square wood balusters. A round wood handrail is located on each side of the staircase. A piece of wood cove trim is located at the outside base of the balustrade and along the north wall of the staircase. The staircase is enclosed at the balcony level, except at its landing. The enclosure does not extend to the ceiling, but is capped with a wood cornice. The enclosure has a small storage closet that is accessed with a wood door on its east wall. The enclosure has a pressed metal ceiling.

The balcony (see photo 0010) has a wood floor composed of tongue and groove wood planks. A step that is the full width of the balcony is along its east side; an aisle is at the base of the step between the balustrade and the step. A new wall that has a rounded top was placed on the step to act as a screen for the balcony space (see photo 0004). The balustrade

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(seen in photo 0004) is composed of square wood balusters and a bulky wood handrail. A square, bulky newel post with a large ball finial and recessed paneled sides is located at each end of the balustrade, against the outside wall, and in the center of the balustrade. The front wall of the balcony, facing east beneath the balustrade, is composed of six equally sized wood framed panels. The balcony at one time had a stepped floor with risers; these were removed during earlier renovations.

The assembly hall (photos 0004, 0005, and 0009) has extraordinary natural lighting in its tall vaulted ceiling. The ceiling is arched inward from all four exterior walls toward the center (seen best in photo 0009 of the balcony). The ceiling is covered with metal pressed into a small square pattern. The ten tall full arched windows, and the three windows in the west wall of the balcony, appear to function like arched dormers from the interior due to the vaulting of the ceiling and the way in which the walls curve inward. The oculus window in the west wall of the balcony is located in the attic. At the base of the vaulted ceiling the pressed metal panels terminate at a band of pressed metal with a quatrefoil and acanthus leaf design. The band is interrupted around the assembly hall and balcony by the windows. Below the band in the assembly area, but not in the balcony, is a pressed metal cornice which is at the top the walls below. The windows have simple wood casings and sills. A very large, ornate brass chandelier is centered in the ceiling of the assembly area (photo 0008). It has three tiers of arms for electric lighting connected to a pierced band that surrounds a large globe. The globe and band are suspended by multiple rods and a center portion that extend up to another globe and pierced band. A similar but smaller light fixture appears in the dedication picture of the building. This second fixture appears to be an early replacement of the original.

The walls of the assembly hall are plaster. A wood cornice is located on the north, east, and south walls. The cornice is at the level of the top of the bottom sash of the windows. Original painted stenciling with Hebraic iconography was once located between two windows near the top of the wall on the north and south sides of the hall. Gilt paint appears to have been the background for the design which had three Stars of David; two located within geometric shapes and a larger one in the center of the stenciling in a wreath. The colors included blue, green, red, and shades of gold. The floors throughout the first floor are composed of tongue and groove wood planks.

The most dominate feature of the assembly hall is the raised platform and cabinet for Torot, also called the "ark" in the center of the east wall (photo 0009). The platform, known as the bimah, is raised two steps above the floor; the rounded front of the platform was removed in 2012. The ark for storing Torot has an ornate surround that is painted white with gilded details. The front wall of the cabinet is divided into four panels on the bottom. The top of the ark has a new painting of Noah's ark in its door opening. The ark (cabinet) is framed with a pair of fluted Corinthian columns that are set on a low wall that has paneled sides. Behind the columns are fluted pilasters engaged into the wall. The columns support an ornate cornice. A broken arched pediment was once located on top of the cornice. Tall wood finials with brass Stars of David on their tops once framed the pediment and a wood tablet in the shape of the Ten Commandments was centered in the pediment. A smaller, less ornate ark is pictured in the same location in the dedication picture of the building. The existing ark appears to be an early replacement of the original.

A basement is located under approximately the eastern third of the building; the remaining area beneath the building is a crawl space. At one time the basement contained two toilet rooms, mechanical equipment area, and a bathing area used by Jewish people for ritual purification by full immersion. The toilet rooms were located near the east wall and near the south wall of the basement. The bath, called a mikveh, was located near the west wall of the basement area. The basement is only used for mechanical equipment now.

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**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.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: OTHER: Jewish

RELIGION

**Period of Significance**

1902-1962

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Freyermuth, George W. & Maurer, R. B.

Indiana Lumber and Manufacturing Builders

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The building's Period of Significance begins with its completion in 1902 and ends in 1962, the mandatory 50 year date of eligibility. It was maintained as a synagogue during this time; services ended at the building in 1990.

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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

Sons of Israel Synagogue meets consideration A because it is among the most tangible places associated with the history of the Jewish ethnic group in South Bend. Jews were a socially distinct group within the broader Eastern European influx that shaped South Bend in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The building is also architecturally significant for its Romanesque Revival style.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)**

The Sons of Israel Synagogue is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. Criterion A is met due to the building's use as an early house of worship for an orthodox congregation composed of a number of Jewish immigrants to the area. Criterion C is met due to the building's unique Romanesque Revival architecture with its congregants' ethnic roots reflected in its details and styling. The Areas of Significance attributed to the building are Architecture, Ethnic Heritage, and Religion.

**Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)**

**ETHNIC HERITAGE**

The Sons of Israel Synagogue represents in built form the rich Jewish history of the neighborhood and the City of South Bend. The synagogue was the first house of worship constructed by members of the Jewish community in South Bend and was at the heart of a once thriving Jewish neighborhood south of the downtown.

Jewish immigration to the United States is identified as having occurred in three waves. The earliest arrivals, which date to 1654, were small in numbers. The first large migration occurred between the 1820s and 1880s. These Jews were dominantly from Germany. The second wave occurred between the 1880s and 1920s; 80% of American Jews can trace their lineage to this wave of migration which was mostly of Eastern European origin. The final wave of migration occurred as Jews left the inner urban communities they had established and moved to the suburbs, like many of their non-Jewish counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Though there were some early arrivals of Jewish people in the State of Indiana, it was not until about 1840 that a concentrated number had settled to start communal organizations. The first Jewish congregation was formed in Ft. Wayne in 1848, Lafayette followed in 1849 and Evansville in 1853. Indianapolis's first Jewish congregation formed in 1856. During the late 1840s and the 1850s the first Jewish people settled in South Bend. Theo Seixas, Meyer, Wolk, and Moses Livingston, Abraham Hanauer, A. Barth, Jacob Mish, Samuel and Moses Adler, Dan and David Holland, and David Pollock were the city's first Jewish settlers.<sup>2</sup> These settlers were largely of German origin. They first peddled goods and merchandise prior to the establishment of many successful business houses, financial institutions, and real estate developments.

Theo Seixas, a New York City native, moved to South Bend in 1857 and opened a grocery store. When the business failed in 1868 Seixas solicited prominent businessmen to form the St. Joseph County Savings Bank in 1870. Henry Barth, a German immigrant, opened a clothing store in South Bend in 1847 and started successful lumber companies. Abraham Hanauer came to South Bend from Germany in 1859 and established a clothing and dry goods store. Meyer and Moses Livingston were cousins who founded a dry goods store in 1860. Brothers Samuel and Moses Adler immigrated in 1857 and later founded Adler and Company Hatters.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stolzman, pg. 18

<sup>2</sup> A. Z. A. News and Views of South Bend, April 5, 1932

<sup>3</sup> St. Joseph County Jewish History, pg. 6

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Largely due to their shared German heritage, South Bend's early Jewish immigrants mixed well in the city's largely German population and took part in a number of civic and community social clubs participated in by Christians.<sup>4</sup> The South Bend Tournverein, a German social, cultural, and athletic center was established in 1861 by ten local leaders that included Moses Livingston. Other German clubs included the German Choir and German Lodge; members of the Jewish community participated in both as officers and members.

As part of religious custom, even prior to the establishment of a local congregation, the Jewish community organized for the purpose of creating a burial society in 1859. The Hebrew Society of Brotherly Love was founded by Henry Barth, Abraham Hanauer, Theo Seixas, Henry Goodman, and Meyer Livingston to provide a suitable burial ground for the community's Jews, as well as provide for the needs of those who were disadvantaged. The association purchased ground on the west side of Niles Avenue between Crescent and Cedar Streets. Twenty-two burials were performed before the Singer Corporation purchased the ground for parking in 1883. The bodies were relocated to Rose Hill Cemetery in 1884. In 1875 several more Jewish families settled in South Bend. These included Samuel and Moses Adler and Abraham and Isaac Kahn. By 1878 South Bend's Jewish population had reached 125 persons. The first religious organization was formed in 1887; the Hebrew Orthodox congregation met at the home of Louis Feldman at 720 W. Division (later Western). This congregation was the origin for several congregations that formed after 1900 based on their interpretation of Jewish law. This includes the Sons of Israel congregation which constructed the first synagogue in the city in 1901.

The number of Jewish people in South Bend grew to 1,200 by 1912 after a large immigration of Jews from Russia and Poland during the late 1890s through the early 1900s. They were part of a large wave of migration by Jews escaping persecution in Europe between about 1880 and 1920. This late wave of immigrants sought both a good employment environment, of which South Bend had many manufacturing opportunities, and an existing Jewish neighborhood. The size of the small Jewish enclave in South Bend grew quickly; the highest concentration became the block surrounded by Western Avenue, Monroe, Taylor, and William Streets. Jewish-owned businesses catered to the community's Jewish population by providing products that met religious dietary laws. Two kosher meat markets were located on Division Street (Western) between 1914 and 1943 and two kosher bakeries were located on Chapin Street from 1921 through 1960.<sup>5</sup>

In 1917 the members of the Jewish community founded the Hebrew Institute Society and in 1920 they constructed a large building near the downtown at 420 South Franklin Street at a cost of \$25,000. The building was used to host weddings, dinners, youth and adult events, and for educational purposes until 1963. It was razed in 1963 to construct a parking lot.

