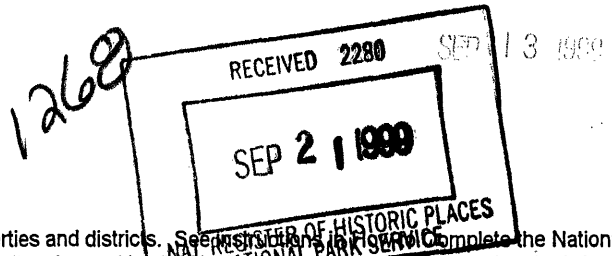


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, work processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mount Sinai Temple

other names/site number United Orthodox Synagogue

2. Location

street & number 1320 Nebraska Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Sioux City

N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Woodbury

code 193 zip code 51101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the national Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia Jenkins DSHPO 9-15-99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is :

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson W. Beall 10/21/99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

NA

0

7. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Queen Anne

Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements:

Gothic/Prairie School

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls wood

roof asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark an "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for national Register Listing)

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/European
Architecture

Period of Significance

1901, 1948

Significant Dates

1901, 1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

GW Burkhead, GW
Steele, William L.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:
Mount Sinai Temple

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 14 713400 4708900

3 _____

2 _____

4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Glenda Castleberry

name/title _____

organization SiouxLandmark date June 6, 1998

street & number 2311 Nebraska Street telephone 712-258-4239

city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name United Orthodox Synagogue c/o Frank Baron

street & number 750 Pierce Street telephone 712-277-1015

city or town Sioux City state IA zip code 51101

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S. C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Narrative Description

Mount Sinai Temple is located on a busy commercial corner of 14th and Nebraska Streets five blocks north of Sioux City's downtown. Constructed in 1901, the Mount Sinai Temple is a one and one-half story, frame, clapboard and shingle sided, Queen Anne style building with a one story Prairie School style 1922 addition. As such, the building can be described as eclectic. The 1901 Queen Anne style building features a moderately pitched front gable roof with a lower cross gable roof and a one story front gable, centrally placed, entry vestibule. There is also Gothic influences in the detailing of this original structure especially in the use of the Gothic arch over windows. The gable, cross gable, and entry vestibule roofs features prominent gable end returns. Two towers intersect the front gable at the south and north corners. The northernmost tower is three stories with a six-sided, bell-shaped (S curved) roof, the southern tower is two stories with a four-sided, bell-shaped (S curved) roof. Both towers have decorative roof cresting. The east facade is a one story hipped roof and the addition is a gabled with opposing flat roof projections.

The windows are a mixture of one over one and one over two double hung flat; and fixed arched, Gothic arched, and round. Double hung windows are all flat and are located in the southern tower, the first and second floors of the northern tower, along the building's northern facade, and in the 1922 addition. The northern facade's cross gable features a Gothic arched window. The shape of this window is echoed in the outlining of the shingle siding. This Gothic arched window pattern is copied in the southern facade of the 1922 addition. The round window is centrally located in the front gable above the entry vestibule and, like the Gothic arched window, its shape is also accentuated by the outlining of the shingle siding. In the northern three story tower there are louvered openings. Although there is no bell in this tower, it looks like it could have a bell. No information has been found to support either conclusion. The Gothic arch is prominently featured in the central entry vestibule. The shape of the opening is echoed both in the wood pattern of the doors and in the outlining of the shingle siding.

The addition to the original structure was constructed in 1922 and was designed by William L. Steele the prominent Sioux City architect famous for the Prairie School style Woodbury County Courthouse, the largest public building ever constructed in the Prairie School style and designated as a National Historic Landmark. The Mount Sinai addition is also in the Prairie School style of architecture and was designed to add space for larger meetings. Attached to the south end of the Queen Anne structure, this later addition features a long series of windows which form a visual band of glass the full length of the addition. A false roof projection hides another band of windows (now covered) in the interior auditorium and these windows from the street. It has a flat roof line and an additional visual band of wood which is a slight overhang

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above the windows. Lastly, as is true of prairie style architecture, the addition has a very horizontal appearance. It is a tribute to Mr. Steele that while this later addition constitutes a major break with the original building in terms of style, it still matches up with the original in terms of shingle patterns, scale, siding width, and window trim treatment and blends very attractively.

