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A Summary History

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SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA
A Summary History

> BARRY L. STIEFEL[1]

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In recent decades much has been written about architecture in Canada as well as on synagogue architecture, the house of worship in Judaism. Examples include *Art et Architecture au Canada* (1991)[2] and *Canadian Modern Architecture: A Fifty-year Retrospective* (2019),[3] as well as this periodical, *Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada / Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*. However, these and other Canadian architecture publications have addressed synagogue architecture in a piecemeal fashion, either investigating individual buildings or specific communities. Synagogue architecture scholarship also treats Canada peripherally, with there being greater interest in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern period synagogues that have their emphasis in the Old World.[4] Modern and contemporary synagogue architectural studies primarily focus on Europe, Israel, and the United States.[5]

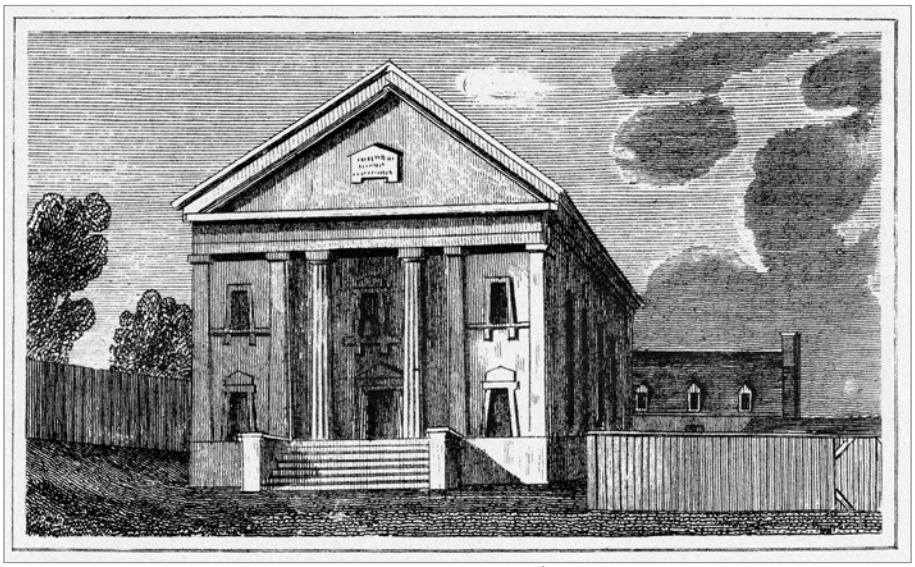

FIG. 1. SHEARITH ISRAEL'S SYNAGOGUE ON CHENNEVILLE STREET, MONTRÉAL, BUILT IN 1838 AND THEN SOLD TO BETH DAVID IN 1890. | PEN-AND-INK ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES DUNCAN. COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

Not since the late 1970s when Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, and Sidney T. Tenenbaum produced the monumental survey entitled "Shuls: A Study of Canadian Synagogue Architecture" has there been a comprehensive study on Canadian synagogue architecture. As a comparison, Hagit Hadaya's "The First Synagogues in Ottawa" (1994), Sharon Graham's "An Examination of Toronto Synagogue Architecture, 1897-1937" (2001), and Sara F. Tauben's *Traces of the Past: Montreal's Early Synagogues* (2011), among other works, are all community-specific and do not encapsulate Canada as a whole.[6] Indeed, considering that Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum's fieldwork

dates from the mid-1970s, and that their work was made as a professional three-volume report for the Canadian Jewish Congress and other stakeholders with a limited production, access to their work can be challenging. A coffee table-like book was produced, *Treasures of A People: The Synagogues of Canada* (1985), but its contents are a limited, qualitative study with little description or analysis.[7] Since the early 1980s, when "Shuls" was completed, Canada's Jewish population has migrated and changed significantly through suburbanization and upward socioeconomic mobility. The synagogues that existed in 1975 compared to 2022, as a signifier of Jewish expressions on the built environment, are different from one another as night and day from the snapshot perspective of a broader cultural landscape.[8] Pre-1970 synagogues, which would have been the majority that Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum encountered, were a product of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Eastern European Jewish immigrants, mostly with modest economic means; they reflect the practice of adaptively reusing pre-existing buildings and borrowing Canadian vernacular architectural traditions, with an occasional monumental structure through the pooling of larger community resources. After 1970, larger Modern architecture synagogues became abundant as new and conglomerated Jewish congregations replaced the former smaller, immigrant-oriented institutions. Surprisingly, in the academic journal *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes*, there has not been a single article devoted to synagogue architecture (just the community-organization entity), though Harold Troper does cover the Jewish and Israeli pavilions at Expo '67 in that journal.[9]

An entire monograph could be devoted to updating and expanding upon Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum's *magnum opus*, but here is not the space to do justice to a comprehensive study on synagogue architecture and other forms of Jewish expressions on Canada's built environment. Other aspects of Jewish communal infrastructure on the built environment include schools, community centers, museums, memorials, ritual baths (*mikvaot*), and ritual enclosures (*eruvin*). In recent years, there has also been a growing interest in built environment heritage conservation of synagogues. Therefore, this paper will revisit and explore synagogue architecture in Canada thematically with a focus on social and cultural history, instead of taxonomical assessment of quantitative building surveys, such as what Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum have produced.

THE FIRST SYNAGOGUES IN CANADA

Synagogue terminology of features and typology in Canada is the same as other synagogues anywhere else in the world, so in these respects there is nothing unique about Canadian synagogues akin to Canadian churches and Canadian mosques. And as American and British architectural historians have discussed in their nation-state-oriented synagogue studies (such as Wischnitzer and Kadish), there really is no such thing as a "Jewish architectural style" like Byzantine, Gothic, and Romanesque, which are considered Christian; or Islamic, Moorish, and Mughal attributed to Muslim societies.[10] Synagogues were designed and built in the same styles and traditions as the countries of their hosting societies. So, in Christian Europe, synagogues can be found in Byzantine, Gothic, Romanesque, and associated nineteenth-century eclectic-revival styles; and in North Africa, Levant, and South Asia, in Islamic, Moorish, and Mughal styles. Because of Medieval Christian and Muslim edicts that regulated what professions Jews could engage in, and prohibit them from joining guild societies, Jews were hardly involved in the physical development of their houses of worship from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the end of the Early Modern Period. From the end of the Roman Empire in the fifth century CE to the late eighteenth century, Jewish participation in the construction of their own houses of worship was mostly limited to making design requests of architects and contractors, and funding. This practice changed in the late eighteenth century, as Jews began to receive citizenship rights within the newly formed United States and Napoleonic France, which is also when Jews first began to settle in large enough numbers in British Canada to build their first synagogues.[11] Synagogue architecture in Canada thus also reflects Canadian architectural practices, as well as the ties and associations that Canadian architects have had with Europe and the United States since the eighteenth century.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French forbade Jews from openly settling and practicing their faith in their North American colonies of New France and Louisiana. Only in Alsace-Lorraine, Bordeaux, and in small numbers in the West Indies could Jews be found openly living under the French Crown. The arrival of openly practicing Jews in what is now Canada began in 1760, when the British Army captured Montréal during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), because some worked as commissary officers and suppliers. A Jewish congregation was founded in Montréal soon after, called Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel), but there were not enough members to warrant building a synagogue. Since the mid-seventeenth century, Jews had been allowed to reside in England and her expanding British

