

Temple Oheb Shalom

MIHP # B- 73

7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21208

Constructed in 1960, 1986-1987, 2001

Private Access

Temple Oheb Shalom is a Modern suburban synagogue complex, located in an important cluster of postwar synagogues in northwest Baltimore. Constructed between 1958 and 1960, it was designed by world-renowned architect Walter Gropius, along with TAC (The Architects Collaborative) and Sheldon Leavitt as Associate Architect. The building is significant as the work of a master architect. Temple Oheb Shalom is a multi-functional building consisting of an unornamented purism of elemental forms and proportions.¹ The interior of the building retains many of Gropius's original design concepts. Temple Oheb Shalom also contains several significant works of art, including a pair of glass mosaic murals on opposite sides of the entrance lobby by Gyorgy Kepes. The Ark, menorahs, and eternal light were designed by Kepes and Robert Preusser.²

The complex is significant both for the quality of its architectural design and its inclusion in a collection of important suburban Jewish properties in northwest Baltimore. Its particular form derives from the suburbanization of the Jewish population in Baltimore, as it is a distinguished example of the evolution of the synagogue as a multi-functional complex that preserves Jewish ethnic religious identity and offers a full communal life. The complex is a multi-functional building that includes spaces for worship, social activities, administration, and education. These were and are accommodated in a sanctuary, social hall, lounge, administration

¹ Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966), 65.

² "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record* 135 (June 1964): 147-152.

facilities, and a school. Temple Oheb Shalom featured an innovative plan that placed the sanctuary and social hall on the same axis so that on high holidays, when more congregants needed to be accommodated for services, large folding doors separating the two spaces could be opened up to seat over 2000 people. A state of the art public address system piped the service to all present. To meet the growing needs of the congregation, a chapel, and new lobby were later added (in the mid 1980s) and the sanctuary was renovated (2001), permanently separating sanctuary from social hall.³

Temple Oheb Shalom is significant in four major ways. First, it is significant under Criterion C as the work of a master architect, Walter Gropius, along with TAC (The Architects Collaborative) and Sheldon Leavitt as Associate Architect. Temple Oheb Shalom is also significant under Criterion C, second, for the quality of its architectural design and, third, for its several important works of art in the Sanctuary, original vestibule, and Auditorium, including a pair of glass mosaic murals on opposite sides of the vestibule by Gyorgy Kepes. Temple Oheb Shalom is also significant under Criterion A as an important monument in a cluster of suburban Jewish properties in northwest Baltimore that constitute a key component of Maryland and Jewish social history. The suburban complex symbolizes the establishment of a large and thriving Jewish community in Baltimore and its sequential movement to the suburbs in the twentieth century. Thus, Temple Oheb Shalom is a distinguished example of the evolution of the synagogue as a multi-functional complex that preserves Jewish ethnic religious identity and offers a full communal life. Temple Oheb Shalom's architectural distinction and historical significance make this resource worthy of designation even though it is just short of 50 years old.

³ *Ibid.*

The following National Register of Historic Places form was prepared for inventory documentation purposes only; the property has not been nominated to the National Register.

B-73

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Temple Oheb Shalom
other names _____

2. Location

street & number 7310 Park Heights Avenue not for publication
city or town Baltimore vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 Determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Temple Oheb Shalom
Name of Property

Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

MIHP # B- 73

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
3		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School
Religion/Religious Facility
Social/Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School
Religion/Religious Facility
Social/Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Brick and Stone/Limestone and Glass
roof Concrete
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Description Summary:

Temple Oheb Shalom is a Modern suburban synagogue complex, located in an important cluster of postwar synagogues in northwest Baltimore. Constructed between 1958 and 1960, it was designed by world-renowned architect Walter Gropius, along with TAC (The Architects Collaborative) and Sheldon Leavitt as Associate Architect. The building is significant as the work of a master architect. Temple Oheb Shalom is a multi-functional building consisting of an unornamented purism of elemental forms and proportions.¹ The sanctuary assumes a dramatic volumetric form created by a rhythmic series of four 15-foot diameter vaults connected by 15-foot wide slabs, enclosing an 83 by 90 foot sanctuary interior, free of supports. The vaults are constructed of a thin shell of reinforced concrete. Each component of the complex is given its own form appropriate to function. The interior of the building retains many of Gropius's original design concepts. The sanctuary was dramatically designed to slope upwards to the bema, toward the Ark, and terminates in a gently curved, apse-like screen. In 2001, however, the layout of the sanctuary was reversed 180 degrees, although the original bema design and screen remain intact at the rear. Temple Oheb Shalom also contains several significant works of art, including a pair of glass mosaic murals on opposite sides of the entrance lobby by Gyorgy Kepes. The Ark, menorahs, and eternal light were designed by Kepes and Robert Preusser.²

The complex is significant both for the quality of its architectural design and its inclusion in a collection of important suburban Jewish properties in northwest Baltimore. Its particular form derives from the suburbanization of the Jewish population in Baltimore, as it is a distinguished example of the evolution of the synagogue as a multi-functional complex that preserves Jewish ethnic religious identity and offers a full communal life. The complex is a multi-functional building that includes spaces for worship, social activities, administration, and education. These were and are accommodated in a sanctuary, social hall, lounge, administration facilities, and a school. Temple Oheb Shalom featured an innovative plan that placed the sanctuary and social hall on the same axis so that on high holidays, when more congregants needed to be accommodated for services, large folding doors separating the two spaces could be opened up to seat over 2000 people. A state of the art public address system piped the service to all present. To meet the growing needs of the congregation, a chapel, and new lobby were later added (in the mid 1980s) and the sanctuary was renovated (2001), permanently separating sanctuary from social hall.³

¹ Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966), 65.

² "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record* 135 (June 1964): 147-152.

³ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

General Description:

Site Plan

Temple Oheb Shalom is located in the City of Baltimore, approximately eleven miles northwest of the Inner Harbor. The rectangular site is bordered on the east by Park Heights Avenue, which is a major thoroughfare. It is surrounded on the remaining three sides by residential neighborhoods of modest single-family houses and garden apartment complexes. The surrounding area consists of residences and a few businesses. Park Heights Avenue is home to a number of other Jewish congregations. The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation is on the opposite side of Park Heights and about one block to the south.

The Temple Oheb Shalom site is to the west of Park Heights Avenue. Currently, the site consists of the sanctuary, social hall, education wing, office space, and a chapel. The complex is located on 5.22 acres of land. Temple Oheb Shalom is set back from Park Heights 200 feet. The space in front consists of a grassy lawn with scattered trees. Two entrance drives lead in from the street to two parking areas, the largest one to the rear of the complex and a smaller one to the south of the building. The northern entrance leads both to the rear parking lot and to a gently semicircular drop off drive at the front of the complex. The south entrance leads to the rear and southern parking areas.

The entire complex is organized in three major blocks. The first, located nearest to Park Heights Avenue, includes the sanctuary, social hall and lobby. The central portion, or second block, originally included the administrative space, lounge, and a kitchen, grouped around an open court. As the needs of the congregation evolved, the central block was expanded to the south in the 1980s to include a chapel and second lobby and in 2001 to include additional social and administrative spaces. The final block, located at the rear of the property, is the education building. All three of the blocks are interconnected by an axial spine that takes the form of a glass corridor. The additions are not visible from the main elevation on Park Heights. The architecture of the addition blends cohesively with the original design of the building.

Temple Oheb Shalom was sited to preserve several mature trees on the acreage, particularly on the south side and near the educational building. To these were added flowering dogwood and English oaks near the educational building and rows of moraine locusts placed near the broad expanse of the parking areas. Around the front of the Temple are informally arranged areas of myrtle and shrubbery amidst a large expanse of lawn.

Building Campaigns

Original complex, 1958-1960

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 3

The original complex, constructed between 1958 and 1960, included three blocks placed from east to west (or front to rear) on the property and connected by a glass enclosed corridor running from the main entrance to the back door of the educational building. The first block contained the sanctuary, an entrance lobby, and the social hall, named the Louis and Henrietta Blaustein Auditorium. The central block was constructed adjacent to the social hall around a landscaped central courtyard. It contained a kitchen (adjacent to the social hall), a memorial concourse (part of the glass corridor), and the Brotherhood Lounge, the latter two spaces opening onto the Memorial Garden. Further to the rear in the central block along another hallway perpendicular to the glass corridor were administrative spaces, including the Rabbi's study, the Associate Rabbi's study, the General Office, the Board Room, and the Cantor's office. At the end of the perpendicular hallway is the service entrance and a porch. Below the social hall and central block is a basement storey containing boiler and equipment rooms, dressing rooms, and storage rooms for the social hall. The westernmost block, still connected by the glass corridor, is the two-storey educational building. To the immediate left (or south) of the glass corridor lies the library and book storage room, and at the rear, spaces for the School Director and his assistant. The rest of the space in the rectilinear educational block was taken up by classrooms with the kindergarten in the southwest corner. The second storey contained classrooms, while the full basement storey contained storage areas and space for arts and crafts activities. A separate kindergarten wing southeast of the education building and shown in some original plans published by TAC was never built.

Chapel Addition, c. 1986-87

The first addition to Temple Oheb Shalom, completed by Levin/Brown & Associates, Inc., of Owings Mills, MD, included 7000 square feet of additional space at a cost of \$1.1 million. The principal features were the chapel, which can be considered the first addition to the central block. The chapel was located just west of the sanctuary and was placed perpendicular to it. Also completed at this time was a new entrance lobby located to the west of the chapel, adjacent to the southern parking lot. It is perpendicular to and connects with the central glass corridor. Levin/Brown also redeveloped the business and clergy offices and refurbished the gift shop.

2001 Renovation

Levin/Brown & Associates, Inc. were again commissioned to renovate and add to Temple Oheb Shalom in 2001. This campaign included 57,000 square feet of the complex and cost an estimated \$4.2 million. The renovation completed the "infill" of the central block, expansion of both the Sanctuary and the Blaustein Auditorium, creation of a new entrance lobby between the Sanctuary and the Chapel—perpendicular to the original glass corridor, creation of an art gallery, a Jewish resource center, and additional subdividable small meeting rooms. It also included refurbishing the Blaustein Auditorium, upgrading corridor and office areas, and partial renovation of the school to create a Day Care/Pre School area in the southern half of the education building. The most significant change at this time, however, was the refurbishing of the Sanctuary, which included changing its orientation 180 degrees and creating a new bema, redecorating the space, installing a new ceiling and lighting fixtures, and designing a "quiet room" adjacent to the Sanctuary for young children. This renovation included removal of the original lobby and permanent separation of the Sanctuary from the Social

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and StateSection 7 Page 4

Hall, so that the two spaces can no longer be opened up to create one large assembly space for high holidays. Many of Gropius's original design concepts remain after this renovation; for example, the original bema, Ark, and screen are intact at what is now the rear of the sanctuary. The fenestration and architectural lighting elements remain intact. The exterior Park Heights Avenue façade is basically unchanged. However, the new bema in the Sanctuary departs from Gropius's design aesthetic, the ceiling and lighting fixtures in the Sanctuary have been altered drastically (although much of the 2001 refurbishing is reversible), the original lobby with the Kepes mosaics has been relegated to storage space, though it is entirely intact, and the resulting reconfiguration of the Sanctuary and Auditorium in relation to one another violates the conceptual purity of Gropius's original plan. Nonetheless, the 2001 changes reflect the needs and desires of a changing congregation—particularly for what they perceive as a more intimate and acoustically friendly worship space, a larger auditorium, a wider and more sumptuous lobby, and considerably more meeting and conference spaces.

Exterior Elevations

The exterior description of the Temple Oheb Shalom complex begins on the Park Heights façade, the primary elevation of the complex. From there, it will proceed clockwise around the structure, subsequently describing the south side of the exterior, the rear elevation, and the north facade.⁴

Park Heights (East) Elevation

The façade facing Park Heights Avenue (east façade) is the primary elevation of the complex, although most visitors enter the building from the south side. The building is set back approximately 200 feet from Park Heights Avenue. From the road, from left to right, the exterior walls of the sanctuary, entrance and central corridor, and social hall are visible.

The eastern elevation of the sanctuary is on the southern (left) end of the main façade. The sanctuary measures 83 by 90 feet, and consists of a dramatic volume of space created by a rhythmic series of four monumental vaults, symbolizing the Tablets of Law. The sanctuary roofline consists of the four parallel semi-circular vaults, which project six feet from the front and rear masonry walls. The vaults are connected by "15-foot-wide concrete slabs that continue the roof at an elevation 2 feet below the spring line of the arches."⁵ The vaults are constructed of reinforced concrete forms that extend from the ground. The thin shell of reinforced concrete in the arches is only 3 ½ inches thick at the crest and 8 inches thick at the spring. The four vaults span the 90-foot width of the sanctuary and "find their supports in reinforced concrete slab legs at each springing. Between these legs are orange brick masonry walls, in the words of Associate Architect Sheldon Leavitt, "set alternately at the inside and outside edges, giv[ing] the enclosing panel walls of the Sanctuary a deep rhythm which

⁴ A current floor plan of the Temple Oheb Shalom complex is included at the end of this nomination and may provide additional orientation for the reader.

⁵ "A Big Temple for Baltimore," 148.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

harmonizes with the roof but which has a flat form more appropriate for the vertical surface.”⁶ Between the arches, the masonry wall consists of a vertical stack of brick panels rising from the ground to the concrete slab/legs. At about the height of one storey, in the three masonry walls between the arches, a shallow concrete shelf projects from the wall, both on the exterior and interior of the sanctuary. The projecting vaults and recessed masonry walls create a stark pattern of shadow and light. Within the arches on the exterior wall, the brick has a decorative pattern. Below the height of the concrete shelf, the brick is composed of a series of regularly placed, recessed bricks, painted with blue enamel, forming a diagonal pattern; above the height of the concrete shelf is a series of raised bricks, unpainted, continuing the same diagonal pattern. At night the arches are illuminated by lighting, creating a dramatic and memorable façade easily visible from Park Heights Avenue. The eastern elevation terminates in a monumental concave slab that forms the southern façade of the Sanctuary; both the slab, and side walls of the outermost vaults are faced in limestone. The dramatic pattern of the vaulted forms of the Sanctuary is echoed inside the Sanctuary in the form of the original Ark (now located in the back of the sanctuary after the interior seating arrangement was reversed).

To the north of the sanctuary is the one-story formal entrance to the complex. Four concrete risers lead to this entrance, which is covered with a flat canopy roof that rises slightly to be supported by two attenuated piers. The entrance has three sets of double glass doors, with metal framing; this is the origination point of the glass corridor-spine that connects all three components of the complex; it runs perpendicular to Park Heights Avenue. Behind the entrance, the orange-colored brick façade of the building rises to two stories with “Temple Oheb Shalom” in black lettering. This entrance, which originally opened onto the main lobby connecting the sanctuary to the left and the social hall to the right, now opens directly into the social hall, as a result of the 2001 renovation campaign.

At the northern (right) end of the eastern Park Heights façade is the exterior wall of the social hall, also known as the Louis and Henrietta Blaustein Auditorium. This is a much more temporal and rectilinear form than that of the sanctuary but one that still communicates stature. The façade, which rises roughly two stories, is built of the same materials—concrete, brick, and stone—as the Sanctuary, but whereas the Sanctuary structure is arcuated, the Auditorium structure is trabeated. The eastern elevation is comprised of six contiguous vertical stacks of orange-brick panels, similar to the masonry walls between the arches of the Sanctuary, but lacking the diagonal brick patterning. The southern four stacks have six rows of these panels, placed above a series of four large windows, which are, in turn, sheltered by a shallow concrete canopy. The windows are comprised of a large glass pane with three smaller panes below. The northern two stacks have nine rows of brick panels, forming a blind wall rising from a concrete water table to just below the roofline. Across the length of the social hall, just below the roofline, there is a line of six horizontal clerestory windows. Each of these sets of windows is comprised of three glass panes, in dot-dash-dot formation, encased in metal framing. The sharp, flat

⁶ Ibid., 149; Sheldon J. Leavitt, “A Tour of the Temple Complex,” Service of Dedication, Temple Oheb Shalom (pamphlet, Baltimore, MD, Setp. 16, 1960), n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 7 Page 6

roof of the social hall is made of precast concrete girders and slabs.⁷ North of this brick paneled wall, the façade steps back a few feet symmetrically to contain the stage for the social hall. This set back brick masonry is completely absent of fenestration and ornamentation. Terminating the northern end of the east façade is the one-foot-wide limestone-faced slab wall of the northern façade of the social hall.

South Elevation

The south façade borders the southernmost drive leading to the parking lots and consists of (from east to west) the south façade of the sanctuary, the 2001 entrance and lobby, the chapel, the entrance to the narrower lobby from the 1986-7 renovation, the glass enclosed walkway connecting the main complex to the school building, and the south façade of the education wing. This elevation changes in character as you move from east to west, with the sanctuary and chapel facades visually dominating the elevation. The school and glass-enclosed walkway are much more linear and functional as well as smaller in scale than the chapel and sanctuary facades.

The south wall of the sanctuary is a concave curved slab roughly two stories tall, faced with limestone. It is echoed on the interior of the sanctuary by a parallel concave wall behind the bema, forming an apse-like space; the latter can best be seen in the sanctuary floor plan. The apse of the Sanctuary steps in roughly twelve feet on each side from the width of the vaults. The south slab wall, however, projects a few feet past the unornamented brick sidewalls of the apse. The exterior southern wall is ornamented with a tall narrow metal sculpture in the shape of the tablets of the Ten Commandments and containing Hebrew phrases. The sculpture is placed left (west) of center in the slab wall and assumes similar proportions to the original Ark and to the vaulted form of the Sanctuary. Just to the west of the sanctuary wall, in the lobby addition completed in 2001 is a one-story entryway that consists of a metal convex roof with a shallow projecting concrete canopy with recessed lighting in the ceiling of the canopy. The canopy is supported on the left by a pier of marble imported from Israel; on the right it attaches to the wall of the sanctuary. Five concrete risers lead to the two sets of double glass doors. The doors are surrounded with glass windows encased in metal framing, creating a steel and glass entryway under the canopy. This is currently the grandest entrance into the complex and is used for conferences and ceremonial events.

West of this entrance is the south façade of the chapel, which was added to the complex in 1986-87 and lies perpendicular to the sanctuary vaults. The chapel is shorter than the Sanctuary, about two stories in height. It is constructed of concrete and orange brick, in order to maintain continuity of materials with the original complex. The rectilinear chapel façade, which is symmetrical, is faced with brick on both the east and west ends. In the center of the flat-roofed façade, the shape of four narrow arches, echoing the vaults of the Sanctuary, is outlined in projecting brick against a concrete background. Outside of and between the arches, the wall is punctuated by five small rhythmic vertical stained glass windows that illustrate the history of the Jewish people.

⁷ Ibid., 152.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 7

To the west of the chapel on the south façade is the most commonly used entrance to the complex, located close by the south parking lot. Part of the new construction in 1986--87, this entry leads into a lobby that takes one past the new chapel to the administrative area of the original complex. The one-story flat-roofed concrete canopy of this entrance is supported on two brick piers. The entrance is comprised of a single-set of double glass doors. Above the flat roof of the canopy, there is a semicircular window, framed with a brick arch, set into a concrete panel in an otherwise orange brick façade, set back several feet from the southern façade of the chapel.

West of this entrance, and set back a substantial distance from the rest of the south façade—roughly 100 feet—is the south wall of the glass corridor that connects the social, administrative, and worship areas of the synagogue complex to the education building. The south façade of this walkway is entirely composed of glass windows encased in metal framing. The window panels consist of one large, vertical, rectangular pane, with a smaller, horizontal pane on both the top and bottom. The walkway is capped with a flat roof.

The south facade of the education building is a crisply outlined orange brick wall, located to the west of the glass-enclosed walkway. This façade of the school building is L-shaped to contain a staircase and is void of all ornamentation. The roof is crisply flat.

West (Rear) Elevation

The western (rear) façade of the complex includes the west wall of the education building. In general character, the education building is a long, low rectilinear building and exhibits an extremely clean, austere, rhythmic curtain wall design that contrasts strongly with the dramatic volumetric effect of the sanctuary on the eastern and southern facades. The school boasts a “pan-type waffle slab reinforced concrete floor and roof.”⁸ It is an elegant and austere International Style building.

The curtain wall façade of the education building is made of glass and precast concrete with exposed surface aggregate.⁹ This elevation is two-stories tall and is mainly comprised of a number of large, glass windows. The windows are grouped in sets of four, with brick piers extending from the ground to the flat roofline between each set. Below each window is a rectangular, exposed concrete panel. The windows consist of a large, vertical rectangular pane, with a smaller, horizontal rectangular pane alternately located either above or below the large pane. Slightly off-center in the west façade is a recessed entrance to the school building, on axis with the glass corridor spine connecting the components of the synagogue complex. The entrance consists of a single set of glass doors, with metal framing. Two vertical windows sit to either side of the doors and three panes rest above the entrance doors. A concrete walkway leads to this entrance from the west parking lot. Between the parking lot and the façade are mature shade trees.

⁸ “A Big Temple for Baltimore,” 148.

⁹ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 8

North Elevation

The northern façade includes (from west to east) the northern wall of the education building, the glass-enclosed walkway, exterior elevations of the administrative space in the central block of the complex, and the northern façade of the Blaustein social hall and auditorium. The north facade of the education building is a crisply outlined orange brick wall capped with a narrow cornice, painted black. The roof is flat and composed of reinforced concrete. At the center of this façade is a limestone and glass projection containing a staircase. It is devoid of all ornamentation.

East of this entrance, and set back a substantial distance from the rest of the south façade—roughly 60 feet—is the north wall of the glass corridor that connects the social, administrative, and worship areas of the synagogue complex to the education building. The north façade of this walkway is identical to the south façade, except that it contains a narrow entrance where it adjoins the central administrative block. The entrance terminates the axis of the second entry and lobby constructed during the 1986-87 renovation.

The façade of the central block is simple in design and devoid of ornamentation. The façade borders the northernmost driveway for the complex, leading to the rear parking lot, and an area of dense trees. This administrative block is easily distinguished from the education building to the west and the Blaustein Auditorium to the east because it is mostly a single story. In general character, the central administrative block consists of a linear wing extending to the north from the central spine. On its west façade, it consists of an unornamented glass curtain wall capped with a flat reinforced concrete roof with a simple black cornice. On its north façade, the wing terminates in a service entrance and loading area with a recessed porch supported on concrete piers. The north façade is brick; the narrow service entrance is glass framed in metal. Adjacent to this entry is a concrete paved service area providing room for trucks to pull up and unload, though there is no loading dock per se. This administrative wing is a part of the original Gropius design, although its interior spaces have been somewhat reconfigured; the wing was extended slightly to create the recessed porch in the 2001 renovation.

East of the administrative wing and connecting it and the Blaustein Auditorium is the kitchen. A one-and-a half storey service area shielded by a dense thicket of shrubs, it was refurbished and raised in height to accommodate a utility upgrade. The unornamented brick wall, an identical extension of the administrative block, is invisible behind the shrubs and a large freestanding mechanical cooling unit. The wall is capped by a hood of white metal containing utility and ventilation equipment. The kitchen adjoins the social hall—the Blaustein Auditorium—to the east. At that junction, there is an additional narrow service entrance, recessed under a shallow porch. Originally an entrance directly into the kitchen, it now opens into a narrow service corridor that enables workers to move unseen between the kitchen and the Blaustein Auditorium. This corridor was carved out of the social hall in the 2001 renovation, narrowing the width of the Auditorium, and providing a modest staging area for food service.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 9

The north wall of the social hall is a solid two-story concrete slab faced with limestone, which forms the exterior wall of the stage area for the auditorium. The slab has four rows of vertical, rectangular cut-outs — forming the only decoration on the north façade—and sits above a concrete water table.

Interior

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary of Temple Oheb Shalom is entered from the side from the new lobby created in the 2001 renovation; this lobby opens from the south facade. (The original entrance was from the 1958-60 lobby opening from the east façade of the building, so one would enter from the rear of the Sanctuary.) The roof is forty feet high and supported with four transverse vaults, which are constructed of a thin shell of reinforced concrete supported by exterior concrete slabs and legs at the springing point. Four concrete shelves at the first storey level placed between the vaults add rigidity. The interior space measures 83 by 90 feet and is free of any interior support. It is a dramatic volume of space. The sides are made up of brick masonry walls set alternately at the inside and outside edges of the concrete uprights that support the vaults. The walls consist of two masonry layers with a void between. In the original Sanctuary, open metal frameworks were suspended horizontally from the ceilings between the vaults; a series of electrical lights in the form of narrow metal cylinders hung from long chords and illuminated the interior. This aspect of Gropius's original design has been completely altered in the 2001 renovation. The present false ceiling consists of a series of three proscenium-like arches spanning the width of the Sanctuary between each vault and obscuring the functional purity of the original design. Twin rows of electrical lights (about ten lights evenly spaced) are recessed in the borders of each arch add to the proscenium effect and replace the original lighting. Speakers are also discreetly built into the new ceiling. Between the borders, each arch has decorative wood latticework with Stars of David at the intersections of the longitudinal and transverse lattices. Although the brick masonry walls were originally exposed on the interior, they are now sheathed. The renovation architects have built out a continuous entablature along the front and sides of the Sanctuary, forming three pier-like structures that appear to support the new arches spanning the Sanctuary on each side at their spring point. The lower level of each "pier" is recessed and/or marks an entrance to the Sanctuary. These are sheathed in plyboard; the original brick arches are covered by acoustical panels; the combination forms alternate reflective and absorbing surfaces. Above each recess, on the second level of each pier, are niches containing etched stained glass windows representing the six holidays of Judaism: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Simkhat Torah, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavu'ot, designed by the artist/sculptor Herman Perlman c. 1978. These originally hung in the glass corridor connecting the administrative block with the educational building. Although the 2001 renovation of the Sanctuary has significantly changed the Gropius's interior space and design, Levin/Brown & Associates have been respectful of the original configuration; the 2001 changes appear to be reversible.

At what was the original (southern) front of the Sanctuary, a gently curved wood screen, covered with acoustically transparent grille cloth, formed an apse-like surface where the Ark was placed. The original bema took the form of an elevated stage, five feet above the floor, and the floor swept gently upward to it. On the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 10

bema was a single lectern, eight upholstered chairs, placed at regular intervals on each side of the Ark, and three menorahs. The Ark is a large structure in the form of the Tablets of Law, 20 feet tall by 8 feet wide. Its doors are walnut veneer; they are appliquéed with colorful triangular shaped metals in a seemingly random composition said by Associate Architect Sheldon Leavitt to have been based on the theme of the Star of David. When the Ark doors are open, the whole form echoes the series of four vaults shaping the Sanctuary as a whole. Inside the Ark was an aluminum grille set against a blue velvet lining. The grill spells out the first words of each of the Ten Commandments.¹⁰ The original grille is now installed in the Blaustein Auditorium. The Ark was designed by Gyorgy Kepes and is still present, though not currently used, at the back of the Sanctuary (as a result of the reorientation of the Sanctuary during the 2001 renovation). The original bema is currently used for balcony seating; initially flat, it is now stepped. It has been given a new railing for safety purposes. The original central stair to this bema has been removed, but the side stairs on either side are intact.