Several social organizations were founded for the purpose of Jewish gatherings for the social, fraternal, and intellectual good of their community. The Sinai Society, a social and literary club, was organized in 1916. The B'Nai B'rith Lodge and the Louis Sandock Lodge were organized in 1918. The Hebrew Educational and Athletic Association was also organized about the same time. Other groups were the Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, Sons of Israel Sisterhood, Temple Beth-El Council of Social Services, Daughters of Israel, Hebrew Ladies' Loan Society, and the Sisters of Lenas Hatzedek. Branches were founded of the Workman's Circle, the Jewish National Workingman's Alliance, and the South Bend Jewish Workingman's Association.<sup>6</sup> The Jewish War Veterans Post was founded in 1947 and met at 301 South William Street until 1962.

Members of the Jewish community also served in several civic roles including members of the South Bend Park Board and city council, the county attorney, and a city judge in Mishawaka. A survey in 1960 revealed 805 Jewish households with 2,652 individuals. The numbers decreased through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as new generations relocated to larger cities. In 1945 South Bend and Mishawaka Jewish leaders established the Jewish Community Council of St. Joseph County. The organization was reorganized in 1978 as the Jewish Federation of St. Joseph Valley and remains active today.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> St. Joseph County Jewish History, pg. 4

<sup>5</sup> St. Joseph County Jewish History, pg. 7

<sup>6</sup> A. Z. A. News and Views of South Bend, April 5, 1932

<sup>7</sup> St. Joseph County Jewish History, pg. 9

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## RELIGION

While Jewish immigrants to the United States enjoyed acculturation in many aspects of social interactions and enterprise, the Hebrew practice of religion is what set the people apart from their largely Christian neighbors. The early synagogue, though not readily identifiable architecturally, was the symbol of this separation between Christian and Jewish congregations. The word synagogue is derived from the Greek *synagein*, which means "to bring together". The synagogue had a three-fold purpose in Jewish life. First, it was a house of worship; second, it was a house of assembly. Lastly it was a house of study.<sup>8</sup> Though the functions of the synagogue remained consistent from ancient times, the physical form of the building varied greatly. Early American synagogues were mostly used for education and prayer. Later synagogues incorporated fraternal and benevolent functions, once located outside of the synagogue, in an effort to maintain a coherent Jewish community as acculturation grew.<sup>9</sup>

The first Jewish congregation formed in South Bend in 1887; it was known as the Hebrew Orthodox Congregation and over time met in several locations in the city. In April of 1900 twenty-two Russian and Polish members of that congregation withdrew and formed a separate congregation called the Sons of Israel, led by members David Hurwich (the first president of the congregation), Peter Cohen, and Hyman Kaplan. Rabbi Altfield also left the Hebrew Orthodox Congregation and became the rabbi for the newly established congregation. The Daughters of Israel, a sister organization, formed at about the same time. The congregation purchased the lot on South William Street in the same year by raising \$1800. The lot was in the heart of the Jewish neighborhood and was surrounded with residences.<sup>10</sup> Construction on the Sons of Israel Synagogue began in October, 1901; some of the members assisted by digging the basement. It was dedicated on June 8, 1902.<sup>11</sup> A photo from the dedication shows the pride the Eastern European immigrants had in their new homeland; ribbon with stars and stripes was hung from the tops of windows around the assembly hall. Elbel Brothers Orchestra furnished music for the event.<sup>12</sup> This was South Bend's first permanent house of worship for the Jewish community. The original congregation constructed a brick synagogue in 1923 one block west on South Taylor Street; it is now home to a Missionary Baptist church. Temple Beth-El was a Reform congregation that formed in 1905 and occupied a building at 604 W. LaSalle St. from 1906 through 1950 at which time they relocated to a new facility.

The nativity of the congregation's rabbis shows the diversity within the local Jewish community. Rabbi Max Altfield led the congregation for 25 years. He was born in Niemstadt, Lithuania in 1866 and came to the United States in 1888. He lived at 527 S. William Street. Rabbi Moses Feiwell was born in 1867 in Russia and led the synagogue until his death in 1933.<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Irving Meiser of Chicago was installed in 1934.<sup>14</sup> The Sons of Israel congregation celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1951 with a special service and a dinner attended by 200 people at the LaSalle Hotel.<sup>15</sup> In 1982 the Sons of Israel congregation became a Reconstructionist group and was renamed B' Nai Yisrael. Dwindling membership caused the congregation to close the synagogue's doors in 1990.