8. Significance Statement

This property is significant under Criterion C for Architecture and Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage.

Architecture

Mt Sinai Temple is significant under Criterion C as beautiful example of Queen Anne style architecture and significant under Criterion C as a local example of Prairie School style architecture. The Queen Anne style is evident in the original, earlier structure as it has prominent towers, mixed patterned side shingles and decorative wrought iron tower ornamentation. The Prairie School style is evident in the later addition constructed on the southern side of the temple. This later addition is executed in long, horizontal lines with bands of windows which further accentuate its low, flat features typical of Prairie School style architecture.

Queen Anne Architectural Style:

Queen Anne architectural style was the dominant style of domestic building during the period from about 1880 until 1900. The style was named and popularized by a group of 19th century English architects to describe buildings that were inspired by the transitional architecture or the pre-Georgian period when classical ornament was grafted onto buildings of medieval form. The Queen Anne style plays on a contrast of textures and ornamentation as can be seen on Mount Sinai Temple. It also features steeply pitched roofs, decorative shingles wrapping towers and accentuating shingle siding over the windows and the front door in attractive mixed patterns typical to Queen Anne style. In addition, the main tower features iron ornamentation topped with the Star of David noting its unique Jewish heritage in a Queen Anne Style.

Prairie School Style:

At the start of the 20th century, a group of Chicago architects were at the forefront in the development of a distinctive Midwestern residential style known as the prairie style. The acknowledged leader of the movement was Frank Lloyd Wright. A number of young architects also designed in this style during its brief but prolific heyday. These architects consciously rejected currently popular academic revival styles and sought to create buildings that reflected the rolling Midwestern prairie terrain on which they were to be built. As a result, the prairie

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style structure had a predominantly horizontal appearance with a broad hipped roof and widely overhang eaves.

Mount Sinai Construction:

On the fifteenth of April 1901, the *Sioux City Journal* ran a nearly quarter-page rendering of the temple design, announcing "Jewish synagogue to be finished by September." On September 1, 1901, the *Journal* devoted a large, half-page tribute to Mount Sinai's "pretty synagogue." A huge photograph of the new temple was in center page, with a description announcing it as "a handsome frame structure 39 by 62 feet on the ground.... The main auditorium on the first floor is 36 x 39 feet in size.... There are the choir room and study in the rear. In the basement is a schoolroom 25 by 37 feet in the dimensions, with a large rostrum in front. There are also toilet rooms, kitchen and heating room."

From the newspapers' detailed coverage and their attention to the whole span of this structure's construction, it is clear that Mount Sinai Temple was a source of pride for Sioux City citizens at the time. Tragically, the Temple archives hold no documents pertaining to its construction or design. All that remains in the archives is a brief, one-and-one-half page summary of the congregation's history up to 1901 and a photocopy of the "autographs of the members of the congregation," described in a May 20, 1901 *Sioux City Journal* article about the laying of the cornerstone that day.

Nonetheless, from the detailed reporting in the local press, including the large rendering and photographs, it is possible to infer that the City's leaders found the design of the temple to be exciting and of a high quality. The building contractors were well-respected and noted for capable work, and the architect, G. W. Burkhead, was one of the leading local designers at that time. Mount Sinai Temple can thus certainly be seen as architecturally significant at the time of its construction, and remains as a beautiful example of a local architect's interpretation of the Queen Anne revival style in a religious structure. In fact, in the recently-published Buildings of Iowa, one volume in the Society of Architectural Historians' series on Buildings of the United States (1993), the Mount Sinai Temple is written up as one of the city's noteworthy structures.

Regarding the later addition, the *Sioux City Tribune* reported in a May 28, 1924 article that in "1922 ... an annex costing \$25,000 with an added seating capacity for 200, was added to the temple. It is so constructed that it may be separated from the original part, and thus used as an auditorium and meeting hall." The annex was designed by Prairie School architect William L. Steele.

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Architects and Contractor

The Mount Sinai temple building, designed by a local architect, G.W. Burkhead and constructed by a local firm, was a source of great civic pride at the time of its erection, and reflects the best Sioux City had to offer in turn-of-the-century indigenous religious architecture. In the 1920's, its Prairie School style addition was designed by William L. Steele, architect of Sioux City's Woodbury County Courthouse which is now a National Historic Landmark. Steele was probably the most prestigious architect living in Sioux City at that, or any subsequent, time.