Empire as well, starting in the West Indies and Rhode Island colonies.[12]

In 1777, approximately two years into the American War for Independence, Montréal's Jews built their first synagogue on St. James Street. The building is recorded as being a vernacular stone structure, one or one-and-a-half storeys in height, crowned with a high roof, and enclosed by a whitewashed fence or wall.[13] Montréal's first synagogue would not have been built if it were not for the influx of refugee Jewish Loyalists who fled the turmoil taking place to the south, so there is a direct correlation with the American Revolution. The name Shearith Israel was a direct nod to New York's Jewish congregation, also bearing the same name, which dated from the seventeenth century and owned a synagogue from 1730.[14] Mirroring the socioeconomic building histories of the two Shearith Israel synagogues in New York and Montréal provides additional, valuable nuances about the past in regard to the current growing interest about forgotten enslaved African contributions to Canada's early development.[15] New York's Shearith Israel used enslaved African labour in the construction of its synagogue, as recorded in its Board of Trustees Minute Book where congregants had their bondsmen work for so many hours in lieu of providing a cash contribution. While Montréal's Shearith Israel was under construction in 1777, Samuel Judah, congregational leader and merchant, is recorded as having also purchased enslaved Africans, suggesting that he may have used enslaved labour here too.[16]

There are no known images of Shearith Israel in Montréal, which was used until 1824 when it was torn down due to its deteriorating condition. A replacement synagogue was erected in 1838 on Chenneville Street. A surviving illustration of this building depicts an eclectic Egyptian Revival edifice (fig. 1). Shearith Israel was established as a Sephardic rite congregation, which originated from Iberia prior to the Spanish Expulsion decree of 1492, though the community had many members of Ashkenazic-Central European background. In 1846, Montréal's Ashkenazim who desired to follow the customs of their European ancestors founded a new congregation, Shaar Hashomayim (Gates of Heaven), and built their first edifice in 1859 on St. Constant Street, though no detailed descriptions survive of this building either. The Toronto Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1849 and a second was established in that city in 1856, Sons of Israel Congregation. Two years later, the two Torontonian congregations merged to form Holy Blossom. Congregation Beth Israel (House of Israel) in Québec City was also founded in 1853, followed by Anshe Sholom (People of Peace) in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1863; yet it would be many years before these congregations built their first synagogues; instead they met in the homes of congregants or in rented spaces.[17] Lastly, in 1862, the beginnings of Emanu-El (God Is With Us) were started in Victoria, British Columbia, and the foundation for a synagogue was laid on June 2, 1863; the building was completed later that year. This Romanesque Revival synagogue was designed by the non-Jewish architect John Wright and could seat five hundred and fifty worshippers, though there were only two hundred and forty-two Jews in Victoria. Emanu-El synagogue in Victoria remains as the only Jewish house of worship that survives from the pre-Confederation period.[18] Before 1867, Canada's Jews were primarily urban, residing in Montréal, Victoria, Québec City, Toronto, and Hamilton, with a handful of others in small towns where they were primarily involved with commerce and mercantilism. Of the scant information that exists on these earliest Canadian synagogues, the Jewish settlers copied the architectural traditions of the region and used local architects and contractors for building them.

THE RISE AND PROLIFERATION OF CANADIAN SYNAGOGUES FROM CONFEDERATION TO WORLD WAR II

Following Confederation, Canada's Jews primarily concentrated in the cities of Montréal and Toronto, with significant pockets emerging in early twentieth-century Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Ottawa. Short-lived, but significant rural Jewish agricultural colonies were also established in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.[19] In 1885-1886, Shaar Hashomayim of Montréal built a synagogue on McGill College Avenue (fig. 2). This building was the second erected by this congregation to accommodate its growth. Its former home on St. Constant Street was first rented and then sold to B'nai Jacob (Children of Jacob), another Jewish congregation. Shearith Israel followed suit four years later with its third edifice on Stanley Street, who subsequently sold its former building on Chenneville Street to congregation Beth David (House of David). In 1892, Montréal's congregation Emanu-el built their own synagogue on Stanley Street to serve the city's Reform Jews, so that prior to 1900 Montréal had five synagogues built by three congregations. The province of Québec's only synagogues outside of Montréal also arose at that time, first in Québec City in 1892 and then in the Montréal suburb of Lachine in 1900, both coincidentally named Beth Israel.[20] Between 1892 and 1900, there was a drought of synagogue construction with high architectural styles because of a widespread economic depression, called the "Panic of 1893."

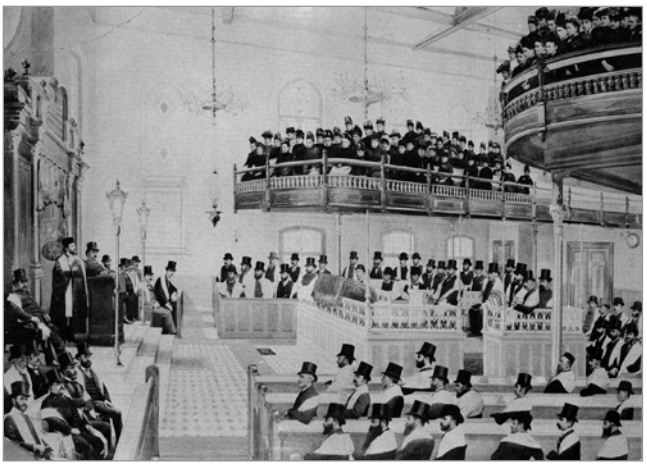

FIG. 2. THE INTERIOR OF SHAAR HASHOMAYIM'S SECOND SYNAGOGUE ON MCGILL COLLEGE AVENUE, MONTRÉAL, BUILT 1885-1886, AS IT APPEARED DURING HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES IN THE EARLY 1890S. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

