

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-934 (Rev. 12-2015)

OMB Control No. 1024-0276 (Exp. 01/31/2019)

## TEMPLE AARON

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### 1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

**Historic Name:** Temple Aaron

**Other Name/Site Number:** 5LA.2179.12

**Street and Number** (if applicable): 407 South Maple Street

**City/Town:** Trinidad

**County:** Las Animas

**State:** Colorado

### 2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

**NHL Criteria:** 1, 4

**NHL Criteria Exceptions:** 1

**NHL Theme(s):**

- I. Peopling Places
  - 3. Migration from outside and within
  - 4. Community and neighborhood
- II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
  - 3. Religious Institutions
- III. Expressing Cultural Values
  - 5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

**Period(s) of Significance:** 1889–1972 (NHL Criterion 1, Exploration/Settlement, Religion, Social History)  
1889 (NHL Criterion 4, Architecture)

**Significant Person(s)** (only Criterion 2): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only Criterion 6): N/A

**Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder:** Charles William Bulger and Isaac Hamilton Rapp (Bulger & Rapp)

**Historic Contexts:** N/A

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement.** We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

**Estimated Burden Statement.** Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

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3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

\_\_\_ Yes

X No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: less than one

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places):

Datum if other than WGS84:

Latitude: 37.1664202 Longitude: -104.5028757

OR

UTM References:

Zone 13 Easting 544144.6015543625 Northing 4113415.593770584

3. Verbal Boundary Description: O T S Block 53, N 40.81 feet of S 83.3 feet Lot 4 – E 35 feet of center Lot 5 being 40.81 feet on Maple Street by 125 feet N 81.7 feet Lot 4 – E 35 feet of N part of Lot 5. (Las Animas Co. File # RPT - 36 01015 01)

4. Boundary Justification: All property currently owned by Temple Aaron of Colorado in association with construction and use of the building

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### 5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

#### INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Temple Aaron is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with the westward movement of Jewish immigrant individuals and families during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, representative of broad patterns of immigration and settlement in the United States. The property is significant in the areas of Exploration/Settlement, Religion, and Social History for the period 1889 to 1972. Although the congregation was established in Trinidad in 1883, Temple Aaron's period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1889 and, owing to its continuous use, ends 50 years from present in 1972. Temple Aaron illustrates aspects of the settlement and development of the American West by Jews from the East Coast and Midwest regions of the United States, and by Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe during critical decades in the nation's growth and industrial development. Temple Aaron also is the oldest synagogue building constructed in the state of Colorado that remains in continuous use for its original purpose by the same congregation, the oldest synagogue still in use in the Intermountain region, and the second-oldest synagogue, generally, still in use in its original location west of the Mississippi River. The property meets NHL Criteria Exception 1 for properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes.

Temple Aaron's national significance derives both from its architectural distinction and its broader association with immigration, settlement, and Jewish community. The building is architecturally distinct as an excellent example of the exotic Moorish Revival style popular among the eclectic revival styles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but at a modest scale appropriate to its small-town setting. Temple Aaron was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 28, 1973, as contributing to the Corazon de Trinidad Historic District (NRIS 73000482); however, the nomination did not address Temple Aaron's individual significance. Architecturally, Temple Aaron is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 4 as an excellent example of a synagogue designed in the exotic Moorish Revival style favored by many Reform Jewish congregations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a style first adopted by Reform congregations in Europe and then in the eastern United States.<sup>1</sup>

Character-defining features of this exoticized style include minarets, "onion" domes, and key-shaped or pointed-arched window and door openings. Working with the local architecture firm of Bulger & Rapp, this small-town German Reform congregation selected an Exotic Revival building stylistically typical of this period of Jewish settlement in the United States, but unlike any other building in Trinidad—signaling local tolerance of its distinctiveness as well as the foundational contributions of the Jewish community to Trinidad's settlement, while simultaneously and boldly announcing its difference. Constructed in 1889, Temple Aaron showcases the exotic Moorish Revival style as applied to a synagogue of modest size; its style is clearly expressed without ostentatious ornamentation, which most likely was constrained by the availability of materials and the budget of the relatively small congregation. Locally made red brick is laid in decorative sawtooth patterns in panels below windows on two sides, and the building's most noteworthy exterior ornaments are sheet-metal "onion" domes of different sizes that crown the interior stairwells. Renowned architect Isaac Hamilton Rapp continued to design significant public buildings in Trinidad in a variety of popular and exotic styles, even as he expanded his

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough history and appreciation of eclectic and exotic revival styles in American architecture, see Walter C. Kidney, *The Architecture of Choice: Eclecticism in America, 1880-1930* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1974). A detailed discussion of the Moorish Revival style of architecture as applied to synagogues is provided below in this nomination.

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practice into New Mexico; he is credited as the originator of the “Santa Fe style” of architecture.<sup>2</sup> Temple Aaron is the oldest Moorish Revival-style synagogue in continuous use by a single congregation in the American West.<sup>3</sup>

## NATIONAL PATTERNS OF HISTORY

### Jewish Migration in the American West

Jews have been in the Americas since the earliest waves of colonization began, and they first established a presence within the thirteen colonies of Great Britain in the middle of the seventeenth century; by 1700, it was estimated that between 200 and 300 Jews had arrived. While the earliest to arrive on these shores were Sephardic Jews of Portuguese and Spanish heritage—expelled from Spain in 1492 and having found a safe haven in the Netherlands and in Dutch colonies, twenty-three Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654—Ashkenazi Jews arriving from central and western European countries outnumbered Sephardim by 1720.<sup>4</sup> During the following decades and continuing through the founding of the United States, Jewish immigration increased and by the 1830s, Jews had become well-established throughout the nation, with more living in Charleston, South Carolina, than in any other U.S. city.<sup>5</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, Jewish immigration from Germany increased significantly in response to rising antisemitism and many restrictive laws prohibiting their education, livelihoods, and civic participation.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, in contrast, German Jews found opportunities to establish themselves as merchants and owners of small businesses, even finding

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<sup>2</sup> Carl D. Sheppard, *Creator of the Santa Fe Style: Isaac Hamilton Rapp, Architect* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 73-102.

<sup>3</sup> Other prominent Reform Jewish Moorish Revival synagogues east of the Mississippi include: New York’s Central Synagogue, designed by architect Henry Fernbach and built 1871-72 (listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 9, 1970, and designated a National Historic Landmark on May 15, 1975, see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75319356>); and Cincinnati’s Isaac M. Wise (Plum Street) Temple, built 1865-66 (listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 27, 1972, and designated a National Historic Landmark on May 15, 1975, see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/71989153>). These nominations did not reference significance in the history of American Judaism, and neither of these buildings were pioneer synagogues or located in a small town or rural setting, nor do they represent Jewish migration to the American West. The oldest standing synagogue in the United States is Touro Synagogue National Historic Site, designed by Peter Harrison and built in 1763; it was designated as a National Historic Site in 1946, immediately following World War II and the Holocaust, with National Register of Historic Places documentation accepted on July 7, 1986 and updated on February 2, 1989 (see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/41375084>). The property was initially originally listed administratively on October 15, 1966. The second oldest synagogue building and longest in continuous use in the United States is St. Thomas Synagogue—Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim, Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands, built in 1833, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 15, 1997, and designated a National Historic Landmark on September 25, 1997 (see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/131518967> and <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/131518853>).

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Atkin, et al, “United States of America,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, v. 20 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 302–404.

<sup>5</sup> In Charleston, Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (“Holy Congregation House of God”) was founded in 1749 and claims to be the earliest American Reform Judaism congregation, formally adopting its tenets in 1840, the same year in which their second synagogue was constructed in the Classical Revival style in the form of a Greek temple, replacing a Georgian building destroyed in the Great Charleston Fire of 1838. For more on this congregation and its synagogue building, see: <https://www.kkbe.org/ourhistory>, accessed on March 1, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the current usage of the term by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Associated Press (AP), and the *New York Times*, the author of this nomination will not utilize a capital “S” nor hyphenate this word; see the website of the ADL at: <https://www.adl.org/spelling>. The AP officially changed its style guide to reflect this spelling change on April 23, 2021, while the *New York Times* made its change official on August 16, 2021. See Matthew Kassel, “NYTimes Replaces ‘anti-Semitism’ with ‘antisemitism’ in Updated Style Guidance,” *Jewish Insider*, published on December 7, 2021, at: <https://jewishinsider.com/2021/12/ny-times-replaces-anti-semitism-with-antisemitism-in-updated-style-guidance/>. For a critique of this change in spelling, see Yair Rosenberg, “Removing a Hyphen Won’t Stop Anti-Semitism” in *The Atlantic*, published on December 10, 2021, at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/12/anti-semitism-new-york-times-style/620966/>.

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themselves welcome among the professional class; these Jews were instrumental in establishing Reform Judaism in this country. Just as other Americans and immigrants to the United States headed west in the nineteenth century to homestead or seek their fortunes outside of the crowded cities of the east coast, so too did American and immigrant Jews.

Canals, roads, and railroads opened land and new opportunities to the west of the Alleghany and Appalachian mountain ranges in the early nineteenth century, attracting migrants of all backgrounds, including Jews.<sup>7</sup> The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, in particular, was an important nexus of early Jewish settlement in the American West; as will be described later in this nomination, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, Ohio, played a critical role in the spread of American Reform Judaism in the years before the Civil War. The first documented Jew in Ohio was an English watchmaker named Joseph Jonas, who in 1817 settled in Cincinnati; Ohio's first congregation, B'nai Israel, was established there in 1824. Cleveland's first Jew, Daniel Maduro Peixotto, arrived in 1835 to teach at a medical college, and within four years an additional sixteen Jewish men and women arrived from Unsleben, Bavaria, and formed Cleveland's Israelitic Society. Before the Civil War, Jewish communities were established in other Ohio cities, including Columbus (1838), Dayton (1850), Hamilton (1855), Piqua (1858), and Portsmouth (1858). After the war and during the peak years of German Jewish immigration to the United States (1840-1880), Jewish communities were formed in other Ohio urban centers, including Youngstown, Canton, Akron, and Toledo.<sup>8</sup>

Jews traveled farther west and put down roots in other locations that are now considered to be the Midwest. In Cahokia, Illinois—a part of the Northwest Territory established by the 1783 Treaty of Paris—the first permanent Jewish settler was John Hays, grandson of an early Jewish settler in New York. Hays was a farmer and trader who served as the postmaster in Cahokia until he was appointed sheriff in 1798. The only other Jew documented in Illinois before its statehood in 1818 was a veteran of the War of 1812 named Joseph Phillips, who was named as the secretary of the Illinois Territory in 1817. Jews arrived in Chicago in the 1830s, as it was a major center of trade on the Great Lakes, but they quickly started settling in cities and towns statewide, often individually. Abraham Jonas, a relative of Joseph Jonas, moved from Cincinnati to Quincy, Illinois, in 1838; he was elected to the Illinois legislature in 1842, where he met Abraham Lincoln, and the two remained close friends and political allies until Lincoln's death. In the late 1840s, Captain Samuel Noah, the first Jewish graduate of West Point, arrived in Logan County and became a schoolteacher at Mount Pulaski. The oldest Jewish community in Illinois outside of Chicago was established in Peoria in 1847, where a Jewish benevolent society was first organized in 1852 and its first congregation, Anshai Emeth, was founded in 1859. In the state capital of Springfield, the first Jews to arrive were the Hammerslough brothers Julius, Edward, and Louis, and their sister Augusta, who emigrated from Germany; the three men established the Hammerslough Brothers Clothing Company in Springfield in 1855 with Augusta's husband, their brother-in-law Samuel Rosenwald. Julius Hammerslough became the first president of Springfield's first synagogue, B'rith Sholom, founded in 1858, and he, like Quincy's Abraham Jonas, was a close friend and confidante of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>9</sup> Samuel

<sup>7</sup> For a history of Jewish peddlers and their role in the growth and development of the United States, see Hasia R. Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Jane A. Avner, "Judaism," in Tarunjit Singh Butalia and Dianne P. Small, eds., *Religion in Ohio: Profiles of Faith Communities* (Athens, Ohio: The Ohio University Press, 2004), 271-285; also Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> For more on President Abraham Lincoln's interests in and relationships with Jews, including details of his long friendships with Jonas and Hammerslough, see Isaac Markens, "Lincoln and the Jews," *American Jewish Historical Society Journal* 17 (1909), available at: [https://web.stevens.edu/golem/ilevine/history/lincoln\\_jews.pdf](https://web.stevens.edu/golem/ilevine/history/lincoln_jews.pdf), accessed on March 23, 2021; see also Lenny Picker, "Abraham Lincoln's Greatest Gift to the Jews," *Forward* (February 14, 2021), available at: <https://forward.com/culture/217863/abraham-lincolns-greatest-gift-to-the-jews/>, accessed on March 23, 2021; and Jonathan D. Sarna and Benjamin Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews: A History* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015).

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Rosenwald's son Julius—born in Springfield in 1862 in a house one block from Lincoln's—followed his father and uncles into the clothing business and in 1895 joined Sears, Roebuck and Company in Chicago, eventually making it the dominant merchandiser in the nation through its mail-order business. Julius Rosenwald later established himself as a major philanthropist, funding Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry and large affordable apartment complexes, and, perhaps most notably, public schools for Black children throughout the American South that now are known as "Rosenwald schools." Through his friendship with Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald served on the board of the Tuskegee Institute until his death. Other significant Jewish communities established in Illinois before the twentieth century include Urbana (1854), Aurora (1860), Champaign (1861), Cairo (1863), Moline (1866), Bloomington (1875), East St. Louis (1888), Granite City (1891), Centralia (1894), and Waukegan (1897).<sup>10</sup>

With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the federal government encouraged settlement of its new western territory, and Jews quickly headed west of the Mississippi River, following opportunities in trade and industry along transportation routes and establishing farms. While a non-Jewish land speculator, William Robinson, first proposed a mass movement of European Jews to settle in Missouri and Iowa in 1819, the first documented Jew arriving to Iowa was a Frenchman named Alexandre Levi, who came to Dubuque in 1833 by way of the port city of New Orleans; in Iowa, Levi assisted in the development of lead mines established there by another Frenchman, Julien Dubuque, and eventually was elected as that new mining town's justice of the peace in 1846. German and Polish Jews soon followed, settling in Dubuque, Des Moines, Davenport, Burlington, and Keokuk, where they opened stores that sold clothing, shoes, hats, dry goods and hardware, and equipment for mining and farming; others became teachers, lawyers, and doctors. The first organized Jewish congregation in Iowa was formed in 1855 in Keokuk under the name Benevolent Children of Israel, and it established a Jewish cemetery; four years later, the society incorporated as Congregation B'nai Israel and built the first synagogue in Iowa in 1877. By 1878, approximately 1,000 Jews lived in Iowa, and Keokuk quickly developed into one of the largest Jewish urban centers in the Midwest; dozens of Jewish families were reported to live in Keokuk in 1855, and "for a very brief period this Jewish community may even have outnumbered Chicago."<sup>11</sup> The brothers Henry and Samuel Jaffa—among the first Jews to settle in Trinidad, Colorado, and establish Temple Aaron—arrived there from Keokuk, Iowa.<sup>12</sup> Other Jewish communities and congregations were formed throughout the 1870s and 1880s in Sioux City, Iowa City, Council Bluffs, and Mason City, and by the turn of the twentieth century, 3,000 Jews made their homes in Iowa.<sup>13</sup>

The first known Jewish settler in Missouri was Ezekiel (Bloch) Block, an immigrant from Schwihau, Bohemia, who left Richmond, Virginia, for upper Louisiana shortly before its cession to the United States; some accounts

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<sup>10</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 23-25, 158, 301-302; and Skolnik and Berenbaum, eds., *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985, Vol II: The Germanic Period* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), especially Chapter 4, "Jews in the Middle West, Prairie States, and Far West." For quotation on Keokuk's Jewish population exceeding that of Chicago, see this chapter's section on Iowa; unpaginated version available on Google Books, at: <https://books.google.com/books?id=S5lwDwAAQBAJ>.

<sup>12</sup> "Interview with Sol. Jaffa, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Taken by A.K. Richeson, Trinidad, Colorado. December 23, 1933," Federal Civil Works Administration's Pioneer Interviews Collection, Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado, Denver. Transcript available at: <https://www.historycolorado.org/oral-histories>, File 359-8.

<sup>13</sup> Just seventy-five years earlier, the Jewish population of the entire United States was estimated to be 2,000-4,000. See "Appendix: American Jewish Population Estimates, 1660-2000" in Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 375; also Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1985), 31, cited in Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 12; Rabbi Simon Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa* (Des Moines: Koch Brothers Printing Company, 1904), available at: <https://archive.org/details/jewsofiowa00glaz>; and Skolnik and Berenbaum, eds., *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

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state that he owned slaves and brought them with him, first to the New Madrid district, before he finally settled in 1802 at Giboney Creek, south of Sainte Genevieve. After Ezekiel Block, at least twenty-three other members of his family arrived and settled in Missouri towns including Troy, Perryville, Cape Girardeau, Louisiana, and, eventually, St. Louis; one young woman from the Block family, Louisa, married Abraham Jonas from Illinois, and another Block cousin also married a Jonas.<sup>14</sup> The first Jewish family to live in St. Louis was named Philipson, and a Block married into that family, as well. Joseph Philipson, a merchant, had arrived in St. Louis from Philadelphia and opened a general store in December 1807, and his brother Jacob followed in 1808 and also opened a store; the two Philipson brothers were the only Jews known to live in St. Louis until 1816.<sup>15</sup> By 1836, however, the city of St. Louis had enough Jews to gather a *minyán* (a twice-daily prayer gathering of at least ten adult Jews who, during that time, exclusively would have been men) and although by 1840 there still were less than one hundred Jews there, a Jewish cemetery was established that year and the United Hebrew Congregation—the city’s first congregation and the first established to the west of the Mississippi River—by 1841; the congregation began as an Orthodox synagogue, but joined the Union of American Congregations and the Reform movement in 1878. German Jews began immigrating in significant numbers between 1848 and 1853, such that the Jewish population of St. Louis grew to nearly 700, and an influx of Jews arrived and established congregations in St. Joseph in 1860 and in Kansas City in 1870.<sup>16</sup> In 1879, Congregation Beth El was established in Jefferson City, Missouri’s capital, and its small Gothic Revival-styled brick synagogue—the oldest to the west of the Mississippi River, six years older than Temple Aaron in Trinidad—was constructed there in 1883.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most significant Jewish resident in St. Louis and all of Missouri in the second half of the nineteenth century was Isidor (Busch) Bush, whose leadership within the national Jewish service organization of B’nai B’rith, founded in New York City in 1843, directly helped to construct Temple Aaron in Trinidad, Colorado, in 1889.<sup>18</sup> Bush (1822-1898) was born in Prague and his family relocated to Vienna, where his father’s printing business, Von Schmid & Bush, grew to become the largest Hebrew publisher in the world. Isidor Bush immigrated to New York City in 1849 and there he briefly published the first Jewish weekly in the United States, *Israel’s Herald*, closing it after just twelve issues, before he moved on to St. Louis later the same year. Bush opened a grocery store and then a hardware store in St. Louis, before establishing a 100-acre grape farm in Bushberg, Jefferson County, in 1851, and then a wine and liquor business, Isidor Bush & Company, in 1870. He also was involved in banking and in civic and cultural life in St. Louis, elected to serve as an alderman for the First Ward in 1866, serving on the Board of Education from 1881 to 1884, and eventually rising to the

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<sup>14</sup> Mary L. Kwas, “Two Generations of the Abraham and Fanny Block Family: Internal Migration, Economics, Family, and the Jewish Frontier,” *Southern Jewish History: The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 12 (2009), 42-44; on these pages, Kwas writes, “Historian Isidor Bush considers the Block family (probably erroneously in terms of priority) the ‘first and most numerous Jewish family’ to settle west of the Mississippi River. Early family members lived in Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, and Texas, and many emigrated directly from Bohemia without settling first in the East.” This dilemma of the Block family being “first” to settle in Missouri is further explained in her footnotes 8, 9, 12 and 13 on pages 101-102. On the specific locations of Ezekiel Block’s 1802 settlement in Missouri, see page 38 of Louis Houck, ed., *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, v. II (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1909); available at:

[https://archive.org/stream/spanishregimeinm02houc/spanishregimeinm02houc\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/spanishregimeinm02houc/spanishregimeinm02houc_djvu.txt).

<sup>15</sup> Donald Makovsky, “Joseph, Jacob, and Simon Philipson: The First Jewish Settlers in St. Louis, 1807-1858,” *Western States Jewish History* 45, no. 1 (2012), 55-72.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Erlich, “Origins of the Jewish Community of St. Louis,” *American Jewish History* 77: 4 (June 1988), 507-529; Walter Erlich, “The First Jews of St. Louis,” *Missouri Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (October 1988); Walter Erlich, *Zion in the Valley: The Jewish Community of St. Louis* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997); Skolnik and Berenbaum, eds., *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

<sup>17</sup> For the history of Temple Beth El in Jefferson City, Missouri, see the congregation’s website at: <https://templebethel-jc.org/history/>, accessed Sep 17, 2017. This building will be described further below in the discussion of comparable properties.

<sup>18</sup> The history of the B’nai B’rith International is available at: <https://www.bnaibrith.org/175th.html>.

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leadership role of vice president of the Missouri Historical Society. Bush first became involved in the Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith (I.O.B.B.) organization when he briefly lived in New York, joining its Zion Lodge #2, and he helped to organize the Missouri Lodge #22 in St. Louis, which also was the first lodge of the I.O.B.B. in the Mississippi Valley. He then helped found the B'nai B'rith Eben Ezra Lodge #47, and he remained a member there until his death. Bush was seated on the Board of Commissioners of the I.O.B.B. District Grand Lodge #2 when it selected a site for the organization's first sponsored orphan's home in 1863. Most significantly for Temple Aaron, the subject of this nomination, Bush served as the Chairman of the Endowment Fund Board of Trustees of the I.O.B.B. District Grand Lodge #2 when it provided a loan of \$5,000 to Congregation Aaron in June 1889 to build its synagogue in Trinidad, Colorado; and another loan of \$4,000 in December 1896.<sup>19</sup>

Several Jewish philanthropic and benevolent aid societies were established in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, either for the purposes of helping eastern European and Russian Jews escape rampant antisemitism and *pogroms* (mob violence against Jews) in Jewish *ghettos* (walled-in or segregated urban neighborhoods) and *shtetls* (villages), or to assist these newly-arrived Jews in distributing themselves throughout the nation and away from the largest cities on the east coast, where many lived in tenements and slums.<sup>20</sup> The Chicago-based Jewish Agriculturalists' Aid Society (JAAS), established in 1888 by Rabbi Abraham R. Levy of the Orthodox Congregation B'nai Abraham, sought to transform poor urban peddlers and factory or sweatshop workers into independent farmers and landowners through its loan programs.<sup>21</sup> Historian Sanford Rikoon has stated, "[T]he German Jewish sponsors of the JAAS desired to see Russian Jewish immigrants assimilated into American society and acculturated to dominant American values and character. Removal to farms would not only turn immigrants into useful citizens, it would also aid in their

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<sup>19</sup> Burton Boxerman, "Remembering Isidor Bush: Pioneer St. Louis Jewish Community Leader, Publisher, Patriot," *Western States Jewish History* 29, no. 3 (Apr 1997); Siegmur Muehl, "Isidor Bush and the Bushberg Vineyards of Jefferson County," *Missouri Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (Oct 1999): 42-58. As will be described elsewhere in this nomination, Isidor Bush is named on deed records as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund of District Grand Lodge #2 of the I.O.B.B. of St. Louis, Missouri, which loaned the Congregation Aaron \$5,000 "for the use and benefit of said Congregation in constructing and furnishing a temple upon its property in the City of Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado." This trust deed is signed by Samuel Jaffa, President of Congregation Aaron on June 19, 1889; recorded in Book 61, pages 238-243. A second deed of trust, signed on December 8, 1896, signed by Jaffa and several others, states: "Resolved that Congregation Aaron borrow from Isidor Bush, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund of District Grand Lodge No. 2, I.O.B.B. of the City of St. Louis, State of Missouri, for the use and benefit of said Congregation Aaron," although the document does not detail to what purposes the borrowed sum of \$4,000 will be put; recorded in Book 98, pages 78-82. Copies of these documents are located at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado.

<sup>20</sup> Historians have noted that during this time the word "ghetto" was used rhetorically, but it is not historically accurate to the situation in nineteenth-century eastern Europe nor in the United States. Etymologists and historians have postulated that the use of the term originated with an edict of the Venetian Republic on March 29, 1516, which ordered that all Jews in Venice be restricted to a small island on the city's northern edge. Historian Daniel B. Schwartz has written that all Christian residents of this island were made to leave their homes, and all outward-facing windows and doors were bricked over; two gates were erected that were locked at sunset each night: "[T]he establishment of an enforced and exclusive residential space for the Jews of Venice was a historical beginning in at least one crucial respect. It marked the start of a fateful link between the idea of segregation and a particular word: 'ghetto.'" Schwartz states that this particular Venetian island already was known before 1516 as the *Ghetto Nuovo* (New Ghetto), with the word "ghetto" deriving from the Venetian verb *gettare* (to throw, or to cast), in reference to the copper foundry that once had been there. The French Army of Italy, led by General Napoléon Bonaparte, forced the dissolution of the Venetian Republic on May 12, 1797, and ended the separation of the Jewish *ghetto* from the rest of the city of Venice on July 11, 1797, after 281 years of enclosure and restriction of Jewish mobility. See Daniel B. Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), especially 1-7 and 9-48.

<sup>21</sup> J. Sanford Rikoon, "The Jewish Agriculturalists' Aid Society of America: Philanthropy, Ethnicity, and Agriculture in the Heartland," *Agricultural History* 72, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 1-32; and R. Douglas Hurt, *The Big Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 38-39.

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Americanization.”<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Levy and the JAAS board members also believed that the placement of honest, hard-working Jews would help combat the spread of antisemitism in rural America, where few people knew Jews. According to historian Sanford Rikoon, Chicago’s JAAS assisted 1,748 Jews to establish 426 farms throughout the Midwest and Great Plains states—an average of 4 people per farm—between 1888 and 1908; its years of greatest placement were 1900-1908, when the society made loans to 353 applicants. The most popular state for Jewish farmers and homesteaders was North Dakota, which received 167 families, nearly 40% of all JAAS placements; the second-most popular state was Michigan, to the east of Chicago, to which 23% of JAAS loan recipients moved. Among the seventeen states in which the 426 farms were settled by JAAS borrowers, the least-popular were Oklahoma, Ohio, and Florida with just one farm each, and Kentucky and Colorado, each with just two farms established between 1906 and 1908.<sup>23</sup>

Three years after Rabbi Levy founded the JAAS in Chicago, the Baron de Hirsch Fund, established in 1891 in New York City, gave \$2.4 million to create trade schools and agricultural “colonies” through its Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (JAIAS), which by 1912 had placed over 3,400 Jews on midwestern farms.<sup>24</sup> In 1901, the JAIAS established the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), which focused on assisting eastern European Jewish immigrants in their safe transport to the United States and their subsequent economic and cultural integration. IRO field agents sought Jews in Russia, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland and sent applications for review and approval by the New York bureau, which tried to match applicants with potential employment opportunities in communities around the country. The IRO headquarters worked with local B’nai B’rith lodges throughout the American South and West to place Jewish immigrants in jobs in smaller cities and towns, often placing advertisements in Yiddish newspapers. Between 1901 and its closing in 1917, the IRO sent 2,791 Jews to 43 different cities and towns in Colorado, the majority of which settled in Denver. According to historian John Livingston, 500 out of 619 Jews sent to Colorado between 1903 and 1905 went to Denver (81%), and in 1907—the single year in which both Denver and the state of Colorado received their highest number of IRO immigrants—351 out of 383 (92%) were settled in Denver.<sup>25</sup>

Responding to a significant increase in antisemitic activities in these eastern European countries and in the major urban centers along the east coast—where Jews would first arrive and often remain—the IRO established the Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau (JIIB) in 1907, with additional funds of \$500,000 (almost \$14 million today) from German Jewish financier and philanthropist Jacob Schiff. The JIIB executed what it called “the Galveston Plan,” today more commonly known as “the Galveston Movement,” bringing 8,407 eastern European Jews to the port city of Galveston, Texas, between 1907 and 1914, when the program ended. Galveston was selected because of its established shipping connections to Germany, from which the immigrants sailed, and because of its railroad connections to St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, and beyond. On the ground in Galveston, the immigrants were welcomed by Rabbi Henry Cohen of the local Reform synagogue B’nai Israel, whose volunteers gave the tired arrivals a bath and a kosher meal before sending them off on the same day with a train ticket to their new hometowns.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rikoon, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 8; Hurt, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Rikoon, 2-5.

<sup>25</sup> John Livingston, “The Industrial Removal Office, the Galveston Project, and the Denver Jewish Community,” *American Jewish History* 68, no. 4 (June 1979), 443-444, 456.

<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Henry Cohen, “The Galveston Immigration Movement,” *The Federation Review* (March 1908), 1; cited in Ronald Alan Axelrod, “Rabbi Henry Cohen and the Galveston Immigration Movement, 1907-1914,” unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Texas at Austin (1974), 6; Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 1-4; and Bryan Edward Stone, “The Galveston Diaspora: A Statistical View of Jewish Immigration through Texas, 1907-1913,” *Southern Jewish History: The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 21 (2018), 121-176. Marinbach claims a total of 9,332 immigrants were processed through Galveston, but Stone’s more recent analysis provides a correction.

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According to historian Bryan Edward Stone, the Galveston Movement settled its participants in 235 cities scattered over 32 states, with Kansas City, Missouri, being the most common destination; the most frequently counted occupations among the 133 listed were men’s tailor, clerk, and housewife.<sup>27</sup> The JIIB sent 7,886 immigrants to states in which it had strong local connections, as follows:

Arkansas	155 (2% of total)	Missouri	1,099 (13%)
Colorado	284 (3%)	Mississippi	35 (<1%)
Illinois	283 (3%)	Nebraska	641 (8%)
Iowa	1,225 (15%)	North Dakota	35 (<1%)
Kansas	208 (2%)	Oklahoma	245 (3%)
Louisiana	296 (4%)	Tennessee	191 (2%)
Minnesota	997 (12%)	Texas	2,134 (26%)
		Wisconsin	48 (1%)

An additional 521 immigrants were placed in states outside of the bureau’s primary scope.<sup>28</sup> The majority of all individuals settled were settled as unskilled laborers (765), while 551 were assigned jobs as men’s tailors, 537 as clerks, 463 as shoemakers, and 317 as carpenters; other occupations included butchers, dressmakers, locksmiths, tanners, blacksmiths, painters, teachers, bookbinders, watchmakers, glaziers, drivers, and bakers; weekly salaries typically ranged between nine and fifteen dollars.<sup>29</sup> Stone’s analysis of the collected data offers an important correction to the work published by historians in the 1970s and 1980s, who had suggested that among the 284 Galveston Plan participants relocated to Colorado by the JIIB, none were sent to Trinidad.<sup>30</sup> Ten cities in Colorado received 284 immigrants between 1907 and 1913 as follows, according to Stone.<sup>31</sup>

Boulder	1	La Junta	1
Colorado Springs	38	Monte Vista	2
Cripple Creek	8	Pueblo	87
Denver	133	Trinidad	2
Del Norte	1	Victor	7

Although the B’nai B’rith Lodge No. 293 in Trinidad, which gathered at Temple Aaron, regularly made donations to the IRO and JIIB, they likely opted not to receive many Galveston Plan participants because the community no longer needed additional laborers, whether skilled or unskilled.<sup>32</sup> Trinidad, which had quickly blossomed into a thriving industrial and commercial nexus in Colorado during the nineteenth century, had reached its zenith and was heading toward a decline by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Stone, “Galveston Diaspora,” 123.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 132. Those other states were California (349 people, or 4% of total), Michigan (26), Georgia (25), Ohio (19), Oregon (19), Utah (19), Kentucky (17), Washington (15) Arizona (8), Alabama (6), Connecticut (5), New York (4), Indiana (2), Massachusetts (2), New Mexico (2), Nevada (2), and Rhode Island (1), each receiving less than 1% of the total number of participants.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 143; Axelrod, 16-20.

<sup>30</sup> Livingston, 434-458; Marinbach, 190-191.

<sup>31</sup> Stone, 134-138 and 151.

<sup>32</sup> In June 2019, the author of this nomination found several boxes in the Temple Aaron basement that contained meeting minutes and accounting books and ledgers of the B’nai B’rith lodge, the Hebrew school children, and the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society and Sisterhood, ranging from the 1890s through the 1940s. These books detail not only charitable donations to the IRO, the JIIB, and the national offices of the B’nai B’rith and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations—the American Reform movement established by Cincinnati rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in 1873, which today is the Union for Reform Judaism—but also to local, state, and national charities, including those of Christian welfare organizations and churches.

