

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received **JUL 28 1980**  
date entered **SEP 17 1980**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue

and/or common \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 612 Washington Avenue \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Woodbine \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 2

state New Jersey code \_\_\_\_\_ county Cape May code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Woodbine Brotherhood

street & number 612 Washington Avenue

city, town Woodbine \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cape May County Court House

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Cape May Court House \_\_\_\_\_ state New Jersey

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This building is a freestanding one-story synagogue with a balcony and full basement. The building is rectangular in plan, three bays by five bays, or approximately 36' by 56'. The roof is a simple gable. The primary entrance, at the rear of the Synagogue, is reached by a twin exterior stair. The building is in good condition, but most finishes, both interior and exterior, require some care.

#### Exterior

1. Foundations: Where visible (e.g., basement storage room), they are exclusively brick masonry.
2. Walls: Are rather soft brick, red to salmon in color. They were once painted brick red, but the paint is now peeling. There are raised brick quoins. The walls decrease in thickness at the head of the basement windows and again at the main floor level.
3. Structure and Systems: Bearing brick walls with wood interior framing. The balcony is carried on two rows of irregularly spaced posts. These posts lean on two beams, which are exposed below the basement ceiling; the beams are in turn supported on regularly-spaced posts. The roof spans from wall to wall without intermediate support.
4. Porches: The present entrance to the main sanctuary level is via an exterior twin stair structure. It is constructed of reinforced concrete and brick masonry, with brick facing.
5. Chimney: There is one chimney (ca. 1930). It is structurally independent of the building, but it abuts the entrance wall.
6. Openings - Doorways and Doors: The main entrance doorway is within the same masonry opening as the center window. The basement doorway is in the rear wall of the exterior stair structure. All of these doors have modern flush wood door panels. There is an under-sized emergency exit door through a basement window opening.

Openings - Windows: The basement windows are double-hung, approximately five feet square. A flat arch composed of three rowlock courses spans the opening. The main window openings are approximately five feet by sixteen feet; a round arch composed of three rowlock courses, with a raised brick keystone, spans the opening. The original windows included four panes of casements (each sash with nine lights) surmounted by a fanlight. Except in the last sidewall openings nearest to the entrance and in the entrance wall openings, these casements have been replaced with double-hung windows. There is a circular window in the front (Washington Ave.) wall; the muntins of this window form a Star of David. This window, as well as the fanlights, is painted opaque white and deep blue on alternate panes. All sills are wood.

7. Roof - Shape, Covering: The roof is a simple gable, forty-two feet high at the ridge, covered with three-tab mineral surface asphalt shingles.  
Roof - Cornice, Eaves: Above the main window openings there is an architrave of three courses of corbelled brick. Above this is a frieze, set back in the same plane as the main walls. The cornice consists of three courses of corbelled brick, one rowlock course with alternate bricks projecting to form dentils, and three more courses (with the first and third corbelled). There are raking cornices which exactly duplicate the primary cornice, except that the last three courses are partially concealed by a wood fascia. The roof rafters are exposed at the eaves. The drainage system is exposed and made of galvanized steel. The horizontal cornices show some deterioration, and plants have taken root there.

Continued . . .

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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** Dedicated 1896 **Builder/Architect**

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue was built by the Woodbine Brotherhood as the religious, cultural, and educational center of a colony of East European Jewish immigrants. Constructed entirely by the Colonists on an American design, the Synagogue is symbolic of several basic characteristics of Woodbine. It is a response to the need for a place to practice a religion central to the life of the community. It expresses a cultural continuity in a new land, while also fusing American ways with East European tradition.

#### Background

The origins and history of the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue are inextricably tied to the development of Woodbine itself. Woodbine was the largest and most successful of a number of towns established in South Jersey for and by East European Jewish immigrants in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Pogroms and general persecutions of this period in Russia were the impetus for many Jews to take up once again their search for the Promised Land, assisted by western European and American Jews who provided funds for settling immigrants in the United States. Among those giving help were the Baron de Hirsch Fund, the American funnel for the fortune made by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in western European railways. The Fund was established in 1891 to aid the Vineland area colonies, and Woodbine in particular.

Woodbine was founded in 1891 with three hundred Russian and Rumanian refugees settled on a 5,300 acre estate bought by the Fund from a local judge. The aim was to establish a model agricultural community, but the difficulty of making a living from the recalcitrant land spurred, within the first year, the institution of factories for soft goods, particularly clothing.

Initially, the Colony survived primarily through the support of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. The founding organization, the Woodbine Land and Improvement Company, was a subsidiary of the Fund. The Fund made necessary loans, held mortgages of homesteads, and subsidized factories and the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School. In 1903, however, Woodbine was incorporated as an all-Jewish borough, and hailed (by David Blaustein in the magazine "Circle") as the "first self-governed Jewish community since the fall of Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup> Although the Colony suffered regular economic setbacks, it was nevertheless outstanding among such experiments for its civic capability.

Continued . . .

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brandes, Joseph: Immigrants to Freedom: Jewish Communities in Rural New Jersey Since 1882. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.  
 "Jewish Exponent", Dec. 4, 1896  
 Stevens, Lewis T.: The History of Cape May County. Cape May City, 1897. Continued. . .

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreege of nominated property 1.03

Quadrangle name Woodbine, N.J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UMT References**

A 

1	8	5	1	5	6	3	10	4	3	4	3	1	3	10
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**

Beginning at a point on the North side of Washington Ave., 150' East of intersection with Clay St., then 300' West at right angles to line of Washington St., thence 150' North along line of Jackson Ave., thence 300' East at right angles to line of Jackson Ave.