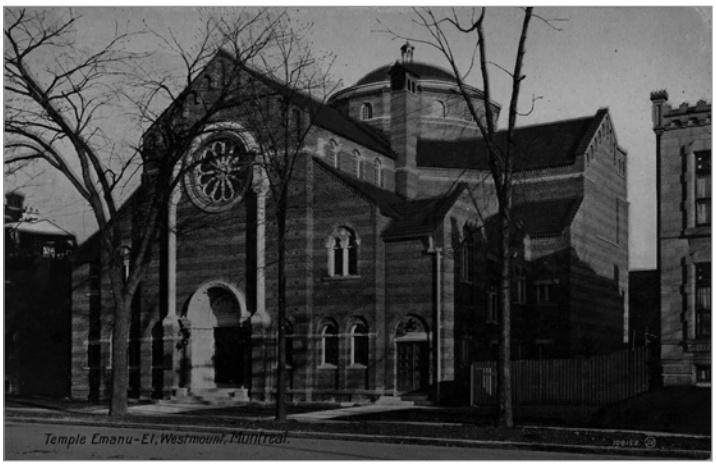

FIG. 3. TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S SECOND BUILDING ON SHERBROOKE STREET IN WESTMOUNT, MONTRÉAL, BUILT IN 1911. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 4A. THE EXTERIOR OF SHAAR HASHOMAYIM'S THIRD SYNAGOGUE IN WESTMOUNT, MONTRÉAL, BUILT 1920-1922. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 4B. THE INTERIOR OF SHAAR HASHOMAYIM'S THIRD SYNAGOGUE IN WESTMOUNT. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, JUNE 2012.

Over the course of the following two decades, Montréal's Jewish population mushroomed, with ten additional synagogues built. The congregations that built synagogues for the first time were Chevra Kadisha (Holy Brotherhood, 1903), Shaare Tefilla (Gates of Prayer, 1903-1906), Poale Zedek (Workers of Righteousness, 1910-1920), Tifereth Jerusalem (Adornment of Jerusalem, 1911), Adath Yeshuran (Congregation of Jeshurun, 1916), B'nai Jacob (1918), Beth Hamedrash Chevra Shaas (House of Study of the Shaas Brotherhood, 1920), and Beth Jehuda (House of Judah, 1921-1923). New buildings that replaced older synagogues were erected for congregations Temple Emanu-el (1911, fig. 3) and Shaar Hashomayim (1920-1922, figs. 4a and 4b) in Westmount. A total of seventeen synagogues had been purposely built (or under construction) within Québec by fourteen congregations between 1867 and 1921.[21] Additional pre-existing residential and commercial buildings were also occasionally converted into synagogues by smaller congregations. Beth Shloime's (House of Solomon, figs. 5a and 5b) Bagg Street Shul is one such example in a building that dates from 1899 that was adaptively reused for Jewish religious needs in 1922. "Shul" is the Yiddish term for synagogue. The Bagg Street Shul continues as the oldest continuously operating Jewish house of worship still in use in Québec and is renowned for its ornate hand-painted murals in the sanctuary, testifying that while not purposely built as a synagogue, the congregants sometimes invested great time and care to make these vernacular spaces special.[22]

FIG. 5A. BETH SHLOIME'S BAGG STREET SHUL, MONTRÉAL, IS AN EXAMPLE OF A HOUSE (BUILT IN 1899) THAT WAS CONVERTED INTO A SYNAGOGUE (1922). THE EXTERIOR HAS ONLY BEEN MODESTLY MODIFIED FROM ITS ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, JUNE 2016.

FIG. 5B. THE INTERIOR OF BETH SHLOIME'S BAGG STREET SHUL HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED TO BE A HOUSE OF WORSHIP; IT CONTAINS VERY EXCEPTIONAL MURAL PAINTINGS AND CABINETRY. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, JUNE 2016.

As previously mentioned, Montréal's high architecture synagogues of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as many others built in Canada's growing cities and towns from the swells of impoverished immigrants from Europe seeking new economic opportunity, were built in the historical-eclectic styles popular in Europe and the settler destination countries where Jews established new communities. Some historians have attributed the popularity of historical-eclectic architecture in synagogues as reflections of the steps toward emancipation Jews were achieving in many countries where they had been discriminated against for centuries. Other historians believe that the historical-eclectic synagogue architecture was expressions of Jewish religious (r)evolution within and between the Orthodox and Reform segments. However, according to architectural historian Jesse Olson, "[w]hile [these experiences Jews underwent were] undeniably important, neither of these explanations is completely satisfactory. Neither was universal, nor even representative phenomenon."[23] While Olson does not provide a counter theory as to why so many of the world's synagogues built during this period look the way they do—including those in Canada—I agree with Olson that the other two theories related to Jewish emancipation and religious revolution are inadequate based on my own observations that there are simply too many exceptions. For the moment, the ensemble of Canada's synagogues with high architectural styles are best conceptualized as a *mélange* of what the various congregations and their contracted architects desired as fitting for a Jewish house of worship. Canada also has a very different story on Jewish architects and buildings of synagogues compared to other Anglophone nations.[24] *Circa* 1910, the members of *two* Montréal Jewish congregations—Poale Zedek and Tifereth Jerusalem—came together to build their own respective houses of worship. The details on the construction of these synagogues remain largely unknown, since records were poorly kept during the building projects; but in these instances, there were Eastern European Jews who had experience in the building trades.[25] When not at their places of employment, the congregants volunteered their labour for the synagogue in their own time.