<sup>33</sup> William Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado’s Jewish Women: The Domestic Basis of Community, 1889-1910,” *Western States Jewish*

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### Temple Aaron and the Jews of Trinidad, Colorado

The 1871 *Trinidad Directory* provides a lyrical description of the relatively young city:

The town of Trinidad is situated near the base of a spur of the Rocky Mountains, on the old emigrant route from the States to Santa Fe, and a few miles from Raton Peak—a well known landmark—which gives its name to the defile or pass that for many years has been the gate-way for the immense traffic of New Mexico, and through which are still carried all government supplies for distribution at the various military posts in that Territory, and a part of Arizona. The situation of the town is picturesque, lying as it does on the banks for the Purgatoire or Las Animas river, a stream, whose valley of about 150 miles in length, embraces some of the most fertile lands in Colorado. The surrounding hills, covered with the piñon and sabina, relieving somewhat the hard gray aspect of the bold cliffs beyond, present attractions of a superior order. Inexhaustible beds of coal underlie the town, and outcrops of the same are visible in all the neighboring ravines. Copper and iron ores have been discovered in the vicinity, and a proper development of the mineral resources of the mountains contiguous would doubtless insure [sic] rich returns to the enterprising capitalists, and the adjacent plain to the eastward, covered with nutritious grasses, affords excellent pasturage for cattle and sheep, a source of no inconsiderable profit to persons engaged in the stock business. The geographic position of Trinidad gives it a prominence that must sooner or later make it the commercial centre of a large district. The town, with a population of 1,000, with its forty stores and shops, with its numberless and slow-jogging freight wagons, with its daily and tri-weekly mail coaches, and the rapidly increasing travel, already attracts attention abroad, and gives promise of a prosperous future. It may safely be said that the six or eight persons who, at the commencement of the last decade, erected a cluster of log shanties where the present town site is, had no idea of the real significance of their feeble invasion of the wilderness.<sup>34</sup>

Trinidad's history derives from the establishment of the trade route known as the Santa Fe Trail, which stretched westward from Franklin, Missouri, diagonally across Kansas and into southeastern Colorado, ending in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A true "frontier town" of early nineteenth-century Euro-American exploration and settlement in the American West, Trinidad was established due to trade that began in 1821 along the Santa Fe Trail Mountain Branch, quickly followed by the coal, coke, iron, brick, stone quarrying, and smelting industries as well as cattle ranching—all supported by the development of railroads. The town sits within the 1843 Vigil and St. Vrain or Las Animas Mexican land grant; its main commercial streets and several adobe plazas developed initially around 1861.<sup>35</sup> In 1867, Jewish merchant Abraham Jacobs extended the Denver-Pueblo stage route to Trinidad, and Richard Lacey "Uncle Dick" Wootton created the Raton Pass Toll Gate, spurring Trinidad's development. The city was incorporated in 1876, just a few months before Colorado's statehood, and in 1878 the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railway reached Trinidad; the Denver & Rio Grande Railway, incorporated in 1870, arrived at the massive coke ovens of El Moro, four miles east of Trinidad, in 1876, finally reaching Trinidad in 1887.

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*History* 28, no. 2 (January 1996), 109-111.

<sup>34</sup> "Trinidad" in the 1871 *Trinidad Directory*, 397; available on the website of the City of Trinidad's Carnegie Library "History Room" at: <https://www.trinidad.co.gov/history-room>, accessed February 18, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> William Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape, 1860-1940* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 207-213. Before the commonly recognized date of 1821 for this route, Spanish and French colonizers and traders had traveled throughout the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, perhaps beginning with Coronado as early as 1541; see H. Bailey Carroll, "Santa Fe Trail," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/santa-fe-trail>, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

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By the late 1860s, Trinidad was home to approximately 1,200 people of diverse ethnic and geographic origins, including Mexico, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, and Syria. Between 1860 and 1871, approximately eight young Jewish men from Hanover, Bavaria, Bohemia, and Alsace-Lorraine settled in Trinidad.<sup>36</sup> Trinidad's Jewish settlers benefited from religious tolerance and had the foresight and business acumen to capitalize on the need for suppliers and investment, emerging as pillars in the community.<sup>37</sup> Temple Aaron's construction in 1889 demonstrated the acceptance, integration, and economic and civic leadership of Trinidad's Jews.

### The First Jews of Trinidad

The first Jews to establish themselves in Trinidad were merchants and traders attracted by the industrial and commercial possibilities of the town, which was serviced by established transportation routes. Abraham Jacobs—who in the spring of 1867 purchased the stagecoach line between Denver and Pueblo and extended it to Trinidad, where it joined the Barlow and Sanderson Route running along the Arkansas River to Santa Fe—was most certainly Jewish, but it is not confirmed that he ever resided in Trinidad, despite clearly recognizing the town's potential significance for mining and trade.<sup>38</sup> Historian Allen duPont Breck lists Maurice Wise as “the first [Jewish] resident of whom we have certain knowledge.”<sup>39</sup> Wise arrived in Trinidad in 1867, where he opened a small general store on Main Street, between B and C streets, in a one-story adobe building.<sup>40</sup> Breck states that Wise was born in 1836 in Bohemia (the western half of what is known today as the Czech Republic), and that Wise maintained his store there for approximately four years, when his clerk, another Bohemian Jew named Isaac Levy, took over the business in 1871. Breck describes the adobe building as a “flat-roofed store on a muddy street, with its sign advertising ‘Dry Goods, Boots and Shoes, Hardware, Groceries and Liquors.’”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Department of History Series, *The West in American History* 1 (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1961), 49, 141.

<sup>37</sup> William Toll, “The Jewish Merchant and Civic Order in the Urban West,” in Ava F. Kahn, ed., *Jewish Life in the American West* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2002), 83. “By the 1870s, the Main Streets of Trinidad, Colorado; Prescott, Arizona; Virginia City, Nevada; Albany, Oregon; and Tacoma, Washington, all held clusters of Jewish stores selling the usual dry goods and provision, while other Jews offered services as tailors, barbers, watchmakers, and saloon keepers.”

<sup>38</sup> Although Abraham Jacobs purchased the stagecoach line and extended it to Trinidad, he likely never resided in the town, as he established his mercantile business ventures with partner Jacob Wisebart in Denver and in Central City, Colorado Territory, beginning in 1859. Jacobs married one of Wisebart's sisters—Frances, a schoolteacher in Cincinnati—in 1863, bringing her to Colorado. Frances Wisebart Jacobs later was called “the Mother of Charities” in Denver, as she was the founding president of its Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society chapter (1872, now known as the Jewish Family Service of Colorado), a founding member of the nonsectarian Denver Ladies' Relief Society (1874), the founder of the city's first free kindergarten at the Stanley Public School (1885), and the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives in Denver (1899); she also helped to establish the Charity Organization Society with other religious leaders in 1887, which became the national organization Community Chest in 1922, and which today is the United Way network of fundraising organizations. For more on Frances Wisebart Jacobs, see Jeanne Varnell, *Women of Consequence: The Colorado Women's Hall of Fame* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Press, 1999), 38-42.

<sup>39</sup> Allen duPont Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1960), 49. Breck states that the Jewish identity of Abraham Jacobs cannot be confirmed, therefore considering Isaac Wise as Trinidad's first Jewish resident.

<sup>40</sup> The building is no longer extant. Breck specifically states that Wise's store was located in a one-story adobe building, between B and C streets, but he gives no further specific information. The earliest available city directory for Trinidad, published in 1871, lists “Wise, Maurice, dealer in general merchandise, etc. Main, bet. B and C” on page 403. There is no listing for Abraham Jacobs. Page 401 lists “Jaffa H.N. (Biernbaum & Co.), dealer in general merchandise, Main, bet. B and C,” without any further information as to the location or construction type of that store building. By the time of publication of the November 1883 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Trinidad, all of the streets named with letters had been renamed, and most of the small adobe buildings constructed decades earlier had been wrapped or replaced with brick or frame structures; see: [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01084\\_001/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01084_001/). The digitized city directories for Trinidad are available on the website of the City of Trinidad's Carnegie Library “History Room” at: <https://www.trinidad.co.gov/history-room>.

<sup>41</sup> Breck, 49. In 1889, Isaac Levy was listed on the cornerstone of Temple Aaron as a founding trustee of the congregation.

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The Trinidad census of 1870 does not list the religious affiliations of its counted residents, but Breck infers from the listed surnames that Wise, Levy, and Levy's wife, listed as Mary, were the only Jews in Trinidad in 1870.<sup>42</sup>

Henry Biernbaum opened a general merchandise store on Trinidad's Main Street shortly thereafter, but the precise date of the store's opening is not known. Although his birthdate is not given, the *History of New Mexico, Its Resources and People* states that Biernbaum was born in Hesse-Kassel, Germany, emigrated to the United States in 1850, and came to New Mexico in 1851, where he found employment in Santa Fe as a clerk at Spiegelberg Brothers' Mercantile; while the Spiegelberg brothers also were German Jews, it is not known if there is a connection to Biernbaum, either through his earliest experiences on the east coast, or stretching all the way back to Hesse-Kassel. Henry Biernbaum had a brother, Marcus, who had entered into the mercantile business in Philadelphia, and before too long, Henry left the Spiegelbergs to open the Biernbaums' trading company in New Mexico. In their first three or four years of operation, the Biernbaum brothers traded between Philadelphia and San Juan, New Mexico and Pueblo, Colorado, before Henry moved on to San Miguel for another three or four years; Henry Biernbaum then settled in Mora, New Mexico, for ten years, where he successfully operated the H. Biernbaum Mercantile Company, and where he also bought a cattle ranch. In 1863 Henry Biernbaum married Juanita Leyva of Mora, with whom he had four children—Esteban, Henry, Mary, and Isabelle—and eventually he was elected to serve one term as the treasurer of Mora County. His eldest son Esteban Biernbaum, born in 1864, later became a Mora County probate judge and the chairman of the board of county commissioners. Henry Biernbaum always had maintained strong connections to Philadelphia through his mercantile business with his brother Marcus, which they sold in 1888, and to where Henry subsequently returned in his retirement, living there until his death in 1913.<sup>43</sup> It was in Philadelphia that the Biernbaums had connected with two German friends, Henry and Solomon Jaffa, and invited them to help manage the Biernbaum stores in the West.<sup>44</sup> The Jaffas became significant cultural and civic leaders in Trinidad, whose imprints on the town still are felt today.

In 1862, brothers Henry and Samuel Jaffa emigrated from Hesse-Kassel, Germany, to the United States and quickly settled in the growing Jewish community in Keokuk, Iowa; their younger brother Solomon ("Sol")

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. As described by Breck, an "O. Levy," perhaps mistakenly written instead of "I. Levy," was listed as a 32-year-old originally from Bohemia, with a personal worth of \$1,500, occupation "merchant," and living with Bohemian "Mary Levy," a 22-year-old "housekeeper" with no personal wealth, in house number 28. In house number 29, the resident was listed as "Maurice Wise," a 34-year-old merchant originally from Bohemia, with \$6,000 in real estate holdings, and \$12,000 of personal wealth. Some later histories of Jews in Trinidad state that Maurice Wise was joined in business in Trinidad by "his brother, Isaac," which may suggest that Isaac Levy was his brother-in-law, married to Wise's sister, but this has not been confirmed. The 1871 Trinidad City Directory, p. 403, lists only a Maurice Wise and not an Isaac Wise; on p. 401 it lists a "J. Levy, clerk, with Maurice Wise," assumed to be a typographical error for "I." or "Isaac" Levy; no street address is given for Levy. Trinidad city directories are available on the website of the City of Trinidad's Carnegie Public Library History Room at: <https://www.trinidad.co.gov/history-room>. U.S. Census takers began asking questions about religious organizations starting in 1850, and this data continued to be collected in the subsequent censuses in 1860, 1870; these questions were expanded in 1880 and continued in 1890 and 1900. After the U.S. Census Bureau was established as a permanent government agency in 1902, the collection of data on religious bodies was separated from other demographic data; the Census of Religious Bodies was created by statute in 1906, to be taken every 10 years. For an explanation of the historic collection of religious affiliation in the United States census, see "A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census" on the Pew Research Center website, at: <https://www.pewforum.org/2010/01/26/a-brief-history-of-religion-and-the-u-s-census/>. For the current iteration of the Religion Census, which originated in 1952, see: <http://usreligioncensus.org>.

<sup>43</sup> *History of New Mexico, Its Resources and People*, Vol. II (Los Angeles: Pacific States Publishing Co., 1907), 651-652.

<sup>44</sup> The 1871 Trinidad Directory lists "Wise, Maurice, dealer in general merchandise, etc., Main, bet. B and C," "Biernbaum, H. & Co., dealers in general merchandise, Main, bet. B and C," and "Jaffa H. N. (Biernbaum & Co.), dealer in general merchandise, Main, bet. B and C," while the subsequent directory published in 1888 features a small horizontal band at the top of each page of the residential listings that advertises "Mansbach Bros., 206 West Main St., The Leading One Price Dry Goods Merchants."

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joined them in Keokuk in 1865.<sup>45</sup> The following year, Samuel relocated east to Philadelphia to be married, and both Henry and Sol followed shortly thereafter. In 1867, Henry Jaffa was working for the Philadelphia mercantile firm, H. Biernbaum and Company, then expanding into Mora, as referenced above; Marcus Biernbaum led the Philadelphia business, while his brother Henry managed operations in Mora. The Biernbaum brothers, thinking to open a store in Trinidad, Colorado, invited their employee Henry Jaffa to come to Mora with his brother Sol in 1868; in less than two years, H. Biernbaum and Company sold the Mora store and purchased another in Las Vegas, New Mexico, to which they sent the Jaffa brothers.<sup>46</sup> In 1871, Sol Jaffa left the Biernbaum business to work for Inez Perea, a woman with a large sheep ranch and mercantile business in Las Vegas. By this time, the Jaffa brothers had learned a great deal about the mercantile business and decided to leave Las Vegas and go into business for themselves in Trinidad. Henry arrived first to work at the Biernbaum store on Main Street, but soon left to open Jaffa Bros. General Merchandise, where Sol joined him in September 1871.<sup>47</sup>

The first Jaffa Bros. storefront was rented space that they quickly outgrew, so they purchased a store at the corner of Main and Commercial streets, a site upon which the Columbian Hotel was later constructed in 1879 (now 105 W. Main Street). The Jaffas did very well with their store; by 1873, their brother Samuel joined them in Trinidad, bringing his wife and children from Philadelphia, and the business grew further. In 1877, the Jaffa Bros. Company expanded their mercantile business into Las Vegas, New Mexico, and Henry relocated there to manage the new store, leaving Sol and Sam in Trinidad. Samuel Jaffa built a home for his family, including four daughters and two sons, in 1879 at the corner of Second and Chestnut streets, where he lived until he died in May 1909, aged 64; his widow Amelia later sold the property for the construction of the Beaux-Arts-styled Las Animas County Courthouse, designed by Isaac Hamilton Rapp and built in 1912.<sup>48</sup> Sol Jaffa married in 1880 and built a two-story frame house on the corner of Third and Maple streets, which seems to remain extant, though its windows and siding have been replaced.<sup>49</sup> In 1881, the Jaffas purchased the city block at 100 W.

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<sup>45</sup> Solomon "Sol" Jaffa was born in Heinbach, Hesse-Kassel, Germany, on August 6, 1849, one of eight children—five sons and three daughters—born to Rabbi Aaron Jaffa and his wife Ella. "Interview with Sol. Jaffa, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Taken by A.K. Richeson, Trinidad, Colorado. December 23, 1933."

<sup>46</sup> The Trinidad City Directory of 1871 lists both Henry Biernbaum and Henry Jaffa as employed at the Biernbaum store on Main Street, between B and C streets; there is no listing for an "S. Jaffa" in 1871.

<sup>47</sup> "Interview with Sol. Jaffa, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Taken by A.K. Richeson, Trinidad, Colorado. December 23, 1933." It must be noted that this chronology and the date of September 1871 are taken directly from this interview, when Solomon Jaffa was 85 years old; although his memory may have been quite strong, he also may have conflated events and dates. Allen duPont Breck also relies heavily upon this Jaffa interview in his book, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959*.

<sup>48</sup> The October 1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (sheet 18) shows a two-story, wood frame and "adobe-lined" dwelling with an address of 231 S. Chestnut; this would correlate to the 1901 city directory listing (page 90) for Samuel Jaffa, clerk, and Mrs. Amelia Jaffa, vice-president of the White House Mercantile Co., who are listed as residing at 231 S. Chestnut with their daughter Ella, chief operator of the Colorado Telephone Company.

<sup>49</sup> "Interview with Sol Jaffa," 1-5. It is important to note that these descriptions of location, "corner of Third and Maple" and "corner of Second and Maple" are taken directly from the 1934 CWA interview with Sol Jaffa, when he was 85 years old; exact addresses or descriptions of the houses are not provided in the transcript. Referring to the 1888 Trinidad City Directory, the Jaffa brothers' houses would appear to have been located near to each other and to the site where Temple Aaron would be constructed the following year; "Jaffa, Sam., dry goods, 231 South Chestnut" and "Jaffa, Sol., dry goods, 218 East Third" are listed on page 95. The Colorado Cultural Resource System records a 2001 survey form (5LA.2179.188) for the Amelia Jaffa Residence, indicated as built 1910 with moderate alterations (on file with History Colorado, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Denver). Current Google Maps street views show the two-story, wood-frame side-gable house with front-facing gable wing still standing at 218 East Third Street, although its windows and siding have been replaced, and its one-story porch has been altered. This dwelling is shown on sheet 21 of the Sanborn Fire Insurance map of October 1907. Next door, the map shows a one-story dwelling at 210 East Third, which also appears altered today; this house was the residence of Sol Jaffa's daughter Helen, as listed in the 1912 city directory. In the 1901 directory, Solomon is listed as the President of "Citizens' Building & Loan Assn." According to the 1912 directory, Sol's son Arthur, a civil engineer, and nephew Perry, a physician and surgeon (and son of Samuel Jaffa) also lived at 218 East Third at that time. See the 1888, 1901, and 1912 city directories at the Trinidad Carnegie Library's History Room.

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Main Street for \$5,500 from John S. Hough, where they built an Italianate two-story block of buildings of adobe and locally-quarried sandstone known as the Jaffa Opera House (NRIS. 72000275; 5LA.2181).<sup>50</sup> The Jaffa Opera House opened in 1883 and hosted events including plays and musical theater, public speakers, and orchestra and brass band performances for twenty-four years, before closing in 1906; the Jaffas, however, had sold the Opera House Block in 1895 and relocated their mercantile business to the White House Building in the Stevens Block, which closed in 1919. Sol Jaffa then relocated to Las Vegas, New Mexico, where Henry had expanded the brothers' store four decades earlier, and lived there until his death in 1941, at 92 years of age.<sup>51</sup>

Another "pioneer" Jewish immigrant to Trinidad, David Gottlieb, arrived in Trinidad from Sandusky, Ohio, on July 4, 1871, just a few months before Sol Jaffa arrived there to join his brother Henry. Gottlieb, too, had been invited by family to go into business—his brother-in-law Aaron Rosenwald asked him to help manage the Rosenwalds' store in Trinidad. Born on May 21, 1844, in Bosen, Germany, Gottlieb had been sent to Arlow, Belgium, at the age of sixteen to train to be a butcher. He worked there—delivering meat twice a week to the king of Belgium—until he turned twenty-one.<sup>52</sup> To avoid service in the German army, Gottlieb left for the United States, traveling for twenty-one days in steerage on a ship from Le Havre, France, to Hull, England, and then to New York, arriving on April 15, 1865—the day after President Lincoln's assassination. Gottlieb stayed with a cousin in New York City until July 1865, when he headed west to Shelbina, Missouri, and opened his own butcher shop; in 1867, Gottlieb moved further west and settled in Junction City, Kansas, where he worked for a large butchering business. There he met Jacob Goldsmith, who had a men's clothing business with Edward Rosenwald that soon expanded to Abilene. Gottlieb joined Goldsmith and Rosenwald in Abilene, where they sold between \$600 and \$1,000 worth of merchandise each day out of a corn shed until they constructed the city's first store building; in 1867 and 1868, the three men also had a store in Junction City. Upon closing the Junction City business, they relocated to Philadelphia, where Goldsmith and Rosenwald had family, and there David Gottlieb met and married Rosenwald's sister Jette (Yetta). The Gottliebs moved to Sandusky, Ohio, where David had an unsuccessful boot and shoe store, when Aaron Rosenwald asked him to help with the store in Trinidad in 1871. Gottlieb was instrumental in the 1887 extension of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway (D&RG) line from El Moro to Trinidad, connecting the town to Pueblo and Denver, as was critical to Trinidad's economic growth heading into the twentieth century. In the three years following the D&RG railroad construction, Trinidad land prices exploded, and Gottlieb quickly profited on properties he had purchased in 1874. Jette and David Gottlieb had a son, Leo, who eventually managed the Gottlieb Mercantile Company in nearby Cokedale before opening an insurance office in the First National Bank Building in downtown Trinidad.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The Jaffa Opera House was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places as "Hausman Drug" on February 7, 1972 (NRIS 72000275), see: <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/72000275>. The nomination states: "The Opera House was one of the first buildings in the area to make use of the high quality sandstone from the nearby quarry of D. A. Chappell." See also "Jaffa Opera House/Hausman Drug" on the website of History Colorado, at: <https://www.historycolorado.org/location/jaffa-opera-house-hausman-drug>.

<sup>51</sup> "Interview with Sol. Jaffa," 1-6.

<sup>52</sup> It must be noted that this story of delivering meat to the king of Belgium, while it seems far-fetched, is the reminiscence of David Gottlieb near the end of his life, as he died in Trinidad just two years later, in 1936, at age 92. The 90-year-old Gottlieb did not state during this interview that he had been trained as a *shochet*, or kosher butcher. "Interview with David Gottlieb—A Pioneer Merchant. Taken by A.K. Richeson, Trinidad, Colorado. January 26, 1934," 1-8, Federal Civil Works Administration's Pioneer Interviews Collection, Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado, Denver. Transcript available at: <https://www.historycolorado.org/oral-histories>, File 359-23.

<sup>53</sup> "Interview with David Gottlieb." Both this Gottlieb interview and the Sol Jaffa interview, also conducted by Richeson for the Civil Works Administration and previously cited, significantly inform much of the Trinidad sections of Allen duPont Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1960). A perusal of Trinidad city directories, however, show the cultural and ethnic diversity of Trinidad residents—not only descendants of Spanish colonists and indigenous peoples, but Americans from the east coast and Midwest, as well as immigrants from throughout Europe, North Africa, and China, attracted by job

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A slightly different story is that of Simon Sanders (né Sender), born in 1845 in Soetern, Alsace-Lorraine, who married his childhood sweetheart, Jennie, and then emigrated to the United States in 1865 or 1866; their son Leopold was born in New York City in 1875. The Sanders family then made their way west, settling in Rock Port, Atchison County, Missouri, where Sanders joined his east coast friend Harry Moses, who had opened a small store there.<sup>54</sup> Moses had come from Oberhausen, in the Ruhr area of Germany. Sanders left the Missouri lowlands to escape malaria, heading further west, and in 1879 established a wholesale liquor store at Main and Convent streets in Trinidad. Sanders would regularly travel between southern Colorado and northern New Mexico with his wares in a wagon; a trip to Taos, New Mexico, would take him five or six days. Harry Moses eventually followed his friend Simon Sanders to Trinidad, where he opened his first clothing store on West Main Street in 1883. Decades later, in the early twentieth century, he opened H. Moses and Company, a general store, on Commercial Street, which was successful for several decades more, as operated by his sons.<sup>55</sup>

These stories of successful early Jewish settlers in Trinidad demonstrate how the town grew in the late nineteenth century to be a center of commerce—indeed the fourth-largest city in Colorado after Denver, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs between 1870-1890—built upon important relationships with friends and families in larger urban centers and establishing nationwide trade networks. As emphasized in the work of historian William Toll, young Jewish immigrants from Germany and Russia scattered throughout the West seeking to make a living, and they “connected through networks of trade with kin in larger cities, peddled until they found a town that seemed to offer sufficient business prospects in which to settle... The sons of frontier merchants were usually trained as salesmen to succeed their fathers.”<sup>56</sup> In Trinidad, these men married younger women who maintained Jewish households and helped foster cultural acceptance in the community through social gatherings, some of which were open to all, regardless of religious beliefs or affiliations.

### Growth of Trinidad’s Jewish Community and Temple Aaron

At the time of the Jaffa brothers’ arrival in Trinidad in 1871, the town was home to approximately 1,500 people, two-thirds of whom were of Spanish or Mexican descent, and one-third of whom had come from the eastern United States.<sup>57</sup> Historian Breck has stated that “approximately eight young Jewish men” put down roots in Trinidad between 1860 and 1871, and that “by 1871 or 1872” there were ten Jewish men—enough to form a *minyan* (translated from Hebrew as “count” or “number”), the quorum required for prayers and other Jewish

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opportunities in mining, railroads, ranching and agriculture, and all types of business enterprises supported in town.

<sup>54</sup> In addition to their eldest son Leopold (1875-1935), Jennie (1854-1929) and Simon Sanders (1845-1906) had their son Isidore (1877-1939) while in Rock Port, Missouri; sons Alfred (1878-1888), Jesse (1879-1888), daughter Miriam (1883-1949), and son Gilbert (1889-1952) after they settled in Trinidad; see: <https://www.geni.com/people/Simon-Sanders/6000000034291242921>.

<sup>55</sup> Breck, 141.

<sup>56</sup> William Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado’s Jewish Women: The Domestic Basis of Community, 1889-1910,” *Western States Jewish History* 28, no. 2 (January 1996), 109-111. Thirteen years after Toll, historian Mary L. Kwas countered the popular narrative of the “Jewish peddler” in the West when she wrote about the Block family, who first came to the United States from Bohemia in 1796 and within six years had begun to settle in Missouri and other states to the west of the Mississippi River: “Jews migrated within America from place to place for better economic opportunities rather than being rooted.... Family connections often influenced the choice of location.... Jews...mov[ed] from eastern seaboard cities to new towns on transportation corridors in the West.... [A] typical image of the western movement of Jews is of a male peddler who started with a pack, saved for a wagon, and eventually opened a business in a small town of promise, bringing family members to serve as clerks and partners. However, not all started this way. Abraham Block married into a prestigious Jewish family and lived in eastern centers of Jewish life before deciding to go west. Thus, he had the finances to skip the peddler stage and enter quite early into a partnership with a gentile businessman and quickly rise into the wealthy merchant class. This business pattern continued with his sons as they transformed their resources into new opportunities in new places.” See Kwas, 40-41.

<sup>57</sup> “Interview with Sol. Jaffa,” 2.

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rites—who observed the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, celebrated in September.<sup>58</sup> Just five years later, when the city incorporated in 1876, there were fifteen Jewish families in the town, and Sam Jaffa was elected as chairman of the Trinidad Town Council, while friends and fellow Jewish merchants Isaac Levy and Abraham Mansbach were appointed to the council board, demonstrating the community’s acceptance and appreciation of their organizational skills and business acumen, in addition to their social connections. Another excellent example of Trinidad’s acceptance of Jews—its embrace, rather than mere tolerance—is the city’s earliest fraternal organization, the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (AF & AM) Las Animas Lodge #28, organized in 1875; the order’s first meeting was held in the H. Biernbaum and Company store in the 200 block of West Main Street, and the lodge included many Jewish Lodge Masters, including Samuel Jaffa (1882), Sol Jaffa (1885, 1887, 1888, 1900), and Temple Aaron’s Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal (1896, 1897).<sup>59</sup> From 1875 and through the next fifteen years, Jews increased in number and in civic and social presence in Trinidad.<sup>60</sup>

Shortly after the organization of the town’s Masonic lodge in 1875, many of its Jewish members and other Jews in Trinidad formed the Trinidad Lodge #293 of B’nai B’rith—“Children of the Covenant,” a Jewish fraternal order and philanthropic organization that first organized in New York City among immigrant German Jews in 1843—and they held their first meeting on March 3, 1878, in the Masonic Hall. The first elected leaders of this lodge were Samuel Jaffa, president; Solomon Schwed, vice-president; David Gottlieb, treasurer, and Isaac Levy, secretary. Historian Breck has noted that most of these first B’nai B’rith members in Trinidad were shopkeepers or clerks in clothing or general mercantile stores, and very nearly all of them originally identified as from Bavaria, Bohemia, Hanover, or Prussia.<sup>61</sup> As historian Toll wrote, “As a community, the Jews of Trinidad were a small mercantile enclave of brothers, cousins and friends who owned general stores or dry goods and clothing stores serving the general public.”<sup>62</sup> Toll lists four men in the Sanders family—brothers Simon, Joseph, and Jacob, and Jacob’s son Arthur—as liquor wholesalers; Levi Akerman as an art dealer and picture framer; Jacob Kahn as a trader of wool and hides; and Gus Westerfield and Jacob May as proprietors of cigar shops.

Although the Jews of Trinidad had been able to gather a *minyan* for prayer since 1871 or 1872, and even though they had formed the AF & AM Lodge #28 in 1875 and the B’nai B’rith Lodge #293 in 1878, they still had no formally organized congregation, nor their own place for worship; despite this lack, they continued to meet for prayers in the Masonic Hall, which the B’nai B’rith rented for its regular meetings. Five years passed before

<sup>58</sup> Breck, 49-50. Other congregation histories trace the first minyan to 1871, so it is noteworthy here that Breck states that it could have been in September of “1871 or 1872.”

<sup>59</sup> Breck, 50, note 91; and 304-305.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 141; and Phil Goodstein, *Exploring Jewish Colorado* (Denver: Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society/Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver, 1992), 87. Breck gives Jewish population estimates rather erratically for Trinidad, starting only in 1905 with 150 Jews (compared to 300 in Pueblo and 75 in Colorado Springs); then rising to 250 in 1917 (compared to 1,000 in Pueblo and 660 in Colorado Springs); then shrinking down to 110 Jews in 1927 (compared to 1,200 in Pueblo and 500 in Colorado Springs); and in 1937, the last year for which Breck has data, only 70 Jews in Trinidad (compared to 650 in Pueblo and 550 in Colorado Springs); see Breck, Appendix A, 321-323.

<sup>61</sup> Breck, 141, note 148; and 310-311, from the B’nai B’rith Lodge #293 meeting minutes, American Jewish Archives microfilm. The lodge was installed by Louis Anfenger of the Denver B’nai B’rith, and the twenty-five charter members of the Trinidad Lodge #293 are listed as: Solomon Schwed, Samuel Jaffa, Louis Strauss, Edward Rosenwald, Morris Leon, Philip Prager, M. Whiteman, Herman Cohn, Henry Jaffa, Isaac Levy, Henry Biernbaum, David Gottlieb, Aaron Rosenwald, Maurice Seligman, Alex Levy, B. Leon, H. Brown, Henry Berl, Philip Holzman, James Rosenwald, Emanuel Rosenwald, Bernard Ielfield, Aldolph Flersheim, Isidor Stern, and Solomon H. Jaffa. As for their places of origin, following the Austro-Prussian War, Prussia annexed Hanover in 1866, Bohemia was included in the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, and Bavaria—allied with Austria during the war—was not incorporated into the North German Confederation of 1867, but joined Prussia in its war with France in 1870 and eventually became part of the German Empire in 1871.

<sup>62</sup> Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado’s Jewish Women: The Domestic Basis of Community,” 111-112.

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Congregation Aaron was formed on July 23, 1883, at the home of Sol Jaffa, where he was joined by Max Eppstein, a liquor wholesaler visiting from Denver, and seventeen other Jewish men—all family or friends from Trinidad—to celebrate the *bris* (circumcision ceremony) of his son, Aaron. Then and there, they decided to form Congregation Aaron, named not only in recognition of the occasion and Sol Jaffa’s son, but also in honor of the Jaffa brothers’ father, also named Aaron, who had been a rabbi in Germany. Soon after, the congregation adopted by-laws that were approved and signed by twenty-four men, and which set the annual dues to the congregation at four dollars and membership fees at five dollars. They also agreed that the congregation would use the Roedelheim *mahzor* for the forthcoming High Holidays, and to purchase a *sefer* Torah, or Torah scroll, as soon as possible. Within a few months of signing these by-laws, according to the *American Israelite*, Congregation Aaron had raised the needed funds and purchased its Torah scroll on September 2, 1883, for one hundred dollars.<sup>63</sup> This allowed Congregation Aaron to conduct its first Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services that October in the Trinidad Opera House, which the Jaffa Brothers had constructed at 100 West Main Street the prior year. The congregation continued to formally establish itself within the Trinidad community through other activities, including the official incorporation of “Congregation Aaron of Trinidad, State of Colorado,” with fifty-five men signing its charter in July 1884; and the December 1884 purchase—for a token payment of five dollars to the AF & AM Lodge #28—of two-and-a-half acres taken from the Masons’ cemetery on the west side of Trinidad, which they consecrated for Jewish burials, enclosing it with a fence.<sup>64</sup>

Congregation Aaron met with lay leaders conducting its services in the Masonic Hall for much of the next two years while planning for the future. One of the Jaffa brothers often led these services, but other members also may have taken turns, with prayers in Hebrew or in German. With few Jewish organizations or active congregations in the area, Congregation Aaron brought worshipers from outside the community—even from New Mexico—to Trinidad, just as it continues to do today. Charles Dobriner of Las Vegas, New Mexico, was invited to join the congregation’s 1883 services, with the congregation charitably paying his travel expenses; Dobriner became one of the twenty-four men who signed the by-laws the following year.<sup>65</sup> Others came from Elizabethtown and Raton, New Mexico, and from Walsenburg, Colorado, to worship. The Jewish community of Trinidad also grew during these years, with brothers Ralph and Benjamin Hamerslough as notable arrivals from

<sup>63</sup> “A Synagogue for Trinidad—1889,” *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (October 1978), 18-19; Breck, 141-142, notes 148 and 150; and 310-311. Breck’s use of “Roedelheimer Mach Sor” [*sic*] refers to the Roedelheim *mahzor*, or the festival prayer book used for the High Holy Days; the Roedelheim version was published by the German Talmudic scholar, translator, and liturgist Wolf Heidenheim (1757-1832) at his own publishing house in Roedelheim, beginning in 1799; in 1838 (after his death), the press published an edition in Hebrew with a German translation for the first time, and continued to publish revised editions thereafter in both languages, making it a likely choice for Congregation Aaron and others whose members came from German-speaking areas. For more on Wolf Heidenheim and the Roedelheim *mahzor*, see the website of the Leo Baeck Institute for the Study of German-Jewish History and Culture, “The Roedelheim Mahzor Collection: Change and Continuity,” at: <https://www.lbi.org/news/roedelheim-mahzor-collection-change-and-continuity/>. Also see “Laying the Corner-Stone of a New Jewish Temple at Trinidad, Colorado,” *American Israelite* 35, n. 52 (June 27, 1889), reprinted from the *Trinidad Daily Citizen* (June 19, 1889). As listed therein, the organizers who signed the by-laws included S. Frankel, S. Jaffa, S.H. Jaffa, H.N. Jaffa, H. Jaffa, P. Holzman, I. Levy, B. Levy, A. Rascower, S. Sanders, J. Sanders, H. Biernbaum, S. Goldsmith, D. Gottlieb, A. Rosenwald, S. Schwed, A. Leon, D. Gump, M. Leon, A. Goodman, M. Pechner, A. Mansbach, C. Dobringer, and H. Moses. This 1889 newspaper story also reported that in 1883 “Mr. H. Biernbaum, being the oldest of its members, was elected President, and held said office until he removed from this city.”

