

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 *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 SHAAREI TFILOH SYNAGOGUE

other names/site number B-4501

2. Location

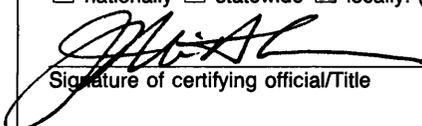
street & number 2001 Liberty Heights Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Baltimore N/A vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Independent City code 510 zip code 21217

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 locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official/Title

9-3-96
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
Date

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.)

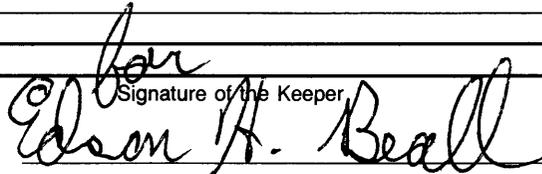
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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:)


Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
10.10.96

Shaarei Tfiloh Synagogue
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD B-4501
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)

CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof Stone/Slate/Metal/Copper

other

Narrative Description

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 7.1

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

RELIGION

Period of Significance

1921-1946

Significant Dates

1921

1926

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Russell, Stanislaus (architect)

Narrative Statement of Significance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 8.2

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 9.1

Bibliography

(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:

Shaarei Tfiloh Synagogue
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD B-4501
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one (1) acre

USGS quad: Baltimore West, MD

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8	3	5	7	6	7	0	4	3	5	3	3	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

2

Zone	Easting				Northing									

3

Zone	Easting				Northing									

4

Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 10.1
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 10.1
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Fred B. Shoken

organization N/A date 1 March 1994

street & number 413 East 31st Street telephone (410) 366-7724

city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21218

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 Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation, C/O Arnold Cummins

street & number 2001 Liberty Heights Avenue telephone (410) 523-4375

city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21217

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.

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SHAAREI TFILOH
Baltimore City
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Shaarei Tfiloh synagogue, located at Liberty Heights Avenue and Auchentoroly Terrace, in northwest Baltimore, Maryland, is a rock-faced stone structure with large arched stained glass windows and a pedimented roof line surmounted by a central copper-clad dome. Embraced on two sides by Druid Hill Park, it is situated in a prominent and highly visible location. The main entrances are located in the northwest and southwest corners. A secondary entrance to the first floor is located on Holmes Avenue. The building is rectangular in shape with inset rounded corners. It is seventy feet on the east and west and one hundred eighteen feet on the north and south. The first floor interior consists of a *Beth Hemedrosh* (study room), offices, two apartments, kitchen, rest rooms, and social hall with stage. The second floor houses the main sanctuary space which is free of columns and takes up most of the building. It features a classically decorated Aron Kodesh (ark where torahs are kept) set on a *bimah* (and elevated stage) along the eastern wall, a reading platform in the center eastern third of the sanctuary and wooden pews. A balcony originally for women's seating is supported from above and forms a third level along three of the walls. This level also includes rest rooms in the rear. Rising above the sanctuary is the rotunda of the central dome. Interior materials include: oak floors, wainscotting, painted oak trim, marble decorations above the ark, plaster walls, stained glass in swirling patterns and star of David motifs, plaster ceilings, and ceramic tile floors and wainscotting in the second level lobby. The building has undergone only minor alterations, such as wood panelling and a dropped acoustical tile ceiling in the social hall. The synagogue is in fair condition: the rounded corners of the sanctuary ceiling exhibit some plaster damage caused by leakage, and some of the stained glass windows are in need of repair.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Shaarei Tfiloh is located in northwest Baltimore adjacent to Druid Hill Park. It is surrounded on two sides by the park, with a dense urban residential neighborhood adjoining the synagogue to the south and west. The building takes up most of its urban lot. Narrow landscaping strips surround the building on the three street frontages. A small fenced-in yard is located along the inner-block southern exposure. An alley running parallel with Holmes Avenue and Auchentoroly Terrace abruptly ends at a stone wall at the southern synagogue yard, with ground level more than ten feet above the alley paving. The yard once provided space for fairs and carnivals and is still used seasonally for the congregation's *succah* (a wooden booth erected for a seven day holiday which takes place two weeks after the Jewish New Year).