In 1910, only the foundation and first floor of Poale Zedek were built in brick at 7161 St. Urbain Street. The upper portions of the synagogue were assembled between 1920 and 1922 (fig. 6). Prior to 1922, Poale Zedek congregation used the raised basement as their place of worship. When completed in 1922, the synagogue could seat approximately three hundred and fifty people. The character-defining design elements of this vernacular building are two extended Stars of David on the front façade, which were subsequently altered by a later non-Jewish owner.[26] This Judaic star design was also copied in the window sash pattern. These design motifs were made by the volunteer congregant-workers to render the building more identifiably "Jewish" and are perhaps the earliest instance that one could call a "Canadian-Jewish" architectural style. Poale Zedek's builders likely obtained their knowledge from constructing Montréal's growing

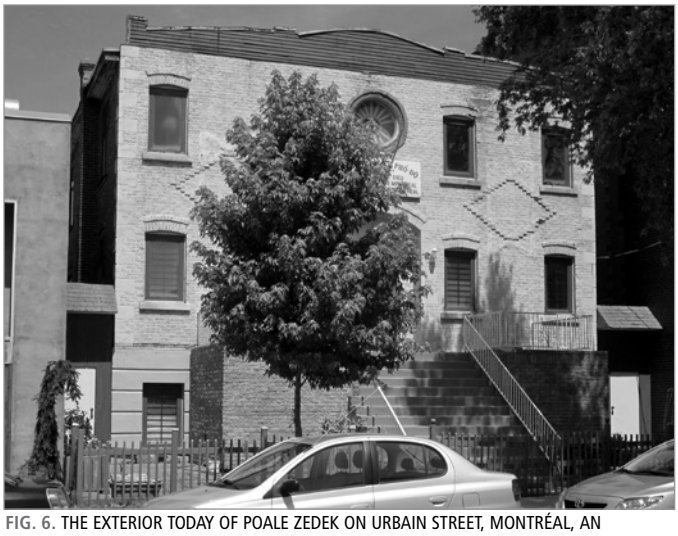

FIG. 6. THE EXTERIOR TODAY OF POALE ZEDEK ON URBAIN STREET, MONTRÉAL, AN EXCEPTIONAL SYNAGOGUE THAT WAS PHYSICALLY DESIGNED AND BUILT BY THE CONGREGANTS ON AND OFF BETWEEN 1910 AND 1922. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

FIG. 7. ADATH JESHURUN OF OTTAWA, BUILT IN 1904 AND DESIGNED BY JOHN W.H. WATTS. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, JUNE 2015.

neighbourhoods, fuelled by the settlement of European immigrants. The one identifiable worker of Poale Zedek is "Mr. Morris," first name unknown, who was a carpenter. Mr. Morris's son, Benjamin Morris, president of the Poale Zedek congregation during the mid-twentieth century, shared this information. Mr. Morris likely worked on the synagogue's wood framing or sanctuary interior, which had fine millwork and cabinetry.[27] Completed in 1911, the Tifereth Jerusalem synagogue was located at 6627 Rue Cartier, and was sometimes called the Rossland Synagogue, in honour of the Ross Realty company that donated the land to the congregation. Because of the red bricks used, the synagogue was also sometimes called the Roite Shul (Red Shul). There is no documented explanation as to why Lieutenant-Colonel James George Ross, a distinguished member of Canada's Scotch-Anglo-Saxon upper crust, donated the land for Tifereth Jerusalem synagogue, a congregation of blue-collar Eastern European Jewish immigrants.[28]

It is unknown as to why the members of Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek constructed their own synagogues in contrast to where so many of Montréal's other small Jewish congregations instead pooled together their savings to convert an existing house or other edifice for such a purpose. As Benjamin Morris demonstrates in his reminiscing on his father's accomplishment, Poale Zedek did instil a sense of pride and social community building. As demonstrated by the presence of their respective synagogue buildings, a sufficient number of the early congregants of Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek also had the know-how and vocational training. It is also unknown if the number and percentage of Jewish tradesmen at Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek was higher or the same as at other comparable congregations in Montréal. The possibility that Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek may have had exceptionally talented building tradesmen could have also been a factor as to why these congregations constructed their own synagogues and others did not.

As a matter of comparison, Ottawa's first synagogues were built using Romanesque Revival with Byzantine ornamental details from European-influenced models, like the other synagogues of Montréal. The congregations included Adath Jeshurun (Congregation of Jeshurun, 1904, fig. 7) designed by John W.H. Watts [1850-1917]; Agudath Achim (Brotherhood Legend, 1912) designed by Cecil Burgess [1888-1956] and Harry Coyles [no dates]; Machzikey Hadas (New Holders, 1926) designed by Werner E. Noffke [1878-1964]; and B'nei Jacob (Children of Jacob, 1931) in a modified existing house.[29] Toronto's first synagogue was built in 1876 by Holy Blossom at Victoria and Richmond streets, and designed by Walter R. Strickland [1841-1915]. Due to the waves of Central and Eastern Jewish immigrants to Canada, Holy Blossom soon outgrew their first building and constructed their second in 1897 on Bond Street. The second Holy Blossom Temple was designed in the Byzantine Revival style by architect John W. Siddal [1861-1941] (fig. 8a). Other Jewish congregations soon emerged in Toronto, too, and built their own synagogues, including Goel Tzedec (Righteous Redeemer, 1907, fig. 8b) designed by William L. Symons [1870-1931] and William Rae [1867-1957] of the firm Symons &

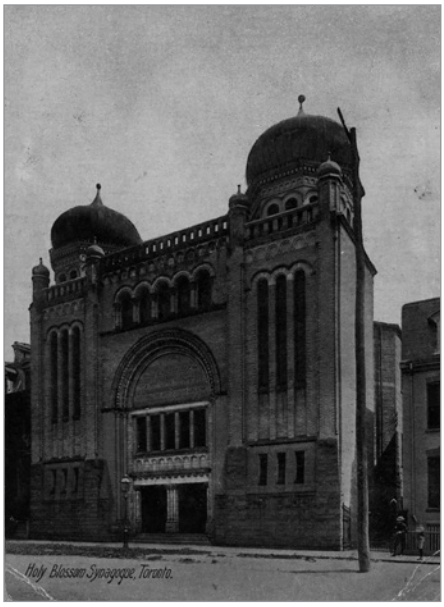

FIG. 8A. TORONTO'S SECOND HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE ON BOND STREET BY ARCHITECT JOHN W. SIDDAL AND BUILT IN 1897. | SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 8B. GOEL TZEDEC'S SYNAGOGUE WAS BUILT IN 1907 ON UNIVERSITY AVENUE, TORONTO, AND DESIGNED BY THE FIRM SYMONS & RAE. | SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 9A. THE EXTERIOR OF TORONTO'S ANSHE KIEV WAS DESIGNED BY BENJMAIN SCHWARTZ AND BUILT IN 1927. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2017.

FIG. 9B. THE INTERIOR OF TORONTO'S ANSHE KIEV FROM 1927. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2017.