<sup>64</sup> “Laying the Corner-Stone of a New Jewish Temple at Trinidad, Colorado”; Breck, 142; and Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers & Tsadikim: The Story of Jews in Colorado* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000), 109. The first burial in Trinidad’s consecrated Jewish cemetery was Maurice Leon, as stated in “Laying the Cornerstone of a New Jewish Temple at Trinidad, Colorado”: “God has been kind to Congregation Aaron. Only one member, Maurice Leon, has been buried.” In its first five years, from its 1884 purchase until the 1889 construction of Temple Aaron, only one congregant had died and was interred in this cemetery. Many of those whose stories are told in this nomination are buried here, including members of the Jaffa and Sanders families, as well as Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal. Congregation members continue to be buried in this cemetery today, including the last lay rabbi and congregation leader Kathryn Rubin, buried here in 2018, next to her husband Leon Rubin (d. 2013).

<sup>65</sup> Breck, 142.

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Hesse-Kassel in 1885. Ben arrived in Trinidad to clerk at the general store operated by A. DeBre, and by 1888 they had established DeBre, Hamerslough and Company at 301 Commercial Street, which was open every night until nine o'clock and until midnight on Saturdays. During the same period, Ralph established the R. Hamerslough Mercantile Company at 215 West Main Street, which sold groceries, grains, wool, and dry goods, and which remained in business through the 1930s.<sup>66</sup>

The 1888 Trinidad City Directory clearly shows that Jews continued to play important leadership roles in the civic and social life of the city, in addition to its spiritual or religious life. In the directory of fraternal organizations, Sol Jaffa appears as the Worshipful Master of the AF & AM Las Animas Lodge #28. Samuel Jaffa is listed as the Director and David Gottlieb the Treasurer of the Knights of Honor Trinidad Lodge #3145, which met at the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) Hall twice each month. Samuel Jaffa served as President and Ralph Hamerslough as Vice-President of the B'nai B'rith Trinidad Lodge #293, meeting twice monthly at the Masonic Hall. Samuel's son Harry Jaffa served as the Vice-President of the H.E. Mulnix Hook and Ladder Company #1 of the Fire Department.<sup>67</sup>

By 1887, the members of Congregation Aaron had saved the \$1,000 needed to bring Rabbi J. Glueck to Trinidad on a two-year contract; they raised the funds by increasing annual dues by three dollars, and by selling tickets for the High Holiday services at a price of twenty dollars for married men and five dollars for unmarried men.<sup>68</sup> Rabbi Glueck conducted services and all activities at the Masonic Hall—*shabbat* (Sabbath) services on Friday evenings at 7:30 and Saturday mornings at 10 o'clock; as well as Sabbath school classes on Saturday mornings at 9 o'clock and Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock.<sup>69</sup> Glueck served as the first official rabbi of Congregation Aaron for two years as it prepared to purchase land upon which to build a permanent synagogue at the southwest corner of Maple and Third streets. The congregation also worked during this time to hire its second rabbi on a permanent basis as Glueck's two-year contract approached its end. The property was purchased on January 9, 1889, as follows:

Know all Men by these Present, that Lewis H. Turner of Trinidad, County of Las Animas and State of Colorado, for the consideration of Two Thousand Dollars, to him paid, hereby sell and convey to The Congregation Aaron, Jacob Sanders, I. Levy, S.H. Jaffa, David Gottlieb, and E. Sugerman, Trustees, and their successors in trust, the following real property situated in the City of Trinidad, Las Animas County, State of Colorado, to-wit: Eighty feet (80) off of the north part of Lot. No. Four (4) in Block Number Fifty-three (53) described as follows: Eighty (80) feet fronting Maple Street, Ninety (90) feet on Third Street, Seventy-five (75) feet on West line, Ninety (90) feet on south line, said Lot and Block being situate in original subdivision of the City of Trinidad.<sup>70</sup>

The members of Congregation Aaron engaged the Trinidad architecture firm of Bulger & Rapp to design its

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 142-143; 1888 Trinidad City Directory, 89 and 91.

<sup>67</sup> 1888 Trinidad City Directory, 52-53.

<sup>68</sup> Breck, 143.

<sup>69</sup> The schedule of services for Congregation Aaron appears on page 51, and Rabbi Glueck's residence is listed on page 85 in the 1888 Trinidad City Directory as "Glueck, Dr. J., rabbi, 115 South Animas." This building—no longer extant—appears on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of August 1890 (sheet 4) as a one-story adobe duplex dwelling numbered 115-117 South Animas. The 1890 Sanborn map is available at: [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01084\\_003/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01084_003/). The 1901 Sanborn map shows that the adobe building at 115 South Animas was then in use for "Dress Mkg."

<sup>70</sup> Warranty Deed filed on February 5, 1889; recorded in Book 35, page 328. Copies on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado.

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synagogue in the exotic Moorish Revival style, which at that time was an extremely popular architectural style among Reform Jewish congregations, as it communicated that their modern practices and new traditions were connected to an ancient past originating in the Middle East. Constructed on its dramatically sloped site on a gray sandstone foundation, the red brick synagogue was designed to visually command the corner with its distinctive minarets and onion domes, glowing from within through its multicolored stained-glass windows. The cornerstone was laid by architect Isaac Hamilton Rapp in a public ceremony held on Tuesday, June 18, 1889, with Congregation Aaron's new rabbi, Leopold Freudenthal, delivering a powerful address.<sup>71</sup>

Freudenthal, like Glueck before him, originally came to Trinidad's Congregation Aaron on a two-year contract in 1889, but he became the first permanent rabbi of the congregation and remained there in leadership and service until his death in 1916.<sup>72</sup> Born in Germany in 1848, Freudenthal had studied at Heidelberg University, where he earned his doctorate before emigrating to the United States. Unusually, Freudenthal was not ordained as a rabbi in Europe, as was common at the time; he may have attended the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the Reform tradition, before he went on to serve as a rabbi in several congregations on the east coast and in the Midwest, including Pennsylvania, Virginia, Indiana, and Iowa. It was while serving as the chaplain of the Iowa State Legislature that Freudenthal was hired to serve as the rabbi to Congregation Aaron in Trinidad, the membership of which was fifty-four families at that time.<sup>73</sup> Services were conducted in Hebrew, German, and English, and Freudenthal was instrumental in bringing the congregation more fully into the Reform tradition. Rabbi Freudenthal brought his family—wife Fannie, and their sons Samuel and Alfred—and became well-respected and active in civic life, joining the AF & AM Las Animas Lodge #28, just as many of his congregants had.

Jewish women also played important roles in Trinidad's civic and cultural life, joining existing social clubs and also establishing their own. On June 22, 1889, as the funds needed to build the synagogue were borrowed, the women of Congregation Aaron formed a chapter of the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society (HLAS), to which they elected Mrs. Mansbach as its first president.<sup>74</sup> Thirty-four women applied for membership, as in a men's fraternal order, and had to be elected, but none were rejected. Initially, HLAS members focused upon the mutual support of its members, such as when a member had bills to pay for doctors' visits and hospital stays. They also helped to prepare the bodies of deceased women for burial. Rabbi Freudenthal requested that they expand their aid to Jews receiving care at local hospitals and needy travelers passing through Trinidad, even if they were not members of the HLAS or of Congregation Aaron. Members paid an initiation fee of one dollar and annual dues of three dollars to the chapter. Often the HLAS women gathered in Temple Aaron just to socialize—talking and knitting or sewing over cups of tea—hence the organization's less formal name, the Temple Aaron Sisterhood. In April 1890 they agreed to admit unmarried women, mostly their own daughters, as members. One of the major functions of the HLAS focused on raising funds to pay off the mortgage of the new synagogue, which the women accomplished by holding social events with broad community appeal.<sup>75</sup>

The first major event organized by the HLAS was an 1889 Halloween Fair, open to all for an admission fee of

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<sup>71</sup> "A Synagogue for Trinidad, Colorado—1889," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (October 1978), 18-19; also "Laying the Corner-Stone of a New Jewish Temple at Trinidad, Colorado".

<sup>72</sup> Breck, 143.

<sup>73</sup> Uchill, 109; and "Temple Aaron Bilette in Commemoration of Three Anniversaries," November 11, 1949, cited in Breck.

<sup>74</sup> Breck, 143.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 144; also Toll, "Trinidad, Colorado's Jewish Women: The Domestic Basis of Community," 112-121. See also Jeanne E. Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 8: "Despite their distinction as a religious minority, pioneer Jews in communities throughout the West were generally viewed as a stabilizing influence that upheld morality and order in new settlements as well as bringing a measure of culture to the rough frontier."

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25 cents per person. In June 1890, the HLAS women organized a Strawberry Festival, also open to the public; a second Torah scroll was purchased with \$100 taken from the event's proceeds. From then on, the HLAS members focused their efforts almost exclusively on event planning, whether for fairs, festivals, or balls to raise funds to support the congregation and the building. To attract the greatest audiences, tickets for these events were sold to the general public and the events held in a secular building, such as the Trinidad Opera House. With the money they raised, the women purchased a spittoon for Temple Aaron and paid to carpet the stairs and hallways; they paid off a debt on the Jewish cemetery with cash; they paid the monthly fees for the temple's choir; they purchased a property to serve as the home of Rabbi Freudenthal; and they regularly made donations of cash to other charitable organizations and individuals in need.<sup>76</sup> In 1901, for example, the HLAS sponsored a booth at the Spring Fair organized by a Catholic women's group to raise money for St. Raphael's Hospital. They also encouraged their own members to join other groups in Trinidad, such as the Art League, and they started a Montefiore Literary Society, named in honor of Moses Montefiore, a Sephardic Jew from England and significant philanthropist of international Jewry. In its support of arts, culture, social engagement, and charities in Trinidad, the Temple Aaron Sisterhood exemplified the significance of women in Jewish life and mutual aid in the settlement of the West.<sup>77</sup>

Temple Aaron's 1889 construction symbolized permanence in the community, and Jews continued to settle there. By the turn of the twentieth century, Las Animas County had grown by 25% to almost 22,000 people, and Trinidad—the county seat—was its commercial center with 5,300 residents, of whom approximately 170 (or 3.2%) were Jews.<sup>78</sup> Jewish families chose to live in the neighborhoods west of Commercial Street, on Second, Third, and Fourth streets and the cross-streets of High, Animas, and Beech; or they lived immediately to the east of downtown on Chestnut and Walnut streets. Trinidad nearly doubled in the next ten years, reaching a population of over 10,000 in 1910 with the arrival of more coal miners, ranch hands, and agricultural laborers, but Trinidad's Jewish community stopped growing at that time. Some of the sons of the founding Jewish families became professionals—doctors, lawyers, civil engineers, dentists—while others continued in their family businesses in town. New Jewish families and individuals, however, chose to move to larger cities like Denver. As historian Toll stated: “For Trinidad, the two decades from 1890 through 1910 represented the height of Jewish migration and the onset of stagnation in a small mining town.”<sup>79</sup> Breck states that by 1905, there were 150 Jews residing in Trinidad, and although the number grew to 250 in 1917, it had decreased to 110 by 1927, and only 70 Jews lived in town in 1937.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The 1892 Trinidad City Directory (page 76) lists Rabbi Freudenthal residing at 229 South Ash Street; the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of August 1890 (sheet 2) shows this is a two-story brick duplex or attached dwelling with a one-story wood-framed porch that spanned both 225 and 229 South Ash Street, at the northwest corner of South Ash and East Second streets. This duplex dwelling no longer is extant. The 1895 Trinidad City Directory (page 74) lists Rabbi Freudenthal residing at 216 West Third Street, and he is listed there in all directories thereafter until his death; therefore, this would be the address of the home built for his use by the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society members. The house no longer is extant, and it has been replaced with a frame dwelling that appears to have been constructed after 1950. The October 1905 Sanborn Map (sheet 20) shows this to have been a large, two-story wood-framed house with multiple one-story porches, likely built in the Queen Anne style, at the southeast corner of South Beech and West Third streets. The 1912-13 Trinidad City Directory (page 112) lists not only Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal residing at 216 West Third Street, but also both of his sons: “Freudenthal, Alfred, Physician and Surgeon,” and “Freudenthal, Samuel, Attorney-at-Law.” Their offices were listed in the Samuels Block, 110 ½ East Main Street, suites 1 and 2.

<sup>77</sup> Breck, 143-144; Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado's Jewish Women,” 112-121. Breck states that the total borrowed for the construction of Temple Aaron was \$11,915.36, and the mortgage was burned in 1905.

<sup>78</sup> Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado's Jewish Women,” 108-112.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Breck, 321, “Population Trends, 1877-1958,” table in Appendix A.

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### Temple Aaron and Reform Judaism in the United States

Reform Judaism has its roots in the emancipation of Jews after centuries of isolation, ghettoization, and restriction. Throughout much of European history beginning in the thirteenth century, Christians often had restricted the movement of Jews and Muslims, required them to wear identifying clothing, prohibited them from voting or holding office, disallowed them to enter certain professions, and denied them the freedom to practice their religions. Some nations would not allow Jews or Muslims to enter their territories, or they were actively expelled. One notable exception to this was Poland, which guaranteed Jews their safety and religious freedom in royal edicts of the late fourteenth century, which led Poland to become the home of Europe's largest Jewish population. During the Enlightenment era, Jews slowly were able to become more involved in society and regain some of their rights. By the time of colonization in the Americas, some Jews were able to participate in trans-Atlantic trade, while others sought to settle there to be free of restrictions in their former homelands. As President of the United States, George Washington endorsed the full and equal rights of Jews in a letter written in 1790, while France emancipated its Jewish population the following year, and Jews were granted rights equal to gentiles in the Netherlands in 1796 and in Greece in 1830.<sup>81</sup> Centuries of exclusion from society had led Jews to adopt a common language, establish their own social networks, and develop their own educational systems; although Jews around the globe felt culturally connected to each other through these shared traditions, many were disconnected from the societies in which they lived. As Jews were gradually emancipated, they began to reflect upon their practices and sought changes—reforms—that would make them modern people, reflecting their current freedoms in civic and cultural life.

In mid-nineteenth-century Germany, Reform Judaism arose as rabbis and laymen found that Jewish observance and practices needed to be reconsidered to meet the changing needs of Jews in society. Traditional Orthodox belief centered on the philosophy that all laws, both written in the Torah and the spoken law documented in the Talmud, were given to Moses and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai—divine law, fixed and immutable. Attempting to balance this doctrine with modern life, Jews seeking reforms broke from rabbinic tradition by claiming that only the written law of the Torah was given to Moses, and that the spoken laws of the Talmud were written by men with divine inspiration. Rabbis associated with this new movement, such as Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), had trained in Orthodox seminaries or yeshivas, but also had attended universities, allowing them to simultaneously appreciate and understand the traditional and modern worlds. While there always have been—and there continue to be—strong communities of Jews throughout the world who have retained their Orthodox traditions, the Reform rabbis of the nineteenth century sought to bring changes to Judaism that would be more fitting to their congregants' contemporary lives, focusing on holiness through *Tikkun Olam*, “repairing the world.”<sup>82</sup>

Rabbi Geiger and Rabbi David Einhorn (1809-1879) advocated for prayers to be in German and not in Hebrew; for synagogues to have mixed-gender seating; for services to incorporate new forms of music, including songs led by a cantor with a choir or an organ; for holiday observances outside the land of Israel to last for just one day instead of two; to remove all references to the return to a national homeland in Israel or the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem; to remove all references to sacrifice and sacrificial actions; and to remove all references to Jews as the Chosen People. In 1842, the Society of Friends of Reform in Frankfurt established five principles for the movement: 1) do not consider traditions as static but continuously changing; 2) do not consider as binding those laws and rituals concerned with diet and bodily practices that stem from ancient and outmoded ideas; 3) do not consider circumcision binding as a religious act or symbol; 4) do not recognize the

<sup>81</sup> Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 3-5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; and Rabbi David Phillipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907), 5-6.

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Talmud as an authoritative document; and 5) do not pray or plan for a Messiah to lead the Jews back to Palestine, but consider the nation to which you belong, whether by birth or by citizenship, as your homeland.<sup>83</sup>

No longer would Jews be required to prove their uniqueness by keeping kosher dietary practices, wearing the *kippah* (headcover, also called a *yarmulke*), *tallit* (prayer shawl), or *tefillin* (phylacteries, or small leather boxes containing parchment with Torah inscriptions, worn with leather bindings on one's forehead and wrapped around one's arm and hand) during prayer. Geiger, Einhorn, and other rabbis interested in reforms passionately argued that, historically, all of Jewish tradition was an evolutionary process in which each successive generation of Jews should create new practices that expressed their ancient and eternal ethics, but in new ways; as Geiger wrote, "[W]e should be concerned not for the letter, but for the spirit."<sup>84</sup> These rabbis and Jewish scholars believed that such changes would save Judaism from stagnation in the face of modernity, while it also would serve to dramatically decrease antisemitism, by demonstrating the acceptability of contemporary Judaism to the secular world.

Einhorn left Germany for the United States in 1855, becoming the first rabbi at Congregation Har Sinai in Baltimore, Maryland, to which he introduced Reform Judaism. There, he wrote the *Olat Tamid* prayer book (*siddur*), which later became a model for the Union Prayer Book published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1894, and which, though revised many times, is still widely used in Reform congregations today.<sup>85</sup> Einhorn began to publish *Sinai*, a monthly German-language magazine on Reform Judaism, in 1856, in which he wrote essays that argued against interfaith marriage for Jews as well as proclamations against the evils of slavery in the United States, among other topics relevant to a rapidly modernizing world. Of particular note in his career as a radical reformer, on April 19, 1861, Einhorn delivered a sermon in which he decried slavery and argued that it was inconsistent with the values and ethics of Judaism—especially as Jews had been held as slaves to the pharaohs in Egypt.<sup>86</sup> However, as Baltimore was located in the slave state of Maryland, the sermon inspired great anger and resulted in a mob seeking to tar and feather the rabbi. Einhorn fled to safety in Philadelphia, where he later became the leader of Congregation Keneseth Israel for four years, before relocating to New York City in 1866 to become the first rabbi of Congregation Adas Jeshurun. Einhorn remained in New York City until his death in November 1879, four months after delivering his final sermon to Congregation Beth-El on July 12.<sup>87</sup>

In contrast to the more radical expressions of Einhorn, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati came to be the nationally-recognized leader of the American Reform movement—which Trinidad's Congregation Aaron eventually adopted—as he espoused an idealized unity of Jews in America. The moderate Reform movement, which thrived after 1870, particularly in the United States, was intended to appeal to a broad audience through universal principles, tolerance, revised liturgy, and aesthetics. Progressive American congregations embraced

<sup>83</sup> Solomon B. Freehof, "Reform Judaism in America," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 45, no. 4 (1955), 354.

<sup>84</sup> Geiger quoted in Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 94; for Meyer's thorough analysis of Geiger's critical role in the Reform movement, see 89-99.

<sup>85</sup> Einhorn's prayer book differed from the *siddur* written by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, *Minhag America*, in that Einhorn's text did not refer to the restoration of the Temple in Israel, sacrificial services, nor did it claim for Jews the status of "the chosen people." See Freehof; also Phillipson, *ibid.*, as well as Phillipson, *Centenary Papers and Others* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing, 1919), available at: <https://books.google.com/books?id=QvoLAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA26&#v>. For more information on the Har Sinai Congregation, which later merged with another Reform synagogue in Baltimore, Oheb Shalom, see: <https://www.hsosc-baltimore.org/about-us>.

<sup>86</sup> The full text in English, translated from the original German, of Einhorn's 1861 essay "A Biblical View of Slavery," in *Sinai*, vol. VI, 2-22, available at: <http://www.jewish-history.com/civilwar/einhorn.html>.

<sup>87</sup> "Honors to Rabbi Einhorn, Presentation of a Testimonial by Orthodox and Reform Ministers," *The New York Times* (July 14, 1879), 5, available at: <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1879/07/14/80688653.pdf>; and "Death of the Rev. David Einhorn," *The New York Times* (November 3, 1879), 5, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1879/11/03/archives/death-of-the-rev-david-einhorn.html>.

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diversity and freedom in their responsiveness to local communities and conditions.<sup>88</sup> As his grandson and biographer stated, “Dr. Wise realized that if Judaism in America was to be preserved, it would be necessary not only to Americanize the Jew, but also his Judaism.”<sup>89</sup> Wise (*né* Weis), born on April 3, 1819, emigrated in July 1846 to the United States from Bohemia, where he had been serving as a rabbi; he changed the spelling of his surname to Wise upon arrival. In October 1846, Wise was appointed the rabbi of Congregation Beth-El of Albany, New York, where he instituted new reforms. This congregation in Albany was the first to have a mixed-sex choir and to allow men and women to sit together in family pews, as in a church; to eliminate the ceremonial *bar mitzvah*, the rite of passage into adulthood for 13-year-old boys, substituting it with a confirmation service for both boys and girls; and, significantly, to count or include women in the gathering of a *minyan*, the quorum of ten adults required for prayer services.<sup>90</sup>

In his first sermon at Albany’s Congregation Beth-El, Wise laid out the need for reforms in Judaism: “Religion is intended to make man happy, good, just, active, charitable, and intelligent. Whatever tends to this end must be retained or introduced. Whatever opposes it must be abolished.”<sup>91</sup> Four years later, however, while visiting Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim—recognized today as the first Reform congregation in the United States—at their Greek Revival-style temple in Charleston, South Carolina, Rabbi Wise boldly declared that he did not believe in the coming of the Messiah or the resurrection of the dead. Word of his remarks traveled quickly, inspiring great anger and conflict when he returned home to Albany to lead the Rosh Hashanah (New Year) services at Temple Beth-El; the congregation’s trustees presented Rabbi Wise with a letter of dismissal, which he refused. During the services the following day, a fight broke out between the rabbi’s supporters and his detractors that required intervention from the sheriff.<sup>92</sup> As a result, Wise and his adherents left to form Congregation Anshe Emeth in Albany in the autumn of 1850, where he stayed until 1854—a momentous year in his life—during which he established the national newspaper for Reform Judaism, *The Israelite* (renamed *The American Israelite* in 1874), and relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio, to become the rabbi of Kehilat Kodesh B’nai Yeshurun (Holy Congregation of Children of Yeshurun), where he remained until his death in 1900.

Wise made a profound impact upon Cincinnati and upon Reform Judaism nationwide during his lifetime. Congregation B’nai Yeshurun held its services at its Gothic Revival-styled Lodge Street Synagogue (1848) at his arrival, but they quickly outgrew its synagogue as the charismatic rabbi attracted many new followers interested in reform. Wise was instrumental in the drive to construct the much larger, jewel-like Moorish Revival-style Plum Street Temple beginning in 1865. Dedicated on August 24, 1866, the Plum Street Temple was completed at cost of over \$263,525 (\$4.462 million in 2021) while the nation was fighting the Civil War.<sup>93</sup> Wise also established the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in October 1875, a Jewish seminary which today has additional campuses in New York City, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem—the latter of which is the only Reform

<sup>88</sup> Alexandra Sheket Korros and Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Synagogue History: A Bibliography and State-of-the-Field Survey* (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1988) 8, 25. See also Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press by the University Press of New England, 1976): 177.

<sup>89</sup> Max B. May, *Isaac Mayer Wise, The Founder of American Judaism: A Biography* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1916), v.

<sup>90</sup> May, 1-73; also see extensive obituary “Career of Rabbi Wise: He Was Known As ‘The Moses of America’—His Life One of Great Influence and Activity,” *The New York Times* (March 27, 1900), available at: <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1900/03/27/102582424.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> “Career of Rabbi Wise,” *The New York Times*.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* “[T]he President of the congregation assaulted the rabbi in the pulpit, and a scene of violent disorder followed. The next day Dr. Wise’s followers seceded, and a reform congregation, called Anshe Emeth, was organized. Within a year a new temple, with an organ and family pews, was built.”

<sup>93</sup> The Plum Street Temple, designed by architect James Keys Wilson, will be discussed in more detail later in this nomination. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 27, 1972 and designated a National Historic Landmark on May 15, 1975, see: [https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NHLS/72001021\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NHLS/72001021_text).

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seminary in Israel. In Cincinnati, Rabbi Wise and the Hebrew Union College celebrated the graduation of the first class of rabbinical students on July 11, 1883.<sup>94</sup>

It has been suggested that Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal, who first came to Trinidad in 1889 to serve the congregation at Temple Aaron, graduated from an early class of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati; however, it must be noted that Leopold Freudenthal is not listed among the students, graduates, or ordained rabbis in any of the annual reports of the college prepared by Rabbi Wise from 1875 through 1895. This does not mean that Freudenthal did not enroll in or attend classes there, but it does suggest that he may not have graduated with a degree from this renowned Reform seminary. Nevertheless, Freudenthal—who had graduated from Heidelberg University before emigrating to the United States—was instrumental in bringing the congregation more fully into the Reform tradition throughout his years of leadership, and, significantly, he presided over the cornerstone-laying ceremony and the dedication of Temple Aaron. Literally and figuratively, Rabbi Freudenthal laid the foundation of the moderate Reform practice that continues at Temple Aaron today.<sup>95</sup>

### Trinidad and Temple Aaron at the Turn of Two Centuries

Following the death of Rabbi Freudenthal in July 1916, Temple Aaron never again had a resident rabbi of such significant duration—he had served for 27 years—but instead relied upon lay leaders and visiting rabbis to conduct services, just as the congregation had done during its first years of existence, when the Jaffa brothers and other members took turns leading the services. However, there were at least three other permanent rabbis whose service to Temple Aaron was comparatively short, whether for known or unknown reasons.

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<sup>94</sup> The celebratory dinner to honor the four newly ordained rabbis—the first in the United States—that evening is referred to as “the Trefa Banquet” because the caterer, who was Jewish, served clams, shrimp, and frog legs—all not kosher—as courses before the beef entrée, which was accompanied by vegetables with cream sauces, followed by cheeses and ice cream for dessert. According to Jonathan D. Sarna, University Professor and Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History, the menu was not known to Rabbi Wise—who kept kosher at home at the insistence of his wife, the daughter of an Orthodox rabbi—in advance of the event, causing him some embarrassment, as it had deeply offended and even angered many of his guests. One hundred rabbis and lay leaders from seventy-six congregations had attended the ordination ceremony and the tenth anniversary of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations earlier that day. In Sarna’s telling, the “inclusive gathering in Cincinnati marked the high point of Jewish religious unity in America. It symbolized the longstanding goal of [Rabbi Wise] to lead a broad, ideologically diverse coalition committed to strengthening American Judaism.” Instead, the “blunder” of this banquet created a wedge between advocates for reform, who supported Wise, and “those favoring a conservative approach to Jewish life,” who went on to establish a competing rabbinical school, the Jewish Theological Seminary, which opened in January 1887 in New York City. Between these two events, the Reform movement’s Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 rejected Jewish dietary laws as “entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state.” The author of this nomination suggests that it is not an accident that this Reform declaration employed the word “foreign” to describe the relationship between “old world” practices—in this case, kosher law—with the need to embrace “modern” American practices to achieve wellbeing. See Jonathan D. Sarna, “What Really Happened at the Original Trefa Banquet?” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (January 16, 2018), at:

<https://www.jta.org/2018/01/16/opinion/what-really-happened-at-the-original-trefa-banquet>.

<sup>95</sup> “Temple Aaron Bilette in Commemoration of Three Anniversaries,” November 11, 1949, cited in Breck, claims that Freudenthal graduated from the nation’s first Jewish seminary, established by Rabbi Wise in Cincinnati; this claim is repeated in Harriet and Fred Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986 [2000, 2014]). However, the annual reports of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, prepared by Rabbi Wise, list all graduates and current students whose examination grades are passing or better; the reports do not name students with low grades or students who left before earning a certificate or a diploma. The Hebrew Union College Annual Reports prepared by Rabbi Wise are available from the Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, at:

[https://sites.americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/browse.php?i=Hebrew\\_Union\\_College\\_Reports](https://sites.americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/browse.php?i=Hebrew_Union_College_Reports). The Marcus Center at the American Jewish Archives also holds the records of Congregation Aaron, Trinidad (MS-318), and the Leopold Freudenthal Papers (1878-1929) (MS-247), which include his sermons, records of births, marriages, and deaths, and personal business ledgers; both collections of papers were donated to the archives by Temple Aaron’s lay leader Beatrice Sanders.

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Rabbi Harry Richmond (1891-1976), newly ordained by the Hebrew Union College in 1917, came directly to Trinidad to lead the congregation at Temple Aaron; Richmond had immigrated from Beresnitz, Russia, to England and then to Canada before coming to the United States, where he studied at the University of Chicago and then the University of Cincinnati.<sup>96</sup> During his rabbinical studies, Richmond was the only student at the Hebrew Union College who—at a symbolic vote of the student body—cast his vote in opposition to the United States entering World War I; he also earned the college’s highest award for academic achievement that year.<sup>97</sup> Although he strongly opposed the war, Rabbi Richmond believed deeply in aiding those serving on the front lines, and in July 1918—after less than a full year leading Temple Aaron—he waived his clergyman’s exemption and enlisted in the U.S. Army, joining the 34<sup>th</sup> “Sandstorm” Division at Camp Cody near Deming, New Mexico, before shipping out to Bordeaux, France. He was promoted to first lieutenant chaplain and after ten months of service there, Richmond was honorably discharged and retained the rank of captain in the Officer Reserve Corps. Richmond then led Temple Beth El in Rockaway, New York, as its rabbi until 1930, when he left to become the rabbi at Congregation Emanu-El in Wichita, Kansas. At 51 years old, Rabbi Richmond was called to active duty in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1941, and was in his chaplain’s quarters on Sunday, December 7, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; following the attack, he was one of three chaplains who conducted funeral services for those killed in that event, and he then went on to serve in the Pacific during World War II as one of 311 rabbis for the 500,000 enlisted Jewish U.S. soldiers. Rabbi Richmond returned to Congregation Emanu-El in Wichita in 1945, where he stayed until 1956, when he chose to become the first rabbi of the newly formed Temple B’nai Israel in Clearwater, Florida. Richmond then took a position as a chaplain at the University of Rhode Island, from which he finally retired to return to New York, where he died in 1976.<sup>98</sup>

Wolfe Macht (1890-1952)—yet another newly ordained rabbi from Cincinnati’s Hebrew Union College, in the class behind Richmond—became the rabbi at Temple Aaron during “impressive installation exercises” on the morning of September 1, 1918: accompanied by organ music, a choir sang before the *kaddish*, followed by W.B. Hamerslough’s introduction of the new rabbi, after which Rabbi Macht gave his invocation and then led the service.<sup>99</sup> After less than one year as rabbi at Temple Aaron, however, Macht left Trinidad for Waco, Texas, where Congregation Rodef Sholom had invited him to serve as its rabbi. It is not known why Macht so quickly chose to leave Temple Aaron to accept the Waco position, but it is possible that the declining Jewish population of Trinidad was less attractive to the young rabbi than the larger congregation in that growing Texas city. Whatever his personal or professional reasons may have been, it appears that his choice to relocate to Waco was a good one, as Rabbi Macht served for 33 years at Rodef Sholom; upon his death in 1952, he was buried in the congregation’s cemetery.<sup>100</sup>

Temple Aaron continued with visiting rabbinical students and lay leaders following the departure of Wolfe

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<sup>96</sup> “Harry R. Richmond, Rabbi and Chaplain,” *The New York Times* (Saturday, August 28, 1976), 24; and Naomi Sandweiss, “A Comforter and Friend on the Front Lines: How Rabbi Harry Richmond Viewed His Historic Role as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army,” *Tablet* (November 10, 2020), available at: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/comforter-and-friend-harry-richmond-army-chaplain>.

<sup>97</sup> Sandweiss, *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Trinidad Anunciador* (August 31, 1918). The article, which has no headline or title, provides the full description of the program planned for the following morning at 10 o’clock, and explains that Macht is “taking the place made vacant by the resignation of former Rabbi Harry Richmond, who volunteered for service with our national army several weeks ago.” It is also worth noting that the induction program includes organ music; the origins of the organ are not known, but it must be different from the Estey Organ Co. instrument installed at Temple Aaron in 1921.

<sup>100</sup> “Waco: Historical Overview,” in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities*, [electronic resource] The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (Jackson, Mississippi), at: <https://www.isjl.org/texas-waco-encyclopedia.html>. A photograph of Rabbi Macht’s headstone at Rodef Sholom’s cemetery in Waco, Texas, is at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48180799/wolfe-macht>.

