

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 2610 Pioneer Avenue

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

  
city or town Cheyenne  
state Wyoming code WY county Laramie code 021 zip code 82001

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

Mary M. Hopkins July 19, 2017  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Jon Edsall / G. Beall 9-5-17  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

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

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

Religion/religious facility

Religion/religious facility

**7. Description**

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

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

Mid-Century Modern

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof:

other: Stone

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### **Narrative Description**

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

#### **Summary Paragraph**

Mt. Sinai Synagogue is located at 2610 Pioneer Avenue, Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming. It is representative of mid-century Modernism during a building boom in the city. It is a steel framed building with extruded red brick cladding resting on a stone base. The synagogue is located in a residential neighborhood bordering on more commercial style buildings to the south. It is an approximately 13,000 square foot building and is mostly one story except for the main sanctuary located on the south portion of the building that is two stories. As is typical for a Mid-Century Modern style building there is little ornamentation on this building; most of the walls are large and undecorated, there is a flat roof on the entire building with no overhang, and most of the windows are arranged in horizontal bands except for a couple of large panes arranged together in a vertical grouping. The only embellishment on the building is a Star of David centered on the main sanctuary made of brick and red granite. The main entrance contains three sets of large wooden doors which are a striking contrast to the red brick throughout the rest of the building. Overall, the synagogue has a high level of historic integrity owing to, if any, minimal changes being made to the building in the last seventy years.

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### **Narrative Description**

Mt. Sinai Synagogue is located at 2610 Pioneer Avenue, at the northwest corner of 26th Street and Pioneer Avenue, on the outskirts of downtown Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming. This synagogue is surrounded on the north and west by residential properties, although some have turned to commercial use; to the east by a small triangle park and more residential properties; and the south by a parking lot. The building, which was constructed in 1950, is approximately 13,000 square feet in size and represents the Modern style of architecture. The building sits close to both Pioneer Avenue and 26th Street with roughly ten foot setbacks on both streets and is built to the property line that borders the alley to the north. It was originally part of a residential neighborhood and remnants of the neighborhood remain on three sides, but it is currently in a transition to more commercial use. To the west of the synagogue is a large open green space fenced off for private use. There are small landscaped areas on the east portion of the property facing Pioneer. The building's significant features include the massing of the building, the lack of architectural ornament, a tall brick chimney at the northwest corner, and the elaborate stained glass windows that are found on all four elevations. The massing is significant because the walls are undecorated and the main sanctuary hall launches out of the ground in a more pronounced way than the surrounding properties.

The east elevation, or the façade of the synagogue is only one story where the lobby is, though the southern portion of the building where the main sanctuary is located is two stories tall and three bays wide. Overall the building features a square plan, though it is obvious from looking at the exterior that the interior spaces are broken up for various functions because the roof line varies and the windows vary according to the internal use. It is a steel frame building with a concrete foundation. The exterior walls are clad in extruded red brick laid in a running bond with a stone water table base. The entire synagogue has a flat roof with various heights. The flat roof is trimmed at the cornice with copper.

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The lower flat roof extends across the lobby entrance, which protects it from the weather. The main entrance is comprised of three sets of wood doors centered on the main sanctuary; each door is roughly three feet wide by ten feet high with four small windows framed with several layers of molding/trim. These doors are a striking contrast to the red brick and white stone banding on this elevation. The only windows located on this elevation are on the northern part of the building; these stained glass windows are set at the very top of the wall in a ribbon window fashion. To the south of the doors, just under the extended roof is a red granite carving with Hebrew words that are mirrored in English to the north of the doors; the phrase reads "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord." Lastly, centered on the main sanctuary, above the doors, is the Star of David outlined in red brick with a red granite center.

The south elevation showcases the expansive height of the two story main sanctuary. The stone water table base wraps around this elevation and allows the extruded red brick to rest on top of it and rise up in the same running bond pattern. On both the west and east ends of this elevation are large stained glass windows that extend from the ground to the roof. Running across the top of the wall, under the roof-line, is a ribbon of stained glass windows. There is an emergency exit door located on the west part of this elevation. The native copper cornice continues on this elevation. The two large stained glass windows have light boxes set out in the yard to illuminate them at night.

The west elevation of the synagogue is fairly plain and composed primarily of extruded red brick without the stone water table base seen on the other elevations. The majority of this elevation is the two story main sanctuary with no architectural elements. The northwestern portion of the building is the kitchen area with a series of hoods and fans visible on the one story roof. Starting from the northwest corner and moving south there is a four-pane casement/awning window, a four-by-three-pane central casement/awning window, another four-pane casement/awning window, one door, and another four-by-three-pane central casement/awning window. The windows appear to be original to the building but have a plexiglass storm window covering. The two story, extruded red brick chimney, is located on the very northwestern corner of the building and was probably used to exhaust the heating system in the basement of the building. On the lower portion of this wall directly under the chimney, there is evidence of concrete on the brick, which indicates there used to be some addition here. The native copper cornice continues on this elevation at both the two story main sanctuary and the one story flat roof. Today, this elevation is viewed from the open green space immediately next door. In the past, the adjoining lot was privately owned and contained a residence. There was no need for this elevation to be prominent in terms of design and ornamentation.

