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News Letter

THE ARCHITECTURE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY SYNAGOGUES IN ST. LOUIS

by David J. Simmons

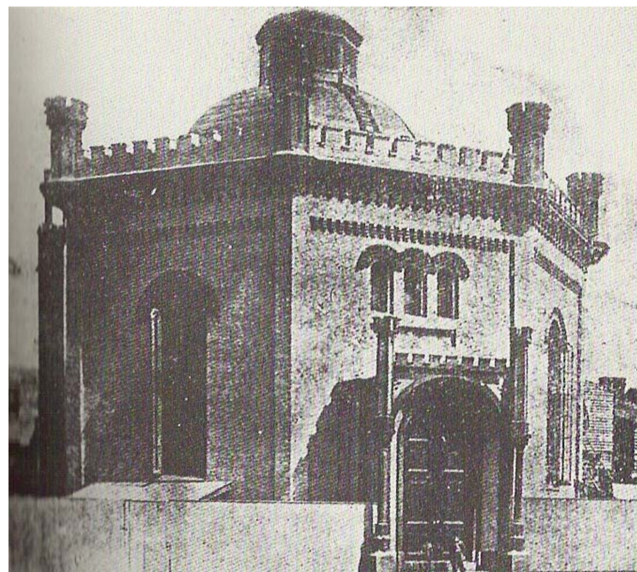
Between 1855 and 1897 the St. Louis Jewish community built six important houses of worship. Each synagogue was unique in some way. Collectively these religious facilities reflected the practice of their Jewish faith as it moved from the strict dictates of Orthodox Judaism expressed in their German and Polish heritage to the ideals of Reformed Judaism advocating a more liberal religious methodology. Americanization of the St. Louis Jewish community and in particular the practice of their faith influenced synagogue architecture and initiated an architectural conflict between traditional Jewish design and conformity with contemporary church design. As they sought to gain acceptance in American society, St. Louis Jews chose for the most part to conform with church architecture. Most of these synagogues lacked any exterior manifestation of the Jewish faith.

Prominence in the Jewish business community and competition among Jewish congregations for membership added another dimension to the design process for some houses of worship. Many people in this era believed wealth to be God's blessing. Affluent individuals had an obligation to honor God with their substance because of His blessings. Jew or Gentile, they contributed to building of magnificent religious buildings, palaces by the standards of the frontier. Local newspapers feasted on the beauties of these structures and listed every major contributor with glee. Prestige and business opportunities opened up to these participants. The close proximity of some of the Jewish temple locations led to competition for membership. A beautiful temple helped to retain membership and to attract members from the ranks of other congregations and non-affiliated Jews.

Of the four Jewish congregations building the six temples described here, United Hebrew and B'nai El, the two earliest, started their religious experience in the Orthodox persuasion. They gradually moved toward Reformed Judaism. But Shaare Emeth and Temple Israel migrated to the Reform movement at the beginning of their religious journeys. Most of the wealthiest Jewish businessmen in St. Louis belonged to Shaare Emeth or Temple Israel. As a result, these congregations erected the most lavish and costly temples of worship.

Nineteenth century American synagogue architecture utilized a variety of styles, but Neoclassical, Gothic Revival, and Romanesque dominated. After the Civil War, most Reform congregations adopted the Moorish style for their new temples. Its use symbolized their break with Orthodox Judaism. Romanesque architecture guided the design process for four St. Louis temples, two of them in the early phase of the Romanesque Revival and the others in the later Richardsonian Romanesque. Moorish architectural elements touched the designs for the two other Jewish houses of worship in 19th-century St. Louis.

United Hebrew, the first St. Louis Jewish congregation, traced its roots back to 1837, organizing formally four years later. In spite of this achievement, the group did not erect St. Louis' first Jewish place of worship. Credit for this belongs to Congregation B'nai El, which emerged in 1850 from the merger of two earlier congregations – B'nai Brith (1847) and Imanu-El (1849). Judah Touro, a wealthy Jewish New Orleans merchant., left the fledgling congregation a three-thousand-dollar inheritance in 1853. With this money the congregation purchased a site for a new building on the east side of Sixth Street just south of Cerre. Measuring 70 feet frontage by 75 feet deep, the lot cost $2,380. The membership struggled to obtain additional funds for the new temple, and several local churches collected funds for the project from their own members.