Announcing plans to construct the temple, a local newspaper, the *Sioux City Journal* on March 26, 1901 predicted that the new building would be "an ornament to that already attractive portion of the city." Another local paper, the *Sioux City Tribune* concurred, stating the following day that "the plans indicate a neat structure, which will add greatly to the appearance of that portion of the city." When the temple was dedicated six months later on September 1, 1901, *the Journal* proclaimed it as "one of the handsomest little church buildings in the city." Designed by Sioux City architect G.W. Burkhead, the Mount Sinai temple was constructed by Ostling & Johnson, a local building company.

Contractor, Ostling & Johnson:

The 1904 publication, Past and Present of Woodbury County, states that "Ostling is connected with the building interests here as a contractor and his work has ever been of a character that insures him a good patronage." Andrew Ostling had trained as a carpenter, emigrating from his native Sweden in 1889 at the age of twenty-three. He made his way to Sioux City where, in 1893, he formed a partnership with Charles Johnson under the firm style of Ostling & Johnson, contractors and builders.

Architect, G.W. Burkhead:

At the height of his career, at the turn of the century, when he designed Mount Sinai Temple, G.W. Burkhead's work extended very far, in regional terms, and appeared to be considered highly desirable. He designed hundreds of public and private structures, and clearly was a well respected practitioner of his trade. His work was not confined to Sioux City but extends over Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Minnesota. Among Burkhead's best known Sioux City works were: the First National Bank; Methodist Church; Longfellow School; Howard Hotel, Christian Science Church; West Hotel; Clinical Amphitheater at St. Joseph's Hospital and the City Auditorium all in Sioux City. Burkhead was also responsible for the design of the Court

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House at Elk Point, S.D., First National Bank at Randolph, Nebr., and Marcus, Iowa, High and Grade Schools at Castana, Iowa, and the Carnegie Library at Odebolt, Iowa.

The August 23, 1899 issue of *Construction News* confirms Burkhead as the architect of the original Queen Anne style Mount Sinai Temple with the following note:

"Sioux City, Ia. - Architects Burkhead & Reese have prepared plans for a Jewish synagogue, for the Reformed Jews; frame and stone, furnace, shingle roof, art glass, gas and electric fixtures, etc. Cost, \$5,500."

The firm of Burkhead & Reese was changed to G.W. Burkhead in 1900. Burkhead, then, would have been the principal during the final stages for the synagogue, completed in 1901.

Architect, William L. Steele:

This property is one of dozens of buildings in Sioux City designed by the prominent Prairie School architect William L. Steele. Born in Springfield, Illinois, Steele earned his B.A. in architecture, from the University of Illinois in 1896. The most detailed discussion of his architectural training and experience prior to Sioux City is made by Arthur Francis Allen:

He next entered the office of Louis Sullivan, of Chicago, who had gained considerable note as the architect for the Chicago Auditorium, the Chicago Stock Exchange Building, the old Schiller (now the Garrick) theatre and other important buildings. W. Steele served three years [1897-1900] as draftsman in that office, and then went to the office of S. S. Beman, of Chicago, the architect who designed the Pullman building and laid out the town of Pullman. Later Mr. Steele went to Pittsburgh and spent two years [1900-01] in the office of Thomas Rodd, who was the architect for the Westinghouse people. While there the Westinghouse buildings for Manchester, England, were designed, and Mr. Steele was one of the factors in drafting the plans. Subsequently he went with Alden & Harlow, of Pittsburgh, who were drafting plans for the Carnegie Institute, in which work he took an active part. Mr. Alden, of this firm, had been a pupil of Henry H. Richardson, the first American architect to gain a national reputation. From there Mr. Steele went into the office of Sidney F. Heckert [from 1902 to 1904], also of Pittsburgh, who specialized in church architecture, and here Mr. Steele was made head draftsman. In 1904, feeling that he had made sufficient preparation, Mr. Steele came to

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Sioux City and for a time was associated with Wilfred W. Beach, under the firm name of Beach & Steele.¹

Steele arrived in Sioux City to work for Beach in 1904, and was a full partner by 1905.² In 1907 he set up an individual practice. Steele began a brief association with George B. Hilgers in 1926, and in 1928 became a partner in Kimball, Steele, and Sandham of Omaha. In 1946, he formed Steele, Sandham, and Steele with his son William La Barthe Steele, Jr. Steele was active in countless community and professional organizations, serving as president of Iowa Society of Architects and the Iowa Chapter of AM and vice president of the national AIA, and he contributed to *Architect*, *Ecclesiastical Review*, *House Beautiful*, and *Journal of the American Institute of architects*.