The north elevation of the synagogue alludes to yet another use of the interior space. This elevation is one story and is comprised of nine bays, both windows and doors, and includes the stone water table base found on the other two elevations with the extruded red brick continuing above. The native copper cornice at the flat roof continues on this elevation. There are four windows that are three-by-five lights with one operable awning window that appear to be original. There is one window that is one-by-five lights with one operable awning window that appears to be original. All of these windows have the same plexiglass storm window covering as the windows on the west elevation. On the east end of this elevation are more stained glass windows that extend from ground to roof. There are two doors on this elevation that appear to be more modern. This elevation also has more downspouts, which indicates the flat roofs from most of the building drain in this direction to keep water away from the pedestrian uses near the sidewalk.

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On the north elevation of the higher, two story main sanctuary portion of the building, there are more stained glass windows arranged in a ribbon/band. This elevation is rather hard to see from any direction other than the façade but lets in a good amount of northern light into the main sanctuary at all times of the day.

Starting on the façade and wrapping to the south elevation, there is a red brick planter box that is roughly three feet high. On the southeast corner there is a raised planter bed that contains various shrubs and is surrounded by red gravel. This red gravel is continued in the area between the building and the sidewalk on the northeast area of the façade. The large open green space to the west of the synagogue is fenced in by a wrought iron fence set in a brick border. The western and northern border of the property is marked by a red concrete block fence roughly six feet in height. There are no outbuildings on this property, only an open-sided but roofed gardening shed located on the northern border of the property detached from the main building.

There appear to be no major changes to the exterior of the building. In walking around the building, there are very few areas that show mortar that is distinguished by color changes. The brick is in remarkable condition given the age of the building. The condition of the roof is unknown at this time.

The main entry on the east façade leads into a rectangular vestibule. Two sets of double doors on the west wall lead into the main sanctuary while doors on the north wall lead to the social hall and offices. The main sanctuary is a large space that occupies the southern half of the building. Columns are evenly spaced on the north and south walls. Structural members then extend horizontally from the columns to the central portion of the roof that is lowered to contain mechanical systems. The north and south walls are covered with drywall and are topped by a row of stained-glass windows that is interrupted by the columns. The windows give a visual separation of the walls from the ceiling and provide a generous amount of natural light into the sanctuary. At each end of the south wall a stained-glass window rises the full height of the wall. The east and west walls are covered with drywall in the central bay while the outer bays have exposed brick. The floor is covered with carpet and seating is provided by rows of folding seats that are thought to be historic to the building.

The stained-glass windows on the south wall of the sanctuary feature a large bank on each end of the wall with a ribbon of clerestory windows along the top of the wall. The easternmost window bank depicts a twelve foot high menorah. The westernmost window bank depicts the twelve tribes of Jacob. The north wall has twenty clerestory stained-glass windows that depict the major Jewish holidays. The stained-glass windows in the sanctuary were completed between 1972 and 1977.

The north half of the building is mostly occupied by a large social hall. The hall is relatively simple in design with few decorative features. The floor is covered with carpet except for a wood dance floor that is located in front of the stage located in the west wall. Flanking the stage is a kosher kitchen to the north and the rabbi's office to the south. East of the social hall is a small office, two restrooms, and the small sanctuary. A row of stained-glass clerestory windows are on the east wall of the social hall. These windows were completed in 2007 and contain eleven windows which honor notable women of the Bible.

A hallway runs the length of the east end of the building. The west wall largely contains a built-in bookcase that contains the synagogue's library. The library largely contains books relating to Jewish history, culture, and language.

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The small sanctuary is on the north end of the hallway. The west wall of the small sanctuary contains a full height built-in bookcase. Seating, which consists of folding seats, faces east. Two stained-glass units rise the height of the small sanctuary on the east and west end of the room. The lower portion of the east stained-glass unit is a door that leads out to the alley north of the building.

#### Integrity (conclusion)

The synagogue was designed by Earl C. Morris and built by Carl Christensen on this location in 1950. Prior to the synagogue being built, this entire block, and adjacent neighborhood was residential in character. Over time the neighborhood has transitioned toward commercial use even though the majority of the commercial tenants have remained in the original residential houses.

The feeling expressed by this building is Mid-Century Modern style. The building is made up of large, undecorated walls, flat roofs with no overhang, windows – mostly stained glass – typically arranged in a linear pattern but also in large horizontal groupings, and few and simple materials. The primary material on this building is extruded red brick resting on stone giving the appearance of exposed foundation walls and native copper cornice wrapping around all sides of the building. The numerous stained glass windows on all sides of the building are not original but certainly enhance it. The stained glass windows were installed in the main sanctuary space in the 1970s and the windows in the social hall and small sanctuary were placed in 2007. The placement of the stained-glass windows was put in existing window openings. The stained-glass does not alter the overall historic character of the building. The main features of the building that define it as a good example of Mid-Century Modern architecture all remain in place. The building retains its strong horizontal lines and restrained decorative features. The only embellishments found on the exterior of the synagogue are granite and wood on the façade at the primary entrance.

The synagogue was designed in complete contrast to the surrounding residential properties. Most residential buildings on this block are approximately 100 years old, the residential buildings across the street range from construction dates of 1911 to 1940. The houses reflect Victorian era styles and retain a high degree of integrity. It is safe to assume that the houses that were torn down to build the synagogue were of the same age as those remaining on this block. The synagogue was also situated on the property differently from the neighboring houses, being pulled closer to the street - more like a commercial structure - but still leaving room for a "front yard" setback to blend with the residential character of the neighborhood. In contrast to how any commercial or religious building is designed and planned today, there was and still is no dedicated parking lot for the synagogue. Current standards today in Cheyenne dictate that should any building be planned for a similar use there are parking requirements that must be met to ensure the users of the building have a place to park their cars and do not park on the streets encroaching on the residential character of the neighborhood. For the members today and in the recent past, there is a parking lot south of the synagogue that can be used for parking which replaced an old Safeway grocery store that had a large parking lot the members used to use. Seventy years ago when the synagogue was built, most members walked to the synagogue to worship; if they did drive, which was frowned upon during the holidays, they would park a few blocks away and walk in so no one knew they drove. With such a small congregation today, parking is much less an issue.