Rae; Beth Jacob (House of Jacob, 1922); Anshe Kiev (People of Kiev, 1927, figs. 9a and 9b) designed by Benjamin Schwartz [1899-1961]; and Anshei Minsk (People of Minsk, 1930, fig. 10) designed by Harold S. Kaplan [1895-1973] and Abraham Sprachman [1896-1971] of the firm Kaplan & Sprachman, who also utilized a modified Byzantine Revival architecture aesthetic.[30] Due to its continued membership growth, Holy Blossom also built a third synagogue in the Romanesque Revival style in 1938, which it continues to use, designed by Alfred H. Chapman [1875-1949] and James M. Oxley [1883-1957] of the architectural firm Chapman & Oxley (fig. 11). Holy Blossom located this synagogue on a large suburban lot at the edge of Toronto's city limits, initiating a trend in Canadian synagogue development that continued after World War II, when Canadian Jews acquired wealth and relocated to new suburban developments.[31] It was also in 1922 that Canada's

FIG. 10. TORONTO'S ANSHEI MINSK SYNAGOGUE WAS BUILT IN 1930 AND DESIGNED BY THE FIRM KAPLAN & SPRACHMAN. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2017.

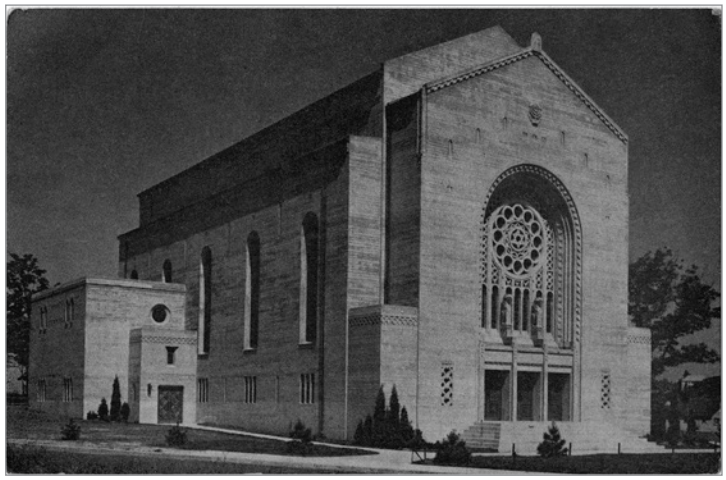

FIG. 11. HOLY BLOSSOM'S THIRD SYNAGOGUE ON BATHURST STREET IN TORONTO, BUILT IN 1938 AND DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTURAL FIRM CHAPMAN & OXLEY. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

first *eruv* (mixture)—a ritual enclosure constructed to facilitate activities prohibited on the Jewish Sabbath—was created in Toronto under the leadership of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Graubart [1862-1937].[32]

At approximately the same time that Rabbi Graubart was working to develop Toronto's *eruv*, the members of Beth Jacob congregation began efforts to develop their own synagogue, at Henry and Cecil streets. In contrast to the members of Montréal's Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek, the members of Beth Jacob were of wealthier socioeconomic standing.[33] In place of physically toiling to construct their synagogue, they contracted with a builder and the professionally trained architect Benjamin Brown [1888-1974]. Beth Jacob is a Romanesque Revival brick building and is significant as being the first high architecture synagogue in Canada where the architect was Jewish (fig. 12). In contrast to the congregational workers at Tifereth Jerusalem and Poale Zedek, Brown does not appear to have designed anything uniquely or exceptionally "Jewish." The Romanesque Revival Beth Jacob follows the architectural precedents previously established by other peer synagogues elsewhere in Canada, as

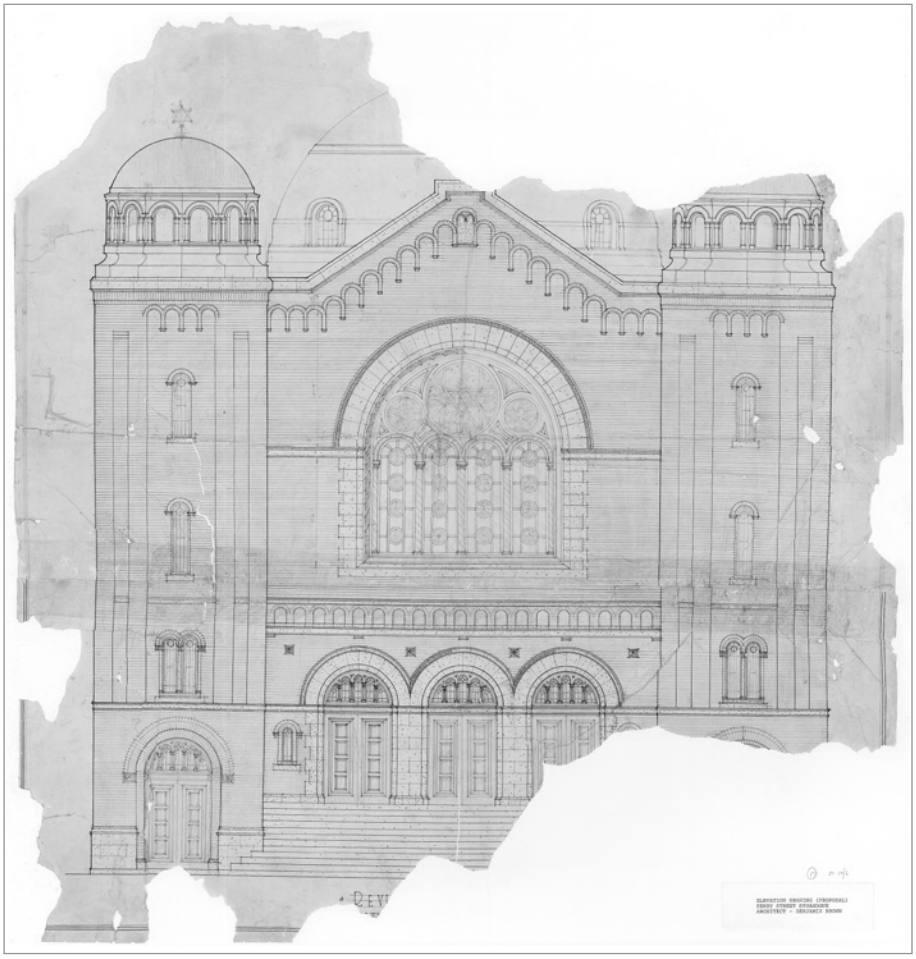

FIG. 12. ELEVATION DRAWING BY ARCHITECT BENJAMIN BROWN OF BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE ON HENRY STREET, TORONTO, 1919-1922, THE FIRST SYNAGOGUE DESIGNED BY A CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHITECT. | ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, FONDS 49, SERIES 1, FILE 2.