Due to most Jewish immigration occurring from Europe, European precedents of synagogue form were brought with them. At this time no ancient precedents had been discovered for synagogue design. The form of the synagogue remained simple: a large assembly hall and possibly another smaller room for education or other functions. The buildings were mostly unadorned and lacked any identifiable Jewish features that became part of later synagogue design. Early requirements such as building on the highest mountaintop and near a river were normally ignored when introduced onto the American topography. However, two elements had to remain. These were the inclusion of the ark (cabinet in which Torah were stored) and the bimah (platform from which Torah were read). Orientation of the building was also an important requirement in the design that was strictly obeyed. Synagogues had to face the land of Israel, so most American synagogues' front walls in the assembly space face due east. The placement of the bimah varied in location from the platform near the ark to the middle of a wide center aisle. More orthodox congregations also maintained the

<sup>8</sup> Stolzman, pg. 15

<sup>9</sup> Stolzman, pg. 19

<sup>10</sup> Sanborn map, 1917

<sup>11</sup> *South Bend Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1902

<sup>12</sup> *South Bend Tribune*, July 10, 1927

<sup>13</sup> *South Bend News-Times*, Dec. 1, 1933

<sup>14</sup> *South Bend Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1934

<sup>15</sup> *South Bend Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1951

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separation of male and female participants; women were required to sit in a balcony or gallery apart from the men. Orthodox congregations also incorporated the mikveh, a large bathing area for ritual purification. The iconic six-pointed Star of David is a relatively new addition to synagogue design. It is believed to have first appeared in a synagogue constructed in Baltimore in 1845.

Though American Jews sought to establish their status as both Americans and Jews, they also sought to adapt and adopted the popular styles of the periods in which they constructed their houses of worship. In their synagogues they balanced their new homeland by using popular American styles with the cultures of their native lands within the internal design of the building.<sup>16</sup> The first synagogue constructed in the United States was built in Manhattan in 1730, almost eighty years after the first Jewish immigrant arrived in America. It was a small, simple masonry building that appeared indistinguishable from its surroundings.<sup>17</sup> As synagogue design followed popular revival styles, one style that became frequently used in synagogue design in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was Romanesque Revival, also called Byzantine. The style fit the more exotic form of architecture believed to be appropriate by Jewish congregations. This was further validated with archaeological investigations of Middle Eastern sites. One Eastern American congregant, referencing their newly constructed Romanesque Revival styled synagogue, stated that the style chosen was used by persecuted Jews many centuries before and "the spectator will at once receive the impression that the building is intended for a place of worship, not of the poetical deities of the Greeks, nor the pompous trinity of the Christians, but of the mighty God of the Jews."<sup>18</sup>

American Jews differed in terms of liturgy and this became reflected in the development of several branches of Judaism in their established enclaves. These included the Reform movement, which had a direct effect on the design of the interiors of synagogues by placing the congregants in theater style seating and joined men and women in the same seating area. Those who held on to more traditional practices of the Jewish faith established Orthodox congregations. Later arrivals to the United States from Eastern Europe held on to the orthodox traditions, largely due to their ethnic and cultural heritage rather than religious piety.<sup>19</sup> Orthodox Jews typically constructed simple one-room synagogues with balcony seating for women participants.

The Sons of Israel Synagogue represents the more orthodox approach to religious practice by the Jewish community, most notably in its separation of men and women during assemblies by use of a balcony. The Orthodox congregation also incorporated a mikveh in the basement of the building. The orthodox plan is likely due to its founders' Russian and Polish traditions. The building also maintains the practice of its eastern wall being the front wall of the assembly hall in which the ark is centered, facing the land of Israel. An early photo from the dedication of the building indicates that seating was arranged facing east and a lectern was located in the aisle in front of the bimah, in front of the ark.

## ARCHITECTURE

The Sons of Israel Synagogue is important architecturally on a number of levels. First, it is the oldest synagogue in the City of South Bend and it retains a significant amount of its character defining features. Second, its design is a unique blend of the Romanesque Revival style with a form of European brick gothic design, and it is thought to be "the only synagogue of its kind in the United States that introduces the Chicago school influence of architectural design".<sup>20</sup> It also is believed to be the sole surviving synagogue of its simple scale remaining without alteration in the Midwest.

The synagogue has the unique distinction in South Bend as being the first building constructed for the purpose of worship by the Jewish population. The building has a simple arrangement of space with only the most necessary rooms incorporated into the building plan. The feature of a gallery, or balcony, space to separate the sexes during assembly and the mikveh are typical of more Orthodox congregations of the Jewish faith. These features in the Sons of Israel Synagogue are likely a reflection of the more Orthodox Russian and Polish Jews who were represented in the original congregation. The building's interior also faces east; this is an important feature in synagogue design that reflects the Jewish people's connection to the land of Israel. The name of the congregation, spelled with Hebrew characters, is

<sup>16</sup> Stolzman, pg. 35

<sup>17</sup> Stolzman, pg. 36

<sup>18</sup> Stolzman, pg. 45

<sup>19</sup> Stolzman, pg. 51

<sup>20</sup> Nevel, Robert, lecture and telephone interview

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located on the front façade of the building and is the most identifiable exterior feature that indicates the building is a synagogue. Star of David finials located on the front of the building also identify the building as a synagogue. Little alteration has occurred on the exterior of the building.