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Macht until September 1921, when the congregation hired Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg (1885-1931).<sup>101</sup> Born in Brzesko, Austria-Hungary, Rosenberg earned his degree from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1913, and he subsequently had a rather itinerant rabbinical career throughout the United States.<sup>102</sup> The *Sentinel*, a Chicago Jewish weekly newspaper, reported in July 1913 that “Congregation Temple Sinai of Lake Charles, La., has extended a call to Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg of Chicago, who has accepted and will occupy the pulpit on September 1.”<sup>103</sup> Rosenberg remained in Lake Charles at least through 1916, when it was reported that he had assisted in the organization of a new congregation and Hebrew school in Crowley, Louisiana, “during his ministry at Lake Charles, La.”<sup>104</sup> At some point between his service in Louisiana and at Temple Aaron in Trinidad, Rosenberg briefly served as the rabbi of Temple Beth-El in Pensacola, Florida. He did not last but a few years at Temple Aaron, either, as the *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* lists him as living in Trinidad only through 1923.<sup>105</sup> The published report of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, held in June 1924, lists him as living in Texarkana, Texas, without any affiliation with a synagogue or congregation.<sup>106</sup> By 1926, Rosenberg had left Texas to become the rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel in Phoenix, Arizona, but he did not stay there for long either.<sup>107</sup> Rosenberg left

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<sup>101</sup> *Trinidad Anunciador* (September 10, 1921). The newspaper reported in a two-sentence article: “The vacancy in the pastorate of Temple Aaron has been filled by the acceptance of Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg of the offer [sic] to become rabbi of the local congregation. Rabbi Rosenberg comes to Trinidad highly recommended from Pensacola, Fla., and will occupy the pulpit here permanently. He is a graduate of Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, Ohio, and unmarried.” Adolph Rosenberg is named as the first rabbi of Temple Beth-El in Pensacola, see: [https://www.pensapedia.com/wiki/Temple\\_Beth-El](https://www.pensapedia.com/wiki/Temple_Beth-El); this encyclopedic Pensacola wiki states that many of the congregation’s early members were lumber workers in the timber industry of Milton, Florida, which is corroborated on the congregation’s own website, at: <https://templebethelofpensacola.org/about-us-2/our-history/>; however, the wiki gives an impossible date of 1892 for Rosenberg’s hiring there.

<sup>102</sup> “Hebrew Union College Alumni List, 1883-1933,” in Jacob de Haas, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Knowledge in One Volume* (New York: Behrman’s Jewish Book House, 1934); transcription available online at: <http://bklyn-genealogy-info.stevemorse.org/Ethnic/Jewish/HebrewUnionCollege.html>. In addition to Adolf (Adolph) Rosenberg (1913), other Temple Aaron rabbis included on this alumni list are Harry R. Richmond (1917) and Wolfe Macht (1918). It is important to note that this published list does not include Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal, which suggests that he did not graduate from the Hebrew Union College, even if Temple Aaron’s oral tradition suggests that he did. The asterisk next to “Adolf Rosenberg” among the alumni of 1913 indicates that he was deceased at the time of publication, as corroborated in “Retired Rabbi Dies in City Yesterday,” *Bradford Era* (September 3, 1931), 5 and by the headstone on Rosenberg’s grave in Oak Hill Cemetery, Bradford, Pennsylvania, see: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90863121/adolph-rosenberg>.

<sup>103</sup> This brief article does not make clear whether Rosenberg was merely a resident of Chicago at that time, or if he was serving a congregation there. “Rabbi Rosenberg to Occupy Pulpit in Louisiana,” *The Sentinel* 11, no. 2 (July 11, 1913), 2, available at: <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/p16614coll14/id/16389/>.

<sup>104</sup> “District 16, Southern and Western Louisiana, Supervisor Rabbi Emil W. Leipziger, New Orleans, La.” *43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (Cincinnati: Press of May and Kreidler, December 1916), 8036, available at: <https://books.google.com/books?id=gt6fAAAAMAAJ>.

<sup>105</sup> *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report (November 1, 1924 - October 31, 1925) (Cincinnati: 1926), 9997, available at: <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Proceedings/hH8zAQAAMAAJ>. The alphabetical list of Hebrew Union College alumni includes Adolf Rosenberg as having earned his B.A. in 1913 and residing in Texarkana, and there is no asterisk after his name. An asterisk denoted those alumni who “are located in places stated, but who are not officiating rabbis.” This suggests that Rabbi Rosenberg was employed as a rabbi in Texarkana, even if his affiliation with a synagogue or congregation there is unconfirmed. It is also worth noting that Rabbi Harry R. Richmond appears just four lines above Rosenberg on this page, listed as having earned a B.A. in 1917, and living in Rockaway Park, Long Island, New York. On page 10068 of the Proceedings, “Aaron Congregation, Trinidad, Colo.” is listed—without a rabbi—among the members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

<sup>106</sup> Rabbi Isaac E. Marcuson, ed., *Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention, Central Conference of American Rabbis*, 34 (Richmond, Virginia: Old Dominion Press, Inc., 1925), 394; Rosenberg appears here in the alphabetical “List of Members” simply as “Rosenberg, Adolph, Rabbi, Texarkana, Tex.” without any street address or congregational affiliation, unlike any other rabbi on this page. Members are also listed by state; on page 407, he again appears by name in Texarkana, but without any affiliation to a congregation. In contrast, former Temple Aaron rabbi Wolfe Macht is listed two lines below Rosenberg, at Rodef Sholom in Waco, see <https://books.google.com/books?id=1z4cAQAIAAJ>.

<sup>107</sup> “History,” The Cutler-Plotkin Jewish Heritage Center of the Arizona Jewish Historical Society [website], available at: <https://www.azjhs.org/history>. This webpage provides the history of Congregation Beth Israel of Phoenix, Arizona, which hired

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Phoenix for Bradford, Pennsylvania, where he served as the rabbi of Temple Beth Zion for approximately three years, when poor health forced his early retirement in 1929 or 1930. Adolph Rosenberg died at age 48 on September 2, 1931, and was buried the following day in Oak Hill Cemetery in Bradford.<sup>108</sup>

After Rosenberg's departure to Texarkana in 1923, Temple Aaron does not seem to have hired another permanent rabbi. This likely is due to a decline in the congregation's members and a related decrease in its annual budget, or perhaps it was difficult to attract rabbis to Trinidad in those years, as the town no longer was booming. Members of the Freudenthal and Sanders families served as lay leaders during this time, with visiting rabbis leading the High Holiday services each autumn.<sup>109</sup> Martin M. Weitz first served as a visiting rabbi to Temple Aaron for the High Holidays in 1929 while still a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College; he returned for these duties in 1930 and again in 1931.<sup>110</sup> Rabbi Weitz maintained close ties with Temple Aaron throughout the years, editing the "Temple Aaron Biblette"—a document cited by many historians of Jews in the Mountain West—in 1949.<sup>111</sup> In June 1983 Rabbi Weitz returned to Trinidad to celebrate the congregation's centenary, along with Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, emeritus professor at the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion and founding director of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.<sup>112</sup>

Like their father, Rabbi Leopold Freudenthal's two sons, Samuel and Alfred, played critical supporting roles at Temple Aaron and in the civic life of Trinidad. Samuel Freudenthal (1880-1929) was a prominent attorney who practiced law in Trinidad until his death; he also served as a Republican senator in Colorado (1924-1928) and was one of the sponsors of Senate Bill 403, which established Trinidad State Junior College in 1925—the first community college in the State of Colorado. Today, the Samuel Freudenthal Memorial Library is located in the heart of that college campus in Trinidad. Alfred Freudenthal (1879-1944) was a physician and surgeon in Trinidad who established a trust to support charitable organizations, local health care facilities, and Temple Aaron. Upon his death, his estate—valued between a half-million and one million dollars—endowed the Freudenthal Memorial Foundation, which supported the maintenance and good repair of the synagogue for more than seventy years. The Fund also made gifts to twenty-four other nonprofit organizations in the region

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Adolph Rosenberg in 1926, stating: "[T]he congregation struggled to find and retain suitable spiritual leaders given Phoenix's small size and far-flung location. One of the early rabbis, Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg of Texarkana, hired in 1926, claimed to be a rabbi but was never actually ordained. His successor, the Reverend Y. Dow, was initially engaged to serve as a *shochet*, or ritual slaughterer, and was eventually retained to lead the congregation due to his popularity with the religiously diverse group." The 2019 Temple Beth Israel annual memorial booklet (published online in 2020) lists Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg as the congregation's third rabbi (1926-1929)—following two rabbis who each served for one year or less—who then was followed by "Rabbi Y. Dow (Interim), 1929-1930." See page 46 at: <https://online.anyflip.com/xkox/sezv/files/basic-html/page46.html>.

<sup>108</sup> "Retired Rabbi Dies in City Yesterday" and "Rabbi Adolph Rosenberg," *Bradford Era* (September 4, 1931), 14; transcriptions of both available at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90863121/adolph-rosenberg>.

<sup>109</sup> "[T]he Jewish community failed to grow, and economic conditions in Trinidad started to deteriorate. It now became a constant struggle to maintain the congregation. Periodic special assessments of the members, and even reductions in the rabbi's salary, became necessary. And, after a futile attempt to support a rabbi following Dr. Freudenthal's death, the congregation drew upon students from the Hebrew Union College to conduct the High Holyday [*sic*] worship. For the rest of its religious activities, it called upon its own members. As a result, the temple developed a ministry of devoted laypeople—chiefly the Sanders family," see *Commemorating a Century: Congregation Aaron, Trinidad, Colorado, 1883-1983* [printed program for the Centenary of Congregation Aaron], (June 10-11, 1983), Collection of Temple Aaron.

<sup>110</sup> Doris Sky, "Temple Aaron of Trinidad, Celebrates a Century of Service as Reform Temple," *Intermountain Jewish News* (June 10, 1983), 16-17.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* Included in the "Biblette" is a copy of a letter addressed to Rabbi Weitz at Temple Aaron from Eleanor Roosevelt (October 17, 1949) "on the occasion of your three-fold celebration," as well as a letter addressed to him from Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (October 25, 1949).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, and Doris Sky, "Temple Aaron Centennial Celebration Was a Never-to-Be-Forgotten Weekend," *Intermountain Jewish News* (July 22, 1983), 12-13; also *Commemorating a Century*.

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that supported social services, education, and local churches.<sup>113</sup>

Although the Jewish population of Trinidad stagnated and then declined in the first half of the twentieth century, the remaining Temple Aaron families stayed close-knit and maintained their strong bonds of friendship and community. Two sons of Jennie and Simon Sanders—the liquor wholesaler from Alsace who served as a founding trustee and first treasurer of Congregation Aaron—each became a lay rabbi, as did one of his daughters-in-law. Leopold Sanders (1875-1935), born in New York City and brought to Trinidad at four years old, grew to become a civic leader who eventually served as president of the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>114</sup> He led the services and acted in place of a rabbi at Temple Aaron until his death, at which time his younger brother assumed this role. Gilbert Sanders (1889-1952), born in the year of the synagogue's construction, was an attorney by profession who also served on the Board of Directors of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). He began his service as lay rabbi in 1935 and continued in this capacity until his death. For his many years of dedicated service to the Jewish community of Trinidad and at the national level, the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion granted Gilbert Sanders an honorary Doctorate of Hebrew Letters on June 6, 1952.<sup>115</sup> The last of the three lay rabbis in the Sanders family, Gilbert's wife Beatrice (1900-1987), assumed the responsibilities of Temple Aaron after the death of her husband in 1952, leading the services for the dwindling Jewish community. Her role at the helm of a synagogue was especially remarkable, as she was one of only five women in the United States to hold a comparable leadership position within Reform Judaism at that time.<sup>116</sup> In recognition of her extraordinary work, the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion granted Beatrice Sanders an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters on March 11, 1981.<sup>117</sup> However,

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<sup>113</sup> Rabbi Martin M. Weitz, "The Story of the Dr. Freudenthal Foundation," 15-16. Breck states that Rabbi Freudenthal and his two sons "established by a joint will a Foundation which was to begin operation on the death of the last surviving testator. Thus, on the death of Dr. Alfred Freudenthal, this fund of \$400,000, the largest part of which went to the Temple, became available for charitable and educational purposes in Trinidad. The Freudenthal Health Center was part of this bequest. The executors of the will included a Jew, a Protestant, and a Catholic; the three directors of the Fund (Gilbert Sanders, Albert Moses, and Leo Gottlieb) were all sons of men who had invited Rabbi Freudenthal to Trinidad in 1889." See Breck, 230. The 1952 Trinidad city directory lists attorney and Temple Aaron lay rabbi Gilbert Sanders as the President of the Freudenthal Memorial Foundation on page 132; Sanders died later that year. The author of this nomination found several boxes of Alfred Freudenthal's medical books and ledgers of his practice and accounts stored in the basement of Temple Aaron in June 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Simon Sanders lived until his 1906 death with his wife Jennie and their sons Leopold and Gilbert at 219 South Chestnut Street, near Samuel Jaffa's family at 231 South Chestnut Street. Joseph Sanders, president of the Trinidad Club and later the manager of Simon Sanders & Co., lived across the street at 220 South Chestnut Street, until they sold their homes for the construction of the Rapp & Rapp-designed Las Animas County Courthouse and Jail sometime in 1911. After 1912, the widow Jennie and her sons Leopold and Gilbert are listed as residing at 202 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street; this cream brick, two-story four-square house with exposed rafter tails—still standing, largely unaltered, at the corner of East 6<sup>th</sup> and South Maple streets—was designed by Rapp & Rapp (Sheppard, 68). Leopold, who never married, and his widowed mother Jennie continued to live in this house until their deaths, after which time Gilbert continued to live in the house with his wife Beatrice. In the 1909 city directory, Isidore Sanders—brother of Leopold and Gilbert—is listed as residing at 322 South Ash Street, and this two-story Queen Anne style house, covered in wood shingles, remains extant today at the corner of South Ash and East Third streets. In the 1912-13 directory, Isidore Sanders is listed as residing at 716 South Maple Street, but beginning in 1918, Isidore and his wife Gertrude are listed next door at 710 South Maple Street until Isidore's death in 1939; the two are nearly identical, low-slung Arts and Crafts style bungalows that remain standing today, just around the corner from the 6<sup>th</sup> Street home of Jennie, Leopold, Gilbert, and Beatrice Sanders.

<sup>115</sup> Gilbert Sanders's honorary doctorate diploma is framed and hangs in the lodge meeting room at Temple Aaron. Gilbert Sanders's *wimple*—the swaddling cloth wrapped around him at his circumcision ceremony when he was eight days old in July 1889—was transformed into a Torah binder given to Rabbi Freudenthal for use at Temple Aaron. As customary in this German Jewish folk art tradition, the child's mother or grandmother embroidered or painted the fabric with the child's name and birthdate, as well as the prayer recited at the ceremony, to ensure a blessed and happy life. Gilbert Sanders's wimple is now part of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Cultural Center Museum Collection in Los Angeles, California, and featured in the online exhibit *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America* on the website of the Library of Congress, at: [www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html#obj18](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html#obj18), accessed on March 3, 2021.

<sup>116</sup> Marjorie Barrett, "Synagogue is Trinidad Landmark," *Rocky Mountain News Global* (July 19, 1970), 7.

<sup>117</sup> Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1995* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998),

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the Jewish population of Trinidad continued to dwindle during the last twenty years of Dr. Sanders's service to Temple Aaron—throughout this period, only fifteen to twenty Jewish people belonged to the congregation, including two families who traveled from northern New Mexico for services.

The matriarch of one of these two New Mexico families, Kathryn Rubin (1923-2018) of Raton, took the lead at Temple Aaron after the death of her good friend Beatrice Sanders in 1987, ensuring the care of the synagogue and bringing in visiting rabbis for services. Mrs. Rubin and her late husband, Leon, had owned several stores in Raton, including Rubin's Family Clothiers, R&R Shoe Store, and the Sports Arena.<sup>118</sup> In the summer of 2016, with the Rubin family as the only consistent members of the congregation, Kathryn Rubin concluded that the building should be sold, and no rabbi was invited to conduct the High Holiday services that year. Temple Aaron's potential closure and sale received significant media attention that reached beyond Colorado, attracting a wave of support that allowed Temple Aaron to remain a functioning synagogue, beginning with Sukkot celebrations that October.<sup>119</sup>

Another member of Temple Aaron was the surgeon Dr. Stanley Biber (1923-2006), who made Trinidad a renowned center of gender confirmation surgery in the second half of the twentieth century. Biber had been raised within the Jewish community of Des Moines, Iowa, and his parents had hoped he would become either a rabbi or a concert pianist. After he graduated from high school at sixteen years old, Biber enrolled in a Chicago *yeshiva* to begin his rabbinical studies, but he chose to pause his education during World War II to work as a civilian in Alaska for the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency. During the war, Biber decided to become a doctor instead of a rabbi, and he enrolled at the University of Iowa, earning his medical degree in 1948. Biber served in an army surgical hospital in Colorado Springs as the head of its orthopedics unit during the Korean War, after which the United Mine Workers of America hired him to serve as a general physician and surgeon at its new clinic for Trinidad's coal miners and their families. He eventually opened his own medical practice and took an office on the fifth floor of the First National Bank building—designed in 1890 by the firm of Bulger & Rapp, the architects of Temple Aaron—at the corner of Main and Commercial streets in the center of downtown. In 1969, a social worker with whom Dr. Biber regularly worked asked the doctor for help; as a transgender woman, she was seeking what was then referred to as a “sex change operation.” Although many people at that time considered the procedure to be experimental, and despite the fact that he had no experience with this type of surgery, Biber agreed to help his colleague and performed the operation. The patient then referred another transgender client to Dr. Biber, and his reputation quickly grew among patients seeking gender confirmation surgery. While also maintaining his general medicine practice and serving for many years as the only surgeon in Trinidad, Biber's expertise was sought by transgender people from around the world, and he sometimes performed four confirmation procedures in a single week. After forty-one years in practice, Biber estimated that he had performed six thousand gender confirmation surgeries before his retirement in 2004.<sup>120</sup> Although he never officially had a “lay rabbi” role at Temple Aaron, Dr. Biber did occasionally attend services at the synagogue throughout his years in Trinidad.

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126. Beatrice Sanders's honorary doctorate diploma is framed and hangs in the lodge meeting room at Temple Aaron.

<sup>118</sup> “In Memoriam: Kathryn Rubin, A Life Well Lived,” <https://www.templeaaron.org/kathryn-rubin-memoriam>, accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>119</sup> Jesse Paul, “Trinidad's Temple Aaron Seemed Destined to Die. But the 131-year-old Jewish Synagogue's Fate Was Never Sealed,” *The Colorado Sun* (September 18, 2020), at: <https://coloradosun.com/2020/09/18/temple-aaron-trinidad-rosh-hashanah/>.

<sup>120</sup> Devin Flores, “Dr. Stanley Biber,” at: <https://www.historycolorado.org/story/2020/06/26/dr-stanley-biber>; also “Dr. Stanley Biber” at: <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/dr-stanley-biber>; both websites accessed on March 2, 2021. For more on Biber's Jewish identity, see “This Day in Jewish History: Doctor Who Devoted His Career to Sex-Change Surgery Dies,” *Haaretz*, at: <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-this-day-sex-change-doctor-dies-1.5312217>, accessed on November 30, 2021; and Zachary Solomon, “The Small Town Jew Who Pioneered Sex-Change Surgery,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (February 9, 2016), at: <https://www.jta.org/jewniverse/2016/the-small-town-jew-who-pioneered-sex-change-surgery>, accessed on December 1, 2021.

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Today, at the time of this nomination's preparation, Kathryn Rubin's two sons, Randy and Ron, serve on the Temple Aaron Board of Directors along with four others who continue to care for the 132-year-old synagogue—even though none of the six are residents of Trinidad. The new board members have brought a renewed sense of purpose, deep commitment, and vision to the congregation, hiring a new rabbi, Dr. Robert Lennick of Santa Fe, New Mexico, in November 2020. The board also is actively pursuing grants for the further preservation and maintenance of the historic building, and in December 2020 it announced its two most recent awards. To repair the 132-year-old metal roof, including the signature onion domes, Temple Aaron received a \$50,000 State Historical Fund grant from History Colorado, which the board must match with its own funds of \$30,500. Jewish Colorado and the Rose Community Foundation have awarded Temple Aaron a Safety and Security Grant of \$3,000 to install lighting, access control devices, and security cameras onsite. During the late summer and early fall of 2021, the congregation raised over \$50,000 toward the replacement of the temple's boiler, and it is planning to celebrate the new heating system in January 2022.<sup>121</sup> As it begins to settle into the third decade of the twenty-first century, Temple Aaron reflects the challenges of maintaining synagogues amidst dwindling communities throughout the United States, and especially in the American West.<sup>122</sup>

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPLE AARON

### Origins of the Moorish Revival Style of Synagogue Architecture in Europe

Architects and scholars of Jewish history and architectural history have written many dozens of articles and books on the origins of the "Moorish style" of architecture and its application to the design of synagogues in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; particularly, there has been much written on what the choice of this style might have signaled or meant. Historian Lee Shai Weissbach has called the synagogue a *mivneh simli*, or a "symbolic structure fraught with meaning," writing, "[A] synagogue building often acts as a concrete representation of the character and condition of the Jewish community it serves. It can and often does reveal not only who the Jews who make use of it are and how they behave, but also what they think and what they believe."<sup>123</sup> Synagogues serve as places for Jews to gather, study, and worship, but they also represent Jews and Jewish identity in the communities where they are located. While there are rules or traditions as to how a synagogue building should be sited—on the highest ground due to its primary role in Jewish life, and facing Jerusalem to strongly connect the Jewish people to the Land of Israel—and where the bimah and the ark should be placed within the sanctuary, there never has been a requirement for the exterior style or shape of a synagogue building.<sup>124</sup> Jewish architecture always has been flexible, adaptable to whatever its particular context demands.

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<sup>121</sup> "We Did It!" [e-mail message to Temple Aaron mailing list subscribers], October 11, 2021; also "Turn Up the Heat!" fundraising campaign, posted August 2021 on the Temple Aaron website, at: <https://www.templeaaron.org/turn-up-the-heat>.

<sup>122</sup> According to the Pew Research Center's 2013 "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," only 4% of American Jews live in rural areas; see <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>. The recent announcements of Rabbi Lennick and the grants awarded to Temple Aaron are posted on the congregation's website, at: <https://www.templeaaron.org/announcements>, accessed February 23, 2021. In an email message sent on June 15, 2021, to the author of this nomination, Kim Grant, Endangered Places Program Director at Colorado Preservation, Inc., and a current board member of Temple Aaron, confirmed that Colorado Preservation, Inc., has held a preservation easement on this synagogue building since 2012. Other work completed through grants and awards from Colorado Preservation, Inc. is listed on that organization's website, at: <http://coloradopreservation.org/2017-list-colorados-most-endangered-places/temple-aaron/>.

<sup>123</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, "Buildings Fraught with Meaning: An Introduction to a Special Issue on Synagogue Architecture in Context," *Jewish History* 25 (2011), 1.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2. Eminent historian of synagogue architecture Rachel Bernstein Wischnitzer wrote in 1955 that not only is there no prescribed or mandated style for synagogue buildings, but that "Jewish tradition does not require a specific place for a congregation to meet, and a humble room can serve the purpose." Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), 3.

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Writing to the Jews of Trieste in 1787, Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague stated that a synagogue could be constructed as an octagon or any shape, but he suggested that Jews should not be tempted to copy the styles employed by the gentile elite classes in their churches; noting that Jews everywhere in the world are in exile of their true homeland in Israel, Rabbi Landau argued that it would be inappropriate for an exiled people to construct buildings that ostentatiously displayed wealth, and—perhaps most significantly—that too-elaborate synagogues might suggest an increasing tendency toward assimilation.<sup>125</sup> During the many centuries in which Jews were made to live under great restrictions throughout Europe, it was ill-advised to call attention to their own difference; mere survival under these circumstances was paramount, and the traditions of Jewish life were quietly maintained. Many historians have noted that quite often during this era of great restrictions and ghettoization, if synagogue construction was permitted at all, one most likely would adopt the prevailing style of the day.<sup>126</sup> Historian Gavriel D. Rosenfeld has stated, “Dispersed among diverse countries around the world, the Jews developed an architecture of diversity rather than uniformity. For this reason, some scholars have offered the paradoxical conclusion that Jewish architecture is best defined as the absence of an identifiable style.”<sup>127</sup>

However, as Jewish emancipation spread throughout Europe into the nineteenth century, Jewish communities—experiencing fewer restrictions and enjoying new freedoms—began to question how they should construct their new synagogues and what these buildings might symbolize or mean to their own communities and to outsiders. Broadly, rapid modernization in nineteenth-century Europe initially provoked anxiety that resulted in the rise of nationalism, which, in turn, often inspired a country to return to its presumed architectural roots as a display of its past strength and heritage in the face of an unknown future. Across the continent, buildings of all types and purposes were recast in a wide range of stylistic revivals—Gothic, Romanesque, Byzantine, Egyptian, Indo-Saracenic, and Moorish. It has been suggested that the latter revival style was frequently employed in the construction of new synagogues in Europe due to “a more complex set of circumstances.”<sup>128</sup>

Some architects and historians have suggested that nineteenth-century central European Jews chose the historic architecture of Muslim Spain between the eighth and fifteenth centuries in order to connect their newly liberated lives to that historic period or “golden age” of tolerance and coexistence with Christian and Islamic cultures.<sup>129</sup> Others have written that European Jews were reaching further back into a more ancient history—in the Middle East, not in Spain—in an attempt to display themselves as the originators of these two later cultural and religious traditions. Architect and historian Rudolf Klein of Budapest has written that the Moorish Revival style—a “second rate” style used for amusing architectural follies and pavilions at zoos—was not seen as “serious” and therefore may have been thrust upon Jewish communities in order to reinforce their cultural segregation; at the same time, the style may have been selected as “the only available architectural idiom not already in use” for monumental buildings.<sup>130</sup> Historian Ivan Davidson Kalmar, too, has noted that the so-called

<sup>125</sup> Weissbach, “Buildings Fraught with Meaning,” 2.

<sup>126</sup> Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 194. Cited in Michael M. Kahn and Ashley Paine, “The Decorated Synagogue: Architectural Appropriation and Assimilation at Atlanta’s Temple,” in Paul Hogben and Judith O’Callaghan, eds., *Architecture, Institutions and Change*, Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, v. 32 (Sydney: SAHANZ, 2015), 280.

<sup>127</sup> Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, “Postwar Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust” in *Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture: Antisemitism, Assimilation, Affirmation*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Matthew Baigell, and Milly Heyd (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 2010), 285-302. Cited in Amy H. Crain, “Synagogue Architecture as Metaphor: Standing Out or Blending In,” paper presented to the Society of Architectural Historians Marion Dean Ross / Pacific Northwest Chapter Annual Meeting, Ashland, Oregon, October 23-25, 2015.

<sup>128</sup> Kahn and Paine, 280.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-281. Kahn and Paine refer to the work of many architectural historians and historians of Jewish history, including works previously cited herein by Wischnitzer (1955 and 1964), Krinsky (1985), Kalmar (2001), and Weissbach (2011).

<sup>130</sup> Rudolf Klein, “Ludwig Forster’s Dohany Tempel in Pest: Moorish Cathedral for the ‘Asiates of Europe,’” *Prostor* 17, no. 2 (2009),

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Moorish style often was associated with the exotic, with escapism and play, flatly stating, “The Moorish style was not invented for synagogues.”<sup>131</sup> Russian-born architect and art historian Rachel Bernstein Wischnitzer, who wrote extensively about the historic evolution of synagogue architecture, said of the widespread use of this style:

The search for the meaning of architectural forms with regard to the synagogue coincided with, if it was not provoked by, the Romantic Movement. The accompanying revival of the medieval architectural styles, with their strong appeal to the imagination and the greater freedom of design they allowed, weakened the hold of the classical tradition in America. . . . One of the puzzling problems of synagogue architecture in America involves the motives for adopting the Moorish style . . . . Oriental forms—minarets, bulbous domes and horseshoe arches—had no prestige. . . . [but] the Oriental Revival was a phase of the general Romantic interest in the past—in the European Middle Ages in the first place, but also in alien, exotic civilizations . . . it was a blind alley, an alien importation with roots neither in the Jewish past nor in the American environment. It was a fashionable trend which generated its own chain of associations, containing features which were readily accepted as a traditional Jewish style.<sup>132</sup>

Wischnitzer lists Washington Irving and Benjamin Disraeli as Romantic-era proponents of the so-called Oriental Revival. In *The Alhambra* (1832), Irving “found the remains of Moorish Spain, which he exalted,” while Disraeli “established an emotional link between the Jews and the Orient in literature.”<sup>133</sup> No matter the reasons for its adoption by congregations constructing new synagogues in the nineteenth century, it seems indisputable that the Moorish Revival style was intended to clearly and boldly communicate the presence of Jewish people—their freedom and mobility, their heritage in the past, and their potential in the future, wherever they were living—first in Europe, and then in the United States.

While traditional or Orthodox Jews tended to resist architectural change—Klein states that “they followed modern trends with a lag of twenty to fifty years”—Jewish reformists “stood at the forefront in not only changing/updating religion but also in supporting the latest architectural innovations/trends.”<sup>134</sup> The flexibility in synagogue architecture was amplified or magnified by the Reform movement. The first Reform synagogue opened in Seesen, in Lower Saxony, Germany, on July 17, 1810, with a community celebration attended by political dignitaries, Christian ministers, and rabbis, all walking into its sanctuary as bells rang from a tower and a choir sang hymns in German and Hebrew, accompanied by a pipe organ.<sup>135</sup> It also was around this time that Reform Jews began to use the word “temple” to refer to their synagogues; they believed “that the Jewish people were not in exile and considered every house of worship a temple, as holy as the original Temple in

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214 n. 3, cited in Kahn and Paine, 281; also Rudolf Klein, *The Great Synagogue of Budapest* (Budapest: TERC, 2008).

<sup>131</sup> Kalmar, 74. He cites the style’s use at the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, designed in 1815 by architect John Nash for George, the Prince Regent (later King George IV), with its “claim of exoticism, an air of carefree amusement.”

<sup>132</sup> Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States*, 6-7.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. Disraeli, who visited Jerusalem in 1830, published a novel in 1833 inspired by his travels—*The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*—in which the protagonist David Alroy dreams of the Temple of Jerusalem and receives a vision of the Star of David.

<sup>134</sup> Rudolf Klein, “Nineteenth Century Synagogue Typology in Historic Hungary,” 109 and 122, n. 2.

<sup>135</sup> Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 20-61. On the first Reform synagogue, established by philanthropist Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) at Seesen in 1810, see especially 40-43. On page 41, Meyer describes the rectangular building, constructed between 1805 and 1810, to have “a curved roof containing clock faces on all four sides. It was topped by a belvedere from which a short bell tower—really a louver—extended upward an additional few yards. The bells, so obviously Christian that they are to be found in only one later German synagogue, were a point of great controversy, raising objections from both Jews and Gentiles.”

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Jerusalem.”<sup>136</sup> In 1817, sixty-five Jewish families organized in Hamburg as the *Neuer Israelitischer Tempelverein* (New Israelite Temple Society), a Reform congregation; they utilized a pre-existing building in the city’s Neustadt quarter as their synagogue until 1844, when they constructed a larger temple for their growing congregation.<sup>137</sup> Typical attributes of the Reform synagogue as an architectural type include verticality, to pronounce the building as the most important building in the Jewish community; ample windows to allow views to the heavens and natural light; twelve windows representing the tribes of Israel; a raised ark (*aron kodesh*) with a curtain (*paroket*) to hold the Torah scrolls; placement of a wood reader’s desk in conjunction with a platform (*bimah*) in front of the ark, rather than in the center of the sanctuary as in the Sephardic Orthodox tradition; integrated seating of men and women; and provision for an organ and choir.<sup>138</sup>

The Kassel Synagogue in Hesse, dedicated on August 8, 1839, was designed in 1836 by architect August Schuchardt with assistance from his Jewish protégé Albrecht Rosengarten. According to synagogue historian Wischnitzer, the Kassel Synagogue had “no oriental [*sic*] suggestions” and was designed “in a reduced Romanesque style: unassuming and neutral, with just the right measure of medievalism required to identify the structure as of religious significance.”<sup>139</sup> In a later book, she described the Kassel Synagogue as the first to be constructed in the *Rundbogenstil*, a German historic revival style that combined elements of Byzantine, Romanesque, and Renaissance architecture in a hybridized fantasy, created by German architects seeking to create a national style.<sup>140</sup>

The Dresden Synagogue (1838-1840), also called the Semper Synagogue, was the only religious building designed by the German architect, critic, and professor of architecture Gottfried Semper (1803-1879). Semper, who was not Jewish, designed the synagogue with a heavy Romanesque exterior using very little ornament, allowing it to fit comfortably near the old ramparts of the city of Dresden along the river. Worshipers entered

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<sup>136</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, *The Story of the Synagogue: A Diaspora Museum Book* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), 169; also Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 42. Meyer writes here that while the word “temple” could even be applied to a rented room as well as a synagogue, Israel Jacobson’s choice of the word “temple” also was ideologically strategic: “Not only was this new building given a name which was not exclusively used for Jewish houses of worship (like ‘synagogue’) and which pointed to its distinctiveness from earlier structures, it would also recall—however distantly—the ancient temple in Jerusalem.”

<sup>137</sup> The rented building in Hamburg was dedicated as the Society’s new temple on October 18, 1818, seating 142 men on the main floor and 107 women in the balcony; see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 54-57. Some scholars consider this Hamburg temple to be the “first” Reform synagogue because, although a pre-existing building, it was not associated with any other religious organization or use; whereas the 1810 building that Israel Jacobsen constructed in Seesen was affiliated with an immediately-adjacent Jewish academy that he had founded, and therefore it could only be considered as the school’s “prayer room” and not a synagogue—but this seems to be an esoteric distinction. Meyer’s description of the 1810 dedication in Seesen establishes that the community viewed it as the equal of local churches and earlier synagogues.

<sup>138</sup> At Temple Aaron the ark is against the west (southwest) wall, so that the Torah scrolls within it—and the rabbi and cantor, when reading from the Torah at the bimah—are facing east (northeast) toward Jerusalem, as the worshipers face the west/southwest.