The first synagogue in St. Louis: B'nai El Temple, 1855, Koenig & Brother, from Ehrlich, Zion in the Valley, *Vol. 1, p. 65. Note the size of the man at the door.*

Eventually B'nai El hired the local architectural firm of Koenig and Brother to plan their new synagogue. Herman and Otto Koenig, German-trained architects, established their St. St. Louis architectural practice prior to 1850. Before the Civil War they operated as a team, later maintaining separate practices. Financial constraints required the worship facility to be simple in design and modest in its proportions. Construction of the building began in January 1855. The congregation laid the cornerstone on April 16 of that year and dedicated their new $6,600-temple on September 7.

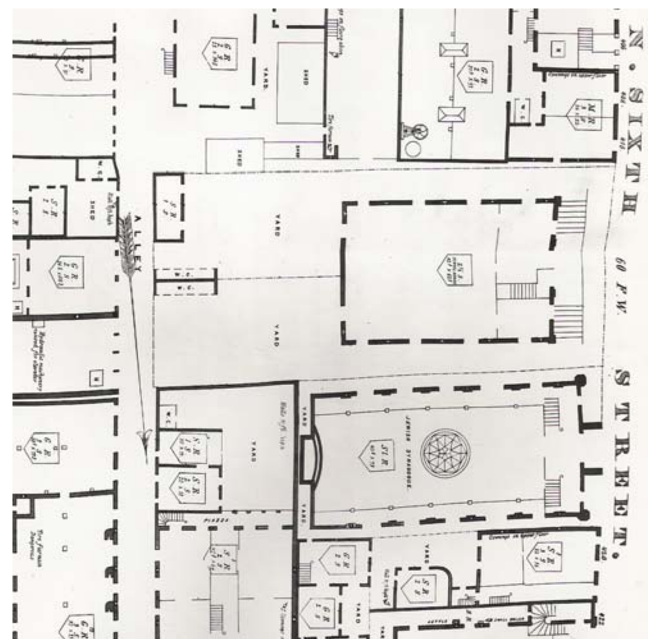
Koenig's design called for an octagon-shaped structure sixty-feet in diameter, crowned with a large dome and small cupola. Its brick exterior trimmed with limestone featured squared crenellated battlements, tall and narrow arched windows on six sides, and a massive arched entrance with a double door opening in the front section. These Romanesque elements projected a fortress-like appearance. Local residents affectionately named the new B'nai El "the coffee grinder."

The three level interior placed the auditorium or audience room on the main floor, with a balcony above and a basement below. The sanctuary seated 300, with the men on the main level and the women in the balcony, in accordance with Jewish Orthodox religious practices. On the east wall a pair of menorahs flanked the ark with its sacred scrolls. At the center of the room a raised reading platform with lectern faced the ark. Bench seating focused on this platform. Natural light radiated from the windows and the skylight in the dome. Two gas chandeliers and six vase gas lights illuminated the premises at night. A modestly sized organ completed the sanctuary arrangements. Classrooms, furnace area, a mikvah or ritual bath, and other spaces occupied the basement.

Chouteau Presbyterian Church, 11th and Chouteau, 1867, used as B'nai El Temple, 1875-1906, from Ehrlich, p. 66

Nineteen years passed, and B'nai El relocated to Eleventh and Chouteau. They acquired the Romanesque style Chouteau Presbyterian Church, built in 1867 at a cost of $90,000. They purchased this property for $14,000 and remodeled its interior to accommodate their needs. In the meantime, they sold the Sixth Street property to the Good Samaritan Episcopal Church, which served the African-American population. The Good Samaritan church conducted religious services on the premises until they disposed of the property to commercial interests, which demolished the building in 1905.