Steele's Buildings in Other Styles:

While Steele is best known for his Prairie School designs, dozens of other structures dot Sioux City's landscape, ranging from water pumping stations and horse barns in the stockyards to monuments in local cemeteries to a host of buildings for the Catholic Church, from churches (Immaculate Conception, St. Casimir's (1915-16), and St. Michael's) to convents and rectories, to schools and a college, Trinity (all 3 buildings now razed). Major Sioux City structures in styles other than Prairie School include the National Guard Armory, the commercial-style Crane Co. Warehouse (ca. 1910; razed), the Neoclassical First National Bank (1911; razed), St. Vincent's Hospital (1916-17), the Italian Renaissance-style Woodbury County Poor Farm (1917-18), Hawkeye Truck Company factory (1918), the Italian Revival-style Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (1925), the Tudor Revival-style Northside Branch Library (1929).

Domestic Architecture by William L. Steele:

An intriguing statement by Steele exists in a scrapbook at the Sioux City Public Library:

American domestic architecture has many worthy examples. The old colonial style as it sprung into being in response to actual living conditions was beautiful and distinctive. As it exists today, it represents more or less of anachronism, a conservative sophisticated lack of faith in the frank solutions of the more modern conditions of the problem. The most truly American homes nowadays are being designed along the lines

¹ Arthur Francis Allen, "William LaBarthe Steele," *Northwestern Iowa: Its History and Traditions 1804-1926* (Chicago: Clarke, 1927), vol. II pp. 1042-43.

² Steele, William LaBarthe *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 2 (1950). See also *Who's Who in Iowa* (Sioux City, 1922), pg. 72.

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of the Chicago renaissance. This term was applied in fun by eastern architects to the work of the young men of the west who have been following Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. There has been an attempt to work out architectural problems in absolute fidelity to the fundamental canons of art but unhampered by a slavish adherence to details which are taken arbitrarily to determine style.³

No comprehensive survey exists of Steele's residential designs, dozens of which were completed in Sioux City. Thirty-six homes are listed in the 1941 inventory, followed by the phrase "and many others." Because the brief popularity of Prairie Style for residences corresponds with a period of steady, sustained growth for Sioux City, there are probably over a hundred houses in the style, ranging from pale pattern-book vernacular copies to Steele's best. Steele's grandest Prairie residential design, the brick Everist House, with its 90 ft. wide ground floor interior space, tile roof porches with widely overhanging roofs, leaded art glass windows and doors, built-in cabinets and benches, and bands of casement windows. Hubert H. Everist, the owner, knew of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House in Chicago and "wanted a similar solution, using modern materials and based on an open and convenient living space for his family." ⁴ Wilson and Robinson characterized the Everist house as Steele's "most noteworthy. Long horizontal volumes of space are stacked together, and tied to the site by outstretching terraces and pergolas. Forms basically Wrightian in origin are articulated by Sullivan-derived ornament." ⁵

Steele's Religious Architecture:

Between 1907 and 1928, William Steele designed nearly thirty churches. His designs, especially those for the Catholic Church, seemed to be a compromise between his own Prairie School ideals and the desires and needs of his clients. According to Brian Hughes in his Master's thesis "Sermons in Stone: the Ecclesiastical Designs of William LaBarthe Steele", the majority of Steele's church projects can be classified only loosely under the term Prairie School. Indeed, of his five identified Sioux City church projects only one, the First Congregational Church located at 1301 Nebraska Street (NRHP), can be classified as Prairie School style. This

³ Quoted in Mrs. Lewis Worthington Smith, "Creative Artists in Iowa," a series of articles published in the *Des Moines Sunday Register*. Undated

⁴ *Sioux City, Iowa: An Architectural View* (Sioux City: Sioux City Art Center, 1983), pg.36.

