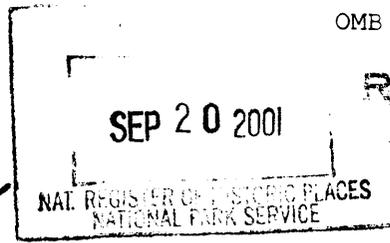


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 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 Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles

other names/site number Breed Street Shul; Breed Street Synagogue

2. Location

street & number 247 North Breed Street not for publication N/A

city or town Los Angeles vicinity N/A

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037

zip code 90033

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

K. M. Allen

9/10/01

Signature of certifying official

Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

2 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>RELIGION</u>	Sub: <u>religious facility-synagogue</u>
<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>school</u>
<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>meeting hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>VACANT/NOT IN USE</u>	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVAL
Other: Byzantine Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>CONCRETE</u>
roof	<u>ASPHALT</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>
other	<u>Cast Stone</u>

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

See continuation sheet

=====
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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE
RELIGION
EDUCATION

Period of Significance 1915-1951

Significant Dates 1915; 1923; 1935; 1948

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Edelman, Abram (Abraham) M., Architect
Zimmerman, Archie C., Architect
Barnett, Leo W., Architect
Gorelnik, Hyman, Contractor

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

See continuation sheet

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: see Continuation Sheet

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property .37 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>388440</u>	<u>3767810</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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 Robert J. Chattel, AIA (President, Chattel Architecture and Vice President, Breed Street Shul Project, Inc.), Francesca G. Smith, Nicole J. Purvis, Christy Lombardo and Stephen J. Sass (President, Breed Street Shul Project, Inc.)

organization Breed Street Shul Project, Inc., c/o Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, Inc. date 5/8/01

street & number 13322 1/2 Valleyheart Drive South telephone (818) 788-7954

city or town Sherman Oaks state CA zip code 91423

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Breed Street Shul Project, Inc., Stephen J. Sass, President

street & number 6006 Wilshire Boulevard telephone (323) 761-8950

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90036

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

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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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Narrative Description

The Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles (Breed Street Shul) property is .37 acre in size and is located in an urban area. There are two contributing buildings consisting of the original rear, wood-framed school building/synagogue with alterations (original 1914 (permit), 1915 (completion); alterations 1918, 1922, 1927 and 1930); and main, brick synagogue with alterations (original 1922 (permit), 1923 (completion); alterations 1928, 1930, 1932, 1936 and 1948). The buildings are located on a rectangular parcel, paved in concrete from the sidewalk to the rear building. The property is currently fenced at the perimeter with high chain link.

The main building is a raised, two-story with basement, symmetrical composition with a combination front facing gable roof with a raised parapet consisting of curved planes and flat returns, and a hip roof at the rear. The building is constructed of unreinforced masonry, configured in a T-shaped plan. Byzantine Revival characteristics of the principal (east) façade include alternating bands of light and dark sandstone-color veneer brick, laid up in running bond, and bas-relief cast stone decoration around the four arched doorways and central, two-story great arch that surrounds the main entrance. This decorative band includes a row of palmettes. Veneer brick returns extend approximately ten feet on the north and south elevations and provide a transition between the decorative façade and utilitarian side and rear elevations. There is original decorative cast stone detail at the flat returns of the parapet, which has been replaced with smooth, cement plaster along the upper edge of the double-arched parapet.

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The main entrance is located in the center of the symmetrical three-bay composition and consists of a pair of arched doorways, separated by engaged pilasters, outlined in brick. The pilasters are detailed with six-pointed, *Magenay David* (Shields or Stars of David) arranged in a repetitive pattern. Above the main entrance there is a half-round, wood sash, stained glass window with a large central Star of David. Subordinate arched doorways, with small vertical, second story, wood sash casement windows containing leaded stained glass, flank the central entrance and form the outer two bays. Each doorway contains a pair of multi-panel wood doors with blind wood paneled transoms. The central doors have small horizontal transoms in leaded stained glass between the lintels and the wood paneled transoms. A small, double-arched niche that once contained the Ten Commandments in cast stone is centered above the great arch.

The doorways are served by three concrete stairways which project toward the street in front of the façade. The central pair of doors share a wide stairway flanked by decorative, fluted metal lamp posts (without globes). Handrails are utilitarian metal pipe. Basement level windows are located between each of the projecting stairways. There are utilitarian steel security grills over the doorways and transoms. Door leaves were removed and stored (on site) to accommodate steel protection panels sandwiched between the inner and outer building faces. The upper level, half-round window and small, vertical windows are covered with plywood protection panels screwed into the wood window frames. The lower level of brick veneer has been overpainted to cover graffiti. Although the cast stone Ten Commandments were stored at one time, they no longer exist.

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The north, south and west elevations are utilitarian, with common brick laid in American bond and reinforced concrete bond beams at the level of the main floor, approximately at the mid-point of the wall, and at the roof line. Raked vertical buttresses of the same utilitarian design are located between window bays and support trusses within the roof structure. Window bays on the north and south walls are vertical, three-part compositions contained within projecting brick borders. The lower rectangle-shaped window is of wood frame construction with leaded, stained glass, pivoting at the horizontal midpoint. The upper level contains a similar rectangle-shaped window that is fixed, but contains a smaller central pane, which pivots at the horizontal midpoint. A round, arch-shaped transom, operable as a hopper-type window, completes the vertical composition. The transom contains a Star of David within a circular element. The leaded glass is principally yellow in color, with borders and other details in multiple colors. Small panels contain donor or congregant individual and family names. All of the lower level windows were removed (and are stored on site) to accommodate steel plate protection panels sandwiched between the inner and outer building faces. Upper level windows are covered with plywood protection panels screwed into the wood window frames. Most original windows remain intact and/or are stored (on site). Some panels are missing original glazing. There is evidence on the south elevation of canvas awnings with galvanized pipe supports at the lower window level.