Inspired by the presence of B'nai El's new shul, the United Hebrew Congregation inaugurated their own building campaign for a new worship space. In 1856 the congregation purchased a lot measuring 48 feet front by 90 feet deep located on the east side of Sixth Street between St. Charles and Locust, immediately north of the first Benton Public School, which had been erected in 1841. Judge George W. Bernie sold the site to United Hebrew for $6,240. Two plans were submitted for a new building, one by Hodgeman and Seaton, contractors, andanother by the associated architects Thomas Brady and Thomas Walsh. The architectural firm of Barnett and Weber furnished the design for Hodgeman's plan. Because Barnett's design required an expenditure of $37,000 to complete, Hodgeman revised some of its elements, substantially reducing its cost. These revisions made the plan more acceptable to the building committee. After agonizing over the Hodgeman and Brady-Walsh plans for a year, they chose Hodgeman's. On May 27, 1858, the congregation approved the construction contract. Dedicated on June 17, 1859, the new United Hebrew synagogue cost $21,000.



Groundplan of First United Hebrew Temple and adjacent buildings (north to bottom),showing skylight and alcove, as built by Hodgeman & Seaton to designs of George I. Barnett. The adjacent building is the Benton School, 1841, where the first public high school west of the Mississippi opened in 1853. From Makovsky (see Sources)

No photograph or drawing of this structure has survived. Romanesque Revival in design, this brick synagogue with limestone foundation and trim rose to a height of 53 feet. Its frontage traveled across three bays for a total of 42 feet. The building extended back 80 feet. The façade focused on a central recessed entrance four feet wide connected to the sidewalk below by a short staircase of easy steps. A pair of arched windows, each three feet wide, flanked the entrance. A rose window may have graced the area above the entrance. Corbel coping dressed the pyramidal roof line.

Behind the front wall, the flat wood roof with slate overlay and wood joist supports covered the building. Foundation walls were 18 inches thick, while the brick superstructure relied on 13-inch thick walls. The basement climbed to 8 feet above ground level.

The synagogue's interior operated on three levels – main floor, balcony and basement. The main entrance opened into a T-shaped vestibule 20 feet deep with a room on either side at the front end. A double staircase at the rear of the vestibule accessed the audience room balcony. Several sets of vestibule doors admitted people to the main floor of the audience room (40 feet wide and 60 feet deep). The balcony for the seating of women extended around three sides of the room, but it did not join with the rear or east wall. A row of five cast iron columns on both the north and south walls supported the balcony and ceiling. Accommodating nine hundred people, the audience room seating faced the bemah or reading platform in the center of the room. On the east wall, the ark with sacred scrolls and the menorah resided in an alcove three feet deep and twelve feet wide.

East wall of first United Hebrew in 1958. Note outline of rose window at top of wall. From Makovsky

Above the alcove a large and magnificent rose window filtered the natural light through stained glass. Other windows decorated the east wall. Both sides of the room contained two rows of windows, some with arched heads. Crowning the room's fenestration was the round skylight, twelve feet in diameter, located in the center of the ceiling. It featured the Mogan David or star of David symbol expressed in stained glass. All audience room fenestration employed stained glass with some windows being family memorials. Gas chandeliers lighted the premises at night. Classrooms, public toilets, furnace room with coal shoot, caretaker's quarters, and the ritual bath partitioned the basement space.

Eleven years after the synagogue's completion, United Hebrew Congregation engaged architect George I. Barnett to make changes to the building. The report of these alterations failed to describe what he did to the building. As a result, the above description of the synagogue may include some of the changes made at this later date.

Another decade passed before United Hebrew decided to move west and sell their downtown property to commercial interests. During the next century business interests would remodel the structure many times, completely obliterating its original features. In the mid 1980s, developers finally removed the remaining fabric along with the rest of the block to make way for the St. Louis Centre's multi-level parking garage.

Dissatisfied with B'nai El's slow movement toward Reform Judaism, 63 of its members withdrew at the close of the Civil War to establish a new congregation they called Shaare Emeth. Anxious to declare their separation from their Orthodox Jewish brethren, they chose to design their new shul in the Moorish style.