Gropius and Leavitt carefully controlled the lighting in the Sanctuary. Throughout the entire space, the source of light is lateral or indirect and is always subdued. There are four narrow horizontal skylights on each roof form. These lit the front wall of the sanctuary (now the rear wall, since the 2001 renovation). Wall fenestration is kept to a minimum and glazed with deeply colored glass. Windows are set behind or above the sight lines of the congregants.¹¹ On the original rear elevation (now the front elevation), a series of twelve narrow vertical stained glass windows is placed. A narrow line of vertical stained glass windows was carved out of the rear edge (now the front edge) of each vault. Two of these are now blocked by the entablature of the 2001 renovation, but they are intact.

The operative bema is now located at the northern end of the sanctuary in a gently curved extension into what was the original entrance lobby connecting the Sanctuary and the Auditorium. The Sanctuary floor now slopes down from the back towards the new bema. The present configuration has three steps leading to the bema, which protrudes in the center, and contains the Ark, reading desk, and seating, arrayed symmetrically on either side of the Ark. The original Eternal Light hangs above the reading desk and is an open gas flame. The Ark is located behind the reading desk and is constructed of six stone columns and two sets of doors. The inner doors are solid glass while the outer doors are decorated with a bronze metal openwork sculpture in the form of a tree of life. The artist was David Klass. A tiny circular skylight has been carved out over the Ark. To the right of the reading desk is a seven-armed sculptural menorah. This Shabbat Menorah is copper with a colorful cloisonné enamel. The menorahs are original designs by Kepes and Preusser.

On either side of the new bema are staggered aediculae forming symmetrical overflow rooms on the right and left sides. The one to the right (east wall) as one faces the 2001 bema is used for the storage of musical equipment. The one to the left is used as an overflow room. Toward the back of the bema are symmetrical concave screens on either side of the Ark. They are composed of vertical panels of two alternating widths;

¹⁰ Leavitt, "A Tour of the Temple Complex," n.p.

¹¹ Ibid., n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 11

square openings are carved out of the upper two feet of the narrower widths and dramatically lit. The easternmost screen hides a ramp that gives wheelchair access to the bema.

The current sanctuary seats approximately 800 people and includes two symmetrical diagonally placed front side sections as well as balcony seating for 100 persons. The pews have individual, royal blue fabric-covered upholstered wood seats and are separated with a central aisle. (The original chairs were upholstered in black and deep violet). At the back of the sanctuary is a raised platform, which consists of five rows of seats. This balcony is the former bema. An important feature of Gropius's initial design for the temple complex was its flexible plan. The Sanctuary was "right-sized" to accommodate congregants for normal weekly services. Gropius placed the Social Hall on the same axis, however, and separated it from the Sanctuary with large folding walnut doors that could be opened on high holidays to unite Sanctuary, lobby, and social hall into one large space that could hold up to 2000 people. A public address system enabled everyone to hear the service. This flexibility was eliminated in the 2001 renovation, which eliminated the original lobby and created a permanent wall between the Sanctuary and the social hall. The social hall now uses the original lobby entrance as a private entry. Both the Sanctuary and social hall are still used for services on high holidays, but they host separate, more intimate services.

Several pieces of significant art adorn the Sanctuary, in addition to the original and current Arks. The monumental copper and enamel menorah currently placed on the bema is original artwork by Gyorgy Kepes and Robert Preusser. The Shabbos and Chanuka menorahs were completed by the same artists for Temple Oheb Shalom: an abstract rectilinear sculpture in bronze, eight feet tall, very austere; and an aluminum menorah seven feet tall. The eternal light, with an open gas flame, was executed in bronze in the form of a prominent circular lamp base above a suspended openwork of metal pieces in the form of a reverse triangle. It is still in use over the present bema.

Lobby and Meeting Spaces

In the original vestibule or entrance lobby, connecting the Sanctuary and the Social Hall, Gyorgy Kepes created two identical large glass mosaic murals, 9 ½ feet by 18 feet each, one on each side of the vestibule. Abstract in form, they are titled "From Dark to Light." Both murals are still in place. However, during the 2001 renovation, which eliminated the original lobby space between the Sanctuary and the Blaustein Auditorium and refashioned the east entrance directly into the Auditorium, the southernmost mural was enclosed in a storage room. This entrance is currently only used as an emergency exit; thus the Kepes murals are no longer on public display. The entrance vestibule still has its original recessed lights in the ceiling, but it has been given new outer doors. In addition, a handicap access ramp has been created to the north (right) of the original vestibule, with a door at the interior end, just clearing the mosaic on the north side. The various parts of the Temple complex were originally united by the use of gray terrazzo flooring throughout. The flooring is intact and in good condition but it has been covered with carpet in many places, such as in the Social Hall. In the 1958-60 building a Memorial Concourse extended along the glass corridor to the west of the Sanctuary, adjoining the Memorial Garden; both the Memorial area and garden court are no longer extant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 12

In the current main lobby from the 2001 renovation there is recessed lighting and a Star of David floor shrine in wood. A row of stained glass clerestory windows sits at the top of the gently curving west wall of the lobby, adjoining the Chapel. The lobby steps down in two places (two risers each); on the west side, there is a gently curving ramp for disabled visitors. Past the coatroom on the west side, as the lobby continues, is the relocated Memorial Concourse; it features a walnut cabinet containing bronze plaques on which are embossed the names of members of the congregation who have passed away. It is marked by a Memorial Lamp. Toward the end of the Memorial Concourse, there is a new meeting room, with a capacity of 30 persons, opening to the west, and the gift shop. The new meeting room is "infill," between the 1986-87 chapel and the original administrative block. Also part of this infill on the south side of the glass corridor are enlarged men's and women's restrooms and office spaces opening onto both the central spine and the 1986-87 lobby perpendicular to the spine.

A conference center, with a large room that can be subdivided, is located at the north end of the new lobby, west of the Blaustein Auditorium. Dark wood doors lead to the conference center, which has wood, stone, and cloth covered walls. This area filled in the space originally dedicated to the Memorial Garden and part of the administrative block of the 1958-60 complex. It is separated from the Auditorium by a narrow hallway carved out of the space between the western row of piers and the outer wall of the original Auditorium (in other words, the Auditorium has been narrowed and its symmetry destroyed). West of the conference center in the area originally devoted to administration is a slightly expanded (to the north) and refurbished administrative block with the offices arranged along the original administrative corridor perpendicular to the glass corridor. Outside the conference center is a small freestanding display case. Where the conference center lobby meets the narrowed central corridor, there is a set of stairs, containing four risers, that one encounters leading to the administrative wing. A square ramp for disabled visitors has been constructed immediately to the north of the stairs. The wall space along two sides of the ramp displays a series of portraits in oil of previous rabbis of Temple Oheb Shalom.

Social Hall

North of the sanctuary and east of the conference center is the social hall, the Louis and Henrietta Blaustein Auditorium. This room, once separated from the sanctuary by a lobby and folding walls, can hold up to 700 people. It is built of concrete, brick, and stone. A trabeated structure, in contrast to the arcuated Sanctuary, the roof is made of pre-cast concrete girders and slabs. The original ceiling featured a series of skylights on each side of the hall, between a row of piers and the outer walls, that is, on the east (Park Heights Avenue) and west sides. There are also four windows that face out to Park Heights Avenue, placed asymmetrically and low in the eastern wall. The original auditorium contained a wooden stage on the north end and a suspended ceiling over the center of the room in which there was recessed lighting and from which light and airy satellite-like chandeliers were suspended. The Blaustein Auditorium was redecorated during the 2001 renovation. It has been extended in length, with the original folding wall removed. It now occupies most of the original (eastside) entrance lobby and uses that entrance as a private entry into the Auditorium space. It has also been narrowed slightly in width. The Auditorium now terminates on the west side at the original line of piers. The interior has

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Section 7 Page 13

been given a richer decor. The current ceiling consists of a series of acoustical drop ceilings that sweep up toward the skylights and contain recessed lighting. There are no chandeliers currently. The current floor is carpeted except for a square section of wooden dance floor; both floor coverings have been placed over the original terrazzo flooring, which is intact. The original stage has been reshaped and refurbished into a bema and stage so that the social hall can double as a Sanctuary; over the bema hangs the re-commissioned eternal flame from the Eutaw Place temple. The metal sculptural screen containing phrases from The Ten Commandments, part of the original Ark in the Sanctuary, is now located in the Social Hall, as are some of Herman Perlman's original etched windows.

To the left of the bema/stage is an updated kitchen in the original kitchen space. Below the kitchen, in the basement space, there are boiler and mechanical equipment rooms, and dressing and storage rooms. The storage room is served with an elevator in the northeast corner of the social hall.

Chapel

The Gordon Chapel was added in the 1986-87 building campaign by Levin/Brown & Associates. It is furnished with narrow blond vertical board and batten oak paneling on all four sides. The chapel contains ten modern stained glass windows depicting old Testament scenes that are placed in the side walls at the clerestory level, five windows per side. The windows are accented by columns with narrow vertical wooden laths running the entire height of the columns. Between the columns is tasteful wallpaper in a teal blue herringbone pattern. The ceiling has acoustical tiles with recessed lighting, alternating with transverse sets of symmetrical wood laths shallow at the sides and more full in the center. The effect is to create a set of horizontal transverse striations that create an aisle-like effect on either side. At the upper level of the walls, wallboard creates the effect of a surrounding entablature that frames the windows and appears to be supported by the vertical board and batten columns. Air conditioning and heat ducts are hidden behind the board and batten paneling.

The bema is placed at the east end of the chapel; three steps lead up to it. The bema holds the central reading desk, the Ark, and upholstered chairs placed to either side. Overhead is the Eternal Light—an openwork design of wrought iron with a gas flame. An arched skylight lights the podium, which is also made of oak. A needlepoint tapestry in a modern design covers the Ark. Another needlepoint design of a tree of life is placed against the board and batten paneling to the left of the Ark.

The floor of the chapel is covered with a sea green carpet with mauve and brick red specks in it. The seats are Scandinavian in style and made of blond wood; they have curved backs and the seats are upholstered in a brick red woven fabric with cream flecks in it. Underneath each seat is a shallow curved drop shelf to hold hymnals.

Outside the chapel entrance, which is off the 1986-87 lobby, is a built-in and lighted Judaica display case.

Education Building

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 14

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

A glass-enclosed, glazed walkway leads to the education building, which has two floors in use. This glass corridor originally held the Perlman etched glass panels currently displayed in the Sanctuary and the Blaustein Auditorium. The basement of the education wing is currently used for storage. On the ground floor of the education building the preschool wing occupies the southern end, while the northern half houses the congregation's religious school. Some of the rooms have been subdivided since they were built. However, other rooms are in their original condition. The restrooms and the wing that houses the congregation's religious school are unchanged and retain a high level of integrity. The preschool wing, however, was fully gutted, except for the restrooms, which are original, and the library. The second story classrooms have not undergone any renovations and retain all of their original fabric. They were outfitted with chalkboards, tackboards, and coat hooks, scaled up for children of various sizes from 4 to 15.¹² The original office for the education building, which used to be open in plan, is now enclosed with walls.

A pan-type waffle slab reinforced concrete floor and roof was used in this wing. The molded waffle slab is visible on the ceiling, while the floors are covered with tile. Curtain walls are made of glass and precast concrete with exposed surface aggregate. Metal frame doors open into the classrooms and the entrances have a glass panel on one side of the door. The classroom windows are set into cinderblock walls. There are clerestory windows on the inside wall of each classroom with electrical fans installed in the window over the door. There is no air conditioning in the school. Wood and metal coat racks are located between the classrooms, and the rooms have their original wall clocks. There are stairwells in the education wing at both the north and south ends of the building. The education wing includes a designated music room that has been partitioned. This room has extensive built-in cupboards that are original to the building.

¹² Ibid.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
In process
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage
 Other: Jewish and Social History
 Architecture
 Art

Period of Significance

1958-1972

Significant Dates

1958-1972, 1958-1960, 1986-1987, 2001

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Walter Gropius & Sheldon Leavitt

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Walter Gropius & Sheldon Leavitt
Levin/Brown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University of Maryland, School of Architecture, Planning, & Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section 8 Page 1

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Summary Statement of Significance:

Temple Oheb Shalom is significant in four major ways. First, it is significant under Criterion C as the work of a master architect, Walter Gropius, along with TAC (The Architects Collaborative) and Sheldon Leavitt as Associate Architect. Gropius, the internationally renowned architect, designed the original portion of the Oheb Shalom complex, including the sanctuary, social hall, and educational building as well as the distinctive exterior facades. The synagogue complex was the first Jewish religious property designed by Gropius. Leavitt, of Norfolk, VA, carried out the contract documents and overall supervision of the project.¹³ Temple Oheb Shalom is also significant under Criterion C, second, for the quality of its architectural design and, third, for its several important works of art in the Sanctuary, original vestibule, and Auditorium, including a pair of glass mosaic murals on opposite sides of the vestibule by Gyorgy Kepes. The original Ark, Ark screen (now in the Auditorium), menorahs, and eternal light, designed by Kepes and Robert Preusser, are of high quality, as is the second Ark for the Sanctuary, designed by David Klass.¹⁴ Temple Oheb Shalom is also significant under Criterion A as an important monument in a cluster of suburban Jewish properties in northwest Baltimore that constitute a key component of Maryland and Jewish social history. The suburban complex symbolizes the establishment of a large and thriving Jewish community in Baltimore and its sequential movement to the suburbs in the twentieth century. As these congregations relocated to the northwest suburbs, they developed a new building type that allowed for the combination of worship, social/community, and educational space that served the needs of new Jewish suburban households. Thus, Temple Oheb Shalom is a distinguished example of the evolution of the synagogue as a multi-functional complex that preserves Jewish ethnic religious identity and offers a full communal life. The original complex had several distinctive features, including the dramatic shape of the Sanctuary vaults and interior (intact), and an innovative plan that placed the sanctuary and social hall on the same axis so that on high holidays, when more congregants needed to be accommodated for services, large folding doors separating the two spaces could be opened up to seat over 2000 people (altered in the 2001 renovation). Temple Oheb Shalom's architectural distinction and historical significance make this resource worthy of designation even though it is just short of 50 years old.

During the mid-century migration of Jews to the Baltimore suburbs, a number of new synagogue complexes were constructed, pushing the city to the forefront of a renewed interest in synagogue architecture throughout the United States. These new synagogues were not simply houses of worship, but complex centers that were used on a daily basis for a wide range of suburban activities. The close proximity of these complexes to each other helped shape Judaism into a way of life for congregation members. In certain ways, this important function exists in tension with the integrity of the original Gropius design. As the congregation has grown and changed, along with the circumstances surrounding Jewish religious and community practices in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, it has altered the building to accommodate better its needs and changing functions. The Levin/Brown additions and alterations of 1986-7 and 2001 have damaged the integrity of some aspects of the

¹³ John C. Harkness, ed., *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 170.

¹⁴ "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record* 135 (June 1964): 147-152.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom

Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

original Gropius interior designs, particularly in the Sanctuary, original lobby, and Auditorium. They have violated the conceptual purity of the Gropius plan while altering his dramatic volumes and facades surprisingly little. These changes, however, document and reflect the precise contours of the ongoing Jewish social and community life sheltered at Temple Oheb Shalom. They are part of what makes the place a dynamic, living complex.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Resource History and Historic Context:

Social History of the Jewish Population in Baltimore

The history of the Jewish population in Baltimore, originally comprised first of German Jews and later Eastern European Jews, is essential to an understanding of the trends in suburbanization that resulted in the construction of Temple Oheb Shalom's suburban synagogue complex. There had been a long tradition of immigration, relocation, and suburbanization within the Jewish community of Baltimore. Throughout different periods of history, the Jewish community relocated, generally to the north and west of the central city, as the result of chain migration patterns, discrimination, institutional support, and the construction of new synagogues. Although during the early years of Eastern European immigration the existing German Jews and the new immigrants generally maintained separate communities both geographically and socially – including separate synagogues -- in the mid-twentieth century they began to merge into a unified Jewish community of Baltimore.

Baltimore Jews played a major role in the development of North American Judaism. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Baltimore was a center for Jewish life in America. Although Maryland's first settlers had purely Christian ideals in mind, they became more hospitable towards Jewish populations over time. In 1632 the proprietary charter for the State of Maryland invoked "zel [sic] for the propagation of the Christian faith." The Act Concerning Religion was passed a few years later, in 1649, as a result of growing tensions between Catholics and Protestants within the state. The Act declared tolerance for Christians, but stated that those persons who did not follow the Christian faith "shall be punished with death and confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her lands and goods."¹⁵

The first recorded Jewish resident of Maryland was Jacob Lumbrozo, a healer, innkeeper, businessman, and Indian trader. He was sentenced to death in 1658 for blasphemy under the Act Concerning Religion (known as the Tolerance Act), but was later freed under a general amnesty in honor of Richard Cromwell's accession as Lord Protector of England. The next known Jewish settlers were Benjamin Levy, a merchant who moved to Baltimore from Philadelphia, and Solomon Etting, who established the city's water company and later became director of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.¹⁶

When Maryland's constitution was adopted in 1776, Jews were forbidden to hold elected office or practice law. Twenty-one years later, Etting and other Jewish residents who were gaining prominence in Baltimore's business community petitioned the Maryland General Assembly to repeal these provisions from the constitution as the Jewish population continued to grow. This law, commonly known as the "Jew Bill", was not passed until 1826.

¹⁵ Howell S. Baum, *The Organization of Hope: Communities Planning Themselves* (Albany, NY: 1997), 17; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 20-21.

¹⁶ Baum, 18-19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

It permitted Jews to hold public office and practice law and allowed Baltimore to become a predominant immigration center for the Jewish community.

The first wave of 19th century Jewish immigration to Baltimore coincided with a massive exile of European Jews who were in search of economic opportunity and political and religious freedom. The earliest immigrants generally hailed from Germany, Bavaria, Bohemia, Austria-Hungary, the Rhineland, and German-speaking Switzerland. These immigrants tended to settle alongside other European immigrants near the entry port in east and southeast Baltimore, around Lombard, High, Exeter, Aisquith, and Central Streets.¹⁷ As early as the 1830s, there were enough Jewish immigrants that viable neighborhoods and community organizations formed.¹⁸

The first organized congregation in the city was the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, which, as the only synagogue in the city, was known as the Stadt Shul, or the city synagogue. The second synagogue was the Fells Point Hebrew Fellowship (known as the Eden Street Shul) and the third was the Har Sinai Verein, which followed the rituals of Hamburg's Reform temple as opposed to Orthodoxy.¹⁹ In 1853, Temple Oheb Shalom was formed as the fourth congregation in Baltimore, by members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation who were unhappy with the traditional attitude of their rabbi and the reforms offered by the Har Sinai congregation. Eighteen years later, traditional German Jews who were displeased with the continual reforms occurring at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation formed the Chizuk Amuno congregation.²⁰ The Jewish population in Baltimore had grown from 200 families in 1840 to 10,000 individuals in 1880. Many entered the clothing business and prospered as Baltimore grew to have one of the largest clothing trade businesses in America with its Jewish community comprising nearly this entire industry.²¹

The earliest trends of moving out of the central city were the result of class distinctions within the German-Jewish community. A small group of elite Jews began to move out of southeast Baltimore to the northwest. After the Civil War, this trend accelerated, as an enclave of prosperous Jews emerged in the northwest portion of the city. This marked the beginning of a century-long trend of Jewish families moving further away from the city center.²² From the early years of the mass German immigration, leaders within the Jewish community established charitable organizations to care for their less fortunate. These included the United Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Hebrew Assistance Society, the Hebrew Hospital and Asylum, the Jewish Education Alliance, the Hebrew Free Burial Society, and the Jewish Home for Consumptives.²³

By the late 1860s, the rate of German immigration had drastically slowed, and Jews began arriving (in small numbers at first) from the Russian Empire of Eastern Europe. The Port of Baltimore was the first stop for

¹⁷ Jan Bernhardt Schein, *On Three Pillars: The History of Chizuk Amuno Congregation 1871-1996* (Baltimore: 2000), 5.

¹⁸ Gilbert Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album* (Baltimore: 2000), 5.

¹⁹ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 5-6.

²⁰ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 9.

²¹ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 19.

²² *Ibid*, 19.

²³ *Ibid*, 20.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

thousands of Eastern European immigrants, along with Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.²⁴ This second wave of Jewish immigration into Baltimore flourished in the post-Civil War period. Eastern European Jews were fleeing from persecution, epidemic, and famine. The established German-Jewish population commonly referred to the new immigrants as “Russians”, acknowledging the czar’s control over Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine, among other countries. During the 1880s 24,095 Jews landed in Baltimore, with an additional 20,000 arriving in the 1890s, and 25,000 from 1900-1905.²⁵ In addition to the immigrants arriving directly in Baltimore, Jews made their way to Baltimore from other eastern ports as the city acted as a “magnet” for Jews.

The newly landed Eastern European Jews encountered an organized, sophisticated German-Jewish community that was generally located around East Lombard and East Baltimore Streets between Central Avenue and the Fallsway.²⁶ A social divide emerged between the two immigrant groups, reflected in the separation of their synagogues. The existing German-Jewish residents were concerned that the influx of poor “Russian” Jews would damage their social standing.²⁷

The Eastern European synagogues -- the Bikur Cholim Congregation (1856), the B’nai Israel Congregation (1873), and the Anshe Chesed Bialystok Congregation (1875) -- were located near the immigrant communities in southeast Baltimore. The rapid surge in immigration resulted in “ghetto-type” conditions within the east Baltimore neighborhoods. As these poor immigrants continued to settle in Baltimore, established German-Jews began to move to the northwest near Eutaw Place and into the established residences, mansions, and grand apartment buildings that lined the boulevard.²⁸ This caused a geographic rift within the Jewish community of Baltimore. The German-Jews generally lived in the northwest portion of the city and were commonly referred to as “Uptown Jews”, while the Eastern European Jews remained in southeast Baltimore and were known as the “Downtown Russians.”²⁹ The Eastern European immigrants arrived with experience in industrial fields, especially tailoring. They often found work in the shops and factories owned by the German-Jewish population. The new immigrants formed organized unions and began to strike out against the German-Jewish factory owners. This caused a deeper rift between the two groups and began to discourage German charitable concern for the less fortunate population.³⁰

By 1895, there were four German-Jewish synagogues established in the northwest portion of the city. Within a few blocks of each other were the Chizuk Amuno Congregation, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Temple Oheb Shalom, and Har Sinai. The majority of the members of these congregations lived on six main streets -- Eutaw Place, Madison Avenue, Linden Avenue, McCulloh Street, Bolton Street, and Druid Hill Avenue. In the history of Chizuk Amuno Congregation Jan Bernhardt Schein notes that “despite differing religious preferences,

²⁴ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 68.

²⁵ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 20.

²⁶ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 4.

²⁷ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 20.

²⁸ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 5.

²⁹ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 21.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 20-21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

the German Jews of Baltimore lived side-by-side, served communal organizations together, often intermarried with one another, and some German Jews maintained dual membership – paying dues to more than one synagogue.”³¹

By the 1920s, the Eastern European Jewish community had gained both social and economic stability. They subsequently began to follow their German predecessors to the northwest portion of the city and the Park Heights-Reistertown Road area. As a result, the German Jews, still not comfortable living next to the Eastern European communities, began to move further out toward the City boundary and the suburbs.³² The opening of the Eastern European Shaarei Zion Congregation on Park Heights Avenue, just north of Druid Hill Park, represented the onset of the relocation of the newer immigrants to this portion of the city. Another indicator of these population shifts was the opening of a branch of the German-Jewish, orthodox Shearith Israel Congregation further out on Park Heights Avenue, near Glen Avenue.³³ As the two communities began to move in similar directions, a growing sense of unity began to emerge between the two immigrant populations. There were two main reasons for the Jewish population shift to the north and west. First, the Protestant and Catholic communities of northeast Baltimore, centered in Roland Park, were generally inhospitable to the Jewish population. Second, the Eastern European Jews followed the pattern of movement that the German Jews had earlier embarked on.³⁴

During the 1920s there was a construction spree among Jewish congregations throughout the United States. Lay leaders believed that new buildings and renowned cantors would help increase membership and attendance, which dropped off in the 1920s as “increased mobility and the need for financial stability” caused many men to prioritize social and economic pursuits over religious observances. To complicate matters, Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe nearly stopped in 1924 when the United States Congress passed the Johnson Immigration Act, which severely restricted the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe.³⁵ Nonetheless, Baltimore’s synagogues took advantage of the construction boom of the 1920s in two ways. New assembly spaces attracted Jews who “no longer assembled for community events at privately owned locations...but rather convened for public rallies and memorials at synagogues.”³⁶ Secondly, in striving—perhaps for the first time—to adapt to the changing *American* lifestyles of their congregations, some synagogues began to reinvent themselves as community centers. As the intensive Jewish homelife of the immigrant generation waned, adults began to attend late Friday evening services not just for worship but for “social interaction and communal fellowship.”³⁷ This trend would expand significantly with the synagogue relocations to the suburbs after World War II.

³¹ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 103.

³² Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 21.

³³ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 8.

³⁴ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 8.

³⁵ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 165.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 166.

³⁷ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 166, 150-51.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 7

By the 1930s Park Heights Avenue up to the city boundary was an elongated Jewish neighborhood. The extension of the streetcar lines made it possible for the area around Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road to become bedroom communities for Jewish people working in downtown Baltimore. The Jewish population had been drawn to this area because of the affordable rowhouses, the friendly neighborhoods, and the abundance of drug stores and kosher butcher shops. In addition, while some residents moved prior to the relocation of the synagogues, many chose to live in the area after their synagogues had constructed new facilities nearby.³⁸ Members of Orthodox congregations, in addition, had to be able to walk to the temple. In 1938, a new orthodox congregation, Beth Jacob, formed on Park Heights and Manhattan Avenues and the reform Har Sinai built a suburban branch on Park Heights and Strathmore Avenues. In addition, they relocated their religious school uptown.³⁹ Throughout the following decades, Jewish life would be wholly transported to this area as the Jewish Community Center, Hebrew Schools, Baltimore Hebrew University, and agencies of the Associated Jewish Charities all relocated to the Park Heights neighborhood.⁴⁰

An ongoing conflict within the Jewish community of Baltimore was whether to identify itself as a religious or an ethnic group. In medieval Europe Jewish communities were geographically defined and self-contained. The Enlightenment brought about the development of nation-states and Jewish communities subsequently began to define themselves based on the customs of their homelands. Throughout Germany, the forces of the Enlightenment caused an erosion of the established Jewish community and posited Jews as individual citizens. As a result, German-Jews began to think of themselves as a purely religious group similar to Catholics or Protestants. In Eastern Europe, though, there was a mix of national groups and the formation of nation-states occurred at a slower pace than in Germany. The Russian government also treated the Jewish population as a separate national, or ethnic, group. Throughout the twentieth century, distinct Jewish communities, commonly living in ghettos, existed across Eastern Europe. While their religious practices followed several centuries of tradition, religion was not the primary element in their Jewish identity.⁴¹ In North America, German-Jews tended to adopt widespread American customs. This was especially visible in the reform congregations with liberal practices and patterns of worship. The Eastern European immigrants preferred to use more traditional religious practices and formed Orthodox congregations that were both religiously and socially similar to the institutions of small Eastern European Jewish settlements. As these newer immigrants began to adapt to American society, they sought out a more moderate form of worship. Conservative Judaism was created as a compromise between the strict Orthodox and the liberal Reform movements. While the practice of conservatism emerged in Philadelphia and New York around the turn of the century, Baltimore's conservative congregations grew mainly during the post-World War II period of suburbanization.⁴² Today, conservative congregations generally belong to the United Synagogue of America, the liberal or reform congregations to the

³⁸ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 8 and 128.