⁵ Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson *The Prairie School in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1977), pg. 24 and pg. 25.

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church, constructed in 1918, is considered to be one of Steele's most creative church designs. Here, because the progressive liturgical and social life of the Congregational community demanded innovation, Steele was allowed some freedom of architectural expression. Steele provided the Congregationalists with a design that was a reflection of that progressivism. This church is characterized by crisply defined rectilinear masses, soaring square piers, decorative terra cotta, and horizontal stone banding, incorporated with more traditional church elements such as stained glass windows and a Byzantine styled dome.

Recently a number of national honors have been bestowed upon the Courthouse. In 1993, Gebhard and Mansheim featured it on the cover of their hardback edition of *Buildings of Iowa*, and Sydney LeBlanc identified it as one of the 200 key American buildings of this century, "a model of progressive architecture at a time when most prominent American designers sought inspiration in the past." ⁶ In 1996, G.E. Kidder Smith chose it as one of the 500 most significant buildings constructed in America, and characterized it as:

Ethnic Heritage/European

This property is also significant under Criterion A as it is associated with the emigration of European Jews to Iowa and Sioux City, Iowa.

Local Jewish Heritage:

What is today Sioux City's United Orthodox Synagogue was built in 1901 as the Mount Sinai Temple. Mount Sinai was only the fourth building in Iowa, and the first in western Iowa, to be constructed as a Reform Jewish temple. The first three were Congregation B'nai Israel, Keokuk (1875), Temple Emanuel, Davenport (1885), and Temple B'nai Jeshurun, Des Moines (1887).

Mount Sinai is the only one of these first four structures still standing and was the only one designed by a congregation that, at its inception, followed the radical branch of Reform Judaism. In a letter dated April 13, 1998 from the Executive Director, Dr. Marilyn L. Chist, for The Center for the Documentation and Preservation of Places of Worship, in St. Paul Minnesota the synagogue is noted as "the oldest operating synagogue in the Upper Midwest, and, I believe, is also the region's oldest extant synagogue structure."

The Mount Sinai congregation numbered only 32 members when the temple building was constructed. By the early 1920s, it had "a membership of almost 200 and was the largest Jewish congregation in Sioux City" (*Sioux City Tribune* May 28, 1924).

⁶ Sydney LeBlanc, *The Whitney Guide to 20th Century American Architecture: 200 Key Buildings* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1993), pg. 31

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The temple's architectural features are significant. So, too, are its reflection of the ethnic heritage of Sioux City's Reform Jews and its contribution to the understanding of the Jewish religion, especially as it developed within the American context. Reform Judaism was a religious response to the political emancipation of Jews that occurred during the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Western Europe. Germany was the primary focus for this major intellectual revolution within the Jewish tradition. Reform Judaism reinterpreted Jewish religious practices in light of newly available opportunities for assimilation into the majority culture.

The 1840's were the heyday for Reform Judaism in Europe. In 1848, the political upheavals sweeping across Europe resulted in the arrival in the United States of nearly a quarter-million German Jews. During the next four decades, according to Max Dimont, author of The Jews in America, "American Jewish history was largely that of the reform movement."

Dimont summarizes:

The Jewish population swelled ... as German Jews fled to America (in company with 7 million Christians) to escape the economic and social havoc that convulsed the European continent ... The German Jews quickly sensed the opportunities offered by the American frontier. They worked hard, lived frugally, and saved their money to invest in businesses of their own, their first investments often being peddler's carts. As they trekked across the continent, they left ever larger retail establishments as milestones of their enterprise ... this German-Jewish elite became wealthy beyond the dreaming in the ghettos of Europe. They became a merchant-prince class.

This process revealed itself clearly in the history of Sioux City's Reform Jews. Centennial Historic Sketches, published in 1968 in the Jewish Federation Newsletter, recorded:

Prior to 1888, Sioux City's Jewish settlers appear to have been mainly, if not exclusively, of German and Western European origin.... Most of them came with money and goods and were in a position to establish successful businesses. From all early newspaper accounts the Jews were accepted and rose to prominence, economically, socially and politically.

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When Godfrey Hattenbach, the first Jewish settler, arrived in Sioux City in 1857, statehood was only a decade old. Sioux City was a frontier outpost with a population of 150, the remote gateway to the Dakota Territory. As had been the case in Eastern Iowa, long years elapsed between the organizing of the Jewish community and the actual construction of a temple building.