This Moorish Revival looked back to the period of Spanish history from the 13th to the 15th centuries, when Jews, Christians and the ruling Moslems had lived together in relative harmony. All those groups had employed the Mudéjar style, although only a handful of specifically Jewish examples survived, notably the synagogue in Toledo later known as Santa Maria la Blanca. As adapted to 19th-century use, the exotic style effectively distinguished Jewish from other religious buildings and accommodated the use of Jewish religious symbolism.

Reform Judaism and the Moorish style first came together in Gottfried Semper's synagogue built in 1839 in Dresden, Saxony. The Moorish Revival as an architectural style came to symbolize the American Reform movement during the two decades following the Civil War, when many Reform congregations built lavish temples in this style. Some of the most important synagogues include the Plum Street Synagogue in Cincinnati, 1866, designed by James K. Wilson; Temple Emanu-El in New York City, 1868, designed by Eidlitz and Fernbach; and Rodeph Shalom Temple in Philadelphia, 1869, designed by Frazier, Furness & Hewitt.

The new temple built by Shaare Emeth here in St. Louis is contemporary with and shared the design inspiration of these better-known works.

Shaare Emeth Temple, northeast corner 17th and Pine, 1866-69, Thomas Brady, with Centenary Methodist Church in distance, from Gateway Heritage*, Fall 1986, p. 32.*

The Temple Building Association of Shaare Emeth purchased a lot at the northeast corner of 17th and Pine costing $22,500 and measuring 100 feet on 17th by 110 feet on Pine. They immediately engaged architect Thomas Brady to design the new shul. His architectural experience made him well qualified for the task. During the previous nine years, he had designed five major churches, several smaller worship centers, and many religious schools. At the close of 1866 the temple association accepted Brady's Moorish plan for the new synagogue. Construction started in the spring of 1867. The cornerstone was laid on June 24, and the dedication took place two years later, on August 27, 1869.

Use of the horseshoe arch, a major aspect of Moorish architecture, unified and individualized the temple exterior. Round motifs decorating the exterior acted as a foil to enhance and at the same time to soften the bold lines of these horseshoe-shaped arches. Spanning 71 feet across, the temple façade divided into three areas – twin towers and between them the entrance area. Rising to a height of more than 100 feet, the towers measured fifteen and a half feet square. Each tower reveled in its open lantern supported by rows of columns and capped by a dome, four diminutive bulbous minarets, and a tall cupola. Between the towers the central section 40 feet across employed the horseshoe arch to frame its three grand entrances, the tripartite windows above them, and the molded roof line 70 feet above the ground. Round windows added to the mix for contrast.

Sides of the temple extended eastward for 100 feet and offered several interesting architectural devices. Five horseshoe-shaped copper dormers enclosed with round windows occupied the clerestory level on the north and south walls. Below this area, the main audience room windows, each capped with a horseshoe arch, measured five feet wide and 18 feet high. A convex roof covered the brick building trimmed in limestone.

Architect Otto H. Stickel worked with Brady to plan the temple's interior. Stickel served as city architect after the Civil War and designed the new city-owned Central Market in 1868.

An entrance level and the audience room above directed the arrangement of the temple's interior. At ground level a vestibule accessed the sanctuary on the second floor through two staircases located in the twin towers. The rest of the first floor behind the vestibule contained classrooms, custodian's apartment, rabbi's study, furnace and fuel area, and the public toilets.