The northern Liberty Heights Avenue facade is four bay wide featuring large, two-story high stained glass windows. The walls of the synagogue are rough, rock-faced stone with smooth limestone trim. The ground level fenestration features three-part double hung windows. The central section is 21 over 21 obscured glass flanked by two similar nine over nine lights. The windows are set into smooth limestone surrounds. A few room air conditioning units project from these windows. A limestone band acts as a water table defining the first floor level.

The large arched stained glass windows define the sanctuary level and balcony. They are also in three sections divided by wooden frames painted white. The stained glass is bluish-green in color and features a swirling pattern. A dark blue glass border defines the window edges. The lower section of the window pivots out for ventilation. Wood panels with slightly projecting star of David motifs and oval designs define the balcony floor level. These panels continue along the stone facade forming a smooth limestone band course which also features projecting star of David decorations. The balcony level windows feature decorative circular stained glass windows with star of David motifs. The circular window is surrounded by stained glass similar to the second level. A smooth limestone surround defines windows on the balcony level and is capped by emphasized keystones.

Centered on the facade above the large arched windows is a smaller circular attic stained glass window featuring a small star

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SHAAREI TFILOH
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of David motif with twelve panels of floral designs radiating from the central star. The oculus window is set into a stone surround with four emphasized stones. The facade ends in a simple pediment above this attic level window. A simple dentiled limestone band completes the building walls.

The southern inner-block elevation is identical to the northern facade except for a doorway replacing one of the central ground level window sections providing access to the yard from the social hall. A narrow stairway to the basement furnace room is also located on the southern elevation.

The eastern and western elevations are three bays wide. The central bay is similar to those of the northern facade, except it is slightly narrower. The flanking bays are slightly smaller and feature two sections of stained glass. Instead of a circular star motif, they are made up of two arched windows on the balcony level reflecting the motif of the ten commandments. The eastern facade includes a stone chimney hiding the flue from the basement furnace. The Holmes Avenue elevation has a central double-door entrance to the first floor level instead of a three-part central window. It is flanked by two smaller windows, now partially filled by wood. A multi-paned transom surmounts this entrance.

The inset curved corner entrance bays feature ground level doorways on the eastern elevation and sanctuary level entrances on the western elevation above flights or granite steps. All of the entrances feature double wood single pane doors with decorative knob surrounds. The eastern entrances are surmounted by multi-paned transoms and two-section stained glass windows on the upper level. The sanctuary entrances are set into limestone bracketed surrounds and have blank transoms surmounting the double doors. These entrances open slightly below the sanctuary level and require an interior lobby stair to reach the sanctuary. Above the entrance is a decorative limestone arch featuring a ten commandments motif with Hebrew letters abbreviating the ten commandments. The decorative arch is punctuated by simple stained glass windows with star of David design. The curved entrance sections end in a small bracketed cornice capped by a copper roof.

Rising above the building's slate roof is the copper-clad dome above a sixteen-sided limestone drum punctuated by arched stained glass windows. Simple pilasters and band courses decorate the

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drum. Copper gutters and downspouts direct rain from the roof.

The interior of the synagogue features the sanctuary on the second level and many ancillary uses on the ground floor. The lobby just off the sanctuary is accessible by the corner entrances on Holmes Avenue. It features ceramic tile floors set in hexagonal patterns, tile wainscotting and large brass memorial plaques on the wall above the wainscotting. Three entrances with single-panelled doors lead to the main sanctuary.