While some remodeling of the interior space has occurred in 2012, the building retains several other architectural features that identify the building as a synagogue. The ark is the most important feature in synagogue design; the Sons of Israel Synagogue has an elaborate ark and bimah area in front of the ark (photo 0005). The ark features fluted columns and a cornice surrounding the cabinet. An unusual feature of the building are the tall vaulted ceilings that are covered with pressed metal panels (photo 0009). Other important architectural features extant in the Sons of Israel Synagogue are the carpenter gothic wood windows, the balcony and platform wood railings and newel posts, the large ornate chandelier in the assembly hall (photo 0009), and the wood staircase (photo 0006).

The applied style to the building, most developed on the front (west) façade (photo 0001), is a blend of popular revival styles of the period during which the synagogue was constructed. Both the Romanesque Revival style and the Second Gothic Revival style were used for the designs of public and religious buildings at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Romanesque Style gained popularity through its most accomplished architect, H. H. Richardson, from about 1880-1900. A later wave of the Gothic Revival design occurred at the end of the 1890s and continued into the early 1900s; it was a popular choice for church and education building construction. The synagogue may also be classified as "brick Gothic" which is a general term applied to construction in northeastern Europe that uses brick in lieu of stone in construction. The tall shaped gable parapet, brick arches, and articulated brick tourelles are common features in brick Gothic design.

Indicators of the Romanesque Revival style on the Sons of Israel Synagogue are the three large arched windows and rusticated stone string courses on the front façade. The stone arch with the name of the synagogue in the brick gable wall is also designed in the Romanesque Revival style. The lancet style windows and the building's shaped parapet are features of the Gothic Revival style. Tourelles are features common in more sophisticated designs of both the Gothic and the Romanesque Revival styles. The tourelles on the Sons of Israel Synagogue have metal Stars of David on their pyramidal-shaped roofs which make them appear like pinnacles, a feature more common in the Gothic style. The only high-style feature inside the building is the ark (photo 0005). It is a Neo-Classically inspired design with fluted Corinthian columns and a cornice.

While there is no prototype for synagogue design in relationship to their exterior appearance, the Sons of Israel Synagogue has a few architectural design elements that are not uncommon in other synagogues of this period. The tourelles and the row of three arched windows on the front façade are found with limited regularity. This may derive from the popular choice of the Romanesque Revival style for synagogue construction after its embrace by many in the Jewish community as an archetype based off of archaeological findings during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Architect & Builder of the Synagogue*

The architectural firm of Freyermuth & Maurer, of South Bend, was chosen by the Sons of Israel to design their synagogue. The firm designed several notable buildings in South Bend including the Saint Joseph County Infirmary in 1890, Citizens National Bank in 1913, and James Monroe School in 1931. The firm also designed a number of homes during the early 1900s. George Freyermuth (1869-1958) was part of a family of carpenters and builders; he became Mayor of South Bend in 1935 and held the office until 1939. R. B. Maurer was born in 1873 and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago's School of Architecture in the late 1880s before joining Freyermuth as a partner in the firm. The Indiana Lumber & Manufacturing Company received the contract to construct the synagogue. The firm was established in 1898 by Christian Fassnacht and his wife Carolyn Freyermuth, who was part of the George Freyermuth family.

Robert Nevel is an architect in Chicago who grew up in the Sons of Israel congregation. Nevel has researched Maurer in relationship with the synagogue design and speculates that Maurer was influenced by his exposure to Chicago architecture while studying in that city. Nevel has concluded that the work of H. H. Richardson in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the Chicago school of architecture design generally influenced Maurer's design of the synagogue, but that John Root's design of the front facade of the original Art Institute of Chicago itself was the largest contributing influence in the design of the synagogue (see attached image). Nevel has called the Sons of Israel Synagogue "the only

<sup>21</sup> Stolzman, pgs. 17, 43

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example of a synagogue influenced by the Chicago school of design" of which he is aware, and the only extant intact synagogue of its size in the Midwest.<sup>22</sup> Though there is no documentary evidence that Maurer was emulating Root's design, the two facades do share many elements. Synagogue design changed significantly from essentially single-room assembly halls to larger buildings that were constructed to house other functions of Jewish cultural society. Though the Sons of Israel Synagogue marks the first community building constructed for the Jewish population of South Bend, it also marks the closing of a period in which synagogue construction was most basic in its constructed form and function.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Archives of the Historic Preservation Commission of South Bend and St. Joseph County

*AZA News and Views of South Bend*, April 5, 1932

Howard, Timothy Edward, A History of St. Joseph County Indiana, Volume 2. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1907

Nevel, Robert. Lecture on Sons of Israel Synagogue, June 16, 2009; telephone interviews on October 13 & 26, 2011.

Sanborn map of South Bend, 1917

*Sons of Israel 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1901-1951*, booklet, South Bend. Publisher unknown. 1951

The following articles are a part of the clippings file held by the South Bend Public Library and the Historic Preservation Commission of St. Joseph County and South Bend; titles are unavailable:

South Bend News-Times, Dec. 1, 1933

South Bend Tribune, Oct. 25, 1902

South Bend Tribune, July 10, 1927. The caption read "courtesy of M. E. Altfeld", the Rabbi.