³⁹ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 192.

⁴⁰ Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore*, 206.

⁴¹ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22-23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and orthodox to the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations.⁴³ The separation of the Jewish community by type of worship (conservative, reform, or orthodox) was reflected in their geographic distribution. The orthodox communities tended to remain in the Park Heights area, while the reform and conservative Jews lived in the adjacent northwest suburbs.⁴⁴ Although the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and Temple Oheb Shalom are located within the City of Baltimore, they are generally thought of as located in the northwest suburbs along with other Conservative and Reform congregations, such as Chizuk Amuno, and Beth El.

By 1947 there were 80,000 Jews living in the greater Baltimore area (as estimated by the Baltimore Jewish Council.⁴⁵ In this post-war period, a sense of nationalism emerged in America. This had a positive effect on the relationship between the German and Eastern European Jewish communities. Throughout the following decades the groups would work together on a variety of issues including buffering the criticism of the Christian community in the 1950s and eliminating the use of restrictive covenants to limit the rights of Jews in property ownership (declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1953).⁴⁶

Suburbanization of American Judaism

In Baltimore, the shift to suburban Judaism was particularly dramatic and epitomized a national phenomenon of relocating to the vast open spaces of the suburbs and constructing large synagogue complexes. After World War II, most new residential development occurred in bands and corridors around established urban centers. Deconcentration challenged organized Judaism in that it dispersed congregation members over a wider area, distributing households in far more integrated neighborhoods that provided little natural support for Jewish identification or traditional lifeways.⁴⁷ Synagogues filled this void through the provision of all-encompassing social, educational, and worship centers. As a result, many synagogues experienced an increase in membership and were forced to assess their facilities. How could all the new worshippers be accommodated, especially on High Holidays? Should existing structures be modified or should new synagogues be constructed? What aesthetic environment would best reflect the new religious reality of American Jewish life?⁴⁸ In order to answer these questions successfully, congregations developed what was essentially a new building type – the Modern synagogue complex.

Before World War II, American synagogues generally followed the plans and techniques of Christian churches.⁴⁹ Architects in Europe, however, began experimenting with new styles, flexible spaces, and new

⁴³ Paul Thiry, Richard M. Bennett and Henry L. Kamphoefner, *Churches and Temples*, New York: 1953, 19J.

⁴⁴ Baum, *The Organization of Hope*, 23.

⁴⁵ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 228.

⁴⁶ Phillip Kahn, *Uncommon Threads: Threads That Were the Fabric of Baltimore Jewish Life*, Baltimore: 1996, 221.

⁴⁷ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 228.

⁴⁸ Lance J. Sussman, "The Suburbanization of American Judaism as Reflected in Synagogue Buildings and Architecture, 1945-1975," *American Jewish History* 73 (September 1985): 31.

⁴⁹ H.A. Meek, *The Synagogue* (London: Phaidon, 1995), 227.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 9

building materials in synagogue design as early as the 1920s and 1930s. Although architectural innovation nearly ceased in Europe as congregations focused on the war and the unfolding Holocaust, it sprang forth with renewed vigor in the United States after the war, as the role of the synagogue in daily life transformed to suit the needs of the new suburban population.⁵⁰

Modernism was chosen as the most appropriate architectural style for these new complexes for a number of reasons. The suburban synagogues represented a completely new building form in a growing metropolitan landscape. As suburban locales gained political power and independence, the residents often desired to separate themselves from “old” traditions. One method of doing so involved turning to Modernism as the principal architectural style – especially for prominent social and community buildings such as religious structures – including synagogues. Modern architecture at its best offered the ability to merge the multifunctional practical requirements of the building with a design expressive of its symbolic purpose.⁵¹ In many cases, the lay leaders and prominent patrons of the congregations influenced both the functions and designs of the new buildings. They have asked for “social halls, stages for dramatic performances, art galleries, swimming pools, classrooms, libraries, museums, meeting rooms, and kitchens.”⁵² At Baltimore Hebrew Congregation the Rothschild family, who were also patrons of the avant-garde in art and music, appear to have influenced design decisions; artist Amalie Rothschild, for example, designed the tapestries covering the Ark in the sanctuary. Another rationale for selecting Modernism related to the progressive thinking and liberal attitudes associated with Reform congregations. As national Jewish organizations began to support Modern designs for Reform synagogues, the style quickly spread throughout the entire Jewish community as a method of giving the synagogue a unique and outwardly recognizable architectural form.

Collectively, Jewish leaders, architects, and artists concluded that a new synagogue form was necessary to symbolize the arrival of Judaism in the suburbs. In addition, a bold and Modern synagogue design reaffirmed publicly the Jewish community’s right to assert their collective heritage and identity, particularly in light of the persecutions before and during the European war.⁵³ European architects immigrating to the United States, such as Walter Gropius, who designed Temple Oheb Shalom, brought a more functionalist approach to architecture with them. By the end of the 1940s, a new synagogue form had emerged. The design was distinctly suburban and unique from synagogues of the pre-war period. The new synagogue complex was a symbol of suburbia, and it actively nurtured the family values associated with it. It incorporated programs that promoted the values of recreation and a youth-oriented society. Some general characteristics of the suburban synagogue included an overall sense of “newness” expressed in the furniture, light fixtures, Torah covers and candelabras; increased accessibility by the automobile; and the availability of an expansive setting with large lawns and attractive

⁵⁰ Sussman, 33-35.

⁵¹ Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966), 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵³ Brian de Breffny, *The Synagogue* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 192.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

landscaping.⁵⁴ In addition, the suburban synagogue had to accommodate a sprawling, multifunctional complex and room to park cars, and therefore demanded larger plots of land than were generally available within the city. The result was a more three-dimensional building, designed to be seen from several approaches—an object in the landscape, rather than a building with one principal elevation.

From 1945 to 1975, an impressive number of suburban-style Modern synagogues were constructed across the United States. In the postwar period, there was a determined revival of religious faith in general in the United States, but especially within the Jewish community, which brought unprecedented numbers of worshippers into existing synagogues, especially for High Holidays. This caused overcrowding among congregations, and led many of them to construct new facilities. In this period of widespread construction, “it might even be asserted that building new synagogues constituted the central religious activity of American Jews.”⁵⁵ This building boom brought the United States to the forefront in modern synagogue architectural design.⁵⁶ Baltimore synagogues played a prominent role in that process.

The idea that the synagogue could serve the cultural and social needs, as well as the spiritual needs, of the Jewish community arose out of the conditions of the American urban environment. The “Jewish American” movement, which emerged in second and third tier settlements throughout cities in the early twentieth century, promoted a new type of Jewish community that was based primarily on ethnicity.⁵⁷ The ideas of Mordecai Kaplan, who believed that Judaism was more than a religion and encompassed a civilization that included language, culture, and customs, promoted the concept of a “synagogue center” offering religious services, study programs, drama, dance, song, sports, and exercise in an effort to retain young Jews in the congregations and reduce the amount of intermarriage. Mordecai Kaplan was born in Lithuania in 1881, where he received a traditional Jewish education. He came to the United States in 1889; he was the author of many publications, beginning with *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934).⁵⁸

According to Lance Sussman, in the post-war period of suburbanization, America “changed from the land of immigrants, with its thriving ethnic groups, to the triple melting pot in which people tend[ed] more and more to identify and locate themselves in terms of three great sub-communities – Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish – defined in religious terms.”⁵⁹ As one of these emerging sub-communities, the Jews found themselves as

⁵⁴ Sussman, “The Suburbanization of American Judaism as Reflected in Synagogue Buildings and Architecture, 1945-1975,” 31-32.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 32.

⁵⁶ de Breffny, *The Synagogue*, 196.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 35-36.

⁵⁸ “Mordecai Kaplan: Founder of Reconstructionism,” *Rabbi Sheinerman's Home Page* [on-line], available at: <http://sheinerman.net/judaism/personalities/kaplan.html>, 2003.

Mordecai Kaplan graduated from the City College of New York, was ordained at the conservative Jewish Theological Seminary, and received a master's degree from Columbia University. In addition, he served as an associate rabbi for an Orthodox synagogue in New York and taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He became disenchanted with orthodox theology and interested in alternative approaches to Judaism. Over time the new social science field of sociology and the progress in the physical sciences influenced Kaplan. In 1935 he authored *Judaism as a Civilization*, which became the foundation of the Reconstructionist movement.

⁵⁹ Sussman, “The Suburbanization of American Judaism as Reflected in Synagogue Buildings and Architecture, 1945-1975,” 36.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

guardians of one-third of the American religious heritage, though only comprising 3.2% of the total American population. These empowered Jews quickly found their synagogues, as both institutions and physical structures, inadequate to serve as symbols of their cultural heritage.⁶⁰ Individual congregations, and their national umbrella organizations, turned to architects, many of whom were Jewish, to create a new building type of suburban synagogues. After 1945, there was a widespread belief throughout the Jewish community that a "true" Jewish style in art and architecture was about to be created and that the synagogue would become a distinctly Jewish building. The Reform movement took the leading role in the architectural development of the suburban synagogue because of its large financial resources and its tradition of reforming the standards of Jewish thought. In 1946, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the national organization of Reform Judaism, published a guide for congregations considering relocating to the suburbs. The following year, the UAHC sponsored two conferences on synagogue architecture. The UAHC also organized a panel of synagogue architects who traveled throughout the country to meet with congregation building committees. The panel developed a series of guidelines for new synagogue construction, which was subsequently published by the UAHC. In addition, the UAHC published, in 1954, the landmark book, *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guidebook to Synagogue Design and Construction*. The book was edited by Peter Blake, a well known critic and architect of German Jewish origin, and included writings from a variety of religious leaders and architects (including Daniel Schwartzman, the architect of Chizuk Amuno).⁶¹

While the UAHC promoted synagogue architecture at the national level, architects who promoted synagogue design in their professional organizations and journals were contacted by individual congregations. Eric Mendelsohn (1887-1953) and Percival Goodman (1904-1989) were the two architects who had the greatest influence on the design and style of American suburban synagogues after 1945. Mendelsohn established trends in the design of large synagogues and experimented in the use of new building materials. His career began in Germany in the 1920s and was pursued in England and the British State of Palestine. Mendelsohn moved to the United States in 1945 and was involved in synagogue architecture until his death in 1953. Goodman, on the other hand, made major contributions to the design and style of smaller synagogues. From the readings of Martin Buber (*I and Thou*, 1923), a Jewish philosopher and theologian, he developed ideas of intimacy in synagogue construction. His most lasting contribution to synagogue design is possibly the emphasis on the Ark as an external feature, which he thought had the possibility to define a building as a synagogue to the general public.⁶²

Some architects during the post-war period attempted to transform the suburban synagogue structure into a literal symbol of Judaism, through such methods as devising plans in the form of the Star of David. In most cases, though, such symbolism was not apparent from the interior of the structures or was so abstract that it was not recognized by most congregants. The post-war synagogues also incorporated general trends in religious institutions of any denomination. For example, architects and planners incorporated multifunctional spaces into

⁶⁰ Ibid, 36.

⁶¹ Ibid, 37-38.

⁶² Ibid, 39-40.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

their redesigns of synagogues. One of the most notable new features of the suburban synagogue was the expandable sanctuary, which provided additional seating for the High Holidays. Spatial flexibility was employed by linking the sanctuary with the social hall. The presence of an imposing social hall reinforced the concept that Judaism was more than just a religion; it was an all-encompassing way of life. Usually equipped with a kitchen and a stage, it could be used for a variety of activities. The religious school was closely modeled after public school buildings and usually did not have any features that identified it as Jewish (the same is true for Catholic schools). For the most part, synagogue schools followed state-wide and national trends towards the use of Modern architecture for new school facilities. Central offices became a noticeable feature of large synagogues, a reflection of the bureaucratic needs of suburban congregations and on the important role granted to office work in the post-war American society.⁶³

Suburban Relocation of Baltimore Congregations

The post-war years marked the beginnings of the eventual suburban relocation of most of Baltimore's synagogues. By 1946, one out of every six Americans lived in the suburbs. The rapid spread of new suburbs after the war created an instant building boom of residential, educational, and religious structures (including synagogues), all adopting similar design concepts. In the new communities, the synagogue complexes were typically the only operating Jewish agencies and they truly became the geographic center of Jewish life. As such, new designs that allowed for programmatic flexibility were necessary. As early as the 1940s, plans emerged that included features such as movable partitions and sliding doors that would allow for the conversion of spaces for a variety of uses.⁶⁴

By the end of World War II, Baltimore's German Reform Jews had moved from the mid-town northeast into Upper Park Heights; Eastern European Jews still living in East Baltimore migrated to the newly vacated residences.⁶⁵ Throughout the late 1940s the generations reaching adulthood continued to leave the urban area. In general, they relocated to the suburbs where they hoped to "raise their children in single-family homes nestled among green lawns and open areas."⁶⁶ With the suburban migration, though, came a loss of the tightly knit Jewish community that had existed in the dense urban neighborhoods. The suburban synagogue complex, with its social, educational, and worship spaces, was designed to provide a surrogate community to its members.⁶⁷

Three of the prominent Reform congregations, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Har Sinai, and Temple Oheb Shalom, began discussions for relocation plans as early as 1940. Their desire was to move closer to their members who lived at the time in the Pikesville and Stevenson areas. The synagogue leaders collectively

⁶³ Ibid 40-43.

⁶⁴ Rachel Wishnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: 1955).

⁶⁵ Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 222.

⁶⁶ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 228.

⁶⁷ Ibid 229.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section 8 Page 13

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

understood that they would have to follow their members in order to survive. This was a lesson learned from the Hebrew Friendship Congregation that, after the Civil War, refused to follow their members out of East Baltimore and eventually had to disband the synagogue.⁶⁸ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Jewish families in Baltimore continued to settle and relocate to the northwest suburbs and the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was the first reform congregation to relocate in 1951. Har Sinai followed in 1959 with a new complex at Park Heights Avenue and Fords Lane, while Temple Oheb Shalom moved to its new complex on the west side of Park Heights in 1961.⁶⁹

The conservative congregations in Baltimore gained popularity in the post-war period. They appealed to young people because they allowed their members to fully participate in a secular life while still maintaining their religious lives. As a result, not only did the conservative congregations have to accommodate a shift to suburban locations, but also a growing membership. As Schein notes, "nationally, migration to suburban areas, coupled with increasing interest in the middle of the road policies of the Conservative movement, had created an explosion of new congregations."⁷⁰ The largest conservative congregation in Baltimore, Chizuk Amuno, relocated to Baltimore County in 1961.⁷¹ Twenty families that were displeased with the strict ideologies of the Orthodox Beth Tfiloh synagogue formed an additional conservative congregation, Beth El, in 1947. Although Beth El's first site was near Taney Road, many members soon moved outward. Their first synagogue complex, erected by the congregation in 1960, was north of the city line on Park Heights Avenue, directly behind the Chizuk Amuno site.⁷²

Other Jewish facilities soon followed suit. In 1958 the Baltimore Hebrew College relocated to 5800 Park Heights Avenue. Two years later the Jewish Community Center moved to a facility at 5700 Park Heights Avenue. By 1968 there were 106,300 Jews living in greater Baltimore, comprising almost 7% of the total population of the city. Out of this Jewish community, 47% lived in suburban locations. The greatest concentration was in the Upper Park Heights community, with 35.8% of the total Jewish population. In addition, 29.2% lived in Liberty, 14.6% in the Reb Corridor, 10.9% in Lower Park Heights, 5.2% in the downtown, and an additional 4.3% lived in other outlying areas. The Lower Park Heights neighborhood was predominantly Orthodox (55%), while the other communities had a more balanced distribution. Upper Park Heights, with the largest concentration of Jewish residents, was 35% Orthodox, 29% Conservative, and 31% Reform.⁷³

⁶⁸ Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 222-223.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 274.

⁷¹ Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 224-225.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "The Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore: A Population Study," completed by the Associated Jewish Chamber of Baltimore, 1968.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Trends in Synagogue Design

The synagogue, from the Greek “sinago”, or “to gather”, has a triple function in Jewish life. It serves as the house of prayer, house of study, and house of assembly. In other words, the synagogue provides space for worship, educational facilities, and social gathering places.⁷⁴ In the introduction to a 1963 exhibit entitled *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*, Richard Meier describes this typology as the Jewish people’s “most original creation, the mainstay of their cohesiveness, assuring the survival of their group, their cultural identity, and their historical cohesiveness.”⁷⁵ There have never been any standard definitions or prescribed protocols for synagogue design. While certain implications about the form of the synagogue have been extracted from the Bible, there is no set of rules that architects or congregations must follow. Synagogues thus become an individualized, outward expression of the congregation. In arriving at this end, it is “the problem of the synagogue architect to express in a physical structure the spirit of the Jewish congregation.”⁷⁶

The earliest designs for synagogues were by today’s standards “a grassroots, democratic form springing up from and encouraging individual initiative and responsibility based on a common understanding of basic needs.”⁷⁷ Although there are no prescriptions for designing a synagogue, there are some common elements among congregations. The Torah, the most valuable element in the sanctuary, is a “copy of Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, handwritten on parchment about twenty inches high and a foot in diameter.”⁷⁸ The second ritual element is the Ark, in which the Torah is stored. In addition, an Eternal Light always hangs near the Ark. Other traditional features include a seven-branch candelabra that hangs on one or both sides of the Ark and a representation of the Tablets of Law above the Ark.⁷⁹

The sanctuary of the synagogue is designed with the bema in front of the Ark. The bema should be, but is not always, elevated with three steps. On the bema there is a reading desk, or pulpit, that is used to place the Torah on when unrolled. There is a great amount of flexibility in the arrangement of the bema. Some common patterns consist of placing one reading desk in the center of the bema, in front of the Ark, one unit to either side of the Ark, a mobile unit that can sit in different locations depending on the service, or two separate pulpits on either side of the bema. There are no further guidelines for the shape or dimensions of the sanctuary as a whole.⁸⁰ Prior to entering the sanctuary, there is generally a foyer, or gathering space, which functions as the central core of the complex. Generally, all areas of the synagogue facility are accessible from this space.

Historically, Jewish communities have built synagogues that follow the dominant architectural style of the time. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, congregations borrowed the forms of the Greek

⁷⁴ Meier, 11.

⁷⁵ Meier, 13.

⁷⁶ Meier, 10.

⁷⁷ Thiry, *Churches and Temples*, 6J.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 19J.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 20J.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 22J.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 15

temple, Moorish mosque, Gothic cathedral, Romanesque church, and even the colonial American church.⁸¹ Early on in America, the immigrant origins of the congregations, along with their religious views and economic conditions, were the dominating factors in synagogue design. Although the Jewish population in America began to flourish in the early 1800s, there were no professional architects or designers within the Jewish community until the 1840s.⁸²

Although Jews had settled in America as early as the mid-seventeenth century, it was not until 1730 that the first building was constructed specifically for Jewish worship in New York City. By 1825, Jewish congregations were worshipping in their own buildings in many of the larger cities in the new nation. At this time, neoclassicism was the typical choice for many synagogue designers. The growth of the Jewish population around the mid-nineteenth century directly led to an increased need for houses of worship. Many Jews crowded into urbanized areas and replaced pre-existing Christian communities. Jews commonly acquired former church structures, many of them Gothic in design, and converted them for Jewish liturgical use. The Romanesque revival style was also used for synagogues in the period before the Civil War.⁸³

By the mid-1800s, German Jews began to prosper along the Eastern seaboard. As the community organized into distinct congregations, they began to show concern over distinctive features in their synagogue buildings. While synagogues do not have any display of an image or symbol that is thought to have "supernatural" power, the German Jews were the first group to display common Jewish symbols on the exteriors of their buildings. The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, in 1845, was the first synagogue in the United States to display a monumental Star of David on a primary facade; it was visible in one of the synagogue's windows.

Beginning after the Civil War and continuing into the twentieth century, synagogues used Islamic motifs, including Moorish minarets and horseshoe-arched facades. This style was easily differentiated from church design at the time and created a desired visual identification for the minority Jewish groups. However, the Moorish style lacked any true identification with Judaism and remained alien to American sensibilities. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a new interest in the planning of the synagogue emerged. There was a shift from the basilican plan, which had characterized Moorish synagogues, to a more central orientation. The dome is the architectural form that was most often used to emphasize this new approach. Then in the early twentieth century synagogue architecture experienced a new phase. The archeological discovery of ancient synagogues in Galilee justified the use of Greco-Roman designs. Although antiquity became the most popular reference in the first quarter of the twentieth century, other historical periods were also represented.⁸⁴

During the 1920s, many of the historical elements that characterized synagogues were derived from Byzantine architecture. The layout of Byzantine churches could easily be adapted to a centrally planned synagogue.

⁸¹ Meier, 7.

⁸² Rachel Wishnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States*.

⁸³ *Two Hundred Years of Synagogue Architecture* (Waltham, Mass: 1976), 9-13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 13-17.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 16

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Another advantage was the characteristic simplicity in the block-like forms of a polygonal Byzantine structure. Although new advances in technology had freed architecture of the load-bearing wall and massive stone buttress, synagogues in the 1920s continued to feature these traditional forms. The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s brought a virtual halt to synagogue construction in the United States, although experimentation with new forms continued throughout Europe.⁸⁵

The earliest synagogues in America were generally single buildings, with the primary space dedicated to worship, and smaller rooms for educational and social functions. Due to their urban locations, many of the social gatherings for the congregation could be held at other nearby locations. Beginning in the 1920s, as households left the traditional neighborhoods behind, a trend to build Jewish centers emerged in an effort to provide for the social and cultural needs of the congregation. These synagogue centers existed in addition to the broad-based, community-oriented Jewish Social Centers that served the community at large.⁸⁶

During World War II, architects in the United States began experimenting with the concept of multi-purpose space and flexible design for synagogues. The most common flexible space included in modern synagogues was the combination of the sanctuary and social hall. The social hall was almost always included in synagogue design, illustrating the importance of the festive meals in celebration of the various Jewish holidays. To provide increased seating flexibility, particularly in smaller synagogues, this space was often situated adjacent to the sanctuary and separated with a removable wall. Other common elements in modern synagogue complexes were classrooms, administrative offices, a library, memorial walls, the mechanical plant, and kitchen(s). Additional gathering space was also commonly provided by the inclusion of an outdoor courtyard.⁸⁷

After World War II, there was a popular revolution in American spirituality. After the Holocaust, many American Jews renewed their religious and cultural identity. This increase in membership and changing demographics led to an unprecedented number of newly constructed synagogues. During this building frenzy, architects in the U.S. began to use the idioms of the Modern Movement in synagogue design, which was influenced by the architectural experimentation of pre-war Europe. Eric Mendelsohn, a German born architect, was the first to produce an outstanding post-World War II synagogue, the Congregation B'nai Amoona in St. Louis (1950).⁸⁸ Its layout enabled the seating capacity to be doubled for the high holidays by linking the prayer hall, foyer, and auditorium with folding walls. This "flexible plan" was revolutionary at the time.⁸⁹

There were still no standard rules for exterior synagogue design, except that "Biblical law says the orientation should be toward Jerusalem" and that the "synagogue should be on the highest land in the community and

⁸⁵ Ibid, 17.

⁸⁶ Rachel Wishnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States*.

⁸⁷ Thiry, *Churches and Temples*, 23-25J.

⁸⁸ Information on the B'nai Amoona synagogue can be found in Kathleen James' *In the Spirit of Our Age: Eric Mendelsohn's B'nai Amoona Synagogue* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2000).

⁸⁹ *Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture*, 30.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 17

should be the highest building.”⁹⁰ Also common on the exterior are two freestanding columns flanking the main entrance to the building. Paul Thiry, in his discussion of synagogue design, notes that contemporary synagogues “are planned so that each of the various parts expresses its own essential spirit: sanctuaries, the center of religious life, tend to express mass and, by means of greater height, to dominate other elements; social halls, often larger in area than the prayer hall, are usually endowed with greater glass areas which let in light and create a cheerful atmosphere; and the educational and administrative functions are revealed as spreading, many-windowed wings.”⁹¹

Percival Goodman, one of the most prominent modernist synagogue architects and the designer of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, believed there were five key elements to successful synagogue design. First, he emphasized that the tradition of the congregation and their service should “establish the whole tone and feeling of the building.” In addition, the best design skills, most advanced engineering, and best materials should be employed. Intimacy was essential. The design of the sanctuary should allow as many people as possible to sit as close as possible to the bema. Goodman also believed that there was no substantial difference in the sanctity of the parts of the synagogue and that the educational, social, and worship spaces should all receive equal emphasis. The only ritual element that Goodman called for is to have two menorahs flanking the Ark.⁹²

In this movement, Baltimore took a leadership position, as congregations worked with nationally prominent architects, even the occasional non-Jewish designer, e.g. Walter Gropius. The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation’s suburban synagogue complex represents the beginning of a national trend towards a new building form for Jewish religious structures. Constructed in the late 1940s, it was one of the earliest Modernist synagogues in both the mid-Atlantic region and in the nation as a whole. It set a standard for excellence in expression that the other new Baltimore suburban synagogue complexes emulated in spirit if not in the precise details of design. One of Percival Goodman’s remarkable achievements in architecture, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation is extensively cited in Elman and Giral’s *Percival Goodman: architect – planner – teacher – painter*, a text highlighting the work of this master architect. The congregation has long been recognized nationally as one of the most important in American Jewish history. It was the first congregation in Baltimore, a city known for its prominent place in American Judaism, and it blazed the trail for Chizuk Amuno, Beth El, and Temple Oheb Shalom in the postwar suburban era.

The post-war trends in synagogue design are highly significant and represent a genuine change in the design of synagogues. In the years following World War II, the suburban version of the synagogue complex was elaborated and there was a dramatic turn to Modernism as the architectural solution for the new buildings. By the mid-twentieth century, Jews no longer accepted structures that were not representative of their heritage. Jewish services in a Gothic atmosphere seemed anachronistic. The lack of traditional temple architecture enabled Modernism to become the language of the suburban synagogues of the new American Jewish

⁹⁰ Thiry, *Churches and Temples*, 25J.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Recent American Synagogue Architecture* (New York: 1963), 21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 18

communities.⁹³ Another trend after WWII was synagogue complexes that included “monumental” chapels, which were clearly distinct religious spaces. Indeed, these may have served as incentives for Christian denominations to jump on the Modernist bandwagon. According to Avram Kampf, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Temple Beth Shalom (1959) in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania was one of the most publicized post-war synagogues. The plan resembled the Star of David and the building had a tripod roof, which Wright hoped would suggest both Mount Sinai and the tent tabernacles of the ancient Hebrews. This tent theme is the most popular idiom in modern American synagogue architecture. Symbolic programs went hand in hand with these historical allusions. Generally, these building types were not as successful because their form was compromised in order to exhibit their chosen symbol.⁹⁴

Artwork in Synagogues

Traditionally, there are three main types of artwork in the synagogue: symbols, ritual objects, and decorative works. Paul Thiry, Richard M. Bennett, and Henry L. Kamphoefner in *Churches and Temples* mention that “only the artist can revitalize the familiar objects and images so that they convey a meaning and a feeling transcending the inherent reality of the devices themselves.”⁹⁵ Most designers of synagogue artwork use functional objects to represent Jewish symbols and concepts, but there is the need for the artist to express the deeper purposes they embody. As architectural historian Avram Kampf points out, Modernist synagogues in particular, because of the strictly rationalized principles of their design, “need the intensification of the meaning of the building, the externalization of its spirit; they need some of the warmth, eloquence and passion of an individual work of art.”⁹⁶

Particularly as the synagogue has become a multi-functional complex in which the prayer hall is but one component, art has come to play increasingly prominent roles in its cultural and religious expression. To begin with, art fulfills the traditional need for “Hiddur Mitzvah (the artistic work which is done to adorn religious objects and actions).” In addition to artistic expression that will stimulate worship, many congregations desire an environment appropriately indicative of the social status of the congregants. Then, too, artistic works such as sculpture and the embellishment of the synagogue doors enable congregations to identify with and to announce themselves to the surrounding community. Art can also express “communal pride and personal identification with the synagogue,” particularly when it captures the values and spirit of a congregation. Many lay leaders believe art should form part of the educational program and become, for example, a meaningful activity that children learn from. Still others “seek an art which is relevant, which increases consciousness of belonging, spiritual awareness, [and] an historical understanding of the group.” Thus art comes into the mid-twentieth century Modern synagogue as an activity directed toward increasing communality, assisting the traditional

⁹³ Matthew Fitzsimmons, *The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation* (College Park, Md: 2002), 7.

