

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Beth-El Zedeck Temple

Other names/site number: Beth-El Temple

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 3359 Ruckle Street

City or town: Indianapolis State: Indiana County: Marion

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

XA ___B XC ___D



7.18.2019

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

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

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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:) _____

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 ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT: not in use

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Neo-Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE: limestone

TERRA COTTA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Beth-El Zedeck Temple, built in 1924 as Beth-El Temple, is a tan brick synagogue (photo 0001) that represents 20th century synagogue architecture. The Temple was designed by the Indianapolis firm of Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller and is located north of downtown Indianapolis in the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood. The nominated site includes the original Temple and its lot, which is graded to elevate the ground line of the building approximately two feet above street level (photo 0002). It also includes a small one-story addition with a flat roof and short parapet at the south end of the east (rear) façade faced in tan brick that matches the brick on the original structure. (Taking the form of a bumpout, the addition is one bay wide on each of its three (north, east, and south) exterior facades and was constructed as an extension of the original kitchen after 1938.) The setting is an urban, primarily residential neighborhood with an access alley located on the east boundary of the lot (photo 0003) (Attachments 3 and 4). The building fronts Ruckle Street and is located at the southeast corner of East 34th and Ruckle

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streets. A driveway is placed along the south facade, providing access to a parking lot behind the two residential lots to the south of the Temple (photos 0004 and 0005). The Temple is positioned snugly against the south and east borders of the lot, with minimal spacing between the lot boundary and the south and east exterior walls.

The main building is set back from Ruckle and East 34th streets approximately 40 feet. A cast iron fence surrounds the property on the north and west boundaries of the lot. Grassy areas separate the north and west facades of the Temple from the cast iron fence and sidewalks (photo 0009). The surrounding Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood, which encompasses Ruckle Street, includes many 1920s and 1930s single-family residences and duplex houses.

As the oldest surviving synagogue structure in Indianapolis, the building represents the early 20th century Indianapolis Jewish population, which transformed from an immigrant group into a social and financially stable community. The building retains a significant amount of architectural integrity, both inside and outside. As of this nomination's writing, the building is vacant.

Narrative Description

Exterior

Beth-El Zedeck Temple, built in 1924 as Beth-El Temple, is a two-story, flat-roofed building adorned with a terra cotta cornice and copper acroteria (photo 0006). The building has unique brickwork consisting of an alternation between ten courses of Flemish bond and two courses of running bond. The windows on the first floor of the north and south façades of the building are all 3/3, single-hung sash windows (photo 0008). The second floor windows, which are visible on the north and south facades as well, are long, narrow fixed and awning windows made of wood covered by contemporary aluminum frame storm windows (photos 0003 and 0005). Because the building is located on the corner of Ruckle and 34th streets, both the west and north facades are prominent. The main façade faces west on Ruckle Street and the secondary façade faces north and fronts 34th Street.

West Façade

Consisting of three bays, the west façade is symmetrically arranged (Photos 0001 and 0002). Three steps lead from the sidewalk along Ruckle Street to a concrete walkway centered on the front of the building.

The middle bay contains a front entrance surmounted by a large fixed window. The entrance comprises two pairs of double doors surmounted by transoms and separated by a narrow spacer window, also topped with a transom. Standing in lieu of historic wooden doors (Attachments 1 and 2), the existing doors are of galvanized aluminum with single window panes. A cast-iron floral and fleurs-de-lis decorative canopy is suspended over the entrance by two steel tension cables anchored in the limestone surround of the superjacent fixed window. Above the canopy, two limestone scrolled brackets support a shelf. Historically, large limestone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments sat upon this shelf, identified in historic photographs (Attachments 1 and 2). Above the shelf is a large, aluminum-framed, fixed storm window. Although the storm window is a later addition, the underlying window may be original, as suggested by historic photographs. Several muntins break up the glazing into twenty-three

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separate lights. The large fixed window is framed on its top and sides by decorative floral limestone carvings that are repeated in the sanctuary. A smooth and flat panel of limestone rests directly on top of the floral carvings above the window and bears the inscription "BETH EL TEMPLE."

The center bay is flanked by two identical bays (photo 0001). At the base of each bay is a three-foot brick plinth topped with a limestone water table. Each bay is broken up by two vertical channels of recessed brick, delineating simple brick pilasters separated by a brick panel. The pilasters sit on a brick and limestone base that projects slightly from the plane of the façade, forming a water table, as noted above. The tops of the pilasters are terminated with a band of terra cotta. The two brick panels are topped with a soldier course surmounted by a band of cut limestone. Above the limestone is a recessed soldier course that serves as a horizontal link between the two vertical channels that outline each panel. Approximately four inches above each recessed soldier course are three carved limestone foliate swags that are topped by a limestone congée. The roofline is crested with a decorative terra cotta cornice and copper acroteria (photo 0006).

South Façade

The south façade (Photos 0004 and 0005) is divided into two sections – a western part corresponding to the main portion of the building and subdivided into three bays, and an eastern part corresponding to a subsidiary but original rear portion of the building and consisting of a single bay. At the level of the first floor, each bay in the western part of the façade is marked by a group of three 3/3, double-hung, wood sash windows – except for the easternmost of these bays, in which the westernmost opening contains a single aluminum-frame and plate-glass door with a transom window and a narrow sidelight (photo 0004). Within the three western bays, the eight first-floor window openings are framed at the bottom by limestone sills that interrupt the façade's limestone water table and framed at the top by soldier course lintels. Above each of the three windows in the westernmost grouping on the south façade is a brick spandrel containing a decorative limestone panel, which features a stack of acanthus leaf and volute motifs resting on a plinth in low relief (photo 0007). The second story of the south façade has nine long, aluminum, fixed and awning windows, again divided among the three western bays into three groupings of three. All nine window openings have limestone sills, soldier course lintels, and overlying spandrels. Above the three long windows in the westernmost bay are three decorative limestone swags (Photo 0005). While the three bays of the western part of the façade are three stories in height, encompassing both the single-story portion of the ground floor and the double-height portion of the second story sanctuary, the easternmost bay is only two stories in height and is quite narrow relative to the bays in the three-story portion, containing only one window opening at each level. Of the two window openings on this bay, the lower one has protective metal bars and the upper one has been boarded up. At the ground level, this easternmost section of the façade corresponds to a kitchen while at the level of the second floor, it corresponds to an office space located south of the *bimah*. Appended to the façade at its easternmost end is the south bay of the single-story kitchen addition. This portion of the façade has no windows and is faced in tan brick with simple limestone coping on top of its short parapet.

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East Facade

The east facade faces the alley and consists of three bays (photo 0003). The central bay rises the full three-story height of the building, comprising the register of the first floor and the double-height second floor sanctuary. The two flanking bays rise two stories in height.

The south bay is defined at the level of the first floor by the kitchen addition built of brick. The brickwork on the addition matches the unique work of the entire building. The kitchen addition has two window openings with two 3/3, fixed, steel sash windows, which are protected by steel bars – one on its east side and one on its north side. A wood staircase leads up to a boarded up door opening on the north side of the kitchen addition. Directly above the roofline of the kitchen addition on the original face of the southern bay are two small window openings – likely the tops of the original window openings that existed prior to the kitchen addition -- the northernmost of which is filled with a board that surrounds a protruding vent pipe. Directly above the two smaller window openings are two large 3/3, wood sash windows at the level of the second floor.

The center bay has a concrete staircase that leads below grade to a boarded up door opening at the level of the basement. To the north of the door opening is a boarded window opening with a header course sill and soldier course lintel. Approximately one foot above the window and door is a band of cut limestone that stretches the full length of the east facade. At the level of the first floor, the center bay contains three recessed window openings with soldier course lintels and a shared limestone sill; all three openings have been filled in with brick. A fourth window opening is centered at the level of the second floor directly above the middle opening of the first floor grouping. It contains a 3/3, double-hung wood sash window. The shallow recesses of the first floor window openings are extended all the way up to the limestone bedmold at the base of the cornice, such that the face of the center bay is broken into an alternating pattern of simple pilasters and intervening channels. At the top of each channel, the brickwork becomes more decorative, with two soldier courses defining the top and bottom of a square, the sides of which are equal in length to the width of the channel. The vertical sides of each square are delineated by a stacked bond brick pattern in which every other brick recedes slightly, creating a rhythmic alternation of light and shadow. The square at the top of each channel has at its center a smaller square limestone inset with a flat, unornamented surface that is coplanar with the faces of the channels themselves.

The northern bay of the east façade is identical in massing with the original portions of the southern bay. A 1960s addition has been removed, leaving behind holes where roof rafters of the addition had been attached to the original east wall. At the level of the first floor is a single former window opening, positioned in the northern half of the bay; it is filled to its vertical midpoint with painted masonry, and filled from its midpoint to its top with a painted board. The upper half of the opening appears to serve as a point of entry for several utility lines. Directly above this blind aperture is another window opening at the level of the second floor, filled entirely with brick. Both openings are likely to have contained 3/3 wood sash windows at one time.

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North Facade

The north facade is similar to the south facade with a few minor exceptions (photo 0003). At the level of the first floor, there are nine window openings that originally contained the same type of 3/3, wood, double-hung windows found on the building's other elevations. Along the first floor of the north facade, a one-story addition was constructed c. 1960 for use as a garage or storage space and remained in place until 2015. Since the demolition of the north addition, the previously hidden first floor window openings have been exposed again to view. Above the nine first floor window openings are brick spandrels with decorative limestone panels, as on the south facade. The second story of the north facade has nine window openings with long, aluminum, fixed and awning windows, grouped in the same fashion as those on the south facade. In contrast with the south facade, however, all nine of the second floor window openings are surmounted by decorative limestone swags in the overlying spandrels. At the eastern corner of the north facade of the original portion of the Temple, the building is lower in height, corresponding to a reduction in the ceiling height of second floor interior spaces, as with the easternmost bay of the south side. At this location, there is a secondary entrance into the building, which was added during the first few years of the synagogue's operation. A concrete stairway leads to a double-door opening; it is protected by a cast iron canopy with scroll brackets, a panel, and decorative carvings -- similar to the west facade canopy.

Interior

From the main entrance on Ruckle Street one enters the building through double doors into a wood paneled lobby (photo 0011). The lobby acts as the main circulation point for the building. From the main lobby, one can access the other portions of the first floor or go upstairs to the sanctuary. The lobby is appointed with wood doors with stained glass and wood panels. Above the paneled wainscot of the lobby is a plaster wall with a faux stone pattern. The floor is covered in a ceramic tile that does not appear to be original to the building. On either side of the lobby area are stairways to the second floor. The stairways have gray marble stringers, risers, and treads. Although covered with contemporary paint, the stairwell features concrete wall surfaces cast with subtle detailing to give an appearance of marble block. Skirting the staircase is a cast iron decorative railing with newel post and balusters. A modern stairway lift has been installed on the south stairs, providing access to the second floor for the wheelchair bound. On either side of the lobby are doors leading into restrooms. To the north is the men's restroom, and to the south is the women's restroom. Next to the men's restroom door is an arched ceramic tile wash basin. Although the fixture had not been conclusively identified, it was likely used for the washing of hands by observant Jews for certain rituals.¹ An inlaid square tile in the niche above the basin is inscribed with the words "IN MEMORIAM OF WM. AND MOLLY GOLDBERG."

Directly to the east of the lobby through double doors is a large open space that was historically used as a multipurpose room for community gatherings, worship, fellowship, and education (photo 0010). A kitchen is located at the back southeast corner. The space was heavily modified from its original configuration through a remodeling project by the architectural firm Rubush and Hunter in the late 1930s.² Several non-historic partition walls were added, dividing

¹ Isaiah Kuperstein, in an interview with Mark Dollase on September 26, 2016.

