

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 11 1985

date entered MAY 9 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Tifereth Israel Synagogue (LC13:D8-264)

and/or common Old Community Playhouse

2. Location

street & number 344 South 18th Street NA not for publication

city, town Lincoln NA vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Lancaster code 109

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Gene Bedient

street & number 4221 Northwest 37th Street

city, town Lincoln NA vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lancaster County Register of Deeds

street & number County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Tifereth Israel Synagogue is a 1913 Neo-Classical Revival building of frame construction with brick exterior walls treated with stone and wooden trim. The shape is rectangular, the roof is flat, and there is one tall story above an elevated basement. The exterior focal point is the center bay of the main facade. This bay is of slight projection, is crowned by a dentiled pediment, and it also incorporates a one-story entrance portico. Another dentiled pediment is on the south wall, where the Neo-Classical Revival theme is further carried out through the use of brick pilasters.

The former Tifereth Israel Synagogue is located at the northeast corner of South 18th and L Streets in Lincoln, Nebraska (1980 census, 171,932). Construction is frame with brick exterior walls, and there is a main floor with a height of 16 feet above a raised basement of 9 feet. The roof is flat.

The main facade faces South 18th Street and is three bays wide. In the center is a double-door entrance with sidelights and a semi-circular light overhead that is filled with stained glass. A Classical frontispiece frames the main entrance, which is surmounted by a tripartite window and a pediment containing a Star of David. The parapet is treated as a Classical entablature with dentil molding. Long, narrow windows flank the main facade central bay, and stone banding marks the raised basement from the main floor. Protecting the main entrance is a one-story portico with two small columns.

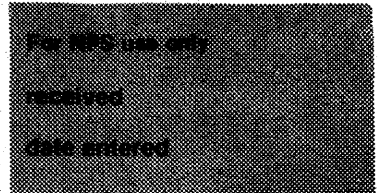
The south facade has an off-centered pavilion crowned by a pediment. The pavilion contains four brick pilasters with stone capitals and bases, and there are pilaster strips that continue from below the bases to ground level. Stone banding also demarcates the building's levels, and the Classically-treated parapet continues on the south. This side also has six long, narrow windows placed above rectangular basement windows.

The north facade of the former synagogue is treated with the same pilaster arrangement. The rear (east) wall of the building is without embellishment and is lacking the Classical parapet found on the other three sides.

The former sanctuary of this house of worship has been somewhat modified, due to changing uses. Original furniture has, of course, been removed. Retained, however, is an elliptical skylight that contains decorative colored glass.

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For slightly over a decade, the synagogue building was used as an organ factory: the sanctuary was used for storage of material and the basement accommodated various machines. The surrounding area, however, is zoned for residential use, and the organ factory was resultingly an illegal operation. The owner applied for a special use permit pursuant to local legislation that can allow special treatment for designated landmarks. Landmark designation for the synagogue was obtained, but the owner withdrew his application for a special use permit since owners of adjacent properties strenuously objected to the continuation of the organ factory. A possible use for the building is rental housing or condominiums. Such use would, of course, comply with the area's zoning, and this project could be greatly enhanced by favorable tax treatment.

Despite some physical modifications, the former Tifereth Israel Synagogue retains architectural integrity. It is eminently recognizable from the era of its construction, and the important elements of design and appearance could be restored. The placement of panels in windows detracts from the architectural character, and the changing uses of interior spaces have compromised the building's identifiable relationship to its history. However, the building is easily recognizable as a Jewish house of worship by the prominently placed Stars of David on the exterior. Also, the Neo-Classical architectural elements render the former synagogue compatible with neighboring residential architecture.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1913

Builder/Architect Fred Young, Jr./Alfred W. Woods

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The former Tifereth Israel Synagogue is an exemplary product of Neo-Classicism as employed in small-scaled synagogue architecture in the early part of the 20th century. Culturally, it is also significant for its ties to Orthodox Judaism in the City of Lincoln for many years.

The following is from the Lincoln Star, Sunday, May 25, 1913:

"Dedication of New Synagogue" The synagogue has just been completed at a cost of \$15,000. It is a neat structure and well adapted to the needs of the congregation. It has a seating capacity of 325, including the balcony. It is built of pressed brick and attractively decorated throughout. The basement is in two divisions, one of which will be used as an audience room except on special occasions when the auditorium of the church will be used. The other half is equipped as a kitchen and can be used as a dining room ("Dedication...", 3:6).