The west elevation has two upper level window assemblies above double doors in the outer bays. The central bay contains a projection just above the main floor level to accommodate the Holy Ark, which contained the scrolls of the *Torah* (*Pentateuch* or *Five Books of Moses*). Alterations in 1936 included

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installation of these double doors as fire exits and relocation of the ark
(four feet back from its original location), creating the projection.

Hopper-type, wood sash windows are located at the basement, one-half level
below grade. These windows are set within light wells, surrounded by
decorative metal grills and sheet metal tops.

The interior of the main building consists of a basement, main level and
balcony. The double-height lobby runs the length of the building along Breed
Street and consists of plaster walls, a coved ceiling with original acorn
pendant lamps, and terrazzo floor (1930 alteration). Both lobby and sanctuary
on the main level are decorated with *trompe l'oeil* marbled wainscot and grained
wood door frames and leaves.

The high-volume sanctuary on the main level was designed to seat approximately
1,100 congregants. The main floor is slightly raked from the rear of the
sanctuary at the lobby (east), to the front, west wall. The interior volume is
nearly as tall as it is wide, or approximately 45 feet in height, except the
rear (east) portion where the balcony above creates a lower, flat ceiling
(below). The sanctuary ceiling is barrel-vaulted (principally east-west and
north-south at the west wall), with heavy plaster texture, light blue/green
color paint, and applied glitter, used to represent the firmament (expanse of
the heavens). A light box surrounds the three walls where the curved ceiling
joins the wall to wash the ceiling in muted light, further enhancing the
desired effect. The fourth wall (east) is located along the street façade at
the rear of the sanctuary where there is no curve, accommodating a high ceiling
in the balcony area.

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Crystal chandeliers were suspended at one time from the ceiling. Three major chandeliers were placed directly below decorative, pierced attic vents. Only armatures of the chandeliers and a few crystals remain (on site). Moveable oak pews are on the main level and fixed, theater-type wood seats on metal frames are on the balcony.

The balcony (women's gallery) is reached from the main level by stairways at the north and south ends of the lobby. In accordance with Orthodox practice, men and women sat separately during services. Small restrooms are located at the north and south ends of the upper balcony above these stairways, which form the principal space of the T extensions along the street façade. The exterior stairway walls (north and south elevations) contain double-hung, wood sash windows, glazed in leaded, stained glass. All these windows are covered in steel plate or plywood protection panels, sandwiched between the inner and outer building faces. Due to deterioration of the north (unreinforced masonry) wall, the double-hung, wood sash window of the upper stairway was removed and stored (on site). Structural support for the balcony was altered with installation of internal steel girders (1931).

The sanctuary also contains hand-painted illustrations on plaster depicting Judaic symbols, holidays, and signs of the zodiac associated with months of the Hebrew calendar, reminiscent of the folk art tradition in wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe. Wood window enframements feature fluted pilasters with decorative Corinthian capitals. There are painted astrological signs in the spandrel between each window assembly, and along the front edge of the balcony.

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The ark is in the center of the west wall surrounded by raised panel woodwork and columns, bas-relief plaster and flat, painted decoration depicting Jewish symbols including *menorot* (candelabra). Sconces which existed at one time have been lost. Columns are painted with faux marble finishes and wood is grained to resemble oak. Stars of David are incorporated into the column capitals. Immediately above the ark is a *ner tamid* (eternal light) supported at the center of a Star of David, although the luminaire is missing. A water-damaged, painted scene of the Ten Commandments and Mount Sinai fills the wall above the ark to the ceiling light box.

In front of the ark, a *bimah* or dais runs along the west wall in a north-south orientation. The narrow *bimah* was used by the rabbi and congregation leaders. This *bimah* has a central reader's table, used by the *cantor* (who chants the service), at the main floor level facing the ark, flanked by a pair of stairs. A second, square, central *bimah* (1936 alteration) is surrounded on three sides by large pews and small individual reader stands. The principal reader's table on the central *bimah* was used for reading from the Torah. Lamp posts incorporated into both *bimahs* are missing globes. A small section of the southeast corner of the sanctuary was separated by a makeshift *mechitzah* (curtain) to provide separate women's seating on the main level.

The basement is reached from the main level by stairways at the north and south ends of the lobby. It is one-half level below grade, with natural light provided along the perimeter by windows served by light wells with hopper-type, multi-light, wood sash windows. Two large restrooms are located partially below the stairs off the basement lobby. The kitchen and pantry are located along a short connecting corridor from the lobby. Bathroom and kitchen details

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are typical of the period with hexagonal tile floors and brick-shaped wainscot tile. The social hall features a central, raised stage at the west end with a painted backdrop. Original acorn-shaped light fixtures remain intact. Stenciled decoration around the light fixtures has been overpainted, but remains visible in limited areas. The social hall was enlarged by replacement of a partition wall and wood columns supporting the floor above with steel columns and beams (1932). Exterior stairways along the north and south elevations provide additional ingress and egress to the basement.