The main sanctuary features wood wainscotting, plaster walls and ceiling, and an oak floor carpeted along the aisle. The seating is divided by three central aisles and two side aisles. The central seating sections generally have seven seats per pew; the end section pews have eight seats. There are approximately twenty-four rows of pews. A reading platform is centered on the main aisle approximately one-third of the distance from the eastern wall. Smaller three seat pews flank the slightly raised platform which replicates the shape of the building plan with inset curved corners. Twisted oak banisters enclose the platform with opening for access on the sides. A large wood table, where the Torah is read faces the ark.

Centered on the eastern wall is the *bimah* and ark. At the center of the *bimah* is a lectern and two desks for dignitaries are located on either side. Painted wood panels decorated with star of David motifs decorate the outside walls of the *bimah*. The ark is set into a two-story arched opening flanked by monumental square fluted columns ending in composite capitals. A curtain protects the ark where torahs are housed. Inside the ark is a sunburst stained glass window artificially lit from behind. The ark is flanked by two sets of half round fluted columns with composite capitals which support a plain entablature with dentils. Directly above the ark is an archway filled with a crown motif surrounded by foliated decorations. Wood panels and amplifier speakers flank the decorative arch. Above the arch is a marble bas-relief of two lions supporting the ten commandments. Above this decoration is a simple oculus stained glass window with star of David motif. A console keystone completes the large two story arched opening.

Two electrical six light brass candelabra flank the lectern on the *bimah*. Hanging above the ark is a *ner tamid* (a perpetual light) utilizing a star of David motif. Two electrical six light

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brass candelabra also flank the reading table. Above the reading platform is a large chandelier featuring a large lantern and multiple bare bulbs. This light fixture and other smaller lights hanging from the ceiling and balcony feature star of David motifs. Sconces along the side walls provide additional lighting. The decorative arch surrounding the ark is highlighted by bulbs set into arches and the cornice.

The balcony is hung from the ceiling by metal rods. Wood panels with star of David motifs decorate the balcony walls. Three rows of stepped seating are on the sides and additional rows in the rear. A rear wall separates the sanctuary from the stairway and rest rooms located in the curved building sections. The balcony features folding auditorium seating instead of pews. Above the balcony, the rotunda of the dome is decorated with blank arches, smaller arched stained glass windows, dentilled cornices and simple pilasters. A series of radiators are set into the drum. At the top of the dome is a star of David motif.

The attic level is accessible from a hatch located in one of the balcony level rest rooms. Within the attic are wooden ceiling joists and immense steel girders approximately five feet in height spanning the width of the building. These girders support the drum of the dome and the steel rods from which the balcony is hung. The four attic level circular stained glass windows provide some illumination in the attic, but are unseen from the sanctuary.

A small lobby is located off the Holmes Avenue entrance on the first level. Rest rooms are located in the curved building sections off this lobby. The stairway which continues up to the balcony level features a simple banister and console designs on the sides. The lobby wall is decorated with plaques honoring congregants who served in the armed forces during World War II. Three entry doors provide access to the social hall. A hallway to the left of the lobby leads to the kitchen, apartments and the *Beth Hemedrosh*. The two major spaces on this level are the social hall and *Beth Hemedrosh*.

The social hall is a large room with panelled walls and a dropped acoustical ceiling. A single column is located in the space. A stage with curtain is located opposite the three entry doors. This space was altered in the 1970s with the paneling and ceiling covering original building materials.

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The *Beth Hemedrosh* functions as a synagogue for Sabbath and morning services throughout the year. It features an ark along the eastern wall, central reading table, and wooden pews relocated from the main sanctuary. The ark is decorated with fluted half-columns with composite capitals. Bare bulbs, located at the cornice, illuminate the ark which ends in dentils. Simple wooden spindles surround the *bimah* and reading platform. The original gas lighting mechanism is visible above the ark but it has been replaced by an electrical *ner tamid*. This room has also been altered with a dropped acoustical tile ceiling.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance	A.D. 1870-1930
Modern Period	A.D. 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning
Religion