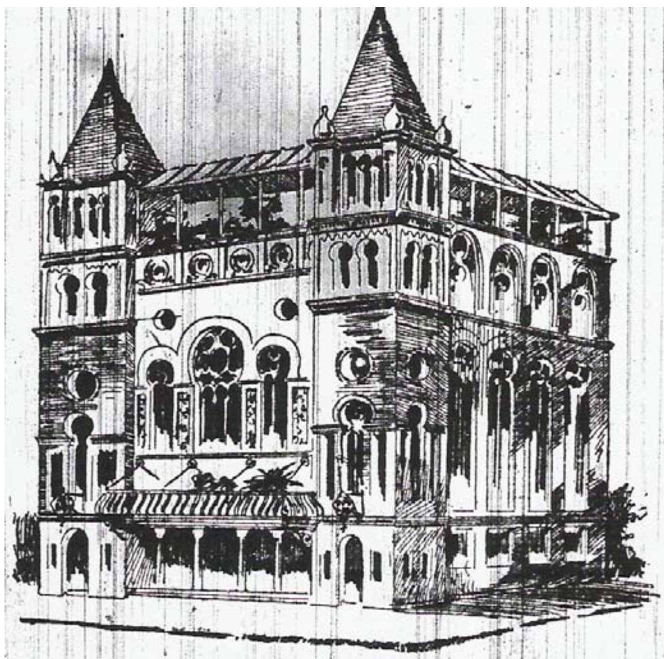
Seating 1,200 people, the audience room (95 feet long by 65 feet wide) utilized all the space on the second floor. Its barrel-vaulted ceiling rose 50 feet above the floor. Entrance to the audience room came at the rear on the west wall beneath the organ and choir loft. A large nave and two small aisles defined the room's seating space. A row of five cluster columns finished in faux marble and adorned with foliated caps marked the boundaries between the nave and the north and south side aisles. Each row of columns supported horseshoe-shaped molded arches. Four ceiling trusses connected the two rows of arches. Each horseshoe arch anchored a twelve-light chandelier.

North and south walls exhibited identical fenestration – a row of five round windows on the clerestory and five large windows with arched heads below. Stained glass, some featuring Jewish religious symbols, filled all 23 windows in the audience room. Sky blue paint covered the walls and ceiling. Gold stars adorned the ceiling and delicate arabesque tracery rendered in gold and silver embellished the walls. Crimson upholstery and plush carpeting contributed to the richness of the premises. In a center vault on the east wall, the tabernacle reigned amid rows of columns and flanked by two large menorahs. Of special interest, the room featured a large locally built pipe organ containing 21 stops and 1,900 pipes. Its music delighted everyone who heard it.

A group of wealthy St. Louis Jewish businessmen belonging to Shaare Emeth spent $110,000 on the new temple. Upon completion, it immediately became a St. Louis landmark. Community praise extolled its beauties. A reported

at a local newspaper commented, “Our Hebrew friends may well feel proud of possessing one of the finest synagogues on the American continent.” As seen in surviving photos and drawings, its bold, powerful, and imaginative design dazzles the eye and confirms its status as a masterpiece worthy of national recognition.

Shaare Emeth congregation worshipped in their beautiful temple for 25 years before relocating to a site west of Grand Avenue in response to the westward migration of their membership. D. F. Addington obtained an option on the Pine Street property in 1894. Charles W. Whitney Jr. and Charles Pope planned to transform the synagogue into a first-class vaudeville theater. The architectural firm of Annan and Son prepared the plans for the $100,000 project, but financial problems scuttled the undertaking.



Unexecuted plan by Annan & Son to convert Shaare Emeth into a vaudeville theater, from Post-Dispatch *Oct. 28, 1894, p. 27*

In the spring of 1895 the realty firm of Lewis and Epstein offered the Shaare Emeth property for $70,000 but sold it to banker L. C. Nelson for $60,000. Whitney and Pope revived their plans for the theater conversion. This time they engaged the architectural firm of Kirchner and Kirchner to convert the building into the Oriental Theatre complex at a cost of $60,000. In the fall of 1895, the Oriental Theatre with its indoor entertainment and outdoor garden restaurant facilities opened to the public. Unfortunately, the theater complex failed to attract enough patrons to make the venture profitable. After a short period of operation, the theater closed. Eventually, Leo Moser purchased the property for $41,500. Since no use for the current premises could be found, the owner cleared the site around the turn of the 20th century and attempted to market the site for commercial purposes.