The raised, single story, wood-framed building at the rear of property, known as the *beis medrash* (school building/synagogue used for daily prayer and study) consists of three major building elements constructed sequentially. The southern half of the building is the original rectangular school building/sanctuary constructed on the site (east-west), which, in 1922, was turned and relocated to its current position and (north-south) orientation. A small projection in the south (originally west) elevation contains the ark. This building has a gable roof with exposed rafter tails and knee braces at the gable ends. The northern half consists of two elements. Immediately north of the original building, the similarly detailed rectangular addition consists of bathrooms, a classroom, foyer and principal entry. The northernmost portion (1930) is similarly detailed, but has a flat roof with a raised parapet. This portion is L-shaped, with a separate, recessed entrance. Clapboard siding and eaves have been thinly texture-coated, but the original clapboard siding is clearly evident. Metal security grills cover windows and doors. Double-hung, wood sash windows with transoms have been covered in plywood protection panels sandwiched between the inner and outer building faces.

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On the sanctuary interior, hand painted decoration adorns the south wall containing the ark. There is a narrow bimah along the south wall, running east-west, and a central, square bimah. Lamp posts, globes, eternal light, and memorial plaques no longer remain. A small area in the northwest corner is separated by a permanent mechitzah. Another small area in the northeast corner was partitioned to serve as an office. The classroom located northwest of sanctuary can be used as sanctuary expansion space by lifting a wood panel divider. Restrooms are typical of the period with hexagonal tile floors and tile wainscot. The northern L-shaped portion contains a small kitchen and dining room/prayer hall. The interior has been vandalized and is covered in graffiti.

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles (Breed Street Shul or Shul) property appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under National Register Criterion A for the pivotal role it played in furthering Jewish settlement patterns, religious practices, and educational institutions in southern California, east Los Angeles, and Boyle Heights, and under National Register Criterion C as a rare, modest example of Byzantine Revival architectural design.

In applying Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties, the Shul appears eligible for its contribution in areas broader than religious history, including its historical importance in the Boyle Heights community and its remarkable architectural design. Boyle Heights was the most populous and visible Jewish community in Los Angeles between approximately 1910 and 1950. The Shul, through its active spiritual, educational, and social programs played a central role during this period, furthering Jewish settlement patterns by providing not only a place for worship, but a place for education, congregation, and support for Yiddish-speaking, Eastern European, Jewish immigrants new to Los Angeles. At least two significant events occurred at the Shul, which demonstrate its broader local importance; the first, in 1935, was the establishment of what was to become the Los Angeles Jewish Academy, the city's first Jewish, parochial, day school, and the second, in 1948, was the center of the citywide celebration of the establishment of the State of Israel.

The period of significance starts when the property was constructed in 1915 and ends at 1951, the arbitrary 50-year cut-off, during which time it was the

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largest Orthodox synagogue in the West.¹ The property consists of two buildings contributing to its historic character, both of which were constructed during the period of significance and retain integrity.

Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles was first organized in downtown Los Angeles in 1904-05, on Rose Street, as a society to support religious education for children, a response to the lack of Hebrew schools in Los Angeles. *Talmud Torah* broadly means study of *Torah* (*Pentateuch*, *Five Books of Moses* or Old Testament) and Jewish traditions, and was the name given to community-supported, supplementary education for children. After the turn of the 20th century, Jews, Japanese, Mexicans, Russian-Molokans, and African-Americans immigrated in large numbers to Los Angeles, and to Boyle Heights in particular. Boyle Heights was later described by historian George J. Sanchez as "Los Angeles' Ellis Island."²

The neighborhood's namesake, Andrew A. Boyle, an Irish immigrant, settled on land located east of the Los Angeles River, in 1857. Following Boyle's death in 1871, his son-in-law, William H. Workman, named the area Boyle Heights in his honor. Soon thereafter, the land was subdivided into building lots by the Pioneer Lot Association, formed by early Jewish land developers Lewis Lewin and Charles Jacoby. By 1900, the population of Boyle Heights reached 10,670.³ The Cramers were the first Jewish family to settle in Boyle Heights in 1908.⁴

In the 1946 *Mount Sinai [Hospital and Clinic] Year Book* (a chronicle of Los Angeles Jewish community history) the synagogue was described as follows:

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BREED STREET SYNAGOGUE

The fact that all existing religious organizations did not provide for any Hebrew school, caused a group of men to organize a Talmud Torah... In 1904 a private house was rented on Rose Street, near First Street [in downtown Los Angeles]. The organization was incorporated that year under the name of 'Talmud Torah' Congregation, which is the name of the present Breed Street Synagogue... After 1910, the Jewish population, which was then estimated to be more than fifteen thousand, began to move to Boyle Heights. In 1913 there was a sufficient number of Jews to purchase a house on the corner of Breed and First Streets, which was used as a house of worship. In 1914 there was no Minyan [quorum of ten men required for public prayer] in the Rose Street Synagogue and the members decided to transfer the corporation, 'Talmud Torah,' and all its assets to those who opened a house of worship on Breed and First Streets.⁵

Soon after its move to the Breed and First streets site in Boyle Heights, the congregation moved north to its present location at 247 North Breed Street. In 1914-15, the congregation constructed a new, wood-framed building for use as a school and chapel. This became commonly known as the "Breed Street Shul," synagogues are often known by the street on which they are located, and *shul* is the colloquial Yiddish language term used interchangeably for school and/or synagogue.⁶ By 1918, the expanding school/chapel required addition of a "portable" building to the center of the lot' and by 1923, the afternoon school had become one of the largest Jewish afternoon schools in Los Angeles, with 100 boys and 10 girls.⁸