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

Religion/Religious Facility/Synagogue

Known Design Source: Architect, Stanislaus Russell

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SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Shaarei Tfiloh synagogue, constructed in 1921, is one of the oldest functioning synagogue buildings in Maryland. It is significant under Criterion A for its association with the migration of Russian and Eastern European Jews to the major urban centers of the northeastern United States in the early twentieth century. The orthodox Shaarei Tfiloh congregation was founded of such immigrants, and has remained in its original building longer than any other Baltimore congregation (75 years in 1996). This stability is remarkable in light of the rapid and comprehensive migration of Baltimore's Jewish community to the suburbs in the period after World War II. The building derives additional significance under Criterion C, embodying the distinctive characteristics of early twentieth century synagogue design including stained glass windows, a central dome and a balcony for women's seating. It is visually distinctive locally for its prominent location near Druid Hill Park and its high visibility in the surrounding area. Designed by Baltimore architect Stanislaus Russell, the building has all four sides equally embellished with stone work and stained glass, a departure from other local synagogues which have prominent front facades with more utilitarian sides and rear.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT

Considering that the Jewish population of Maryland is today approximately 210,000, and that it is estimated that fewer than 200 Jewish congregations have existed in the state,¹ synagogue buildings are rare in Maryland as compared to other religious structures. Also, since the Jewish population has shifted largely from urban centers to suburban areas, most early synagogue buildings have been either destroyed or altered for other uses. Today there are only four synagogues in Baltimore City and seven in the entire state of Maryland, worshipping in pre-1930 synagogue structures.² Only four synagogue buildings in the state are individually listed in the National Register: two are still functioning as synagogues, one is a museum operated by the Jewish Historical Society of Maryland and one is a church.

In general, all synagogue buildings must contain three basic elements: the Holy Ark (*aron kodesh*), either a cabinet or recess in the wall where torah scrolls are kept; and eternal light (*ner tamid*) in the form of a lamp placed above and in front of the ark which burns continually; and a *bimah*, the platform on which stands a table where the torah is read during services.³ The ark and *bimah* are needed in keeping with Jewish liturgy which requires public reading from torah scrolls containing the first five books of the Bible at services at least three days a week. The eternal light is symbolic of the Biblical directive to cause a lamp to burn continually in front of the original tabernacle as stated in Exodus 27:20-21. These elements are found in all synagogues. In most cases, the ark is placed along a wall in the direction of the

¹ Pruce, Earl, Synagogues, Temples and Congregations of Maryland: 1830-1990, Baltimore: Jewish Historical Society of Maryland. 1993, pp. 176-7.

² The number of pre-1930 synagogue buildings still functioning as synagogues in Baltimore and Maryland was determined upon examination of Pruce (1990), which lists all congregations in Maryland, when established, and where located.

³ Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, To be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life, New York: Basic Books, 1972, pp. 193-194.

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original Temple in Jerusalem, since Jews generally pray in this direction.

Additionally, most synagogues will have a candelabrum (*menorah*) reminiscent of the seven-branched *menorah* of the Temple placed prominently near the ark or *bimah*. (Many synagogues have six-branched *menorah* in order not to duplicate the one in the Temple.)⁴ "Aside from these items, whatever other Jewish religious and historical symbols many be displayed depends upon the taste and/or wealth of the congregation, or upon the advice of the architect of the particular synagogue. Stained glass windows, wall inscriptions, carvings, paintings, etc., can express many religious themes, and can reflect a wide range of religious symbols and ritual objects, or historical events in the life of the Jewish people from its very inception over 3800 years ago. The major restriction in these art forms is that no [three-dimensional] human figures are permissible in the synagogue."⁵ There are no other specific design requirements, allowing for a wide range of synagogue arrangements, as well as interior and exterior decorations.