South Bend Tribune, Jan. 15, 1934

South Bend Tribune, Oct. 21, 1951

*St. Joseph County Jewish History*, author and date unknown. Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

Stolzman, Henry & Daniel, Synagogue Architecture in America. Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia, Images Publishing Group, 2004.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government

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<sup>22</sup> Nevel, Robert, lecture and telephone interview

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designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Historic Preservation Commission of South  
bend and St. Joseph County

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 141-598-55474

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>561951</u>	<u>4613548</u>	3	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	4	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the site is the footprint of the building. The building is approximately 40' wide and 70' long.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the historic footprint of the Sons of Israel Synagogue. No other resources outside of the footprint of the building contribute to the historic nature of the property.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kurt West Garner  
organization Partners in Preservation, Inc. date January 23, 2013  
street & number 12954 6<sup>th</sup> Road telephone 574-936-0613  
city or town Plymouth state IN zip code 46563  
e-mail kwgarner@kwgarner.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Sons of Israel Synagogue  
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A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue  
City or Vicinity: South Bend  
County: St. Joseph State: IN  
Photographer: Kurt West Garner  
Date Photographed: January 22, 2013  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0001 Front (west) & south walls, facing northeast from Williams Street  
1 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue  
City or Vicinity: South Bend  
County: St. Joseph State: IN  
Photographer: Kurt West Garner  
Date Photographed: January 22, 2013  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0002 Front and north walls, facing southeast from Williams Street  
2 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue  
City or Vicinity: South Bend  
County: St. Joseph State: IN  
Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Sons of Israel Synagogue  
Name of Property

St. Joseph County, IN  
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Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0003 Back (east) and north walls, facing southwest

3 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0004 Interior of main hall, facing west

4 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0005 Interior of main hall, facing south

5 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0006 Bottom of balcony stairs, facing north

6 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

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Name of Property

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City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0007 Main room below balcony, facing south

7 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0008 Main room below balcony, facing northeast

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Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0009 Main hall, facing northeast from balcony level

9 of 10.

Name of Property: Sons of Israel Synagogue

City or Vicinity: South Bend

County: St. Joseph State: IN

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: January 22, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 0010 Balcony level, facing northwest

10 of 10.

Sons of Israel Synagogue  
Name of Property

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**Property Owner:**

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

name City of South Bend, c/o Historic Preservation Commission of South Bend & St. Joseph County  
street & number County-City Building, 125 S. Lafayette Blvd. telephone 574-235-9798  
city or town South Bend state IN zip code 46601

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

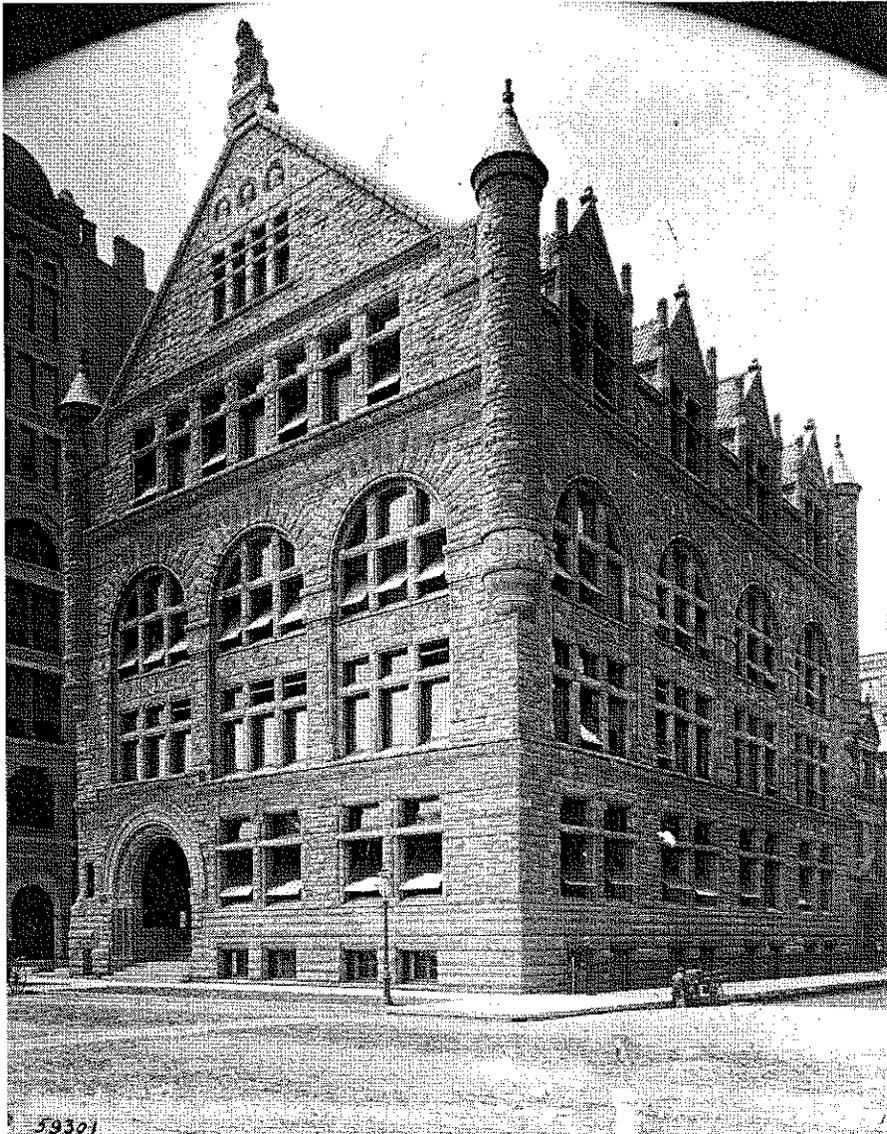
**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

