

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Poile Zedek Synagogue

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 145 Neilson Street N/A not for publication

city or town New Brunswick vicinity

state New Jersey code 034 county Middlesex code 023 zip code 08901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] 9/8/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Edson B. Beall 10/25/95
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Entered in the
National Register

Poile Zedek Synagogue
Name of Property

NJ Middlesex Co.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof (hidden)

other stone

Narrative Description

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

Poile Zedek Synagogue
Name of Property

NJ Middlesex Co.
County and State

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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1923-1938

Significant Dates

1923-24

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bach, Harry (architect)

Frieman, Morris (builder)

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Poile Zedek Synagogue

Poile Zedek Synagogue
Name of Property

NJ Middlesex Co.
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.12

New Brunswick Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown [(1992); 1995 additions & amendments by Robert Craig, HPO]

organization revised by New Jersey Historic Preservation Office date revised May 1995

street & number CN 404 telephone (609) 292-2028

city or town Trenton state NJ zip code 08625-0404

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

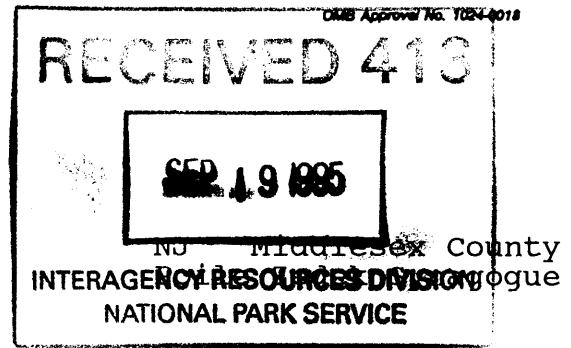
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain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

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1



DESCRIPTION

Poile Zedek Synagogue, its design a blend of Romanesque, Classical Revival, Georgian and Moorish Revival styles, is a fine representative of the eclectic architecture that characterized Raritan Valley and American synagogue architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A handsome, intact building, it retains its integrity of design, materials and workmanship. One of the last surviving early properties in New Brunswick's former Hiram Market Historic District, the synagogue stands on Neilson Street, just south of the National Register-listed Christ Episcopal Church and Dutch Reformed Church. Never moved and still serving an active orthodox congregation, it maintains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

Poile Zedek is a T-shaped brick building. Its front block, which contains a vestibule and stairways at its first floor, is taller, wider and considerably more narrow than its long rectangular rear block, which holds the sanctuary. The east-facing front facade displays a varied array of architectural styles and motifs. The form of the facade is reminiscent of Romanesque Revival style synagogues and churches. It has four nearly flush stone pilasters climbing its face, a peaked gable rising above the widely spaced interior pilasters. Between the interior pilasters are three doorways, reached up a flight of steps, topped by rectangular beveled glass transoms. Above them is an expansive round arched stained glass window characteristic of the Romanesque style. A band of stretchers, separated by a string of glazed headers and interspersed with decorative stone blocks, enframes the arch. Above it is another common feature of the style, a stone arcaded corbel table, its attached arches marked by keystones and raised imposts.

The Classical Revival and Georgian Revival styles characterize much of the rest of the facade. The stone front portico utilizes the Doric order. Its four columns are fluted and its entablature is adorned with triglyphs, metopes, guttae and a frieze with the carved words "Congregation Poile Zedek." Near the tops of the pilasters are stone shields. Between them, at the north and south ends of the facade, are a vertical row of openings. The bottommost are doorways with crossettes at the upper ends of their stone surrounds. Above them are fully crossetted stone windows and blank stone panels. The upper two windows are unornamented, enframed by a single row of brick headers. The glazed header, Flemish bond brickwork of the front block hearkens back to early American Georgian architecture. The exotic Moorish Revival style, a commonplace of late 19th- and early 20th-century synagogue architecture, is represented by the six stone onion-shaped

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetNJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek SynagogueSection number 7 Page 2

domes, capped by finials, that top the front block, four standing atop the front pilasters, two atop the side pilasters of the front block.

