CITY OF SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL SITE BOARD REGISTER  NO. 82

1. LOCATION DESCRIPTION
Street No. 1502 Second Avenue
Legal Description Lot G, Block 207, Horton’s Add.
Other Identification Northwest corner of Second Avenue and Beech Street, San Diego

2. NAME OF SITE Second and Beech Temple
Congregation Beth Israel, 1889

3. OWNERSHIP DATA
A. E. Horton, 1st private owner—Beth Israel built temple
Present owner—Fraternal Spiritualist Church Co.
Address 1502 Second Avenue
(c/o James Bradford, 2244 Second)

4. FACTUAL DETAILS
Original Use Synagogue, Cong. Beth Israel Church, Fraternal Spiritualist
Present Use Church, Fraternal Spiritualist
Architect Unknown
Builder Unknown
Date or Period 1889, Late Victorian
Other Modification of building appear to have been minor; building appears of a size that would be movable.

5. OTHER COMMENTS
Jewish symbols clearly indicate original use.

6. PHYSICAL DETAILS
Style Victorian Eclectic
No. of Stories One story, with partial balcony
Wall Construction Wood frame
Condition Apparently sound

7. SUMMARY: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND NOTABLE FEATURES
This historic temple, used for the first time at sundown, Rosh Hashanah Eve, September 25, 1889, is either the oldest, or at least the next to the oldest, existing such structure in the West. This frame building is certainly the oldest structure erected as a synagogue in Southern California.

This frame building stands as one of the very few recognizable Jewish structure of the early days of San Diego. It is a symbol of the early Jewish settlers and their contribution to the history of San Diego as well as the pioneer congregation, Temple Beth Israel.

8. LOCATION MAP (Optional)
(See plat in attached exhibit)

9. PHOTOGRAPH

10. TRANSMITTAL RECORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Bidg. Insp.</th>
<th>Site Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Dev.</td>
<td>Fire Dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. NAME AND ADDRESS OF RECORD OWNER
Fraternal Spiritualist Church Co.
1502 Second Avenue
San Diego, Calif.
92101
Historically or Architecturally Significant Landmarks

Name of Landmark: Congregation Beth Israel
Location: 1502 2nd Street

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural/Ethnic Style: 
Unique Features of the Design: 
  Construction Method: 
  Detailing: 
  Building Materials: 
  Originality of Design: 
  Originality of Design: 
  Other: 

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

CURRENT STATUS

Legal Description:
  Lot# H & G  Block# 207  Subdivision Name  Horton's Addition
Arbitrary Parcel# 533 363 06  Zoning C  Census Tract# 56

Physical Condition of Structure: Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor [ ]
Assessed Value:
  Land 16,500  Improvements 250  Total 16,750
Size of Lot/Structure: 
Present Use: Fraternal Spiritualist Church Co., 1502 2nd

Present Owner and Address: 
Date Report Filed: By J. Butler
SECOND AND BEECH TEMPLE
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL, 1889

Researchers
Teresa O. Jennings
Henry Schwartz
CONTENTS

Letter, Rabbi Joel S. Goor to William Rick
Letter, Henry Schwartz to Rabbi Joel S. Goor
Historical Data Concerning the Temple Beth Israel
  by Teresa O. Jennings
History
Architecture
Architect
Alterations
Features
Conditions
Record of Title
Picture, Xerox
Flat
Interview
Historical Data
Bibliography
TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL

Location: 1502 Second Avenue, San Diego, San Diego County, California.

Present Owner: Fraternal Spiritualist Church Co.

Present Use: Religious Services.

Statement of Significance: The Temple Beth Israel, constructed in 1889, is one of the earliest surviving synagogues in California. Although modest in size, the building's design and Jewish iconographic elements like the tablets of the law and the six pointed star are highly original. It housed the Congregation Beth Israel from its construction until 1926.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property:
   Lot 6, block 207, Horton's addition.

   The following is an abstract of the complete chain of title:
   1889 Deed of January 19, 1889, recorded in Book 142, p. 365, C. R. Dauer and C. Westover to Hebrew Congregation Trustees, consideration $5,000.00.
   1926 Lever, J. W. by cor. to First National Trust and Savings Bank of San Diego.
   1938 First National Trust and Savings Bank of San Diego to the Fraternal Spiritualist Church Co.

2. Date of erection: 1889.

3. Architect: None known.

4. Original plans and construction of building: A fairly complete account of the temple appeared in the newspapers when the building was finished.
According to the description the building was constructed of redwood, painted a light brown with chocolate trimmings. The interior woodwork including the wainscoting and "four arched trusses supporting the roof" was also of redwood but finished with oil. The interior of the temple was painted a French grey with sky-blue ceiling. The land was purchased for $5,000.00 and the building cost $3,500.00.