Perspective looking southeast from corner of 17th & Olive of design by Kirchner & Kirchner to convert Shaare Emeth into Oriental Theatre, Republican*, June 16, 1895.*

In 1879, the United Hebrew Congregation decided to leave their location in what had become the downtown business district. They chose a lot at the southeast corner of Olive and 21st Street for their new temple, just seven blocks from Shaare Emeth. Lacking the funds available to Shaare Emeth, they sought to erect a modest temple in the Moorish style to celebrate their embrace of Reform Judaism. Architect August Beinke received the commission. His St. Louis architectural career had started in 1872. Within a few years he had cultivated a large client base in the St. Louis German community. Beinke’s plan called for a Romanesque temple with Moorish details. His design employed Romanesque motifs with limited use of the horseshoe arch for accents. At the center of the temple façade was a magnificent rose window, twenty feet in diameter, enclosed with a stone horseshoe-shaped arch containing the name of the congregation and the Jewish date. Similar arrangements existed in the portico transom area of the two tower entrances, the top panel in the large tower windows, and the dormer windows in the onion dome.

United Hebrew Temple, 21st and Olive, 1881, August Beinke,
photo from Ehrlich, p. 67, courtesy Missouri Historical Society

Constructed of stock brick with Warrensburg blue sandstone trim, the temple fronted on Olive for 63 feet and attained a depth of 100 feet along 21st Street. Two towers dominated the temple front. The western tower 100-feet high displayed a modified onion dome enhanced by dormers. Battlements embellished the smaller eastern tower. A portico with support columns, pitched roof, and horseshoe arch sheltered each tower entrance. Temple interior located the audience room on the upper floor and the vestibule and support rooms on the ground level. Seating 800 people, the sanctuary contained walls 24 feet high and a barrel vaulted ceiling 40 feet above the floor. Wall brackets held the ceiling in place. The sanctuary arrangement placed the choir and organ loft on the south wall above the tabernacle. A row of five large Romanesque windows situated on the east and west walls admitted ample natural light into this space. A white and gold color scheme enhanced the lighting.

Entrance towers housed steps leading up to the sanctuary. Four classrooms on the ground level contained pulley-operated glass partitions. When the partitions were raised, the rooms formed a hall 60 feet square. Public toilets, sexton's apartment, furnace room, and a robing area claimed the remaining space on the lower level.

United Hebrew Congregation started construction on their new temple on July 1, 1880. Laying of the cornerstone followed on August 27. Less than a year later, they celebrated its dedication on June 2, 1881. The cost amounted to $30,000. Twenty-two years passed and the United Hebrew Congregation moved westward again to the northwest corner of Kingshighway and Enright. Their they purchased and remodeled Mount Cabanne Christian Church, which had been erected in 1891. Commercial interests bought the Olive Street property and converted it into a multipurpose structure.

Seeking a more liberal interpretation of Reform Judaism, fifty members led by Moses Fraley departed from Shaare Emeth in 1886 and established a new congregation called Temple Israel. Prior to building their own shul, they conducted services at the Pickwick Theatre, located at the corner of Jefferson and Washington. Allocating $5,000, Temple Israel leadership acquired a building site at the northeast corner of Pine and Leffingwell.

To find the architect of their new temple, the building committee conducted a limited architectural competition. George I. Barnett, Isaac Taylor, Charles Holmes, Grable & Weber, and Alfred Rosenheim submitted plans in February 1887. Grable and Weber received the commission. Alfred Grable had practiced architecture in St. Louis for more than thirty years, but his association with Auguste Weber was of recent origin. The firm's reputation relied on their elegant residential work. Many of their clients came from the St. Louis Jewish business community.

Temple Israel, northeast corner Pine and Leffingwell, design by Grable & Weber, from Republican*, May 28, 1887*

Stylistically, the new temple emulated H. H. Richardson's version of the Romanesque. Temple Israel wanted a contemporary ecclesiastical design. It must blend with other recently constructed religious structures. Its attractive exterior depended on clean lines, simple forms, straight forward arrangement, and a color contrast of materials. Fronting on Pine Street for 77 feet, the temple attained a depth of 131 feet along Leffingwell. Built of ash-face North St. Louis limestone, the temple exterior offered a beautiful color contrast in its use of Dunleith red sandstone trim, Missouri red granite columns, oxidized copper downspouts and gutters, blue gray slate roof, and the red slate roof covering the porch and tower. The great 140-foot corner tower and the combination of the porch and large window above acted as a point of focus. This porch sheltered the two main front entrances. A third entrance accessed the front of the temple through the Leffingwell side of the great tower.