Traditional Jewish motifs are utilized as decorative elements throughout this eclectic facade. The most common motif is the six-pointed Star of David. It appears as a stone ornament at the top center of the facade, as two stained glass panels within the round arched window and as leaded forms in the three center circular windows of the main window. Within the three star-shaped forms are three stained glass representations of Jewish symbols, the menorah (candelabrum), the Torah scroll and two hands, their fingers parted in "v"s.

An iron fence at the sidewalk is an original or early feature, as is the heavy railing, green with age, that climbs the center of the steps. Two slender, subsidiary railings with inset Stars of David may be a later addition. The only alteration to the front facade appears to be the replacement of its former glass doors with metal doors, also inset with Stars of David.

The main block of the building, stretched out to the rear, is faced with brick laid in five-over-one, common bond courses. Its side elevations feature three stories of windows, most of stained glass. They are grouped in five pairs, each pair divided by a brick pilaster. The bottom windows, which light the rooms in the basement, are rectangular, as are the sanctuary windows above them. In place of one pair of windows at the north side is an entry to the basement. The topmost windows, which light the gallery, have round arched surrounds. The same window treatment is found at the rear elevation windows, the basement and sanctuary level windows rectangular, those of the gallery level topped by rounded arches. Stone lintels underpin all of these windows. The most prominent feature of the rear block is the stained glass window of the rear facade, which lights the ark end of the sanctuary and matches the front windows.

The entire building is topped by a flat roof. The rears of the side walls rise well above its level. A plain brick chimney stack breaks its surface just behind the front block. And, most prominently, a pyramidal glass skylight rises from its center, providing light for the stained glass panels in the sanctuary ceiling.

For the interior of the synagogue, the Classical Revival style was chosen. The front doors lead into a vestibule marked at either end by a flight of stairs, the square newel posts and attenuated, turned balusters of which are classical in form. Above the vestibule is a sitting room and restroom for the women who worship in the gallery, separated from the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetNJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek SynagogueSection number 7 Page 3

men below as is orthodox Jewish practice. Tall, paneled, folding doors open from the vestibule into the gallery.

The sanctuary is entered from the downstairs vestibule through three glass doorways, each topped by a rectangular transom adorned with heavy beveled rondels. Three rows of original pews lead from its rear to the raised bema and arlc at its front. Classical Revival motifs are found throughout the sanctuary and the gallery that runs along its sides and rear. Paneled wainscoting faces its walls, the bema and the gallery front, which is additionally marked by a low curtain to screen the women from the men. Three-part type surrounds enframe its side windows, which are adorned with stained glass columns and an occasional Star of David or menorah. The ceiling is coffered and adorned with reeded plaster work, medallions and ornate corbels. An immense chandelier depends from the central stained glass skylight; 11 smaller chandeliers hang from the ceiling as well. A candelabrum stands on the raised bema, which has a railing of square newel p095 ? and attenuated turned balusters that mirrors the vestibule stairs. The finest Classical Revival feature of the interior is the rich wooden Doric portico, similar to that of the front entry, that stands on the bema in front of the ark, providing a suitably dignified and grand enframement for the Torah scrolls.

Beneath the sanctuary in the basement is a large room that serves the varied educational and social needs of the congregation and provides a smaller space for weekday worship. It is basically the only altered part of the synagogue, its walls having been paneled and its floor covered. Also downstairs is a kitchen, a short hallway, and bathrooms.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetNJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek SynagogueSection number 8 Page 1

SIGNIFICANCE

Poile Zedek Synagogue, built in 1923-24, is the earliest surviving synagogue building in New Brunswick and the Raritan Valley. It is the last survivor of the several synagogues built in the Hiram Market neighborhood between 1897 and 1927, during the decades when the heart of New Brunswick's downtown was also the heart of its Jewish community. It is architecturally a fine example of the eclectic mixture of Romanesque Revival and other architectural styles that characterized local, American and European synagogue architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It meets National Register Criterion A for its associations with the rise of New Brunswick's Jewish community, and Criterion C for its architectural values.