A continual flood of immigrants, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe, led to a dramatic increase in Jewish households in Boyle Heights, from an estimated 1,842 in 1920 to more than 10,000 by 1930.⁹ This ever-growing working and lower middle class population prompted the planning of a new synagogue. The

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Los Angeles Sunday Times reported in July 1920 that "The congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles... will erect a fine church on the west side of Breed Street, south of Brooklyn Avenue, in the Boyle Heights district." It also noted, "Plans for the building were prepared by Edelman & Barnett, architects."¹⁰ In 1921, Rabbi S.M. (Solomon Michael) Neches (1891-1954) moved to Los Angeles from Columbus, Ohio, to become rabbi of the Congregation. Born in Jerusalem, Neches was active in the American Zionist movement, which promoted establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine (now Israel). In 1922, the existing, wood-framed building was turned 90 degrees and moved to the rear of the double lot to make room for the new brick synagogue. Constructed of unreinforced masonry with veneer brick and cast stone embellishments on the façade, the new Byzantine Revival style synagogue was dedicated on June 3, 1923.¹¹

In 1935, Rabbi Osher Zilberstein (1891-1973), a tenth generation rabbi originally from Mezhiritch, Wolyn, Russia (now Poland), assumed spiritual leadership of the congregation. Upon his arrival, Rabbi Zilberstein observed that the Talmud Torah meeting in the school/chapel building at the rear of the property did not offer intensive enough Jewish education. He felt that such education could only be accomplished by a *yeshiva*, or full day parochial, elementary school. He also wanted to offer advanced rabbinical studies. Under his direction, the Pacific Hebrew Seminary was established, later known as Los Angeles Jewish Academy, the city's first Jewish, parochial, elementary day school.¹² Classes in Talmud, bible and other subjects were also offered for adults, numbering some 55 in 1938. Zilberstein was also active in the American Zionist movement, and served as president of the local Orthodox Rabbis *Misrad*

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(Board of Rabbis), led efforts to centralize *kashrat* (adherence to Jewish dietary laws), and was considered the dean of the local Orthodox rabbinate.

The massive scale of the building and solidity of its brick construction made the Shul an icon of permanence to travel-weary immigrants and it became affectionately known as "Queen of the Shuls." By the late 1930s, the Shul had established itself as the spiritual center of the Jewish community in Boyle Heights. Located just south of the business district on Brooklyn Avenue (renamed Cesar E. Chavez Avenue in 1995), which principally housed kosher butchers, bakeries, delis, bookstores and other shops catering to the Jewish community, it was surrounded on the 200 block of North Breed Street by the Julia Ann Singer Jewish Day Nursery (now part of Vista del Mar Child Care Services), Los Angeles Jewish Academy (absorbed into present-day Yavneh Hebrew Academy), Soto-Michigan Jewish Community Center (first of its kind in Los Angeles), and Mount Sinai Clinic (a forerunner of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center).

In 1941, the Los Angeles Jewish Academy opened in a new building at 233 North Breed Street, two doors south of the Shul (building extant, now the Early Childhood Learning Center) to house the congregation's supplementary Hebrew school for boys and girls, whose curriculum included modern Hebrew language, prayers, customs and ceremonies, and history. This became known as the Los Angeles Jewish Academy Talmud Torah. In 1945, Rabbi Zilberstein realized his dream with the establishment of the Los Angeles Jewish Academy's All Day School, the city's first Jewish parochial elementary school. In 1946, there were approximately 250 students attending the Hebrew school and 100 students attending the parochial school.

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Not only is Breed Street Shul the earliest surviving example of a community supplementary Hebrew school in Los Angeles, but it is also the first Jewish, parochial, elementary school, and school for adult studies. In addition, under its auspices, the first summer camp for Orthodox youth was established in 1946.¹³

The Jewish concept of expressing love for God by constant study was eventually institutionalized in Talmud Torah, the name given to elementary religious schools provided by Jewish communities in Europe, especially for children whose parents could not afford the tuition of a private *cheder*, or one-room school. The Talmud Torah was brought to America with the first wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. Here it became the community Hebrew school that served all strata of Jews, not only the underprivileged, and was "supplementary" in that generally students attended three times a week, on weekday afternoons or evenings after public school and on either Saturday or Sunday mornings, depending on the school. One of the main functions of the Talmud Torah in the United States, of which the Hebrew school at the Breed Street Shul was an excellent example, was to provide higher standards of education and better teachers, not available in a private *cheder*.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was marked by a solemn ceremony and blowing of the *Shofar* (ram's horn, usually reserved for the High Holy Days) on May 15th at the Breed Street Shul, and the new official flag of Israel was unfurled for the first time in Los Angeles. In the years following World War II, the Jewish population of Boyle Heights gradually began to disperse, emigrating to Beverly-Fairfax, Venice-Ocean Park and Pico-Robertson in West Los Angeles, and into the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys.¹⁴ Rabbi

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Zilberstein continued to serve the congregation until his death in 1973, at the age of 85. Although rumored to have appeared in the 1927 "The Jazz Singer," starring Al Jolson, the Shul appears only in the 1980 remake, with Neil Diamond. From a population of less than 2,500 at the turn of the 20th century, today's Los Angeles Jewish population has grown to over 600,000 (third in size after New York City and Tel Aviv, Israel).

In order to comply with a local earthquake hazard reduction ordinance (Division 88 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code) requiring seismic retrofit or closure, the main brick synagogue was vacated in the mid-1980s. Thereafter the dwindling congregation worshipped in the wood-framed synagogue at the rear of the property. In 1987, the Whittier-Narrows earthquake damaged the vacant brick synagogue and by 1996, Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles ceased holding services altogether. It was the last active synagogue in Boyle Heights.

