United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____   Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89000169   Date Listed: 3/22/89

Beth Israel Cemetery   Lauderdale   MS
Property Name   County   State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Amy Schlagel   _3/22/89_
Signature of the Keeper   Date of Action

==
Amended Items in Nomination:

The count for this property was mislabeled and should read: 1 site, 1 structure (gate), and 4 objects (tombs noted in detail in nomination). There are no buildings on the property according to SHPO.

Discussed and concurred in by Mississippi SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:
        National Register property file
        Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

FEB 07 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name   Beth Israel Cemetery

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number   19th Street at 5th Avenue   N/A not for publication

city, town   Meridian   N/A vicinity

state   Mississippi   code   MS   county   Lauderdale   code   75   zip code 39301

3. Classification

Ownership of Property
- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
- [ ] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [x] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Meridian Multiple Resource Area

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Kenneth H. P'Pool   February 2, 1989
Signature of certifying official   Date
    Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer - Mississippi
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

_____   _____
Signature of commenting or other official   Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
- [X] 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:) _____

Amy Schlagel   3/22/89

Signature of the Keeper   Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation ___N/A___

walls ___N/A___

roof ___N/A___

other _Marble, granite, cement markers_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Beth Israel Cemetery is an enclosed burying ground located outside the 19th century limits of the city of Meridian, Mississippi. The 2.9 acre property is bounded by 19th Street, Highway 45, Old Marion Road, and Fifth Avenue.

The cemetery's form and layout date from the late 19th century, when changing attitudes about death and continuing health problems in city cemeteries caused the development of rural or "garden" cemeteries. A stuccoed brick fence with detailed cast iron gates and an iron Star of David mark off the rise where the early, largely mercantile, Jewish community buried its dead. The Temple Beth Israel congregation dates back to 1869 (Temple History, p. 1), but the burying ground may have preceded that by a few years, according to Rabbi Leo Turitz in his book on Jews in Early Mississippi (p. 89). The cemetery has always been separate from the temple building.

The layout of the cemetery is within a rectangle with a north/south axis. An entry road from the west cuts through from Fifth Avenue, past an intrusive mobile home used outside the walls as a caretaker's house. Within the walls, there are two main roads which meet perpendicularly at a circular planter. The older graves are concentrated north and immediately south of the junction. More recent graves are concentrated in the southern half of the site.

Though the cemetery's small scale prevents it from carrying out completely the style of Mt. Auburn or other model Victorian era garden cemeteries, it is clearly laid out to provide an appealing place for visitors and a dignified resting place for inhabitants. Many of the earlier burials (1880s, 1890s), are of people who were born in Germany and emigrated to America. This European tradition may explain the absence of trees in the otherwise garden-like grounds. In Celebration of Death (p. 265), Curl notes that European Jewish cemeteries "are not normally planted with trees because of the possibility of roots disturbing the bodies."

The physical condition of the grounds and markers is excellent. The enclosing fence is in need of repair. The cemetery is operated by an autonomous board acting for Temple Beth Israel congregation, and will remain in private hands.

☐ See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally   ☐ statewide   ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria   ☐ A   ☐ B   ☒ C   ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)   ☐ A   ☐ B   ☐ C   ☒ D   ☐ E   ☐ F   ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Art	1870–1920	1870

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
N/A	Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Temple Beth Israel Cemetery is significant as an unusually intact surviving example of Victorian funerary art.

Small in scale, but similar in feeling to garden cemeteries established in the mid-nineteenth century in the eastern United States, Temple Beth Israel is remarkable for its fine statuary and continuing high level of maintenance. Many of the marble tombstones and markers within the stuccoed brick cemetery walls are similar to those published as examples of fine funerary art in Edmund V. Guillon, Jr.'s book <u>Victorian Cemetery Art</u>.