CONGREGATIONS AND SYNAGOGUES IN THE RARITAN VALLEY

Jews are known to have lived in the Raritan Valley since as early as 1698 and in New Brunswick itself since the eighteenth century, but their first congregations were not officially formed until the mid-19th century. In 1848 a congregation was organized in Newark and, around the same time, another was formed in Paterson. Congregations were also organized in Elizabeth in 1857 and in Trenton shortly thereafter (Patt 1978:33).

The first New Brunswick and Raritan Valley congregation, Anshe Emeth, was chartered in 1859 by a group of primarily German immigrants. It was followed in 1889 by the orthodox Eastern European congregation of Ahavas Achim. Poile Zedek, New Brunswick's third congregation, was organized in 1901. Ohav Emeth of New Brunswick, organized by Hungarian Jews in 1918, was the city's fourth Jewish congregation. A fifth congregation, Etz Ahaim, was formed by Sephardic Jews in 1926 (Baltin 1938; Patt 1978:34-46).

All five of New Brunswick's synagogues--Anshe Emeth, Ahavas Achim, Poile Zedek, Ohav Emeth, and Etz Ahaim--stood within a few blocks of each other, in the Hiram Market neighborhood. Anshe Emeth of New Brunswick built its--and the Raritan Valley's--first synagogue on Albany Street near Neilson Street in 1897. A two-story, gable front, frame structure that looked like a residence, it had stained glass pointed arch windows at its front, a nod to the Gothic Revival style. Ahavas Achim's original home, a gable front building with rounded arch openings, was purchased in 1900 from the Salvation Army and remodeled into a synagogue. It stood on Richmond Street, around the corner from Poile Zedek. Poile Zedek built its first synagogue in 1905, on the site of its present home. Poile Zedek's present synagogue, the fourth raised in the city, was constructed in 1923-1924. Ohav Emeth built an exotic Moorish, Byzantine and Romanesque brick synagogue on New Street just to the south of Poile Zedek in 1927. Also on New Street, Etz

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetNJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek SynagogueSection number 8 Page 2

Ahaim raised its synagogue. Of all of these New Brunswick synagogues, only Poile Zedek survives (Patt 1978:34-46).

This concentration of synagogues reflected the spiritual requirements of the community. Many of the men attended twice-daily prayers and would not, as a matter of belief and doctrine, ride in a vehicle on the Sabbath. These requirements made the siting of synagogues within walking distance of their members' homes and workplaces essential.

POILE ZEDEK CONGREGATION AND SYNAGOGUE

By 1900, the Jewish community in New Brunswick was strongly concentrated in the downtown section of the city and strongly represented in the mercantile sector of the New Brunswick economy. On November 18, 1901, a congregation was organized by Jewish merchants who lived and worked in the neighborhood. They included Jacob Grossman, a grocer and fish seller on Burnet Street; Joseph Gabowitz, who sold picture frames and window shades on Neilson Street; Harry Levin, who operated a business on Burnet Street; and Benjamin Elfant, owner of a leather goods shop on Hiram Street. It was in Elfant's home at 27 Hiram Street that the first services were held. A month later, the organization was chartered as the Independent Sick and Death Benefit Association of New Brunswick. Men's and women's committees were organized to provide the orthodox Jewish burial rites of chevra kadisha ("sacred fellowship"), and a cemetery lot was soon purchased on Codwise Avenue (now Joyce Kilmer Avenue) between Reed and Elizabeth Streets.

