

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Plum Street Temple (Isaac M. Wise Temple)
AND/OR COMMON
K. K. B'nai Yeshurun

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
S.E. Corner Eighth and Plum Streets
CITY, TOWN
Cincinnati
STATE
Ohio
VICINITY OF
CODE
COUNTY
Hamilton
CODE
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
2nd / 1st
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<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
K. K. B'nai Yeshurun
STREET & NUMBER
3315 Clifton Avenue 45220
CITY, TOWN
Cincinnati
STATE
Ohio
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
Hamilton County Court House
STREET & NUMBER
Court and Main Streets
CITY, TOWN
Cincinnati
STATE
Ohio

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Inventory and Appraisal of Historic Sites, Buildings and Areas
DATE
1960
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Cincinnati City Hall, 801 Plum Street
CITY, TOWN
Cincinnati
STATE
Ohio
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"A spectacular mixture of Gothic and Moorish or Near Eastern elements, both within and without, the result is quite fantastic and flamboyantly colorful."¹

The structure is of red brick with buff lime stone trim that is richly ornamented in low relief in the Moorish style. The facade is divided into three bays with the high central nave of a Christian basilica with deeply recessed doors. Two polygonal minarets rise 50 feet above the roof.

The plan includes the nave (34 x 100 feet), two side aisles (17 x 74 feet), two transepts (34 x 34 feet). There is a basement level used for school rooms, a kitchen facility and for the Rabbi's study. The main floor of the temple is 75 feet from the floor to the roof, the transepts 45 feet high and the side aisles 35 feet high. The two story nave is lighted by a clerestory level above whose windows are framed in pointed arches. The roof is supported on slender cast iron columns with Moorish capitals. The altar is at the east end of the building with a rose window above matching the west door, with its rose window. Over the four bays of the nave and side aisles and above the center of the transept rise 13 domes on octagonal bases. The whole interior is richly decorated with eastern ornament. This picturesque embellishment was painted on in 1874 by the German artist, Thien. Successive restorations have left the original work intact including the elaborate inscriptions in Hebrew in the cornice, over the arches and above the Ark. The last cleaning and restoration was carried out in 1969.

¹Patton, Glen James Keys Wilson Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians Vol. XXVI No. 4, December 1967

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1865 - 1866

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Keys Wilson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Plum Street Temple is important architecturally and to the history of the Reform Judaism in the United States. Beginning in the early 19th century in Germany, Reform Judaism was brought to America by immigrants and reached its zenith under Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, Wise became Rabbi at the Plum Street Temple in 1854 and guided that congregation for 53 years. During that period the Synagogue was the leading reform temple in the United States. Rabbi Wise was the first President of the Union of American Hebrew congregations and was the founder of Hebrew Union College.

The congregation was incorporated in 1842 and outgrew an earlier synagogue. In 1863 subscriptions were circulated for a new building and the present site was purchased in 1863 for \$35,000. Ground was broken that year. The Civil War halted construction but the cornerstone was laid on May 12, 1865 and the Synagogue opened August 24 of that year. Current news accounts noted "It is in the Byzantine style with two steeples....the building, according to the plan, will be truly grand, both in design and dimensions."¹ Another booklet notes: "It is an Alhambra temple, with slender pillars and thirteen domes [perhaps to correspond to the famous passage in Exodus 34:6,7 with the thirteen attributes of God."²

The origins of the congregation were central European and particularly Germany and the architectural style is based on the Romantic movement abroad, documented by Rachel Wischnitzer in Synagogue Architecture in the United States. The search among the Jews for an architectural style that gave them a special identity may be derived from a group of central European monumental designs, Rabbi Isaac Wise identified this Moorish style with Reform Judaism and the Plum Street Temple was the first Moorish Synagogue in the United States. (Temple Emanu-El in New York was demolished in 1927, Central Synagogue in New York is another excellent example of this style)

¹May 6, 1864, The American Israelite

²50th anniversary booklet 1892, Isaac M. Wise and Max B. May

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The architect was James Keys Wilson (1828-1894) who had studied his profession under James Renwick and Martin E. Thompson. Wilson is better known for his buildings in the Gothic Revival style so he must have collaborated directly with Rabbi Wise. This New World "Alhambra" is one of the outstanding examples of the Moorish style.

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Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Ohio, Cincinnati, A Guide to the Queen City and Its Neighbors. Cincinnati: The Wiesen-Hart Press 1943.

Cincinnati Commercial, May 13, 1865, Description of the Design of the New Temple.

Patton, Glen, James Keys Wilson (1828-1894), Architect of the Gothic Revival in Cincinnati. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Vol. XXVI No. 4 December 1967.

Smith, S. Winifred, Museum Echoes: Plum Street Temple Published by the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society. September 1948.

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