⁹⁴ *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*, 31-33.

⁹⁵ Thiry, *Churches and Temples*, 34J.

⁹⁶ Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art*, 30.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 19

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

requirements of the worship service, creating a stimulating and inviting environment, and incorporating new cultural activities into the increasing complex program it sponsors.⁹⁷

Modern art struck a resonant chord for many mid-century suburban congregations in the United States. Its sources of appeal are varied. In Baltimore, many prominent Jews were collectors of modern art or, occasionally, artists themselves. For some congregants who uphold the prohibition of the Second Commandment, abstract art is more palatable than traditions of classical representation. As the dominant art form at the time, modern art placed “the synagogue within the main stream of modern life.” In its various manifestations, modern art is capable of communicating important truths and inward states of mind with great effectiveness. Suburban synagogues possess examples of contemporary art that express a range of themes from traditional biblical symbols, such as the burning bush, the revelation on Mt. Sinai, and the menorah, to ideas of spirituality and mystery, democratic ideals of social justice, and the Jewish peoples’ struggle for acceptance.⁹⁸ Works of art manifest on the exteriors of buildings—as sculpture, mosaics, murals, pylons, or inscriptions; in vestibules—where they help prepare worshippers for the more spiritual mood of the prayer hall; in worship spaces—especially adorning ritual objects, such as the Ark, the Torah, the Eternal Light, Menorahs, and stained glass; and in galleries, museums, memorial walls, educational spaces, and sometimes social halls.⁹⁹ Perhaps the quintessential example of the integration of art and architecture in a mid-century synagogue is Percival Goodman’s Congregation B’nai Israel in Millburn, New Jersey (1951). There Goodman selected three struggling abstract artists to enhance a modest synagogue he had designed in the outer suburbs of New York City. Among the striking results were Herbert Ferber’s dramatic sculpture of the Burning Bush on the exterior façade, Robert Motherwell’s semi-abstract decorative mural in the vestibule, and Adolph Gottlieb’s Torah curtain in velvet appliqué.¹⁰⁰ A similar quality of the integration of art and architecture seen in B’nai Israel is achieved in different ways in Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Chizuk Amuno, Beth El, and Temple Oheb Shalom in suburban Baltimore.

History of Temple Oheb Shalom

A group of twenty-one German immigrants formed the Reform Temple Oheb Shalom, or “lover of peace,” in 1853. The congregation was Baltimore’s fourth organized Jewish synagogue, only preceded by the Orthodox Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Fells Point Congregation, and the radical Reform Har Sinai. Their first meetings were held on the third floor of a coach factory at Gay and Lexington Streets, called Osceola Hall.¹⁰¹ In 1858 the congregation purchased its first permanent building to be used as a place of worship. It formerly functioned as the Fifth Presbyterian Church and was located at Hanover and Pratt Streets in southwest

⁹⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 88, 125, 140-173.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 75-86. In the case of Goodman, a strong sense of friendship developed between the architect and the Jewish artists he chose to work with in furnishing his synagogues.

¹⁰¹ “A Brief History of Temple Oheb Shalom,” Dedication Pamphlet, Temple Oheb Shalom, May 11, 2001.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 20

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Baltimore. At the time, about fifty-four percent of the congregation's members lived within ten blocks of the building. This structure was used until 1893, when the congregation relocated to a facility on Eutaw Place.

Oheb Shalom's first rabbi was Dr. Benjamin Szold, who was hired in 1859. He was a graduate of the Breslau Seminary in Germany and was a strong advocate for reforms within the Jewish religion. Szold is now regarded as "one of the intellectual forebears of the later Conservative Movement."¹⁰² In the early years of the synagogue, all of the services were delivered in German, but by 1882 Rabbi Szold had begun to deliver one lecture each month in English. The congregation officially joined the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1882. Six years later, Oheb Shalom joined the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary Association. After following a "cautious path of reform," many, but not all, of the congregants wanted to hire an English-speaking and American-trained rabbi, to further Americanize the community, and to attract a larger and younger congregation.¹⁰³ Their affiliation with the Reform movement in Judaism also affected the style of worship at the temple because the congregation did not have to maintain separate seating for men and women. In addition, all of the congregants did not have to live within walking distance of the synagogue, as was required for Orthodox congregations.

During the 1880s, Oheb Shalom's president, Isaac Strouse, and other prominent members lobbied to move the synagogue uptown to the Bolton Hill area. Their location in southwest Baltimore had started to turn into a factory and industrial district. In addition, Strouse thought that the move uptown would help the congregation increase its membership. In 1890 and 1891 the more radical components of the congregation launched two campaigns – to hire an English-speaking rabbi and to relocate uptown. The congregation's first campaign was fulfilled when they hired their second rabbi, William Rosenau in 1892. He was their first English-speaking and American-trained rabbi and a graduate of the Reform Hebrew Union College. He championed more English in the service, bare heads in worship, and adoption of the radical *Union Prayerbook*.¹⁰⁴ In October 1891, the Building Committee purchased a lot on Eutaw Place, on the corner of Lanvale Avenue. The move uptown was heavily influenced by the richer members of the congregation who wanted to relocate to "newly fashionable upper northwest Baltimore, to Bolton Hill, the area around elegant Eutaw Place, with its large, fine homes for the truly rich and such fancy streets as Madison and Linden avenues and Bolton and McCulloh streets."¹⁰⁵ The new temple on Eutaw Place was Moorish Revival in style and was designed by J. Evans Sperry.

After the relocation to the Eutaw Place building, many of the congregation's members who still resided in southwest Baltimore began moving nearer to the synagogue. Although Oheb Shalom had one of the wealthiest memberships of any synagogue in Baltimore, their pace of reforms lagged behind many of the other Reform

¹⁰² Marsha L. Rozenblit, "Choosing a Synagogue: The Social Composition of Two German Congregations in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 329.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 332-333.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1987, 338.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 21

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom

Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

congregations. It was not until April 1906 that Temple Oheb Shalom formally adopted the Reform movement's *Union Prayerbook*, thus becoming a full-fledged Reform congregation.

Abraham D. Shaw became Oheb Shalom's third rabbi in 1940. By the mid-1940s, Oheb Shalom had become a mainstream Reform congregation. During World War II and throughout the post-war period, Reform congregations across the United States experienced a level of unprecedented growth. While in 1936 the congregation had 800 families, by 1953 there were over 1,000 families. This expansion of the membership at Oheb Shalom caused the congregation to consider their future space demands and to begin looking to the northwest suburbs for locations to construct a large synagogue campus.

Development of Suburban Synagogue Complex

Temple Oheb Shalom purchased a site on Park Heights Avenue in 1953. The move was triggered by a population shift within the congregation's membership towards the northwest Baltimore suburbs. The site, known as the "old Hecht estate," was within close proximity to the property purchased by the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. A May 1959 edition of the *Baltimore Sun* noted that "just as a shift in population brought about a change in 1892, so the trek to the suburbs prompted the move now planned by Oheb Shalom. According to Rabbi Shaw, at least nine tenths of the congregation's members lived from three to ten miles away, and many children had to come some distance to attend the Religious School. Hence, in 1953 land was purchased on Park Heights Avenue to bring the temple location closer to the present center of the Jewish population."¹⁰⁶

Sheldon Leavitt, of Leavitt Associates in Norfolk, Virginia, was hired by Temple Oheb Shalom to design the synagogue complex. He was asked by the congregation leaders to find a famous architect to work with on the project. Leavitt, who was associated with TAC on another project, recruited Walter Gropius and the TAC team to assist in the design of the new suburban complex. Theirs was a "delightful collaboration," as Leavitt put it. He traveled to Gropius's office in Cambridge where they developed the schematic plan; then Gropius periodically sent an associate to Leavitt's Norfolk office, where he completed the working drawings.¹⁰⁷

This was the only synagogue designed by Gropius and he combined both religious symbolism and representations of the industrial age in his Modern design for the building. As Avram Kampf states, "in his search for a genuinely twentieth-century synagogue, Gropius merged the shape of the turbine with the shape of the Decalogue, and thus satisfied his own belief in the machine and that of Baltimore's Oheb Shalom Congregation in the Torah."¹⁰⁸ The series of vaulted bays on the exterior elevations are representative of the Tablets of Law. Because it is believed that God only handed down two tablets to Moses and Gropius used

¹⁰⁶ Kathryn Geraghty, "New Home for Oheb Shalom," *Baltimore Sun*, May 10, 1959.

¹⁰⁷ Telephone Interview with Sheldon Leavitt by Isabelle Gournay, Spring 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965*, New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966, 37.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section 8 Page 22

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

four on each side, H.A. Meek interprets the design of the exterior to be more symbolic of a giant turbine house.¹⁰⁹ In this manner, symbolism is interestingly integrated into an otherwise undecorated modern structure. A brief statement on the architectural history of the building, included in a congregation program from May 2001, stated that “Walter Gropius, contended that ‘he had created the ideal 20th century synagogue by merging the turbine and the Torah in the tablet forms of his façade.’”¹¹⁰ In the interior of the sanctuary, the wall behind the Ark is designed in a repetitive pattern that is reminiscent of the curtain-wall buildings that Gropius pioneered and often used in his high-rise office and residential structures.¹¹¹

One of the greatest challenges faced by the design team was constructing a sanctuary space that was intimate enough for weekly services, but could approximately double its capacity for the Jewish High Holiday services. To fulfill this goal, Gropius and Leavitt designed the sanctuary and social hall to reside side-by-side, separated by a folding wall at the back (north side) of the sanctuary. It should be noted that this design was altered during the 2001 renovation, when the bema and Ark were moved to the north end of the sanctuary. At this time, the original lobby was removed and a permanent wall was constructed between the sanctuary and social hall.

The original building included various functional spaces including the sanctuary, Blaustein auditorium, administrative offices, and the education building. This variety of spaces permitted the combination of worship, social, and educational activities to all proceed at the complex, thus facilitating a total Jewish way of life for the congregants. In the dedication guidebook published by Temple Oheb Shalom in 1960, Sheldon Leavitt provided a written description of the complex. He noted the differences in these functional areas. The sanctuary, he says, “is clothed in dignified forms which yield strong, solid shadows. Its roof, in spaced measures, vaults to a great height.”¹¹² In contrast, the Blaustein auditorium “exhibits a more temporal appearance but retains a suitable dignity of form to make it compatible with the Sanctuary; this relationship is intimate when the spaces are combined.”¹¹³ Finally, he states that the education and administrative spaces “express their practical plans and academic uses by crisp straight lines and extensive use of glass.”¹¹⁴ The sanctuary was solely used for worship space. The Blaustein auditorium was used for social activities as well as additional space for worship on the High Holidays. In addition, the auditorium was the primary space for social dances, parties, and other congregation events and activities. The education building houses two uses – a preschool and a religious school. The religious school operates for grades kindergarten through seven, from 9:30 to 12:30 on Sundays. In addition, grades four through six meet on Tuesday afternoons from 4:15 to 5:45 and grades eight through twelve meet on Tuesday nights from 6:00 to 8:00. There are currently 235 students enrolled in the religious school. During the 2001 renovation, a portion of the original education building was gutted and refurbished for the Learning Ladder Preschool, which opened later the same year.

¹⁰⁹ H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995, 220.

¹¹⁰ Mark D. Levin, AIA, “Architectural Reflections,” *Shabbat Service of Dedication*, Temple Oheb Shalom, May 11, 2001.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Sheldon J. Leavitt, AIA, “A Tour of the Temple Complex,” *Temple Oheb Shalom Dedication Guidebook*, 1960.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 23

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

The additions and alterations at Temple Oheb Shalom reflect the congregation's ongoing attempts to fashion a renewed vision for their community and to "create the environment that articulates the renewed vision."¹¹⁵ According to Mark Levin of Levin/Brown & Associates, "the effects of the '67 and '73 wars in Israel and a 'post-Vietnam America' demanded a more intimate approach for the design of the new Gordon Chapel. The design evolved to be the counterpoint of the Gropius edifice in volume, texture and materials, both inside and out." The 2001 renovations "center around the integration of the old with the new to create a communal spiritual home which will nourish the next generation of Jews."¹¹⁶ Both architects and congregation have endeavored to "modify the building to suit the needs of the present congregation without completely altering the character of the spaces designed by Gropius and his colleagues."¹¹⁷ In the Sanctuary, this meant reconfiguring the seating and creating a new bema and Ark, to provide a warmer atmosphere and smaller scale to "reflect the way [the members] worship today" while preserving Gropius's original bema and Ark and the entire original Park Heights Avenue façade. It includes doubling the amount of social space to include more meeting rooms, and the multimedia Brunn Conference Center, particularly to accommodate greater opportunities for adult learning. It also involved the design of the Davison Lobby and Klein Gallery, what Levin termed a gathering and schmoozing space. Although the changes do compromise Gropius's original conception for Temple Oheb Shalom, sometimes significantly, they nonetheless articulate the congregation's passionate belief in the continuity of synagogue life. It is clear that the Temple Oheb Shalom community regards itself as "ever dynamic and evolving," but it is equally clear that they have intended to "honor the integrity of a world-class piece of architecture."¹¹⁸

The original Gropius/Leavitt design of Temple Oheb Shalom has been widely published in the professional press and in scholarly studies of synagogues and of Gropius's oeuvre, most prominently in a lengthy feature article penned by Leavitt for *Architectural Record* in 1964.¹¹⁹ *Architettura* published the design the same year.¹²⁰ The local press followed its progress steadily.¹²¹ The design is prominently featured in monographs on Gropius and an extensive set of studies and preliminary sketches has been published in Volume 4 of the Walter Gropius Archive.¹²² Nearly every major scholarly study of the history of synagogue design gives Temple Oheb Shalom careful attention; its exterior, sanctuary interiors, and sanctuary art are treated at length in Avram

¹¹⁵ Levin, "Architectural Reflections," 2001.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Edward Gunts, "Temple's Future Set in Stone," *Baltimore Sun*, undated clipping c. 2001.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., quoting Freda S. Sussman, president of the congregation at the time of the 2001 renovation.

¹¹⁹ Leavitt, "A Tour of the Temple Complex."

¹²⁰ "Un Tiempo di Gropius," *Architettura* (November 1964): 472-3.

¹²¹ Kathryn Beraghty, "New Home for Oheb Shalom," *Baltimore Sun* (May 10, 1959); George Hanst, "Farewell to Temple Marks New Beginning," *Baltimore Evening Sun* (September 15, 1960); Edward Gunts, "Temple's Future Set in Stone," *Baltimore Sun* (undated newspaper clipping, c. 2001);

¹²² Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius: An Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991); Paolo Berdini, *Walter Gropius* (Barcelona: G. Gili, 1994); John C. Harkness, ed., *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 24

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Kampf's Contemporary Synagogue Art.¹²³ Interestingly, Temple Oheb Shalom was also showcased frequently in trade advertisements, especially for brick suppliers and manufacturers of electrical fixtures.

Walter Gropius

Walter Gropius (1883-1969) was one of the most influential architects and educators of the twentieth century. He was born on May 18, 1883 in Berlin, Germany, the son of a Prussian architect. During the early twentieth century, Gropius received his professional training at Technical Universities in Munich and Charlottenburg.¹²⁴ After traveling through Spain and Italy, he joined the office of Peter Behrens, a key figure in early 20th century German architecture, in Berlin.

Between 1910 and 1925, Gropius was associated with Adolph Meyer. For his early commissions, he borrowed from the "Industrial Classicism" introduced by Behrens. This period, in which he designed some of his most significant buildings, was one of the most fruitful of Gropius's long career. The Fagus factory in Alfred-an-der-Leine (1911-13) immediately established his reputation as a prominent architect. With this building, Gropius tried to bring together pure construction and art. The factory was notable for its extensive use of glass and narrow piers. The façade of the main wing was a forerunner of the modern metal and glass curtain wall. The omission of solid elements at the corners heightens the impression that the building was a glass-enclosed, transparent structure.

Gropius and Meyer's next major work was the Administration Building for the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne (1914) where the entire façade, including the corner stairwells, was glazed. In 1922, they entered the Chicago Tribune competition and applied these principles to a skyscraper design using balconies inspired by the De Stijl esthetic. Gropius's solution was free of all historicist detailing. Using the rectangular Chicago window employed by architects such as Louis Sullivan, Gropius offered a unique European solution to the design problem posed by America's most innovative structure, the skyscraper.¹²⁵

In 1914, Gropius served on the western front. After the war, he became involved with several radical artists' movements that sprang up in Berlin around 1918. The following year, Gropius was asked by the new social democratic government of Saxe-Weimar to combine Weimar's old art academy and its applied arts school into a new school. This would come to be known as the Bauhaus, a world famous institution. The curriculum of the school exemplified Gropius's ideas to escape academic models and return to the crafts in a modernized version

¹²³ See, for example, Oscar Israelowitz, *Synagogues of the United States: A Photographic and Architectural Survey* (New York: Israelowitz Publishing, 1992); H.A. Meek, *The Synagogue* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995); *Recent American Synagogue Architecture* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1963); and Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966).

¹²⁴ "Biographie: Walter Gropius, 1883-1969," available on-line at: <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/biografien/GropiusWalter/>

¹²⁵ "Gropius, Walter Adolph," available on-line at: <http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/Biographies/MainBiographies/G/gropiuswalter/1.html>

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Section 8 Page 25

of the medieval building guilds.¹²⁶ Artists and craftsmen directed classes and production together at the Bauhaus. This was intended to remove any distinction between fine and applied arts.

The school emphasized the correlation between creative design, modern industry, and science. It also sought a balance between practical training in the crafts and theoretical training in design. The students were trained in all crafts, as well as sculpture, drawing, painting, science, and theory, and, subsequently, in architecture. In 1925, the Bauhaus was forced to move to Dessau, after a debate over funding. Gropius designed for this school one of the most influential buildings of the 20th century. The Bauhaus was asymmetrical in its overall composition and consisted of several connected buildings, each containing an essential part of the school. The frontal workshop wing, which was a four-story glazed box, was the most striking part of the complex.¹²⁷

Gropius left the Bauhaus in 1928 and opened a private architectural firm in Berlin; he visited the United States for the first time that year. In 1932, with Hitler's rise to power, he moved to London. The Nazis closed the Bauhaus that same year. In London, Gropius practiced briefly with Maxwell Fry. In 1937, he was appointed to teach at Harvard University as a dean in the Graduate School of Design, where he remained on the faculty until his resignation in 1952. The following year he opened his own architecture office in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1946, he organized a group of young architects into a new organization, The Architects Collaborative (TAC), with whom he participated as partner. This group embodied his belief in the value of teamwork. TAC had a number of significant commissions including the Harvard Graduate Center (1949), the U.S. Embassy in Athens (1960), and the University of Baghdad (1961).

Gropius also designed a number of American buildings including the Pan Am building in New York City (with Pietro Belluschi and Emery Roth). In addition, he associated with Marcel Breuer during the 1930s on a series of projects. He continued practicing architecture until his death in Boston on July 5, 1969.

The design for Temple Oheb Shalom was completed in coordination with The Architects Collaborative (TAC) and Sheldon Leavitt. Over one hundred and fifteen projects are attributed to Gropius in his Archives, including his furniture designs, unbuilt projects, and master plans. Aside from Temple Oheb Shalom, only one other project is religious in nature. Gropius lent his expertise to the designer of the Catholic Church in Torreon Mexico (1944-1945), Jorge Gonzales Reyna. Reyna had studied with Gropius at Harvard and Gropius's name was merely used to help the project move forward.¹²⁸ Therefore Temple Oheb Shalom is the only religious building or complex attributed to Gropius.

Gropius's desire to incorporate the local culture in the design of the building is apparent in its religious

¹²⁶ "Walter Gropius," available on-line at: http://www.greatbuildings.com/architects/Walter_Gropius.htm

¹²⁷ "Gropius, Walter Adolph," available on-line at: <http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/Biographies/MainBiographies/G/gropiuswalter/1.html>

¹²⁸ Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume . 3. 1936-1957: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 26

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

overtones. He also wanted the multipurpose nature of the complex to be evident from the exterior.¹²⁹ His interest in the spiritual nature of the commission influenced his use of light and vaulted forms. He conducted many studies on a variety of vaulted forms and light penetration before the desired effect was achieved.¹³⁰ These preliminary sketches are part of the Gropius Papers from the second half of his career, deposited in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

Sheldon Leavitt

Sheldon Joseph Leavitt, Gropius and TAC's partner on the design of Temple Oheb Shalom, was born in Chicago in 1922. Leavitt, who was Jewish, attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 1937 to 1938 and earned a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from the University of Illinois in 1943, where he graduated with high honors. Leavitt worked as a designer for Bernard B. Spigel from 1947 to 1949, as a structural engineer for Tidewater Construction Company from 1949 to 1951, and as a designer for A. Epstein & Sons, Inc. from 1951-1953. The following year, he organized his own firm, Leavitt Associates, Architects and Engineers. The firm was based in Norfolk, Virginia, although Leavitt was registered as an architect or engineer in Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia.

In addition to the suburban complex for Temple Oheb Shalom, Leavitt designed the Dixie Container Corporation building in Richmond, Virginia (1949), YMCA Beach Club in Norfolk (1950), and Azalea Acres housing development in Norfolk County (1955). He was involved in the design and planning of other Jewish religious properties as well, including the Beth-El Temple in Norfolk (1950), Gomley Chesed Synagogue in Portsmouth (1955), Temple Israel in Norfolk (1955), and the Adath Jeshurun Synagogue in Newport News (1961). His work on Temple Oheb Shalom, in collaboration with Walter Gropius, won the Craftsmanship Award from the Building Congress and Exchange of Baltimore in 1962.

Leavitt had, at times, worked in Maryland where he completed the New Grandstands at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore (1954), the Towson Plaza Shopping Center (1958)¹³¹, and the Ruxton Apartment Towers in Baltimore (1964).

Artwork

The artwork and symbolism incorporated in the design of Temple Oheb Shalom was highlighted in Kampf's *Contemporary Synagogue Art*, which focuses on the use of regular geometry and simple forms in both the building design and in the artwork. Kampf points out, "the entire building is based on a constructive purism, a simplified scheme of elemental forms and proportions, a man-made harmony of rectangular shapes believed to

¹²⁹ "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record*, volume 135, June 1964: 147-152.

¹³⁰ Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991.

¹³¹ A rendering of this project is included in the Winter 1960 issue of the *Architects Report*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 27

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

be in accord with a basic harmony and lawfulness of the universe.”¹³² In addition, Gropius himself believed in the use of abstract art to convey spirituality and solemnity, thus explaining the use of “abstract design of rectangular shapes dominating the stained-glass windows, the ritual objects, and the large screen.”¹³³ Gropius commissioned the two main artists responsible for the artistic program at Oheb Shalom.

The artwork at the Modern synagogue complex enhances the overall significance of Temple Oheb Shalom. All of the art pieces retain a high level of integrity, even though there have been renovations to the synagogue. It was common for artistic programs to be included in the overall design of Modern synagogue complexes, although the artwork at Oheb Shalom is notable due to the prominence of the artists and the high quality of the work.

There are four major art pieces at Temple Oheb Shalom. These include a pair of glass mosaic murals in the original lobby, the Eternal Light, Ark doors, and sanctuary menorahs. The murals were designed solely by Gyorgy Kepes, while the latter pieces were a collaboration between Kepes and Robert Preusser. The mosaic murals “provide an immediate introduction to the spiritual content of the Temple; their transparent colors, grading from dark to light, symbolize the passage from daily activities to the realm of religion.”¹³⁴ The Ark is twenty feet high and is constructed in the image of Moses’ tablets. The two doors slide open to the left and right. The doors are walnut veneer with an “appliqué in triangular bits of colored metal in a composition based on the theme of the six-pointed Star of David.”¹³⁵ In describing the Ark and other art objects at the Temple, Leavitt noted that “Kepes has maintained a harmonious relation among them and with the building.”¹³⁶ The sanctuary menorahs and the Eternal Light are all abstract metal art pieces with a geometric form. The Eternal Light has an oil flame.

Gyorgy Kepes (1906-2001)

Gyorgy Kepes, the designer of the glass mosaic murals in the original Gropius lobby and the co-designer of the Eternal Light, Ark doors, and sanctuary menorahs, was born in Selyp, Hungary in 1906. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest, where he studied from 1924 to 1929, and in 1930 moved to Berlin to work in the studio of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian avant garde artist and Bauhaus School founder. He worked with Moholy-Nagy off and on between 1930 and 1937 in both Berlin and London. During these formative years, he first experimented with film, then devoted much of his time to exhibition, stage, and graphic design, activities he would later pursue with great success in the United States. In London, Moholy-Nagy introduced Kepes to Walter Gropius. In 1937, Kepes moved to the United States to head the Light and Color

¹³² Avram Kampf, *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965*, New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966, 65.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Sheldon J. Leavitt, AIA, “A Tour of the Temple Complex,” *Temple Oheb Shalom Dedication Guidebook*, 1960.

¹³⁵ “A Big Temple for Baltimore,” *Architectural Record*, volume 135, June 1964: 147-152.

¹³⁶ Sheldon J. Leavitt, AIA, “A Tour of the Temple Complex,” *Temple Oheb Shalom Dedication Guidebook*, 1960.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 28

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Department at what was then known as the New Bauhaus (later renamed the Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago.

Throughout his career Kepes was interested in the connections between science and art, and in 1944 published the book, *The Language of Vision*, which conveyed his ideas about education and artistic methods. This book was a seminal work that combined the Bauhaus principles with Gestalt theories.¹³⁷ In 1945, Kepes was hired by MIT to teach in the School of Architecture and Planning. He became a full professor of visual design in 1949. While at MIT, Kepes collaborated with Pietro Belluschi and worked with Kevin Lynch on a study of "The Perceptual Form of the City," sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1958, he published *The New Landscape in Art and Science*. Ideas in this book were a driving force in Kepes' decision to found the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT in 1967. The center was intended to be a "closely knit work community of artists and designers who would work together with architects, city planners, scientists and engineers."¹³⁸ Kepes served as the center's director until 1972. In 1965 and 1966, he edited and published *Vision and Value*, a seven-volume series including essays by natural scientists, social scientists, architects, and critics.¹³⁹

Kepes became internationally known as a writer, painter, designer, photographer, administrator, theorist, and educator. In 1966 he designed a show entitled *Light as a Creative Medium* for Harvard University's Carpenter Center. During his career he also completed designs for publications, ceramic tiles, public art for Cambridge public schools, and stained glass windows for religious institutions. His work includes stained glass windows at the First and Second Church in Boston and a window and sculpture for a church in Japan. His paintings are included in over thirty permanent museum collections including the Brooklyn Museum, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Whitney Museum in New York City.¹⁴⁰ Alan Brody, associate provost for the arts at MIT, described Kepes as "the greatest pioneer in the marriage of art and technology in America, if not the world."¹⁴¹

Kepes was awarded the Fine Arts Medal from the American Institute of Arts and Letters. In addition, he was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1996, Kepes was awarded the Medal of Honor and the Middle Cross of the Republic from his native country of Hungary.¹⁴² He also held positions as a Visiting Professor at Harvard University (1964-1966) and as an Artist-in-Residence at the American Academy in Rome (1974-1975).