well as for the United States and Europe. Following this project, Brown was contracted to design Toronto's Hebrew Institute (1923-1924), which was a typical institutional building for the period. Even less scholarly attention has been given to non-synagogue Jewish institutional buildings in Canada, so it is also likely that the Hebrew Institute may have also been the first Jewish educational building designed by a Canadian Jewish architect. In 1966, congregation Beth Jacob moved to a new suburban location and sold the old edifice to a Greek Orthodox congregation.[34]

Brown was born in Lithuania but raised in Canada and attended the University of Toronto where he earned his degree in architecture. His projects were all in the Toronto area and his designs were residential, commercial, and light industrial buildings. Beth Jacob Synagogue and the Hebrew Institute were his only "Jewish" projects for community-oriented institutions, though many of his clients were Jews, including Mendel Granatstein [1919-1999], Mandle Mendel Mehr [1874-1941], and Simon Rabinowitz [no dates]. Thus, Brown was one of Canada's first successful professional Jewish architects who was also Canadian trained.[35] Ethnic patronage may have assisted Brown's success during the early years of his career. By the 1930s, at least nineteen Canadian architects identified themselves as Jewish, and eight of these were born in Canada. Several of the Jewish immigrants came to Canada at a young age and so received their training in architecture in Canada, like Brown. Fifteen of these early Jewish architects in Canada practiced in Ontario; a dozen were located in Toronto. Montréal had only one Jewish architect at that time and Winnipeg two.[36] The emerging interest in architecture by Jewish Canadians correlates with the forming of Jewish middle and upper socioeconomic classes who were benefiting from more accessible education that empowered greater vocational aspirations and social mobility.[37] This condition became a feedback loop for the Jewish middle and upper classes who desired synagogues that reflected their emerging position in Canadian society.

SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE AND DEVELOPMENT AFTER WORLD WAR II

Following World War II and continuing into the twenty-first century, synagogue architectural design in Canada is predominantly defined by its location in suburban landscapes and sprawling floor plans, as is also found in similar countries like the United States and Australia. Presently, little attention has been given to the architectural history of modern synagogues in Canada, with no specific publications on the subject. Michelangelo Sabatino and Rhodri W. Liscombe's *Canada: Modern Architectures in History* (2016) only briefly mentions a synagogue in passing.[38] Elsa Lam and Graham Livesey's *Canadian Modern Architecture: A Fifty-year Retrospective from 1967 to the Present* (2019) does not discuss them at all.[39] Levitt, Milstone and Tenenbaum do provide a chapter of photographs on modern architecture Canadian synagogues in *Treasures of a People*, but other than brief captions no further analysis is provided.[40] Other modern synagogue architecture publications ignore Canada.[41] So, there is a void that scholars interested in Canadian synagogues could fill.

During the second half of the twentieth century, Canada's Jewish population continued to grow, evolve, and change. Following World War II there was a significant migration of Jewish refugees that survived the Holocaust, where they settled in Montréal, Toronto, and other cities. In response to the strengthening presence of Jewish communities in Canada, by the 1970s, Holocaust memorials, monuments, and museums began to be established that introduced a new form of Jewish communal architectural expression.[42] There were also sporadic waves of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s, which ebbed and flowed in response to the economic and political jostling between the United States and Russia.[43] Starting in the 1950s, however, atrocities and persecution in Francophone North Africa and the Levant, in retaliation for the founding of the independent state of Israel in 1948, led to the emigration of large numbers of Mizrachi and Sephardi Jews. This immigration of refugees significantly impacted Canadian Jewry.[44] While most Canadians Jews are Anglophone Ashkenazim, the growing Francophone Mizrachim-Sephardim has both diversified Jewish representations in Canada as well as the religious traditions and customs of synagogue design. None of the buildings featured in *Treasures of a People* by Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum are of a Canadian Sephardi or Mizrachi synagogue from this immigrant demographic.

The Québec independence referendums of 1980 and 1995 were also of significant concerns to Canadian Jews. Before 1980, the largest concentration of Jews in Canada were English speakers residing in Montréal. In reaction to the referendums many Jews left Montréal for Toronto.[45] Montréal's Jewish population in 1971 was one hundred twelve thousand and it dropped to ninety thousand by 2001 (and continues to decline), whereas Toronto's was at one hundred seven thousand in 1971 and mushroomed to nearly two hundred thousand (and still growing).[46] Thus, later twentieth-century synagogue development in Canada, as well as other communal and institutional buildings, were influenced not only by

FIG. 13A. ROSH PINA SYNAGOGUE OF WINNIPEG, BUILT IN 1952. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 13B. SHAAR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE IN HALIFAX, BUILT IN 1955. | COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON LIBRARIES.

FIG. 14A. BETH ISRAEL BETH AARON SYNAGOGUE. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 14B. BETH ORA BUILT IN 1957 AND DESIGNED BY ARNOLD SHRIER. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 14C. TIFERETH BETH DAVID JERUSALEM, BUILT IN 1960 AND ENLARGED IN 1990. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 15A. THE EXTERIOR OF BETH ZION SYNAGOGUE IN THE MONTRÉAL SUBURB OF CÔTE-SAINT-LUC, BUILT IN 1965 AND DESIGNED BY ANDRE VECSEI. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, NOVEMBER 2005.

FIG. 15B. THE INTERIOR OF BETH ZION SYNAGOGUE AT THE BEGINNING OF A WEDDING CEREMONY. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, NOVEMBER 2005.

the post-Holocaust, Middle Eastern, and Soviet waves of Jewish refugees, but also by the internal Canadian dynamics of Jews relocating from older inner city neighbourhoods to the suburbs, and the flight of many Montréal Jews to other cities in response to the Québec independence referendums. Modern examples in smaller Jewish communities include the Rosh Pina Synagogue (Keystone, 1952, fig. 13a) in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and the Shaar Shalom Synagogue (Gates of Peace, 1955, fig. 13b) in Halifax, Nova Scotia.[47] Suburban synagogues, as represented by those in Côte Saint-Luc and Saint-Laurent, provide a more diverse array of buildings reflecting these social changes and political dynamics, including the contemporary Ashkenazic synagogues of Beth Israel Beth Aaron (House of Israel House of Aaron, fig. 14a); Beth Ora (House of Light, 1957, fig. 14b) designed by Arnold Schrier; Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem (Adornment for House of David Jerusalem, 1960 and enlarged 1990, fig. 14c); and Beth Zion Synagogue (House of Zion, 1965, figs. 15a and 15b) designed by Andre Vecsei.[48]