The synagogue was designed and built for a religious use which is still how the building is functioning seventy years later. This is the only Jewish synagogue in the city or region and was built to replace

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the small and outdated one downtown. This is also one of the only religious buildings in this architectural style, which is not unique for a Jewish synagogue but is unique for Cheyenne. Much of the religious architecture in Cheyenne is much older and follows more traditional building styles within the religion, such as Gothic Revival for St. Mary's Church. The synagogue does stand out in style because it does not blend with the neighborhood. That may have been a problem when it was first built, but given time, this building has aged well and maintained its sense of importance to both the Jewish faith and the architectural community.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1949-1951  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1949  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1951  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Morris, Earl C. architect  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christensen, Carl. builder  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance ranges from 1949 to 1951. This represents the period of construction for the synagogue. Construction began in 1949, the cornerstone was laid in 1950, and construction was completed in 1951.



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

This nomination meets criteria consideration A as a property owned by a religious institution. The primary significance of the property as related in this nomination is that it is a good example of Mid-Century Modern architecture in Cheyenne.

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

The Mt. Sinai Synagogue in Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming is locally significant under criterion C for architecture. This building meets the requirements of criteria consideration A as a unique local example of mid-century Modernism. Mt. Sinai Synagogue represents the need for the relatively small and isolated Jewish community within the city of Cheyenne to maintain its strong religious ties to one another and maintain their deeply held beliefs and traditions, and for its reflection of the history of the Jewish population in Cheyenne since the founding of the city through modern times. It's also a significant local example of the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture. The building retains integrity of location, design, materials, feeling and association with its simple, clean lines, large, undecorated walls, flat roof, and horizontal window banding. Construction of the synagogue began in 1949, was halted for roughly a year, and a cornerstone dedicated in 1950 when construction began again. The building is still used by the Mt. Sinai congregation for their Jewish faith and traditions.

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

Background on Jewish Population in Cheyenne

Cheyenne was established in 1867 by the Union Pacific Railroad on its way west. Jewish history claims that the first few trains that brought people to Cheyenne included a number of Jewish people<sup>1</sup>; they have been integral to Cheyenne's history as much as the other ethnic groups that arrived here. Mt. Sinai Synagogue was organized in 1910 when the Jewish population grew large enough to support its own congregation. They built their first synagogue in 1915 that contained more traditional Jewish designs on the interior and seated 200 worshippers.<sup>2</sup> The old synagogue was a two story brick and stone building that had a balcony for female worship, a small Hebrew school which also functioned as a social hall on the first floor, and a kosher kitchen.<sup>3</sup> That building was large enough to meet the congregation's needs until new waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in Cheyenne during the 1940s and the 'baby boom' that occurred after World War II in Cheyenne and throughout the country. Cheyenne in general experienced a boom in population during the 1940s; for all of Laramie County, in which Cheyenne is the county seat and the primary city, the population almost doubled going from 26,845 in 1930 to 47,662 in 1950.<sup>4</sup>

The boom in population led to a building boom as well. With the New Deal initiative beginning to create jobs for millions of people towards the end of the 1930s, construction boomed to put not only

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<sup>1</sup> Centennial Book Committee. *Mount Sinai Synagogue, Cheyenne, Wyoming: The First 100 Years, 1910-2010*. page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 1.

<sup>4</sup> Historical Decennial Census Population for Wyoming Counties, Cities, and Towns. Accessed September 19, 2015. [http://eadiv.state.wy.us/demog\\_data/pop2000/cntyycity\\_hist.htm](http://eadiv.state.wy.us/demog_data/pop2000/cntyycity_hist.htm).

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architects but entire construction teams back to work. However, as construction began to really climb during the early 1940s, once the United States entered World War II, most construction projects were halted as the country reorganized their resources towards the war effort. Even though construction stopped during the war years, plans were still being developed and money was still being raised by groups all across the country; things were no different for Mt. Sinai in Cheyenne. Leaders within the synagogue realized that they were beginning to outgrow their worship space and discussions began for a new building in a new location. If an organization wanted to build in the existing established area of Cheyenne, they were likely to have to demolish some houses, otherwise new development was relegated to the outskirts of Cheyenne where there was room to grow. However, the Jewish population wanted a synagogue to remain near their membership; orthodox Jews avoid driving on Shabbat and holidays and most lived downtown anyway.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, members of the established building committee, thirteen members in all, selected the property the synagogue was built on and remains on today.

It's unclear how the architect was retained by the building committee or when he was brought on board, but Earl C. Morris, of Denver, was hired to design the new synagogue for Mt. Sinai; the contractor was Carl Christensen. Originally Morris designed the new synagogue to be of a similar design to the old synagogue, even though this was not a common style used by Morris. (The work of Morris will be discussed later.) When construction began in 1949 for the new synagogue and the foundation was being dug, water was struck and construction stopped. The construction team had uncovered, quite literally, an underground river.<sup>6</sup> For most building committees, this may have been devastating news; for the Mt. Sinai building committee this, however, was great news. For the Jewish faith, a ritual bath, or mikvah, is a great thing to have in your own community.<sup>7</sup> This amenity requires living water to cleanse and purify objects and people.<sup>8</sup> Following the discovery of the underground river Morris completely redesigned the building, resulting in a building more in keeping with his aesthetic and producing the building that stands today. Instead of being two stories, he spread out the building to one story with the social hall (with stage) next to the main sanctuary (which seats 450 worshippers), a small sanctuary or chapel (which seats 30), a full kosher kitchen, several classrooms, a rabbi study, and of course the mikvah in the basement.<sup>9</sup> This also allowed the building to be handicap accessible without entirely realizing how great this need would be in the future.<sup>10</sup> It is not known exactly how or why the design of the building evolved to its final form.