<sup>139</sup> Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, “The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style Expressive of America,” *Commentary* (March 1947), available at: <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/rachel-wischnitzer-bernstein/the-problem-of-synagogue-architecture-creating-a-style-expressive-of-america/>. In this essay—written after the horrors of the Holocaust and World War II had ended—the author recounted the development of historicist styles for synagogue architecture and asked what the contemporary synagogue should be, combining an awareness of the atrocities of war while remaining steadfast and optimistic about an unknown future. Here, Wischnitzer called the Moorish synagogue “ubiquitous” and stated that after his work on the Kassel Synagogue with August Schuchardt, Albrecht (Albert) Rosengarten went on to complete several other synagogues in his European career, but he wavered on the appropriateness of this style, later calling it a “perverted taste” too closely associated with Islam and Arab civilization. Citing the 1894 reprint of his 1857 *Handbook of Architecture*, she states that Albrecht sought to align Jewish culture and synagogue architecture more closely with Christianity, quoting him: “The chief endeavor in Jewish and Christian worship is the elevating effect [which] could be attained only in classical, Romanesque, and Gothic architecture.” The Kassel Synagogue was destroyed on November 7, 1938, two days before start of the notorious Kristallnacht, with its Torahs and other items taken outside and burned publicly on the street; the city demolished the ruins on November 11, after the pogroms had ended.

<sup>140</sup> Wischnitzer, *Architecture of the European Synagogue*, 195-198.

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the building through a rather modest vestibule situated between two towers with hemispherical domes. The exterior did not suggest the beauty and opulence of the interior. In the sanctuary, Semper chose columns copied from the Alhambra to support a double-tiered balcony with arches decorated in polychrome lattice and foliate designs, effectively initiating the use of an Arabic or “Moorish” style in a synagogue.<sup>141</sup>

Two of Semper’s students, both Jewish, followed with their own Moorish-influenced temples: Otto Jakob Simonson with his imposing, domed Leipzig Gemeinde (Community) Synagogue (1855), which accommodated 2,000 worshipers, and Adolf Wolff at the Great Synagogue of Łódź, Poland (1881). Simonson also advocated the Moorish style be used for new synagogue construction, inspired by Semper, and soon it appeared throughout Germany.<sup>142</sup> Berlin’s Neue Synagoge (New Synagogue) was constructed in 1866 with a sanctuary for 3,200 worshipers, the largest synagogue in Germany. Designed by Eduard Knoblauch with a polychromed brick façade inspired by the Alhambra, the synagogue featured domed minarets at its corners and a towering central dome encrusted with an ornate, gold-plated ribbed lattice.<sup>143</sup>

Built between 1854 and 1859, the monumental Dohány Street Synagogue still stands today in Budapest, Hungary, and is the largest synagogue in Europe, seating nearly 3,000 worshipers. Designed predominately in the Moorish Revival style by the Viennese architect Ludwig Förster, also citing the Alhambra, the massive temple also features Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic Revival elements. Förster believed that, because there was no identifiable, distinctive Jewish style of architecture, “forms that have been used by oriental ethnic groups that are related to the Israelite people, and in particular the Arabs” were most appropriate for new synagogue construction.<sup>144</sup> The ornate, polychromed exterior of light buff-colored masonry with red horizontal bands features two octagonal towers, each over 140’ tall, crowned by onion domes banded with gold; a large rose window of stained glass is centered over the entrance. Its richly ornamented interior is covered with frescoes of Alhambra-inspired geometric shapes, designed by the Hungarian architect Frigyes Feszl; the basilica plan features seating for nearly 1,500 men, separated by three aisles, on the main floor, with two women’s galleries above, supported by slender columns like those in the Alhambra, seating approximately 1,500 women. The synagogue’s 1859 organ featured 5,000 pipes and also served as a central, sculptural element.<sup>145</sup>

### Temple Aaron and the Moorish Revival Style of Synagogue Architecture in the United States

As the first wave of German Jewish immigrants began to arrive in the eastern United States circa 1840, eclectic and exotic, hybridized revival-styled synagogues followed. San Francisco’s Temple Emanu-El (destroyed in the 1906 earthquake) and Cincinnati’s Isaac M. Wise (Plum Street) Temple, each were completed in 1866 in an elaborate and highly ornamented Moorish Revival style at a monumental scale. The Central Synagogue (1870-1872) in New York City is considered to be a near-exact copy of the Dohány Street Synagogue in Budapest.

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<sup>141</sup> The Dresden (Semper) Synagogue was dedicated on May 8, 1840 and served until its destruction on Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938.

<sup>142</sup> H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995) 184-193. Simonson’s Leipzig Synagogue, like Semper’s Dresden Synagogue, also was destroyed on Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938. Wolff’s Great Synagogue of Łódź was destroyed by the Germans one year later, on November 14, 1939.

<sup>143</sup> Berlin’s *Neue Synagoge* was heavily damaged during the Kristallnacht pogroms on November 9-10, 1938, but Jews continued to worship in its sanctuary until the Nazis confiscated the building in 1940; it then was nearly destroyed by Allied bombings in 1943. Subsequently, the main façade was maintained as a memorial, but the main hall was too damaged to save and was demolished in 1958. The façade was restored in 1988-1991 and the central dome reconstructed in 1991; the building now serves as Berlin’s Jewish history museum, the Centrum Judaicum, and is open to visitors, see <https://www.berlin.de/en/attractions-and-sights/3560461-3104052-new-synagogue.en.html>. For information on the Centrum Judaicum, see: <https://centrumjudaicum.de>.

<sup>144</sup> Ludwig Förster, “Das Israelitische Verhaus” (1859), 14-16; cited in Kalmar.

<sup>145</sup> Klein, *The Great Synagogue of Budapest*. The 1859 organ had been played by celebrated musicians Franz Liszt and Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns, among others, before its replacement with a mechanical organ in 1996.

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The Moorish Revival style thrived amidst the proliferation of Reform congregations in the United States through the turn of the century, as Jewish communities sought a quintessential American Jewish architectural expression that was distinctive and meant to signal permanent settlement.<sup>146</sup> However, many synagogues have subsequently been demolished, and the style only remained in favor until around the turn of the century.<sup>147</sup> Drawing upon Egyptian, Byzantine, Moorish, and Romanesque elements, the Exotic Revival style often characterized American synagogue design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in particular as a means of distinguishing the building's function from that of a Christian church.<sup>148</sup>

As these German Jewish immigrants headed farther west, they brought their expectations of synagogue architecture with them—whether they were inspired directly by the synagogues of their former hometowns, or by those they saw in large urban centers of the east coast. As architectural historian Amy Crain has written:

Jews in the American West achieved a more significant degree of assimilation, integration, and acceptance than that experienced by their associates in the East. Actively involved in commerce, politics, fraternal societies, and charitable organizations, virtually the only areas where western Jews did not mix freely with their Gentile neighbors were in the house of worship and the burial ground. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews in the American West were the freest anywhere in the world. The synagogue became the architectural expression of their status...Buildings with flamboyant, exotic, elaborate towers and domes on a grand scale celebrated the congregations' freedom, confidence, and acceptance in the community.<sup>149</sup>

Trinidad's Congregation Aaron was established by Jews from Kassel—the Jaffa brothers and Henry Biernbaum—who would have known of the 1839 Kassel Synagogue designed by Schuchardt and Rosengarten. Other founding members likely would have known of Moorish or exotic revival style synagogues elsewhere in Europe, and many would have been familiar with the monumental synagogues of New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati as they headed west.

The architects who designed Temple Aaron—Charles William Bulger and Isaac Hamilton Rapp, during their first year of practice in Trinidad as the firm Bulger & Rapp—may have encountered Moorish or eclectic revival style synagogues during their own travels or in architectural trade publications and newspapers of the day. There is no documentation that reveals how or why attributes of the Moorish Revival style were selected for this rather small frontier synagogue; architectural drawings for Temple Aaron have not been located, and they may have been lost in the May 11, 1912, fire that damaged the Trinidad office of successor firm Rapp & Rapp.<sup>150</sup> It cannot be known definitively at this time whether the Moorish design inspiration came from the members of Congregation Aaron or from the architects when the building was designed and constructed in 1889.

On June 14, 1889, four days before its cornerstone was to be laid, Congregation Aaron's trustees unanimously

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<sup>146</sup> Henry and Daniel Stolzman, *Synagogue Architecture in America: Faith, Spirit & Identity* (Victoria: Images Publishing, 2004), 47: "Since it [Moorish architecture] was popular in secular society, Jews' use of the style signaled that they were part of the larger community—that they were American—but at the same time made clear that they desired to express their Semitic heritage, so long as it was accepted by the general public."

<sup>147</sup> Samuel D. Gruber and Scott J. Tilden, eds., *American Synagogues: A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), 25.

<sup>148</sup> Wigoder, 172: "The desire of Jews to assert their individuality and to find original and distinguishing features led to their widespread use of oriental motifs." See also Gruber and Tilden, 24.

<sup>149</sup> Crain, "Synagogue Architecture as Metaphor," 1.

<sup>150</sup> Charles Ward Rapp, *Rapp & Rapp Architects* (Virburnum Press, 2014): 51.

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adopted a resolution to borrow \$5,000 from Isidor Bush and the District Grand Lodge #2 of the Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith of St. Louis, for the purposes of constructing and furnishing the new synagogue in Trinidad.<sup>151</sup> The *Trinidad Daily Citizen* later reported that at ten o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, June 18, 1889, "although the sun shone hot," a happy crowd had gathered "at the site of the new temple, the walls of which are fast going up" to celebrate the laying of the new building's cornerstone.<sup>152</sup> The ceremony began with "an impressive introduction" and full Masonic ritual by Sol Jaffa, Worshipful Master of the Masonic Order and a trustee of the congregation. The new rabbi, Leopold Freudenthal, then led an invocation that "was broad, catholic, philanthropic, and fervent in spirit," after which a choir selected "from the best voices of the city" sang "When the Earth's Foundation Was Laid." Freudenthal told those gathered:

When this house of God upon this mount overlooking almost the entire city and this beautiful valley shall be completed, you will, within yourself, feel the reward of having so nobly contributed towards one of the best causes, and we shall ever hold you, one and all, in grateful remembrance...[I]t is neither the grandeur of the edifice, its architectural design, nor the master's art that will cause the "Shohinah," the Glory of God, to dwell therein, but the sentiments of truth, and of love, of virtue and of righteousness that will make it what the prophet so vividly pronounced it: "a house in which all nations will assemble to praise God and worship Him."<sup>153</sup>

Congregation Aaron's president Samuel Jaffa read a brief history of their organization, with Rabbi Freudenthal then delivering "a carefully prepared address"—the reporter dubbed it "a gem of its kind"—that emphasized "the unity of the human race." The choir then sang "Let There Be Light" before the cornerstone was laid. With members of the Masons, architect Rapp "assisted to its place a cube of gray sandstone in the northeast corner" that could hold a container of artifacts; into this void "was placed a tin box containing copies of the city papers, a history of the congregation up to date, a poem on Fisher's Peak, a souvenir of Trinidad, and papers pertaining to the Hebrew faith, such as the *American Israelite*. Opportunity was given to all present to add any additional article desired." Sol Jaffa, as the Master Mason, then conducted the solemn Masonic ritual of pouring the "corn of nourishment, the wine of refreshment, and the oil of joy" from silver cups onto the surface of the cornerstone.<sup>154</sup>

The ceremony truly was a community event and not only for Trinidad's Jewish residents. The featured speaker was Simeon S. Wallace, a Trinidad attorney and member of the Masons, whose fourteen-minute speech declared "Judaism as the bulwark of Theism in all the ages. Jewish scholars held high rank in history...Before the day of Rome and Greece, Jerusalem was a flourishing capital, where civilization held a home, and Masonry had a beginning." As attendees stood in the hot sun, Wallace continued:

Before Sparta existed, Jerusalem was the abode of philosophy and pure worship. The world was better for the Jewish system. All systems have some truth. No system has all. Judaism, like the rock of Gibraltar, amid all the storms of time, had maintained the central truth of one God. As Hiram, king of Tyre, who was not a Jew, assisted Solomon in building the great temple, so

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<sup>151</sup> First Deed, filed July 10, 1889; recorded in Book 61, pages 238-243, copy on file with the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado.

<sup>152</sup> "Laying the Cornerstone of a New Jewish Temple at Trinidad, Colo.," *The American Israelite of Cincinnati* (June 27, 1889), reprinted from the *Trinidad Daily Citizen* (June 19, 1889).

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

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we who are not Jews assist you in laying this corner stone.<sup>155</sup>

The Reverend A.S. Blackwood followed, stating that although he didn't want to keep the large audience waiting uncomfortably in the heat, he wanted all present to know that "as a Mason, a citizen, and a follower of Christ, he was glad to be present and assist in the impressive and delightful work" of the cornerstone laying. Rabbi Freudenthal closed with a benediction, and the attentive crowd was released to resume their daily routines.<sup>156</sup>

The synagogue construction continued quickly, its walls and tower containing 111,800 red bricks supplied by C.W. Sieg, a local brickmaker, built upon a foundation of gray sandstone blocks.<sup>157</sup> Trinidad stone suppliers and builders Frank Damascio and Frank Pellini subcontracted some construction labor to G.B. Smith, who employed a team of eleven men, led by foreman C.C. Cochran, who completed their work by August 30, when Cochran filed a lien against the property.<sup>158</sup> Gas fittings and interior finishes and furnishings followed.<sup>159</sup> The total cost of construction for Temple Aaron was \$11,915.36.<sup>160</sup> Once completed that November, the synagogue stood as an eclectic three-story building with decorative courses of red brick, geometric stained-glass windows, minarets, and a tall tower capped with a Moorish dome—proudly announcing the congregation's presence to bustling downtown Trinidad.

Temple Aaron was dedicated on December 6, 1889, by Rabbi Friedman of Denver, demonstrating the new synagogue's significance extended beyond the local community of Trinidad.<sup>161</sup> It continues to be utilized today, serving congregants and worshipers from Trinidad, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Raton and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

### Isaac Hamilton Rapp, Architect of the Exotic

The architect of Temple Aaron, Isaac Hamilton Rapp (1854-1933) was a master of numerous styles of architecture and is considered pioneer of the "Santa Fe" or Pueblo Revival style that continues to dominate New Mexico and Arizona today. He learned his profession from his father, Isaac Rapp, who worked occasionally as an architect but primarily as a contractor and construction superintendent. In 1856, two-year-old Isaac and his family relocated from New Jersey to the newly platted town of Carbondale in southern Illinois, where the senior Isaac Rapp had been hired to construct the new home of Carbondale's founder Daniel Brush. After serving in

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that the residence of A.S. Blackwood appears in the 1888 Trinidad City Directory, but he is not listed in affiliation with any of the churches in the city.

<sup>157</sup> A mechanic's lien, filed November 29, 1889, provides these details; the lien was released following payment in full on December 24, 1889.

<sup>158</sup> C.C. Cochran filed the lien against the Temple Aaron property on August 30, 1889, but the document does not state if the labor cost—only \$100 for eleven men, which equals just under \$3,000 in 2021—was only for the excavation work needed to accommodate the foundation, or if it was for the construction the stone foundation or the brick walls. The eleven men named in the document are: C.C. Cochran, John Shanby, Sam Miller, Cyrus Chance, Warren Ward, J.W. Ward, Frank Shanby, B.L. McFarren, Jacob Kalb, Wilson Turner, and Robert Ban. Recorded in Book 60, pages 234-236, on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado.

<sup>159</sup> On November 14, 1889, a John McEwan filed a mechanic's lien against the Congregation Aaron property "on account of gas fittings furnished and labor performed." The materials were supplied and labor completed on October 10, 1889, at a total cost of \$69.50; the bill was paid and the lien recorded as released on December 4, 1889. Recorded in Book 60, pages 534-535, on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado.

<sup>160</sup> *Temple Aaron Biblette: In Commemoration of Three Anniversaries* (Trinidad: November 11, 1949), 9. In 2021 dollars, this would be a total cost of \$359,963.03, according to Consumer Price Index inflation calculators.

<sup>161</sup> Toll in Kahn, 101: "The 1892 Trinidad, Colorado, city directory featured an etching of the Jewish synagogue, Congregation Aaron, which was erected of brick and stone in 1889 and located two blocks down Maple Street from the courthouse. It made the single-spired Methodist Church featured on the opposite page seem parsimonious by comparison."

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the Union Army during the Civil War, the senior Rapp opened the Carbondale Planing and Moulding Mill and continued to work as a builder; he was in charge of carpentry for the first building constructed at the Southern Illinois Normal University (now Southern Illinois University-Carbondale), a polychromed Gothic Revival facility completed in 1874 (burned 1883). Isaac and Georgina Rapp had two daughters (Harriet, their first child, and Annie, their fifth) and seven sons, five of whom became architects: eldest son Isaac Hamilton, often called “Hamilton,” followed by William Mason, Alfred (a pharmacist), Louis B., Charles R. (who eventually became the cashier at the Trinidad National Bank), Cornelius Ward, and George Leslie. The two youngest sons eventually formed an architectural firm, Rapp & Rapp, in 1906 in Chicago, that is internationally recognized for their exuberant theaters and movie palaces. Hamilton, as Rapp often was called, did not receive a formal education in architecture, but was trained by his father. He left Carbondale after completion of the Southern Illinois Normal University building, stopping first in Anthony, Kansas, before settling in Trinidad in 1888.<sup>162</sup>

Rapp established an architectural practice with Charles William Bulger—the short-lived firm of Bulger & Rapp—in Trinidad, and in just five or six years together, they designed several prominent public buildings there before dissolving in 1892.<sup>163</sup> Their first commission was Trinidad’s City Building and Fire House No. 1 in 1889 (5LA2179.25), followed by Temple Aaron later that same year; both are contributing to the Corazon de Trinidad National Register Historic District. Both buildings utilize local red brick and sandstone in eclectic styles to create asymmetrical compositions crowned by a large sheet-metal dome or cupola on the right-hand sides of their street façades. Each building also employs large groupings of windows with arched ornamentation, but the City Building and Fire House No. 1, with its enormous sandstone quoins, is more clearly influenced by the popular Queen Anne, Italianate, and Romanesque Revival styles and shows no relationship to the Moorish Revival style at Temple Aaron. Other buildings designed by Bulger & Rapp located within the Corazon de Trinidad Historic District include: the Barela Block (5LA2179.18, 1889); the West Block (5LA2179.4, 1889-90, Romanesque and Moorish Revival styles); the George Forbes Residence (5LA2179.157, 1890); the Congregational Church (5LA2179.157, 1891, Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles); and the First National Bank of Trinidad (5LA2179.41, 1890-92, Richardsonian Romanesque style).<sup>164</sup> The firm also completed two churches in Trinidad, each individually listed in the National Register—the Zion’s German Lutheran Church (5LA10968, 1889-90, Queen Anne and Gothic Revival styles, NRIS 06000950, listed on October 25, 2006) and the First Baptist Church (5LA8697, 1890, Richardsonian Romanesque style, NRIS 00000005, listed on January 28, 2000). Bulger & Rapp also designed residences in Trinidad during their years together, as well as two Richardsonian Romanesque county courthouses in 1891: the Prowers County Courthouse in Lamar, Colorado (demolished) and the asymmetrical, polychromed Donley County Courthouse in Clarendon, Texas (1891), which today is the oldest functioning courthouse in the Texas Panhandle.

Bulger, born in Indiana in 1851, always suffered from altitude sickness in Trinidad, or what the newspapers then called “mountain fever”; the *Trinidad Daily News* first reported in January 1891 that Bulger was considering leaving town because of his debilitating struggles with this illness.<sup>165</sup> While several Bulger & Rapp projects were still under construction in Trinidad, in March 1891 Bulger and his family relocated to Galveston,

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<sup>162</sup> Sheppard, 11-14.

<sup>163</sup> Ken Fletcher, “Distinctive Religious Structures of Trinidad, Colorado,” unpublished manuscript, 2002; and *Frontier Architects, Historic Collector’s Series Calendar*, First National Bank of Trinidad, 2005. Fletcher states that Bulger & Rapp first worked together in Anthony, Kansas, as early as 1885, where they owned a lumber yard and designed commercial, residential, and religious buildings before relocating to Trinidad in 1888. Sheppard’s monograph on Rapp, earlier than Fletcher, suggests that Rapp met Bulger in Trinidad. See also George Hagen and Ken Fletcher, The Zion’s German Lutheran Church (5LA.10968) National Register of Historic Places nomination (2005), at: [https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/06000950\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/06000950_text).

<sup>164</sup> The 1973 Corazon de Trinidad Historic District National Register nomination is available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84131477>.

<sup>165</sup> Hagen and Fletcher, 7.

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Texas, where he opened his own practice, and they remained there through 1904—surviving the devastating hurricane of 1900 by sheltering in Bulger’s office in the Levy Building, which he had designed in 1896. His son Clarence joined the practice in 1902 after earning a degree in architecture from the University of Chicago, and in 1904 the family moved to Dallas, where they established the architectural firm of Charles W. Bulger & Son. The firm designed the first steel-framed skyscraper in Texas, the 15-story neoclassical Praetorian Building (1907, demolished 2013) in Dallas, as well as many dozens of buildings in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Louisiana, including over 60 churches. Bulger died in Dallas in June 1922, and son Clarence continued their practice.<sup>166</sup>

As Bulger departed to Texas in 1891, Isaac Hamilton Rapp remained in Trinidad and soon was joined by his younger brother William Mason Rapp, who also had no formal architectural training but had worked with their father in Carbondale.<sup>167</sup> Together, the two established the firm of I.H. Rapp & W.M. Rapp, Architects. In 1904, the brothers hired draftsman Arthur Conrad Hendrickson of Beloit, Wisconsin, who became a partner in 1909, at which time the firm’s name changed to I.H. & W.M. Rapp and A.C. Hendrickson, Architects. They were prolific, working extensively throughout the Southwest, although they always retained their main office in Trinidad; as needed, they also maintained offices in Santa Fe and Las Vegas, New Mexico, for several years.<sup>168</sup> According to historian Ken Fletcher, more than eighty Rapp buildings remain extant in Trinidad alone.<sup>169</sup>

Whether working with Bulger & Rapp or with Rapp & Rapp, architect Isaac Hamilton Rapp designed Trinidad’s most prominent buildings. In addition to Temple Aaron, the Zion’s German Lutheran Church, the Congregational Church, and the First Baptist Church, he designed numerous homes and had a profound impact on the city’s public space, especially in its commercial core. Buildings designed by Rapp & Rapp include the brick Beaux Arts-styled West (Fox) Theatre (1908); the Las Animas County Courthouse (1912) in the Neo-

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. According to these authors, the two oldest Rapp brothers trained under their father in Carbondale while also attending the Normal College there; William also gained experience as a draftsman working in a Chicago firm and a Wichita, Kansas, firm, before relocating to Trinidad to work with Hamilton. The two brothers were listed in the 1892 Trinidad City Directory as living together at 517 East First Street and maintaining offices in rooms 4 and 6 at 139 East Main Street. See also Sheppard, 111-115; and “Rapp, Isaac Hamilton,” in *Architects of Colorado—Biographical Series*, History Colorado, available online at:

<https://www.historycolorado.org/architects-colorado-biographical-series>. Sheppard lists as “documented” twelve Rapp-designed buildings in Trinidad, while the inventory of History Colorado counts sixteen Trinidad buildings designed by Rapp.

<sup>168</sup> Although Hagen and Fletcher claim that the Rapp brothers always maintained their headquarters in Trinidad, Colorado, the author of this NHL nomination has found that there were no listings for the Rapps’ architecture firm in the Trinidad city directories of 1899, 1900-01, or 1902-03, and the only Rapp living in Trinidad in 1902 was Charles R., listed without occupation and residing at the Columbian Hotel. Between 1904 and 1907, Isaac Hamilton Rapp is listed as residing in Las Vegas, New Mexico, while the firm is listed in 1904 at 16 McCormick Building and at 3 McCormick Building between 1905 and 1911. Beginning in 1912-13, the firm’s office is listed as “3d Floor, Masonic Temple,” and remains so through and including the 1918-19 city directory; in subsequent available directories, the firm is listed as officing at 11 Turner Building until its dissolution. William Mason Rapp resided at the Columbian Hotel in 1904 and 1905; younger brother Louis B. Rapp lived in Trinidad at 511 South Maple Street in 1904; and Charles R. Rapp, now listed as a bookkeeper at the Trinidad National Bank, lived next door to Louis at 514 South Maple Street in 1904, before moving in 1905 to 609 South Maple Street, when he then is listed as a bank teller. The three Rapp brothers continued to be relatively mobile, as Charles was promoted to assistant cashier in 1909 (though he remained at 609 South Maple Street until 1915, when he moved to 605 South Maple Street, where he and his wife Helen subsequently remained); William moved to 210 South Beech Street in 1907, but moved by 1912 to the southwest corner of Chestnut and Third streets (listed as 317 South Chestnut Street in 1918), where he lived until his death. Isaac Hamilton Rapp relocated to 410 South Maple Street, near Temple Aaron, in 1908, but is listed as residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, between 1909 and 1919; the next available directory, published in 1929, lists Isaac Hamilton Rapp and his wife Jean as living at 416 South Maple Street, again in the same block as Temple Aaron; but in 1931 they are listed as living approximately one-and-a-half blocks from the synagogue, at 301 East Second Street, where Jean Rapp remained after Isaac’s death in 1933. See also Sheppard 15, 68-69; and personal email correspondence, Ken Fletcher to Dale Heckendorn, 14 June 2004, on file with History Colorado.

<sup>169</sup> Personal email correspondence, Ken Fletcher to Dale Heckendorn, 18 June 2004, on file with History Colorado.

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classical style; the sprawling, one-story East Street School (1919); and the Pueblo Revival-style Trinidad Country Club (1921).<sup>170</sup>

Although the New Mexico-based architect John Gaw Meem is closely associated with the evolution of the Pueblo Revival and Territorial Revival styles of architecture, Isaac Hamilton Rapp is often called their progenitor.<sup>171</sup> Rapp & Rapp designed many of the most significant buildings constructed for the State of New Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century—and even before it was admitted to the Union in 1912—including the Neo-classical, domed New Mexico Territorial Capitol (1903); the Mission Revival-styled New Mexico Building (1904), constructed for the Louisiana Purchase Centennial Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri; the Georgian Revival-styled New Mexico Territorial Executive Mansion (1908); the Beaux Arts-styled Santa Fe County Courthouse (1910); the eclectic, castellated Santa Fe County Jail (c. 1910); and the Mission Revival style Elks Club (1912), among others.

The firm first employed the Pueblo Revival or “Santa Fe” style for the Colorado Supply Company Building (1912, demolished) in Morley, a southeastern Colorado coal mining and railroad town near the summit of the Raton Pass. To celebrate New Mexico’s statehood and emphasize its Native American roots and Spanish colonial history, Rapp further developed this style of architecture in conjunction with anthropologist Edgar Lee Hewitt, Director of Exhibits for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, and archaeologists Sylvanus G. Morley and Jesse L. Nusbaum, when he was commissioned to design the New Mexico Building for the exposition, located in Balboa Park.<sup>172</sup> The romantic, historicist Pueblo Revival style took elements of the vernacular architecture constructed over centuries by indigenous peoples living in *pueblos* (villages)—smooth-plastered adobe with exposed *vigas*, or log beams—and combined them with components of Spanish buildings of the colonial period—their columned *portáles* (covered porches) and enclosed courtyards—and greatly exaggerated them for the scale of monumental public buildings.

After the great success of the Santa Fe style on the national stage of the 1915 exposition, it was widely adopted throughout the Southwest by architects and their clients, including those of Rapp & Rapp. Some of the firm’s most important commissions in this style include the Museum of Fine Arts of the Museum of New Mexico (1917); the New Mexico State Asylum for the Deaf (1917); and the La Fonda Hotel on the Plaza (1920). The exotic Pueblo Revival style proved to be so popular with tourists drawn to Santa Fe—effectively supporting the city’s economic vitality—that in 1957 architect John Gaw Meem led a committee to draft a historic district zoning ordinance that mandated the preservation of all “old Santa Fe style” buildings and a “recent Santa Fe style” that utilized contemporary construction materials for all new buildings in the New Mexico capital, which remains enforced today.<sup>173</sup>

Throughout his immensely prolific career, Isaac Hamilton Rapp was widely recognized as a master of the eclectic Queen Anne, Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque, Neo-classical, Prairie, California Mission, and Pueblo Revival styles, but Temple Aaron is truly unique among his works—the only known building of his career designed in the exotic Moorish Revival style. Despite the great successes and regional renown that began in Trinidad in 1888, Rapp closed his office after slightly more than 30 years in practice, following the sudden

<sup>170</sup> The East Street School (5LA.11123), located at 206 East Street, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 19, 2007 (NRIS 07001277); see: <https://www.historycolorado.org/location/east-street-school>.

<sup>171</sup> On the Pueblo Revival style’s association with Rapp and Meem, see Sheppard, 7; and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

<sup>172</sup> Sheppard, 73-82.

<sup>173</sup> See Preservation Law: Santa Fe, Appendix A, Existing Legislation, “Section 28-43.6. Styles of Architecture,” p. 167; available at: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00001634/00001/1j>.

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deaths of his two partners. Younger brother William Mason Rapp contracted pneumonia traveling between Santa Fe and Los Angeles and died, aged 56, on June 4, 1920, shortly after his arrival there. Partner Arthur Conrad Hendrickson, just one day after traveling with Rapp to visit mining properties to the west of Trinidad, died of a heart attack in his home on July 30, 1921, at only 47 years of age. According to historian Sheppard, “The death of his two closest colleagues caused Rapp to withdraw from his active career. He was sixty-seven when the second of the two tragedies struck.”<sup>174</sup> Rapp’s final building was the Pueblo Revival-styled Trinidad Country Club, completed in 1921. During his retirement, Rapp and his wife Jean—who did not have children—traveled extensively in the United States and throughout the world, always returning to their active social life in Trinidad, where he died, aged 78, on March 27, 1933.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE

### East of the Mississippi River

Synagogues constructed within the eastern half of the United States, in many respects, are not truly comparable with Temple Aaron, in that none are directly associated with the history of Jewish migration to the American West; they do, however, communicate the stories of Jews first arriving on the eastern shores of this continent from the earliest decades of European colonization. Several of these historic buildings may be architecturally comparable to Temple Aaron, however, in that they are excellent examples of exotic Moorish Revival styles as applied to the synagogues of Reform Jewish congregations, but most were constructed at a significantly larger scale, due to the greater membership of their congregations in their dense urban locations. Those that are particularly noteworthy, including those that are National Historic Landmarks or otherwise recognized by historic designations, are discussed individually in brief detail below. Other comparable synagogues in the eastern United States have been demolished, moved, or rehabilitated for new uses, or they have been closed and deconsecrated, their futures uncertain.

Two eclectic Moorish Revival-styled synagogues in New Jersey no longer are in use by their founding congregations. The Oheb Shalom (Prince Street Synagogue) in Newark (1884)—a symmetrical building of red brick with decorative bands of stone and two keyhole-shaped windows flanking a central rose window on its major façade, its pediment capped with a dome-shaped finial of terra cotta on each side—allowed women and men to sit together and later included an organ. The building served as the home of Congregation Adas Israel and Mishnayes between 1911-1939, the Metropolitan Baptist Church between 1940-1993, and, after several years of vacancy, it was acquired by the Greater Newark Conservancy, which rehabilitated it to serve as its headquarters and as an environmental education center in 2004 and 2015.<sup>175</sup> In October 2015, a fire tore through the National Register-listed synagogue of Congregation Poile Zedek (“Workers of Righteousness”) on Neilson Street in New Brunswick, New Jersey, destroying all but the four exterior walls in under two hours. Designed by Jewish architect Harry Bach in 1923 and constructed of brick in 1924 by Jewish builder Morris Frieman in an eclectic combination of Romanesque, Classical and Georgian Revival styles, Poile Zedek’s symmetrical façade, which still stands today despite the catastrophic fire, is topped by six domes of stone, each capped by a finial, its strongest Moorish Revival elements.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Sheppard, 15.

<sup>175</sup> For the history of the Oheb Shalom congregation and its buildings, see <https://www.ohebshalom.org/history>; on the 2004 and 2015 rehabilitation projects, see: <https://www.citybloom.org/about-us/locations/our-center/history.html> and <https://njewishnews.timesofisrael.com/an-old-synagogue-becomes-an-urban-oasis/>.

<sup>176</sup> Unlike most of the Moorish Revival synagogues discussed in this nomination, Newark’s Oheb Shalom was built by a conservative congregation, and New Brunswick’s Poile Zedek was constructed by an Orthodox congregation, with a separate women’s gallery above the sanctuary’s main floor. Investigations confirmed that the 2015 fire was accidental, see: <http://poilezedek.org/cms/> for the history of this congregation, and <https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/353569/photos-massive-fire->

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In Philadelphia, Congregation Rodeph Shalom was founded in 1795 and chartered by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania as “The Hebrew German Society (Rodeph Shalom)” in 1812; the congregation joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations established by Rabbi Wise as a charter member in 1873. Renowned architect Frank Furness designed the eclectic Rodeph Shalom Synagogue in 1868 in his inimitable, flamboyant style with its strong references to the Moorish Revival. The first major commission for Furness, the building was completed in 1871 and served as the congregation’s home on North Broad Street until they demolished it in 1925 to construct a larger, Art Deco temple on the same site at North Broad and Mount Vernon streets, which remains their home today.<sup>177</sup> Another Moorish Revival synagogue on Philadelphia’s North Side was designed by local architect J. Franklin Stuckert for Congregation Adath Jeshurun in 1888 and constructed with brick, decorative molded brick, and stone. The main façade on Seventh Street features multiple keyhole-shaped windows crowned with the horseshoe-shaped lintels common in ornate examples of Moorish Revival synagogue buildings; brick towers on its north and south sides were crowned with Russian onion domes, but only the northern dome remains today. Its most unusual feature is a “rose” window above the two entrance doors that are topped by paired horseshoe lintels inset with patterned molded bricks; the “rose” window is a brick semicircle into which a central keyhole-shaped window has been surrounded by six round windows encircled with molded brick, creating a composition reminiscent a telephone dial. Congregation Adath Jeshurun remained in the building until they sold it in 1911 to Congregation Ohel Jacob, which remained there until 1967, when they sold it to the Shalom Baptist Church, which, in turn sold the building to its current owner, the Greater Straightaway Baptist Church in 1982.<sup>178</sup>

Twelve Jewish families established the Beth El Society in Detroit in 1850—when only sixty Jewish people were counted among the city’s population of more than 21,000—the oldest Jewish congregation in Michigan. The congregation introduced music into its worship services in 1861 and was one of the thirty-four charter members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. Congregation Beth El built its first synagogue in 1861 and then relocated to a larger, extant building in 1867, conducting services there until 1903, when their new Beaux-Arts synagogue—designed by congregant Albert Kahn—was completed on Woodward Street. The

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[breaks-out-in-historic-orthodox-shul-in-new-brunswick-nj.html](#) and <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/10/24/new-brunswick-synagogue-fire-investigation/> on the fire. The Poile Zedek Synagogue was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 25, 1995 (NRIS 95001189), and the nomination is available at: [https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/95001189\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/95001189_text).