5. Alterations and Additions: The building in its main lines still preserves remarkably well the features described in newspaper articles at the time of its completion. Apparently quite early a porch was added to the front of the building. When the property was purchased by the Fraternal Spiritualist Co., they dismantled the ark of the covenant at the rear of the sanctuary and installed an altar. They also constructed an addition to the rear of the building, sealed off the balcony, and enclosed the stairway leading to it. In 1952 the present seats were installed. The tablets of the law at the peak of the gable have also been removed and a large star now rests in this area.

According to the "Anniversary Story of Congregation Beth Israel" the balcony was constructed in 1921 at a cost of $1,500.00. However this is problematical since the balcony appears to be of the same period and construction of the rest of the building and the description of the building in 1889 already mentions a "gallery" within arched fronted, seating 40 or 50.

B. Historical Events and Persons connected with the Structure:

1. Temple Beth Israel: The Adath Yeshurun, later to become the Beth Israel Congregation, was founded in 1861. Among the founders were several very prominent San Diegans including Marcus Schiller and J. S. Manasse, who engaged in important mercantile operations in the area. The congregation held services in various homes and other buildings in the area. In 1886 the name was changed to the Congregation Beth Israel.
and was incorporated in February 1887 for the purpose of purchasing land and building a synagogue. This was during a major boom period of San Diego history. The congregation very early showed signs of interest in reformed Judaism. Already in 1886 they had sponsored lectures on this subject. By 1906 there was clearly a separate reform congregation. When the temple was completed in 1889 it was one of the first in California. The congregation worshiped here until 1926 when they moved to a new building at Third and Laurel.

2. Fraternal Spiritualist Church: The Fraternal Spiritualist Church moved to the building in 1932. The founder of this sect was Dr. H. Robert Moore of Ohio who was said to have demonstrated psychic powers. After extensive world travel, Dr. Moore came to San Diego around 1930. With the help of local followers the group purchased the former temple in 1938. The Fraternal Spiritualists have occupied the building from 1932 to date.

C. Notes:

1. San Diego Weekly Sun reported on April 4, 1889 that the building committee of the church was engaged in a consideration of plans for the new structure. By September 1889, the building was finished. San Diego Union, September 25, 1889.

2. This account which appeared in the September 25, 1889, San Diego Sun, is reproduced in the appendix at the end of this report.


4. Interview with James Bradford, President of the Fraternal Spiritualist Church.

5. "History of the Fraternal Spiritualist Church".

6. See appendix.


11. According to an article in the September 27, 1889, issue of the San Diego Union, it was the second temple in Southern California.


13. History of the Fraternal Spiritualist Church.

D. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:
   a. Photograph of the building soon after it was built without the porch on the front. This photograph appears in the Southwest Jewish Press Heritage, September 13, 1974, p. 5.
   b. An early photograph of the synagogue but with the porch added is in the collection of the San Diego Historical Society.

2. Bibliography:
   a. Books:
      Gerson, Ralph D. "Jewish Religious Life in San Diego, 1851-1918,"
      "History of the Fraternal Spiritualist Church" xeroxed copy in the possession of the church.
      Stern, Norton, notes on the Temple Beth Israel to an article by James Allen in Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly, October 1970.
   b. Newspaper articles:
      San Diego Sun:
      September 1, 1887, The congregation contemplates a $20,000.00 synagogue.
      December 27, 1887. The congregation buys a lot.
April 4, 1889. The building committee considers plans.

September 25, 1889. The synagogue is finished and there is a long description. (See appendix.)

San Diego Union:

September 26, 1886. The congregation has taken steps to erect a building.

September 7, 1889. Mentions cost of new building.

September 27, 1889. Announces the completion of the synagogue and gives a small line illustration.

October 14, 1889. Announcement of the annual meeting to be held in the new synagogue.
HISTORICAL DATA CONCERNING THE TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL

Lot G, Block 207 of Horton's Addition.

San Diego in the years of the 1880's was a place of opportunity for real estate speculators such as Adolf G. Gassen. The Coast County Directory for 1884-5 lists him as "Gassen, A. G. capitalist and contractor, residence D St. corner of 10th." Gassen purchased the property on the northwest corner of 2nd and Beech from R. A. Thomas (also active in land speculation) in March of 1887 and sold it a little over a month later to Charles W. Pauly. Gassen was at times associated with D. C. Reed in Real Estate operations, and did well for himself in such dealings, especially in Pacific Beach. He was not only involved in Real Estate but was also a city Marshall in the early 1870's, businessman and served as a colonel on the governor's staff in later years.

Aaron Pauly purchased the property from his son Charles in June of 1887. Mr. Pauly was among the first to see the future of San Diego and moved here in 1869. He found the streets laid out in a desultory way, though only a few houses had yet been built. He entered at once into a business partnership with his sons F. N. and Charles W. Pauly, renting a wharf and store from A. E. Horton under the name of A. Pauly and Sons. Pauly was instrumental in establishing the San Diego Chamber
of Commerce and was elected its first president, which office he held for 5 yrs. In 1875 he entered the real estate business and in the ensuing years was elected tax collector. The December issue of Golden Era Magazine, 1887, carried an article on Aaron Pauly, who was at the time considered a great asset to the San Diego community.