Publications on Kepes' work are essentially devoted to his photographic and painting output. They also emphasize his most experimental architectural work, where he used eclectic lighting instead of a more

¹³⁷ "Gyorgy Kepes," available on-line at: <http://www.drleslie.com/Contributors/kepes.html>. Kepes was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church.

¹³⁸ "CAVS Founder Gyorgy Kepes," available on-line at: <http://web.mit.edu/cavs/people/kepes/kepes.html>

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ "Gyorgy Kepes, founder of CAVS, dies at 95," available on-line at: <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/nr/2002/kepes.html>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 29

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

traditional medium. In 1950, Kepes created a "kinetic outdoor light mural" out of wavy neon tubes for Carl Koch's Radio Shack store in Boston. He also devised a "programmed light mural" for the New York City offices of KLM Airlines, on Fifth Avenue, in 1960.

For the suburban complex of Temple Oheb Shalom, Kepes completed the 9.5' by 18' glass mosaic mural, *From Dark to Light*, that resides in the synagogue lobby. In addition, in collaboration with Robert Preusser, he completed the 3-foot tall bronze Eternal Light, the walnut veneered Ark doors, a copper and enamel 8-foot menorah, the bronze 8-foot Shabbat menorah that was finished with a colorful cloisonné enamel, and an aluminum 7-foot menorah. All of the pieces that were a collaboration between the two artists reside in the sanctuary of the synagogue complex.

Kepes's work as a muralist is not well documented. He had previously worked for Walter Gropius on murals for the Taunton Public Schools in Massachusetts (1955). In addition, Kepes was commissioned for murals at three Modernist buildings designed by Carl Koch: an outdoor mural at the Youth Library in Fitchburg, Massachusetts (1949), and murals for the Wellesley Public Library (1955), and Morse School in Cambridge (1955). Some of his other mosaics are at Sheraton Hotels in Dallas, Houston, and Chicago (1955), and at the Temple Emanuel in Dallas (1959, W.W. Wurster, Sandfield, and Meyer, Architects). Kepes also completed the stained glass window behind the altar at the Church of the Redeemer in Baltimore (1958) and colored glass murals for the library and connecting bridges at the Commodore John Rodgers School on Fayette and Chester Streets (1970). Kepes passed away in Cambridge on December 29, 2001.

Robert Preusser (1919-1992)

Robert Preusser worked in conjunction with Gyorgy Kepes on Temple Oheb Shalom's Eternal Light, Ark doors, and three menorahs. Preusser was best known as a painter, designer, and educator who primarily worked in Houston, Texas and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Preusser was born in Houston, Texas and took his first formal art lessons with the painter McNeill Davidson in 1930. As a teenager he already participated in national and international exhibits. He moved to Chicago to study at the Institute of Design with Moholy-Nagy for the 1939-1940 and 1941-1942 academic years. It was in Chicago that Preusser first met Gyorgy Kepes, one of his professors at the school. From 1940 to 1941, Preusser left Chicago to study at the Newcomb School of Art at Tulane University. After returning from his service in World War II, he completed his studies at the Art Center School in Los Angeles during the 1946-1947 academic year.

In Houston, Preusser taught at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts from 1947 to 1954 and at the Art Department at the University of Houston from 1951 to 1954. In 1948, Preusser co-founded the Contemporary Arts Association in Houston. While in Texas, he also served as an associate curator of education at the Houston

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 30

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

Museum of Fine Arts. A 1956 review in *Art in America* nominated him as a “promising new talent in the USA.”¹⁴³

In 1954, Preusser relocated to Cambridge, where he taught visual design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the invitation of Gyorgy Kepes. He was appointed as the Director of Education at MIT’s Center for Advanced Visual Studies in 1974 and remained in this position until his retirement in 1985.¹⁴⁴ While at MIT, he created the first studio course geared towards students in the science and technology fields. Preusser served as a professor emeritus of visual design in the School of Architecture and Planning until his death in 1992.

Preusser’s works are included in over 200 private and museum collections. In addition, his work is included in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Throughout his career his work was exhibited at the National Exhibition of American Art in New York (1939), Carnegie Institute (1941), Art Institute of Chicago (1942, 1947, 1951), Virginia Museum of Fine Art (1946), Houston Museum of Fine Art (1940), Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston (1952), San Antonio Arts League (1941), Kansas City Art Institute (1936), Dallas Museum of Fine Art (1938), and the Corcoran Gallery of Art (1953).¹⁴⁵

David Klass

David Klass designed the Ark dedicated in the refurbished Sanctuary of Temple Oheb Shalom as part of the 2001 renovations. He studied art and architecture at the Pratt Institute. After graduation in 1966, he apprenticed with the well-known sculptor, Theodore Roszak. While working with Roszak, he assisted in the fabrication and installation of several public art works for the City of New York. In 1973, he returned to the classroom to study anatomy for physicians and surgeons at Columbia University to enhance his skills as a sculptor. He founded his own studio in New York City, where he sculpts and designs Judaica for the home and synagogue. He has designed Trees of Life, Ark doors, Eternal Lights, and menorahs for many congregations and individual patrons.¹⁴⁶

David Klass is best known, however, for his figurative sculpture, described as exhibiting tremendous technical skill. His work can be found in numerous collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina, and many private collections. He has taught sculpture and anatomical

¹⁴³ “Professor R.O. Preusser Dies,” available on-line at: <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/tt/1992/dec02/28278.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ “Preusser, Robert O.,” available on-line at: <http://siris-archives.si.edu>

¹⁴⁵ “Robert O. Preusser 1919-1992,” available on-line at: <http://www.acmefineart.com/bio-preusser.htm>

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.synagogueart.com/ArtistInfo.html>, accessed 8 August 2004.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 31

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

technique at the New York Academy of Art, the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, the Sculpture Center in New York, and the Loveland Academy of Fine Arts in Colorado. He is a member of the National Sculpture Society. He still lives and works in New York City.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ http://www.jaggallery.com/artist24/d_klass_bio.htm, accessed 8 August 2004.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

MIHP # B- 73
Name of Property
Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

MIHP # B- 73

Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom

Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

MIHP # B- 73

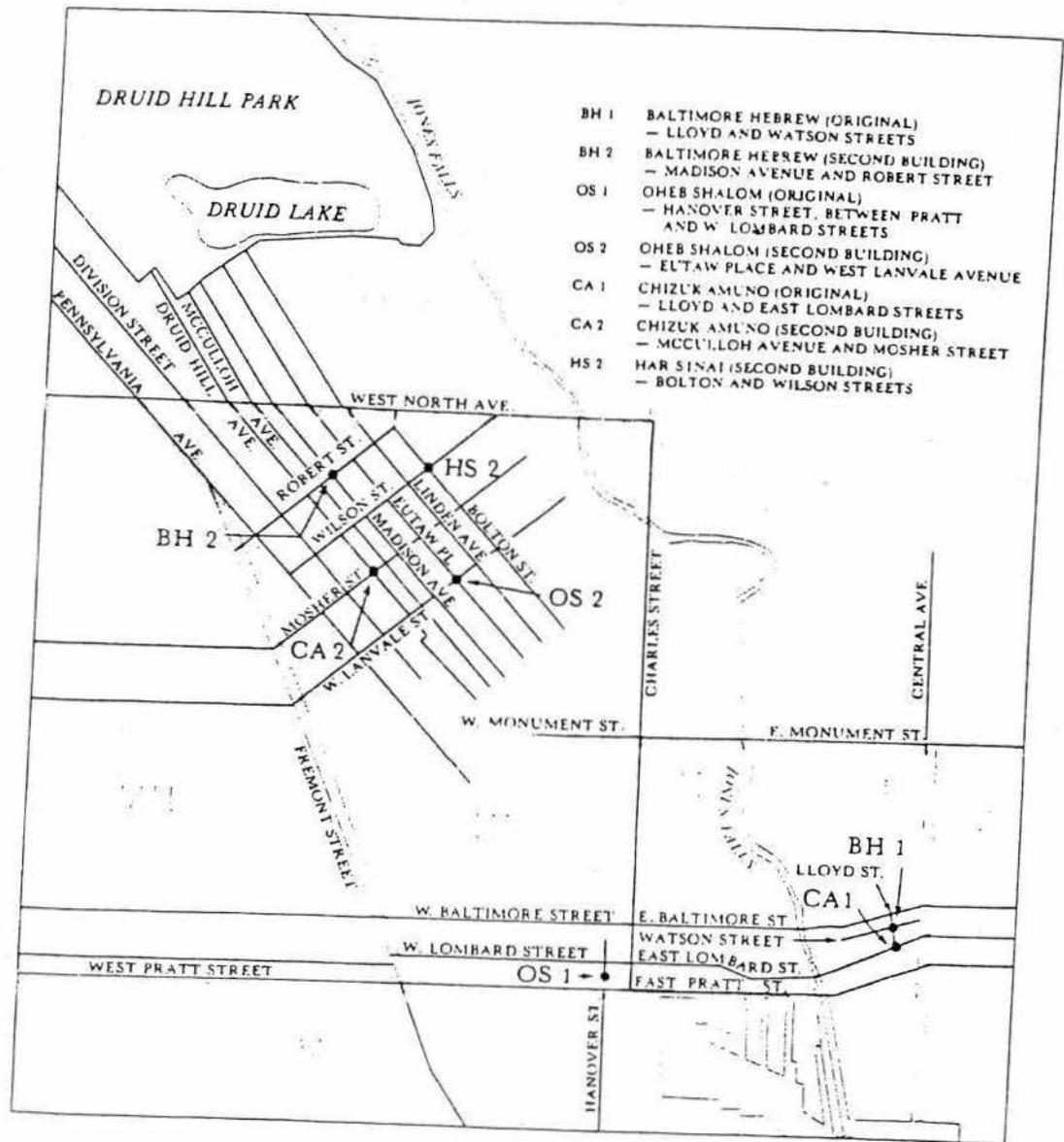
Name of Property

Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore City, Maryland

County and State

Verbal Boundary Description and Boundary Justification:

See attached GIS map as description. It shows the associated tax parcel of the property, with its legal boundaries.



B-73

Plate 1

Temple Oheb Shalom

Map showing the location of the first two synagogues of Temple Oheb Shalom. Note their proximity to other synagogues and the early shift from East Baltimore to the northwest portion of the city.

Source: Rozenblit, Marsha L. "Choosing a Synagogue: The Social Composition of Two German Congregations in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore." in Jack Wertheimer, ed. *The American Synagogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987. 331



Baltimore's old Eutaw Place Temple.

B-73

Plate 2
Temple Oheb Shalom
Façade of the Eutaw Place Synagogue.
Source: Israelowitz, Oscar. *Synagogues of the United States: A
Photographic and Architectural Survey*. New York: Israelowitz
Publishing, 1992, 145.

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570' +/- TO PI

original whole thing

divided

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LIMIT OF SCHOOL AREA NOT INCLUDED IN AREA CALC

50' +/- TO SCHOOL

EXIT CAPACITY = 480

185 PEOPLE

45

30 PEOPLE

20 PEOPLE

300 PEOPLE

10 PEOPLE

EXIT CAPACITY = 480

EXIT CAPACITY = 240

EXIT CAPACITY = 240

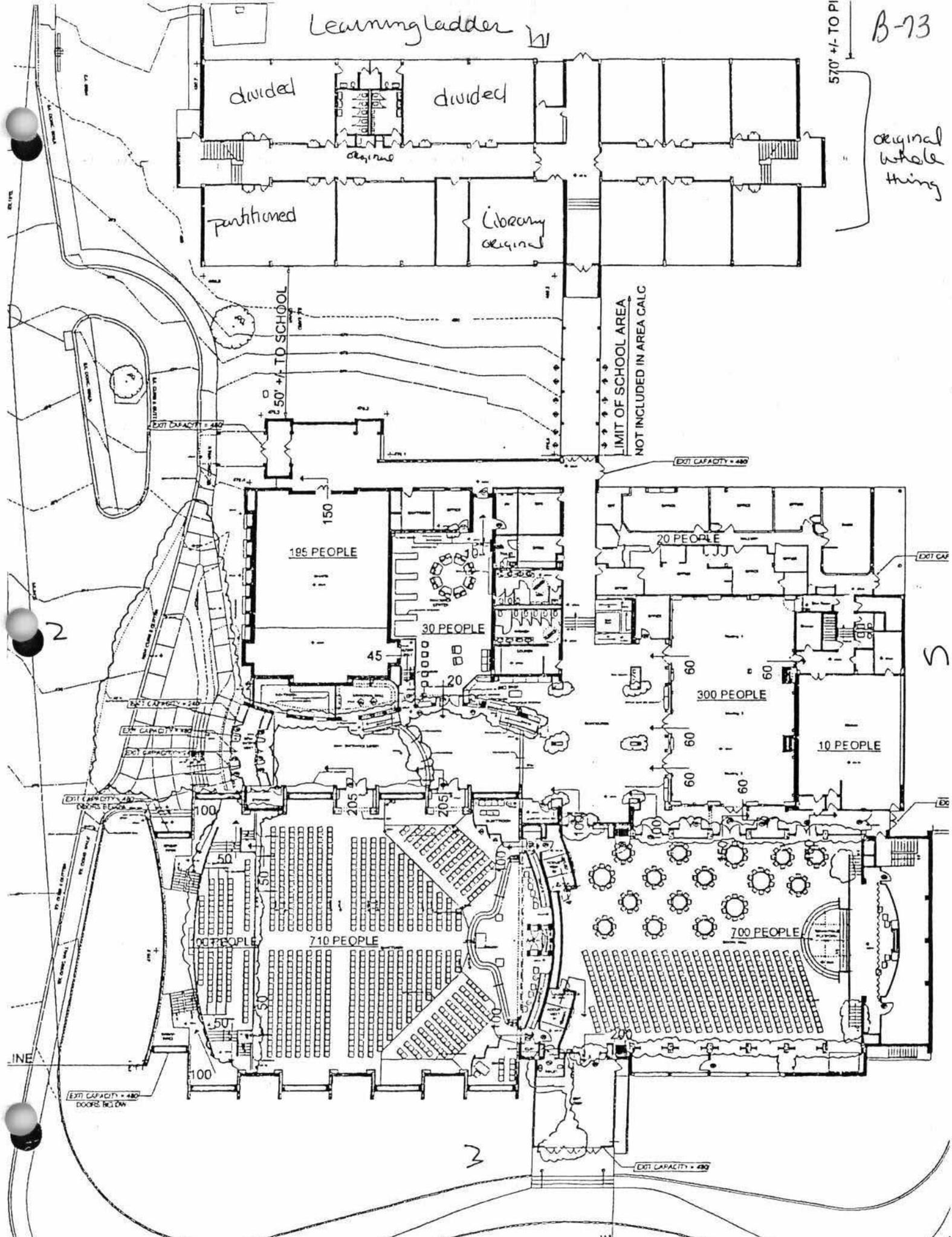
EXIT CAPACITY = 480

DOORS CLOSED

710 PEOPLE

700 PEOPLE

EXIT CAPACITY = 480

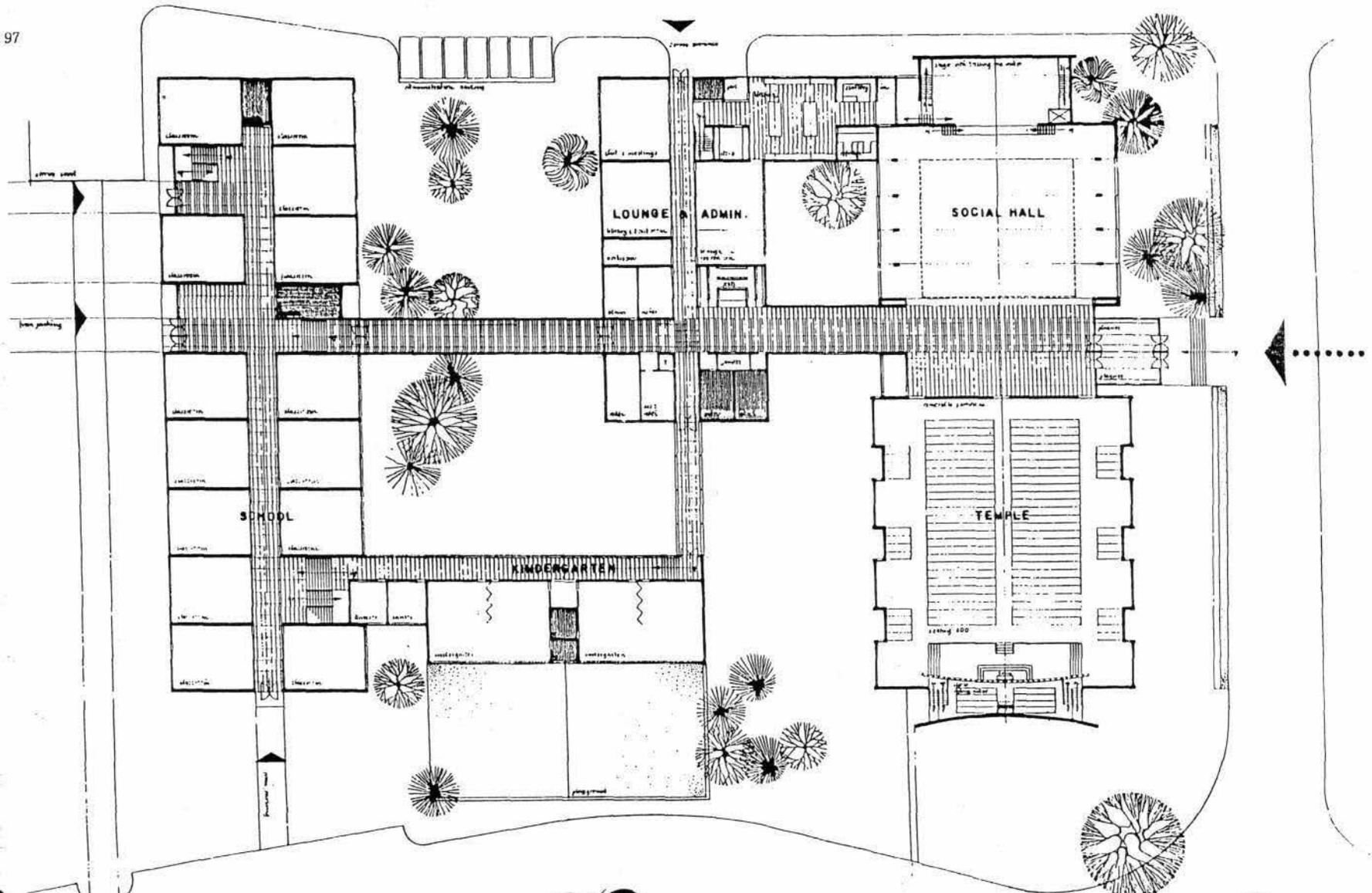


B-13

Plate 3
Temple Oheb Shalom
Current floor plan.
Courtesy of Temple Oheb Shalom.

B-73

97



OHEL SHALOM TEMPLE & BLAUSTEIN FOUNDATION



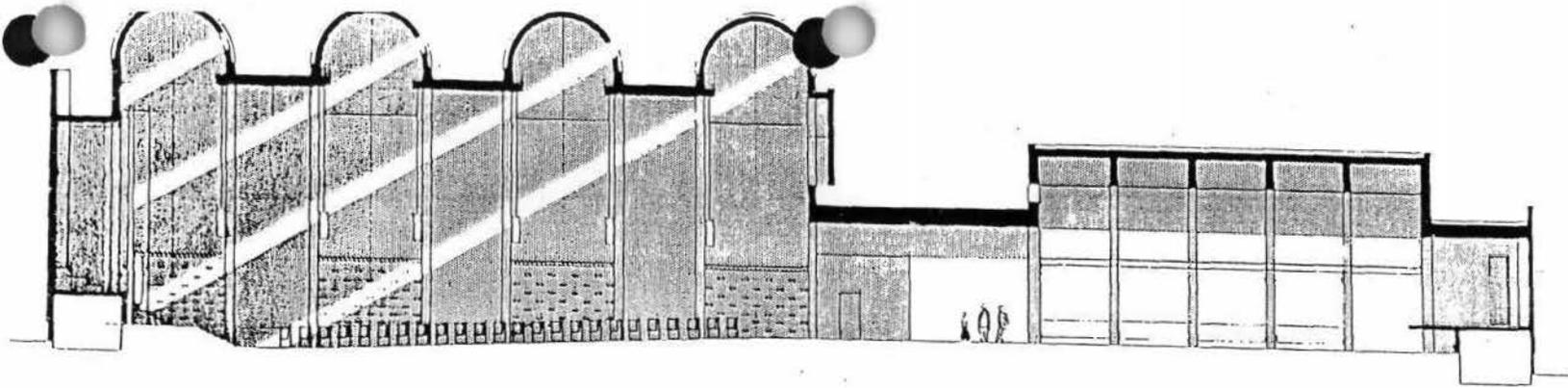
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Plate 4

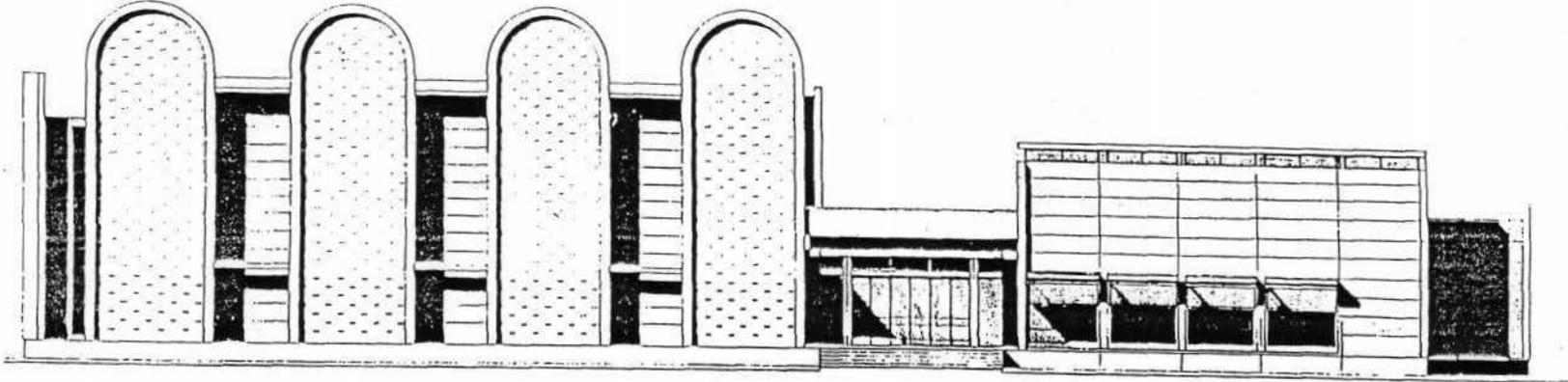
Temple Oheb Shalom

First floor plan, as designed by Gropius & Leavitt. Kindergarten wing was not built.

ref: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 97.



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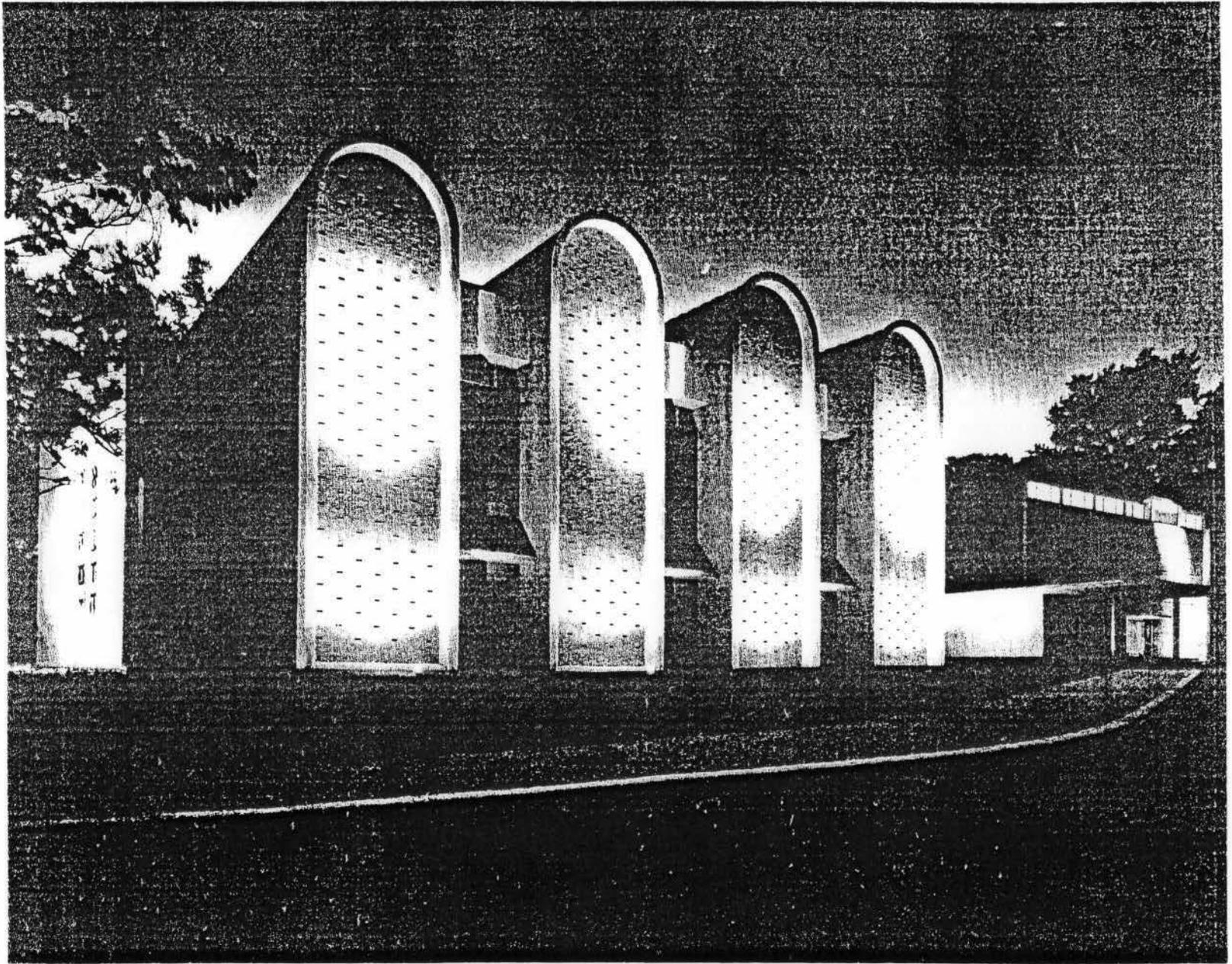
B-73

Plate 5

Temple Oheb Shalom

Elevation of the main façade facing Park Heights Avenue.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative.*
New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 108.