² "Remodel Layouts for Beth-El Temple Cor. 34th & Ruckle Streets," Rubush & Hunter, Architects, 1938. Indianapolis Historical Society, Rubush and Hunter Architectural Firm Records, ca. 1887-1963.

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the northern third of the room into a separate space that includes several classrooms. The historic stage at the eastern extent of the room has also been enclosed with a partition wall in order to capture that space for other uses. At the northeast corner of the first floor is a stairwell that leads down to the basement and up to the second floor. The stairwell also doubles as a secondary point of entry to the building, corresponding to the aforementioned door on the north exterior wall of the building.

Although the second floor can be accessed through the northeast stairs, it is likely that most members would have accessed the second floor through the two stairs at the main entry lobby. At the top of both the northwest and southwest stairs, there is a small entrance way with double doors that leads into the sanctuary (photo 0014).

The sanctuary is a double-height space arranged symmetrically about its east-west axis. Corresponding to the three westernmost bays on the north and south exterior walls, the north and south walls of this sanctuary space are divided into three bays by pilasters and arched transverse ceiling ribs that follow the gentle arc of the barrel-vaulted ceiling. Sculpted mullions separate the windows in each grouping of three, each mullion bearing a carved bead-and-reel border surrounding a vertical chain of engraved ovals containing smaller rectangles at their centers. The pilasters, bookending each group of windows, are relatively simple, consisting of planar shaft moldings superimposed in low relief on the faces of load-bearing piers. The neck of each pilaster is embellished with a string of three elongated flat ovals with dominant vertical axes. The capitals of the pilasters take the form of corbels, supporting the transverse arches at their springing points. Each capital is adorned along the center of its face with a string of four flat elongated ovals (similar to those found on the aforementioned mullions), this time with dominant horizontal axes. Each transverse arch has a stepped profile with three fascia, the uppermost two of which are scalloped on their undersides. The intrados of the arches are more richly sculpted with art deco stem and leaf moldings interrupted at intervals by embossed octagons. Resting on the transverse arches are east-west purlins that further subdivide the surface of the ceiling. The purlins have stepped undersides such that they are T-shaped in section, with thicker stems and thinner tops. The lower edges of the stems are molded with an egg-and-dart motif, while the lower edges of the tops are adorned with a bead-and-reel motif.

Divided by aisles, the floor seating is grouped into three sections with rows of padded wooden pews (photo 0012). The pews do not appear to be original to the building, and are believed to date to the 1950s. A balcony rests above the western third of the sanctuary and is accessed through the northwest stairwell of the building, which leads to a hallway along the rear (west) side of the balcony and vomitories along its north and south ends (Photo 0013). As on the sanctuary floor, the seating of the balcony is divided by aisles into three sections – this time rising in graduated rows to optimize the view from all seats. The aisles between sections are also directly accessible from the hallway along the rear of the balcony. Originally, the sanctuary had a seating capacity of approximately 1,300, including balcony seating for approximately 160. The plaster panel in front of the lowest row of pews in the balcony is trimmed with an egg and dart molding along its base, above which is a repeating relief of shallow bowls containing flowers, each framed by a pair of volutes (photo 0016). Wooden pews also make up the seating for the balcony, but these pews are original to the building (photo 0018). Original brass lighting fixtures hang over the balcony. They are round in shape with exposed light bulbs, and include stylized four leaf clovers with Stars of David circumscribed at their centers (photo 0015). The stylized design is broken up by floral decorated bars that lead down to a metal tassel and can also be found in larger and smaller sizes throughout the sanctuary.

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All seating is positioned in an end-stage arrangement to face the focal point of worship services, a platform, called a *bimah*, framed by a large two-story recess in the center of the east wall (photos 0014, 0017, 0019). The recess is trimmed along its vertical edges with the same geometric inverted flower molding that surrounds the second floor window above the front entrance on the west exterior façade. Lining the top of the opening is a row of seven square grilles -- each subdivided into 25 square openings by wood muntins. Filling the gap between the horizontal band of grilles and the arched line of the ceiling is a frieze with a pattern alternating between runs of attenuated and simplified acanthus leaf moldings and simple embossed octagons surrounded by volutes. The recessed space contains the *bimah* and the ark -- two essential Jewish liturgical elements within the hall of a synagogue. The ark, which houses the Torah, is placed along the eastern wall of the recess so as to face Jerusalem³ (photos 0017, 0019, 0020). The *bimah* is the raised platform from which services are delivered. In the Jewish liturgy, the *bimah* contains both a pulpit-like lectern known in Hebrew as an *amud*, and a separate table for reading the scrolls of the Torah, known in Hebrew as a *shulchan*. The Torah reading table is typically placed behind the podium on the *bimah*, and Beth-El Zedeck Temple followed this tradition during its service as a synagogue, as indicated by historic photographs. Although the *shulchan* is no longer in place at Beth-El Zedeck Temple, the *amud* remains, and was in fact used as a pulpit by Christian congregations that later occupied the building. The *amud* is centered at the western edge of the *bimah* (Photos 0014, 0017, 0019). Its vertical faces are of gilded metal openwork with stylized leaves spanning voids between rails and stiles that subdivide each face into a grid. In its current state, the lectern has a Christian cross centered near the top of its west face, but historic photographs show that there was originally a Star of David in this location. To the left and right of the central lectern are two ancillary lecterns which are built into the *bimah* itself, each comprising three paneled faces that join each other at 135-degree angles. Flanking the *amud* and its two dependent lecterns along the western edge of the *bimah* are gilded metal railings that also bear stylized foliate motifs between every fourth pair of balusters. The *bimah* itself projects several feet into the sanctuary from the east wall of the space. Its west face (tantamount in form to a stage apron) is clad in simple wood paneling. At the north and south ends of the projecting portion of the *bimah*, short runs of stairs rise symmetrically from the floor of the sanctuary to the level of the platform in a north-south direction. Their western spandrels are coplanar with the west face of the *bimah* and are clad in the same paneling. The aforementioned railings also continue along the western edges of the stairs.

As noted above, the ark occupies the rear (east) wall of the recess at the east end of the sanctuary. Dominating the center of the wall, the ark is a richly carved work of carpentry. It has an opening in the center with shelves where Torah scrolls would have been stored; the shelves would traditionally have been concealed by a curtain, known as a *Parokhet*. The opening can be concealed by sliding doors. The vertical sides of the ark are composed of multiple moldings, resembling cornices standing on end. From the inner edge outward, the moldings consist of a fillet, a congée, a cyma reversa, a bead and reel motive, an exaggerated scalloped molding, and a large fillet. The vertical framing dies into the east wall of the recess toward the outer edges of the ark. Directly above the open shelves is a pair of square wooden doors with raised panels and circular knobs at their centers. Above these doors is a smooth, flat panel, and above this are three corbels that carry a projecting panel bearing an asymmetrical foliate design. However, the panel at the top does not date to the Temple's period of significance, and is thought to have been added by one of the Christian congregations that subsequently

³ Henry and Daniel Stolzman, *Synagogue Architecture in America* (Australia: Images Publishing, 2004), 27.

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occupied the building.⁴ Originally, the zenith of the ark was appointed with two large wooden tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew, as documented in historic photos.⁵

The northeast and southeast corners of the apsidal recess are chamfered, and a tall wainscot of dark wood paneling adorns all portions of its walls not occupied by the ark. Above the wainscot, the walls are of a smooth plaster scored to look like ashlar stone, separated from the ceiling by a simple cornice.

Two small rooms flank the central recess that contains the *bimah* and the ark – one immediately to the south, and one to the north, separated from the recess by an intervening stairwell. These rooms were likely used for the rabbi to get ready before worship. A hallway behind the recess leads to the stairwell immediately to the north thereof, which in turn leads to the building's small partial basement.

Flooring for the sanctuary consists of non-historic carpeting and resilient tile at the front of the *bimah*. Underneath the pews one can see the original terrazzo floor. The walls are clad in decorative plaster, as is the barrel vaulted ceiling.

⁴ Dr. Dennis Sasso (Senior Rabbi for Congregation of Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis, IN), in a phone interview with Sam Burgess, August 23, 2016.

⁵ Dr. Dennis Sasso in an interview with Sam Burgess, August 26, 2016.

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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.

Criteria Considerations

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

- ☒ 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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1924-1958

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person (last name, first name)

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name)

Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller

Rubush and Hunter

Period of Significance (justification)

The building's period of pignificance begins with its completion in 1924 and ends in 1958, when the Beth-El Zedeck congregation moved to its current location on West 70th Street in Indianapolis.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Beth-El Zedeck Temple meets Criteria Consideration A because it is one of the most well-preserved places associated with the history of the Jewish community in Indianapolis. Jews were a socially distinct group within the broader European and Ottoman influx that shaped Indianapolis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This building is the oldest synagogue extant in Indianapolis and represents the architectural heritage of the Jewish community. It represents a distinctly American Jewish congregation that became established in Indianapolis during the 1920s through the 1950s.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Beth-El Zedeck Temple is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance. Criterion A is met by virtue of the building's role in the Ethnic Heritage of the Jewish community in Indianapolis, while religious significance is met by the role the congregation and its building played in the development of the American Jewish community in Indianapolis. The building is also significant under Criterion C insofar as its Neoclassical architecture is an example of the synagogue adopting popular American designs.

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

ETHNIC HERITAGE

The Beth-El Zedeck Temple illustrates 20th century Jewish heritage in Indianapolis. The Temple was the first house of worship constructed for the Beth-El congregation in Marion County and was once representative of a thriving Jewish neighborhood north of downtown Indianapolis.

While not the earliest settlement of Jews in Indiana, Indianapolis would become the center of the Jewish population in the state. The state's first Jewish congregations were formed in Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Evansville in 1848, 1849, and 1853, respectively.⁶ Beginning in 1849, the first wave of Jewish immigrants to Indianapolis came from Germany. Many of these immigrants worked as peddlers, profiting from the city's growing economy. From their positions as peddlers, many of the newcomers were able to purchase small stores, some of which grew to become major retailers in the state.⁷ In keeping with statewide trends, Jews in Indianapolis became leaders in the clothing and tailoring businesses.⁸ By 1859, there were about 3,000 Jews living in Indiana.⁹

By the late 1860s, Eastern European Jews began moving into the city. What made Indianapolis unique was the diversity that allowed for many of the distinct ethnic Jewish communities to found their own synagogues. In 1870, the Polish immigrants formed a prayer group that became

⁶ Carolyn Blackwell, "Jews," In *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer, Robert G. Barrows, and David G. Vanderstel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 846-848.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 846.

⁸ Judith E. Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984),

⁹ L.C. Rudolph, *Hoosier Faith: A History of Indiana's Churches and Religious Groups* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 345.

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Sharah Tefella. In 1884, the Hungarians organized congregation Ohev Zedeck, and by 1889, the Russian community founded Knesses Israel. In 1906, a small group of Sephardic Jews settled in the city. Originally from Turkish Macedonia, they spoke Ladino, not Yiddish. These newest immigrants founded Congregation Sephard of Monastir in 1913.¹⁰

In general, the Jews moving to Indianapolis prospered, while German Jews showed a particular willingness to assimilate to American culture.¹¹ In the early days of settlement, most immigrant Jews moved into the area just south of downtown Indianapolis.¹² This south side neighborhood flourished and developed into a distinct community. The city directories for Indianapolis show that the near south side contained most of the Jewish residents, the institutions, and organizations related to Jewish life. Those community resources found in this area on the south side included the *National Jewish Post* newspaper, Abraham Lodge, I.O.O.B. No. 58, Esther Lodge, I.O.O.B. No. 323, and the Tree of Life Mutual Benefit Society. The south side Jewish community was concentrated on a few streets, such as Maple, Eddy, and South Illinois.¹³

The Communal Building, constructed in 1914, later became the Jewish Community Center. The community offered kindergarten for children, citizenship classes for adults, and some social activities including those headed up by the National Council of Jewish Women. The South Side Hebrew Ladies Charity Organization established a shelter house and in 1906, moved to a larger place on South Illinois Street. In 1920, they relocated to Union Street and also started taking care of the elderly.