The property changed owners a few more times and then in January of 1889 C. R. Dauer and C. Westover sold it to the trustees of the Hebrew Congregation known officially as the Congregation Beth Israel.

The First Temple (see attached exhibit)

The Congregation Beth Israel was a loosely knit organization of the first Jewish community in San Diego. The first organization of the Hebrew Congregation took place in 1872 at the house of Marcos Schiller in Old Town; the first officers were: President Marcos Schiller (who served until his death in 1904), Vice-president H. Welisch, Secretary A. Blochman, and Treasurer A. Lippman. Before the erection of the temple on 2nd and Beech services were held in rented halls and the Unitarian Church, but only on the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement. There were at first 18 members.

The Congregation was reorganized and incorporated as the Congregation Beth Israel and by 1888 the Congregation found itself with a growing membership of 55 and a need to erect a place of their own.

On Sept. 25, 1886 the San Diego Union reported: "The Jewish
citizens of San Diego are taking steps for the erection of a building to be used as synagogue and a school for religious instruction. At a meeting a few days ago $500 was subscribed."

On Sept. 1, 1887 the San Diego Weekly Sun reported: "The Jewish residents of this city contemplate the erection of a synagogue at an early date, to cost $20,000. A great part of this amount has already been subscribed."

On April 4, 1889 the Weekly Sun was able to report: "The Building Committee of the projected Jewish Synagogue are engaged on the consideration of plans for the structure which is to be built on the corner of 2nd and Beech Streets. An unpretentious building, similar to that first built by the Unitarian Congregation and since made a vestry of the beautiful new church, seems to be the choice of a large part of the membership."

*On Oct. 14, 1889 the Union reported that "the annual meeting of the Hebrew Congregation will be held today at the new synagogue at 2nd and Beech."

From the above evidence and other sources I conclude that the building was erected in 1889 sometime between the dates of April 4th and Oct. 14th.

Later History

The Jewish Community used the little temple for many years to hold their services and teach religious instruction. But by the early 1920's it was no longer able to accommodate the growing congregation. In 1923 directors Adolph Levi,
Samuel I. Fox and Ed H. Samisch were given authority to purchase the property at the northwest corner of Third and Laurel, the price not to exceed "$12,000.00, for the erection of a new temple. Steps were then taken to sell the old temple site at Second Avenue and Beech Street, and to obtain plans for the erection of the present structure at Third Avenue and Laurel Street. A contract to build the new temple at Third and Laurel was awarded in Aug. 1925 to M. Trepte and Son for $69,300. Early in 1926, according to the present Congregation of Beth Israel, the Second and Beech property was sold to H. N. Durflinger for $20,000.

In 1938 the property was sold to the Fraternal Spiritualist Co. and is presently used as a church for their divine healing services.

Architecture

The architecture of the building is not typical of one period or style of architecture but is a conglomeration of different styles and periods, i.e. the pillars in the front of the building are corinthian and the design at the top of the building 1880 gingerbread.

Architect

All evidence points to no architect. Certainly one of the newspapers that were reporting on the progress of the building at the time would have mentioned an architect if there had been one. There was also no evidence of an architect at the
San Diego County Recorders office. The present Congregation Beth Israel had no knowledge of an architect.

**Alterations**

The building retains its original shape, although there is a small wooden two story house that was attached to the back of the building years after it was built.

From the Anniversary Story of Congregation Beth Israel: "The Jewish Welfare Building was removed from Camp Kearny, where it was used during WW1, to the lot adjoining the Temple on Second Ave., and was designated a Community Center in which all San Diego Jewish Organizations carried on welfare work."

The only real alteration to the building was a balcony that was constructed in the inside front of the temple.

From the Anniversary Story of Congregation Beth Israel: "The membership drive and the inspiring leadership of Rabbi Ernest Trattner proved such great stimuli that by April, 1921, the Temple structure at Second Ave. and Beech Street was no longer able to accommodate the regular Friday evening worshippers. Thus it became necessary to build a balcony of considerable size at a cost of $1500.00, and a new campaign was launched for funds to retire the indebtedness incurred in this project."

**Features**

Immediately inside the door of the temple there is a foyer with two small waiting rooms, one off to the right and the other to the left. There is a balcony upstairs in the very front of
the building and through the foyer is the main body of the temple or church. On the ceiling of the vestry are gothic looking strips of panel inlay. The temple still has its original stained glass windows.

Condition

The inside of the building is in excellent condition. The outside of the building could use some painting etc., also the wooden structure that topped the front of the temple (see photo) is no longer there.