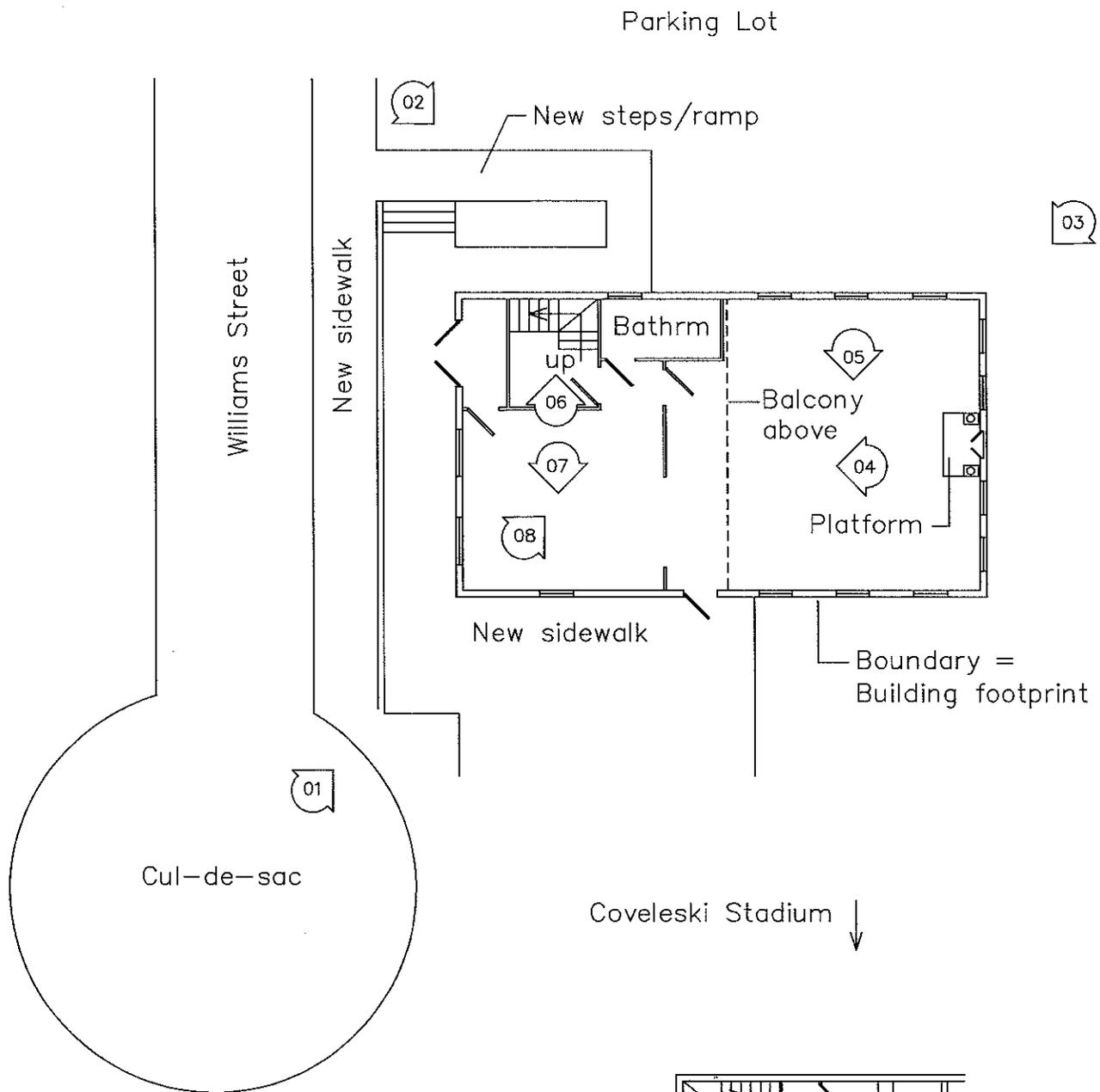
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 11 Page 17