The first Jewish settler in Lincoln arrived about 1879 and others soon followed. However, no attempt to form a congregation was made until 1884, when the Congregation B'nai Jeshuran (Reform) was incorporated. An Orthodox congregation quickly followed, though. At first, Congregation Tifereth Israel (translation: "The Glory of Israel") occupied rented quarters in a hall until October 18, 1903, when the unfinished building of St. Luke's Episcopal Church at 13th and T Streets was purchased. In 1903, another Hebrew congregation under the name of Talmud Torah was formed and was independent for several years. In 1910, however, it rejoined with Tifereth Israel. After the consolidation, a lot was purchased and the cornerstone for a new synagogue was laid on November 3, 1912. The finished building was dedicated on May 25, 1913 (Sawyer, p. 255).

In 1923, one decade following the dedication of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue, a promotional book on Lincoln contained the following:

Opportunity for almost any church affiliation is offered in Lincoln and suburbs. There are eighteen different denominations represented and eighty-nine churches here. Lincoln is the center of the religious as well as the educational activities of the state (Lincoln, Nebraska's Capital City: 1867-1923, Lincoln, Woodruff Printing Co., p. 59).

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Lincoln, Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	4	6	9	4	4	3	5	4	5	2	0	0	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Legal description: Lot A, Hammond's Subdivision of Lots 7 and 8, Block 12, Lavender's Addition to the City of Lincoln. NOTE: There is no property beyond that within the legal description that has historic associations with Tifereth Israel Synagogue.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Daniel Kidd, Historic Preservation Officer

name/title Edward F. Zimmer, Technical Editor

organization Lincoln Co.-Lincoln City Planning Dept. date April 1, 1983
March, 1985

street & number 555 South 10th Street telephone (402) 471-7491

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Mervin W. Knott 3/28/85

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

J. Delores Byer
Keeper of the National Register

date 5/9/85

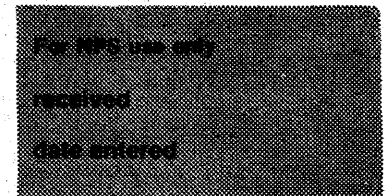
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The 1923 book then followed with photographs of Lincoln's houses of worship, including a picture of a trim Neo-Classical building whose entablature on the entrance's frontispiece was inscribed with "1913" and the Hebrew letters for "Tifereth Israel."

From the beginning of synagogue architecture in America, prevalent styles were employed, as Judaism never historically enjoyed a traditional style, such as English Gothic for Anglicanism, or Romanesque for Roman Catholicism. During Colonial times, the Colonial and Georgian styles were used; later, in the 1800's, the revivals were used in their progression: Greek Revival, Egyptian Revival, Gothic Revival, and so on. But according to Jewish architectural historian Gerald Bernstein, "in this resurgence of revival modes the one style most successfully adapted to the synagogue was the classical. The justification of Greco-Roman design could be found in recent archeological excavations of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Their discovery of ancient synagogues in the Galilee added impetus to the use of Classical motifs for a number of major (and minor) synagogues built around the country" (The Rose Art Museum, Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1976, page 16).

The people of Congregation Tifereth Israel were following a national trend in synagogue architecture, then, when they chose to have a classical-type building erected in the early 1900's. In the late 1950's, a new synagogue was built on Lincoln's Sheridan Boulevard, and the old building was transformed into the City's Community Playhouse. Following construction of a new Playhouse, the former synagogue was used as an organ factory for a number of years.

Tifereth Israel has not only existed for the religious needs of Lincoln's Orthodox Jewry: it has served the Jewish community's social needs as well. Along with Temple B'nai Jeshuran (listed in the NRHP), congregants of Tifereth Israel have supported numerous organizations: a chapter of B'nai Brith, the Hebrew Relief Society, a Jewish Ladies Aid Society, a supports service, and other educational, charitable, and social organizations. This work is especially admirable in view of the relatively small size of the Lincoln Jewish community. Nebraska's strong agricultural composition has not been one to encourage Jewish settlement. Farming did not attract many incoming Jews, who were not an agricultural people, having been barred from holding land in many countries.

The former synagogue was designated a City of Lincoln Historic Landmark by the Lincoln City Council in 1983, pursuant to Chapter 27.57 of the Lincoln Municipal Code.

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Bibliography

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"Dedication of New Synagogue," Lincoln (Nebraska) Star, Sunday,
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Sawyer, A. J. (Ed.). Lincoln, the Capital City, and Lancaster Co.,
Nebr. Vol. I Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publ. Co., 1916.