The Indianapolis Jewish Federation was established in 1905, as a way to centralize fundraising of Jewish organizations. One scholar states that in Indianapolis, "as in other cities, Jews of German heritage controlled the Federation, although-Eastern European immigrants were the main recipients of services."¹⁴ In 1908, the Jewish Federation sent transients to the "Friendly Inn" or "Wood Yard" shelters established by the Indianapolis Benevolent Society in 1880. Later, the settlement house known as the Nathan Morris House became a part of the Jewish Federation, offering programs for immigrants and serving as a center for social and educational facilities, including a library of Yiddish books, meeting rooms, and kindergarten classrooms.¹⁵

Education was a priority for the immigrants and by 1863, the German Jews established the first school for Indianapolis's Jewish community. Over the next several decades a variety of schools were organized on the south side. Some of the schools were associated with an ethnic group, while others were affiliated with synagogues. In 1896, Chevrah Tamud Torah school was organized and in 1907, Congregation Sharah Tefilla had a school. However, a lack of support for each individual school led to the establishment of the United Hebrew Schools, which would eventually open Hebrew Academy in 1971.¹⁶

¹⁰ Monica Casanova, "The Indianapolis Sephardic Jewish Congregation and Community: An Oral History Account, 2000" (Collection Guide), Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. <http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/collection-guides/the-indianapolis-sephardic-jewish-congregation-and.pdf>

¹¹ Richard Moss, "Jewish Identity in 1920s Indianapolis," *The Indiana Magazine of History* Vol. 103, No. 1 Mar 2007, 42.

¹² Robert G. Barrows and David J. Bodenhamer, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 853.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2-3; Indianapolis City Directories, 1874- 1970

¹⁴ Carolyn S. Blackwell, "Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis," In *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer, Robert G. Barrows, and David G. Vanderstel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 845.

¹⁵ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 20, 72, 74-77; Moss, "Jewish Identity," 45-47.

¹⁶ Lindsey Mintz, A Century of Jewish Education in Indianapolis: 1860-1960," *Indiana Jewish History* Publication No. 35, July 2003, 21-24.

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Over time, Indianapolis's Jewish citizenry became less exclusively concentrated on the south side – a transition spurred by changes in religious attitudes that allowed for shifts in the structure and make-up of the Jewish community. In the Orthodox community, one lived near the local temple so the family could walk to services; riding in a vehicle to Shabbat was against Jewish law.¹⁷ With the rise of the Reform Movement, which lifted this rule, individuals could move into more prosperous neighborhoods, reflecting their socio-economic status rather than religious affiliation. In Indianapolis, this meant moving north of the center of the city at Meridian and Market streets, known as the Circle.¹⁸

With the shift to the Reform Movement, services and buildings of worship evolved, impacting the design of the interiors of synagogues.¹⁹ The American Jews introduced theater style seating arrangements and ceased to separate the sexes, as they began to sit together during the time of worship. Those who adhered to the more traditional Jewish practices established Orthodox congregations. Orthodox Jews typically constructed simple one-room synagogues with a partition or balcony to separate male and female attendees.²⁰

As the Jewish community moved north, so did its institutions. The Indianapolis Club building at 23rd and Meridian streets was purchased in 1925, for the Kirshbaum Community Center. The noted Indianapolis architecture firm Vonnegut, Bohn and Mueller remodeled the building, but it was razed in 1950. The home for the elderly, in 1938, moved to 356 North Central; in 1964, this institution reopened as Hooverwood upon relocating to the far north side in the "Hoover Road" area – a stretch of Hoover Road between West 64th and West 73rd streets with an abundance of Jewish synagogues, schools, and cultural centers. Other institutions in the "Hoover Road" area include the Bureau of Jewish Education, Congregation B'nai Torah, Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation, the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis, and the Jewish Community Center. A considerable number of Jewish households developed around the synagogues on the north side of Indianapolis, but never rivaled the number or density of Jewish households that surrounded the earlier south-side synagogues. As individuals moved north, most of the buildings affiliated with the Jewish community on the south side were demolished.²¹

The Congregations and Businesses of Indianapolis

Indianapolis had at least four congregations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By 1856, there were enough families living in the city that fourteen men approved the constitution and by-laws of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (IHC). The IHC would become the Reform synagogue for the city. The congregation met in temporary quarters for at least two years, until they could acquire a room in the Judah Block (located just east of downtown on East Washington Street, no longer extant), where they remained for ten years. In 1868, they moved to the East Market Street Temple (approximately four blocks east of the city center, no longer extant), where they

¹⁷ Hedeem, 2-3

¹⁸ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 115-117.

¹⁹ Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE, "Reform Judaism: History & Overview," <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-reform-judaism> [accessed 11 Feb 2019].

²⁰ "Orthodox Judaism," New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Orthodox_Judaism [accessed 11 Feb 2019]

²¹ *City Directories of Indianapolis, 1920-1970*; Endelman, , *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 21-4-24; Moss, "Jewish Identity," 41; Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, *Indiana Jewish Heritage Survey: A Study of the Impact of a People on the Built Environment* (Indianapolis: Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, 2007), 80-104; Carolyn S. Blackwell, "Jews," *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2010), 317-318.

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worshiped until 1899; at that time, they sold the Market Street temple to Ohev Zedeck, the Hungarian shul (a small synagogue).²²

Sharah Tefilla was founded by Polish immigrants in 1870. Originally called the *polische shul*, this was the first of the southside *shuls*. The group met in rented rooms, changing its name to Chevro Bene Jacob around 1877 but returning to using its original name in 1882. At this time, Sharah Tefilla also purchased a permanent building on South Meridian Street. In 1910, the group moved into a new building designed by George Bedell, a well-known Indianapolis architect.²³

Knesses Israel was founded in 1889, by a group of Russian immigrants. This Orthodox synagogue was also known as the *russische shul*. By 1893, the group built a new temple; in 1923, they moved out of this facility and built another structure. For many years, Sharah Tefilla and Knesses Israel shared rabbis.²⁴

Ohev Zedeck was formed in 1884, by Hungarian immigrants, renting storefronts for worship. In 1899, the group was able to purchase the Market Street temple from the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. Ohev Zedeck occupied this building until 1927, when the congregation merged with Congregation Beth-El (formed in 1915). The vacant East Market Street Temple was demolished in 1933 for a parking lot. The Hungarian Jews also established a Hungarian Jewish School, a benevolent society, and the First Hungarian Society.²⁵

While there were three Orthodox congregations, they remained small. Ethnic differences prevented any organizations which benefited the entire Jewish community (schools, burial societies, etc.) from prospering. In 1903, the United Hebrew Congregation was formed with the hopes of overcoming the ethnic differences that divided the Orthodox community. Also known as the Union *shul*, they dedicated their building in 1904. It became the largest and most influential of the many Orthodox synagogues on the south side of Indianapolis. It boasted the city's first Talmud Torah (school), as well as the city's first Jewish Women's group.²⁶

In 1910, Ezras Achim served some of the poorest Jews in the city. Also known as the peddler's *shul*, because of the occupation of most of the congregants, the congregation was the last synagogue formed by Eastern Europeans.²⁷

In 1915, a former president of Sharah Tefilla, Alexander Cohen, formed a small group of other former members of Sharah Tefilla and began to participate in High Holy Day services.²⁸ This small group was the beginning of the Beth-El synagogue, which sought to define itself as a new, American Jewish congregation. The members rented a house at 16th and Illinois streets for the

²² City Directories of Indianapolis, 1855-1870; Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 111-156; Moss, "Jewish Identity," 39-65; Department of Natural Resources, *Indiana Jewish Heritage Survey*, 80-104.

²³ Department of Natural Resources, "Indiana Jewish Heritage Survey," 80-104; Blackwell, "Jews," 318-319; *Golden Jubilee: Congregation Sharah Tefilla* (Indianapolis: Congregation Sharah Tefilla, 1981).

²⁴ Department of Natural Resources, *Indiana Jewish Heritage Survey*, 80-104; Blackwell, "Jews," 320-321; Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE, *Indianapolis*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/indianapolis> [accessed 11 Feb 2019]; Judith E. Endelman, "Judaism," in *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer, Robert G. Barrows, and David G. Vanderstel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 853-855.

²⁵ Department of Natural Resources, *Indiana Jewish Heritage Survey*, 80-104; Blackwell, "Jews," 318-319; Endelman, "Judaism," 853-855.

²⁶ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 64-66.

²⁷ Endelman, "Judaism," 855.

²⁸ Kerry M. Olitzky, *The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary and Source Book* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.), 138-139.

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purpose of holding service on the High Holy days. Within a year, the attendance grew and the congregation rented a house at 21st and Talbott streets.²⁹ On January 3, 1921, the Congregation Beth-El incorporated under Indiana Law.³⁰

Rabbi Bienenfeld, the first rabbi of Congregation Beth-El, was elected in 1922. The congregation chose to buy a lot at 13th and Talbott streets, but it was found that the lot was not suitable. Accordingly, Beth-El chose instead to construct the Neoclassical structure at 34th and Ruckle streets in order to serve the growing Jewish community in the surrounding area. As the American Jewish population evolved from a body of immigrants into a group composed largely of natural-born U.S. citizens, the community gained financial means and a desire to assimilate to the larger social realm of America. This transition encouraged the development of Jewish congregations that would integrate American ideals into religious practice, community activities, and the design of sacred structures.³¹

The official dedication of Congregation Beth-El's new building was held on the first day of Hanukkah, December 12, 1925. Dedication festivities concluded on the final day of Hanukkah. On this occasion, speakers from outside of the congregation included Indiana Governor Edward Jackson, who had taken office in January of that year.³² Jackson's presence at the event was redolent of irony, as the governor had won the election with strong support from the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, he had accepted the fervent endorsement of D.C. Stephenson, then grand dragon of the Indiana KKK.³³ The allegiance of the Klan voting base was an enormous boon to political candidates at a time when as many as one-third of all Indiana males over the age of eighteen were members.³⁴ The gubernatorial election was just one piece of a larger scheme to install Klan sympathizers at all levels of Indiana's government.³⁵ However, Stephenson had become mired in scandal in mid-1925, and had been convicted of second degree murder in November of that year.³⁶ As a consequence, many Indiana political figures who had enjoyed the support of the KKK began to distance themselves from the organization, and especially from the now-infamous Stephenson.³⁷ Governor Jackson's appearance at the dedication of Beth-El Temple may have been a symbol of regret for aligning himself with purveyors of bigotry for political gain; however, it must certainly also have been part of an effort to save face after alienating Jewish, Catholic, and African American constituents whose support had become important amid the weakening solidarity among Klan voters.

Perhaps Governor Jackson's appearance at the event was also intended to mend some of the tension between the congregation and its new neighborhood, for numerous local residents had protested the construction of the Temple near their homes.³⁸ Although the neighbors had cited a fear of reduced property values in their pleas to the Indianapolis Board of Zoning Appeals, anti-Semitic motives were strongly suspected at the time. In any case, the zoning dispute was

²⁹ Ethel A. Wynne, "Group Started in 1885," *The Indianapolis News*, April 11, 1931.