When construction started again, a cornerstone was laid in 1950 and the building was completed in 1951.<sup>11</sup> The only alterations that have been made to the building since its dedication are the replacement of casement and plate windows with the stained glass windows present today. Originally just the windows in the main sanctuary were replaced with stained glass windows, the largest of which is a fifteen pane, twelve foot high depiction of a menorah (candelabra) that was dedicated in 1972.<sup>12</sup> Other rooms have been tackled over the past forty years as money was raised.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Feldman. Interview with author.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Larry noted during his interview that he's been to several synagogues in the region that are not able to have mikvahs due to lack of living water.

<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Larry Moldo. Interview with author.

<sup>9</sup> Centennial Book Committee, page 1.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy Feldman. Interview with author.

<sup>11</sup> Dates vary slightly for construction. Research found dates ranging from 1949 to 1951 with dedication definitely in 1951.

<sup>12</sup> [www.mtsinaicheyenne.org/donations.asp#windows](http://www.mtsinaicheyenne.org/donations.asp#windows) Accessed September 1, 2015.

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All of the stained glass windows in the building have been paid for by members of the congregation and all have been created, designed and installed by the same company – Watkins Stained Glass Studios of Denver, Colorado.<sup>13</sup> The interior of the building has changed very little, with the exception of the kitchen, in which a few of the appliances have been upgraded during the last 5-10 years.

Mt. Sinai congregation has decreased in size over the last 50 years. At the time of construction of the new synagogue the congregation was approximately 600 people and there were 90 children in weekly religious studies.<sup>14</sup> Those children grew up, went to college, moved away and haven't returned. The congregation today is somewhere around 60-70 people, most of whom only attend services on the high holidays when the main sanctuary is used. Otherwise the small sanctuary is primarily used. In a way this is a benefit to this small congregation; the main sanctuary has not been overused during its life and the room maintains its original appearance.

Throughout Wyoming today there are a total of five Jewish organizations; it is roughly estimated that there are only 1,000 Jews in all of Wyoming today. Even though there is an organization in a community, it doesn't mean there is a building associated with it. The only synagogues found in the state are located in Casper, Jackson, and Cheyenne; Mt. Sinai congregation in Cheyenne is both the oldest congregation in the state and one of only two purpose-built synagogues in the state. The synagogue in Casper was built in 1957, six years after the new Mt. Sinai was dedicated.

## Jewish Architecture

Generally speaking a synagogue often serves three distinct functions. At a minimum a synagogue serves as a place of prayer. It is the place where Jews can come together for community prayer services. The second major function is as a place of study. Mt. Sinai has a well-stocked collection of books in built-in bookcases locate along the west wall of the hallway outside the social hall and in the small sanctuary. This library of books is available to the general public. The synagogue also regularly hosts study sessions. The third general function of many synagogues is as a meeting place for religious and non-religious activities. The social hall at Mt. Sinai is used regularly for a variety of uses such as the showing of movies, folk dancing, and the popular Yiddish Food Festival.

Synagogue architecture has a unique history which is represented by Mt. Sinai Synagogue. Most other religious facilities have set design patterns and key architectural features that are adjusted according to location, materials, and time period. Whereas many Christian churches often feature steeples and a cruciform plan and mosques often have distinctive domes, synagogues lack an easily identifiable design characteristic. Instead, synagogues tend to be built in the contemporary style of the location in which it is built.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout most of history in Europe, anti-Semitic laws prohibited buildings of synagogues. If synagogues were allowed they could not be visible from the street. Because synagogues in Europe needed to either be hidden from street, fit in small spaces, or needed to blend with surrounding architecture, they did not develop their own style of design, leaving their design choices to be more

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Feldman. Interview with author.

<sup>15</sup> [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14161-synagogue-architecture](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14161-synagogue-architecture). Accessed September 4, 2015.

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contemporary in style and controlled by the local congregation. After “emancipation in European countries...their building blossomed.”<sup>16</sup>

There are a few instructions in the Talmud, a body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law, that relate to the building of synagogues. These instructions state that the building have windows, be the tallest building in a community, and have separate seating for men and women. These rules are not always steadfastly held as it is not always possible or practical. The synagogue that preceded the current building did have a balcony area that was designed to provide separate seating areas for men and women, however this was not carried over to the current building. It is also customary that a synagogue face in the direction toward Jerusalem and the sanctuary be arranged to face in the same direction with the Torah scrolls on the east wall. While Mt. Sinai Synagogue does face to the east, the main sanctuary does not follow suit. The Torah scrolls are kept along the west wall and the congregation likewise faces west. The small sanctuary, however, does face east with the scrolls on the east wall. It is not known why this deviation was made in the arrangement of the main sanctuary.