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B-73

B-73

Plate 6

Temple Oheb Shalom

Principal façade of the sanctuary at night.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive*,
Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative
New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 172.

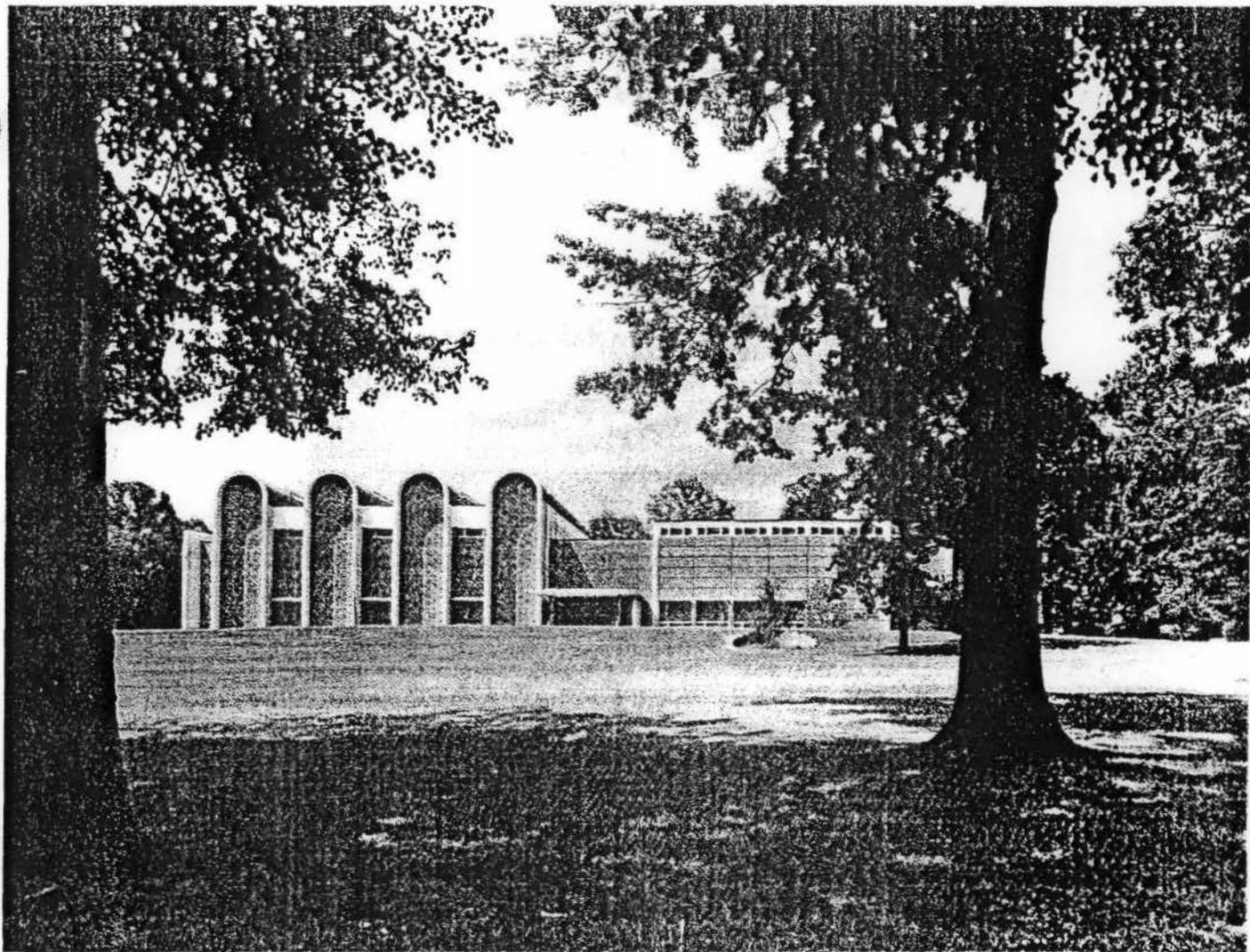


Plate 7

B-73

Temple Oheb Shalom

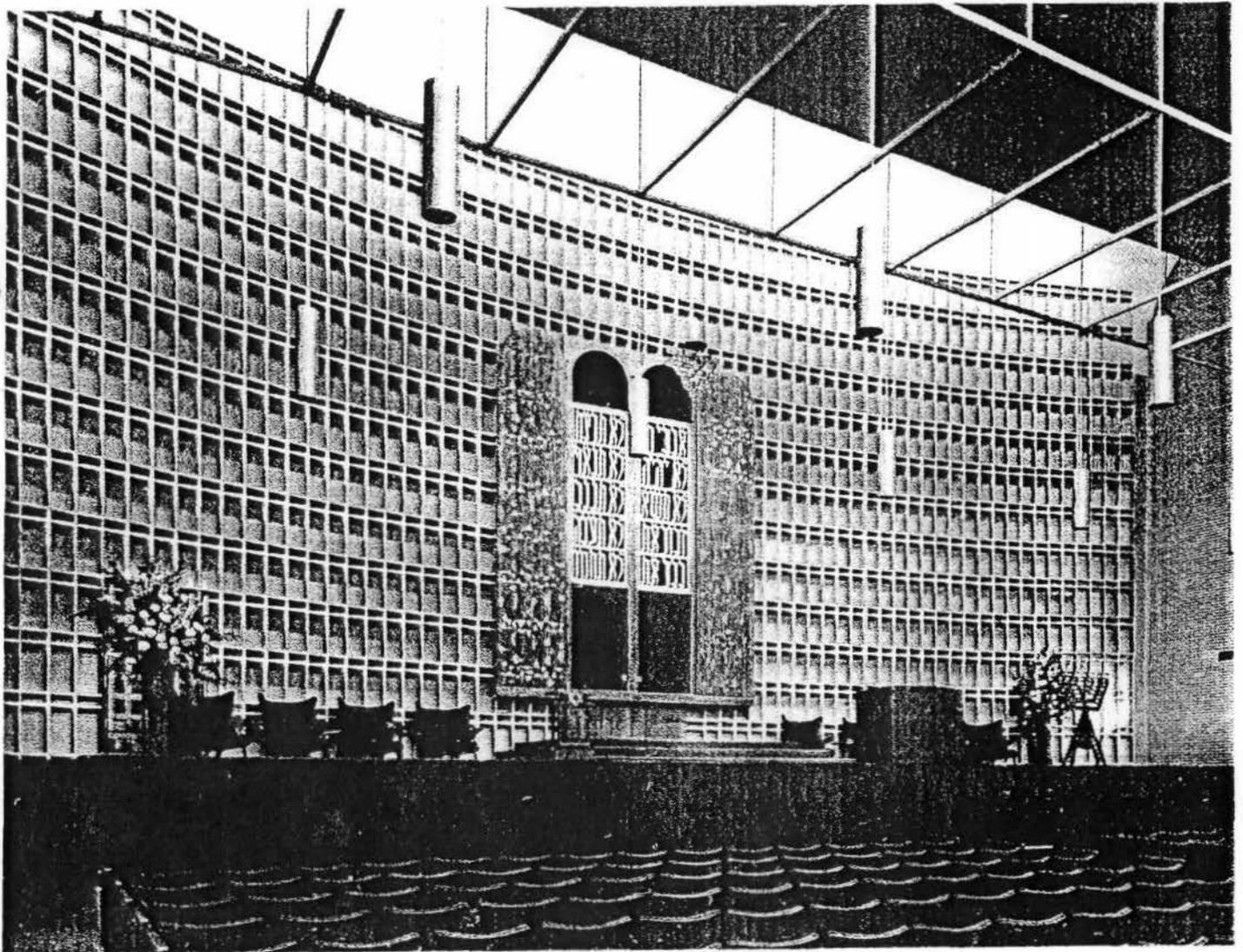
Principal façade of the Temple Oheb Shalom complex, note the expansive lawn.

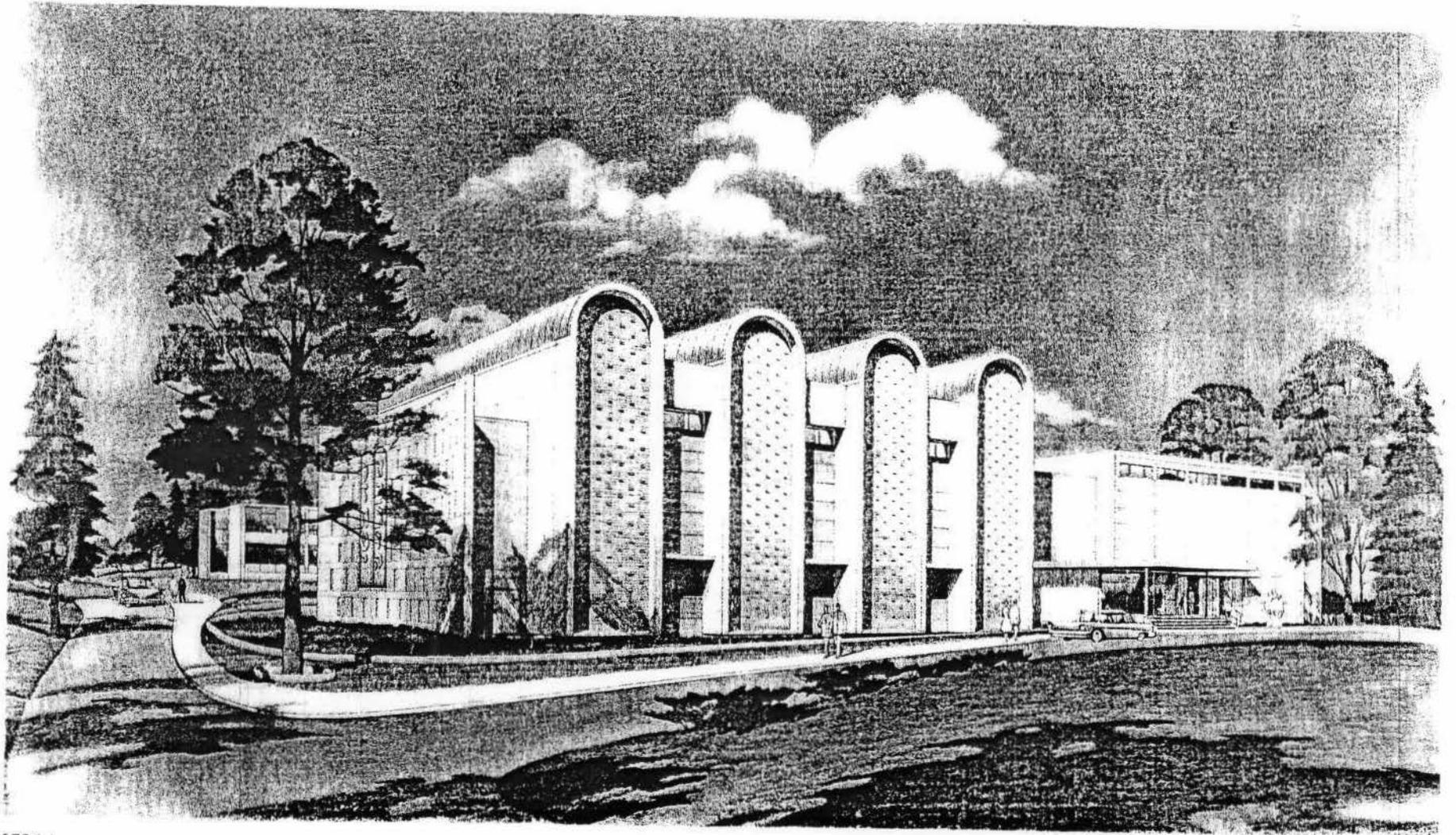
Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 173.

Plate 8

Temple Oheb Shalom

The original bema and Ark in the sanctuary, with the Ark doors open.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 173.



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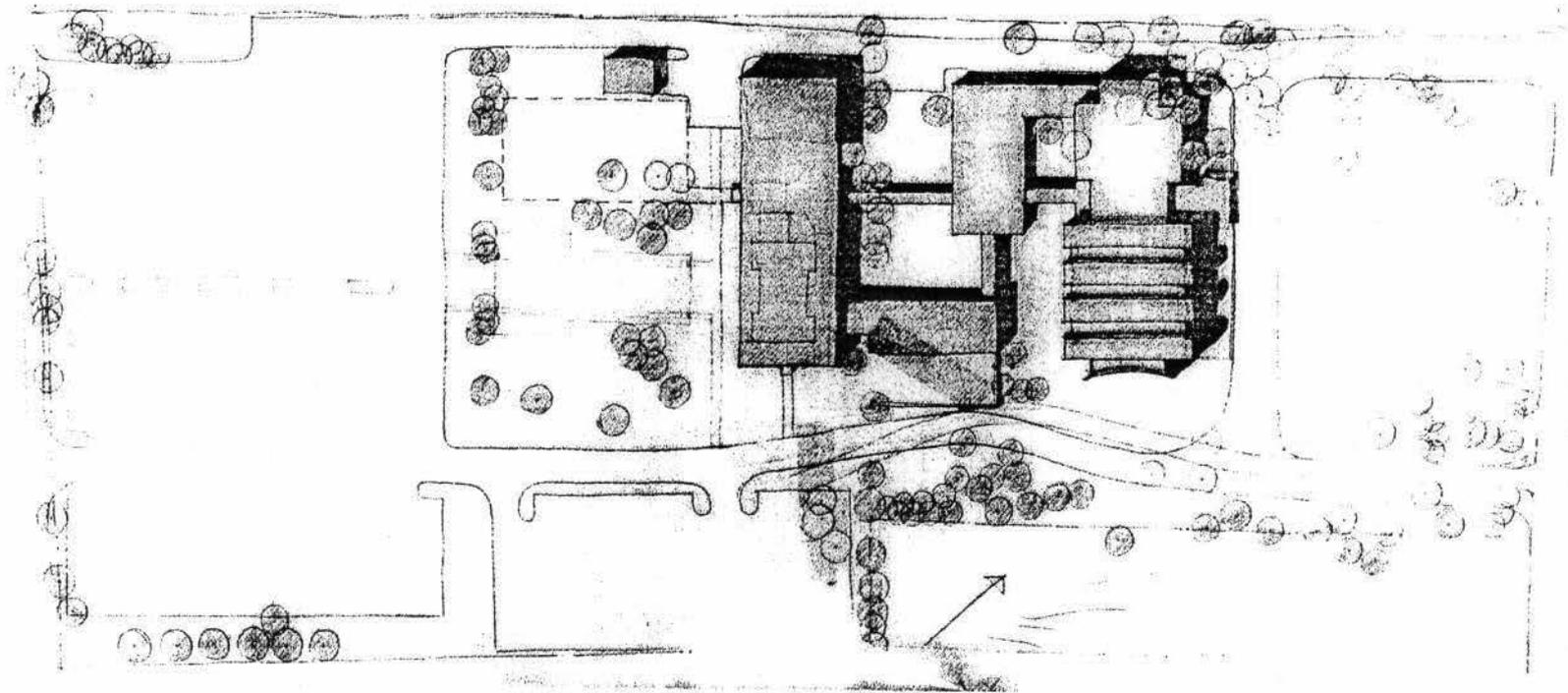
B-73

Plate 9

Temple Oheb Shalom

Rendering of the synagogue complex, showing the east and south
facades.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive*,
Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative
New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 174.



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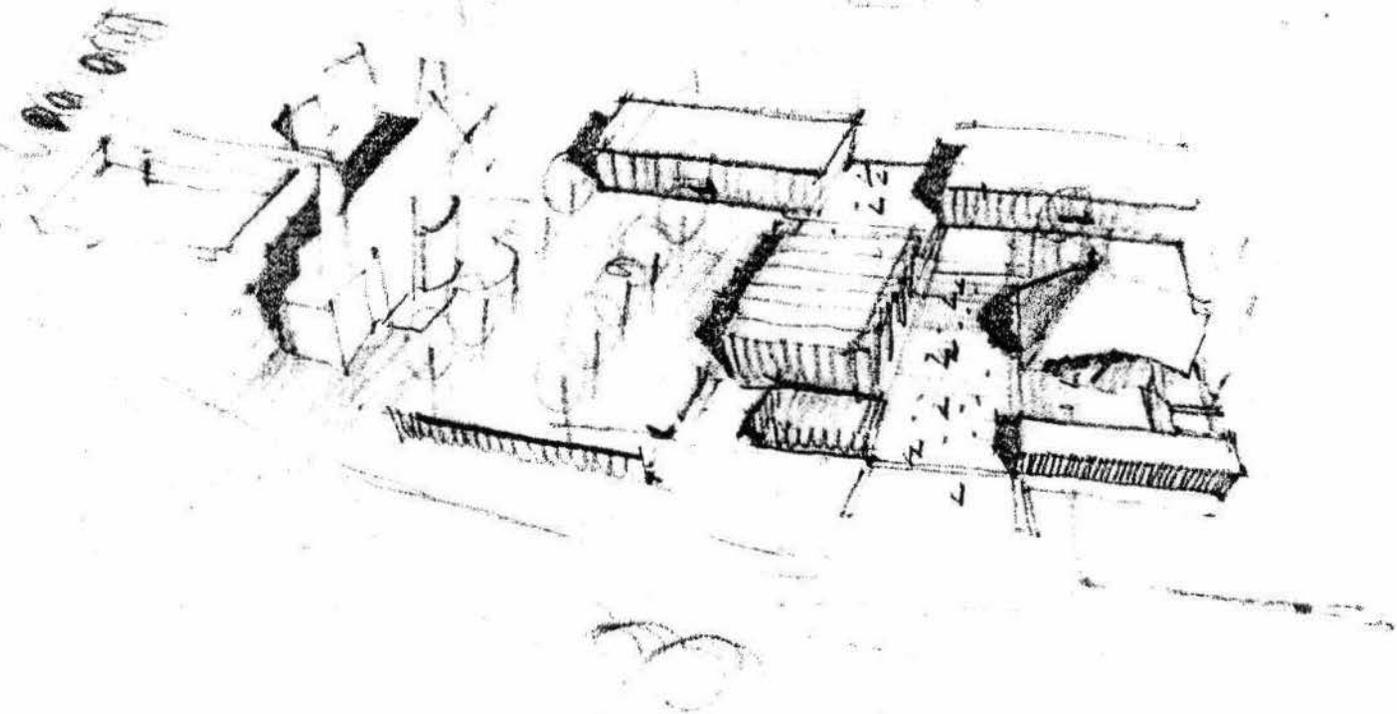
Plate 10

Temple Oheb Shalom

Sketch of the complex plan.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive*,
Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative.

New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 175.



5726.3

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B-13

Plate 11

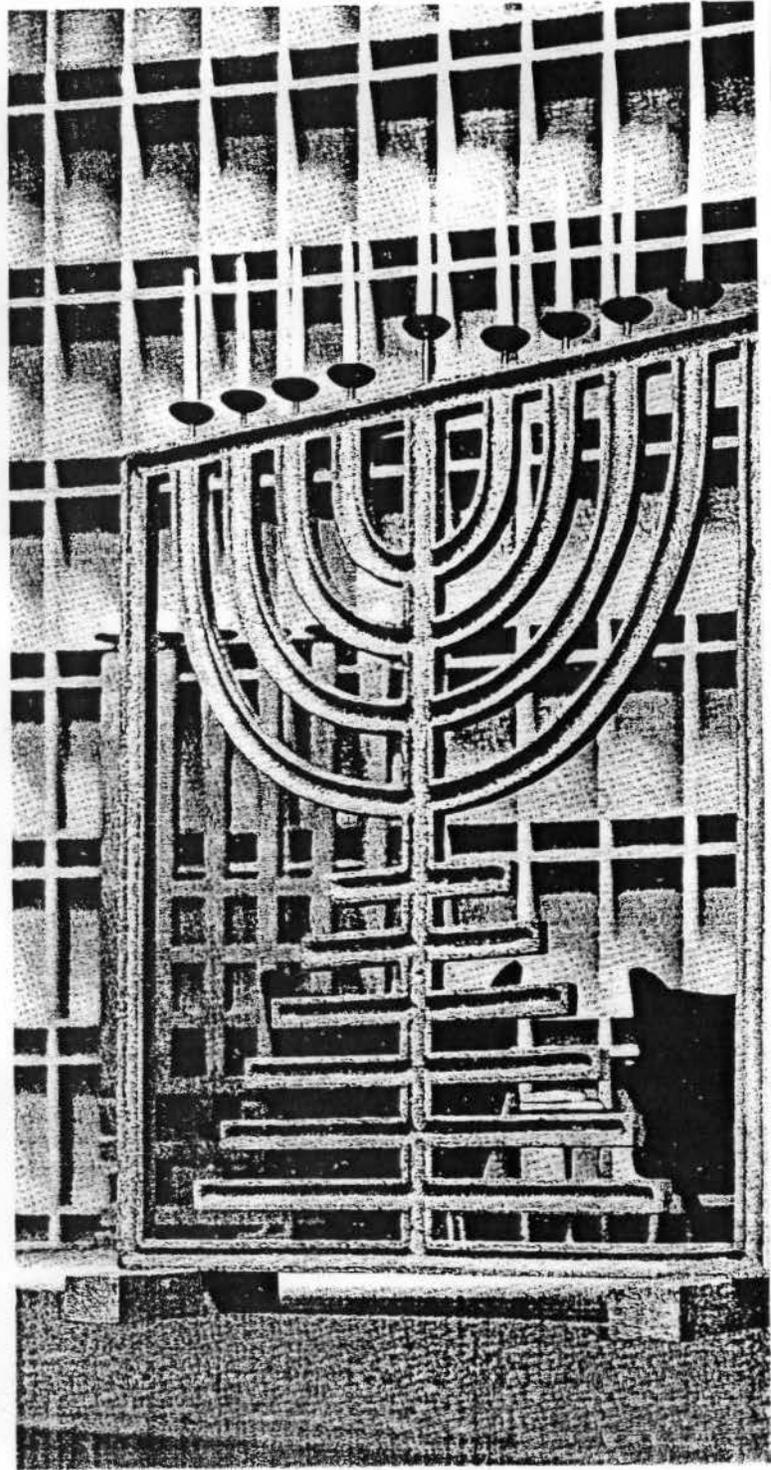
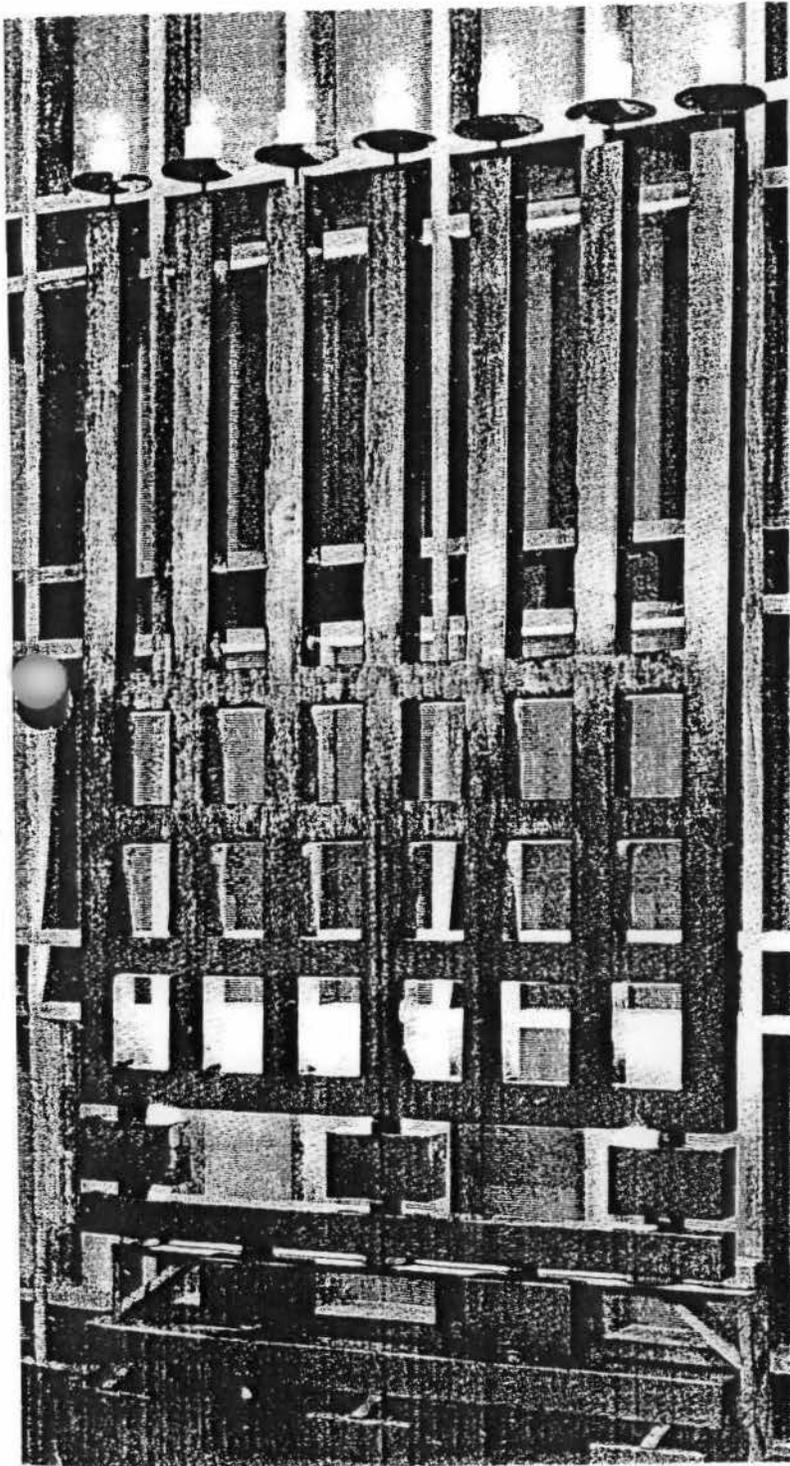
Temple Oheb Shalom

Perspective sketch of the synagogue complex.

Source: Harkness, John C., ed. *The Walter Gropius Archive*.

Volume 4: 1945-1969: The Work of the Architects Collaborative.

New York: Garland Publishing, 1991, 175.