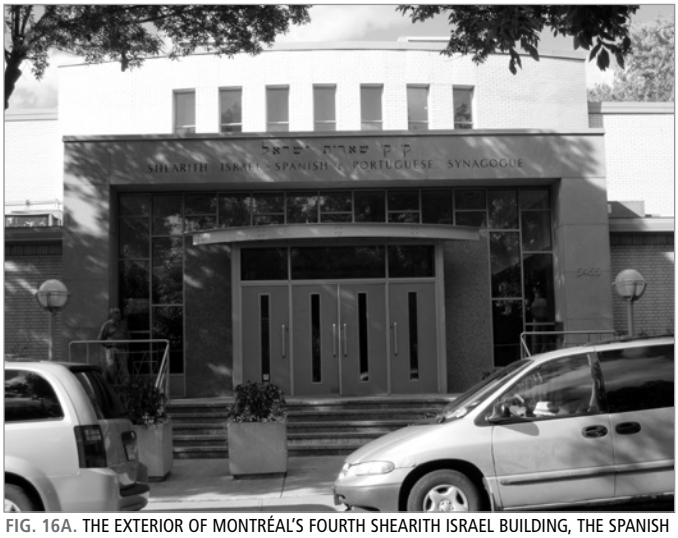

FIG. 16A. THE EXTERIOR OF MONTRÉAL'S FOURTH SHEARITH ISRAEL BUILDING, THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SYNAGOGUE, BUILT IN 1960. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

FIG. 16B. THE INTERIOR OF MONTRÉAL'S FOURTH SHEARITH ISRAEL BUILDING AT THE BEGINNING OF A WEDDING CEREMONY. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

FIG. 17A. OR HAHAYIM SYNAGOGUE. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 17B. HEKHAL SHALOM SYNAGOGUE. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 17C. PETAH TIKVA SYNAGOGUE. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

FIG. 17D. BETH RAMBAM SYNAGOGUE. | PHOTO BY MIRI HOCH BOWEN, NOVEMBER 2020, AND USED WITH HER GENEROUS PERMISSION.

Contemporary Sephardic synagogues in suburban Canada include Montréal's fourth Shearith Israel building, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (1960, fig. 16a and 16b); Or Hahayim (Light of Life, fig. 17a); Hekhal Shalom (Audience of Peace, fig 17b); Petah Tikva (Opening of Hope, fig. 17c); and Beth Rambam (House of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, fig. 17d).[49] It is also during these decades that Canadian Jewish architects came into their own, though not all have necessarily designed synagogues in Canada or at all. Leading figures include David Azrieli, Frank Gehry, Phyllis Lambert, and Moshe Safdie.

FIG. 18A. THE INSENSITIVELY MODIFIED B'NAI JACOB SYNAGOGUE BY THE COLLÈGE FRANÇAIS, MONTRÉAL. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

FIG. 18B. A DEFACED ORNAMENTAL STAR OF DAVID AT THE POALE ZEDEK SYNAGOGUE, MONTRÉAL. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

ADAPTIVE REUSE AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION OF CANADA'S SYNAGOGUES

In 2018, Thompson M. Mayes published *Why Old Places Matter: How Historic Places Affect our Identity and Well-being*. In relation to houses of worship, he argued:

> [O]ld places that are considered sacred are treasured by the religious and the non-religious. Why? Because these old places provide people with restorative benefits that foster meditation and reflection and . . . a sense of peace or serenity, and with all the other benefits that old places provide—continuity, memory, identity, and beauty—that are psychologically and sociologically beneficial.[50]

As part of Canada's milieu of sacred architecture, synagogues also contribute to this societal benefit, which is why they should matter to all Canadians and not just the Jewish ones. Over the passage of time, many of Canada's historic synagogues are no longer owned or used by their respective Jewish communities. There has, unfortunately, been a lack of respect for many old Canadian Jewish sacred places where either insensitive or vandalistic changes were made. One such insensitive example is Montréal's former B'nai Jacob synagogue, which was sold to the Collège Français in the 1950s.[51] Today, the first three floors have been obliterated and obscured by the lower three quarters of the front façade that was of architectural significance. Due to the colossal height of B'nai Jacob synagogue, the great arched portico with the Hebrew inscription, declaring the identification of the Jewish congregation that had once been there, can still be read (fig. 18a). In another example of malicious vandalism, subsequent owners of Montréal's Poale Zedek defaced the façade by chiselling away at the character-defining brick Stars of David made by the congregant-builders, reshaping the stars into diamonds. The cement-patched scars are so deep that the outline of the hexagram can still clearly be seen. Not only was the mutilation to Poale Zedek unnecessary but the damage made to the affected brick will accelerate its spalling and eventually compromise the wall's structural integrity (fig. 18b). Heritage conservation easements and *servitudes* could be a way to address these issues. There are some former synagogues, such as the Yavna Shul in Montréal, that have been adaptively reused successfully for other purposes without greatly harming Jewish character-defining features by subsequent occupants. Such accomplishments illustrate that new uses can be found for these historic buildings without insensitive changes or vandalism (fig. 19).

There are currently three synagogues individually listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places: Emanu-El (1863), in Victoria, British Columbia; Beth Israel (1906), in Willow Creek, Saskatchewan; and Tiferes Israel (Adornment of Israel, 1927), in Moncton, New Brunswick. Each one is identified as the oldest surviving synagogue in its respective province. Shaarei Zedek (Gates of Righteousness) of Saint John, New Brunswick, is also listed on the Canadian Register, but it was first built as a Presbyterian church in 1871, and then purchased and converted into a synagogue by the Jewish community in 1919. Other sites identified as Jewish on

FIG. 19. THE YAVNA SHUL IN MONTRÉAL THAT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED INTO A POST-RELIGIOUS JEWISH USE. | BARRY L. STIEFEL, MAY 2010.