<sup>177</sup> Matthew Singer, “Reforming Faith by Design: Frank Furness’ Architecture and Spiritual Pluralism Among Philadelphia’s Jews and Unitarians,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* (Winter 2021), at: <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/reforming-faith-by-design-frank-furness-architecture-and-spiritual-pluralism-among-philadelphias-jews-and-unitarians/> (accessed on April 12, 2021). For more on the history of Congregation Rodeph Shalom and its synagogues, see: <https://rodephshalom.org/history/>; and <https://why.org/articles/congregation-rodeph-shalom-is-set-to-become-a-beacon-on-north-broad/>. The Art Deco and Byzantine-influenced synagogue built on this site in 1928 and designed by the firm of Simon & Simon was listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance (NRIS 07000797) on August 8, 2007; nomination available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/71996996>. Furness also designed the Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia in 1871 and the 1889 Mount Sinai Cemetery Chapel and Mortuary in Frankford, the latter of which featured keyhole windows and other nods to the Moorish Revival style: <https://hiddencityphila.org/2014/10/a-lost-furness-chapel-and-the-stories-it-tells/>. A Pennsylvania State Historical Marker was dedicated at the North Philadelphia site of Furness’s Jewish Hospital in 2017; see: <https://einsteinperspectives.com/einstein-progenitor-jewish-hospital-honored-historical-marker/> and <https://sites.temple.edu/historynews/2015/09/28/einstein-medical-center-history/>.

<sup>178</sup> The former Adath Jeshurun Synagogue was recorded for the Historic American Buildings Survey as HABS-PA-6693 under its current name, Greater Straightaway Baptist Church; documentation is available at: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/pa3924/>. For more on the history of this truly unusual Moorish Revival building, see: <https://hiddencityphila.org/2012/07/greater-straightaway-baptist-church-a-convoluted-architectural-voyage/> and Inga Saffron, “In North Philadelphia, Moorish-Style Synagogue Tells the Story of Aspiration and Change,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 18, 2012), at: [https://www.inquirer.com/philly/columnists/inga\\_saffron/philadelphia-jewish-history-adath-stuckert-20181018.html](https://www.inquirer.com/philly/columnists/inga_saffron/philadelphia-jewish-history-adath-stuckert-20181018.html).

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Kahn-designed building was in use until 1922, when it was sold to be used as a theater; today it is the Bonstelle Theatre of Wayne State University. Kahn designed their next synagogue as a Neoclassical temple with an entrance portico supported by eight monumental Ionic columns, which was used from its completion in 1922 until it was sold to the Lighthouse Tabernacle in 1974, when Congregation Beth El moved to its current home—a modernist synagogue designed by Minoru Yamasaki—in the suburb of Bloomfield Hills.<sup>179</sup>

### Touro Synagogue (Congregation Jeshuat Israel), Newport, Rhode Island

Declared a National Historic Site in 1946 following the horrors of the Holocaust, Touro Synagogue began construction in 1759 and was completed in 1763. It is thus the oldest synagogue building in the United States, although there are Jewish congregations that are older than this building. Many of the founding members of Congregation Jeshuat Israel were Sephardic Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin involved in trade in the West Indies with the Dutch and the English. The Greek Revival building is the best-known work of British architect Peter Harrison, who then lived in Rhode Island. Although the Touro Synagogue is more than one hundred years older than Trinidad's Temple Aaron, it is not a truly comparable property in terms of architectural style. Where Temple Aaron is eclectic and employs the Moorish Revival style to announce its difference from its immediate neighbors and from other churches and religious buildings in Trinidad, Touro Synagogue seeks to blend into the fabric of its community to the point of disappearance—evoking instead classical Greek references, as did many other important public edifices of its time and place.<sup>180</sup>

### St. Thomas Synagogue National Historic Landmark (Congregation Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim), Charlotte Amalie, U.S. Virgin Islands

The second-oldest synagogue in the United States and the longest in continuous use by a congregation, the St. Thomas Synagogue was built in 1833 for a congregation founded in 1796 by Portuguese and Spanish Sephardic Jews who arrived in the Caribbean to participate in trans-Atlantic trade. The congregation's name, *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim*, is Hebrew for "Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety." The synagogue is a single-story rubble masonry building with a Greek Revival-styled temple front, but featuring windows and doors with pointed arches, as in a Gothic Revival-styled church. Door and window openings are of red brick and sandstone on the exterior, and red and yellow brick on the interior. All interior furnishings, such as the ark, bimah, and pews, are mahogany and original to the building's construction. The historic chandeliers, some of which include Baccarat crystal shades, were electrified in 1974. The synagogue remains in use despite suffering significant damage from hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. While this building is associated with the earliest arrivals of Jews to the New World, it is not constructed in the exotic Moorish Revival style associated with Reform Judaism, which developed after this congregation was founded; and it is not associated with the Jewish settlement of the American West. For these reasons, the St. Thomas Synagogue is not truly comparable to Temple Aaron.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Irving I. Katz, *The Beth El Story, with a History of the Jews in Michigan before 1850* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1955), available at: <https://archive.org/details/bethelstorywitha00katz>. Both of the congregation's Kahn-designed buildings were listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 3, 1982 (NRIS 82002911 and 82002912) as part of the "Religious Structures of Woodward Avenue" Multiple Property Listing, at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25338545> and <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25338547>.

<sup>180</sup> See also Mark W. Gordon, "Rediscovering Jewish Infrastructure: 2018 Update on United States Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Synagogues," American Jewish Historical Society, at: <https://ajhs.org/rediscovering-jewish-infrastructure>, accessed February 12, 2021.

<sup>181</sup> Frederik C. Gjessing, St. Thomas Synagogue National Historic Landmark Nomination Form (NRIS 97001270, designated September 25, 1997); also congregation website, at: <https://synagogue.vi/our-historic-synagogue/>, accessed March 3, 2021. Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim, Charlotte Amalie, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 15, 1997, and designated a National Historic Landmark on September 25, 1997 (for the digitized nomination forms, see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/131518967> and <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/131518853>).

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### *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue, Charleston, South Carolina*

This is the third-oldest synagogue building in the United States and the second oldest in continuous use by its founding congregation, after the St. Thomas Synagogue. The earliest known record of a Jewish resident in this English colony, established in 1670, dates to 1695. Jews sought civil and religious liberty as well as economic opportunity in the New World, and by 1749 there were enough to form this congregation, which they called Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, or “Holy Congregation House of God.” Fifteen years later, they established their own consecrated burial ground at the Corning Street Cemetery, which today is the oldest Jewish cemetery in the American South. It took two years to construct their first synagogue (1792-1794), a cupolated Georgian building that was destroyed in the great Charleston fire of 1838. The congregation built their second synagogue in 1840, in the Greek Revival style, and they continue to worship here today. In 1824, a disagreement over the Sephardic liturgy and ritual caused 47 members to resign from the congregation and organize “The Reformed Society of Israelites,” worshipping in English and abandoning many other Orthodox practices. By 1833, however, the Reformed Society reunited with the congregation and incorporated many of their Reform practices, to the extent that an organ was installed during construction of their second temple in 1840; Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim therefore is considered to be the first and oldest Reform congregation in the United States. It was here in 1850 that Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, visiting from Albany, New York, made his controversial statement that he did not believe in the coming of the messiah or the resurrection of the dead, which then set his path in a more radical direction. This Greek Revival-styled, Doric temple was designed by architect Cyrus L. Warner and constructed by congregant David Lopez using the labor of enslaved artisans; two of them, Kit and George, are known to have been trained as carpenters. It is a one-story brick building on a raised foundation of granite stone, with stucco over the brick—painted white and scored to look like stone blocks. The dedication stone from the burned 1794 synagogue is incorporated into the wall of the foyer over the entrance to the sanctuary. Original stained-glass windows were destroyed in an 1886 earthquake and were replaced in 1888; balconies were removed and the bimah reconfigured at the same time. It was recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1963 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRIS 78002499) on April 4, 1978; it then was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 19, 1980. While this building is associated with the earliest arrivals of Jews to the colonies in the South, it is not constructed in the exotic Moorish Revival style later associated with Reform Judaism, which was still developing during construction; and it is not associated with the Jewish settlement of the American West. For these reasons, the Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue is not truly comparable to Temple Aaron.<sup>182</sup>

### *Isaac M. Wise / Plum Street Temple (Kehilat Kodesh B'nai Yeshurun Synagogue), Cincinnati, Ohio*

Designed in 1865 by Cincinnati architect James Keys Wilson, first president of the city’s chapter of the American Institute of Architects—in close consultation with its celebrated rabbi and the founder of American Reform Judaism, Isaac Mayer Wise—and completed in 1866, this synagogue combines eclectic revival-styled features, such as its Gothic Revival lancet arched windows and large rose window, with Byzantine Revival and Moorish Revival-styled features first employed in the Reform synagogues of Europe. Located in the historic heart of Cincinnati at Plum and Eighth streets, the Plum Street Temple contrasts with its prominent neighbors in terms of style, but confidently takes its place among them on this city block, including the Romanesque Revival style Cincinnati City Hall, the Greek Revival-styled St. Peter-in-Chains Cathedral, and the English Perpendicular Gothic style Covenant-First Presbyterian Church.

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<sup>182</sup> A 1916 reprint (Bloch Publishing Company) of “The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers Adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites, Founded in Charleston, South Carolina, November 21, 1825” can be read in full at:

<https://archive.org/details/sabbathservicemi00refo>. The National Register nomination form for Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue is available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/118997366>. For more on the history of this congregation and building, see their website, at: <https://www.kkbe.org/ourhistory>.

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The temple is constructed of red brick and a buff-colored limestone with its three-bay façade facing west, punctuated by two slender minarets that each rise nearly 50' above the flat, elaborately corniced roof. Although the tripartite exterior emulates a Christian basilica, the Moorish surface details and decorative flourishes—frets, scrolls, and filigree—clearly differentiate this building as a temple or synagogue, announcing the heritage of its ancient traditions in a decidedly new manner. Inside this spectacular synagogue, the grandly-scaled sanctuary accommodates 1,500 Reform worshipers together in pews separated by a central aisle as in a Gothic church—without segregating women from men, as in an Orthodox sanctuary. Its two-story nave with clerestory windows is flanked by side aisles, four bays each, leading to a transept. A total of thirteen hemispherical domes rest upon octagonal bases over the center of the transept, the nave, and over each of the four bays of the side aisles. The walls, lancet arched colonnades, thirteen domes, and ceiling feature mosaics and are colorfully painted and stenciled with delicate and complex abstract floral and geometric patterns reminiscent of Islamic mosques, with Hebrew inscriptions in gilt letters.<sup>183</sup> An organ built for the congregation in 1866 by Johann Heinrich Koehnken is located in a loft, its pipes soaring high above the sanctuary floor as an additional sculptural element—as Wise's Reform services encouraged music and choirs, unlike Orthodox practice.<sup>184</sup>

The Wise (Plum Street) Temple was listed in the National Register in 1972 and designated a National Historic Landmark on May 15, 1975 for its architecture and its significance in the history of American Judaism. It is the first example of an eclectic, Moorish style constructed in the United States, with considerable input from its rabbi, who is recalled today as the founder of American Reform Judaism and its strongest voice until the turn of the twentieth century. Temple Aaron owes a great deal to this man and to this building, yet the Plum Street Temple is not truly comparable because it does not directly relate to Jewish migration to American West, and it is not located in an isolated rural or small-town mountain setting, but in an urban location that was considered at that time to be the center of modern American Judaism.<sup>185</sup>

### Congregation Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue/Central Synagogue National Historic Landmark, New York, New York

A copy of Budapest's Dohány Street Synagogue, this Moorish Revival synagogue was designed by architect Henry Fernbach—known as the first Jewish architect in the United States—and constructed on Lexington Avenue between 1870-1872 for two German-Jewish congregations that had merged: Shaar Hashomayim, granted its charter in 1839, and Ahawath Chesed, founded on Ludlow Street in lower Manhattan in 1846. It has been in continuous use by its congregation longer than any other in New York City, and it is second in the state of New York.<sup>186</sup> The building was listed in the National Register in 1970 and designated a National Historic

<sup>183</sup> The architectural historian George Everard (G.E.) Kidder Smith described the Plum Street Synagogue's amalgam of styles thusly: "Whereas the Saracenic exterior—complete with two prominent minarets—is competent, the neo-Gothic interior is ablaze with glory. Kaleidoscopic motifs and colors are woven together like a gigantic Oriental rug. Scarce an inch is left unattended...but all is carried out with excellent harmony of scale. The *bimah* (reading platform) is backed by an ark of intricate geometry. The Ten Commandments stand out brightly in the window over the *bimah*, while the artificial lighting does a commendable job of helping create a joyful setting for worship." See G.E. Kidder Smith, *Looking at Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1990), 136-137.

<sup>184</sup> On the German-born American organ builder Koehnken, see Karl Lietzenmayer, "Johan Koehnken: The Midwest's Master Organ Builder," *Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society* (July/August 2010), 2-4, at: <https://kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org/data/documents/July-August-2010.pdf>.

<sup>185</sup> See nominations at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/71989153>; also: <https://www.wisetemple.org/about/our-history/history-of-plum-street-temple/>, accessed March 18, 2021.

<sup>186</sup> Congregation Berith Sholom was organized in Troy, New York, in 1866, with members worshiping in their homes until they constructed their synagogue between June and September 1870 on Third and Division streets. The oldest synagogue in continuous use in the state of New York, it is of modest size, perhaps more comparable in size to Temple Aaron, but it is not designed in the Moorish Revival style; rather, it is an eclectic Victorian mix of Italianate and Gothic Revival styles. See the congregation's website, at: <https://berithsholom.org/about-us/our-history/>; for a view of the interior, see:

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Landmark on May 15, 1975, but the nominations do not reference its significance in the history of American Judaism, only in architecture. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the synagogue as local landmark in June 1966, stating, “Although the plan is Gothic in arrangement, this stone Temple is our finest example of the Moorish Revival Style in New York City.”<sup>187</sup>

On its brownstone exterior, two octagonal towers dominate its major (east) façade—each topped with elaborately ornamented, globe-like copper domes—with a large circular or rose window centered over the grand entrance of three double doors. Door and all other window openings have rounded Moorish arches. Its stained-glass windows and interior finishes are extraordinarily ornately detailed. The synagogue suffered two fires, one in 1886, and another on its roof in 1998, while the synagogue was undergoing a renovation. Architect Ely Jacques Kahn is credited with the building’s restoration after the first fire, although he later published an essay in which he called the Moorish Revival style a “spurious tradition.”<sup>188</sup> The second restoration was completed by Hugh Hardy of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer in 2001, during which he restored some interior details that Kahn had removed. Although it is an older and far more elaborate example of a Moorish Revival synagogue—at a much greater scale—the building is not truly comparable to Temple Aaron because it is not directly relevant to Jewish migration to the American West, nor is it located in a small market town or rural setting.

### *Eldridge Street Synagogue/Synagogue K’hal Adath Jeshurun with Anshe Lubz, New York, New York*

Constructed for the Orthodox congregation K’hal Adath Jeshurun with Anshe Lubz (“Community of the People of Israel with the People of Lubz”) on the city’s Lower East Side in 1887, this brick and terra cotta synagogue is an exotic combination of Gothic, Romanesque, and Moorish Revival styles. Its architects, brothers Peter and Francis William Herter, went on to design many other buildings on the Lower East Side, especially tenement housing blocks, in which they often included a Star of David. The gable-roofed synagogue’s magnificent exterior includes two stair towers that frame a recessed, central entrance bay with an arcaded gable with Romanesque columns; the towers have decorative terra cotta and brick cornices but do not feature domes. Key-shaped window and door openings feature elaborately decorative Moorish terra cotta arches. A spectacular rose window dominates the main façade, placed over a grouping of five arched windows above the double-arched entrance in the central bay. The rose window in its eastern wall, above the ark, was destroyed by a storm in 1944 and initially replaced with glass block. Other interior details included ornately carved pews and a highly decorative ark of walnut and oak, with other pine moldings painted to resemble other species. Its 70’-high, hemispherical ceiling dome and barrel-vaulted ceilings are painted with celestial frescoes, and other plaster surfaces are marbled, stenciled, or painted with trompe l’œil frescoes. Lighting fixtures are brass with glass globes.<sup>189</sup>

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[360.anumuseum.org/gallery/congregation-berith-sholom/](http://360.anumuseum.org/gallery/congregation-berith-sholom/). Congregation Berith Sholom adopted the Reform rituals around 1890, and during its fiftieth anniversary in 1920, they joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

<sup>187</sup> See nomination at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75319356>). For the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission report LP-0276, “Central Synagogue,” see: <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/0276.pdf>.

<sup>188</sup> In the Jewish magazine *Commentary* in 1947, Kahn wrote: “[T]he senseless copying of historical ornament has been accepted. Jewish religious buildings had to cope with this wave of mediocrity and at the same time with the weight of spurious tradition, mainly Moorish. . . It is incredible that really honest designers should have the effrontery to advise a quasi-Gothic, Moorish, or any other sort of historical potpourri as an expression of Jewish culture. . . Does the Jewish building want to shrink into its surroundings and be unobtrusive, or should it be proudly imposing, with a wealth of detail and expensive ornament?” Kahn then stated that he believed “that modesty and natural beauty should dominate, he might well create a block, simple and beautifully proportioned and set off by attractive planting, so that the worshiper can step into a quiet atmosphere of dignity and restraint.” See Ely Jacques Kahn, “Creating a Modern Synagogue Style: No More Copying,” *Commentary* (June 1947), available at:

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/ely-kahn/creating-a-modern-synagogue-style-no-more-copying/>. In light of these opinions expressed in his 1947 essay, it seems ironic that Kahn accepted the first restoration project at the Central Synagogue, but the essay may help to explain his earlier decisions to not replace or restore some missing or fire-damaged features.

<sup>189</sup> The Eldridge Street Synagogue (NRIS 80002687) was listed in the National Register on March 28, 1980 for both its architectural

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From the time of its construction through the 1920s, the synagogue served as many as 800 families, and its sanctuary was designed to hold 1,000 worshipers—a monumental scale far greater than that of Temple Aaron. By the mid-1950s, the building was suffering from long-term water infiltration and other roof problems and structural issues on its stairs, such that the congregation stopped using the sanctuary in 1955 and used its basement study hall (*beth midrash*) for its worship services for more than twenty-five years, until the 1980s, when planning began to transform the synagogue into a museum of Jewish American history. Since then, it has functioned primarily as the Museum at Eldridge Street. Although it is an older and far more elaborate example of a Moorish Revival synagogue, the building is not truly comparable to Temple Aaron because it is not directly related to Jewish migration to the American West, and it is located in the largest city in the United States, and not in a small market town or rural setting; further, it was built by an Orthodox congregation and always has been used for Orthodox worship, and not Reform traditions. The museum completed its 20-year restoration, at a cost of \$20 million, on December 2, 2007.<sup>190</sup>

### *Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv Synagogue, Chicago, Illinois*

The Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv (“Congregation of the People of the Evening,” sometimes translated as “Congregation of the Men of the West” and locally called “KAM”) was established in Chicago in 1847, making it the city’s oldest congregation. Originally founded by Orthodox Jews, discussions over reforms to their practice started early, and as conflicts increased, the more traditional members left to form a new congregation, B’nai Sholom, in 1852. Fully embracing Reform practices, KAM became a founding member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism) in 1874. Abraham Kohn, a founding member of KAM, later was the father-in-law of architect and engineer Dankmar Adler, partner of architect Louis Sullivan; Adler’s father, Rabbi Liebman Adler, served as the rabbi for KAM from 1861 to 1882. In 1890, Adler and Sullivan designed the fourth KAM synagogue in what some architectural historians have called the firm’s “transitional style,” its last expression before their design of the Getty Tomb. Dedicated on June 11, 1891, and constructed at the southwest corner of South Indiana and West 33<sup>rd</sup> streets, the synagogue is a massive, three-story volume of rough-faced Joliet limestone blocks and brick on a foundation of dressed ashlar stone, topped with a clerestory block, recessed on all sides, that was covered with decorative sheet metal and dramatically crowned with a steep pyramidal roof. KAM sold the building in 1922 to the Pilgrim Baptist Church, which became widely known for its gospel performances. While the building was undergoing a \$500,000 restoration in 2006, it was nearly completely lost to a fire caused by welding equipment on the roof. Since then, the remaining four walls have stood only with additional structural support, but plans are underway to reconstruct the building as a national museum celebrating gospel music. The fourth KAM synagogue was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The monumentally-scaled, fifth KAM synagogue was designed in a heavily ornate Byzantine Revival style—Eastern in inspiration, but not Moorish—by the architect Alfred S. Alschuler and constructed in 1923 on Hyde Park Boulevard in the Kenwood neighborhood, with a sanctuary that seats 1,000 worshipers. Although the KAM played a foundational role in the Union for Reform Judaism and is one of the oldest continually functioning Reform congregations in the country, neither its fourth nor its fifth (current) building is comparable to Temple Aaron, whether due to condition, integrity, use (in the case of the fourth), scale, age, or stylistic details.<sup>191</sup>

and its religious significance; see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75319463>. It was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 19, 1996.

<sup>190</sup> The Museum at Eldridge Street, at: <https://www.eldridgestreet.org>.

<sup>191</sup> The Adler and Sullivan-designed fourth KAM Synagogue / Pilgrim Baptist Church (NRIS 73000696) was listed in the National Register on April 26, 1973; see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/28892372> and <https://news.wttw.com/2017/12/11/plans-gospel-museum-site-burned-out-pilgrim-baptist-church>. Regarding the fifth KAM synagogue designed by Alschuler, see: <https://www.kamii.org/history> and <https://synagogues-360.anumuseum.org.il/gallery/kam-isaiah-israel/>. The South Side neighborhood, Kenwood, in which this still-active synagogue is located is now highly secured today, as immediately across the street

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### Moses Montefiore Temple, Bloomington, Illinois

German Jews arrived in 1856 to this central Illinois prairie community south of Chicago. Although they had established B'nai B'rith Abraham Lincoln Lodge #190 in 1872, they did not formally establish a congregation for worship until May 14, 1882. Religious school classes and services were held above a shoe store and in the basement of the Free Congregational Church after the congregation decided to adopt the Reform rituals of Cincinnati's Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. The twenty-four members raised funds in order to purchase a lot at the southeast corner of Monroe and Prairie streets and borrowed from the B'nai B'rith for construction of their synagogue, dedicated on Friday, May 21, 1899. Local architect George Miller designed the enormous, asymmetrical building in the Romanesque and Moorish Revival styles using rough-hewn stone block. The synagogue's tallest feature was a minaret topped with a massive onion dome at the corner, and a large rose window with a Star of David was centered on its major façade, but most other windows and all doors were keyhole-shaped; the interior walls and ceiling were covered with decorative stencils. Barely more than one year later, on June 7, 1890, a gas jet—which served as the *ner tamid*, or eternal light—started a fire on the altar and destroyed much of the interior space; the sanctuary was repaired, but without its elaborate finishes. Orthodox Jews from Russia, Romania, Hungary, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe began to arrive in the early twentieth century and eventually many joined this Reform congregation. After World War II, they had outgrown their building, so they constructed a new temple in 1959. The 1889 synagogue declined over the years, including the loss of some historic stained-glass panels and decorative wood molding, and, most significantly, the large onion dome, which blew off in a storm in the 1970s. A couple purchased this synagogue in 1993 and slowly worked to restore missing features as they converted it into a single-family home, winning the 2001 award for outstanding adaptive reuse from Landmarks Illinois and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. Though the Moses Montefiore Temple building has been rehabilitated, it no longer is in use as a place of worship and therefore is not a comparable property. A historic photograph of this beautiful building graces the cover of historian Lee Shai Weissbach's book *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, published by Yale University Press in 2005.<sup>192</sup>

### Temple B'nai Shalom, Quincy, Illinois

Quincy, Illinois, sits just east of the Mississippi River, thirty miles from Mark Twain's hometown of Hannibal, Missouri. The town grew quickly as an agricultural, manufacturing, mercantile, and river transportation center after Illinois statehood in 1818. The first Jewish resident of the town was Abraham Jonas, who arrived in 1838 from Kentucky, where he had been elected to the state legislature and served as the Grand Master of the state's Masons; he followed suit in his new Illinois home, where, as a legislator and attorney, he became a close friend of future president Abraham Lincoln. Quincy's first Jewish congregation was Orthodox, established in 1856, but a small group broke away in 1864 to establish the Reform Congregation B'nai Shalom. They purchased a lot on Ninth Street in 1867 and held a cornerstone-laying ceremony in 1869, with a procession through the city streets and a keynote address by Rabbi Wise of Cincinnati. The Moorish Revival-styled synagogue began construction in 1870, featuring a symmetrical façade of red brick on a limestone base; at the time of its completion later that year, there were approximately 500 Jews in Quincy—the peak of this river city's Jewish population. The modest interior was without stenciled or encrusted decoration on its plaster walls; the stained-glass windows, boxed ceiling beams, and the carved wooden bimah and ark were its ornamentation. The temple's twin brick towers—echoing minarets with their onion domes—were significantly damaged by a 1947

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from the home of former president Barack Obama and his family; see: <https://www.wbez.org/stories/whats-that-building-oldest-jewish-congregation-in-chicago/882079fd-e4fb-42e0-b4ee-b7b6e44590b0>.

<sup>192</sup> For the history of this Reform congregation and its buildings in Bloomington, see: <https://mosesmontefioretemple.org/our-history/>; for information on the 2001 award from Landmarks Illinois, see: <https://www.landmarks.org/preservation-programs/richard-h-driehaus-foundation-preservation-awards/2001-award-recipients/outstanding-adaptive-re-use/>.

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tornado, after which they were removed and never replaced. The size of the aging congregation dwindled to fewer than two dozen during the 2010s, and the 150-year-old synagogue closed its doors and was deconsecrated in May 2019, one month before Temple Aaron celebrated its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the dedication of its historical marker in Trinidad that June; its Torahs and other sacred objects were given to other congregations in need.<sup>193</sup>

### West of the Mississippi River

Truly comparable properties located west of the Mississippi River are difficult to find as very few synagogues dating either from the post-Civil War era or the peak years of Jewish immigration (1840-1924), remain in use today by Jewish congregations. In many cases, these buildings have been destroyed, heavily modified from their historic form, or moved; in other instances, as their congregations have moved to new locations or disbanded, the buildings remain in place but have been put to new uses as churches, community centers and theaters, and as private businesses or residences. The following section includes brief descriptions of numerous synagogues built throughout the western half of the United States in the late-nineteenth century, most of which are demolished or no longer in use, demonstrating the rarity of Temple Aaron and its exceptional significance for nomination as a National Historic Landmark. A selection of four key comparable properties—two in Colorado, one in Texas, and one in Missouri—are those discussed in greatest detail below.

Immediately west of the Mississippi River in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, Congregation Bikur Cholim constructed its synagogue in 1872 and used it until the 1940s, when the Jewish population dwindled. Today the wood-framed building, stripped of most of its decorative Victorian-era jigsaw trim, is used as an Ace Hardware store.<sup>194</sup> In New Orleans, Louisiana—although geographically to the east of the Mississippi River—the Temple Sinai synagogue, built in 1870 on Carondelet Street, was demolished in the 1920s. Touro Synagogue, also in New Orleans, traces its origins to 1881, when an Ashkenazi congregation first merged with a Sephardic one; their new synagogue on St. Charles Avenue was designed in 1908 by the architect Emile Weil in an eclectic Byzantine-Sullivan-esque style with Moorish elements, and dedicated in 1909. With its enormous, green-tiled dome, this cream brick and terra cotta synagogue is still in use today by its Reform congregation, but it is twenty years younger than Temple Aaron and in the eastern half of the United States.<sup>195</sup>

In Iowa, synagogues constructed during its peak years of Jewish immigration are no longer in use by their congregations. The first Iowa synagogue constructed was in Keokuk, once a major shipping port on the Mississippi River. Congregation B'nai Israel built its monumental brick Gothic Revival-style synagogue there in 1877, but sold the building to the Keokuk Gospel Center in 1938. The building was demolished in 1957.<sup>196</sup> In the rural town of Muscatine, newly-arrived Jews from Lithuania formed a congregation, B'nai Moses, and in

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<sup>193</sup> Shahla Farzan, “Quincy Synagogue Turns Off the Lights—For the Last Time” (May 22, 2019), at: <https://will.illinois.edu/news/story/quincy-synagogue-turns-off-the-lights-for-the-last-time>; and “Temple B’Nai Sholom Closing After 150 Years,” *Quincy Herald-Whig* (May 12, 2019), at: [https://www.whig.com/archive/article/temple-bnai-sholom-closing-after-150-years/article\\_2b2baf31-8d4f-5136-b153-e9da2a4c13cf.html](https://www.whig.com/archive/article/temple-bnai-sholom-closing-after-150-years/article_2b2baf31-8d4f-5136-b153-e9da2a4c13cf.html). As of July 7, 2021, the landing page for this synagogue’s website can still be viewed; however, none of its pages or links are active; see: <http://www.bnaisholomquincy.com/>. For more on the Jewish communities in Quincy, Illinois, and in Hannibal, Missouri, see: [http://smallsynagogues.com/quincy\\_hannibal\\_mo.htm](http://smallsynagogues.com/quincy_hannibal_mo.htm); also David A. Frolick, “From Immigration to Integration: Jewish Life in Quincy in the Nineteenth Century,” at: <https://www.lib.niu.edu/1998/ih519829.html>.

<sup>194</sup> Sherry Zander, *Small Synagogues in Small Places across America*, <http://smallsynagogues.com/donaldsonville.htm> (accessed September 17, 2017).

<sup>195</sup> <https://tourosynagogue.com/about-us/ourhistory/> and <https://tourosynagogue.com/our-architectural-history/>, both accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>196</sup> <http://www.jewish-american-society-for-historic-preservation.org/completedprgms1/keokukiowa.html>, accessed March 2, 2021.

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1893 built a gable-front, wood-framed synagogue with pointed-arched windows; in 1991, the building was purchased for use by a local theater group and again put on the market for sale in 2014.<sup>197</sup> A similar Gothic Revival-styled, wood-framed synagogue was constructed in Centerville, Iowa, by an immigrant community of Russian Jews in 1894; Centerville's Jewish population dwindled in the middle of the twentieth century, and the building is currently in use as an Episcopal church, although its stained-glass windows featuring the Star of David remain in place.<sup>198</sup> B'nai Jacob Synagogue in Ottumwa, Iowa, was constructed in 1915 to serve a congregation of nearly four hundred people; architect George M. Kerns designed the square, red brick two-story synagogue in the Renaissance Revival style, and the sanctuary included a separate women's gallery on its second floor, following Orthodox tradition. In 2004, B'nai Jacob's building was rehabilitated and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but the congregation diminished to the extent that it donated the building fifteen years later to the American Gothic Performing Arts Festival; in 2019, it was renamed the Temple of Creative Arts and is used as a meeting and performance space.<sup>199</sup>

United Hebrew Congregation (Achdut Yisroel) was founded in 1837 in St. Louis, Missouri, just fifteen years after the city was incorporated, making it the first Jewish congregation to be established in St. Louis and the oldest to the west of the Mississippi River. At the time of its founding, the congregation was Orthodox, but United Hebrew joined the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1878, withdrew in 1885, and rejoined the Reform movement in 1904—the year of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. United Hebrew Congregation has occupied six synagogue buildings since 1841, including its magnificent Byzantine Revival-style temple on Skinker Boulevard, constructed in 1927 and designed by the firm of Maritz and Young. The Missouri Historical Society purchased the building in 1989 for use as its Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center; the United Hebrew Congregation is now located in the suburb of Chesterfield, its current synagogue designed by Pietro Belluschi and constructed between 1986 and 1989.<sup>200</sup>

Texas has long been home to Jewish people who settled in many of its agricultural and mercantile towns along railroad lines, as well as in its largest cities. In the port city of Galveston, Temple B'nai Israel was constructed in the Norman Gothic style in 1870, with significant additions and alterations in 1890 and 1928; the congregation sold the building to a Masonic organization in 1953 for use as its fellowship and meeting hall.<sup>201</sup> El Paso's Temple Mount Sinai completed its Moorish Revival-style building in 1898 and occupied it until 1916, when the congregation built a second temple; the 1898 synagogue has since been demolished.<sup>202</sup> Built in 1897, B'nai Abraham in Brenham, Texas, ceased functioning as a synagogue by the 1970s; the wood-framed Gothic Revival style building, which appeared like a modest church, was moved to Austin in 2015 and now serves as an Orthodox synagogue, Tiferet Israel.<sup>203</sup> Built in 1860 as a residence and subsequently used as a school, the

<sup>197</sup> [https://muscatinejournal.com/news/local/old-muscatine-synagogue-faces-an-uncertain-future/article\\_9666b21a-b062-55a3-a9ac-a2a7692fb69c.html](https://muscatinejournal.com/news/local/old-muscatine-synagogue-faces-an-uncertain-future/article_9666b21a-b062-55a3-a9ac-a2a7692fb69c.html), accessed March 2, 2021; also see the weblog of architectural historian Samuel D. Gruber, at: <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/2014/06/usa-former-iowa-synagogue-up-for-sale.html>, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>198</sup> <http://lucascountyia.blogspot.com/2011/11/varied-career-of-tiny-synagogue.html>, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>199</sup> "B'nai Jacob Synagogue," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, listed August 10, 2004 (NRIS 04000815); also "Dwindling membership challenges Ottumwa synagogue," *Ottumwa Courier* (May 23, 2018), at: [http://www.ottumwacourier.com/news/dwindling-membership-challenges-ottumwa-synagogue/article\\_ea816742-5ee2-11e8-b798-8390360e6ea9.html](http://www.ottumwacourier.com/news/dwindling-membership-challenges-ottumwa-synagogue/article_ea816742-5ee2-11e8-b798-8390360e6ea9.html), and "Performing arts festival celebrates new home," *Ottumwa Courier* (June 17, 2019), at: [https://www.ottumwacourier.com/news/performing-arts-festival-celebrates-new-home/article\\_aba4724c-9106-11e9-b5b8-b747c66dd1a3.html](https://www.ottumwacourier.com/news/performing-arts-festival-celebrates-new-home/article_aba4724c-9106-11e9-b5b8-b747c66dd1a3.html); "The last of Iowa's small-town synagogues: seven members still praying," *The Guardian* (February 24, 2016), at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/feb/24/iowa-small-town-synagogues-ottumwa-judaism>, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>200</sup> <https://www.unitedhebrew.org/about/history/>, accessed March 11, 2021.