In 1988, the Shul was designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 359, and in December 1998, it was visited by then-First Lady (now U.S. Senator) Hillary Rodham Clinton as the first Los Angeles "official project" for her national *Save America's Treasures* campaign. At the time, *Save America's Treasures* was a public-private partnership between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (now solely a program of the National Trust).

Of the roughly 30 synagogues located in Boyle Heights and neighboring City Terrace, the Breed Street Shul was the oldest and largest in terms of membership and school enrollment, and the only synagogue to sponsor a Jewish

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day school, a supplementary Hebrew school, and advanced pre-rabbinic and rabbinic studies. The most imposing synagogue in scale in the neighborhood, it was known throughout the city for its "old country" style. Its centrist Orthodox approach made it appealing to a broad segment of the community. It was the congregation with the most continuity of, and widely respected, rabbinic leadership (Rabbi S.M. Neches, from 1921-1935 and Rabbi Osher Zilberstein, from 1935-1973). Its rabbis and members were active in communal endeavors, including support of Jewish education, kashrut supervision, Zionism and community institutions. By the 1980s, it was the last surviving congregation, long after all other synagogues in the area had closed.

There are no other remaining synagogues in Boyle Heights. Buildings that were formerly synagogues and are now used as churches or for other purposes include: Iglesia Monte de Sion (formerly Congregation B'nai Zion), 3364 City Terrace Drive; Iglesia de Dios (formerly Srere Shul), Second Street and Matthews Avenue; Iglesia Casa de Dios (formerly Congregation B'nai Jacob, Fairmount Street Shul), 2833 Fairmount Street; Variety Boys and Girls Club (formerly Cincinnati Street Shul), 2530 Cincinnati Street; and Church of God of Prophecy (formerly B'nai Israel Congregation, Houston Street Shul), 2446 Houston Street. These remaining buildings are not as large or architecturally imposing as the Breed Street Shul. In addition, inasmuch as these synagogues have been adaptively used, in varying degrees their Jewish significance has been affected and in many cases, lost.

The buildings on the Shul property reflect the aspirations of the Jewish community to establish itself permanently in Los Angeles. Through its spiritual leaders, who helped establish Jewish educational programs locally and

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their active support of the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel, the Shul became part of the Jewish legacy of Boyle Heights. As the name Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles implies, the connection to place was critical to making Los Angeles home to immigrant Jews. The brick synagogue established a solid foundation for Jewish religious and educational purposes, and created a familiar, welcoming environment for Yiddish-speaking, first generation Jewish immigrants and their families. Its presence, even today, as a place of congregation, assembly and worship, continues to warrant respect.

The rear, wood-framed vernacular synagogue, designed by O.M. Warner and constructed by Bornstein & Cohn, served from 1915 until 1996 as a school and chapel. The main brick synagogue is a rare and unique example of Byzantine Revival style architecture by a highly skilled and prominent local architect, Abram M. Edelman (1864-1941).

Byzantine Revival architecture is an interpretation of Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire architecture which originated in the fourth century and lasted until the fall of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in 1453. Domes, round arches, elaborate columns, bas-relief decorative work and structural polychromy characterize the revival style. As described by William MacDonald, specialist in Roman and Byzantine art and architecture, "The interior of the Byzantine church, by obliterating the distinction between architecture and decoration, became a magical image of the Christian cosmos."¹⁵ Typically, Byzantine interiors "mirror... the courts of heaven"¹⁶ by emphasizing high interior volumes with ceilings resembling the firmament (heavens). Byzantine Revival was a popular style for synagogues during the late 19th and early 20th century because of its association with "... Byzantium and the pre-Christian Middle Eastern

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cultures [which were] considered appropriate ornament for some synagogues and other Jewish institutions."¹⁷ Due to its differentiation from Christian church architecture, particularly Gothic style,¹⁸ a number of synagogues in the United States were designed in Byzantine Revival style.¹⁹

The exterior of the brick synagogue includes dichromatic (alternating bands of sandstone-colored) brickwork on the façade, round-arched windows and doorways characteristic of Byzantine Revival style, as well as "dense prickly foliage carving,"²⁰ and other organic motifs (palmettes) and Stars of David in bas-relief cast stone detail. Following Byzantine tradition, the intersecting barrel vaults of the sanctuary ceiling depict the firmament and overall hand-painted decoration blend art with architecture.

Locally, four other Byzantine Revival style buildings compare with the Breed Street Shul: Sinai Congregation (S. Tilden Norton architect, 1925, Conservative, 401-407 South New Hampshire Avenue, City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 91); Congregation B'nai B'rith (Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Abram M. Edelman, S. Tilden Norton and David Allison architects, 1929, Reform, 3641-3663 Wilshire Boulevard, National Register-listed 1981, City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 116); Al Malaikah Temple/Shrine Auditorium (John C. Austin and G. Albert Lansburg architects, 1926, 647-665 West Jefferson Boulevard, National Register-listed 1999, City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 139); and Saint Sophia Cathedral (Gus Kalionzes, Charles A. Klingerman and Albert R. Walker architects, 1952, 1324-1420 South Normandie Avenue, City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 120). Although not lacking in decorative detail, the Breed Street Shul is the most modest of these local extant examples of Byzantine Revival style.

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Also, the other examples are stone or stucco-clad, the Shul is unique in that it is the only one faced in brick.