FIG. 20. CONGREGATION EMANU-EL, VICTORIA, BC, BUILT IN 1863 AND DESIGNED BY JOHN WRIGHT. | MICHAL KLAJBAN, MAY 2018, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

the Canadian Register are Lipton Jewish Cemetery in Saskatchewan and Beth Israel Cemetery in Québec City. Some historic districts also identify old synagogues as contributing, like Anshe Kiev and Anshei Minsk in the Kensington Market National Historic Site in Toronto. Elsewhere, local and provincial governments recognize synagogues as having important heritage value, such as the Bagg Street Shul by the City of Montréal and Québec Ministry of Culture.[52] In Alberta, Calgary's Heritage Park Historical Village purchased the Montefiore Institute Synagogue (1910s) in 2008, one of a few surviving wooden vernacular synagogues from the Canadian Prairies, and relocated it to its outdoor museum.[53] What is apparent from this survey of historic synagogue heritage listings is that more attention and efforts have been invested in peripheral Canadian Jewish communities, and not in the largest ones of Montréal and Toronto, where the majority of Jewish manifestations on the historic built environment are found. One noteworthy example of a historic synagogue architectural heritage conservation project was Emanu-El of Victoria, Canada's sole surviving synagogue to predate Confederation.[54]

Victoria's Jewish community flourished until 1866, then slid into decline when the Fraser River gold rush ended. With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Vancouver in 1885, British Columbia's economy left Victoria for the mainland. However, not until 1911 was the first synagogue built in Vancouver, by congregation B'nai Yehudah (Children of Judah), at East Pender and Heatley streets. Other synagogues followed in Vancouver, notably Schara Tzedeck (Gates of Righteousness, its first synagogue in 1920 and second synagogue in 1948), Beth Israel (1949), Temple Sholom (Temple of Peace, 1988), and Beth Hamidrash (House of Study, first in 1977 and second in 2004). During the 1880s, Victoria's Jewish community was in steady decline, shrinking to thirty-eight families by 1899; it stayed at this level into the mid-twentieth century. In 1948, the congregants of Emanu-El decided to "update" their synagogue with a modest budget of $14,000. Near the main entrance a small addition was built to house a kitchen, office, and furnace room. Two entrance portals on the front elevation were removed, the building's Romanesque exterior was covered with painted stucco, and the windows facing Pandora and Blanshard streets were closed and bricked-up. On the interior, hardwood pews were replaced with individual theater seats, and to reduce heating costs a drop false ceiling was installed in the stately sanctuary to cover the shallow dome with a circular skylight and upstairs galleries. Another purpose of the synagogue's "update" project was to cover signs of deterioration, causing the building's historic Romanesque style to disappear from public view.[55]

During the 1970s, the fortunes of Victoria's Jewish community changed and Emanu-El's membership began to grow, exceeding three hundred and eighty individuals by the end of the decade. With the popularization of architectural heritage conservation, congregants first led by Martin Levin and Allan Klenman became interested in restoring the old synagogue to its previous glory at the

time of the Fraser River gold rush. In 1978, the Committee to Restore Canada's Oldest Surviving Synagogue was formed and began fundraising, with a goal of $370,000. Victoria's Jewish community provided most support, but additional funds came from the British Columbia Heritage Trust ($82,000), the Jewish community of Vancouver ($30,000), and the Bronfman Foundation ($20,000). Victoria's city government also provided $5,000 on top of landscaping improvements around the building, as well as some contributions from Victoria's non-Jewish population. The synagogue's restoration took more than two years, requiring the services of specialized historic architects, craftsmen, and carpenters. The restoration work included removing the stuccoed exterior and drop ceiling from the 1940s, recreating the three wooden door front entrance, replacing the gallery railings, and restoring the Romanesque rose window (fig. 20).[56]

At the end of the project, several Jewish organization and heritage conservation government agencies bestowed upon Emanu-El awards for exceptional restoration work. The old and restored synagogue was designated a National Historic Site in 1979.[57] For the congregation's one hundred twentieth birthday celebration in 1982, a grand rededication ceremony was organized. For its heritage significance, Emanu-El was recognized primarily as the oldest synagogue in Canada and only secondarily for its architectural quality. Today, the building is recognized as a "rare example of a 19th century Romanesque Style synagogue in Canada."[58] By the early 1980s, the Jewish population in Victoria had grown to nine hundred and thirty, and it doubled within ten years.[59] To accommodate the congregation's increasing numbers, an addition was constructed that copied the materials and massing of the original Romanesque synagogue but differed with less ornate architectural detailing so that the wing would not be confused as being historic and meet the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. A kitchen, office space, multipurpose classrooms, and a library were located within the new wing.[60]

FINDINGS

Synagogues have been part of Canada's built environment since the late eighteenth century when a small group of refugees fleeing the turbulence of the American War for Independence joined their fellow compatriots at Shearith Israel in Montréal to build their first synagogue. While Canada's Jewish population remained miniscule compared to other countries for more than a century, today Canada ranks the fourth largest in the world with Jewish residents.[61] Only in Israel, the United States, and France are there greater Jewish populations, and yet countries with fewer Jews than Canada have had significantly more scholarly attention spent on their synagogue architecture and other Jewish buildings. Thus, for scholars in Canada looking for material that has been little explored, neglected, and nearly forgotten, studying these synagogues and other Jewish-related structures represents a rich opportunity for original research. While many scholars in the field of Canadian Jewish Studies are Jewish, cultural or religious identity are not prerequisites for engaging in this kind of research either.[62] Multicultural and comparative studies between different cultures and religious traditions can also provide insightful new perspectives not previously considered.

As Samuel Gruber, director of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments, has observed, synagogue architecture and design continues to follow popular trends with the host societies they are found in, though there are often adjustments to meet Jewish needs.[63] Besides aesthetics, Jewish congregations looking to develop new synagogues, or update older ones, are also interested in sustainability-related technologies (with an increasing number of LEED-certified[64] synagogues in North America), addressing walkable built environments as an alternative to automobility, and responding to gender and equity-related issues since traditional Jewish practice (Orthodoxy in particular) has maintained segregation between men and women. Auxiliary spaces beyond the synagogue's sanctuary have also evolved in response to the needs of the entire lifecycle experience. The architectural heritage conservation of historic and aesthetically exceptional synagogues has started, most notably with Emanu-El in Victoria, British Columbia, during the 1970s and 1980s, and relatively recently with Calgary's Heritage Park Historical Village relocation of the Montefiore Institute Synagogue, where it can play a role in the heritage tourism of the area. Presently, little of the heritage tourism economy is built around Jewish culture in Canada, though Canada's federal government has recently declared the month of May "Jewish Heritage Month."[65] In old urban districts and small towns where Jews once lived, stewarding Canadian Jewish cultural property—instead of neglecting or vandalizing the historic remnant—could become an avenue for enhancing local tourism economies, as has been successfully accomplished in certain parts of Europe, the Caribbean, and the United States. Jewish historical, contemporary, and future contributions to the Canadian mosaic of religious expressions on the built environment help to define the diverse society that is Canada and should be considered more inclusively.

NOTES

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