A women's section (*ezrat nashim*) in Orthodox synagogues, is based upon the pattern established in the ancient Temple of Jerusalem in order to avoid levity, immodest and unbecoming behavior between the sexes. The *ezrat nashim* can take the form of a balcony, or a divided section to the side or rear of the men's section at the same level or slightly raised. Various Rabbinic opinions require a divider (*mehitzah*) ranging from 38 to over 60 inches.⁶

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Russian and Eastern European Jews migrated to the United States in large numbers, most often settling in the major cities of the northeast. Between 1880 and 1920, Baltimore's Jewish population grew from an

⁴ Ibid., p. 194.

⁵ Ibid., p. 194.

⁶ Ibid., p. 194.

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estimated 10,000 to 65,000.⁷ This new immigrant group greatly changed the character of American Jewry, which had been predominantly of German ancestry. The German Jewish community was well established in Baltimore by the late nineteenth century.

Most of Baltimore's earliest synagogues were founded by German Jewish immigrants. They were located in fairly modest structures in downtown or East Baltimore in the vicinity of the present day main post office. These congregations at first practiced traditional Judaism, but later reformed and modernized their method of worship. By the turn of the century, a large segment of this early German Jewish immigrant group migrated to northwest Baltimore and synagogues were constructed in the vicinity of Bolton Hill and Reservoir Hill.

Most of Baltimore's largest synagogues were built at the turn of the century by Reform and Conservative congregations moving to the northwest from downtown and East Baltimore: Baltimore Hebrew Congregation moved from Lloyd Street to Madison Avenue (1891); Oheb Shalom moved from Hanover Street to Eutaw Place (1893); Har Sinai moved from Lexington street to Bolton Street (1894); and Chizuk Amuno moved from Lloyd Street to McCulloh Street (1895) and later to Eutaw Place near Druid Hill Park (1922).

The later Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants generally practiced the traditional Orthodox method of worship. They established many congregations in East Baltimore, at times moving into the older buildings of Reform and conservative congregations which moved northwest of downtown. As these groups became better established, they too followed the earlier German Jewish community out to the northwest and built the first large Orthodox synagogues in Baltimore in the early twentieth century rivaling the temples of Conservative and Reform Jews.

Shaarei Tfiloh represents one of the largest Orthodox synagogues built in Baltimore city in the early twentieth century. It was generally founded by the families of Russian and Eastern European Jews who prospered after their arrival in America. This

⁷ Puce, p. 176.

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population maintained traditional Orthodox Jewish practice. When the congregation was incorporated in 1921, its charter stated: "Said congregation shall forever during its existence be an Orthodox Hebrew Congregation and nothing inconsistent with orthodoxy shall be allowed, entertained or considered and the form of prayer and recital shall forever be according to the usual custom of Orthodox Hebrew Congregation."⁸

The congregation began in 1920 as residential development extended to the area west of Druid Hill Park and north of Gwynns Falls Parkway. Increasingly Jews moved into this growing northwest neighborhood. During this era Jews and other minority groups were restricted from living in many Baltimore's communities by deed covenants and general real estate practices.

Northwest Baltimore became the center of the Jewish population in the early to mid-twentieth century. Although the community surrounding the synagogue was not exclusively Jewish, it was predominantly Jewish. Since census records do not indicate religious affiliation, it is impossible to obtain precise figures on the size and location of the Jewish population. However, early congregational membership lists show members living in the immediate community around the synagogue. Also, Orthodox Jews walk to synagogue instead of riding, requiring synagogues to locate within Jewish neighborhoods. Several other large synagogues were built within this general area (within a one mile radius of Shaarei Tfiloh) in the 1920s: Mishkan Israel (1921) in the 2200 block of Madison Avenue; Har Zion (1922) 200 block North Avenue; Chizuk Amuno (1922) 2500 block Eutaw Place; and Shaarei Zion (1926) 3400 block Park Heights Avenue. From the 1920s to the present day, most synagogues in the Baltimore area have been built along the northwest corridor with Park Heights Avenue as the major artery. Earl Pruce in Synagogues, Temples and Congregations of Maryland 1830-1990, lists 24 synagogue locations along Park Heights Avenue.⁹

The congregation first met in a house at 2218 Bryant Street (two blocks south of the synagogue) which was contributed by the

⁸ Shaarei Tfiloh Charter, 1921., p. 1.