³⁰ "Articles of Amendment of Articles of Incorporation of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck," *Amended By-Laws, 1932*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³¹ Stolzman and Stolzman, 18.

³² "Jewish Families to Observe Feast of Lights: Dedication of Beth El Temple to Be Part of Celebration," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), December 8, 1925.

³³ "Victory for Walb Seen in District Chairmen Election," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), May 13, 1924, p. 3.

³⁴ James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 38.

³⁵ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 50.

³⁶ "Stephenson Aids Give No Bond on Other Charges; Ex-Dragon Found Guilty on First Ballot," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), November 16, 1925.

³⁷ Doug Linder, "The D.C. Stephenson Trial: An Account," 2010.

<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/stephenson/stephensonaccount.html>

³⁸ "Appeal Board Grants Jewish Congregation Permission to Erect Building," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), March 26, 1924.

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resolved on March 26, 1924, when the congregation received a permit to build its house of worship at 34th and Ruckle streets.³⁹

The choice of location was consistent with the northward migration of Indianapolis's Jewish community described above.⁴⁰ At the time of Beth-El Temple's construction, Jewish citizens could purchase and build houses in emerging neighborhoods, including the nearby Oliver Johnson's Woods, which is located ten blocks north of Beth-El, roughly bounded by Central and College avenues between 44th and 46th streets.⁴¹ Many Jewish families lived in this neighborhood during the 1920s and 1930s. In this way, the Temple's location at 34th and Ruckle streets met the needs of the Jewish population looking for a community which incorporated both Jewish traditions and American culture.⁴² The Kirshbaum Center was also nearby at 23rd and Meridian streets and served as a community center for this north side Jewish population.⁴³ The Kirshbaum Center's history is similar to the Temple's inasmuch as it was formed while the Jewish community was shedding its immigrant status and gaining an increasing share in American identity and prosperity.⁴⁴

In 1928, Congregation Beth-El merged with Ohev Zedeck, the aforementioned Hungarian congregation from the south side of Indianapolis.⁴⁵ The resulting congregation, Beth-El Zedeck, incorporated contemporary views of the religion, specifically Conservative Judaism.⁴⁶ Rabbi Milton Steinberg, who served Congregation Beth-El and Congregation Beth-El Zedeck from 1927 to 1933, was instrumental in introducing progressive concepts and practices to the members.⁴⁷

Congregation Beth-El Zedeck served as an anchor for the Jewish community, promoting the religious and social life of the Jewish population in Indianapolis. Formation of social groups within the congregation mirrored those in the secular world, a result of Jewish acceptance within fraternal and community societies. The Americanization of the Jewish social community resulted from the desire to create a congregation that met the religious and social needs of the American Jew.⁴⁸ The Beth-El Sisterhood formed in 1922, and founded the Beth-El Sunday School. Notably, the Beth-El Sisterhood worked with German and Austrian refugees in 1939, to utilize the Temple kitchen for the purpose of baking cakes and pastries for a variety of social events.⁴⁹ The Sisterhood organized the purchase and planting of the extensive shrubbery on the Temple lawn.⁵⁰ The Beth-El Men's Club was established in 1933, and organized events, including the "Thanksgiving 'Hard Times' dances," picnics and bingo games, dinners, and meetings, and was open to all Jewish men in Indianapolis, regardless of their membership in Beth-El Zedeck.⁵¹ The

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Marion County History." *Jewish Historical Resources* (Marion County). Indiana Department of Natural Resources. http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/files/marion_jewish.pdf

⁴¹ Sheryl Vanderstel, "Oliver Johnson's Woods Historic District National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," National Park Service, April 28, 2004, 17.

⁴² Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 114

⁴³ Ibid., 115

⁴⁴ "Marion County History."

⁴⁵ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 142

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Dr. Dennis Sasso in an interview with Sam Burgess, Aug. 26, 2016

⁴⁸ Stolzman and Stolzman, 19.

⁴⁹ "Board Meeting Minutes, March 6, 1939," *Board Minutes, Dec. 1936 – Dec. 1938*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵⁰ "Board Meeting Minutes, August 28, 1939," *Board Minutes, Dec. 1936 – Dec. 1938*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵¹ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.26, *Program, Temple Dedication, 31 August 1958*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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1939 General Membership meeting outlined the variety of clubs and activities at the Temple: "The Friday night services, the Men's Club, the Sisterhood, Sunday School classes, Junior Congregation, Youth Group, Kindergarten and the latest development, the young married couples Club."⁵²

Beth-El Zedeck began holding college courses at the Temple in 1937, noted by Rabbi Elias Charry as "the greatest undertaking for Beth-el."⁵³ The vestry rooms, found on the ground floor of the Temple, were remodeled to the designs of Indianapolis architectural firm Rubush and Hunter in 1938, to allow better use of the spaces for both educational classes and social affairs.⁵⁴ The congregation purchased the residential structure (no longer extant) to the south of the Temple in the late 1930s to allow for additional classroom and office space.⁵⁵

Both male and female members of the Beth-El and Beth-El Zedeck congregations served in many prominent business and civic roles throughout Indianapolis and the United States. Jack A. (J.A.) Goodman was named congregational president in 1925, and served in that post for 10 years, overseeing the construction of the Temple during his tenure.⁵⁶ Goodman founded the notable Indianapolis business the Real Silk Company in 1922, and served as its President until its financial difficulty and subsequent sale in the early 1930s.⁵⁷ Goodman's wife, Sarah, was a civic leader in Indianapolis who was particularly active in arts organizations, serving as arts vice president of the Kirshbaum Community Center (predecessor to the Jewish Community Center) in 1926, and maintaining affiliations with the Indiana State Symphony Society. Sarah also functioned as the chair of the Sisterhood of Beth-El for nine years starting in 1928. Later, she served as the first female president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis and was active in the United Jewish Appeal after World War II.⁵⁸

Daniel Frisch, President of Beth-El Zedeck from 1941-1943, was also the President of the Indianapolis-based Washington Loan and Finance Corporation Bank and later went on to become the President of the Zionist Organization of America in 1949.⁵⁹ Julian Freeman, President of Beth-El Zedeck from 1945-1947, owned a business, Freeman Store Equipment Company; served as the President of the Indianapolis Jewish Welfare Fund from 1947-1948; and went on to become the President of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds from 1950-1955. In this role, Freeman frequently traveled to Israel and developed relationships between the Israeli and Indianapolis Jewish communities.⁶⁰ It is duly evident that there were deep ties between members of the Beth-El Zedeck congregation and the Indianapolis and international Jewish communities during Beth-El Zedeck Temple's period of significance.

Leo Lefkovitz, a leader of the Hungarian-Jewish community in Indianapolis, was one of the first Eastern European Jews to become a lawyer. After graduating from law school in the early

⁵² "General Membership Meeting November 27, 1939," *Minutes 1939*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899-2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵³ "Board of Directors Report, October 12, 1937," *Board Minutes, Dec. 1936 – Dec. 1938*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899-2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵⁴ "Board Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1938," *Board Minutes, Dec. 1936 – Dec. 1938*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899-2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵⁵ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁵⁷ Barrows and Bodenhamer, 1170.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 632.

⁵⁹ Jewish Virtual Library, "Frisch, Daniel," The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0007_0_06892.html (accessed 11 March 2014).

⁶⁰ Monica Casanova, "Julian Freeman Biographical Sketch," Indiana Historical Society, <http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/collection-guides/julian-freeman-collection-1932-1978.pdf> (accessed 11 March 2014).

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1900s, he became credit manager for the *New York Store*, a local department store. After the *New York Store* folded during the Depression, he opened his own law practice. Lefkovitz was very active in Congregation Ohev Zedeck, serving as both secretary and treasurer, and was a strong supporter of its Talmud Torah (an Orthodox school). After the synagogue merged with Beth-El to form Beth-El Zedeck in 1927, he continued to be active, serving on the new congregation's board for more than ten years.⁶¹

RELIGION

The history and development of the Congregation Beth-El Zedeck evolved as the congregation expanded in size and adopted religious practices that suited their changing lives and values.⁶² The evolving Jewish movements align with changes in the Beth-El Zedeck congregation. Prominent events and leaders impacted the way the congregation worshiped in the Beth-El Zedeck Temple, changing how individual spaces were used and how the Jewish community interacted within the space. The Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation transitioned into the Reform movement, which did not meet the needs and beliefs of the entire Indianapolis Jewish community. Beth-El Zedeck Temple's location at 34th and Ruckle streets met a need for a congregation within the Northside that did not subscribe to the more assimilatory Reform ideology.⁶³

In the formative period of Beth-El and Beth-El Zedeck, the spiritual and elected leadership helped shape the future of both the philosophical and operational elements of the congregation. In the fall of 1925, Rabbi Isadore Goodman was named the spiritual leader of Beth-El, a post he held until November 1927.⁶⁴ The Beth-El Temple congregation started out with a Modern Orthodox identity; however, once it moved to 34th and Ruckle streets and elected Rabbi Milton Steinberg, the synagogue became affiliated with Conservative Judaism.⁶⁵ Rabbi Steinberg arrived in Indianapolis in November 1927 while still a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.⁶⁶ Until Steinberg's arrival, the congregation departed little from orthodoxy, except in that men and women were allowed to sit together during worship. Steinberg's teachings and philosophy on Judaism set a new direction for the congregation while bringing the Conservative Judaism stream to Indianapolis.⁶⁷ Conservative Judaism evolved out of American Jewry seeking to incorporate modern ideals into the traditional Jewish culture, while rejecting some of the liberal ideology of the Reform movement. This movement believes Jewish texts indicate that the faith has evolved to meet the needs of Jewish people, allowing for congregations and the entire United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to adopt standards to follow, utilizing the Jewish law as a guiding principle.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Cyrus Adler and Henrietta Szold, *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 9, 5668 September 9, 1907 to September 25, 1908 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of American, 1907), 174; 1940 United States Federal Census: *Indianapolis, Marion, Indiana*; Roll: m-t0627-01131; Page: 8B; Enumeration District: 96-353; *Citify Directories of Indianapolis 1900-1970*.

⁶² *History Used for Dedication Booklet 1958*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁶³ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 142-144

⁶⁴ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.25.

⁶⁵ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 142-144.

⁶⁶ "Dedication," p.25

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Jewish Virtual Library, "Conservative Judaism," The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/conservatives.html> (accessed 11 March 2014); "History," The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism," <http://www.uscj.org/Aboutus/OurStructure/History.aspx> (accessed 4 April 2014). The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism was founded in 1913 in New York City.