Marble floors and wainscoting adorned the vestibule and two parlors located at the front of the temple interior. Three sets of doors at the rear of the vestibule opened into the main floor of the audience room. At 65 feet square, the auditorium contained three aisles and seated 750 people. A balcony along the south side of the room accommodated another 250. An open timbered ceiling with two Howe trusses attained a height of 63 feet. Blue

walls, poplar wood trim, and oak pews contributed to its beauty. Large wrought iron chandeliers equipped with electric lights hung from the ceiling. Natural light streamed through the two rows of windows on the east and west walls. Below the organ loft both the pulpit and tabernacle were situated on the north wall. The magnificent temple organ cost $7,000.

Behind the audience room, a two-tier section contained classrooms, the rabbi's study, a chapel and the furnace room. A rear entrance on Leffingwell provided access to the lower area. Construction of the temple began in the spring of 1887, and on August 31, 1888, Temple Israel dedicated the new building, which cost about $75,000.

Temple Israel decided in 1907 to relocate to "Holy Corners" at Kingshighway and Washington. An examination of their current building revealed a structural problem

Temple Israel in 1960, HABS photo from Landmarks Association, St. Louis: Landmarks & Historic Districts*, 1988, p. 50*

with the great tower. A contractor removed the upper section, and left the remaining tower trunk angled to follow the slope of the side aisle roof. Some months later Temple Israel sold the site to the Union Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church. This church used the building for more than fifty years until the Mill Creek Authority acquired it by eminent domain for urban renewal in 1959. By then, many thought that the tower had never been constructed.

Shaare Emeth built St. Louis's last and largest 19th-century synagogue (or temple as the Reform movement preferred) in 1896. Two years earlier they had left their Pine Street Temple, inaugurated temporary worship at Second Baptist Church (then at Locust and Beaumont), and obtained a site costing $100,000 for their new temple at the southeast corner of Lindell and Vandeventer. Palatial mansions and wealthy churches lined Lindell at that time, During the previous decade, a number of wealthy Jewish families had built or purchased substantial residences on both Lindell and West Pine immediately west of Vandeventer. The Columbian Club, an exclusive retreat for Jewish businessmen, located its quarters diagonally across the street from the site of the new temple.

Shaare Emeth insisted on a contemporary aesthetic for their new temple. Its exterior must blend with religious structures built by other faiths and avoid references to Judaism. Shaare Emeth embraced the credo that they were part of the community, not separate from it.

Under the leadership of Marcus Bernheimer, the Shaare Emeth building committee invited five local architectural firms to compete for the new temple commission: William Levy; John Wees; Grable, Weber & Groves; Link, Rosenheim, & Ittner; and Charles Ramsey.

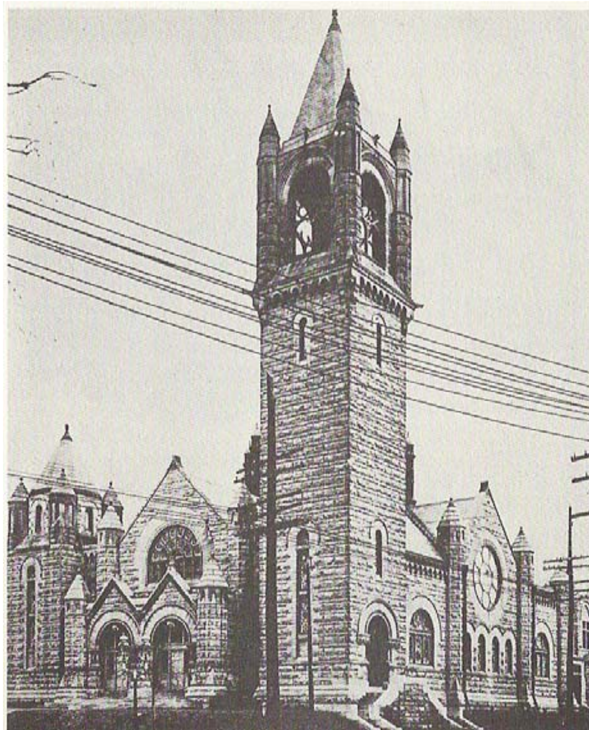
The Rosenheim family were active in the congregation, where they had many friends who expected Alfred Rosenheim to be given the temple architectural commission. When it became known that several committee members favored the temple plan by John Wees, Rosenheim's friends marshaled their forces and pressured the committee to select the Rosenheim plan. Some members even threatened to leave the congregation over this issue. To resolve the problem and promote tranquility, the building committee wisely chose Link, Rosenheim and Ittner. Public announcement of the commission came in August of 1895. Five months later the city issued a building permit for the project, and construction started immediately. On April 12 the cornerstone was laid, and dedication occurred on January 29, 1897.