<sup>201</sup> "Temple B'nai Israel, Galveston," Texas Historical Commission, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ivt01>, accessed August 11, 2017.

<sup>202</sup> <https://www.templemountsinai.com/Who-We-Are>, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>203</sup> Corrie Maclaggan, "Brenham Synagogue to Find New Life in Texas," *The New York Times* (December 14, 2014),

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Hebrew Sinai Congregation in Jefferson, Texas, repurposed the building as a synagogue in 1875; it served through 1927, when it was given to the local garden club in exchange for the club's perpetual care of the Mt. Sinai Cemetery, and the building is now used for theater productions by the Jefferson Playhouse.<sup>204</sup>

During the years of peak immigration in the western United States, Jews established themselves in the Southwest. Congregation Montefiore formed in Las Vegas, New Mexico, for thirty-six Jewish families in 1884; the first Jewish congregation in the New Mexico Territory, they named themselves in honor of the English philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore, who celebrated his centenary that year. The congregation met in the local workmen's hall until it constructed its first synagogue in 1886. The building looked very much like a Christian church, with a front-facing gable end and lancet-arched windows, as well as an enormous tower with a steeple-like appearance, but capped with an elongated dome. Congregation Montefiore constructed a second building that served as its synagogue from 1922 until 1950, when, due to the dramatically decreased Jewish population in Las Vegas, it was sold to the Catholic Newman Center.<sup>205</sup> Congregation Albert, established in 1897 in Albuquerque, is the oldest continuing Jewish organization in New Mexico. Among its founding members were Samuel and Solomon Jaffa's brother Henry N. Jaffa (1846-1901), who served as the city's first mayor after its incorporation in 1885, and the Jaffas' nephew Nathan Jaffa (1863-1945), a prominent merchant, entrepreneur, and civic leader.<sup>206</sup> Three years later, in 1900, the Temple Albert was constructed as a massive cubic volume of brick with a hipped roof topped by an enormous hemispherical dome and minaret. The congregation moved into its second building in 1951 and held its services, Hebrew school classes, and community events there until 1984, when it relocated yet again to its third building, which currently serves as the congregation's home in Albuquerque.<sup>207</sup>

Jewish communities also were established in the Great Plains and intermountain regions during these peak years

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/14/us/brenham-synagogue-to-find-new-life-in-texas.html>, accessed September 16, 2017.

<sup>204</sup> "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities—Jefferson, Texas," <http://www.isjl.org/texas-jefferson-encyclopedia.html>, accessed September 10, 2017; also "Jefferson—Hebrew Sinai Congregation," Texas Jewish Historical Society, at:

<https://txjhs.org/jefferson-sinai-hebrew-congregation/>; and "The Goldbergs: Two Generations of Jewish Pioneers of Jefferson, Texas," Jewish Museum of the American West at: <http://www.jmaw.org/goldberg-jewish-jefferson-texas/>, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>205</sup> "Congregation Montefiore: The First Synagogue in the New Mexico Territory," Jewish Museum of the American West, at: <http://www.jmaw.org/montefiore-new-mexico/>, accessed February 14, 2021; also "Congregation Montefiore, Las Vegas, NM," Southwest Jewish Archives, University of Arizona Special Collections, at: <https://swja.library.arizona.edu/content/congregation-montefiore-las-vegas-nm>, accessed February 14, 2021.

<sup>206</sup> For more on the family of Aaron Jaffa, including sons Samuel and Solomon, see: <https://www.geni.com/people/Aaron-Jaffa/600000003463512689>. It should be noted that this family webpage does not list a "Henry N. Jaffa," but does list a "Hirsch" Jaffa (September 15, 1844-?); they likely are the same man, with "Henry" being an Americanized version of "Hirsch." See the separate webpage for "Henry N. Jaffa (September 15, 1844-January 18, 1901)" that is managed by a different user of this genealogy website, at: <https://www.geni.com/people/Henry-Jaffa/6000000080288536146>. Henry Jaffa expanded the Jaffa brothers' Trinidad mercantile business holdings into New Mexico in 1879—first in Las Vegas, and then into Albuquerque in 1882, where he became mayor three years later. Nathan Jaffa—son of Benjamin Jaffa (1840-?), the oldest brother of Samuel, Solomon, and Hirsch (Henry)—left Germany in 1878 and settled in Trinidad, Colorado, to work with his uncles before relocating to New Mexico, living in Las Vegas, Albuquerque, and Roswell. In Roswell, Nathan is credited with starting "the area's first major growth and development spurt" when an aquifer was discovered as a well was drilled in the backyard of his Richardson Avenue home in 1890; see <https://www.roswell-nm.gov/654/Our-History> and "Wonderful Artesian Field" in George B. Anderson, *History of New Mexico: Its Resources and People*, v. 2 (Pacific States Publishing, 1907), 784-807, at: <http://genealogytrails.com/newmex/chaves/historyoverview.html>. Appointed by President Taft, Nathan Jaffa served as the territorial secretary of New Mexico from 1907 until its statehood in 1912. Nathan also served for fifteen years as a regent of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, two years as the mayor of Santa Fe, and four years as the chief state tax commissioner; see "Henry and Nathan Jaffa" at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jaffa-2>.

<sup>207</sup> "Congregation Albert: The Oldest Continuing Jewish Organization in Albuquerque, New Mexico," Jewish Museum of the American West, at: <http://www.jmaw.org/albert-albuquerque-jewish/>, accessed February 17, 2021; "Temple Albert," Southwest Jewish Archives, University of Arizona Special Collections, at: <https://swja.library.arizona.edu/content/congregation-albert-0>, accessed February 14, 2021; and <https://www.congregationalbert.org/our-history>, accessed February 17, 2021.

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of western immigration from 1840 through 1924, when the Immigration Act established quotas on immigrants from Eastern Europe. According to historian Ellen Baumler, Jews from Prussia, Bavaria, Austria, and Poland made their way to the mining towns growing throughout Montana. In Helena, the United Hebrew Benevolent Society formed in 1866, and by the following year Jews owned and operated seventeen of the twenty dry goods stores in the city. Jews became established professionals and were welcomed to join Masonic lodges and social clubs, and many were elected to public office. The Reform Congregation Emanu-El was founded in 1887, but it did not build its Helena synagogue until 1890-91. Designed by architects Frederick Heinlein and Thomas F. Mathias, the synagogue was constructed of rough stone masonry in an exotic combination of Romanesque Revival and Byzantine and Moorish Revival elements, including keyhole-shaped windows and large arched openings. Two corner towers were capped by copper onion domes painted with stars; its interior included a sanctuary with a 30' tall ceiling and a seating capacity of three hundred worshipers. Upon its completion in 1891, it was the first synagogue constructed between St. Paul, Minnesota, and Portland, Oregon. By the 1930s, however, the Jewish population dwindled to the extent that the synagogue sold its pipe organ and pews to the Seventh Day Adventists; the building sold for one dollar to the State Department of Public Welfare, which sandblasted the Hebrew inscription, "Gate to the Eternal" above the front entrance and removed the two onion domes from their towers. The building was vacant between 1976 and 1980, during which time the Montana Historical Society used it as an off-site storage facility. In 1981 the state sold it for \$83,000 to the Catholic Diocese of Helena, which uses it as its chancery. Temple Emanu-el was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, at both the local and state levels of significance for settlement, ethnic history, and architecture, in July 2002.<sup>208</sup>

The Moorish Revival Temple B'nai Israel in Salt Lake City, organized in 1874, was built in 1890, modeled on the Great Synagogue of Berlin. The building served until 1976; after years of vacancy, furniture sales company Henriksen/Butler purchased the building in 1987, transforming it into a showroom.<sup>209</sup> The continuously serving Moorish-Romanesque style Ahavath Beth Israel in Boise dates to 1895, but the building was relocated three miles from its historic site in October 2003.<sup>210</sup>

In the Pacific Northwest, Temple Emanu-El in Spokane was dedicated in 1892, moving to a new building in 1966 when it merged with the Orthodox Keneseth Israelas congregation as Temple Beth Shalom. Seattle's Ohaveth Sholem synagogue was built in 1892 but was sold in 1896 due to financial difficulties. Seattle's Temple De Hirsch Sinai, founded in 1899, built its new synagogue in 1907, using it through 1960. The hybrid Gothic-Moorish Temple Beth Israel building in Portland, Oregon, dated to 1887, but burned in 1923.

San Francisco's Neo-Gothic Congregation Emanu-El, one of the three largest synagogues in the country at the time of construction, was gravely damaged in the 1906 earthquake. Although rebuilt and serving through 1926, the building is no longer extant. The third Temple Sherith Israel synagogue in San Francisco, designed in a mixed Byzantine and Romanesque style, dates to 1905 and remains in active use. San Diego's original 1889 Temple Beth Israel, which served until 1926, was built the same year as Temple Aaron; the building was moved to Heritage Park in 1978.

<sup>208</sup> Ellen Baumler, "To Ornament the City," *Signature Montana* (Summer 2008), available at:

[http://www.helenahistory.org/Temple\\_Emanu\\_El.htm](http://www.helenahistory.org/Temple_Emanu_El.htm), accessed February 19, 2021; also "Temple Emanu-el," *Historic Montana*, at: <https://historicmt.org/items/show/819>, accessed February 19, 2021; and Temple Emanu-el National Register of Historic Places nomination form (NRIS 02000724), listed on July 11, 2002.

<sup>209</sup> <https://hbdg.com/about/showrooms/salt-lake-city>, accessed August 11, 2017.

<sup>210</sup> Dan Fellner, "Boise's surprising—and splendid—historic synagogue," *Jewish News Service* (21 Nov 2016), <http://www.jns.org> (accessed September 9, 2017). The synagogue was listed at the state level of significance in the National Register (NRIS 72000432) in November 1972.

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Jews first arrived in Colorado in 1859 amidst the Pike's Peak gold rush. The oldest extant Jewish religious building in Denver—originally built as the Emmanuel Episcopalian Church in 1876-1877—is a neo-Gothic, rough-faced stone building with a centrally-located rose window in its front-facing gable. Purchased in 1903 by two smaller congregations of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, they named their new combined congregation Shearith Israel (“Remnant of Israel”) and held services there until 1958, when they sold the building to an artist.<sup>211</sup> In keeping with the larger, wood-framed St. George Episcopal Church across the street, Leadville's Temple Israel—designed in the Carpenter Gothic style by architect George King and constructed in 1884—served as a synagogue for 53 years before it was first converted to residential use in 1937; subsequently it served as an Episcopalian vicarage and then was divided into four apartment units. Leadville's Temple Israel Foundation purchased the former synagogue in 1992, intending to restore it and tell the Jewish history of this mining town. A May 2006 electrical fire seriously damaged the building, and reconstruction occurred between 2007-2008 with support from the Colorado State Historical Fund.<sup>212</sup> From 1888 to 1899, Congregation Shomro Amunoh (“Guardians of Faith”) occupied a Moorish Revival-inspired building on Blake Street near Cherry Creek in Denver, demolished at an unknown date. In 1910, the Sons of Israel purchased and renovated the ca. 1900 Gothic Revival United Brethren Church in Colorado Springs, selling the building in 1951 for the offices of the Izaak Walton League, which removed the steeple and Star of David.

### Temple Emanuel, Denver, Colorado

Temple Emanuel is the oldest Jewish congregation in the state of Colorado; it also claims to be the largest congregation of the Rocky Mountain region with over 2000 member families today. Founded by 22 members in 1874, its membership doubled in one year, and in September 1875 the congregation dedicated its first synagogue at the corner of Curtis and 19<sup>th</sup> streets. As Denver's Jewish community continued to grow significantly, so Temple Emanuel outgrew its 1875 building, and its members began to plan for a new synagogue.<sup>213</sup>

The congregation hired brothers Willoughby J. and Frank E. Edbrooke—the latter the final architect to work on the Colorado State Capitol (1886-1901)—to design a new synagogue at 24<sup>th</sup> and Curtis streets, which served as its second home from 1882 until 1897, when its interior was destroyed by a fire. The Edbrookes had designed the three-story building using a light-colored brick in a combination of the Romanesque and Moorish styles. The asymmetrical façade featured a large keyhole-shaped window on its third floor with smaller, Romanesque arched windows on its second; courses of dark stone stretched across each floor to contrast with the light brick. The front-gabled roof, also asymmetrical, was pierced by two brick towers of different widths and heights. The sanctuary measured 54' x 74' and could seat 500 people; the bimah and ark were of finely carved and gilt walnut. Because many of its members no longer lived in the neighborhood, the congregation chose not to repair or rebuild the fire-damaged structure, and instead constructed a third synagogue in a different location. The second temple was purchased by Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol, who used it until 1921, when that congregation sold the synagogue to Temple Beth Joseph, which used it until 1951. The Golden Bell Press then purchased the building, which most recently has become an arts space.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>211</sup> The Emmanuel Shearith Israel Chapel (NRIS 69000041) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 1, 1969, see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84129877> and <https://denverarchitecture.org/site/emmanuel-art-gallery/>.

<sup>212</sup> The Temple Israel synagogue has functioned as Leadville's Jewish history museum since 2008, see: <http://jewishleadville.org/foundation.html> and <http://jewishleadville.org/buildinghistory.html>. The building is located within the Leadville Historic District (NRIS 66000248), listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966, as well as the Leadville National Historic Landmark, designated on July 4, 1961.

<sup>213</sup> For the history of this congregation and its buildings, see: <https://www.emanueldenver.org/about/temple-and-history>.

<sup>214</sup> The second synagogue for Temple Emanuel (5DV.144) 24 Curtis Street (NRIS 78000853) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 1978; see: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84129569>. Frank Edbrooke was also the architect of the 1902 repair for the second congregation, Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol. On Edbrooke, see:

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Temple Emanuel's third Moorish Revival synagogue, at Pearl and East 16<sup>th</sup> streets in the North Capitol Hill neighborhood, was dedicated in January 1899. Designed by architect John J. Humphreys, who died three months before its completion, the building is described in its National Register nomination as incorporating "Moorish, Syriac, Turkish, and European elements" that work to provide "a definite Eastern feel."<sup>215</sup> As more Jews continued to move to Denver in the early twentieth century, the congregation again needed more space for worship, education, and community events. In 1924, they built a sympathetic addition that doubled its size, designed by Thielman Robert Weiger, who had worked as an apprentice to the first architect Humphreys. A square-plan temple of buff brick on a rough-faced stone foundation, the building's two bays are divided by three tall towers like minarets; the middle and north towers are octagonal, and all are topped with copper Turkish domes. On its interior and exterior, the building is covered with floral and geometric surface decoration, whether in its brick courses or in its painted stucco, mosaic and glazed tiles, or shallow relief carvings. Temple Emanuel utilized this building until 1956, when they built their fourth synagogue; since then, it has been home to the First Southern Baptist Church, the LovingWay Pentecostal Church, Pathways Church, and, currently, the Denver Community Church.

Temple Emanuel moved to their fourth building on Grape Street—a modernist synagogue designed by Percival Goodman—in 1956, where they remain today. Although Denver's Temple Emanuel congregation has a long and important history—its Reform congregation has counted among its members the businessman, philanthropist, and U.S. senator Simon Guggenheim and David May, founder of the May Company department stores—and although they chose to build eclectic Moorish Revival synagogues three different times, none of their buildings have as long a history of continuous use by a single congregation as that of Temple Aaron in Trinidad.<sup>216</sup>

### Temple Emanuel, Pueblo, Colorado

The continuously operating Temple Emanuel (5PE.516.29) on North Grand Avenue at 14<sup>th</sup> Street was designed by Pueblo architect Jacob M. Gile in 1900. Constructed of red brick and rough-faced tan sandstone in an eclectic mix of Queen Anne, Romanesque, and Classical Revival features with a midcentury modernist addition, the building is eleven years younger than Temple Aaron. On the principal (east) façade, the glazed and paneled, paired entrance doors are recessed under a brick Syrian arch, outlined with decorative brickwork in a basketweave pattern; above the arch is bracketed pediment with a dentilated cornice, tympanum, and gargoyles. In keeping with this eclectic combination, the synagogue features a round window surrounded by wood panel, and two polygonal towers flank the entrance, each with a hipped roof topped by a decorative finial. The National Register nomination describes modifications to the sanctuary in 1956 that include the introduction of a new step on its sloping floor and the removal of two rows of seating to create a platform for socializing and refreshments, as well as the 1973 addition of two roof trusses to correct structural issues. The 1963 addition, referred to as the education building, was designed with a plan in the shape of the Star of David—covered by a prominent, hexagonal hipped roof—in strong contrast to the immediately adjacent historic synagogue. The first Jewish congregation in Pueblo, B'nai Jacob, included 40 or 50 Orthodox families, but small number organized in 1898 to establish a Reform group, first as the Ladies Temple Association, and then as the Temple Emanuel Congregation. Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago conducted the synagogue's dedication ceremony in September

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[https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/Architects\\_edbrookef.pdf](https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/Architects_edbrookef.pdf).

<sup>215</sup> Temple Emanuel's Pearl Street synagogue (NRIS 87001554) was listed in the National Register on November 25, 1987, see the nomination prepared by Hal Haney at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84128889>.

<sup>216</sup> The congregation's current synagogue on Grape Street (5DV.8272, NRIS 03000403), designed by architect Percival Goodman in 1956 in a modernist idiom, was listed in the National Register on May 19, 2003: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84128889>.

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1900 with former Colorado governor Alva Adams participating as a speaker.<sup>217</sup> While Temple Emanuel remains in continuous use by its congregation, it is not entirely comparable to Temple Aaron in that it is younger and constructed in a different style (with some alterations). An alarming note, less than five months after Temple Aaron celebrated its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Trinidad, a plan to bomb this Pueblo synagogue was thwarted by the FBI before Shabbat services on the first Friday of November 2019.<sup>218</sup>

### Temple Beth-El, Corsicana, Texas

Temple Beth-El is a wood-framed synagogue in the Moorish Revival style, with a symmetrical façade emphasized by two octagonal towers topped by sheet metal-clad onion domes and a centrally-located pair of wood entrance doors with keyhole-shaped windows in their upper halves. Clad on all sides with wood clapboards, this eclectic building hints at its use as a synagogue by a Jewish congregation through a pair of stained-glass windows placed directly over the entrance doors, shaped as two tablets like the Ten Commandments, but topped by a round “rose” window as in a Christian church; further adding to its eclectic appearance, the onion dome on the right side of the building is topped with a metal ornament of a crescent moon, suggesting connections to the Middle East or to Moorish Spain.

The seat of Navarro County, Corsicana attracted merchants with the arrival of the Houston & Texas Central Railway in 1871, which transformed this cotton town into a trading center. Jewish merchants arrived with the railroad, and Corsicana’s Jewish community formed its first congregation in 1871, with its members meeting for prayers in each other’s homes and above the Freedman Dry Goods Store until they split into two congregations; the Orthodox continued to meet above the store, while the Reform group raised funds to construct this synagogue in 1898, nine years after Temple Aaron was built in Trinidad. The Jewish community reached its peak in 1937, with 360 Jews living in Corsicana, but by 1960, both Temple Beth-El and the Orthodox congregation, Agudas Achim, were served by a single rabbi. The two congregations, in light of their significantly dwindling population, decided to merge in 1978 to become a Conservative congregation, and the Temple Beth-El building was put on the market in 1980. Because of its architectural and historical significance, the Navarro County Historical Society purchased the synagogue in 1982, rededicating it as a cultural center and community meeting space in 1987. Temple Beth-El was designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark by the state historic preservation office in 1981 and listed in the National Register in 1987. Although its façade and stained-glass windows have recently been restored, the Moorish Revival-style building is younger than Trinidad’s Temple Aaron and is no longer in service as a synagogue.<sup>219</sup>

### Temple Beth El, Jefferson City, Missouri

Constructed in 1883, Temple Beth El is the oldest synagogue in continuous use by a Jewish congregation to the west of the Mississippi River. Six years older than Temple Aaron, the building is a small, single-story synagogue built in the Gothic Revival style, making it appear much like a Christian church; the style may have been selected precisely for this reason, so as not to stand out as different from other religious buildings in the community. In contrast, Temple Aaron does not dissimulate its clear distinctiveness, architecturally referencing its use as a synagogue. Whereas Temple Aaron employs an eclectic and exuberant asymmetrical façade with stained-glass windows, Temple Beth El’s main façade is entirely symmetrical and features a central pair of

<sup>217</sup> Pueblo’s Temple Emanuel was listed in the National Register on March 14, 1996 (NRIS 96000273), see:

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/84132419>.

<sup>218</sup> “Man who spoke of hating Jews accused of temple bomb plot, FBI says,” *Los Angeles Times* (November 5, 2019), available at: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-11-05/colorado-synagogue-bomb-plot-arrest>, accessed February 14, 2021.

<sup>219</sup> “Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities—Corsicana, Texas,” in Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, at: <https://www.isjl.org/texas-corsicana-encyclopedia.html>, accessed March 2, 2021. Temple Beth-El (NRIS 86003687) was listed in the National Register on February 3, 1987, for its architectural significance, see at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/40973082>.

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wood doors under a pointed lancet arch of brick, flanked on either side by a lancet arched wood window that originally featured clear glass. The other sides include three equally-spaced lancet-arched windows with clear glass to bring light into the sanctuary space. The Missouri synagogue has a simple pitched roof and front-facing gable into which a small arched panel is set for modest decoration.

Temple Beth El made several changes to its building in 1954 and 1968. Significantly, in 1954 the sanctuary was updated with new finishes, and a rear addition to the building was constructed to include a kitchen, social gathering room, and a bathroom. In 1968, mechanical improvements, including the installation of air conditioning and new electrical fixtures, were completed. As Temple Aaron added wood paneling to interiors in the late 1940s, Missouri's Temple Beth El installed walnut paneling in its sanctuary and completely covered its floor in red carpeting in 1968; stained-glass windows also were added at the same time. The greatest change to the building's interior has been the addition of a new, arched ceiling, replacing the historic flat ceiling and altering the volume of the space. Despite the building addition and modifications to its interior finishes and sanctuary ceiling, Temple Beth El was listed in the National Register in 1976 as contributing to the Missouri State Capitol Historic District.<sup>220</sup>

Although it is six years older than Temple Aaron and is still in use as a synagogue by its congregation—allowing it to claim the title of the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the western half of the United States—the building's physical integrity is compromised by later additions and interior modifications—especially the character-defining feature of its sanctuary ceiling—such that Temple Aaron retains a higher degree of physical integrity than Temple Beth El.

## CONCLUSION

Temple Aaron meets NHL Criterion 1 for its association with the westward immigration of Jewish families and individuals from European countries between 1840-1924, representative of broad patterns of immigration and settlement in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also meets NHL Criterion 4 as an excellent example of synagogue architecture constructed in the exotic Moorish Revival style employed by Reform Jewish congregations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when an enthusiasm for a wide variety of eclectic architectural styles swept the nation. With its onion dome-topped tower and small minarets, Temple Aaron announced its difference, boldly distinguishing itself from other buildings constructed in this booming nineteenth-century market town, while it simultaneously connected its Jewish congregants to a powerful history with ancient roots. Temple Aaron exhibits an extremely high level of physical integrity and is the second-oldest synagogue in continuous use to the west of the Mississippi River; for these reasons, it meets NHL Criteria Exception 1 for properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes. More than 130 years after the synagogue's construction and more than 135 years after its first *minyan* gathered, this small congregation—because of its dedicated stewardship of Temple Aaron—continues to keep alive the story of the Jewish people in the American West into the twenty-first century.

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<sup>220</sup> For more on the recent history of Missouri's Temple Beth El, see the congregation's website at: <https://templebethel-jc.org/history/> and Cole County Historical Museum, Cole County Jewish Temples, <https://www.colecountyhistoricalmuseum.org/jewish-temples>, accessed September 17, 2017.

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### 6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

#### Ownership of Property

Private:   
Public-Local:  
Public-State:  
Public-Federal:

#### Category of Property

Building(s):   
District:  
Site:  
Structure:  
Object:

#### Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

##### Contributing

Buildings: 1  
Sites: 0  
Structures: 1  
Objects: 0  
  
Total: 2

##### Noncontributing

Buildings: 0  
Sites: 0  
Structures: 0  
Objects: 1  
  
Total: 1

### PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY

(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

#### SUMMARY

Situated near downtown Trinidad in Las Animas County, Colorado, Temple Aaron consists of a single contributing building, constructed as a Moorish Revival style synagogue in 1889 and remaining in use today; as well as a contributing structure, a historic retaining wall; and a non-contributing object, a contemporary commemorative marker dating to 2019. It is the oldest synagogue building in continuous use by a Jewish congregation in the state of Colorado and the broader intermountain West. The only older active Jewish synagogue in continuous use to the west of the Mississippi River is Temple Beth El in Jefferson City, Missouri, a smaller building designed in the Gothic Revival style of architecture and constructed six years earlier, in 1883. Temple Aaron was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 28, 1973, as contributing to the Corazon de Trinidad Historic District (NRIS 73000482), locally significant in the areas of commerce, architecture, and community planning/development.<sup>221</sup>

The synagogue was designed by renowned regional architect Isaac Hamilton Rapp with Charles William Bulger of the firm Bulger & Rapp during its first year in practice; the two architects dissolved their firm after four years, in 1892. Subsequently, Bulger relocated to Texas and established his architectural practice in Dallas, while Rapp enjoyed a prolific career working with his brother, William Mason Rapp, as the firm of Rapp & Rapp, throughout the Southwest, but primarily in Colorado and New Mexico.<sup>222</sup>

Temple Aaron sits imposingly on its steeply sloping lot surrounded by a low sandstone retaining wall at the southwest corner of the intersection of South Maple and East Third streets. Historian William Toll's research

<sup>221</sup> El Corazon de Trinidad Historic District, National Register Nomination, NRIS 73000482 (February 28, 1973).

<sup>222</sup> Sheppard, 111-115.

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establishes that most Jewish families in Trinidad lived in this neighborhood.<sup>223</sup> The two-story, red brick, rectangular plan (49' x 69') Exotic Revival synagogue is built on a rock-faced sandstone foundation and features a hipped roof with overhanging eaves, a central pedimented gable under which a round window with metal tracery is centered, and a wide hipped-roofed entrance porch supported by sandstone pillars and punctuated by a segmental arch at center. Character-defining features include sash and transom windows with bright yellow, red, and blue stained glass, minaret-like turrets, and asymmetrical towers—one with an onion dome and the other rising to a pyramidal roof.<sup>224</sup> On the east and west sides of the building, windows are grouped as a large, central window flanked by two smaller ones. On the second story, those twelve windows corresponding to the sanctuary feature segmental sandstone arches framed by alternately recessed brick. The first floor of Temple Aaron includes a social hall, two Hebrew school rooms, and a small kitchen. From either side of the first-floor entrance lobby, a pair of carved wood staircases provide access to the sanctuary located on the second floor of the building. The pegged, open timber sanctuary features a double-height, hipped ceiling and a theater-style plan with pews often associated with early American Reform congregations and echoing mid-nineteenth-century Protestant churches.<sup>225</sup> Architectural historian Carl D. Sheppard summarized: “The Temple of Aaron is a spectacularly successful house of worship and speaks to us now for the small community that was able to construct such a building indicating beauty, the mystery of symmetry under the irregularity of visual reality, and the basic equality of the group or individual on the mythical American frontier.”<sup>226</sup>

## LOCATION AND SETTING

Temple Aaron in the City of Trinidad—a small market town along the Santa Fe Trail that grew with the development of coal mines and related industries and serves as the seat of Las Animas County—located in rural southeastern Colorado approximately 13 miles north of the New Mexico border. Following the street grid, the synagogue is four blocks to the southeast of Main Street (U.S. Route 160), the commercial corridor that spans the city and which is a historic road that connects much of the western half of the nation, from Missouri to Arizona.<sup>227</sup> Temple Aaron sits approximately one mile to the east of Interstate 25, which connects Trinidad to Raton, New Mexico, approximately 20 miles to the south, and to Santa Fe, New Mexico, a farther 175 miles south. Interstate 25 also connects Trinidad to Pueblo, Colorado, approximately 85 miles to the north, and to Denver, the state capital, 195 miles to the north. Trinidad lies within the Purgatoire River valley (El Rio de las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio or the River of the Lost Souls in Purgatory) at an elevation of 6,025' in a semi-arid climate. The Spanish Peaks are to the northwest, rising to over 13,600'; to the southeast is Fisher's Peak, a mountain that rises to 9,600' and creates a dramatic vista from Simpson's Rest, a prominent sandstone bluff to the north of the city. Atop this bluff stands a large sign, illuminated at night, that spells “TRINIDAD.” Census data from 2010 counted 9,096 residents in Trinidad.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>223</sup> William Toll, “Trinidad, Colorado's Jewish Women: The Domestic Basis of Community 1889-1910,” in *Western States Jewish History* 28:2 (January 1996), 112.

<sup>224</sup> See Simmons and Simmons for additional description, Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Architectural Inventory Form: Temple Aaron (5LA.2179.12), (Oct 2001), on file with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado, Denver.

<sup>225</sup> Henry Stolzman and Daniel Stolzman, *Synagogue Architecture in America: Faith, Spirit & Identity* (Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia: Images Publishing, 2004), 30.

<sup>226</sup> Sheppard, 20-21.

<sup>227</sup> U.S. Route 160 was commissioned in 1930 to cross the country between Springfield, Missouri, and Trinidad, Colorado; today it has been extended to connect US 89 near Tuba City, Arizona, Navajo Nation, to US 67 near Poplar Bluff, Missouri. For more on the history of U.S. Route 160, see: <https://www.usends.com/trinidad.html>, <https://www.usends.com/160.html>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Route\\_160](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_160), and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Route\\_160\\_in\\_Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_160_in_Colorado).

<sup>228</sup> Data published at the U.S. Census website projects that the 2020 Census, once finalized, will count an estimated 8,200 residents in Trinidad, a projected loss of 9.8% from 2010; See U.S. Census website, at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/trinidadcitycolorado/PST045219> (accessed July 3, 2021).

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The Temple Aaron site originally was purchased by the trustees of Congregation Aaron from Lewis H. Turner on January 9, 1889, as Lot 4, Block 53, in the original town site of Trinidad, for the sum of two thousand dollars.<sup>229</sup> Since that time, a portion of Lot 5 was purchased for the purposes of a utility driveway with curb cut that has since been abandoned or is no longer in use, but which gives the current Temple Aaron property parcel a slightly irregular rectangular shape of four sides, as recorded by Las Animas County (see Figure 2). The property is defined on its north, east, and south sides by a retaining wall of sandstone slabs, rising to its greatest height at approximately 5', most likely constructed at the same time as the building and counted as a contributing structure. The sandstone slabs that comprise the wall are, overall, in good condition with some flaking, although the wall undulates and bulges in places as the site slopes down dramatically toward the north and west. A historical marker on a steel post at the southeast corner of the building faces to greet visitors approaching from South Maple Street. The marker was placed by the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, in conjunction with Colorado Preservation, Inc., the City of Trinidad, and the congregation of Temple Aaron, and dedicated on June 22, 2019, during a celebration of the congregation's 130 years of continuous use of the synagogue.<sup>230</sup> This historical marker does not detract from the visitor's experience of the historic setting, although it is included as a non-contributing object because it is outside the period of significance.

On its sloping, prominent corner site, defined by the sandstone retaining wall, Temple Aaron stands on a plinth high above the street level of both South Maple and East Third streets, both of which are paved in locally-made red bricks, stamped "Trinidad," for which the city is well-known.<sup>231</sup> Toward the south end of the site is a curb cut for a driveway or vehicular entrance from South Maple Street (previously noted as abandoned or no longer in use). From the street's concrete curb, the visitor approaches the synagogue entrance from a central sidewalk with green turf lawn on either side, before ascending five stairs to a landing, and another three stairs to the building's entrance under a projecting protective porch. Simple pipe railings, painted black, flank the stairs on both sides. A relatively recent concrete sidewalk or walkway has been installed immediately adjacent to the south side of the building, on to which rain gutters drain from the roof.