The architect, Abram M. Edelman (1862-1941) was one of six children of Rabbi Abraham Wolf Edelman, the first ordained rabbi to serve in Los Angeles. Edelman (variously listed as Abram, Abraham and A.M.) was active in southern California architectural circles. He was a member of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1902 until his death in 1941, and at various times he served on the Board of Directors and as Vice President. He also served as Secretary-Treasurer of both the Southern California Board of Architects and the California State Board of Architects.²¹ During his long career, Edelman designed a wide variety of important buildings, including office buildings, schools, theaters and synagogues. Some of his extant building designs in Los Angeles include: the El Mio House (National Register-listed 1982); Remick Building (1903) (National Register-listed 1978 as contributor to the Broadway Theatre and Commercial Historic District); Horace Mann Junior High School (1930); Hillcrest Country Club (1921); Theosophy Hall (1927); and Wilshire Boulevard Temple (National Register-listed 1981). Some of his notable works have been demolished, including the State Normal School (demolished 1925), Black Office Building (1912), and Los Angeles County Jail (1887).

Leo W. Barnett (1880-1950), Edelman's nephew, was credited in part with design of the Breed Street Shul, although there is no corroborating evidence that he was involved in the final design. Edelman founded the firm of Edelman & Barnett with his nephew in 1905. In 1909, they designed the first hospital building for the Kaspere Cohn Hospital Association²², when the hospital outgrew

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its original location on Carroll Avenue in Angelino Heights.²³ By the mid-1920s, Edelman was working with Archie C. Zimmerman (1894-1970). They worked together on a number of projects, including the 52nd Street School, for which they won a local American Institute of Architects award in 1925.²⁴ The building permit for the Breed Street Shul, issued on July 5, 1922, lists "A.M. Edelman and A.C. Zimmerman" as architects.²⁵ Zimmerman worked with H.W. Michael designing schools and churches prior to his work with Edelman.

On July 26, 2000, the Shul was quitclaimed from the City of Los Angeles, which had foreclosed on an assessment recorded against the property for barricading and protection (under Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 91.8408. Vandalism of Historical Buildings), to Breed Street Shul Project, Inc., a California public benefit and 501(C)(3) corporation and subsidiary of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern California, with the intent to rehabilitate Shul buildings as a community museum, educational and cultural center.

¹ Joseph L. Malamut, ed., *Volume III of Southwest Jewry* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Jewish Institutions and Their Leaders, 1957) 155.

² *Meet Me at Brooklyn & Soto*, video, dir. Ellie Kahn, written by Ellie Kahn and Stephen J. Sass, with narration by Harold Gould, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California, 1996. George J. Sanchez, Ph.D., specialist in Boyle Heights history, is Associate Professor of History with an appointment in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicities at the University of Southern California.

³ Wendy Elliott, "Boyle Heights: Jewish Ambience in a Multi-Cultural Neighborhood," dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, draft #2 2000, 77.

⁴ *Meet Me at Brooklyn & Soto*.

⁵ Jacob J. Meltz, ed., *Mount Sinai Year Book* (Los Angeles: Associated Organizations of Los Angeles, 1946) 19-20.

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⁶ William Morris, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000). Shul: Pronunciation: sh^{oo}l, sh^{oo}l Noun: Judaism A synagogue. Etymology: Yiddish, from Middle High German *schuol*, school, from Old High German *scuola*, from Latin *scola*.

⁷ City of Los Angeles, Department of Buildings, Application for the Erection of Buildings, #2327, 3 May 1918.

⁸ Max Vorspan and Lloyd Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1970) 169.

⁹ Vorspan and Gartner 188.

¹⁰ "To Erect Church," *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, 18 July 1920: np.

¹¹ Meltz 20.

¹² Malamut 155.

¹³ These educational efforts reflect basic, timeless precepts of Judaism. The central, and one of the most ancient, Jewish prayers is the *Shema* ("Hear O Israel, Adonai is Our God, Adonai is One."), the first paragraph of which is taken from the sixth chapter of *Deuteronomy*. The basic theme of the paragraph is Talmud Torah, requiring Jews to express their love for God by constant study "when you lie down and when you rise up." No matter where they are, at home or away, Jews are commanded to engage in Torah study. In addition, parents are required to teach Torah to their children through formal education and even in casual conversation.

¹⁴ Stephen J. Sass, ed., *Jewish Los Angeles - A Guide* (Los Angeles: Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1982) 22.

¹⁵ William L. MacDonald, *Early Christian & Byzantine Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1977) 45.

¹⁶ MacDonald 40.

¹⁷ Philippa Lewis and Gillian Darley, *Dictionary of Ornament* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) 66.

¹⁸ H.A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995) 174.

¹⁹ Examples of other extant Byzantine-influenced, synagogues elsewhere in the United States include: Beth Israel Congregation (1912, Henry L. Lewin, architect, Bangor, Maine); Baltimore Hebrew Congregation Synagogue/Berea Temple of Seventh-Day Adventists (1891, Charles L. Carson, architect, Baltimore, Maryland); Temple Emanue-El/Chancery & Pastoral Office (1891, unknown, Helena, Montana); Touro Synagogue (1909, Emil Weil, architect, New Orleans, Louisiana); Congregation B'rith Sholem Synagogue (1921, unknown, Ogden, Utah); Congregation Beth Israel

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²⁰ Lewis and Darley 66.

²¹ *Architect and Engineer*, June 1927: 115.

²² Now Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

²³ *Bicentennial Digest: A Perspective of Pioneer Los Angeles Jewry*, (Los Angeles: Jewish Federation - Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1976) 47.

²⁴ *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 20 February 1925: 45.