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Indianapolis synagogues used their temples as houses of worship and places to serve their communities. Rabbi Steinberg placed great importance on the congregational Sunday school, a confirmation class, and a high school study group. He also helped to establish the Beth-El Zedeck's Men's Club, which was open to all Jewish men in Indianapolis. Cantor Glass arrived to serve the congregation with Rabbi Steinberg and would remain there for 28 years. Glass provided structure and growth for the musical program at Beth-El, as seen in his development of a children's choir.⁶⁹

During the tenure of Rabbi Steinberg, the congregation joined the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the predominant organization of American synagogues practicing Conservative Judaism. From Beth-El Zedeck's earliest years in the 1930s, congregation members attended the national convention of the United Synagogue. This role in national Jewish affairs is one that continued to grow as the congregation developed.⁷⁰ Steinberg was a devoted student of Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, who spearheaded the institution of Reconstructionist Judaism, "an American progressive expression of the Conservative movement."⁷¹ Steinberg introduced Kaplan's modernist and innovative philosophy to the congregation,⁷² leaving a legacy at both Beth-El Zedeck and in the worldwide Jewish community. Indeed, when he left Beth-El Zedeck in 1933, Steinberg went on to become the Rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City and published many notable texts, including *The Making of Modern Jewry* (1934); *As a Driven Leaf* (1939); and *Basic Judaism* (1947). His philosophy not only left a mark on the direction of the Beth-El Zedeck congregation, but also continued to impact the development of Judaism at large during the interwar period and after World War II.⁷³

After the departure of Rabbi Steinberg in 1933, the congregation elected Rabbi Elias Charry as the spiritual leader of Beth-El Zedeck.⁷⁴ Rabbi Charry led the congregation through the Great Depression, a period that caused financial hardship for the synagogue.⁷⁵

During World War II, changes in congregational leadership fundamentally altered the philosophy of Beth-El Zedeck. Rabbi Israel Chodos took the place of Rabbi Charry in August 1942, while the election of Julian Freeman as president in 1945 reaffirmed Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan's philosophy of Reconstructionism.⁷⁶ New educational initiatives also emerged during this time. For instance, the Institute for Adult Studies was established in 1944, providing lectures and discussion of the Jewish faith to both Beth-El Zedeck members and the wider Jewish community of Indianapolis.⁷⁷

In the years following World War II, the congregation thrived both spiritually and organizationally while being involved in the international Jewish movement.⁷⁸ In 1946, the congregation welcomed Rabbi William P. Greenfeld, who helped formalize a definitive philosophy for Beth-El

⁶⁹ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.26.

⁷⁰ "Board Meeting Minutes, October 30, 1933," *Minutes, Jan. 1933 – Oct. 1936*, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899–2002, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁷¹ Dr. Dennis Sasso (Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck), in an interview with Sam Burgess, Sept. 9, 2016.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Jonathan Steinberg, "Milton Steinberg, American Rabbi-Thoughts on his Centenary," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 579-600.

⁷⁴ "Dedication," p. 26

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.27

⁷⁷ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.27

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

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Zedeck.⁷⁹ Rabbi Greenfeld worked with the congregation to infuse the religious services with a greater focus on family.⁸⁰

Rabbi Greenfeld spiritually led the congregation during a period in which Jews across the world faced immense challenges and conflicts.⁸¹ His written comments indicate he was very vocal in offering his advice regarding world events and Jewish organizations. A handful of Beth-El Zedeck members held prestigious roles in national Jewish organizations during this period and undoubtedly would have been influenced by the advice of their home Rabbi. It can be inferred that the strength of the congregation empowered and encouraged its members to take an active role in national Jewish affairs.

In the post-World War II period, the congregation also developed an extensive adult education program which focused on providing a deeper understanding of the Jewish faith. Education classes in "Hebrew, Jewish History, customs and ceremonies, concepts and philosophy" encouraged members to maintain a firm grasp of the tenets of their religious faith.⁸²

The Men's Club hosted a forum lecture series in the fall and spring, with an overarching theme designed to connect a series of five to six lectures. Study courses complemented the lecture series in some cases to allow for a deeper discussion of the concepts as they related to the Jewish faith. Most of these lectures were topical in nature and many were presented by notable American Jewish leaders. These lectures indicate philosophical discussions about the Jewish faith and the future of the Jewish people, reflecting Reconstructionist progressive ideals. Having taken place at Beth-El Zedeck Temple with Beth-El Zedeck members attending, they illustrate a high level of discourse amongst the congregation regarding its faith.

The growth of the Beth-El Zedeck congregation in the period following World War II started discussions about a new building campaign. Julian Freeman was asked to chair the campaign, which led to the congregation purchasing land in the Spring Mill Estates subdivision in 1953. (The subdivision lies north of West 65th Street between Spring Mill and Hoover roads and abuts the Meridian Hills Country Club.) The new building was designed by Indianapolis architects McGuire and Shook and a groundbreaking ceremony occurred on June 7, 1957.⁸³ The Beth-El Zedeck congregation moved out of the Beth-El Zedeck Temple building at 34th and Ruckle streets in 1958,⁸⁴ and the building was subsequently owned and used by Congregation B'nai Torah until 1968.⁸⁵ An Orthodox congregation, B'nai Torah was formed in 1957 through a merger of Indianapolis's United Hebrew Congregation and Central Hebrew Congregation.⁸⁶ The former had been established in 1903 and the latter had been formed in 1923.⁸⁷ For B'nai Torah, the move to 34th and Ruckle streets was thus symbolic of a new union between two long-separate congregations. It also reflected the northward movement of the city's Orthodox Jewish population.⁸⁸ Remaining in the former Beth-El Zedeck Temple building for a relatively brief period, the congregation would move to its current location at 65th Street and Hoover Road by

⁷⁹ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 194.

⁸⁰ "Dedication," pp. 27-28

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.28.

⁸³ "Dedication of the Temple of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis," p.29.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 27

⁸⁵ "About: B'nai Torah History," *Congregation B'nai Torah*, accessed September 6, 2016, http://www.btorahindy.org/?page_id=2

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

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the late 1960s.⁸⁹ Following B'nai Torah's possession of the structure, the property was transferred into the ownership of a Christian congregation, Church of the Living God -- marking the end of Beth-El Zedeck Temple's service as a Jewish house of worship.⁹⁰ As of the writing of this nomination, Beth-El Zedeck Temple sits vacant.

Indianapolis still has a large Jewish population, but only remnants of the historic communities survive on the south side of the city.⁹¹ Though the neighborhood where the Beth-El Zedeck Temple stands is not currently inhabited by a large Jewish community,⁹² the building is still an indication of the footprint of the Jewish community and its history in Indianapolis. Beth-El Zedeck Temple was the second synagogue built on the north side of Indianapolis and was once a prominent center of the Jewish religion in Indiana's capital city⁹³. Its presence denoted the existence of Jewish heritage on Indianapolis' near north side and created a community centered on an evolving, American Jewish religion.

ARCHITECTURE

Although Beth-El Zedeck Temple was certainly not the first synagogue building in Indianapolis, it is the city's oldest extant Jewish house of worship, having outlasted at least four earlier synagogue structures, including the original Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation synagogue that was located at 10th and Delaware streets; East Market Street Temple located on Market Street; Russiche Shul located at 1023 S. Meridian Street; and Polische Shul, which was located at South Meridian and Merrill streets.

Beth-El Zedeck Temple's architectural significance is largely grounded in its design, both in terms of its style and its representation of trends in early 20th century American synagogue planning. As the oldest surviving synagogue building in the city of Indianapolis, it notably retains a significant amount of its character-defining features. Its design illustrates a period of time when the Jewish faith in America evolved and created a distinctively American synagogue.

The construction of synagogues by Jewish congregations during the 1920s reflects an acceptance of American values and styles.⁹⁴ The use of the Neoclassical style illustrates how American design values influenced Beth-El Zedeck Temple. The Neoclassical style was in fashion at the time of the construction of the building. Made popular by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, Neoclassicism was a dominant American architectural style in the first half of the 20th century. Beth-El Zedeck Temple is a restrained example of the Neoclassical style, expressing little of the tendency to multiply angles and projections typical of the related but more exuberant Beaux Arts style. The relative simplicity of the design reflects the congregation's Jewish values, while the use of the style demonstrates that the community enjoyed a sufficient position of influence and wealth to employ such a sought-after Indianapolis architectural firm as Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller.⁹⁵ The broad exterior walls are constructed of brick and stone, as was typical of early 20th century Neoclassicism. Additional hallmarks of Neoclassicism on Beth-El Zedeck Temple's exterior include the use of decorative limestone swags above the windows on the main façades of the building; the recessing of brick work to define pilasters and panels;

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Polk's Indianapolis (Marion County, Ind.) City Directory: 1969," (Cincinnati, OH: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1969), 478

⁹¹ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 114.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 141.

⁹⁴ Stolzman and Stolzman, 53

⁹⁵ Ibid.

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the decorative terra cotta and limestone cornice; and the doorways that are spanned by lintels rather than arches.

The changing Jewish faith in the United States affected the design of Jewish temples, including Beth-El. While initial immigrant synagogues in the United States typically adopted the forms of the homeland, second generation congregations responded to American influences in their building designs. Each of the four notable Jewish practices in the United States (Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist) designed houses of worship that reflected their distinctly different practices. Differences in the internal layout of a synagogue will typically identify the type of Judaism practiced by the congregation. Orthodox congregations retained elements found in European synagogues, including partitions to separate men and women. However, the American reform congregations incorporated Christian traditions or elements of civic architecture. Second generation Jewish congregations introduced new social functions into the synagogue, as a result of their acceptance in secular society and need to maintain a coherent Jewish community.⁹⁶

The congregation's affiliation with Conservative Judaism influenced the sanctuary seating and design of the Temple. American synagogues typically adopted one of three seating arrangements, which focused on the seating placement in relation to the *bimah* and ark. The three plans are the 'central *bimah*' plan, the 'open central aisle' plan, and the 'theater-style' plan. The 'central *bimah*' and 'open central aisle' plans are both more traditional plans, while the 'theater-style' plan developed out of American influences in worshipping.⁹⁷ Beth-El Zedeck Temple features a 'theater-style' plan, with pews that are oriented to face the *bimah* and ark. The use of pews is likewise representative of the values and culture of the Conservative Judaism movement, which allowed men and women to sit together. Another important feature of the Beth-El Zedeck Temple is its orientation. As noted in the narrative description, the Temple was designed with its east wall at the front of the sanctuary, such that the ark and *bimah* would be facing the land of Israel, in keeping with traditional practice.

The use of iconography on both the exterior and interior of the Beth-El Zedeck Temple is limited and shows a combination of both Neoclassical/Americanized iconography with some Jewish symbology. While Jewish synagogues typically refrained from certain forms of representational iconography, as a strict interpretation of the Second Commandment, some incorporated a collection of Jewish symbols such as the menorah, ram's horn, and tablets of the law.⁹⁸ The exterior limestone ornament is primarily Neoclassical in inspiration. Historic photos indicate that two large tablets were previously placed above the entrance to the Temple.⁹⁹ These "tablets of the law" included Hebrew text and were topped with a menorah. The interior features a large barrel vaulted sanctuary which is decorated from top to bottom with ornate plaster. The walls of the sanctuary are broken up by decorated pilasters. While most of this ornate plaster features more Neoclassical iconography, such as egg-and-dart bands and flora baskets, some may have Jewish inspiration, including the bands running across the ceiling. The use of the Star of David on the ornate light fixtures is subtle, but powerful.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁷ Stolzman and Stolzman, 29. The 'central *bimah*' plan places the *bimah* in the center of the sanctuary with congregational seating facing the *bimah* in an U-shape. The 'open central' aisle plan features the ark and *bimah* in the center of the sanctuary, with the seats facing each other with a large central passage.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁹ Dr. Dennis Sasso, in an interview with Sam Burgess, August 26, 2016.

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The inclusion of the kitchen and classrooms on the first floor helped the Temple to serve the entire Jewish community. As Beth-El Zedeck Temple's Jewish faith evolved, the needs of the congregation evolved as well. Members responded by redesigning the first floor in 1938 to create spaces that reflected the changing use of their synagogue, as noted in the narrative description.¹⁰⁰ The purchase of the residential building to the south of the Temple also provided space for social and educational uses.