The interior design and form of synagogues varies widely according to its time and location, however there are a few typical elements that are regularly found. The key elements that are typically included is the ark (where the Torah scrolls are kept), a bimah (table where the Torah is read from), and a pulpit (from which to address the congregation).<sup>17</sup> These features were elevated above the congregation by at least three steps but often times more. Another common feature is an eternal lamp known as the ner tamid, usually placed slightly above the ark. This kind of lamp is seen in both the main sanctuary and in the small sanctuary just above the ark.<sup>18</sup>

Archaeological evidence shows that some of the earliest synagogues were richly decorated with large mosaics and frescoes depicting biblical scenes. Over time the prevalence of these decorations lessened as the artistic depictions of humans and other living creatures was seen to be in contrast to the second commandment. As a result there was “an increasing reliance on Hebrew inscriptions for decorative purposes. These inscriptions served a dual purpose: they embellished the synagogue and edified the congregation.”<sup>19</sup> This is seen on the exterior of Mt. Sinai which has a Hebrew inscription on a stone band south of the main entry and a corresponding inscription north of the entry that reads, “Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

One of the more notable aspects of Mt. Sinai Synagogue is the mikvah. The mikvah is a ritual bath utilizing water from a natural source. The bath represents a spiritual purification. Traditionally it is seen as a vitally important structure within a Jewish community. “In the eyes of Jewish law a group of families living together do not attain the status of a community if they do not have a communal mikvah.”<sup>20</sup> It is used for a few different purposes including conversion to Judaism and the purification of certain items. It can also be used by grooms on their wedding day and men on special holidays. Perhaps the most common use is by married women who immerse in the mikvah’s waters seven days following the end of the menstrual cycle.

<sup>16</sup> [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/synagogue](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/synagogue) architecture. Accessed September 4, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14161-synagogue-architecture](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14161-synagogue-architecture). Accessed September 4, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> “Synagogues, Shuls, and Temples.” Found at <http://www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm>. Accessed June 1, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> “Pre-Modern Synagogue Architecture and Interior Design.” Found at <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/>. Accessed June 1, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> “The Mikvah.” Found at [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org). Accessed June 1, 2017.

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Name of Property

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There are several specific rules relating to the construction and use of a mikvah. It must be built into the ground or be an integral part of the building's structure as opposed to utilizing a portable vessel such as a bathtub. The immersion pool must hold a minimum of 200 gallons and be a shape that allows a person to fully immerse in the water. Generally a mikvah is composed of two pools. One pool is filled with living water, water from a natural source. The immersion pool is filled with purified water. A small opening connects the two pools and allows the intermingling of the waters. Before a person enters the mikvah they must be completely clean. Upon entering the mikvah the whole body must be submerged at one time.

Mt. Sinai maintains a kosher kitchen for use by members of the synagogue for various social functions. Dietary laws found in the Torah require a certain set of standards and procedures for how certain foods are prepared. Only products from certain animals are permitted and rules govern how the animal should be slaughtered. Within a kosher kitchen it is required that dairy and meat be kept separated. A kosher kitchen will have different countertops and work areas for preparing meat and dairy dishes. Additionally, separate sets of dishes, silverware, and other equipment used in food preparation are kept in separate cabinets and drawers. Often the cabinets in the kitchen are labelled so it is clear which sets of items are to be used.

Architect, Earl C. Morris

Earl C. Morris was born in Denver, Colorado in 1902 and died in 1964. He attended the University of Colorado and Columbia University, and had the opportunity to travel and study through Europe for approximately four years after graduation. After working several years as a draftsman he formed the partnership of Frewen & Morris with Frank Frewen in 1935. This partnership lasted until 1937 when Frewen died unexpectedly of pneumonia. Beginning in 1938 operated his own firm and was registered in Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming. It appears that much of his work involved schools and commercial buildings. He was also engaged as a consulting architect for the Bureau of Reclamation and was involved in some capacity with the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington, Falcon Dam in Texas, and Hungry Horse Dam in Montana. Morris also taught architecture at the University of Colorado in Boulder, was on the State Board of Exam of Architects, and consulted with the Denver Building Codes Authority.<sup>21</sup>

Morris designed a number of buildings in northern Colorado that share a similar aesthetic to Mt. Sinai Synagogue in both style and material. Buildings credited to Morris, such as Boulder High School and the Wagar Building at Colorado State University, show similarities including horizontal ribbons of windows and spare use of ornamentation. These characteristics were commonly seen in Mid-Century Modern buildings. Other buildings credited to Morris include buildings at the National Jewish Hospital (1938-1955) and the Samsonite Luggage Factory (1950-1952) in Denver, as well as numerous elementary schools built between 1957 and 1963.

Contractor, Carl Christensen

<sup>21</sup> American Architects Directory, 1956.

[http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/American%20Architects%20Directories/1956%20American%20Architects%20Directory/Bowker\\_1956\\_M.pdf](http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/American%20Architects%20Directories/1956%20American%20Architects%20Directory/Bowker_1956_M.pdf). Accessed September 6, 2015.

Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
Name of Property

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Little is known about Carl Christensen, but his building record in Cheyenne is broad. Christensen took over the business, Christensen's Inc General Contractors, from his father in 1935, and the business is still around today. He built a number of schools, homes, and commercial properties throughout Cheyenne during his time running the company. He was also involved in the construction of three religious buildings and an expansion of a fourth. "He earned respect by never cutting corners and using the best quality materials available. His logo was the square and compass and he lived up to his slogan, "strictly on the square."<sup>22</sup>

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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[http://www.torahlab.org/community/article/synagogue\\_part\\_2/](http://www.torahlab.org/community/article/synagogue_part_2/)

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<sup>22</sup> Sharon Lass Feldman. History of Cheyenne, Wyoming: Laramie County, Volume 2. Page 480.