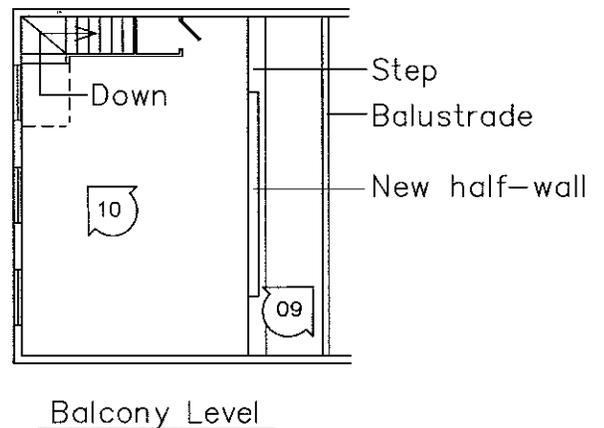
*Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph County, IN*

John Root's design of the front facade of the original Art Institute of Chicago, photo c. 1890





**Sons of Israel Synagogue**  
 National Register of Historic Places  
 Site Sketch Map  
 South Bend, St. Joseph Co., IN



02 = Photographs



Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #001



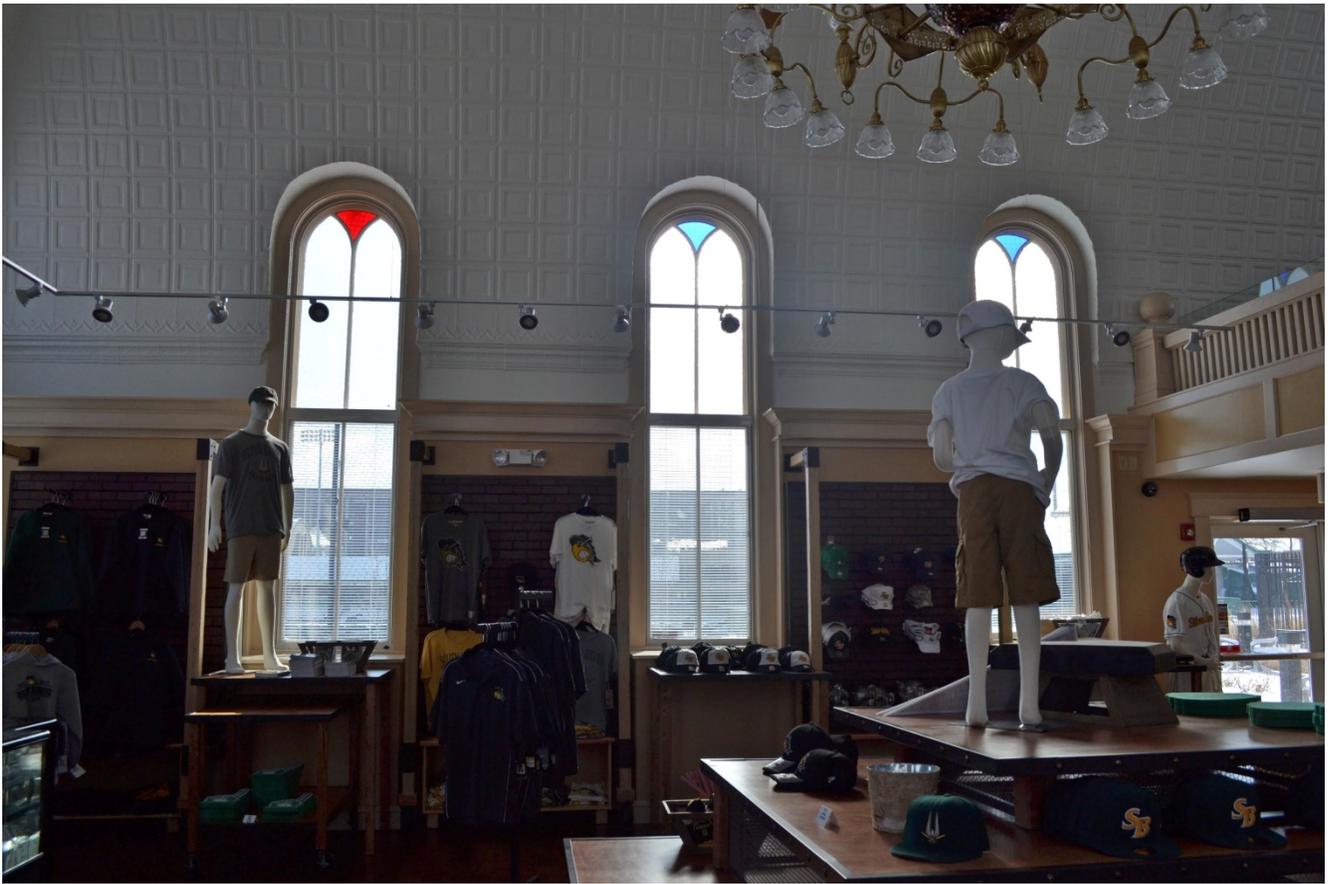
Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #002



Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #003



Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #004



Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #005



Sons of Israel Synagogue, St. Joseph Co., IN #007