In 1905 the congregation purchased the site of its present synagogue at 145 Neilson Street and raised its first permanent home. (It may have been at that time that the name Poile Zedek ("Workers of Righteousness") was adopted. Three years later, the congregants hired Eli Dobin to serve as cantor (reader), shofar (ram's horn) blower, mohel (circumcisor) and shochet (ritual butcher). (Dobin mysteriously disappeared in 1936, last seen on the steps of the synagogue. His body was never found.) During its early years the congregation sometimes shared a rabbi with other New Brunswick synagogues. Rabbi Samuel Baskin served both Poile Zedek and Ahavas Achim briefly in 1918; from about 1918 to circa 1931, Rabbi Anton Klein served both Poile Zedek and Ohav Emeth. (Baltin 1955; Patt 1978:43-44; Alexander Library 1987).

On August 19, 1923, the congregation held ceremonies marking the laying of the two cornerstones of their new synagogue. The north cornerstone has the Arabic number "1923" carved into it; the other bears a date in Hebrew. A front page New Brunswick Daily Home News article printed the day after the ceremonies reported that the building was being erected at a cost of over \$100,000. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetNJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek SynagogueSection number 8 Page 3

synagogue's designer was a local architect named Harry Bach, of whom little has been reported. The construction contract was awarded to New Brunswick builder Morris Frieman, who completed the building the following year.

The style of Poile Zedek synagogue is representative of the eclectic synagogue architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. European and American synagogue architecture has never been identified with a single style. Since the 18th century it has utilized the Georgian, Classical Revival, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Moorish Revival styles, among others. Though its overall form is a Romanesque Revival composition, Poile Zedek employs elements from several styles in its eclectic facade and handsome interior. The round arched window, arched corbel table and gable peak of its front facade are elements common to the Romanesque Revival style. With its gable peak, and the pilasters and raised, extended, one-bay depth of its front facade, it is very similar to the Romanesque- and Classical-influenced Kassel synagogue, built in Hanover, Germany, in 1836-1839. Kassel has been described as the "mother" synagogue of the Romanesque style (Wigoder 1986:176; Wischnitzer 1964). Older members of the congregation believe the Poile Zedek design was adapted from that of a "major [but unidentified] synagogue ... in the Odessa region of [Ukraine]," which was destroyed during World War II (Bea Einstein, personal communication, February 12, 1993). This possibility cannot be ruled out, but the congregation has provided no evidence to support this conclusion.

Numerous Classical Revival and Georgian Revival elements also grace the synagogue's front facade. These include pilasters and crossetted surrounds, a Doric portico and glazed header, Flemish bond brickwork. Inside, the Classical Revival style was fully embraced. The sanctuary adornment includes paneled wainscoting, a coffered ceiling and a rich wooden Doric portico at the ark that is similar to that of the entry. The exotic onion-shaped domes that top the front limestone pilasters hearken back to Moorish architecture. Woven into this blend of styles are a number of Jewish symbols, including numerous Stars of David, menorahs (candelabra), and Torah scrolls.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

NJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek Synagogue

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

NJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek Synagogue

Section number 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

NJ Middlesex County
Poile Zedek Synagogue

Section number 10 Page 1

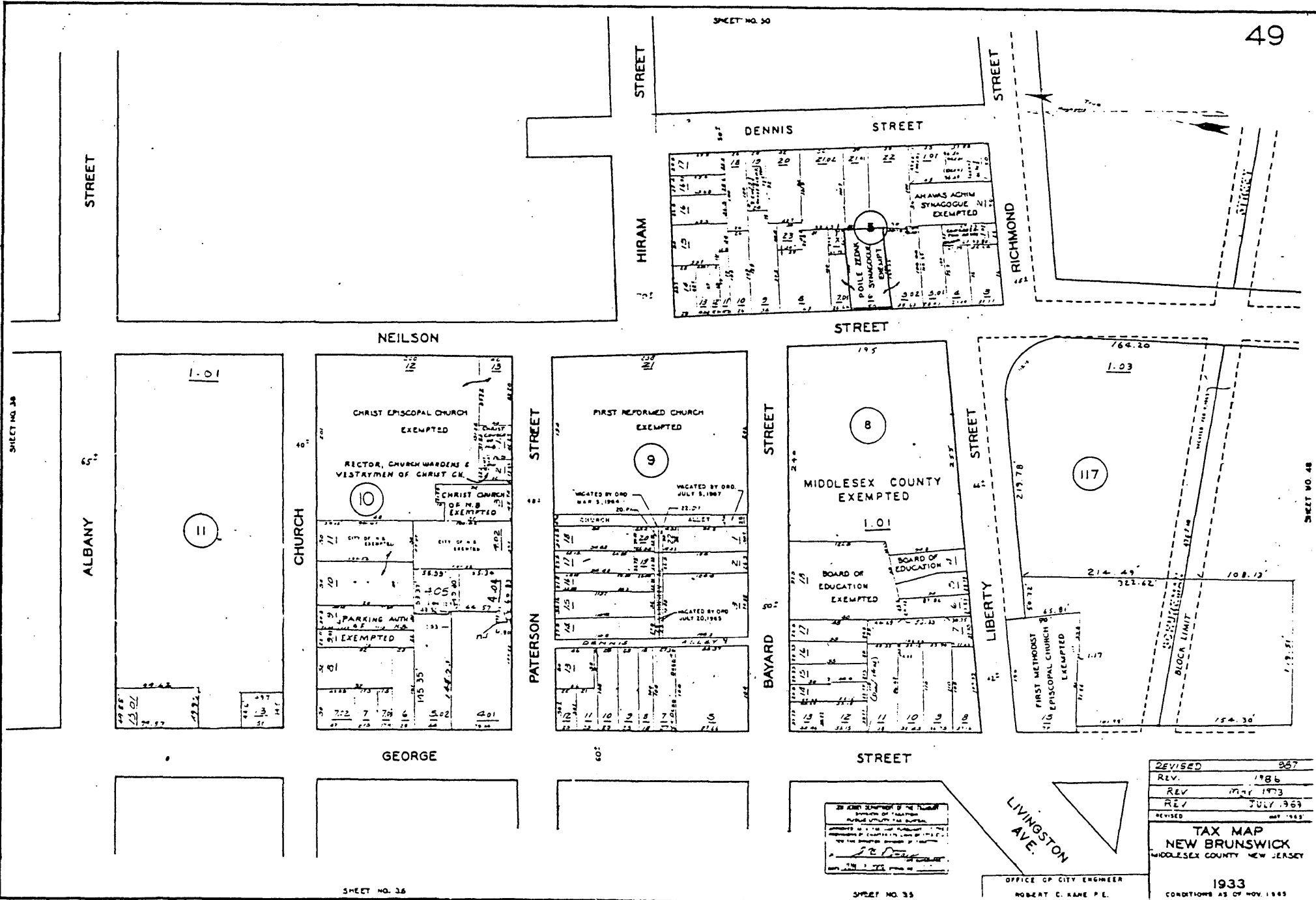
BOUNDARY STATEMENT

The nominated property consists of Block 5, Lot 6, of the tax map of the City of New Brunswick.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property is the entire lot historically associated with the property.

SHEET NO. 30



SHEET NO. 38

SHEET NO. 48

SHEET NO. 36

SHEET NO. 35

REVISED	967
REV.	1986
REV.	MAY 1973
REV.	JULY 1969
REVISED	MAY 1949

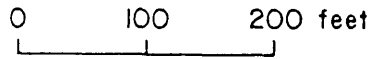
TAX MAP
NEW BRUNSWICK
MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY

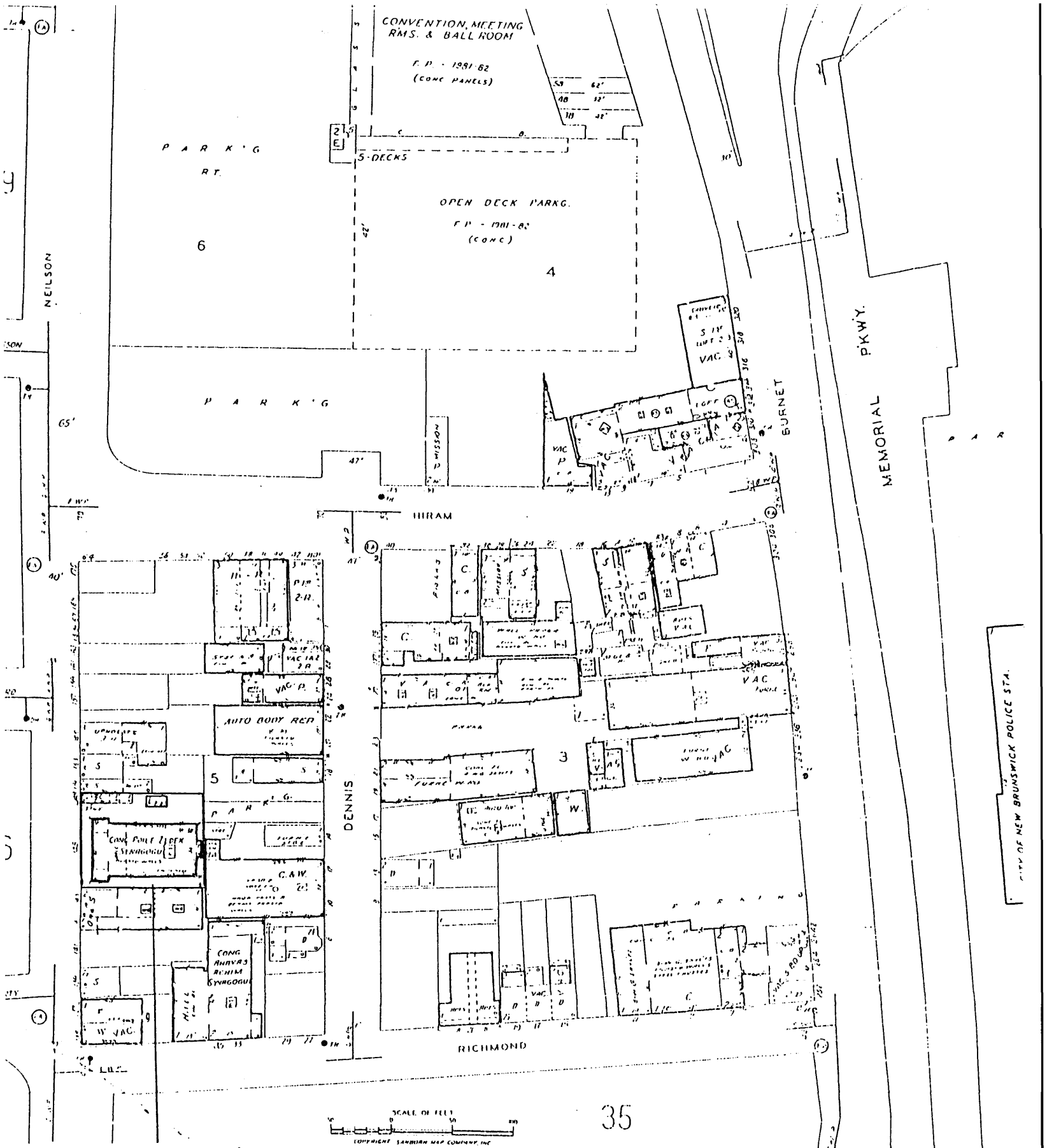
LIVINGSTON
AVE.

OFFICE OF CITY ENGINEER
ROBERT C. KANE P.E.