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Name of Property

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—n.d “Synagogues, Shuls, and Temples.” Accessed June 1, 2017. <http://www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm>.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Mt. Sinai Synagogue

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 48LA3429

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.5 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>13</u>	<u>514776</u>	<u>4554410</u>	3	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	4	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

The property is bound by West 26th Street on the south, Pioneer Avenue on the east, a public alley to the north, and the western edge of the property line bordering with the neighboring lot. The legal description is as follows: Original City of Cheyenne, Lots 6, 7 & 8, Block 82, Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming.

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

The selected boundary was chosen to contain the synagogue because this entire portion, and only this portion, is owned by the synagogue and is one legal parcel.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Stephanie Lowe  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 20, 2015

Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
Name of Property

Laramie County, Wyoming  
County and State

street & number 1209 West 31<sup>st</sup> Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Cheyenne state WY zip code 82001  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

---

**Photographs:**

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

Name of Property: Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
City or Vicinity: Cheyenne  
County: Laramie State: WY  
Photographer: Richard Collier  
Date Photographed: December 19, 2016  
Description of Photograph(s) and number:

East façade of synagogue showing main entry. Photographer facing west.  
1 of 13

East façade and south elevation. Photographer facing northwest.  
2 of 13

East façade and south elevation. Photographer facing northwest.  
3 of 13

Southwest corner of building. Photographer facing northeast.  
4 of 13

Northwest corner of building. Photographer facing southeast.  
5 of 13

Main sanctuary interior. Photographer facing west.  
6 of 13

Main sanctuary interior. Photographer facing east.



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7 of 13

South wall of main sanctuary. Photographer facing southwest.

8 of 13

Doors leading from vestibule into the main sanctuary. Photographer facing east.

9 of 13

Social hall showing the stage. Photographer facing west.

10 of 13

Social hall showing the ribbon of stained-glass windows. Photographer facing east.

11 of 13

Small sanctuary. Photographer facing east.

12 of 13

Small sanctuary showing stained-glass window and built-in bookcase. Photographer facing northwest.

13 of 13

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**Property Owner:**

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

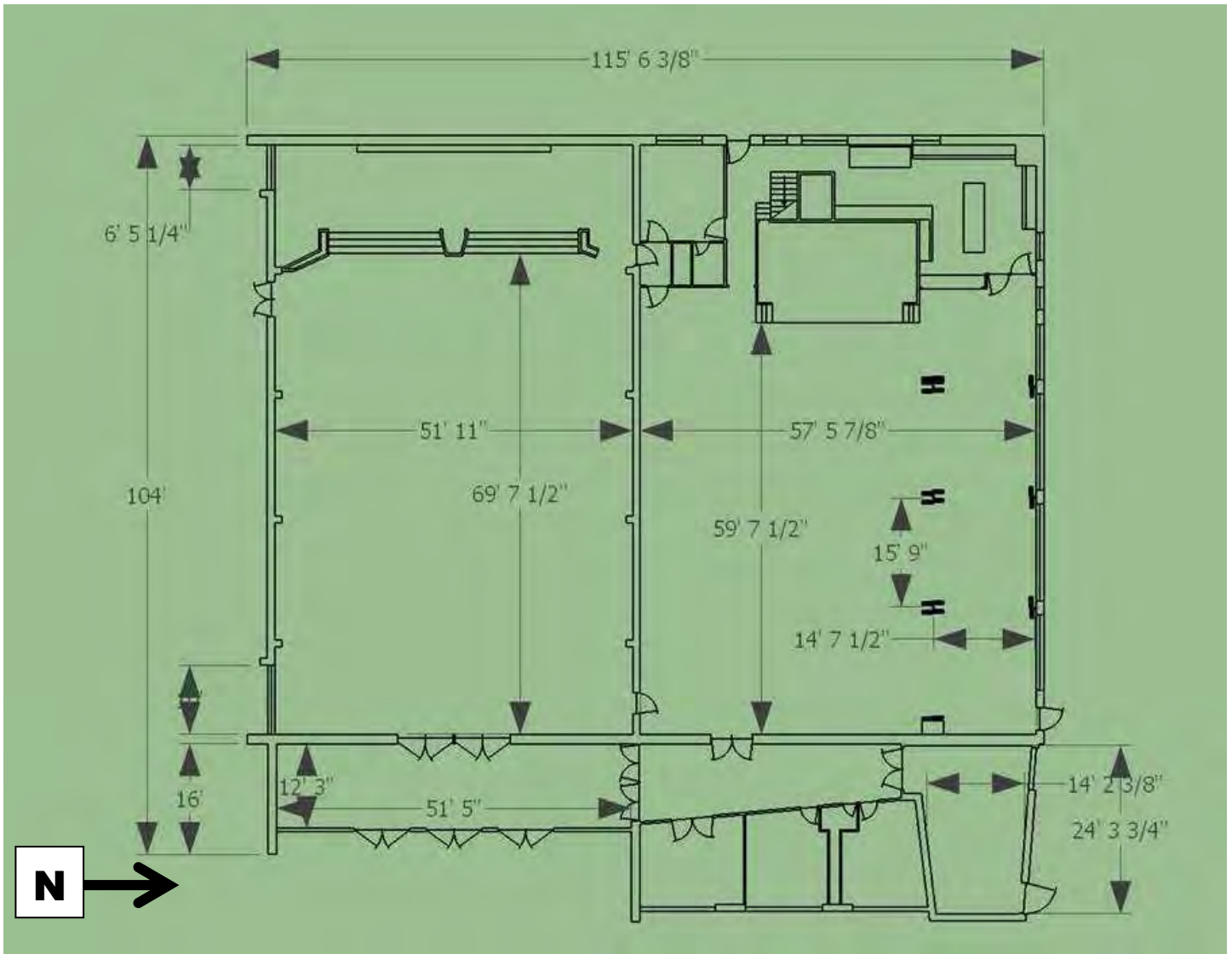
name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
Name of Property