Beth-El Zedeck Temple is architecturally significant both insofar as it is an excellent example of the changing American Jewish faith in the early 20th century and inasmuch as it is an exemplary work of the eminent Indianapolis architectural firm Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller. The design demonstrates tenets of the Americanization of Conservative Judaism, which influenced the way the congregation practiced their faith in this structure.¹⁰¹ As the oldest remaining synagogue structure in Indianapolis, it illustrates the evolution of the Jewish population in Indianapolis.¹⁰² As the Jewish population shifted from immigrants to the second-generation, their faith and community transformed to meet shifting needs. Beth-El Zedeck Temple is a fine example of the architecture of the cultural and spiritual landscape of the Indianapolis Jewish population at a time when they developed a distinctively American faith.¹⁰³

The building at 34th and Ruckle streets also shares certain formal and stylistic similarities with other contemporaneous Jewish houses of worship in Indiana. Perhaps the closest analog is the former B'nai Abraham Orthodox synagogue, now the Wabash Activity Center (IHSSI 167-628-21228; Contributing), at the southeast corner of Poplar and South 5th streets in Terre Haute, dedicated in 1927. As with the Beth-El Zedeck Temple in Indianapolis, this building has an oblong footprint with an entrance centered on its short front façade and no additional fenestration on that face of the building. Both structures are three stories tall with a double-height sanctuary located on the second level above first floor community spaces. Both have strings of tall windows lining their longer sides, corresponding to internal sanctuaries. Likewise, both buildings are of brick, although the Indianapolis temple has more detailed masonry and a more refined outfit of sculpted ornament.

Terre Haute's 1911 Temple Israel (IHSSI 167-628-28525; Outstanding) is also similar to Indianapolis's Beth-El Zedeck Temple building with respect to footprint and massing. Both buildings also exhibit classical influences; however, the Greco-Roman detailing of the Temple Israel is more extensive and more exuberantly articulated. Indeed, while the facades of the Beth-El Zedeck Temple are essentially astylar, the classical order of Terre Haute's Temple Israel is fully expressed in the form of Ionic columns, pilasters, a complete entablature, and a gabled pediment on the main façade.

Another early 20th century Indiana synagogue with some resemblance to Indianapolis's Beth-El Zedeck Temple is Muncie's Temple Beth-El (IHSSI 035-442-39001; Outstanding), constructed in 1922 to the designs of Smenner and Hauck. Like the Indianapolis synagogue building, the Classical Revival Muncie structure is relatively monolithic in its massing, and its walls are faced in brick with limestone accents. Muncie's Temple Beth-El also displays a fair amount of recessed brick work. Admittedly, there are some differences in the interior layouts of the two

¹⁰⁰ Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Board Minutes, Dec. 1936-Dec. 1938. "Board Minutes, July 27, 1938." Congregation Beth-El Zedeck Records, 1899-2016. Box 1, Folder 11. Indiana Historical Society. Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Dennis Sasso (Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck), in an interview with Sam Burgess, September 9, 2016.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

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buildings. For instance, while the main entrance of the Indianapolis synagogue is on axis with the sanctuary, the longitudinal axis of the Muncie synagogue's sanctuary is perpendicular to the line of procession into the building from the street. However, this difference is actually a manifestation of a more significant underlying similarity, for while the Muncie building's main façade necessarily faces north owing to site constraints, the sanctuary still has a dominant east-west orientation with a *bimah* at its east end, exactly as is found in Indianapolis's 1924 Beth-El Zedeck Temple.

In short, there are threads of similarity among Indiana's early 20th century synagogues -- especially in the categories of massing, layout, orientation, and, to some degree, ornamentation. Indianapolis's Beth-El Zedeck Temple building is a strong representative of these broader trends.

ARCHITECTS

The architectural firm of Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller was chosen in the 1920s to design Indianapolis's Beth-El Temple. The firm originated in the late 1880s in Indianapolis as Vonnegut and Bohn.¹⁰⁴ Both Bernard Vonnegut (1855-1908) and Arthur Bohn (1861-1948) came from German immigrant families.¹⁰⁵ Bernard Vonnegut studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later completed graduate work at the Polytechnic Institute in Hanover, Germany.¹⁰⁶ Arthur Bohn also studied in Germany, and both principals had the opportunity to travel extensively in Europe and the United States, making keen observations that would inform their architectural sensibilities.¹⁰⁷ Following his training in Germany and before returning to Indianapolis, Bernard Vonnegut worked in New York for eminent east-coast architect George B. Post, participating in the design of several houses for the Vanderbilt family.¹⁰⁸ Vonnegut and Bohn were also instructors at Indianapolis's Emmerich Manual Training High School – an institution whose establishment was widely credited to the vision of Bohn himself.¹⁰⁹

During its initial phase, the firm designed several notable buildings in Indianapolis. Its first major project in the city was the Athenaeum, which was originally named Das Deutsche Haus – a hub of various activities within the city's German-American community.¹¹⁰ The firm also designed the original Herron Art Museum (1701 N. Pennsylvania Street);¹¹¹ the Schnull-Rauch residence (3050 N. Meridian Street);¹¹² and the L.S. Ayres Building (1 W. Washington Street).¹¹³

Bernard Vonnegut died in 1908,¹¹⁴ and his son Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. (1884-1956), carried on the practice along with Arthur Bohn. Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., completed architectural training at MIT as his father had done, earning both a bachelor's and a master's degree. He pursued an additional

¹⁰⁴ Jacob Piatt Dunn. *History of Greater Indianapolis, Vol. II*, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 965-966.

¹⁰⁵ James A. Glass. "Schnull-Rauch House National Register of Historic Places Form," National Park Service, Sept. 1977. Item 8, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ "Bernard Vonnegut Claimed by Death," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), August 8, 1908.

¹⁰⁷ "An Artist and Builder," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), Jan. 15, 1948, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ "Bernard Vonnegut Claimed by Death," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), August 8, 1908.

¹⁰⁹ "An Artist and Builder," 1948.

¹¹⁰ Dunn, 966.

¹¹¹ Glass, "Schnull-Rauch House," Item 8, p. 6.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Dunn, 966.

¹¹⁴ "Bernard Vonnegut Claimed by Death," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis, IN), August 8, 1908, p. 1.

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year of study at the Technical Institute in Berlin before returning to Indianapolis to work for his father's firm. A reflective and articulate architect, Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. penned an editorial in which he stated that architects were "sponsors of the public taste"¹¹⁵ and that "the architecture of a community reflects the degree of its material and artistic development."¹¹⁶ He also asserted that "a good plan and a good elevation are inseparable"¹¹⁷ -- a conviction that must have influenced his contributions to the design of many Indianapolis buildings, including Beth-El Temple. Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., extended his leadership in the profession of architecture beyond his own firm through his service as a vice president of the Indiana Board of Architects and his membership in the American Institute of Architects.¹¹⁸ A man of many interests, he belonged to the boards of the Art Society of Indianapolis and of The Portfolio -- a local society engaged in the study of literature and arts.¹¹⁹ He was also instrumental in founding the Indianapolis Children's Museum in 1925.¹²⁰

During the period of partnership between Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. and Arthur Bohn, the firm designed the William H. Block Company Building in downtown Indianapolis, among other significant projects.¹²¹ Otto N. Mueller, an engineer, became a principal at the firm in 1920, and the office's name was changed to Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller. Mueller was born in Indianapolis and completed degrees in both civil and mechanical engineering at Purdue University.¹²² He worked as an engineering consultant during World War I.¹²³ In 1929, Indiana Governor Harry G. Leslie named him the first "consulting architect and engineer for state institutions" -- an honor that testified to his technical acumen.¹²⁴ Mueller thus shouldered major public responsibilities while continuing his work in private practice. Bohn, too, assumed a high level of engagement in the profession outside of his firm, serving for a time as president of Indiana's chapter of the American Institute of Architects.¹²⁵

It was during the firm's period as Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller that the Beth-El Temple was designed and built. It is not known why the firm was chosen, but it may have been because the office was employed by the Jewish community at approximately the same time to redesign the Kirschbaum Community Center (no longer extant).¹²⁶

While the firm practiced in the 1920s as Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller, its works varied in style.¹²⁷ The Plaza Oil Company Service Station at 121 East Maryland Street, Indianapolis, exemplified the Beaux Arts style, while Treadwell Hall at Arsenal Tech High School features a Mediterranean Revival design. The Roosevelt Building, at 9 North Illinois Street, was a Chicago Commercial-style structure designed by the firm and constructed in 1923. This terra-cotta clad, twelve-story building displayed a combination of classical and gothic influences. The firm's

¹¹⁵ Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. "Fine Buildings are a Civic Asset," *Indianapolis Star*, Dec. 31, 1915, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "Kurt Vonnegut Dies; Rites Set Wednesday," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), Oct. 2, 1956, p. 20.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ William L. Selm. "Washington Street - Monument Circle National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," National Park Service, Aug. 4, 1997. Section 7, Page 8.

¹²² "Otto N. Mueller is Named Consulting Architect for All State Institutions," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), Jul. 10, 1929.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ "Bohn Will Go to Capital to Represent State Architects at National Institute," *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), May 18, 1930.

¹²⁶ Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 130-132.

¹²⁷ Barrows and Bodenhamer, 1389. The Roosevelt Building was demolished in the early 1990s.

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opportunities for projects became scarce during the Great Depression. Arthur Bohn retired in the 1940s. By 1944, the firm had changed its name to Vonnegut and Wright and during the next several years the firm would change its name multiple times.

Although Beth-El Zedeck Temple is first and foremost the work of Vonnegut, Bohn, and Mueller, its substantial 1938 interior remodeling program was overseen by a firm of similar stature in Indianapolis, Rubush and Hunter, the architects of many iconic buildings in the Circle City. Among their most celebrated projects were numerous edifices fronting Monument Circle, such as the Columbia Club, the Circle Theatre, Circle Tower, and the Guaranty Building.¹²⁸ Other major commissions included the Indiana Theatre, the Indianapolis Masonic Temple, and the Coca Cola Bottling Plant in Indianapolis.¹²⁹ Established in 1905, the firm was a partnership between principals Preston C. Rubush and Edgar O. Hunter.¹³⁰ Rubush studied architecture at the University of Illinois and Hunter studied at the University of Pennsylvania.¹³¹ Following his education, Hunter briefly worked for the firm of Vonnegut and Bohn in the late 1890s.¹³²

Not unlike Vonnegut and Bohn and its later incarnations, the firm of Rubush and Hunter was esteemed for its mastery of wide-ranging styles.¹³³ In an age when a variety of revivalist design modes were in vogue, the firm's versatility was a virtue, winning it many commissions. In total, the office realized nearly 200 projects before it was disbanded in the 1940s.¹³⁴ In addition to their work in Indiana, Rubush and Hunter designed a number of significant buildings in Florida.¹³⁵

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the above discussion, Beth-El Zedeck Temple has many dimensions of significance. With respect to religion, it represents a crucial moment in the evolution of Indianapolis's Jewish theological climate, both insofar as it was the epicenter of Jewish intellectual activity between 1924 and 1958, and insofar as it was the original locus of both Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism in the city. By extension, it is associated with a number of individuals who made important contributions to the Jewish community on local, national, and global levels. With respect to ethnic heritage, the Temple represents the flourishing of Indianapolis's Jewish community -- especially American-born citizens descended from Polish and Hungarian immigrants -- during the early-to-mid 20th century. It also represents the patterns of migration of Indianapolis's Jewish residents during the same period. With respect to architecture, Beth-El Zedeck Temple exemplifies contemporary currents in design, such as the penchants for Beaux Arts classicism, Neoclassicism, and early Art Deco detailing that prevailed during the 1920s. At the same time, it embodies a profound synthesis of American design principles and traditional synagogue programming. With respect to architects, the Temple represents the work of one of Indianapolis's most esteemed 20th century

¹²⁸ Glory-June Greiff, "Rubush and Hunter," *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), Robert G. Barrows and David J. Bodenhamer, eds., 1208-1209.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Janet Schmidt and Dorothy Nicholson, "Rubush & Hunter Photographs, 1902-1949" (Collection Guide), Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, 2007.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Greiff, 1209.