The cemetery was established in the mid-nineteenth century by the Jews who formed Temple Beth Israel in 1869. The graveyard may have preceded the formal organization of the congregation, and certainly pre-dated the construction of the first temple building in 1879. (Loeb, P. 1) The oldest remaining decipherable marker is that of "Fanny, wife of N. Feibelman," who died in 1870. Mrs. Feibelman's marker and other early examples are simpler in form than those from the 1880s, 1890s, and first 20 years of the twentieth century. The commonest of these High Victorian markers are remarkably similar in form to a pen-and-ink illustration of Victorian marker design published by Millward & Company in London, England and reprinted in James Stevens Curl's <u>A Celebration of Death</u> (p. 363). (See photos #7, 8)

Among the cemetery's most outstanding examples of Victorian funerary art are:

-- The grave enclosure of the Winner family, which has a memorial with a bronze bust of Mark Winner, a successful late 19th century Meridian merchant, and marble angels at the entry to the curbed plot; (Photo # 2)

-- The grave of David L. Rosenbaum, son of Samuel and Esther, which is topped with discarded marble shoes and stockings, and bears the inscription "Little feet that never went astray."; (Photo # 3)

-- The grave of Julius Elson, which is marked by a carved marble fainting couch placed by his three maiden daughters; (Photo # 4) and

-- A memorial to Mattimore Meyer, featuring an angel of the type illustrated in Gillon's <u>Victorian Cemetery Art</u>. (Photo # 5)

The attached photos document the high quality of craftsmanship, materials, and design common to Temple Beth Israel Cemetery. The enclosing wall, the markers, and the cemetery lay out all contribute to the Victorian era feeling of this resource. The cemetery equals or exceeds the quality of statuary and design in other listed Mississippi

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Curl, James Stevens, A Celebration of Death. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.1980.

Gillon, Edmund V., Jr. Victorian Cemetery Art.New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1972.

Loeb, Henry S. "History of Temple Beth Israel from 1869." Unpublished paper, Temple Beth Israel, Meridian, Mississippi, 1965.

Stannard, David E., Ed. Death in America. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

Turitz, Leo and Evelyn. Jews in Early Mississippi. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1983.

☐ See continuation sheet

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
Specify repository:
    Meridian Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property ___2.9 acres___

UTM References

A |1,6| |3,4,1,7,4,3| |3,5,3,3,2,0,0|
  Zone Easting   Northing

B |_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_|
  Zone Easting   Northing

C |_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_|

D |_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_| |_,_,_,_,_,_|

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

   Situated in the County of Lauderdale and State of Mississippi, City of Meridian, Southeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 8, Township 6, Range 16 East, Blocks 6 and 24 of Latham's Subdivision. The cemetery is 315 feet on the east and west sides and 290 feet on the north and south sides, enclosed with a brick and stucco wall.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

   The boundary encompasses the original cemetery wall and the grave markers.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title _____Joan Embree_____
organization ____Preservation Consultant____
street & number ___20 Lake Valley Road___
city or town _____Starkville_____

date ___11/18/88___
telephone ___(601) 324-0410___
state ___MS___ zip code _39759_

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
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Temple Beth Israel Cemetery, Meridian, Lauderdale, Mississippi

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cemeteries such as Greenwood in Jackson, and Hillcrest in Holly Springs.

Furthermore, although several of the individuals/families buried here have memorials in the form of downtown commercial buildings, the cemetery is the only remaining built memorial for many early Meridian Jews active in town settlement and development. The early temple buildings associated with these congregation members -- the 1879 Middle-Eastern style, and the grand, 1906 Greek Revival version -- have been replaced by a modern (1964) building. For this reason, the enclosure, the markers, and the Hebraic inscriptions in Temple Beth Israel Cemetery are vital artifacts in Meridian's history.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information is the same for all photographs:

    (1) Temple Beth Israel Cemetery
    (2) Meridian vicinity
    (3) Joan E. Embree
    (4) November, 1988
    (5) Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Photo 1 -- ( ) Entry gates, western edge, view to east