<u>City</u>	<u>Congregation founded</u>	<u>temple dedicated</u>
Keokuk	1855	1875
Davenport	1861	1885
Des Moines	1873	1887
Sioux City	1898	1901

The very late date of the organization of the Mount Sinai congregation is a little misleading. The members of that congregation numbered only 32 at the time the temple building was constructed, a very small number. Nevertheless, a Reform Jewish community had organized a cemetery association in 1869 and had been worshipping regularly in concert with the Unitarian Church of Sioux City. This made practical sense, given the paucity of numbers and the very similar theology of Reform Judaism and Unitarianism. This relationship with the Unitarians may also explain, somewhat, why the building has the Queen Anne influences in its architectural style rather than the more commonly used Byzantine or Classical styles seen in most early synagogues. In a local book entitled I Remember When... Personal Recollections and Vignettes of the Sioux City Jewish Community 1869-1984, by Susan Marks Conner, 1985, it is noted that a number of members of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society either belonged or contributed to the women's organization of the Unitarian Church and the Unitarians, in turn, gave receptions in the church for the Jewish Ladies and invited guest rabbis to speak.

It was the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society which first decided on and pressed for the organization of a Jewish congregation and according to I Remember When... they wanted to be affiliated with the Reform movement. The cemetery association was organized in 1869 and the congregation was organized in 1898 and was incorporated in 1898.

When the congregation did formally organize in 1898 and undertook as its first task for construction of a temple, it accomplished that project quickly. *Sioux City Journal* reporters were intrigued with the

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"endless chain of letters asking a dime from each writer, the receipts to be turned into the fund which will be used for building a synagogue...." This approach to fundraising employed by the congregation's leaders, a practice not apparently seen before, resulted in "everyone of the members of that time deserv[ing] mention in a roll of honor." "The History of the Jews of Sioux City," published in the 1916 Reform Advocate newspaper of Chicago, did point out, however, that Messrs. Sig Schulein and Chas. Wise bore the special burden of financial and personal aid in founding our place of worship." Schulein was the first president of the congregation; Wise became its third president in 1904. Of no little note, Wise's wife was a charter member of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, formed in 1884, and a major force in promoting "the preservation of Judaism" and the building of a temple.

As has been noted, Mount Sinai began as a Reform congregation, the only one of these early Iowa congregations to do so. The design of the temple building itself reflected this highly assimilative perspective. Its exterior blended in with the fashionable residential Queen Anne style. The temple was considered an architectural asset, not an anomaly, by non-Jewish Sioux Citians.

But it was the temple's interior that most dramatically reflected Reform.

The large audience that filled it [on its dedication day] -- Jews and Gentiles - approved the beauty of the structure and its decorations. It is compactly built and its interior has been beautifully harmonized in all its details.... The interior woodwork is all in handsome oak, and the rostrum and its furnishings -- the pulpit and the pulpit chairs are of like material.... A soft delicate light streamed in through handsome memorial windows of stained glass. (*Sioux City Journal*, September 1, 1901)

It points out that "the Ark and Torah was completely missing." Only a pulpit of "handsome oak was situated in the front of the worship hall, with "tablets of stone engraved with the laws of Moses" hung on the sloped ceiling above. Today little of the original woodwork can be seen. Layers of paint mask what remains. All but one window retain the original glass, although those windows that are still in place are in serious need of re-leading.

The 1916 Reform Advocate states that "Mt. Sinai Congregation is at the same time one of the most radical and one of the most devoted congregations in the country." Some of the practices

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that made Mount Sinai rank among the most radical of the Jewish congregations in the country included the following:

Our Temple is unique in having no seat-holders, now or at any time. The members have supported the congregation by their annual dues.... There are ... no seating privileges whatever. Additionally, Mount Sinai welcomed all Jews and non-Jews alike, to worship. Services were held on Sunday, the traditional Christian Sabbath, rather than on the, traditional Friday night and Saturday morning of the Jewish Sabbath. The temple boasted a successful volunteer choir.