⁹ Pruce, p. 215 (A geographical street index of congregations in the Baltimore area).

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builder of the development, Louis Pincus. The name of the congregation, Shaarei Tfiloh, means "Gates of Prayer" in Hebrew.

High holiday services attracted one hundred fifty persons and the new congregation began planning for a permanent home. A lot was purchased for \$16,500 and a building committee engaged architect, Stanislaus Russell (1876-1958) to design the building.¹⁰ Russell designed the Walbrook Methodist Church at North Avenue and Bloomingdale Avenue, the Lithuanian Association Building on Hollins Street, two movie theatres, some houses and apartments in Charles Village and a synagogue for the Mishkan Israel congregation at 2245 Madison Avenue (only the first floor of the building was completed).

The design of Shaarei Tfiloh is unique for its siting. With three street frontages and prominence on Druid Hill Park, all sides have a similar design. In order to place the ark on the eastern side [Orthodox Jews traditionally pray facing east to the site of the original temple in Jerusalem], the main entrance would have to be placed on Holmes Avenue, the least prominent street. Therefore, the entrance was understated and the corner entrances utilized. Most synagogues of the era place design emphasis and ornamentation on the front. At Shaarei Tfiloh, the total composition is emphasized.

Without a prominent front, the dome became a focal point of the design. In order to support the dome without excessive columns, massive steel girders were utilized. The balcony for women's seating (Orthodox synagogues have separate seating for men and women) are hung from the girders hidden in the attic, creating a column free space. Except for a wall separating the stairway from the sanctuary, the entire space is open. From Below it appears that the balconies and rotunda float above the main sanctuary.

Three other local synagogue buildings in Baltimore feature prominent domes. The Madison Avenue Temple, built in 1891, Charles L. Carson, architect and the Eutaw Place Temple, built in 1893,

¹⁰ An Outline History of the Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation. Passover 1942 (in files of the Jewish Historical Society of Maryland), p. 1.

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Joseph Evans Sperry, architect, pre-date steel construction methods and feature domes supported by columns. The more modern Har Sinai Temple at 6300 Park Heights Avenue, built in 1950, Meyer and Ayers, architects, has a column free interior. The entire composition is nearly identical to a Cleveland synagogue designed by internationally known modernist architect, Erich Mendelsohn.

The use of stained glass windows in Baltimore synagogues dates from Lloyd Street synagogue, the first synagogue built in Maryland in 1845. However, Shaarei Tfiloh is significant for its wide scale use of stained glass in the main sanctuary -- in both the swirling pattern which illuminates the second level and the more formal star of David designs prominent on the balcony level. As a totally free standing structure, stained glass for exterior windows is utilized to its fullest.

Ground was broken for construction of the synagogue on Sunday, July 10, 1921, and the first floor was completed before the High Holidays of 1921. On September 23, 1921, the first services were conducted in the new synagogue. In a short time, the congregation had an active sisterhood, hebrew school for children and adult talmud classes. It would take five years to raise funds and build the main sanctuary and complete the original design. The first services in the completed building were held on September 27, 1926.¹¹

The Baltimore Jewish Times noted when the synagogue plans were announced in the May 6, 1921 issue, that the construction reflected the northwest trend of the Jewish population in Baltimore. One of the speakers at the cornerstone ceremony emphasized that although founded on traditional principles, unless the congregation adapted the synagogue to present conditions, it would not endure.¹² The synagogue was a focal point for the community and not only provided a place for religious worship and instruction, but indoctrinated members in a distinctly American culture while retaining religious and ethnic identity. Synagogue activities included: a Hebrew School, speaker's forums, teen-age discussion groups and Boy and Girl Scout troops.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹² Baltimore Jewish Times, May 6, 1921.