Photo 2 -- ( ) Mark Winner's memorial, family plot, view to northeast

Photo 3 -- ( ) Gravestone of David L. Rosenbaum, view to west

Photo 4 -- ( ) Grave marker of Julius Elson, view to north

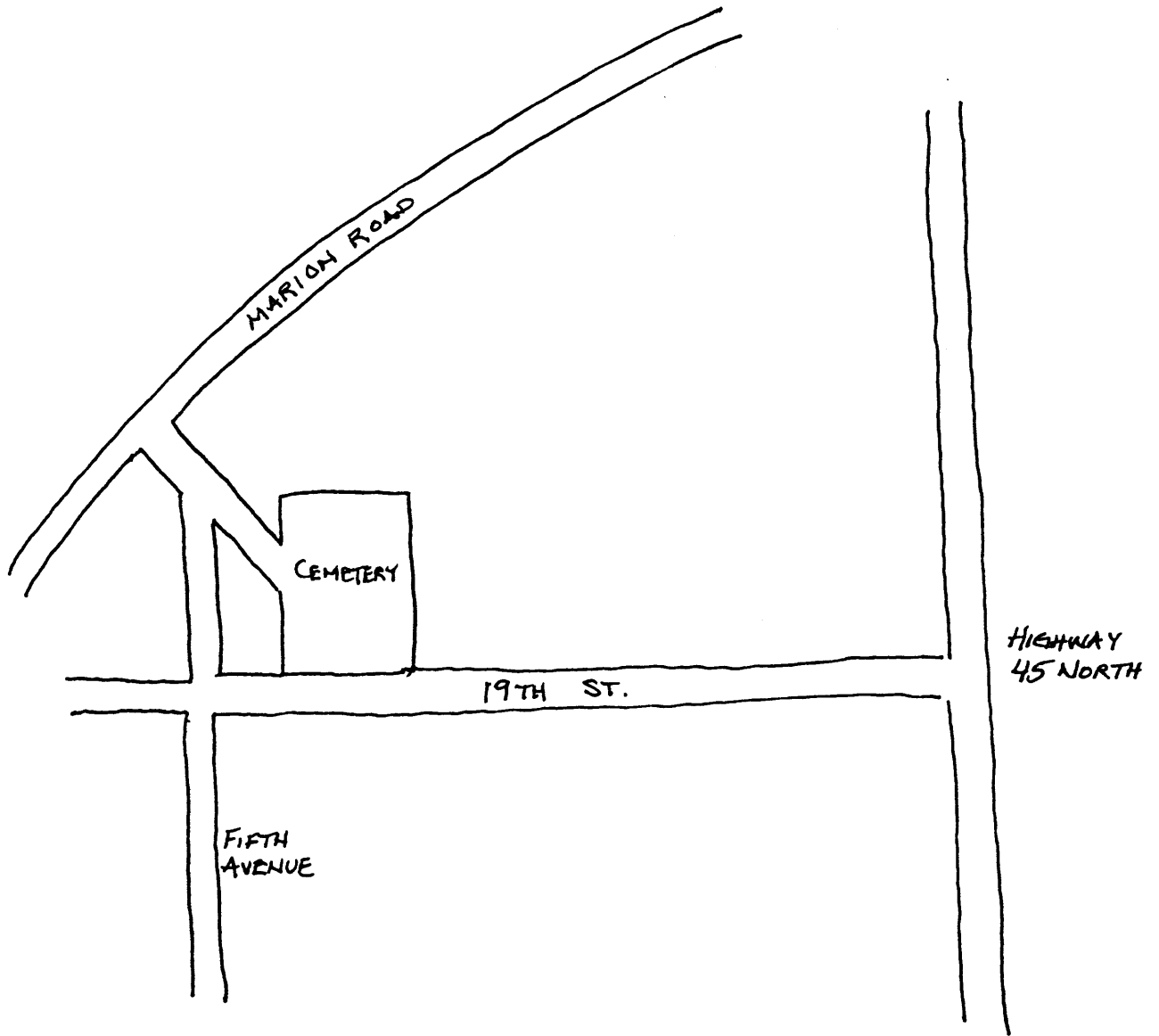Photo 5 -- ( ) Memorial to Mattimore Meyer, view to east

Photo 6 -- ( ) Memorial to Betty and Leopold Lowi, view to west

Photo 7 -- ( ) Cemetery overview, view to northwest

Photo 8 -- ( ) Graves of Arthur M and Julie Marks, view to west

Photo 9 -- ( ) Grave marker for Frederick Irvin Rosenbaum, view to west

MARION ROAD

Cemetery

19TH ST.

HIGHWAY 45 NORTH

FIFTH AVENUE

N

NOT TO SCALE