²⁵ City of Los Angeles, Department of Buildings, Application for the Erection of Buildings, #22608, 5 July 1922.

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"Abram M. Edelman, Architect," *Architect and Engineer* March 1941: 68.

Architect and Engineer June 1927: 115.

Southwest Builder and Contractor 20 February 1925: 45.

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"Jews Here Pray for Peace as Nation is Born," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 May 1948.

"Mrs. Clinton Goes to Boyle Heights," *The Jewish Journal*, 18 December 1998: 12.

"Rabbi Osher Zilberstein," *Vital Records. Los Angeles Times*, 18 January 1973: pt. III: 19.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The land referred to herein is situated in the County of Los Angeles, State of California, and is described as follows:

Lots 49 and 50 of L.N. Breed's subdivision of the Easterly portion of Lot 1, Block 60 of Hancock's Survey, in the City of Los Angeles.

Assessors Parcel number 5183-003-005

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes land historically associated with the property.

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Photographs

Recent contemporary photographs (1996 and 2001) were taken by Robert Jay Chattel, AIA and Christy Lombardo and are noted as "CA". Negatives are located as follows:

Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, Inc. (CA)
13322 ½ Valleyheart Drive South
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423-3287
(818) 788-7954

Contemporary photographs (1980 and 1996) were taken by Bill Aron and are noted as "BAP". Negatives are located as follows:

Bill Aron Photography (BAP)
1227 South Hi Point
Los Angeles, CA 90035-2611
(323) 934-0426

Contemporary photograph descriptions (dates as noted):

- A. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (CA, 2001)
- B. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (CA, 2001)
- C. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (context) (CA, 1996)
- D. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (CA, 1996)
- E. Main synagogue exterior from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- F. Main synagogue, exterior detail of half-round window at top of great arch from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- G. Main synagogue, exterior detail of half-round window at top of great arch from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- H. Main synagogue, exterior detail of Star of David detail in pilasters at main entrance doors from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- I. Main synagogue, exterior detail of typical window on side elevation from southwest looking northeast (CA, 1996)
- J. Main synagogue, exterior detail of typical basement window on side elevation (CA, 1996)
- K. Main synagogue interior, lobby from southwest looking northeast (CA, 1996)
- L. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southeast looking northwest (makeshift curtain/mechitzah on left, (BAP, 1980)

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- M. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary at balcony from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- N. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary at balcony from east looking west (compare to M) (BAP, 1996)
- O. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southwest looking northeast at central bimah with small reader stands, armature of chandeliers within railed area (CA, 1996)
- P. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southwest looking northeast at balcony (CA, 1996)
- Q. Main synagogue interior, detail of typical upper level leaded stained glass window (CA, 1996)
- R. Main synagogue interior, detail of typical spandrel with painted decoration (CA, 1996)
- S. Main synagogue interior, detail of ark from east looking west (BAP, 1996)
- T. Main synagogue interior, detail of central bimah baluster/lamp post (CA, 1996)
- U. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall, detail of stage with painted backdrop (compare to 6) (CA, 1996)
- V. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall typical window detail with hopper-type window (CA, 1996)
- W. Rear synagogue exterior, from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- X. Rear synagogue exterior, from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- Y. Rear synagogue (foreground), main building (background), exterior from northwest looking southeast (CA, 1996)
- Z. Rear synagogue interior, from north looking south (BAP, 1980)
- AA. Rear synagogue interior, from north looking south (compare to Z) (CA, 1996)
- BB. Rear synagogue interior, from northwest looking southeast (compare to 7) (CA, 1996)
- CC. Rear synagogue interior, from south looking north (compare to 8, note partition) (CA, 1996)

Historic photograph descriptions (sources as noted):

- 1 Main synagogue (foreground), rear building (background), exterior from southeast looking northwest (circa 1923, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to B)
- 2. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (1923, *Los Angeles Times*, compare to B)
- 3. Main synagogue exterior, detail of main entrance, from east looking west (circa 1950, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to A and E)

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4. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary, bimah at ark with Ladies Auxiliary from east looking west (circa 1920s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to S)
5. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary, bimah at ark from east looking west (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to S)
6. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall, stage with children from east looking west (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to U)
7. Rear synagogue interior, from northwest looking southeast (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to BB)
8. Rear synagogue interior, from south looking north (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to CC)