The site features turf lawn with simple and rather limited formal plantings: two evergreen juniper shrubs define the path to the building, one on each side of the concrete sidewalk, while a variety of deciduous trees and shrubs are sparsely scattered on the property. An American linden tree stands on the northeast corner of the lot, and a *Vanhoutte spirea* (*Spiraea x vanhouttei*, a deciduous shrub commonly known as bridal wreath) is planted on the north side of the building; on the south wall of the property is a cherry plum shrub. Three apple trees—which

<sup>229</sup> Property purchased by Congregation Aaron on January 9, 1889; Warranty Deed filed on February 5, 1889; recorded in Book 35, p. 328. Records of the Las Animas County Assessor's Office.

<sup>230</sup> For information on the dedication of this marker, see: "Temple Aaron – 1889," at <http://www.jewish-american-society-for-historic-preservation.org/alabamakansas/trinidadcolorado.html> and <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=135690> (accessed April 30, 2021).

<sup>231</sup> Much of the city's architecture and its brick streets are constructed of red bricks featuring the name "Trinidad" in raised letters to provide better traction to all types of vehicles in winter snows, according to the Trinidad History Museum. The bricks were manufactured by the Trinidad Brick and Tile Company, and the streets of Trinidad were paved with these bricks during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1971, the Summit Brick Company of Pueblo purchased the Trinidad Brick and Tile Company but ceased production in Trinidad in 1978; see: <https://www.summitbrick.com/about.html>, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017688739/>, and [https://5008.sydneyplus.com/HistoryColorado\\_ArgusNet\\_Final/Portal/Portal.aspx?component=AAFW&record=70ec66ef-dba3-4285-be6e-cb8af41e3246](https://5008.sydneyplus.com/HistoryColorado_ArgusNet_Final/Portal/Portal.aspx?component=AAFW&record=70ec66ef-dba3-4285-be6e-cb8af41e3246). Other early brick companies in Trinidad included the Colorado Brick Manufacturing Company, which placed a sponsoring advertisement in the 1888 Trinidad City Directory, page 94, as follows: "The Colorado Brick Manufacturing Co., of Trinidad, Colorado. Unincorporated. Capacity 30,000 per day. E.C. Long and P. McArthur, Managers, W.W. Mix, Secretary and Treasurer, Are Now Prepared to Furnish Contractors and Builders with First-Class Hard Brick, The Quality of Which we think was Never Before Equalled in the City. Enquire at Yards, South-East Side of Media Addition, or at the Eagle Real Estate Office in the City"; and on page 66, the Pioneer Brick Yard: "Pioneer Brick Yard, Trinidad, Colo., F. Grasmuck, Proprietor. Will Contract to Make Brick in Any Point in Colorado or New Mexico, Has Had Twenty-eight Years' Experience, Nineteen in Trinidad. Also an Extra Fine Quality of Pressed Brick made to Order and Furnished in any Quantity. Orders from abroad Solicited."

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bear fruit during the Rosh Hashanah holiday each year—are dispersed on the site: one on the east side of the building, one on the southern property line, and one on the southeast corner of the lot. The apple tree on the east side has grown too close to the building’s stone foundation, where it now completely obscures the historic painted sign on the main façade, near the inscribed cornerstone; due to its age and size, it likely would not survive a move away from the foundation, but its branches could be grafted onto a new apple tree, allowing Temple Aaron’s members to continue their enjoyment of this tree and its fruit for many years to come. Mature elm trees are planted along the public right-of-way at street level on the north side.<sup>232</sup>

## PRESENT PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### Exterior

A two-story rectangular red brick building raised on a stone half-basement, Temple Aaron is immediately distinctive from the surrounding buildings in this historic residential neighborhood, in no small part because of its asymmetrical façade featuring minarets and a dome. Architects Charles William Bulger and Isaac Hamilton Rapp of the firm Bulger & Rapp designed the building in the eclectic Moorish Revival style often employed by Reform Jewish congregations in the United States during the mid- to late-nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries, influenced by the style’s popularity for contemporary Reform synagogues in central Europe.

### Main (East) Façade

The asymmetrical, tripartite main façade of Temple Aaron faces east/northeast, toward South Maple Street, but more significantly toward Jerusalem. Rising two stories from its dressed sandstone foundation, the synagogue building is constructed of red brick in a running or stretcher bond.<sup>233</sup> A three-bay projecting porch, constructed of dressed sandstone blocks to match the building’s rough ashlar base and sandstone trim, protects the building’s entrance from inclement weather. The porch’s sloping half-hipped roof is supported by a rough-hewn sandstone lintel with a central, segmental arch of stone that rests upon two rough-faced sandstone block columns, with a similar column at either end of the porch. Each column is crowned with a larger rough-hewn stone evocative of a capital. Two pilasters of the same design anchor the porch to the brick façade. The sheltered main entrance to Temple Aaron is comprised of a pair of wood doors which, when closed, form an

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<sup>232</sup> Kim Peters, Colorado State University Extension Service, identified the property’s vegetation, noted its current condition, and offered suggestions for future maintenance and care at the request of Temple Aaron and Colorado Preservation, Inc. in the summer of 2021; see email correspondence to the author of this nomination and National Park Service staff, from Kim Grant of Colorado Preservation, Inc., August 25, 2021.

<sup>233</sup> A mechanic’s lien, filed November 29, 1889, states that C.W. Sieg provided 111,800 bricks for construction of synagogue building at a cost of \$642.75 under general contractors Frank Damascio and Frank Pellini; the lien was released following payment in full on December 24, 1889. The 1888 Trinidad City Directory lists three “Brick Manufacturers” on page 149, including “C.W. Sieg, yard two miles north of city.” The other two suppliers listed are “F. Grassmuck, yard one mile west of city” and “Colorado Brick Company, yard two miles North of city.” Although the exact stone quarry for the sandstone used at Temple Aaron has not been identified, the 1888 Trinidad City Directory lists six businesses under “Stone Dealers and Contractors” on page 170, including “Damascio & Pillini” [*sic*], 515 North Commercial. The mechanic’s lien identifying Damascio and Pellini as general contractors suggests that they supplied the sandstone for Temple Aaron’s construction, yet does not identify the quarry source. The Notice of Lien for brick supplied by C.W. Sieg is recorded in Book 65, page 82, on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Colorado. The five other stone dealers and contractors listed in the 1888 city directory include Wm. Wienbroer; Chas. Innis; Tom Howard; Johnson & Son; McClane & Fenstermaker. A small advertisement appears on page 118 for: “Chas. Innes, Stone Contractor. Work Done in a First-Class Manner. Office on West Cedar Street, at Planing Mill of Chappell & Innes, Trinidad, Colorado.” There is no explanation for the different spellings of “Innis” and Innes,” however, in the residential section of this directory, on page 93, his is listed as residing thus: “Innis, Chas., stone contractor, 501 Nevada Avenue.” His partner is listed on page 69 as “Chappell, D.A., capitalist, 321 East Main.” Delos A. Chappell also was president of the Trinidad Water Works Company. The 1892 Trinidad City Directory lists no businesses as stone dealers, contractors, or stonemasons.

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arch at their top. Each wood door features a wide lower inset panel featuring a square sunburst with a square panel at center. The upper part of each door features a pair of inset rectangular panels and at top a curved window of fritted or textured opaque red glass. A tall, narrow one-over-one stained-glass window in a geometric (non-pictorial) pattern stands about 18” from the door on either side of the entrance, bringing light into the foyer.

The central building entrance is emphasized on the second floor by paired one-over-one stained-glass windows featuring a geometric pattern, above which is a large round window that brings daylight into the choir or organ loft that soars above the second-story sanctuary interior. This large window—reminiscent of a “rose window” in a Gothic church—features clear glass protected by an ornate metal grille of curving sections suggestive of botanical forms and a dressed sandstone surround. Flanking this round window on the second floor are two slender minarets, which are fluted above the roofline and topped by small onion domes. Between the minarets is a small gable, its inset panel painted white to match the roof trim, raking cornice, and fascia, but featuring a metal ornament of an undulating branch or botanical specimen with six five-pointed leaves; the two largest leaves are at center, with two pairs of smaller leaves to either side. To each side of the paired one-over-one windows beneath the round window, a one-over-one window of geometric stained glass rests on a rough-textured sandstone sill that runs across the central volume of the façade. Each of these single windows is flanked towards center by a slightly protruding pilaster of red brick with sandstone blocks at the base and downward slanted sandstone blocks at their heads, connecting to flat-arched sandstone lintels. These two windows each are topped by a transom with geometric stained glass. A blank rectangular panel is framed in stone at left of the central four windows, lending an asymmetrical element to the façade’s strong central section.<sup>234</sup>

Ultimately, despite the central emphasis established by the rose window and entrance, the main façade is subtly asymmetrical in its tripartite composition, with the central section being widest. As one views this façade from South Maple Street, its left (southern) third is narrowest and presents a protruding corner tower, while the right (northern) third, closest to East Third Street, also has a tower form but appears twice as wide. These two corner volumes each enclose an interior staircase. The narrower protruding brick volume on the southern third of this façade features a tall and slender recessed panel on the first floor, blank in its lower half; the upper half, separated with a thin sandstone band, features a small round window. On the tower’s second floor, above the stone sill stretched across the entire façade like a ribbon, is a narrow one-over-one window of geometric stained glass, above which is a wood panel topped by a pointed arch fixed light, contributing to the building’s distinct, eclectic appearance. The lancet arch points up toward a round sandstone medallion. The slender, protruding south tower volume is crowned by a pyramidal roof covered with zinc shingles decoratively embossed with a triangle pattern, painted red; the pyramidal form is emphasized by sharply pointed, decorative metal strips at its seams and a small pyramidal cap. A fluted, domed minaret of sheet steel, painted white, is attached to the southeastern corner of this south tower volume and extends as tall as the pyramidal roof, matching the height of the two minarets that flank the round window in the center of the façade.

A key Moorish Revival element of the eclectic design, the heavier north tower volume is capped with a metal onion dome on a decorative base with brackets reminiscent of an Italianate cornice. This dome, painted brick red and rising far above the roofline, also features sharply pointed, saw-toothed decorations at its seams

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<sup>234</sup> During a visit to Temple Aaron in the summer of 2021, benefactor Evan Makovsky explained that there is a precedent or practice of deliberately leaving incomplete an element of a synagogue—in this case, the blank stone panel—in reference to a Torah passage that describes the world as imperfect, suggesting that the work of Tikkun Olam (“repair of the world”) is ongoing. Whether this reference was the intention of Temple Aaron’s founders remains unknown. Explanation included in email correspondence from Kim Grant of Colorado Preservation, Inc., and a current member of the Temple Aaron board, to the author of this nomination on August 25, 2021.

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(although a few are missing). The main hipped roof features overhanging eaves and a molded cornice. Below the dome, this brick tower is wrapped with a white-painted cornice similar to that at the façade's center, creating a strong horizontal that visually supports the roofline. Centered in this north tower volume on the second floor, below the white cornice, is a pair of one-over-one windows with geometric stained glass, topped by paneled wood mullions crowned by a pointed-arch stained-glass window reminiscent of the Gothic Revival style. At the first-floor level of this north tower volume is a recessed, rectangular panel into which a blue painted sign has been fastened, reading "TEMPLE AARON, Founded 1883" in yellow-gold letters, with a gold Star of David at center. Below this sign, the building's cornerstone sits within the base of this north tower, resting upon the building's stone foundation and facing South Maple Street. It reads:

	<i>Trustees</i>
S. JAFFA Pres.	J. SANDERS
A. RASCOWER V.	S.H. JAFFA
M. EISEMAN Sec.	I. LEVY
S. SANDERS Tre.	D. GOTTLIEB
	E. SUGERMAN

### South Side Elevation

Temple Aaron's south side, facing a neighboring house, is similarly laid in a running bond of red brick and features three bays, two of which includes a grouping of windows. The right third of this side, closest to South Maple Street, is largely blank and emphasized by the slender tower volume that wraps from the main façade, its fluted minaret punctuating its corner at its top. As on the main façade, this tower features the same narrow inset panel with a small round window on the first-floor level and a narrow, lancet arch one-over-one window on the second floor. Another stone medallion is located between this second-story tower window and the cornice below the roof. Adding visual interest to this wall, running its entire length between the first and second floors, is a ribbon of brick in a dentilated soldier course with every other brick recessed to create an undulation of shadow and light. On the first floor of this eastern section are two small, square windows—one for each of two restrooms located off the synagogue's entrance foyer. In the center of this side are two bays of windows, each topped with a wide segmental arch at the roofline, as discussed below. On the first floor, each of these bays features three tall one-over-one sash windows, the central one being wider, with a sandstone sill and lintel stretching across the three. Between this grouping of three windows and a similar grouping above on the second floor is a set of three decorative panels of bricks laid at a diagonal, with their corner edges facing the viewer, to provide a sawtooth texture diaper pattern upon which light and shadow play. Each of the two second-story groupings of three windows differs from their first-floor counterparts in that the central window in each composition is taller than that on either side. The second-story window groupings are capped by the aforementioned arched stone voussoirs with a secondary dentilated soldier brick arch above, and in turn by a rounded arch eyebrow projecting above the white-painted cornice line. Metal downspouts, painted red to match the brick, extend from the white-painted gutters along the roof all the way down to the ground on either side of the windows; these bend slightly as they meet the ground, emptying out onto a wide poured-concrete sidewalk. On the far left of this side, a coal chute door appears in the sandstone foundation.

### Rear (West) Elevation

The west side of Temple Aaron, being the rear of the building, is the least ornamented and has little fenestration. A red brick chimney for heating the synagogue, located at center, is the façade's most prominent feature as it protrudes out from the wall and extends past a small roof gable. Beneath the sheet metal cornice, painted white, that wraps around from the north and south sides is a decorative course of brick in the dentilated

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soldier bond. This same decorative course appears as a horizontal band between the first and second floors; above this course, the brick wall is blank. On the first floor, one to either side and equidistant from the prominent central chimney, are two narrow one-over-one windows, each with a sandstone lintel and sill. Because the site slopes most dramatically to the west and north, the rough-faced sandstone block foundation wall is tallest on this rear side. To the left side of the chimney at the basement level are a smaller one-over-one window and a flush-panel door that leads into the basement.

### North Side Elevation

The north side, facing East Third Street, is nearly a mirror image of the south side of Temple Aaron. It is laid in a running bond of red brick and features the same two groupings of windows. At left, however, the corner at South Maple Street is visually dominated by the larger tower volume also visible from the main façade, with the large metal onion dome erupting high above the building's hipped roof. As on the main façade, the side of this corner tower features many of the same decorative elements, including the same decorative cornice with Italianate brackets below the dome, painted white; a narrow, pointed arch one-over-one window on the second floor; and an inset panel with a sandstone arch with voussoirs on the first-floor level. Spanning the entire length of this north wall between the first and second floors is a ribbon of brick in a dentilated soldier course. Just as on the south wall, two bays of windows are nearly centered on this wall, each one topped with a gentle arch or eyebrow at the roofline. On the first floor, each of these two bays features three tall one-over-one windows, the central one being wider, with a sandstone sill and lintel stretching across the three. Between this grouping of three windows and a similar grouping above them on the second floor is a set of three decorative panels of bricks laid in a diaper pattern, with their corner edges facing the viewer, to provide a sawtooth texture upon which light and shadow play. Each of the two second-story groupings of three windows differs from their first-floor counterparts in that the central window in each composition is taller than that on either side. The second-story window groupings are capped by a segmental arched of stone voussoirs with a brick arch atop them, with a rounded arch eyebrow projecting the white-painted cornice line. Metal downspouts, painted red to match the brick, extend from the white-painted gutters along the roof all the way down to the ground between the two groups of windows; another downspout is tucked into the corner where the tower connects to the wall. To the far right of this wall, in line with the rear bay of windows, a group of three one-over-one windows is located within the sandstone foundation, bringing daylight into the basement.

### **Interior**

#### First Floor

Temple Aaron's first floor consists of three rooms that have been only slightly changed since the building was first constructed in 1889. Visitors welcomed into a small entrance foyer are immediately confronted with options: they can choose to ascend one of two staircases to either side with carved newel posts and balusters, or proceed straight ahead towards one of two five-paneled wood doors. The floor of this foyer is covered with pieced linoleum that likely was added in the early twentieth century, and which is in very good condition. The linoleum is a deep, rich chocolate brown color with a lighter, gold-brown diamond pattern lacing across it; small circles with rosettes of green or orange are scattered in a regularly alternating pattern, with the orange rosettes appearing in the centers of some diamonds, and the green appearing at some intersecting corners. The entrance foyer walls are plaster painted white, with a carved wood chair rail spanning them.

Two small restrooms are located on the south end of this foyer, with the smaller men's room including a toilet and the women's room offering a toilet and small porcelain sink; the sink appears to be original to the bathrooms' construction, for which a treasurer's log or accounting book found in Temple Aaron's basement

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suggests a date of 1900.<sup>235</sup> The floor covering in these restrooms is a later sheet material of a beige color. Each room is daylighted by a small square window with opaque glass on their south walls.

The two rooms that can be entered from the foyer historically served as Hebrew school classrooms and are equally sized, approximately 18' x 24'. They can be accessed from one another by a pair of paneled wood pocket doors with fluted wood trim and bullseye corners. The floor coverings of these classrooms are a modest vinyl material in a neutral beige color, likely installed in the 1960s or later, but do not detract from the historic feel of these spaces. A utilitarian kitchen was installed in the southernmost classroom in the 1940s, separated by a 7'-tall partition to create a narrow space approximately 7' wide spanning the entire width of the classroom at its west end. The kitchen can be entered from the classroom by an opening in this framed wall without a door. This modest kitchen has a small L-shaped countertop atop base cabinets along the south and east walls, with a sink on the south side. On the west or rear wall of this kitchen, a historic paneled wood door remains in its original location, leading into the large meeting room that spans the rear half of the first floor. The northern classroom remains in its original configuration and also features a paneled wood door that leads into the large meeting room. In the center of the exterior wall in each classroom is a grouping of three one-over-one wood sash windows featuring stained glass in a symmetrical geometric pattern of rectangles, squares, triangles, and diamonds, using red, blue, yellow, orange, and colorless opaque glass. The walls are plaster finish over lath, over which wood paneling was installed in 1949. All of the first-floor rooms now feature dropped ceilings of acoustical tiles and suspended fluorescent lights, also installed during that year.

Spanning the west half of the first floor is the large meeting room, approximately 36' x 24', which can be entered from the kitchen or the classroom. Historically this room was used for meetings of the congregation trustees and the B'nai B'rith, as well as for other social gatherings.<sup>236</sup> The plaster walls are painted white with wood trim and chair rail, and the floors are maple. Currently the room features a piano along with built-in wood benches, display cabinets, and bookshelves that contain many mementos collected throughout the congregation's long life, including service awards from national organizations and memorial items of Temple Aaron's leaders. A radiator for steam heat is located in the northwest corner of the room on the north wall. On the north and south walls are the groupings of three one-over-one wood windows with the same geometric-patterned stained glass described above; each group of three windows totals approximately 10'-6" in width. On the west wall, small one-over-one windows, each just under 3' wide, flank the display cabinets that obscure the building's chimney in the wall behind them.

### Second Floor

From the lobby or entrance foyer, Temple Aaron's second-floor sanctuary is accessed by a carpeted staircase at either end, each one including ten stairs to a rectangular landing, and then another ten stairs to the second floor. Enclosed within the building's corner towers, the staircases each feature beautifully crafted banisters and balusters with hand-cut miter joints, all of varnished yellow pine. The open stairwells are illuminated by multi-colored, geometric stained-glass windows. All window and door frames, featuring bullseye corner trim, are also unpainted, varnished yellow pine in excellent condition, as are the paneled wood doors. From the stairs, visitors arrive at a small lobby on the building's east side and may enter the sanctuary space through a pair of paneled double wood doors that swing outward, centered on the west wall. The small lobby is illuminated by one-over-one wood windows of geometric, multi-colored glass on the east wall overlooking the half-hipped roof of the synagogue's entrance porch on the first floor below.

<sup>235</sup> Record books found in the Temple Aaron basement in June 2019 show a \$50 payment on February 18, 1900, for labor to construct "toilet rooms" in the building.

<sup>236</sup> The history of the B'nai B'rith International is available at: <https://www.bnaibrith.org/175th.html>.

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The sanctuary itself features three sections of historic wood pews, separated by two aisles, with the pew sections on the sides being shorter in length than the central section. The floors are maple as on the first floor, but the aisles are covered by carpet runners of hand-sewn wool, each approximately 2' wide. The soaring sanctuary is bathed by the warm glow of daylight passing through the large stained-glass windows on the north and south walls. The two groupings on each wall are each comprised of three tall one-over-one sash windows, with the central window being twice as wide as those on its sides; the central window of each composition also is topped with an arched window filled with stained glass. The original decorative cornice is visible at the ceiling line and is occasionally pierced by metal vents for the synagogue's ventilation system.

As one enters the sanctuary, the eye is immediately drawn upward by the dramatic, double-height, vaulted ceiling supported by exposed wood beams and decorative wood trusses with drop pendants painted gold. Facing the west end is the raised wood platform or *bimah* from which religious services are conducted by a rabbi or cantor. The bimah sits almost 2' above the sanctuary floor. The bimah curves outward slightly, and the platform is accessed by two steps on either side of this curve. Tall brass menorahs, each with seven branches illuminated by electricity, flank the historic wood lectern or pulpit on which the Torah is laid for readings. This table has a canted top that tilts toward the speaker, engaged columns with heavy wood bases at each of its four corners, and a central panel carved with a Gothic Revival-styled lancet arch. Above this reading surface is an electric pendant lamp added in 1949. When the rabbi, cantor, or congregation member reads from the Torah and faces the congregation, they also are facing east toward Jerusalem.

Toward the back of the bimah—and with its opening also facing east toward the ancient Temple of Jerusalem—is the *ark*, the cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept. This carved wood cabinet is recessed into the west wall and conceals the chimney behind. Tucked into the sides of the bimah, to either side of the ark, is a small room with a five-paneled wood door for preparation of the rabbi and cantor. Temple Aaron's ark, approximately 4' wide when opened, is protected by velvet curtains that are drawn open to reveal the Torah scrolls at appropriate, ceremonial moments during prayer services. The ark and two small rooms are ornately paneled and supported by engaged classical columns with eclectic composite capitals, painted gold. These columns engage an elaborate cornice that includes dentils. The woodwork is unpainted and varnished, except for the columns. Suspended above the ark opening is an electric light that serves as the traditional *ner tamid* lamp, representing the eternal light and reminding the congregation of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. Marble tablets with Hebrew inscriptions of the Ten Commandments are located at the top of the ark.

### Choir/Organ Loft

The historic choir or organ loft cantilevers approximately 8'-6" above the east end of the sanctuary space, over the paired wood doors to the lobby. It is accessed by a short flight of nine stairs with a landing located in the north corner tower. Historic stairs in the south corner tower have been closed off. This choir loft spans the width of the sanctuary and is about 10' deep. It features a wood knee wall or railing, slightly less than 3' tall facing into the sanctuary below. The floor is wood partially covered by carpet runners. The large round window with decorative metal tracery, so prominent on the main façade, brings light into this loft. The loft is original to the building, but most likely did not contain an organ during its first thirty years. The existing tubular-pneumatic pipe organ measures approximately 18' x 7', with its tallest pipe reaching a height of just over 9'. An article in the Trinidad *Chronicle* newspaper, dated August 20, 1921, states that a pipe organ, manufactured by the Estey Pipe Organ Company of Vermont, soon would be installed by Albert Reith, at a cost of \$4,000.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>237</sup> "New Pipe Organ for Temple Aaron," [Trinidad] *Chronicle* (August 29, 1921). The article states that Albert Reith recently arrived to the area from New York, and that he had installed two organs in Roswell [New Mexico]. The article further states that Reith would

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### Basement

Temple Aaron features a half-basement on its west side with a crawl space on the east side, owing to the steep slope of the site. The block walls of the stone foundation are unfinished on the interior and are in good condition overall, although large wood posts and some jacks provide additional structural support. The floor is unfinished, and the space contains the ductwork and mechanical systems that support the comfort of Temple Aaron.<sup>238</sup> Surrounded by a protective brick arch is the enormous historic boiler, for which an iron door is cast to read, “KEWANEE FIREBOX BOILER NO 4, KEWANEE BOILER CO, KEWANEE, ILLINOIS.” Plumbing and electrical wiring conduits are exposed throughout this utilitarian space. A more recent boiler system, likely installed in the late 1970s, also is located here.

### HISTORIC PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

Temple Aaron has functioned as originally envisioned since its construction and changed little since its opening. The congregation has maintained its excellent material condition for reasons of continuity and historic preservation as well as partially for reasons of economy. Temple Aaron retains an excellent degree of historic integrity with rehabilitation and restoration work completed in accordance with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Colorado Preservation, Inc., has held an easement on the property since 2012; this preservation easement requires an annual inspection and report on compliance for any and all work undertaken at the synagogue.<sup>239</sup> The neighborhood has changed little over more than 130 years, except for some dwellings of more recent construction. However, Temple Aaron, still standing tall on its prominent corner site, maintains the scale and feel of Trinidad’s early growth.

Temple Aaron has announced two upcoming projects to be completed with grant-funded assistance. In 2020-21, History Colorado awarded a \$50,000 State Historical Fund grant to complete work on the synagogue’s complex roof. The grant will fund investigation of the roof’s construction in order to determine the best way to pursue restoration. This funding also will support preparation of estimates and construction documents, as well as the first phase of emergency roof repairs. The state grant will be matched with \$30,500 from Temple Aaron. Due to the complexity of the historic roof, it is likely that a larger scope of work requiring additional funding will be undertaken in the near future.<sup>240</sup> Also in late 2020, Jewish Colorado and the Rose Community Foundation awarded Temple Aaron a \$3,000 safety and security grant to be implemented in 2021. The Temple Aaron Board of Directors will work with staff at History Colorado in order to ensure that installation will meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Temple Aaron retains excellent integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, materials, design, and

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open an organ shop in Colorado Springs when his work in Trinidad concluded. Temple Aaron’s pipe organ was numbered 1904, manufactured in 1921 by the Estey Pipe Organ Company of Brattleboro, Vermont. It is included on the complete list of Estey Pipe Organs available at: <https://www.esteyorganmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Estey-Pipe-Organs-Opus-List-BP-rev-3-14-2020.pdf>.

<sup>238</sup> Mechanic’s Lien Notice, filed November 14, 1889, states that John McEwan provided gas fittings and performed “work and labor” at Temple Aaron under general contractors Damascio and Pellini, with McEwan’s work completed on October 10, 1889. The total cost of gas fittings and labor was \$69.50; full payment was received and the lien released on December 4, 1889. Recorded in Book 60, pages 534-535, on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Company, Trinidad, Colorado.

<sup>239</sup> Kim Grant, Endangered Places Program Director at Colorado Preservation, Inc. (CPI), and current board member of Temple Aaron, sent an email message on June 15, 2021, to confirm that CPI has held a preservation easement on the building since 2012. The See also: <http://coloradopreservation.org/2017-list-colorados-most-endangered-places/temple-aaron/>. Grant noted that a 2015 award from the Colorado State Historical Fund was not accepted by the Temple Aaron board because it could not raise the required matching funds; this was the year before the board, led by Kathryn Rubin, decided that the building should be listed for sale.

<sup>240</sup> Information about 2020 grants awarded is available at: <https://www.templeaaron.org/announcements>.

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workmanship. As compared to an 1892 etching of the newly completed building, there have been no significant alterations, nor dramatic changes to its setting. However, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps indicate that the entry porch, while originally designed per the etching, was not constructed until sometime between 1901 and 1907. One rear window in the foundation to the south is bricked in. The years 1920 and 1921 saw the introduction of steam heat, electrical upgrades, the addition of the organ, and, perhaps, the installation of the linoleum in the entry foyer. In 1949, some interior redecoration occurred, likely including the acoustic tile ceilings, small kitchen, and wood paneling on the first floor. More recent physical preservation work—masonry stabilization, electrical upgrades, repair to the original roof and windows, and foundation drainage—has been in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards through grants provided by the Colorado State Historical Fund.<sup>241</sup> Removable Plexiglas panels protect the stained-glass windows.

### Location

Temple Aaron remains in its original location on the southwest corner of South Maple and East Third streets in Trinidad.

### Setting

The setting of Temple Aaron remains largely unchanged from its period of significance. The neighborhood always has been primarily residential in use, and single- and multi-family dwellings tend to remain in residential use with few exceptions, such as a bed-and-breakfast across Third Street to the north. The scale and density of the neighboring buildings during the period of significance remains largely intact.

### Design

The original distinctive Moorish Revival style design of Temple Aaron is clearly reflected in the building today, as the exterior remains largely unchanged from its construction in 1889. Only minor modifications to the interior—including the creation of the kitchen from within one of the two classrooms and the addition of electric lights, removable dropped ceilings, and wood paneling—have occurred. The primary spaces of the building and its floorplan are otherwise unchanged; the second-floor sanctuary and its decorative finishes and furnishings all remain intact.

### Materials

The synagogue retains its historic materials and finishes, including all of its original stained-glass and wood windows and all interior and exterior wood doors, sanctuary pews and other furnishings, including the ark and carved chairs on the bimah. The brick and stone masonry have been carefully maintained and repointed over 130 years, and the historic decorative sheet metal features, including the character-defining onion dome, remain in place.

### Workmanship

Temple Aaron’s workmanship is excellent. The stone masonry is finely crafted—both the cut sandstone blocks and red brick laid in decorative patterns. Throughout the building’s interior, evidence of quality craftsmanship

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<sup>241</sup> Colorado State Historical Fund grant 98-01-100 awarded \$25,612 to Congregation Aaron in 1998 for interior/exterior restoration at the synagogue. Grant 00-HA-065 provided Congregation Aaron \$10,000 for a Historic Structure Assessment in 2000. Past Colorado State Historical Fund grant awards to Colorado Preservation, Inc., for work at Temple Aaron include a second interior/exterior restoration project for \$199,341 in 2003 (03-02-029); additional exterior restoration projects for \$149,247 in 2006 (06-01-024), \$100,606 in 2007 (07-02-020), and \$150,473 in 2008 (08-02-005) followed. Colorado State Historical Fund grant 15-02-018 awarded \$200,000 to the Alfred Freudenthal Memorial Foundation of Trinidad, Colorado/dba Congregation Aaron for roof replacement work at Temple Aaron in 2015. The report “History Colorado State Historical Fund: All Grants Awarded Through Fiscal Year 2020” includes all preservation projects supported statewide through this fund, available on the History Colorado website, at: <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2020/FY2020%20All%20Funded%20List-Final%20Book.pdf>.

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is clear, especially in the carved wood trusses, carved wood furnishings and cabinetry in the second-floor sanctuary, carved wood balustrades of the two staircases, and stained glass. All decorative features throughout the building show a high level of craft and care among the local laborers and craftsmen involved in its construction.

### Feeling

A direct result of the congregation's care for the synagogue since its construction—often with the support and assistance of grants from the Colorado State Historical Fund—Temple Aaron offers a strong feeling and expression of its historic and cultural value. The building is deeply appreciated by the individuals and families of its congregation, but people also come to attend services at Temple Aaron from hundreds of miles away, from Denver as well as Albuquerque, in order to feel a part of the Jewish community deeply rooted in this place. The quality of light that pours in through the multicolored stained-glass windows bathes the classrooms and sanctuary with a warm glow, just as congregants would have experienced in 1889.

### Association

In 2021, Temple Aaron remains in use as a synagogue by its founding congregation. The building never has been used for any purpose other than as the religious, social, and educational center of the small Jewish community that makes its home in Trinidad. Today's congregants can remember stories, told by their parents, of the activities of the temple's founders, whose names are carved in the building's cornerstone. Although its dwindling congregation was very nearly forced to close in September 2016 after 127 years, Temple Aaron persevered and survived, with a small group gathering for a Sukkot service there on October 8, after the High Holidays had passed.

The Temple Aaron Board of Directors has worked tirelessly since the near closure to raise funds to maintain the building and to bring in guest rabbis for Shabbat and holiday services from neighboring New Mexico. In November 2020, the congregation announced that it now would be served by Rabbi Robert Lennick, allowing the Jewish community of Trinidad to continue their worship and social gathering into their 132nd year in this historic synagogue.<sup>242</sup> Under this stewardship, Temple Aaron continues its historical role as the oldest synagogue in continuous use in Colorado and the second-oldest to the west of the Mississippi River, evocative of Jewish contributions through immigration and settlement in the American West.

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<sup>242</sup> The Temple Aaron Board of Directors' announcement of Rabbi Lennick's service to the congregation can be found at: <https://www.templeaaron.org/announcements> (accessed February 28, 2021).

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)  
 Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: El Corazon de Trinidad Historic District  
NRIS 73000482
2. Date of listing: February 28, 1973
3. Level of significance: Local
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A  B  C  D
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A  B  C  D  E  F  G
6. Areas of Significance: Architecture; Commerce

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: | Date of determination: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Designated a National Historic Landmark:                  | Date of designation:   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey:           | HABS No.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:         | HAER No.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey:          | HALS No.               |

### Location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office: Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado,  
Denver
- Other State Agency: -
- Federal Agency: -
- Local Government: -
- University: The Ira M. and Peryle Hayutin Beck Memorial Archives, University of  
Denver, Denver, Colorado
- Other (Specify Repository): Temple Aaron, Trinidad, Colorado  
Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado, Denver  
Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives,  
Cincinnati, Ohio

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