1933
CONDITIONS AS OF NOV. 1969

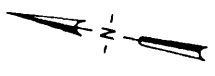
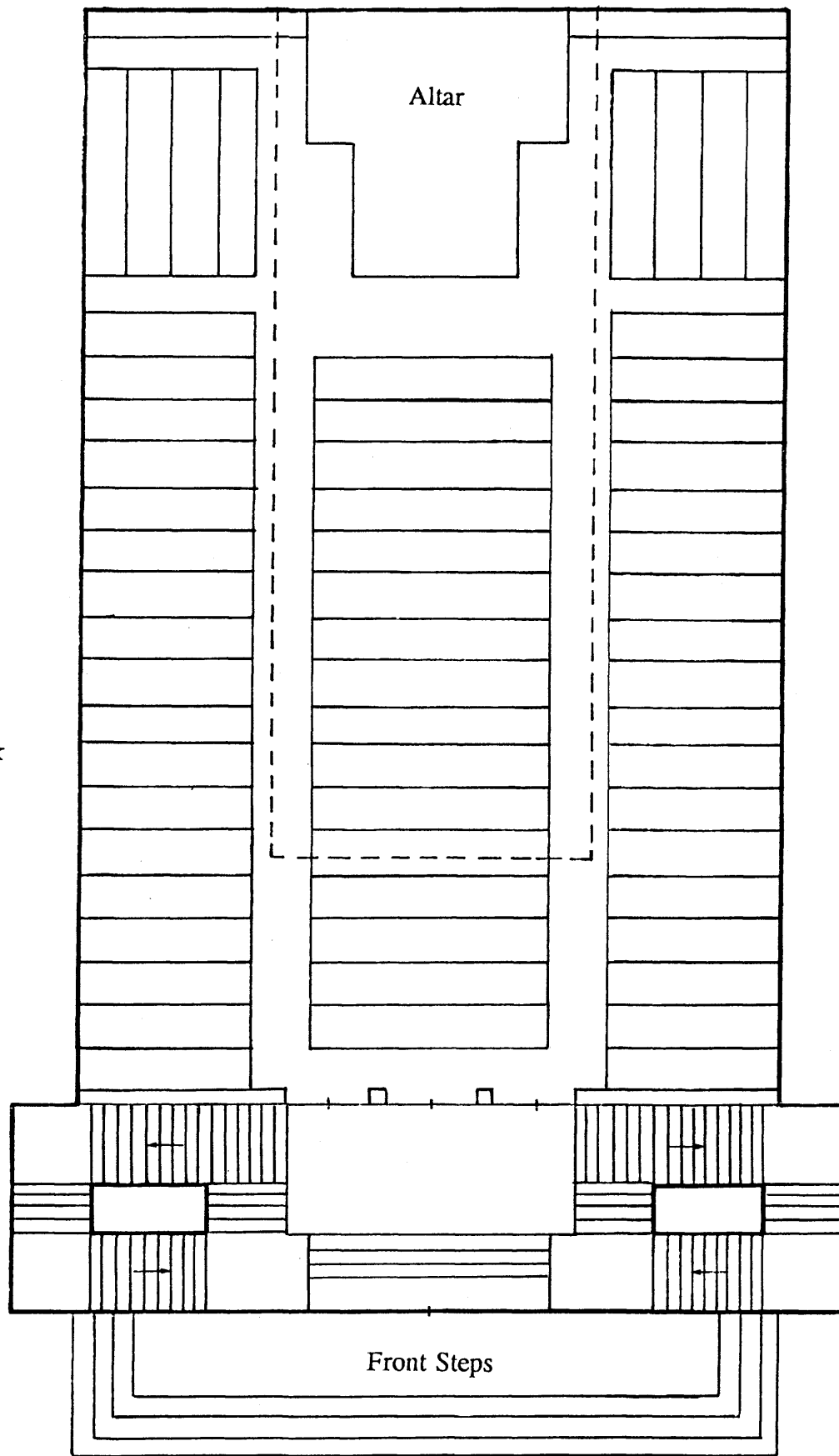
Poile Zedek Synagogue, New Brunswick, Middlesex County, NJ





Poile Zedek Synagogue
 1984 Sanborn Map of
 New Brunswick, NJ
 (Middlesex County)