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architectural firms. Likewise, its interior remodeling in the late 1930s was undertaken by another firm of comparable prominence. Beth-El Zedeck Temple is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on its importance to the ethnic history and built environment of Indianapolis.

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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 # _____
☐ 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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: Less than one acre

Use the UTM system

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 16 | Easting: 572908 | Northing: 4407839 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The lot is Osgood Forest Park 3rd SEC L43. Beginning at the southeast corner of E. 34th and Ruckle streets, turn east and proceed approximately 142 feet to the western boundary of the alley between Ruckle Street and Park Avenue. Then turn south and proceed approximately 100 feet. Then turn west and proceed approximately 143 feet to the east edge of Ruckle Street. Then turn north and proceed approximately 108 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the entire lot historically associated with the Beth-El Zedeck Temple. The lot is part of the Osgood's Forest Park 3rd section.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Cory Johnson, Intern; Raina Regan; Sam Burgess
organization: Indiana Landmarks
street & number: 1201 Central Avenue
city or town: Indianapolis state: Indiana zip code: 46202
e-mail: central@indianalandmarks.org
telephone: (317) 639-4534
date: November 23, 2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Beth-El Zedeck Temple

Name of Property

Marion County, Indiana

County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Beth-El Zedeck Temple
City or Vicinity: Indianapolis
County: Marion State: Indiana
(The above applies to all photographs)

1 of 20

Photographer: Sam Burgess
Date Photographed: August 23, 2016
Overall, West Façade

2 of 20

Photographer: Sam Burgess
Date Photographed: August 23, 2016
Corner of Ruckle and 34th Street, West and North Facades

3 of 20

Photographer: Sam Burgess
Date Photographed: August 22, 2016
Overall North and East Facades

4 of 20

Photographer: Cory Johnson
Date Photographed: May 21, 2013
South Façade

5 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan
Date Photographed: April 8, 2014
South and West Facades

6 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan
Date Photographed: April 8, 2014
Detail of terracotta cornice and copper acroteria, Roof line on West Façade

Beth-El Zedeck Temple

Marion County, Indiana
County and State

Name of Property

7 of 20

Photographer: Cory Johnson

Date Photographed: May 21, 2013

Decorative carved limestone panel above double hung window on south facade

8 of 20

Photographer: Cory Johnson

Date Photographed: May 21, 2013

Original double hung window on south facade

9 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 8, 2014

Corner of 34th and Ruckle streets, setting of Beth-El Zedeck Temple with houses

10 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

First Floor, Fellowship Hall, Camera pointed northeast

11 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

First Floor, Historic Lobby, Camera pointed southeast, taken from staircase platform

12 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Second Floor, Sanctuary, Overall view, Camera pointed northwest

13 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Second Floor, Sanctuary, Overall view, Camera pointed west

14 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Second Floor, Sanctuary, Overall view, Camera pointed southeast

15 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Second Floor, Sanctuary, Detail of historic, large light fixture

Beth-El Zedeck Temple

Name of Property

Marion County, Indiana
County and State

16 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Second Floor, Sanctuary, Detail of plasterwork

17 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Balcony, Overall view, Camera pointed east at *bimah*

18 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Balcony, Overall view with pews, Camera pointed south/southwest

19 of 20

Photographer: Raina Regan

Date Photographed: April 16, 2014

Balcony, Overall view, Camera pointed northeast

20 of 20

Photographer: Chad Lethig

Date Photographed: May 23, 2012

Ark, Close-up, Camera pointed northeast

Beth-El Zedeck Temple
Name of Property

Marion County, Indiana
County and State



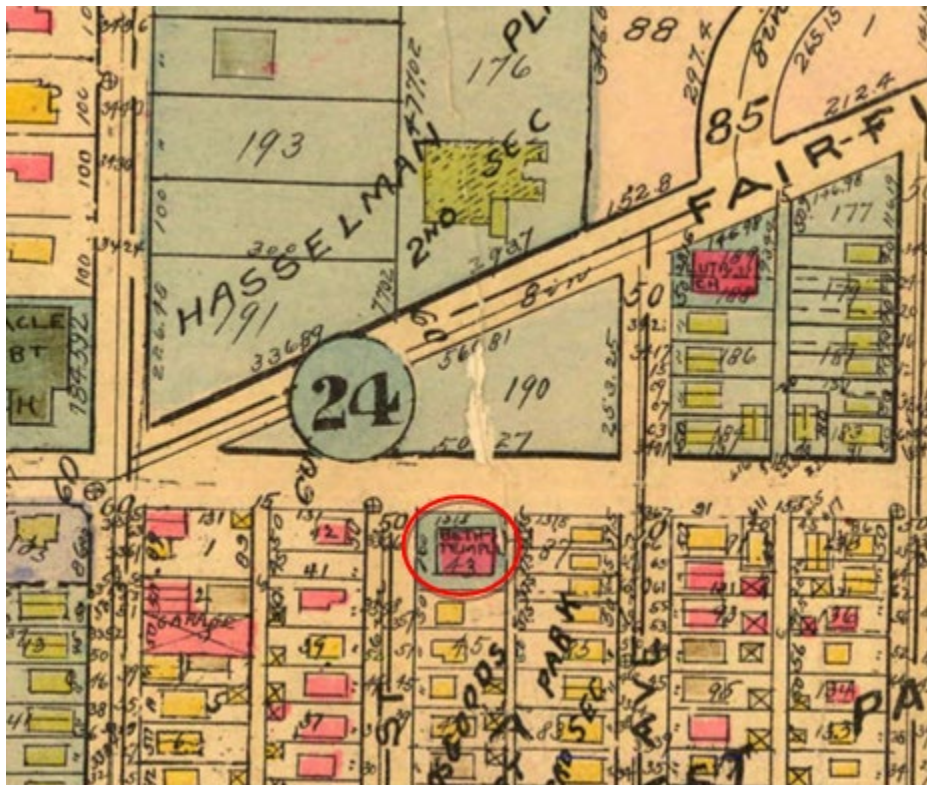
Attachment 1: Beth-El Temple c.1927



Attachment 2: Beth-El Temple 1958

Beth-El Zedeck Temple
Name of Property

Marion County, Indiana
County and State



Attachment 3: Sanborn Map 1927



Attachment 4: Sanborn Map 1929

Beth-El Zedeck Temple

Name of Property

Marion County, Indiana

County and State

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 100 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.

BETH-EL ZEDECK TEMPLE
3359 Ruckle Street, Indianapolis
Marion County, Indiana
Site Plan