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

Cont. . .

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Trina Vaux, Thomas Ewing

organization Rietz & Rietz Architects

date November 27, 1979

street & number 2047 Locust Street

telephone 215-732-6100

city or town Philadelphia

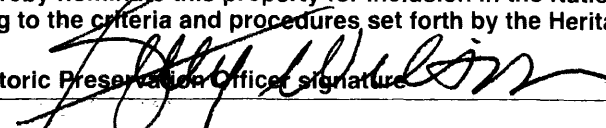
state Pa.

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

date 6-25-80

title Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection

date

For HCPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register 

date

9/17/80

Attest:   
 Chief of Registration

date

9-12-80

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Interior

1. Plan - Main Floor: The entrance in the center bay opens to a vestibule (approximately thirty-four feet by eleven feet) with twin stairs both ascending and descending. The sanctuary (approximately thirty-four feet by forty-three feet) is furnished with pews in three rows. The Ark, containing the Torah, is on the south east wall, and the Bimah (reading desk) is in the center of the sanctuary. Both are elevated above the floor level, as required by tradition.  
Plan - Balcony: The stairs are not enclosed at this level. The plan is U-shaped and the floor is terraced in three levels; each level includes a string of pews.  
Plan - Basement: The entrance opens to a stairway and a vestibule beyond, below the exterior stair structure. The boiler room and a storage room flank the vestibule. Within the main structure, twin stairs rise approximately three feet to washrooms. The only interior stairways to the main floor are entered through the washrooms. The main basement room (vestry room) has a small stage platform at the front wall. Above this stage, the ceiling is raised along the underside of the Ark. A kitchen area is partitioned in one rear corner. There is a stair serving an emergency exit in the east corner.
2. Flooring: There is sheet linoleum flooring in the sanctuary and basement. The balcony and the stairs leading to it have carpet over painted pine floor boards.
3. Walls and Ceiling Finish: In the sanctuary, walls are painted plaster with painted beaded board wainscoting. In the basement the walls are covered with painted composition board. The sanctuary ceiling consists of painted beaded boards formed into rectangular panels. The boards in adjacent panels are oriented in different directions. The central ceiling panel is a square, rotated forty-five degrees. A Star of David is inscribed within. The basement ceiling is painted beaded board.
4. Doors and Doorways: Large panelled wooden pivot doors, now painted, separate the vestibule and sanctuary. All other doors are common panel doors.
5. Interior Trim: The Ark was built with the building, its platform having been framed in lieu of any level floor at that point. The Bimah is apparently of a later date. The Ark, portions of the balcony stairway, and the balcony itself, have substantial turned newel posts and balusters. The remaining railings follow the pattern of the originals, but are simpler and are made of smaller stock.

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6. Mechanical and Electrical: There are modern fluorescent ceiling fixtures throughout the building. A brass electric chandelier hangs below the Star of David panel in the ceiling. The present heating system is an oil-fired (converted from coal) hydronic system with heat supplied by two ceiling-mounted fan-coil units at the rear of each level. The boiler is located below the exterior stair structure, outside of the original structure. There is evidence of an earlier flue in the west corner of the first floor. The electrical system includes a substantial amount of knob-and-tube vintage wiring, including wood wire-mold, etc.

C Site

Orientation: The four corners of the building are oriented nearly toward the cardinal directions. The entrance is at the rear of the building, presumably to allow the assembled congregation to face as easterly as possible while still maintaining a position of the building regular to the line of the street.

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Important Persons and Events Connected with the Structure

The dedication of the Woodbine Synagogue was a major event in the history of the Woodbine Colony, and celebrated a significant achievement on the part of the Colonists. The ceremony was attended by Trustees of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, who took the opportunity to inspect the Colony, as well as by notable figures in the Philadelphia Jewish community. Participating in the ceremony were a number of influential Rabbis, including Dr. K. Kohler of New York and Drs. Sabato Morais and Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia, both of whom gave addresses. A.S. Solomons, Agent of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, lit the perpetual lamp.

A longer term associate of the Synagogue was H.L. Sabsovich, the "Builder of Woodbine", who was treasurer of the Woodbine Brotherhood, and negotiated the finances of the Synagogue with the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Sabsovich was born in Russia, and studied both law and agriculture there. After working in farming communities in Russia, he came to Colorado to do the same, from whence he was hired in 1890 by the Baron de Hirsch Fund to be the superintendent of Woodbine. For some thirty years he managed the affairs of the Colony, and it was he who organized and guided the model Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School, founded in 1894.

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<sup>1</sup> David Blaustein, "The First Self-Governed Jewish Community Since the Fall of Jerusalem," Circles: A Modern Department Magazine for All People, Vol. II (1907), as quoted in Joseph Brandes, Immigrants to Freedom: Jewish Communities in Rural New Jersey Since 1882 (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 256

<sup>2</sup> Woodbine Brotherhood Articles of Incorporation, Woodbine Brotherhood Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.

<sup>3</sup> Brandes, Op. Cit., p. 218

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Living on the Land

Exhibition presented by the Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, Anne Rothberg, Curator, summer, 1979. (Interpretive copy still available.)

American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.

Has all records of Woodbine and Woodbine Brotherhood, including some undated -- presumably turn of the century -- photographs of the Synagogue.

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thence South, at right angles, 150' along Washington Ave. to point of beginning.

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