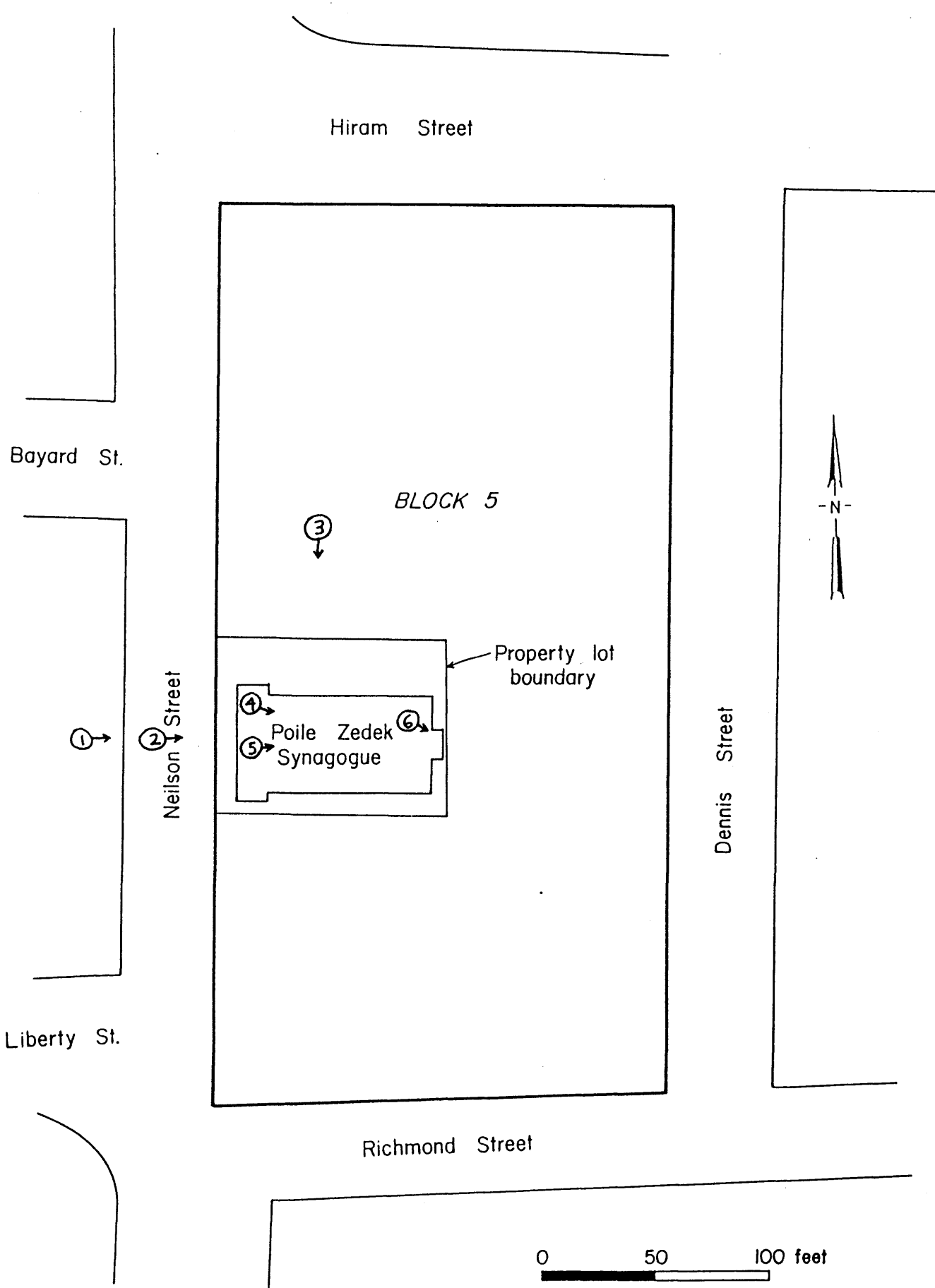


Floor Plan of Poile Zedek Temple
 New Brunswick
 Middlesex County, NJ

Key:

Scale 0 10
 feet

Balcony overhang = - - - - -



Poile Zedek Synagogue, New Brunswick, Middlesex County, NJ