The temple fronted on Lindell for 90 feet and extended along Vandeventer for 150 feet. Richardson Romanesque dictated its style of multiple towers, heavy massing, arched apertures, and rock-faced stone exterior. Several points of interest framed the temple's façade. On the west side, the great tower 25 feet square ascended to a height of 140 feet. At the center behind the entrance area, an octagon-shaped lantern and dome rose to a height of 78 feet. At the east end another tower, smaller in size and square in shape, attained a height of 65 feet. Located front and center, a double arch configuration enclosed the main entrance.

The main entrance and the side entrance in the west tower opened into a vestibule 78 feet long and 10 feet deep. Adorned with a marble floor and wainscoting, the vestibule accessed the audience room on the ground and balcony levels. Both towers housed steps leading up to a balcony located on the north wall of the audience room. Measuring 78 feet square at the audience level, the auditorium could seat one thousand people.

Round and rectangular windows on the east and west walls lighted the audience area. Below the windows sills white oak paneling dressed the walls. White oak pews were upholstered in a golden brown plush fabric that

matched the rich plush carpet. On the south wall the chancel featured a speaker's platform with oak pulpit. Behind the pulpit the Holy Ark contained the sacred scrolls. Large brass menorahs over eight feet high flanked the tabernacle. The organ and choir loft occupied the space above and in the rear of the pulpit area.



Shaare Emeth Temple, southeast corner Lindell & Vandeventer, 1895-1897, Link, Rosenheim & Ittner, from Ehrlich, p. 69

At a height of 26 feet, the four corners of the room were spanned by eight white oak arches which formed a base for the octagon-shaped lantern. It started 30 feet above the floor and terminated into an octagon-shaped dome 65 feet above the floor and 33 feet in diameter. Hanging from the center of the dome, a large brass chandelier glistened with many lights. Electric lights embellished each arch from top to bottom. Some 382 bulbs lighted the room at night. Near the top of the eight-panel lantern, twelve windows of golden brown stained glass gave the audience room a soft glow of natural light.

Immediately south of the auditorium, a lecture hall seated 200 people. Classrooms, reception area, office of the rabbi, furnace room, and the janitor's apartment divided the temple's remaining space.

Shaare Emeth congregation paid more than $100,000 for their new home. They enjoyed it for 34 years before moving to University City. Between 1931 and 1934 they built a new temple at the southeast corner of Delmar and Trinity. Alfred S. Alschuler, a Chicago architect, designed it in the Art Deco style. Less than a decade later, new owners of their former temple property demolished the building. In 1945 the International Order of Railroad Telegraphers built their headquarters on part of this lot.

In the nineteenth century the St. Louis Jewish community demanded architectural excellence for their synagogue designs regardless of financial constraints. All these temples possessed imaginative exteriors and unique audience rooms. They ran the gamut from modest to lavish. Each temple reacted to its predecessors. Sometimes they emulated but never copied. Other times they rejected, seeking a new expression. Collectively, they tell the story of the St. Louis Reform Jewish community – the practice of their faith, the participation in city activities, and the struggle for acceptance among the Gentiles. Great architecture does not happen by accident. It requires concentrated effort, discriminating taste, and ample funding. The St. Louis Jewish community willingly paid the price, and the results justified it.

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