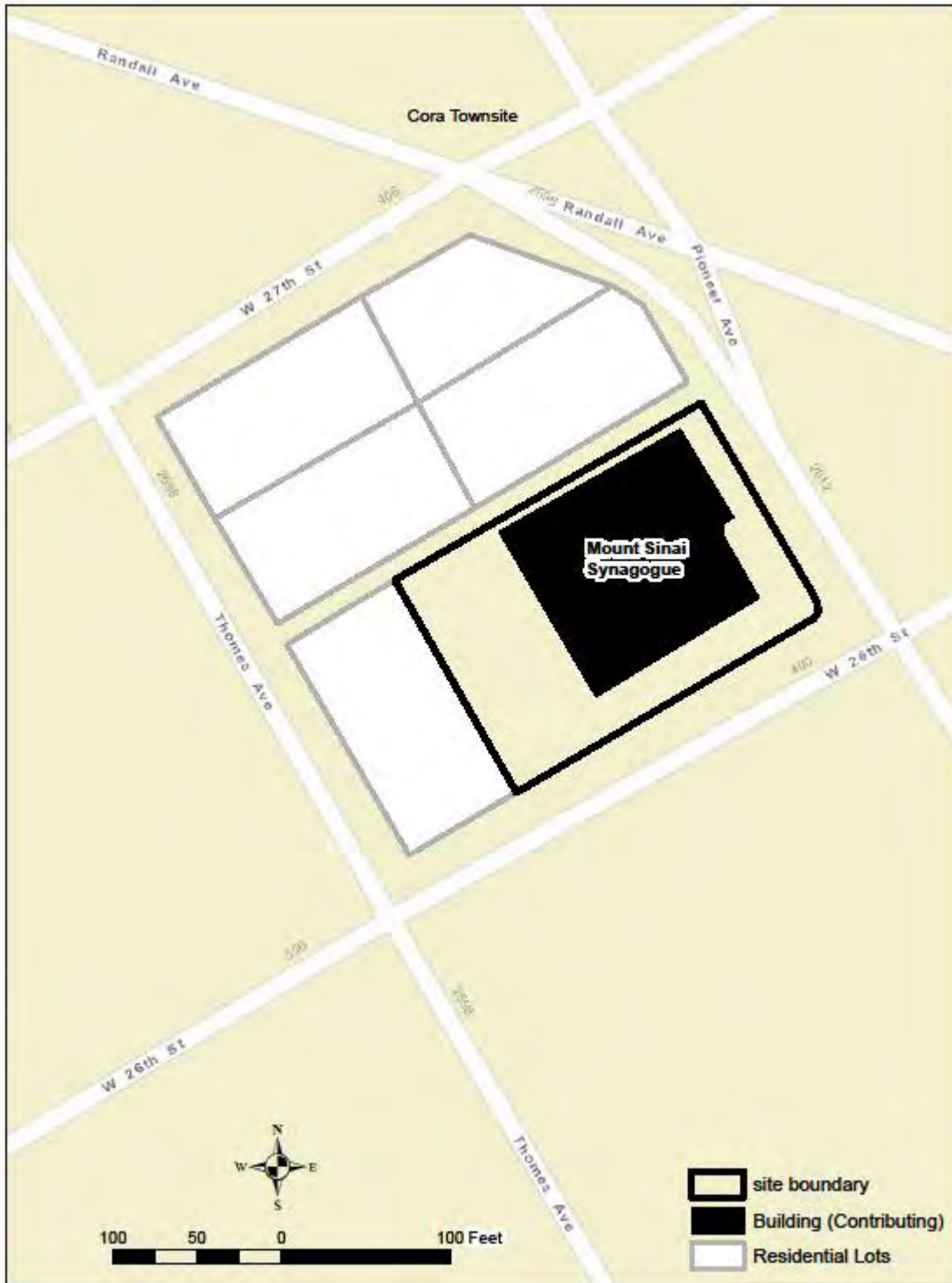
Laramie County, Wyoming  
County and State