This temple building served the Mount Sinai congregation until 1956, when numbers finally outgrew the 14th Street structure and necessitated a move to a much larger facility on 38th Street. The building remains an active synagogue, however, becoming home to the United Orthodox Synagogue coalesced from several earlier Orthodox congregations whose numbers are diminishing and only 11 members remain worshipping in this structure as of May 1998.

Where in the 1960s the Jewish population of Sioux City numbered in the thousands, today it is below 600. With the consolidation of the City's Jewish Population to another very modern structure, the Mount Sinai temple building faces numerous obstacles to its upkeep.

In terms of its significance to Sioux City and the region at large, the Reform Advocate praised Mount Sinai in 1916 as follows:

The congregation founded under such a handicap, and even today both young and small, has achieved remarkable results in its short existence. It is now the leader in all Jewish work in Sioux City; it represents Judaism adequately before the world at large, and represents Judaism at large most forcibly to its own members.... Mt. Sinai congregation represents a strong force among the religious organizations of Sioux City. It is a standing example of the enterprise and liberalism of Sioux City Jews.

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10. Verbal Boundary Description

West ½ of Lots 1, 2 & 3, Block 83, Sioux City East Addition, Sioux City, Woodbury County, Iowa.

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11. Boundary Justification

The boundaries indicated in this application are the legal boundaries historically associated with the Synagogue.

Photographs

Glenda Castleberry, was the photographer for all views and all the negatives are held by SiouxLandmark 2311 Nebraska Street, Sioux City, Iowa. All photos date from June 1, 1998 and depict the Mount Sinai Temple, Sioux City, Iowa, Woodbury County.

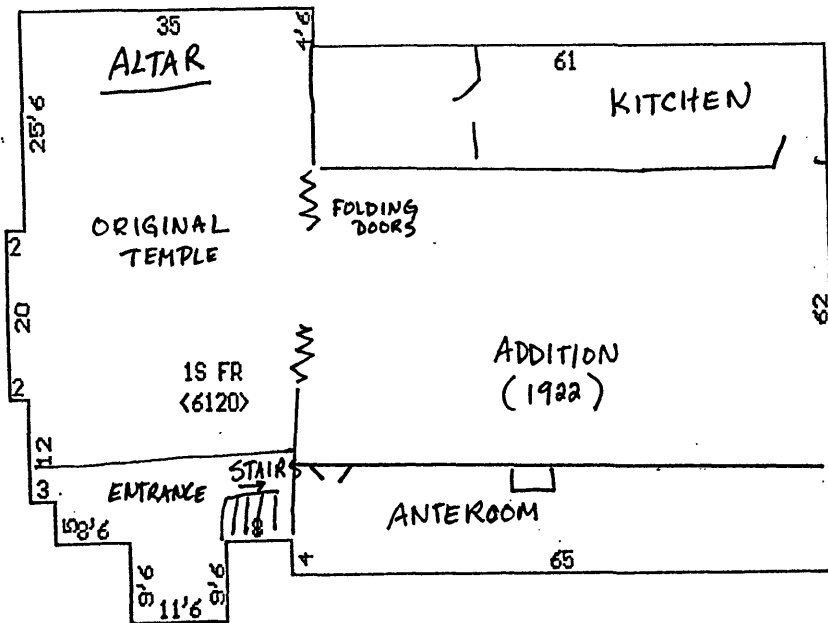
- #1 Northwest corner, camera pointing southeast
- #2 North side, camera pointing south
- #3 West side, 1901 building, camera pointing east
- #4 West side, 1922 addition, camera pointing east
- #5 South side, 1922 addition, camera pointing north (gothic window behind trees)
- #6 East side, 1922 addition, camera pointing northwest
- #7 Altar, camera pointing east from balcony
- #8 Choir loft in balcony, camera pointing to north wall
- #9 Stained glass (cir. 1901) over front entrance, camera pointing west
- #10 Stained glass (cir. 1901) on north wall, camera pointing north
- #11 Front interior entrance and balcony, camera pointing west
- #12 Interior brass plaque of deceased members
- #13 Altar, camera pointing east
- #14 Altar detail, camera pointing east
- #15 Stained glass on south wall (cir. 1922) in 1922 addition, camera pointing south
- #16 Band of windows (covered) on west wall of 1922 addition, camera pointing west

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source: City of Sioux City, Iowa Assessor's Office

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