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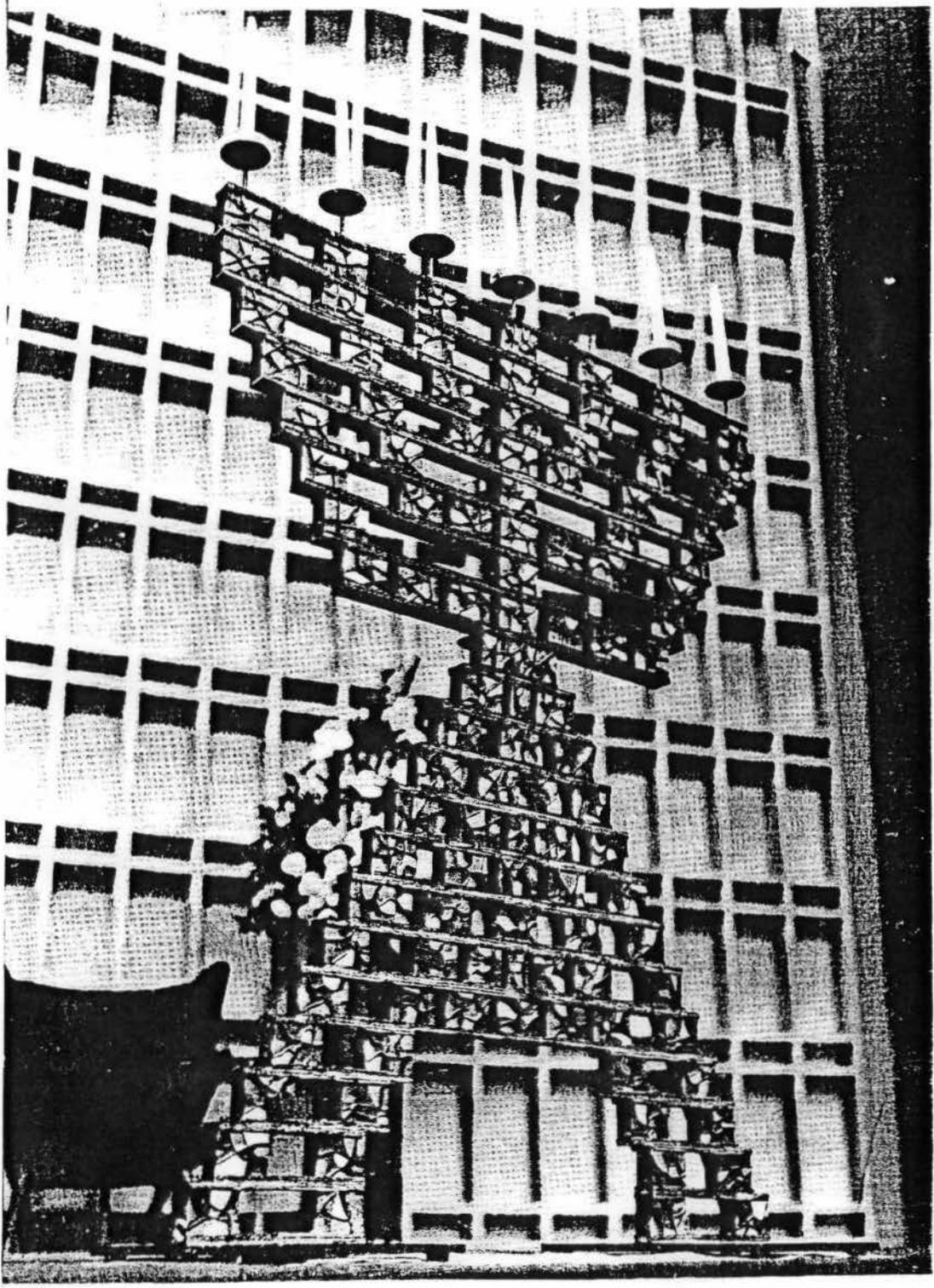
Plate 12

Temple Oheb Shalom

Two menorahs designed for Oheb Shalom by Gyorgy Kepes and Robert Preusser.

Source: Kampf, Avram. *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966, 69.

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B-73

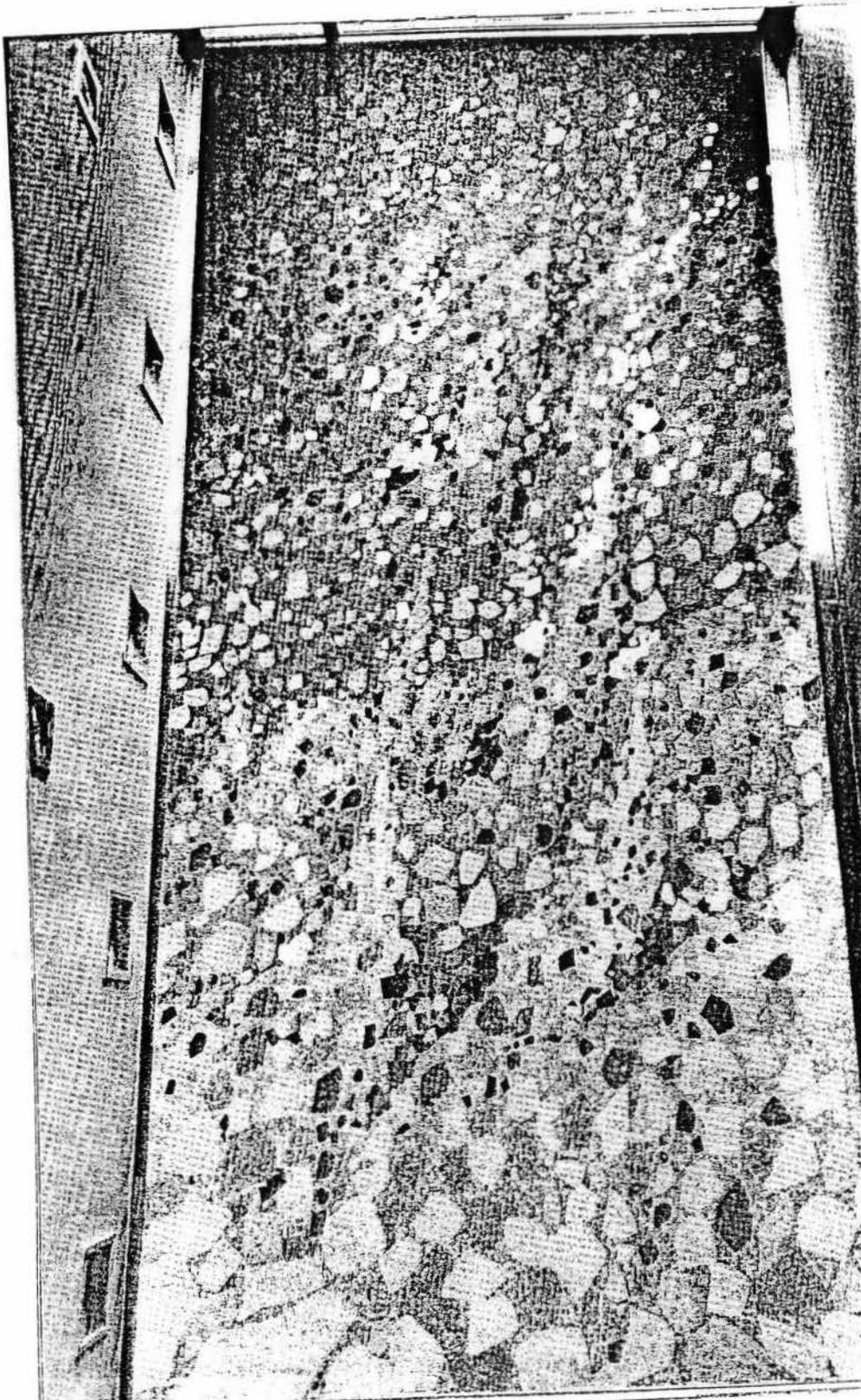
Plate 13
Temple Oheb Shalom
Menorah in the sanctuary, designed by Gyorgy Kepes and
Robert Preusser.
Source: Kampf, Avram. *Contemporary Synagogue Art:
Developments in the United States, 1945-1965*. New York:
Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966. 68.

Plate 14

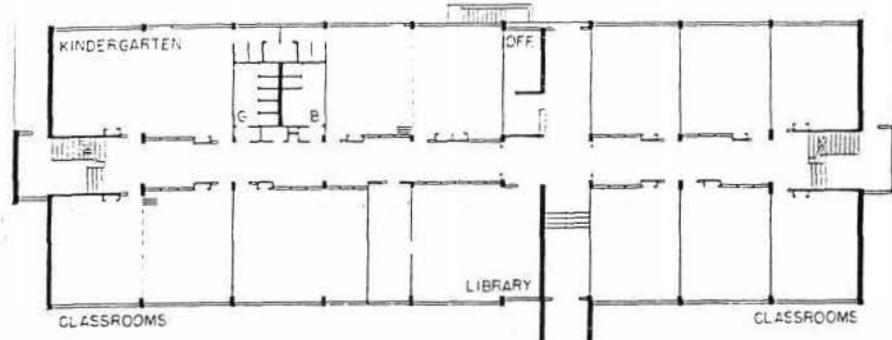
Temple Oheb Shalom

"From Dark to Light." The mural in the lobby of Oheb Shalom, designed by Gyorgy Kepes.

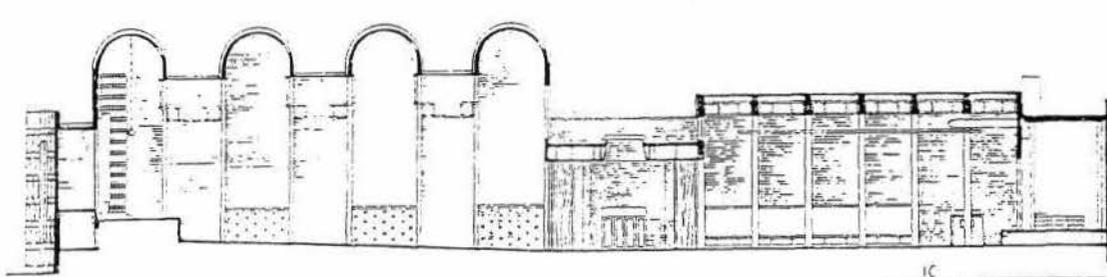
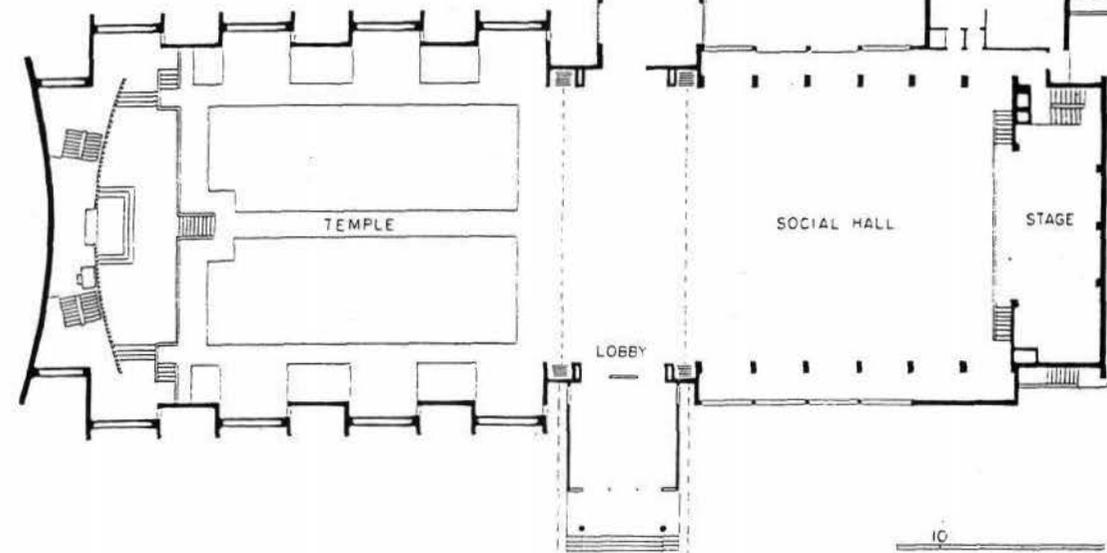
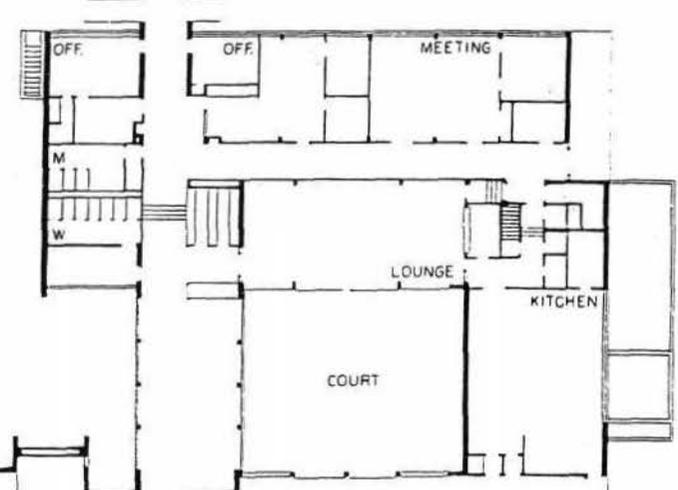
Source: Kampf, Avram. *Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1966, 66.



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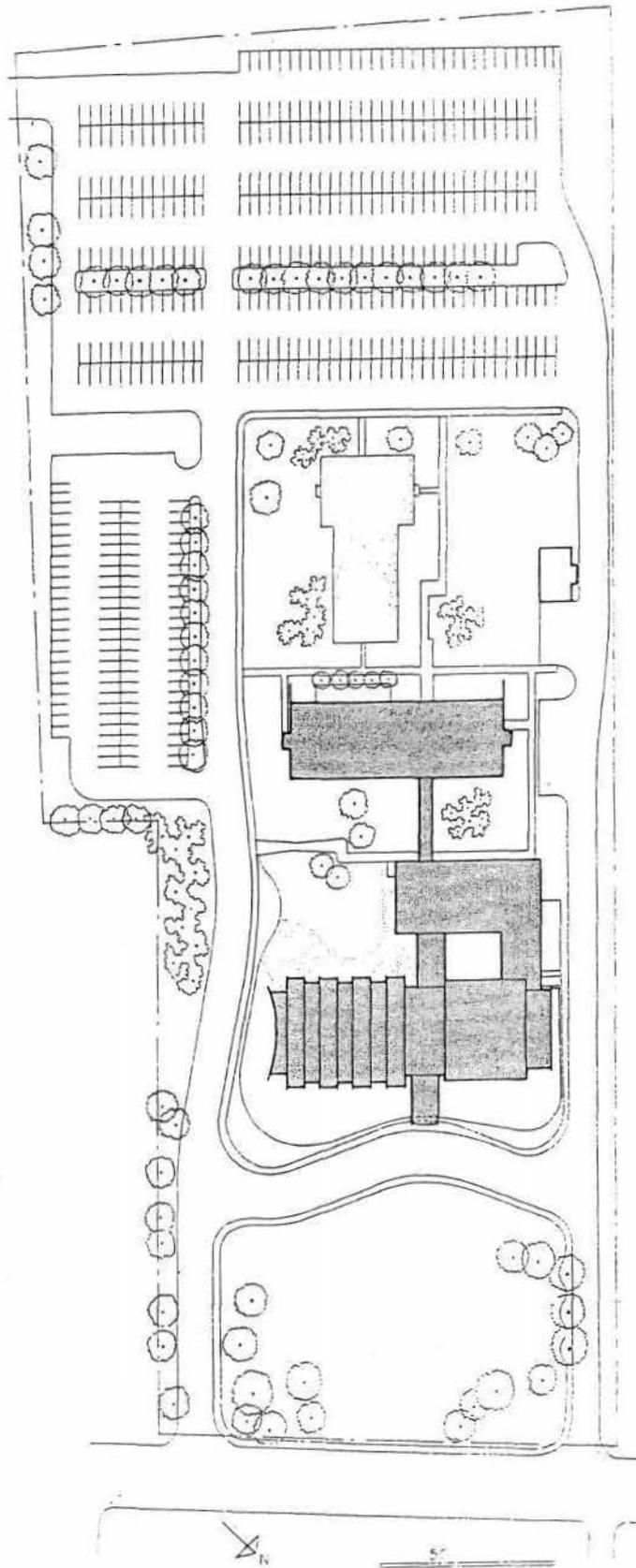
ample sanctuary had to be designed to be no larger than
 ary for the normal services during the year, but with
 its space available for the high holy days. This flexi-
 was achieved by placing the social hall and sanctuary
 same axis and using large folding walnut doors for the
 walls. This permits the transformation of the sanc-
 the lobby and the social hall into one large space 170
 ng, for over 2,000 people, equipped with a public ad-
 system reaching all seats. All parts of the building group
 cessible from the lobby and concourse which, like the
 of the plan, stretches from the main entrance at the
 side to the back of the children's school. As can be
 the section (*below*) the floor rises from the rear of
 etuary to the bema, enhancing the dramatic effect



B-13

Plate 15
Temple Oheb Shalom
Original floor plan of the synagogue complex.
Source: "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record*,
volume 135, June 1964: 151.

B-73



B-73

Plate 16
Temple Oheb Shalom
Original site plan of Temple Oheb Shalom.
Source: "A Big Temple for Baltimore," *Architectural Record*,
volume 135, June 1964: 149.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

B-73





Temple Oheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore MD

B-73

Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2007

Maryland Historic Trust

main facade of the complex facing
Park Heights Avenue

#1



Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD

B-73

Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Primary entrance to the complex, with the rear
facade of the sanctuary to the right

#2



'94 1 1

Temple Beth Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Many Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

South facade of the sanctuary, with the
chapel in the background

#3



'94 1 1

Temple Beth Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

many Combin Sies
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Facade of the administration area, with the mass
of the sanctuary rising in the
background



'94 1 1

Temple Eheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Facade of the Chapel

#5



'94 1 1

Temple Beth Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Gies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Rear facade of the sanctuary, with the
entrance to the complex and the chapel
facade in the foreground



'94 1 1

Temple Beth Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Facade of the school building and the
glass enclosed walkway

#7



Temple Sheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

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April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Extension of the glass enclosed walkway



Temple Beth Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

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April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Interior of the glass enclosed walkway



'94 1 1

Temple Sheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sier

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The rear facade of the two-story education
building

#10



Temple Oneb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

View of the main lobby of the synagogue complex

#11



'94 1 1

Temple Oheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore *City* MD

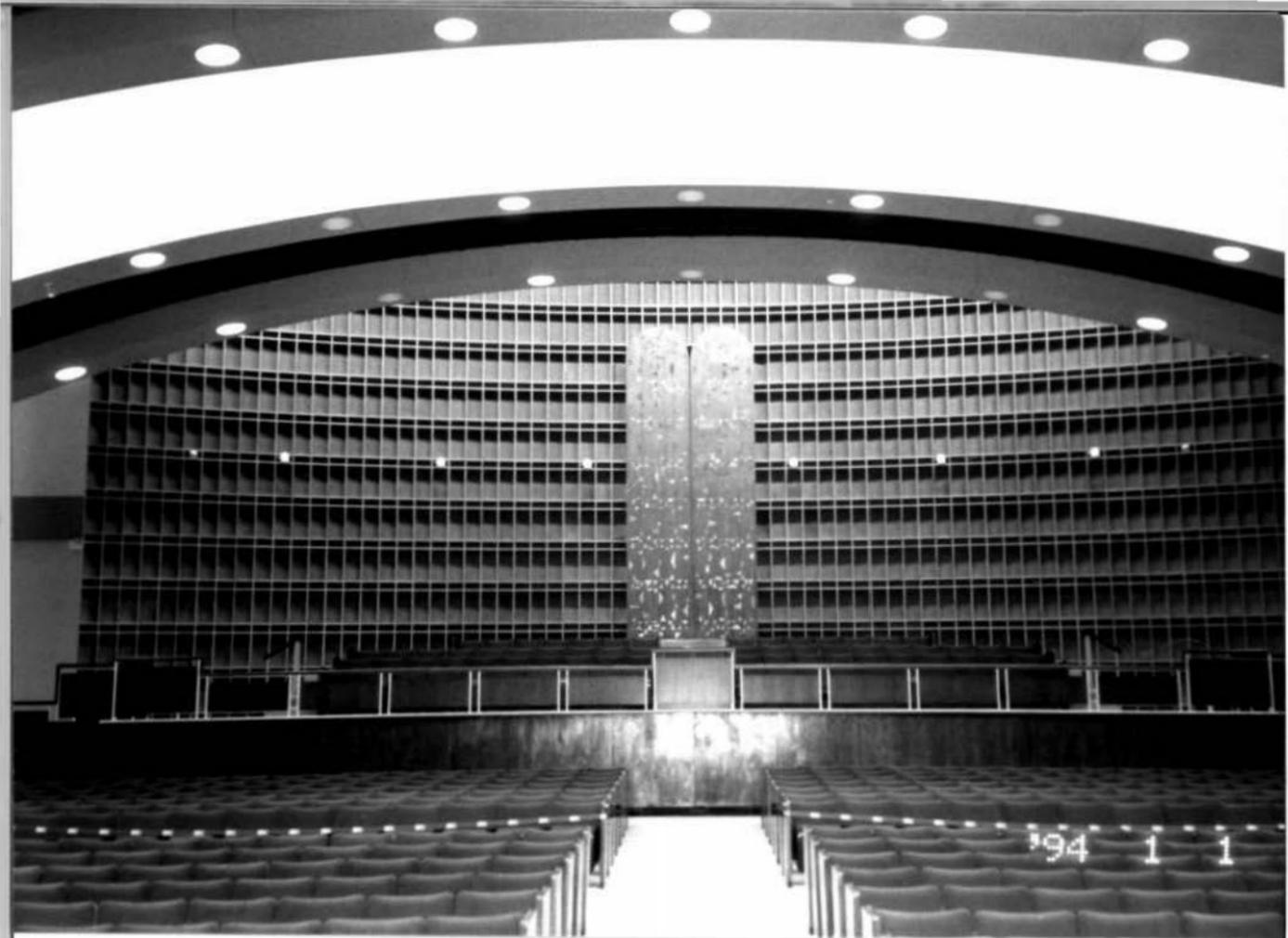
B-73

Mary Corbin Steis
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

View of the front of the sanctuary showing the
stained-glass windows, the bema, and the Ark

#12



'94 1 1

Temple Dheh Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The back wall of the sanctuary, originally
designed by Gropius as the back wall
of the bema.

#13



B-73

Temple Oneb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD .

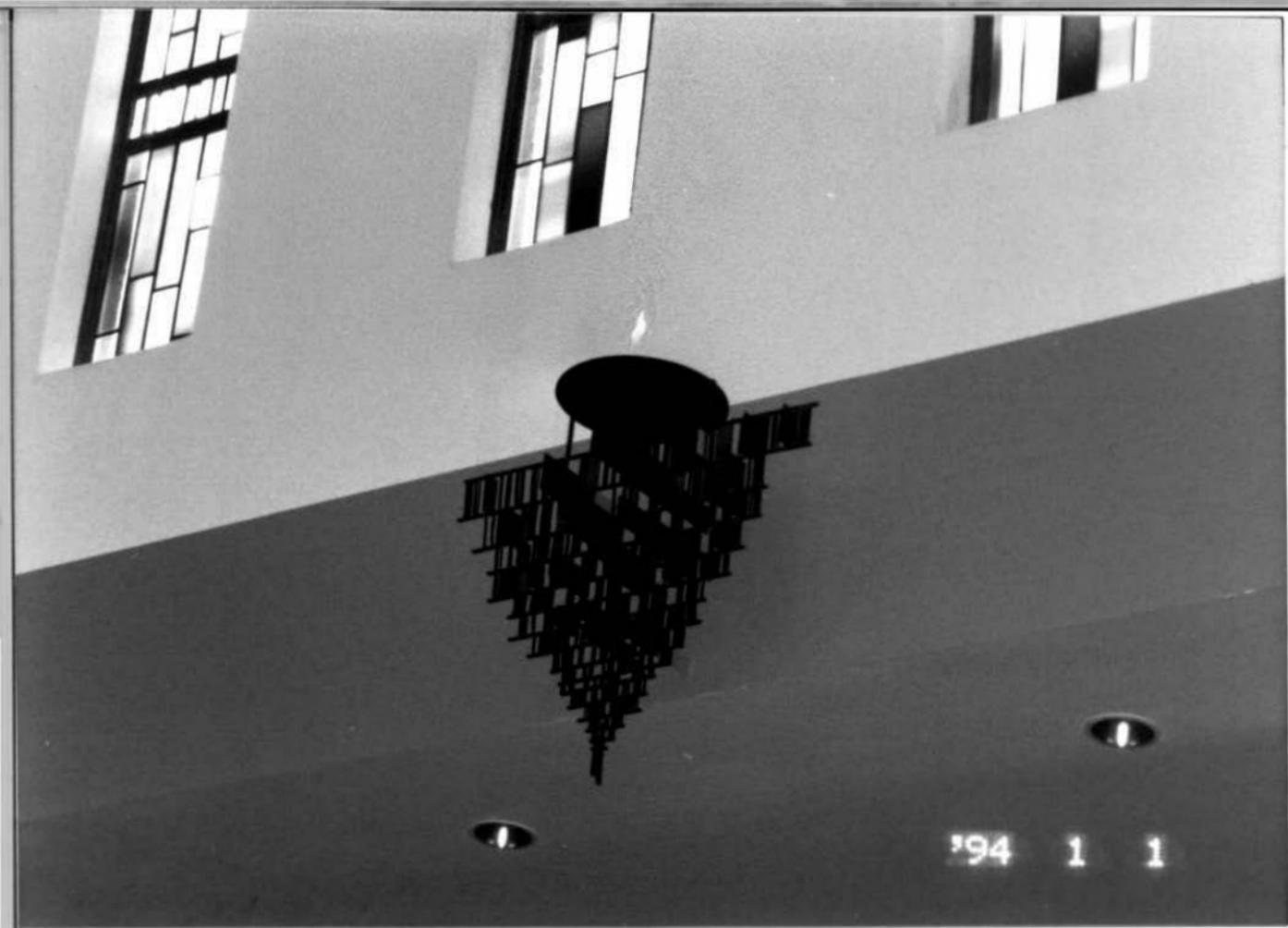
Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The side of the sanctuary with stained-glass windows
and glass panels representing the Jewish
holidays.

#14



'94 1 1

Temple Shev Shalom

B-73

7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Baltimore city, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The Eternal Light, which hangs above the Ark,
designed by Gyorgy Kepes and Robert Prewisser.

#15



1 1 46: '94

Temple Oheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD

B-73

Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The current Ark, situated on the Chapel bema



Temple Oneb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The Chapel, looking towards the bema from
the rear.

#17

1 1 46.



Temple Ohel Shalom

B-73

7310 Park Heights Avenue

Baltimore, MD

Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Tree of Life

Sculpture in the Chapel

#18



'94 1 1

B-73

Temple Ohel Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Fies
April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

The east wall of the social hall.

#19



Temple Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD
Baltimore City, MD

B-73

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Corridor of the education building



Temple B'ne B'nai Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD

B-73

Baltimore City, MD

Mary Corbin Sies

April 2003

Maryland Historic Trust

Typical classroom with waffle-slab ceiling

#21



Temple Oheb Shalom

B-73

7310 Park Heights Avenue

Baltimore MD

Baltimore City

Isabelle GOURNAY

December 2004

Maryland Historical Trust

Education Building from the North

#22

91-2611 (No. 2) 2002
268 1212 - 1 N N-3 16 (0442)



Temple Oheb Shalom

B-73

7310 Park Heights Avenue

Baltimore MD

Baltimore City

Isabelle GOURNAY

December 2004

Maryland Historical Trust

922 2717 1 - 1 N N 2 02 (04429)
PART-2611 (NO. 1 >881

Central Administrative Block shot from

North West

#23.

Goucher College research project

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form may also be used for entering properties into the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and the Maryland Register of Historic Properties.