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Although the synagogue functioned and grew in the 1920s and early 1930s, the congregation lacked a permanent spiritual leader -- a rabbi. For *Shevuoth* (a holiday commemorating the receiving of the law at Mount Sinai) of 1933, the congregation invited Rabbi Nathan Drazin to lead the service. The congregation was so impressed by him that he was hired to be the first permanent rabbi of Shaarei Tfiloh. He remained in that post until 1969, when he moved to Israel. Rabbi Drazin was the spiritual leader of Shaarei Tfiloh during the time when it was one of the largest and most prominent Orthodox congregations in Baltimore. The synagogue was often used for special ceremonies for the entire Jewish community since it was the largest Orthodox synagogue in Baltimore City.

While many synagogues were built in Baltimore City in the early twentieth century, nearly all congregations move out to the northwest suburbs in the period after World War II. Shaarei Tfiloh remains a functioning Orthodox congregation, despite a dwindling membership. Since the mid-1970s, it has been one of only two Orthodox congregations located outside of the Upper Park Heights neighborhood and other nearby suburban neighborhoods.

Today, only four Jewish congregations are located in pre-1930 synagogue buildings. B'Nai Israel, 27 Lloyd Street, is an orthodox congregation which has been housed since 1895 in a building constructed in 1876 for the Chizuk Amuno congregation. Beth Am, an independent congregation, worships at 2501 Eutaw Place, originally built for Chizuk Amuno in 1922. Shearith Israel, an Orthodox congregation, worships at 5813 Park Heights Avenue, built for the congregation in 1923 in the northwestern suburbs. The only other inner-city congregation, Bolton Street Synagogue, a non-affiliated congregation, purchased and renovated a former late nineteenth century church building in Bolton Hill.

This pattern of synagogue worship in relatively modern structures is true throughout Maryland. Outside of Baltimore, only three Jewish congregations worship in synagogues built before 1930: B'er Chayim Congregation in Cumberland worships in a building it constructed in 1867 (the oldest continuously operating synagogue building in Maryland); B'Nai Abraham Congregation in Hagerstown worships in a synagogue it constructed in 1925, and Beth Shalom in Frederick worship in a building it reconstructed for a synagogue in 1923. The Shaarei Tfiloh synagogue, therefore, is one of the

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oldest in Maryland operating in its original structure, having never moved nor changed its orthodox affiliation.

The building is virtually intact except for some minor alterations most of which have taken place in the 1970s. The most prominent being: wood panelling and dropped ceilings in the social hall, a dropped ceiling in the *Beth Hemedrosh*, and wood panelling and modernization in two apartments utilized by the *chazan* and others who stay in the synagogue overnight for the Sabbath and Jewish holidays (Orthodox Jews generally do not ride on the sabbath and few live near the synagogue). Today the main sanctuary is only used for the High Holidays, and occasional Bar Mitzvah, or other special ceremony. The heating system has been cut-off to the main sanctuary space. Repairs have been made to the plaster ceiling of the main sanctuary which has been plagued by chronic leaks at the building corners. Some of the stained glass has been replaced providing breaks in color and in the swirling pattern of the sanctuary level, and other windows are in need of repair. In spite of these alterations, the building maintains the character of an early twentieth century orthodox synagogue and functions much today as it always has since its completion.

The period of significance, 1921-1946, begins with the incorporation of the Shaarei Tfiloh congregation and the initial construction of the synagogue building, and closes fifty years ago, as no more specific date can be defined to end the historic period. The Shaarei Tfiloh congregation has remained active and has occupied the building continuously up to the present date.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is described among the land records of Baltimore city as Ward: 13, Section: 5, Block: 3236, Lot: 27.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The synagogue is bounded by public streets on three sides and rowhousing of the surrounding neighborhood to the south. The nominated property corresponds to the entire parcel historically associated with the resource.