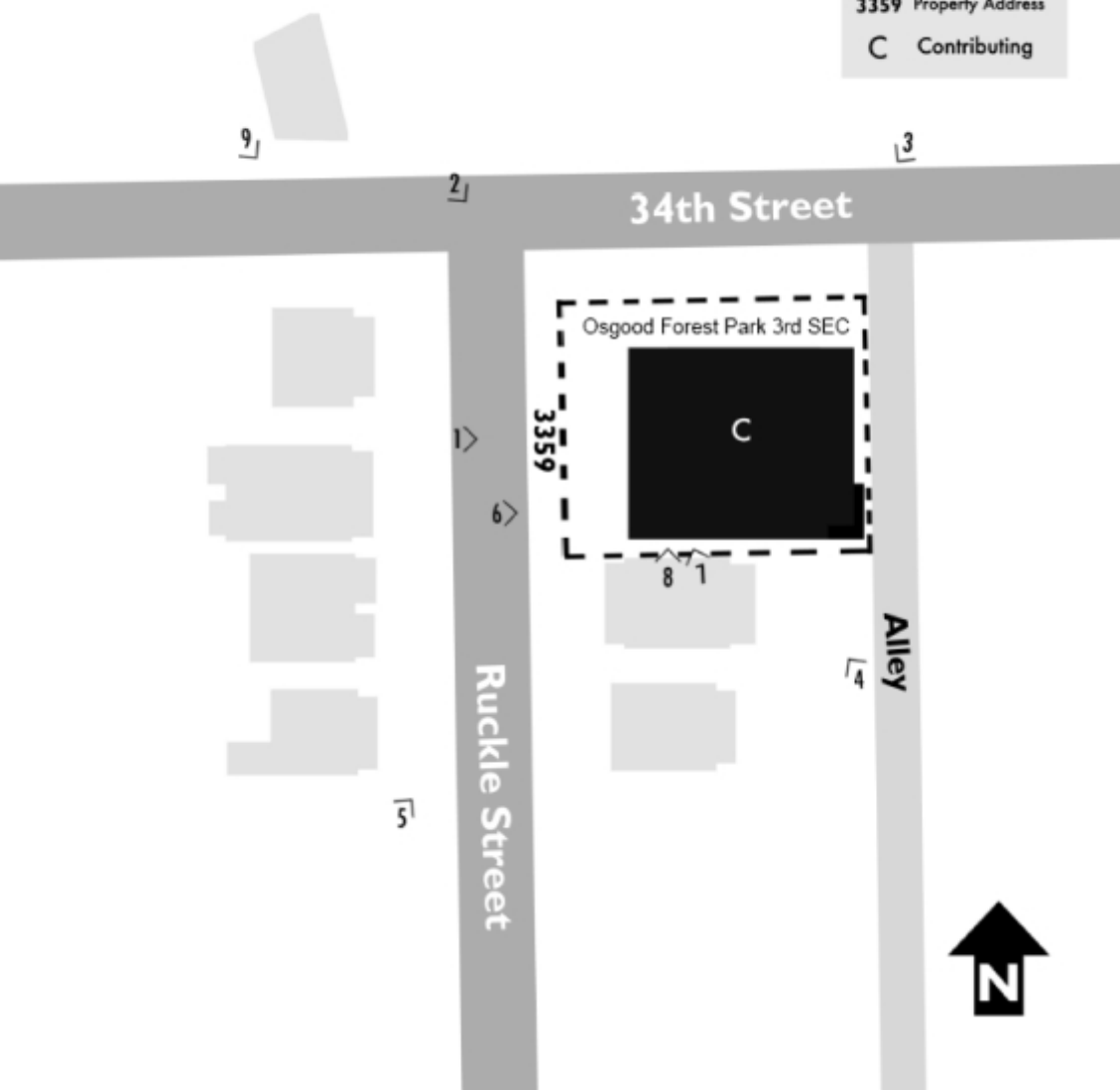
MAP KEY

5 Photo Number

--- National Register
Property Boundary

3359 Property Address

C Contributing

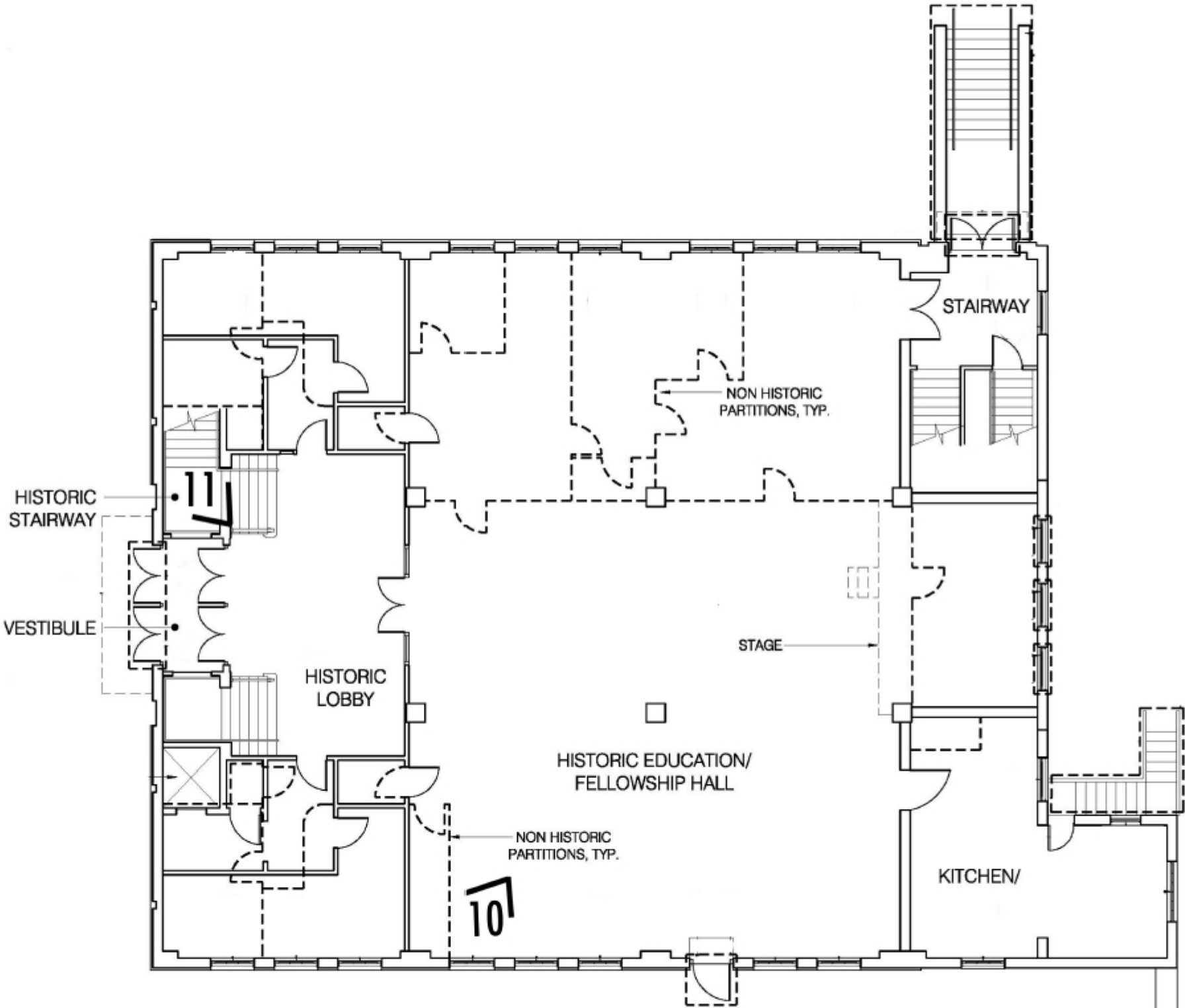


3359 RUCKLE STREET, INDIANAPOLIS
MARION COUNTY, INDIANA

MAP KEY

5 Photo Number

--- Non-Historic
Partitions, Windows,
Doors, Steps, and
Masonry Infill of
Historic Window
Openings



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
BETH-EL ZEDECK TEMPLE

SCALE : 3/32" = 1'-0" 07/18/2013

DRAWINGS BY
JONATHAN YOUNG



BROWNING
DAY MULLINS
DIERDORF
ARCHITECTS

MAP KEY

5 Photo Number

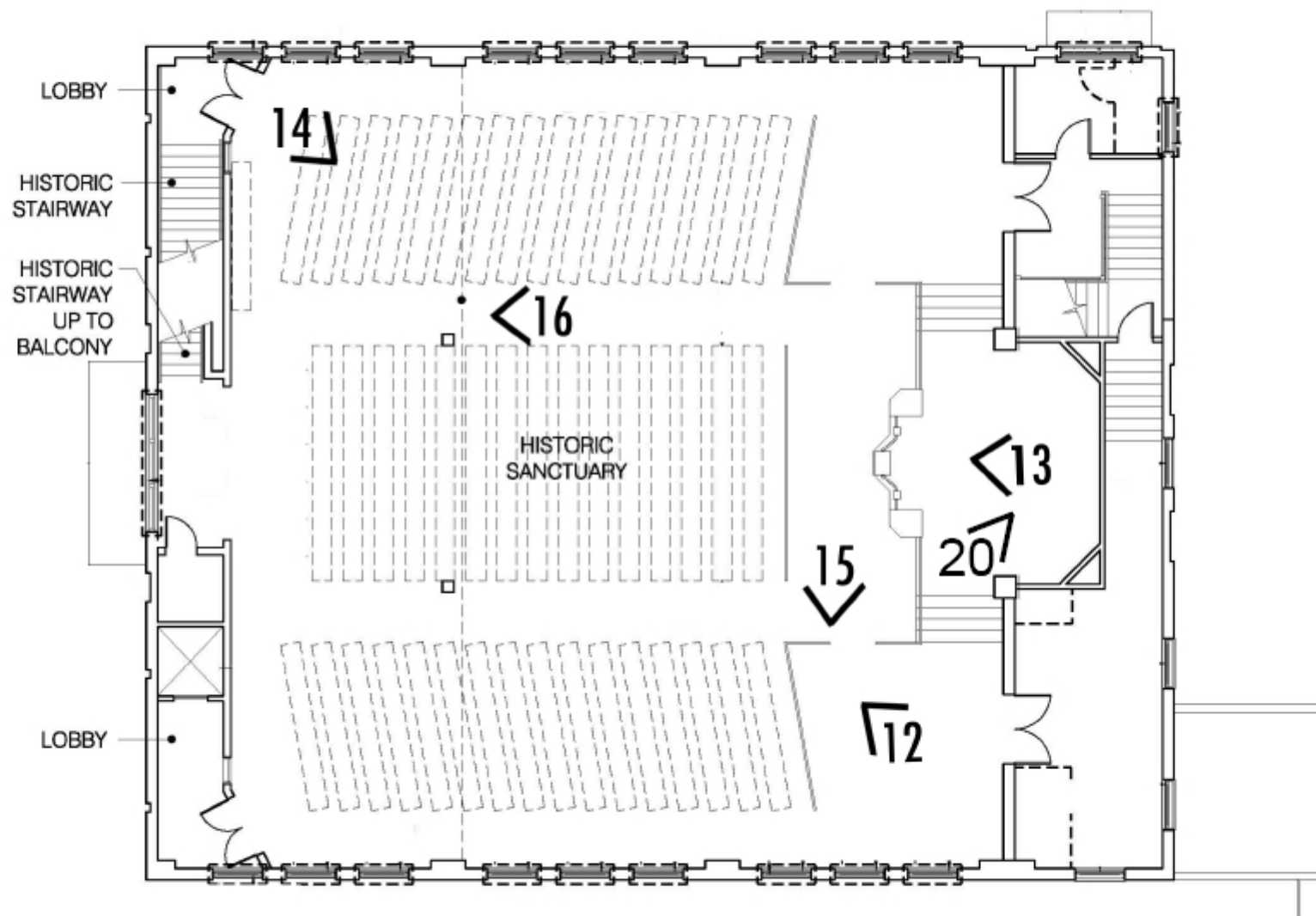
--- Non-Historic
Partitions, Windows,
Doors, Steps, and
Masonry Infill of
Historic Window
Openings



SECOND FLOOR PLAN BETH-EL ZEDECK TEMPLE

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

07/18/2013



DRAWINGS BY
JONATHAN YOUNG



BROWNING
DAY MULLINS
DIERDORF
ARCHITECTS

MAP KEY

5 Photo Number

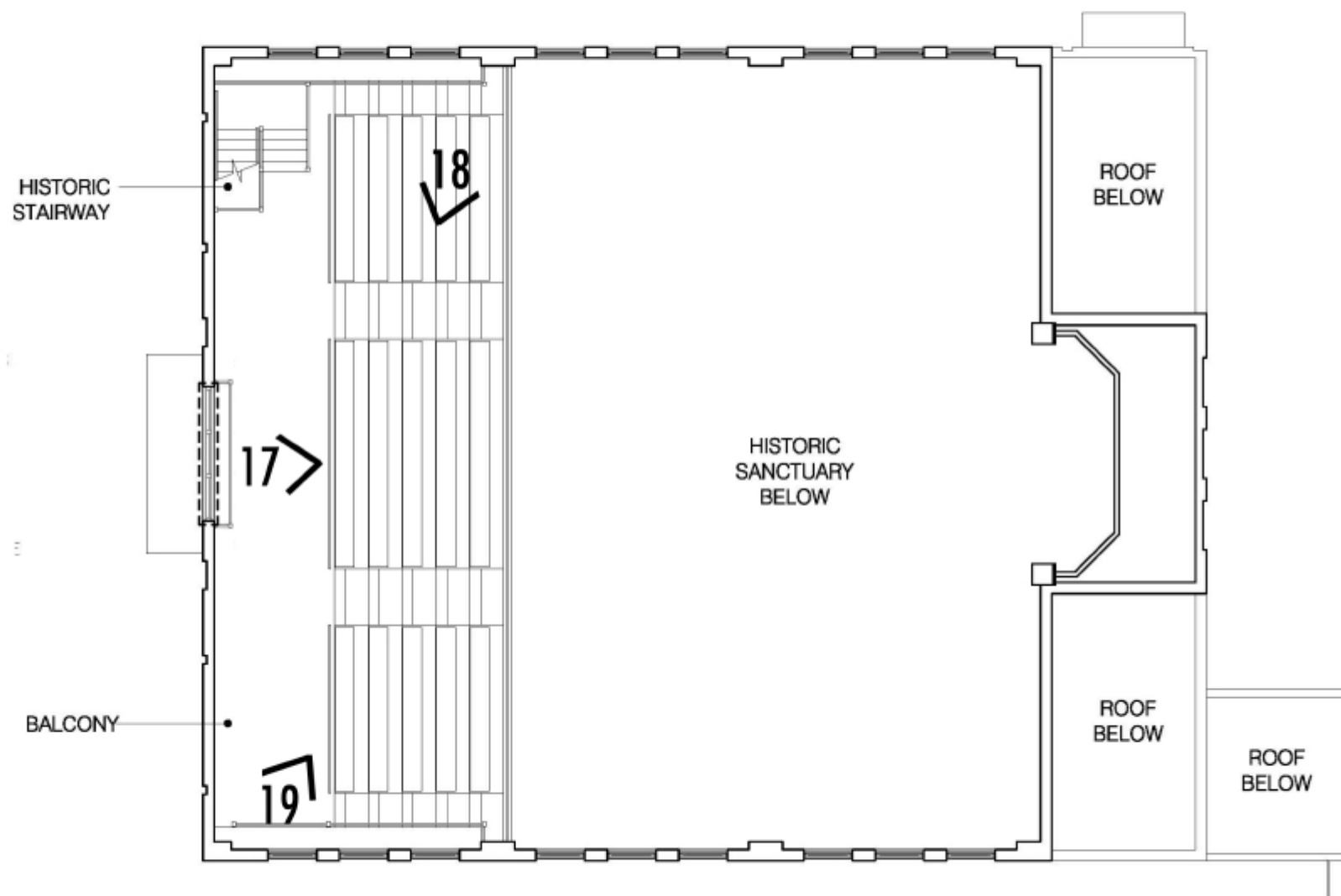
--- Non-Historic
Partitions, Windows,
Doors, Steps, and
Masonry Infill of
Historic Window
Openings



BALCONY FLOOR PLAN BETH-EL ZEDECK TEMPLE

SCALE : 3/32" = 1'-0"

07/18/2013



DRAWINGS BY
JONATHAN YOUNG



BROWNING
DAY MULLINS
DIERDORF
ARCHITECTS



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0002



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0003



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0004



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0005



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0012



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0018



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0019



Beth-El Zedeck Temple, Marion County, IN, photo 0020