Floor plan. Mt. Sinai Synagogue, Laramie County, WY

Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
Name of Property

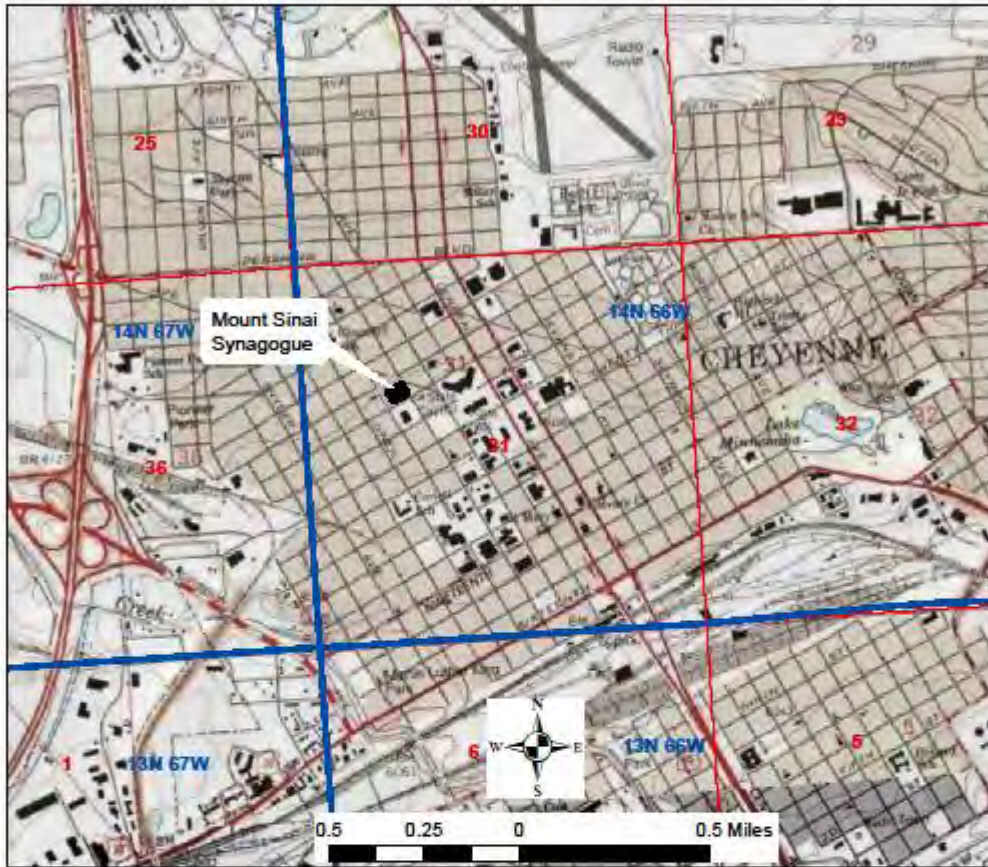
Laramie County, Wyoming  
County and State



Site plan for Mt. Sinai Synagogue, Laramie County, WY.

Mt. Sinai Synagogue  
Name of Property

Laramie County, Wyoming  
County and State



Topographic map for Mt. Sinai Synagogue, Laramie County, WY



ברוך ה' שם כבוד

BLESSED BE HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

WELCOME  
TO THE  
MEMORIAL  
SYNAGOGUE  
OF THE  
CITY OF  
NEW YORK  
AND  
LIBRARY  
OF THE  
JEWISH  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY  
OF AMERICA  
1300  
NORTH  
MADISON  
AVENUE  
NEW YORK  
10017  
TEL: 212-850-2200  
WWW.JTS.EDU



בְּרוּךְ הוּא שֵׁם ה' עוֹלָם וָעוֹד

BLESSED BE HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD



בית כנסת תלמידי תורה



בית כנסת תלמידי תורה









PRIVATE  
PARKING

PRIVATE  
PARKING







EXIT

Occupancy  
462



חלוקת  
שבטים

שמעון	
יודה	
זבולן	
דן	
אשר	
יוסף	

בְּמִי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
TRIBES OF ISRAEL  
DEDICATED

שמעון	
יודה	
זבולן	
דן	
אשר	
יוסף	













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/21/2017      Date of Pending List: 8/16/2017      Date of 16th Day: 8/31/2017      Date of 45th Day: 9/5/2017      Date of Weekly List: 9/7/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      9/5/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall      Discipline Historian

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



2101 O'Neil Ave. Room 309  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
(Phone) 307-637-6305  
(Email) [slowe@cheyennecity.org](mailto:slowe@cheyennecity.org)



January 20, 2017

National Register State Review Board

Re: National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Mt. Sinai Synagogue

Dear State Review Board:

On behalf of the members of the Cheyenne Historic Preservation Board, we are pleased to support the nomination of the Mt. Sinai Synagogue to the National Register of Historic Places. The Mt. Sinai Synagogue is an important structure in our city's history as it reflects the importance of Cheyenne's Jewish heritage and the unique mid-century architecture of Cheyenne.

In 1867, the Union Pacific Railroad trains brought many diverse ethnic and religious groups into the Magic City on the Plains where they established neighborhoods, businesses and religious centers throughout the new city. Jewish immigrants to the area established the first Jewish synagogue and a building was constructed in 1915 for a congregation of 200. By the 1940s, the congregation had far outgrown its original structure and plans were made for a new synagogue just to the north of downtown. One of only two purposefully built synagogues in Wyoming, this structure is unique for both its religious purpose and architectural style in the Cowboy State, fitting well into the National Register Criterion A and Criterion C. The building retains a high level of integrity as no major changes to the interior or exterior have taken place to this structure. The nomination is both well written and thorough, and formally recognizes the synagogue's historical and architectural significance.

In closing, the Cheyenne Historic Preservation Board fully supports this nomination of the Mt. Sinai Synagogue to the National Register of Historic Places and would be happy to offer any further support necessary in your charge.

Sincerely,

Christina Bird

Chair, Cheyenne Historic Preservation Board

# ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.

Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources



State Historic Preservation Office  
2301 Central Ave., Barrett Bldg. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
307-777-8594  
FAX: 307-777-6421  
<http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us>

July 19, 2017

Paul Loether  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Submission of the Mt. Sinai Synagogue National Register Form

Dear Mr. Loether:

The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office is submitting the Mt. Sinai Synagogue National Register Form for National Park Service review. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Mt. Sinai Synagogue to the National Register of Historic Places. The State Review Board reviewed and approved the nomination. Mary Hopkins, the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, has approved and signed the nomination.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Beadles  
Historic Preservation Specialist



Matthew H. Mead, Governor  
Darin Westby, Director