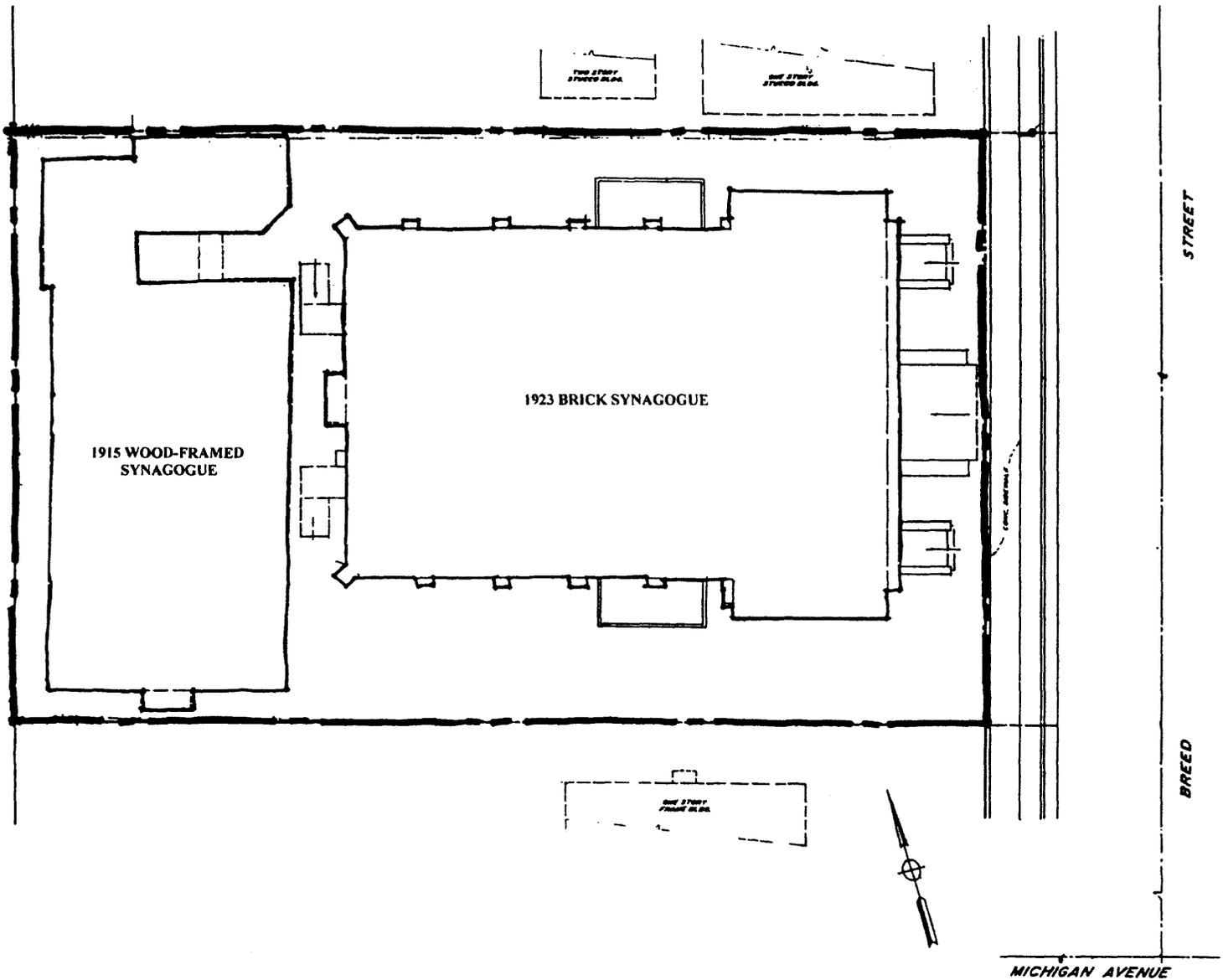
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- D. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (CA, 1996)
- E. Main synagogue exterior from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- F. Main synagogue, exterior detail of half-round window at top of great arch from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- G. Main synagogue, exterior detail of half-round window at top of great arch from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- H. Main synagogue, exterior detail of Star of David detail in pilasters at main entrance doors from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- I. Main synagogue, exterior detail of typical window on side elevation from southwest looking northeast (CA, 1996)
- J. Main synagogue, exterior detail of typical basement window on side elevation (CA, 1996)
- K. Main synagogue interior, lobby from southwest looking northeast (CA, 1996)
- L. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southeast looking northwest (makeshift curtain/mechitzah on left, (BAP, 1980)

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- M. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary at balcony from east looking west (BAP, 1980)
- N. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary at balcony from east looking west (compare to M) (BAP, 1996)
- O. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southwest looking northeast at central bimah with small reader stands, armature of chandeliers within railed area (CA, 1996)
- P. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary from southwest looking northeast at balcony (CA, 1996)
- Q. Main synagogue interior, detail of typical upper level leaded stained glass window (CA, 1996)
- R. Main synagogue interior, detail of typical spandrel with painted decoration (CA, 1996)
- S. Main synagogue interior, detail of ark from east looking west (BAP, 1996)
- T. Main synagogue interior, detail of central bimah baluster/lamp post (CA, 1996)
- U. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall, detail of stage with painted backdrop (compare to 6) (CA, 1996)
- V. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall typical window detail with hopper-type window (CA, 1996)
- W. Rear synagogue exterior, from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- X. Rear synagogue exterior, from east looking west (CA, 1996)
- Y. Rear synagogue (foreground), main building (background), exterior from northwest looking southeast (CA, 1996)
- Z. Rear synagogue interior, from north looking south (BAP, 1980)
- AA. Rear synagogue interior, from north looking south (compare to Z) (CA, 1996)
- BB. Rear synagogue interior, from northwest looking southeast (compare to 7) (CA, 1996)
- CC. Rear synagogue interior, from south looking north (compare to 8, note partition) (CA, 1996)

Historic photograph descriptions (sources as noted):

- 1. Main synagogue (foreground), rear building (background), exterior from southeast looking northwest (circa 1923, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to B)
- 2. Main synagogue exterior from southeast looking northwest (1923, *Los Angeles Times*, compare to B)
- 3. Main synagogue exterior, detail of main entrance, from east looking west (circa 1950, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to A and E)

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4. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary, bimah at ark with Ladies Auxiliary from east looking west (circa 1920s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to S)
5. Main synagogue interior, sanctuary, bimah at ark from east looking west (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to S)
6. Main synagogue interior, basement social hall, stage with children from east looking west (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to U)
7. Rear synagogue interior, from northwest looking southeast (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to BB)
8. Rear synagogue interior, from south looking north (circa late 1940s, Jewish Historical Society of Southern California archives, compare to CC)