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Temple Oheb Shalom Synagogue

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 7310 Park Heights Avenue not for publication

city or town Baltimore vicinity

state Maryland code 510 county City of Baltimore code 510 zip code 21208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Temple Oheb Shalom

City of Baltimore

B-73

Name of Property

site/inventory number

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: worship, social and cultural
 Religious School: religious and elementary
academic education

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

~~Religion: Worship, social and cultural~~
~~Religious School: religious and elementary~~
~~academic education~~

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
 walls brick, concrete, glass
 roof vaulted and flat, concrete and glass
 other skylights

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Temple Oheb Shalom
Name of Property

site/inventory number

City of Baltimore, MD
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion and architecture

Period of Significance

late 1950's through 1970 (Post World War II)

Significant Dates

November 18, 1960 --date of occupancy

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Reformed Jewish Synagogue

Architect/Builder

Walter Gropius

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Baltimore Jewish Historical Society and Temple Oheb Shalom

Oheb Shalom Temple
Name of Property

site/inventory number

City of Baltimore, MD
County and State

B-73

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 7 3/4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jareene W. Barkdoll, Environmental Protection Specialist

organization Federal Highway Administration date December 6, 1992

street & number 711 West 40th Street Suite 220 telephone (410) 962-4440

city or town Baltimore, MD 21211 state _____ zip code _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceRegistration Form: include in this title block the
property name, county, and site/inventory numberMultiple Property Documentation Form: include the
name of the multiple property listing

B-73

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore, MD

Description

Temple Oheb Shalom is a concrete and brick International Style Reformed Jewish synagogue complex constructed in 1960 in the northwest residential edge of Baltimore, Maryland. The buildings face north west on Park Heights Avenue, a wide arterial urban highway that is lined with four other major synagogues and numerous other education, social and communities buildings that service a very large Jewish community in the Pikesville neighborhood. Oheb Shalom ("Place of Peace") has been in continuous use for the purposes it was intended since the date of construction. Walter Gropius, consulting architect and a founder of the International style, along with local architect Sheldon Leavitt, and Professor Gyorgy Kepes of John Hopkins University, creator of art work, were employed to design the contemporary complex. Herman W. Berger, Jr. and Charles Maisel of Consolidated Engineering Company was the general contractor for the project. No structural changes have been made and the entire complex appears to be well cared for and in good condition.

Then entire complex is worthy of nomination because of the importance each unit plays in the overall function of the complex as a unit. But clearly the most important architectural element of the total complex is the sanctuary and most of this discussion will be focused on that element. The overall complex is rectangular in shape, sitting far back on a very elongated property totaling $7 \frac{3}{4}$ acres, facing northeast; the sanctuary/entrance/auditorium wing at the front of the building runs east to west. The school building sits to the back of the complex running east to west, with the administration and other buildings located between the sanctuary/auditorium building and the school-- all connected by a long glass enclosed hallway known as the "spine".

Sanctuary. The tall vaulted roof that dominates the one story sanctuary face and back of the brick exterior also dominates the interior. These four vaults span ninety feet across the width of the sanctuary and find their supports in reinforced concrete slab legs at each springing leaving an open space of 83 feet by 90 feet.

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Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 7 Page 2

Description (continued)

On the exterior, between the legs are masonry walls, set alternately at the inside and outside edges giving the enclosing panel walls of the sanctuary a deep rhythm which harmonizes with the roof. The roof of the Sanctuary is composed of flat slabs of concrete* with skylights on the north rises of the roof vaults. Unlike most auditorium style buildings, the sanctuary concrete carpeted floor slants upward. The choir and organ are located at the front of the sanctuary, visually separated from the congregation by a gently curved wood screen that is covered with acoustically transparent grille clothe. The vault skylights and tall vertical deeply-colored stained glass wall panels provide an obscure lighting effect, with illumination focused on the Ark. The wall fenestration is minimal, maintaining a stark simplicity to hold distraction to a minimum and focus attention on the altar and the Ark. The 1,100 auditorium-style seats are upholstered in deep blue color; the floor carpeting repeats the deep blue.*

The Ark, the most important religious element in a synagogue, is very large-- eight feet wide and twenty feet tall, shaped in the classic form of the Ten Commandments tablets. The doors are walnut veneer and applied with colorful triangular-shaped metals in the shape of the Star of David. Behind the Ark doors, there is a wall of aluminum grille in relief against dark blue velvet lining. The flame is real in the Everlasting Light and has burned continuously, having been brought by torch from the congregation's former Eutaw Place Temple.

Blaustein Auditorium. The general purpose auditorium/social hall is an extension of the sanctuary in a more direct form, made of concrete and brick with a dark gray terrazzo floor. By folding walls back, the auditorium can be opened to the sanctuary to seat an additional 1,000 people, for a total seating capacity of 2,100. A stage and kitchen are located on the ground floor of the auditorium to the back, with boiler and equipment rooms, dressing rooms and storage rooms in the basement-- serviced by a hydraulic elevator at the right side of the auditorium. An entrance and lobby separate the auditorium from the sanctuary. A concourse, or "spine", connects the auditorium to the Brotherhood Lounge that contains a counter and beverage bar and which can be closed off with walnut wood doors. A Memorial Garden is available to the right by sliding glass doors, with a service entrance at the left end.*

*to be confirmed on a field visit

United States Department of the Interior
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name of the multiple property listingNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 7 Page 3

Description (continued)

Administrative Space. A smaller building behind the sanctuary, also accessible by the "spine", contains the Rabbi's study and general office, the Board Room and the Cantor's office. This building exterior is brick with decorative four concrete arches facing the east, echoing those of the sanctuary.

Religious Education Building. This is a typical rectangular two-story red-brick elementary school with a basement, housing twenty three classrooms and a library. This building is also serviced by the "spine".

Other Building and Playground. There is an obscure additional building on the campus that appears to be an older brick garage that is a remnant of the home that formerly occupied the property. It is assumed that this garage now contains the equipment necessary to care for the expansive lawns and trees.* A slightly sunken

garden sits directly behind the school, fenced by a low brick wall and a grape arbor (also from a former time). The garden now encloses a playground.

A tremendously large parking lot sits to the very back of the complex, with smaller lots to each side of the back buildings. An extensive system of paved driveways and pullout areas attest to the fact that almost all members of this congregation arrive via an automobile. Oheb Shalom can provide parking for _____ automobiles at one time.

Art Pieces. In addition to the artistic religious items in the sanctuary already discussed, there are several very attractive art pieces on the complex. The traditional tablets of the Ten Commandments are repeated on the exterior east curved concrete wall of the sanctuary in a large mounted aluminum sculpture. A bronze statue of a caring adult and child sits on the lawn on the east side of the school building. There are subtle etchings of the activities that take place in this complex on the windows that wall the "spine" that runs through the center of the complex.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceRegistration Form: include in this title block the
property name, county, and site/inventory numberMultiple Property Documentation Form: include the
name of the multiple property listingNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 8 Page 1Temple Oheb Shalom
Baltimore, MD

Statement of Significance

Temple Oheb Shalom, Baltimore, MD, is historically significant for its association with Walter Gropius, famous architect of the International Style of Architecture. The design of the building, the materials and technology employed in the construction of the synagogue, and the marriage of the underlying philosophies of Gropius' International Style and the beliefs and traditions of the Oheb Shalom congregation unite to create a place of worship and allied activities that is both representative and an exemplary example of an important style of architecture.

Historical background and significance:

Walter Gropius came to prominence in 1919 as a founding director of Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany. It was there that the Modern School of Architecture derivative--the International Style, evolved embracing the technological culture from which it sprang. The style was revolutionary in its day, approximately 1920 through the early seventies, because it totally departed from the accepted norms of architecture long accepted in Europe and emulated in the United States. Basic underlying tenets of the International Style are that all design should be approached through a systematic study of needs and problems, taking into account modern construction materials and techniques without reference to previous forms or styles. Gropius maintained that architectural design should express a psychological point of view through use of form, color, texture, light and movement, and above all else-- design should be based on function. Industrial and public buildings were the best and most frequent expressions of his International Style design.

Rising Nazi fervor forced Gropius from Germany in 1933. After a few years in England, he became chair of the Architecture

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Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 8 Page 2

Statement of Significance (continued)

Department at Harvard University in 1937, staying until 1952. In 1946 he became associated with the Architecture Collaborative, in the company of a group of his former Harvard students; an association which lasted until his death. Within his circle, he was considered to be a man of visionary zeal and practical ambition.

Gropius' concepts and philosophy of design were a perfect fit with Oheb Shalom congregation's perception of the synagogue they desired to build in the northwestern residential Baltimore in the late 1950's.

Founded in 1853, Oheb Shalom had twice been forced to move the location of their synagogue to remain close to its congregation. The outward migration from the urban center by the Jewish community following World War II was not unlike that of all other Baltimoreans who had the means to obtain a more desirable residential environment. Oheb Shalom was the last of the five major sister synagogues (all off-shoots from Baltimore's first synagogue-- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation) to leave their "uptown" location. Oheb Shalom's 1892 vintage synagogue at Eutaw Place and Lanvale Street was considered to be the most gorgeous Jewish edifice in town in its day and synagogue leaders were understandably reluctant to abandon it. But their congregation, particularly the younger members, had moved to the residential fringe of the city and the uptown neighborhood surrounding their synagogue had become badly deteriorated. It was clearly "move to the suburbs or perish". All five of the aforementioned synagogues are now located within blocks of one another on Park Heights Avenue (sometimes referred to as a prosperous Jewish ghetto), placing Oheb Shalom within three to ten miles of seventy percent of its congregation at that time.

Since Oheb Shalom was being forced to relocate, there was an opportunity to rethink the whole paradigm as to what was an appropriate synagogue design to meet the contemporary religious, cultural and social needs of the Oheb Shalom community. Values emphasizing suburban family/youth focus reached their peak of prominence in the 1950's. Having now been in America a century, members of Oheb Shalom were comfortable with their place in Baltimore society and they were eager to share the good life in the suburbs. In Post World War II, American suburban synagogue

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Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 8 Page 3

Statement of Significance (continued)

architecture began reflecting middle-class suburban values through the following assumptions-- that (1) religious affiliation was the important social mechanism for adapting to the new lifestyle of the automobile suburbs, (2) the need to ease a sense of rootlessness endemic to all American suburbanites, (3) a means for transmitting traditions to children, (4) social status or aspirations thereto, and (5) an opportunity to represent the eternality of Jewish values in a contemporary fashion.

Reformed Jewish congregations logically took a leading role in the architectural development of the suburban synagogue. From its origins, this movement had sought to define the Jewish faith within an American societal context. Oheb Shalom congregation had long been an important leader in redefining the American Jewish Reformed faith and culture. It is not surprising that this particular congregation would be in the forefront of merging the tenets of their religion with the International Style of architectural design. It was the perfect marriage for that day.

The primary design criteria of a Reformed synagogue interior of that day was that the design should incorporate special lighting, wood, and new forms of religious art to place an important emphasis on the Ark and define the building as synagogue. Previously, American synagogue designs were, in large part, merely retrofitted churches. With this new understanding of synagogue design, it was determined that an auditorium style of building better suited Jewish worship. An expandable sanctuary provided the multifunctionalism desired, allowing the social hall to provide additional seating for worship on high holy days by linking the two with moveable walls. This combination of sanctuary and social hall was an appropriate expression of the Reformed philosophy stressing less separation of the sacred and the mundane and prevented overbuilding. These social halls were considered the heart of the "new" synagogue. The concept that Judaism, although a religious tradition, was also "a way of life" was set in motion in these social halls. These halls invariably included a kitchen and a stage, and were/are used for a wide variety of activities ranging from formal banquets to school assemblies. Important Reformed political and cultural positions of the day have evolved from discourse that took place in social halls.

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Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 8 Page 4**Statement of Significance (continued)**

The adjoining religious school provided the vehicle for passing on to children their religion and instruction in the Hebrew language, Jewish history and culture. Key to the ultimate acceptability of a synagogue design, especially to a congregation that no longer adhered to the necessity of walking to worship on the sabbath, was the ability to accommodate the automobile-- the linchpin of suburban life.

This discussion of "the suburban synagogue" of the late 1950's very accurately defines the anticipated functions of the synagogue complex that Oheb Shalom congregation aspired to build. Gropius worked with congregational leaders to define the functional expectations of their building design through the process of articulating congregational needs and expectations.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Clearly the building Gropius designed for Temple Oheb Shalom is a textbook example of the above description of a suburban synagogue, as well as a fine expression of International Style architecture. In approximately the same period that Temple Oheb Shalom was being designed and built, two other Baltimore synagogues were building new complexes on the suburban fringe of the city in the International Style. It was a number of years later before Baltimore Christian churches were sufficiently bold to build their houses of worship in the International Style of architectural design. Many believe the other two synagogues are more beautiful than Oheb Shalom and that may be true. However, Oheb Shalom is the more important of the three because of its association with the important architect of that day, Walter Gropius-- a founder of the International Style of Architecture.

Aside from the functional plane, Gropius was very much concerned with the psychological dimension of ultimate and total building design. Quoting Gropius from his address at the dedication of Temple Oheb Shalom, "Here begins the realm of architecture, which is to give form to what stands behind our practical daily activities: our ardent desire to search for the meaning and

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B-73

Section number 8 Page 5

Statement of Significance (continued)

purpose of life. A temple should induce in us a receptive, contemplative state of mind; it should promote meditation; it should lift our thoughts onto a spiritual plane."

Verbal boundary description

Five lots of ground-- Lots Nos. 3380 and 3725 in the City of Baltimore, and Lots Nos. 290, 216 and 566 in Baltimore County. Located in the interior of a long and very deep block on the south side of Park Heights Avenue, bounded by Seven Mile Lane to the east and Park Village Street to the west, containing seven and three-fourths acres of land, more or less.

Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel associated with the Temple Oheb Shalom complex, with the exception of the garage which appears to be a remnant of the former land occupant.

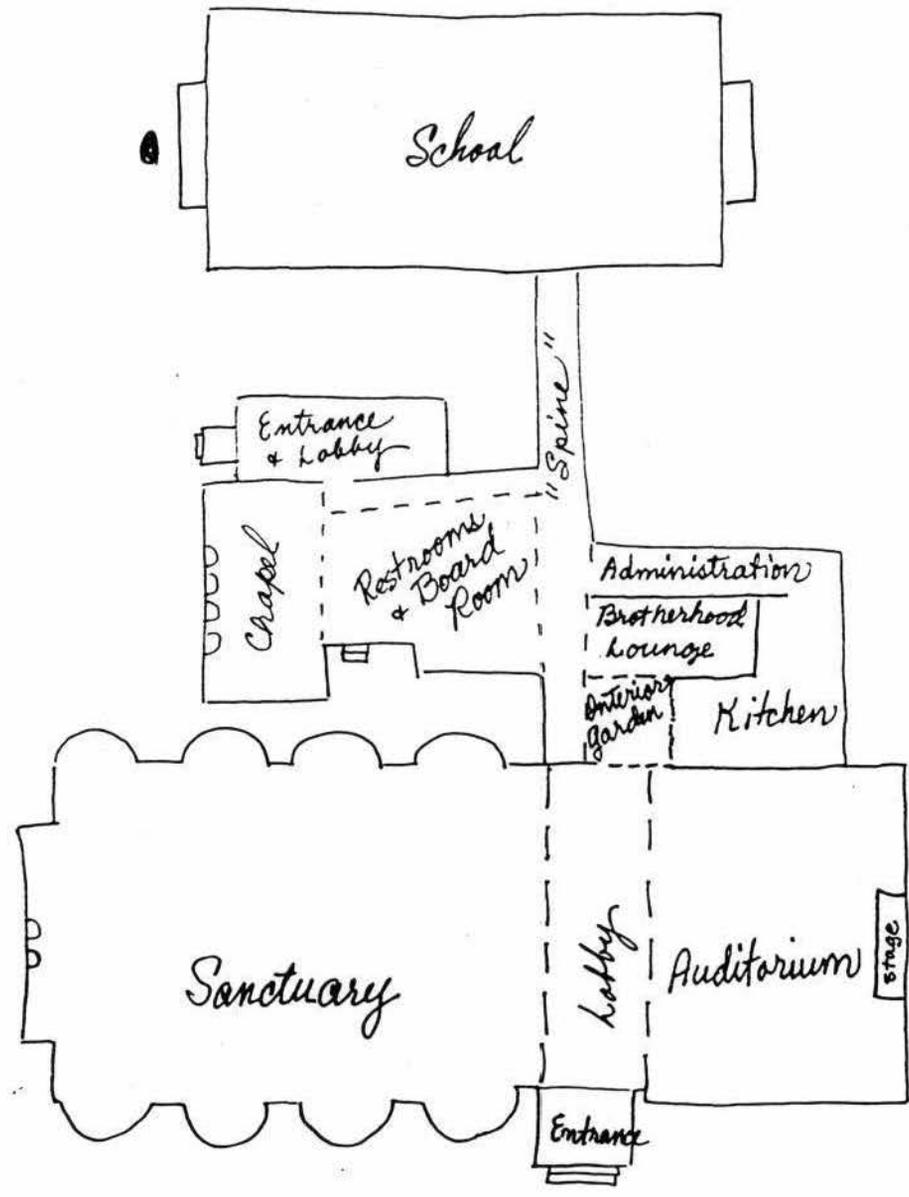
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Continuation Sheet

B-73

Section number 9 Page 1

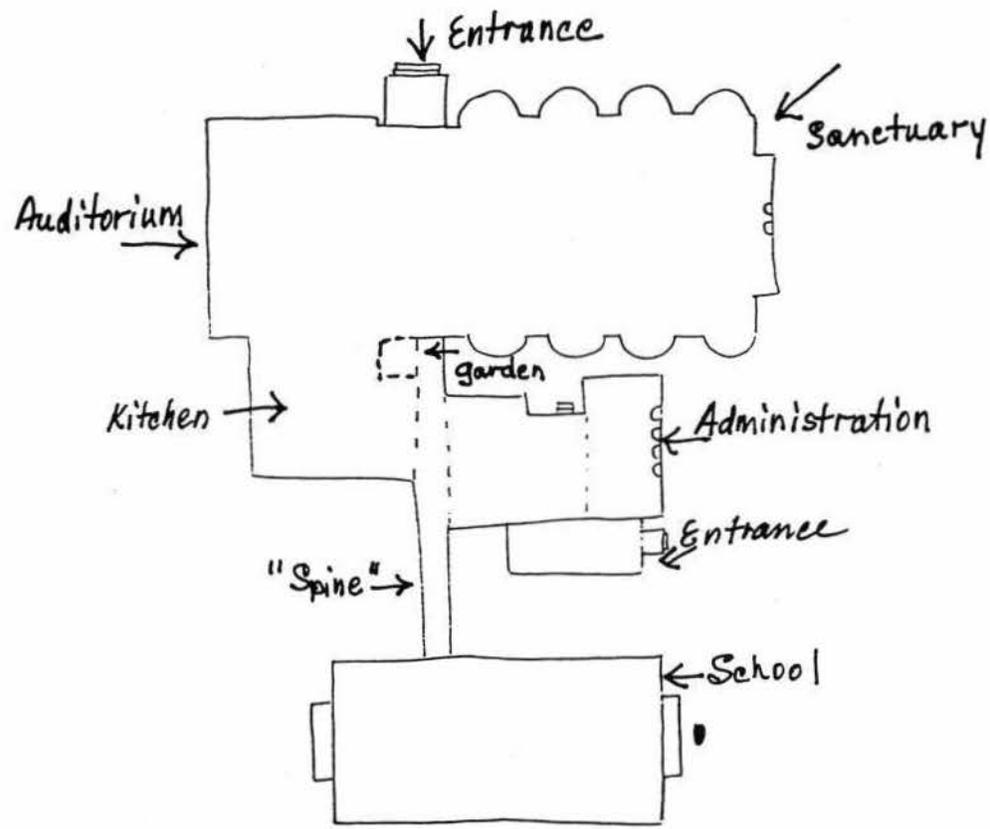
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- Interview with Barnard Fishman, Director of the Baltimore Jewish Historical Society, November 3, 1992. (not recorded)
- Interview with John McGrain, Community Development Department, Director of Housing Rehabilitation, Baltimore County, November 2, 1992. (not recorded)

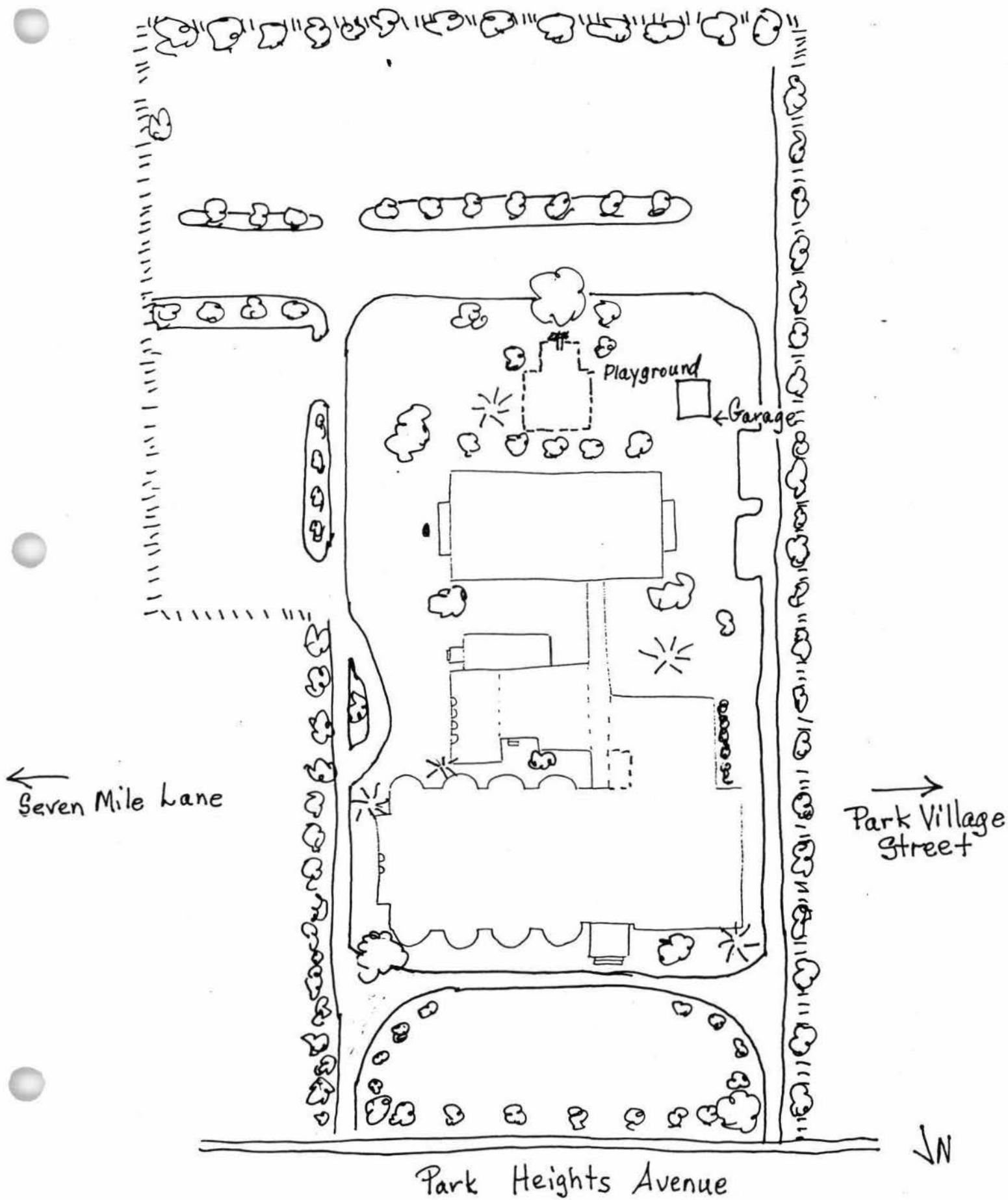


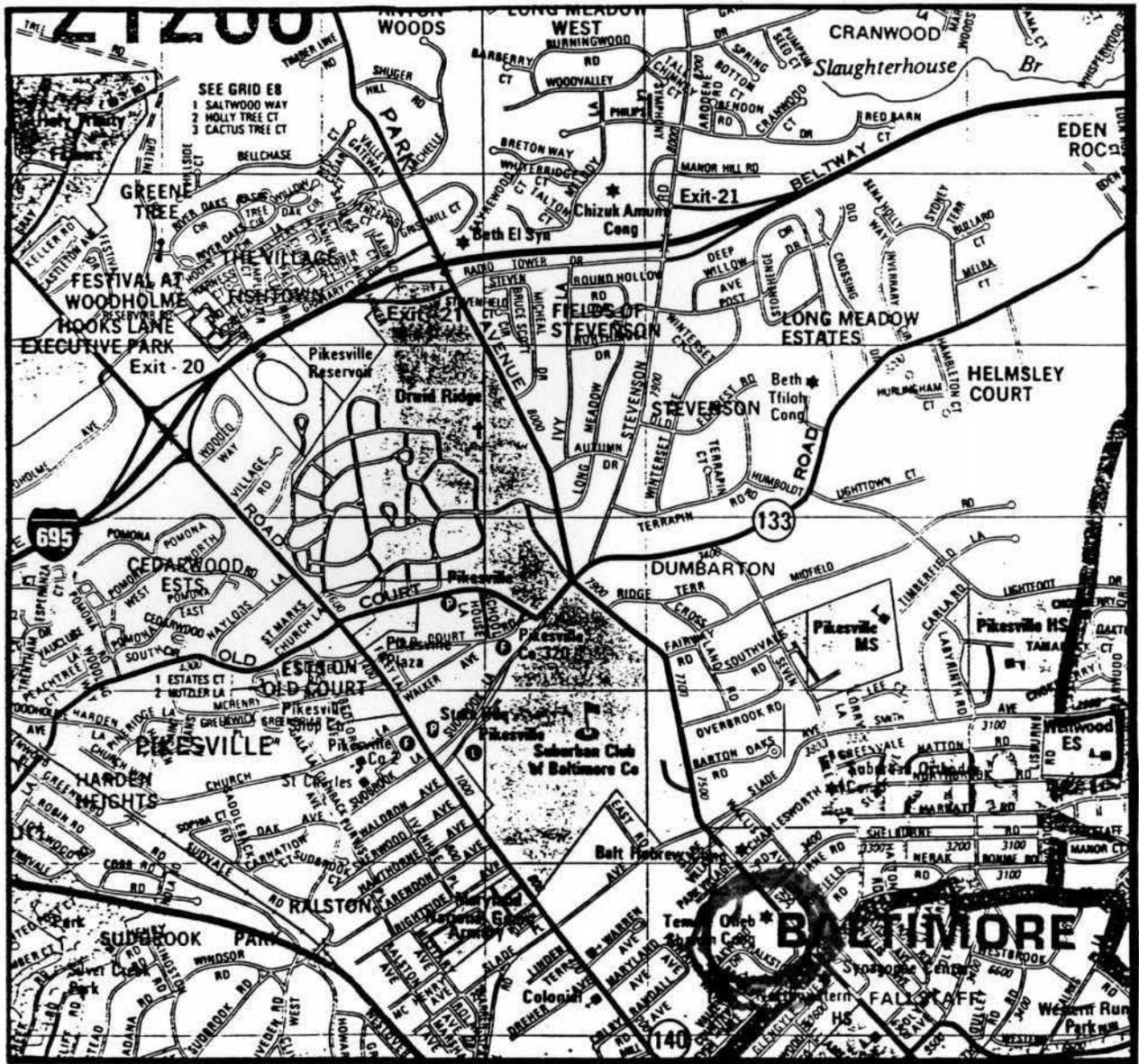
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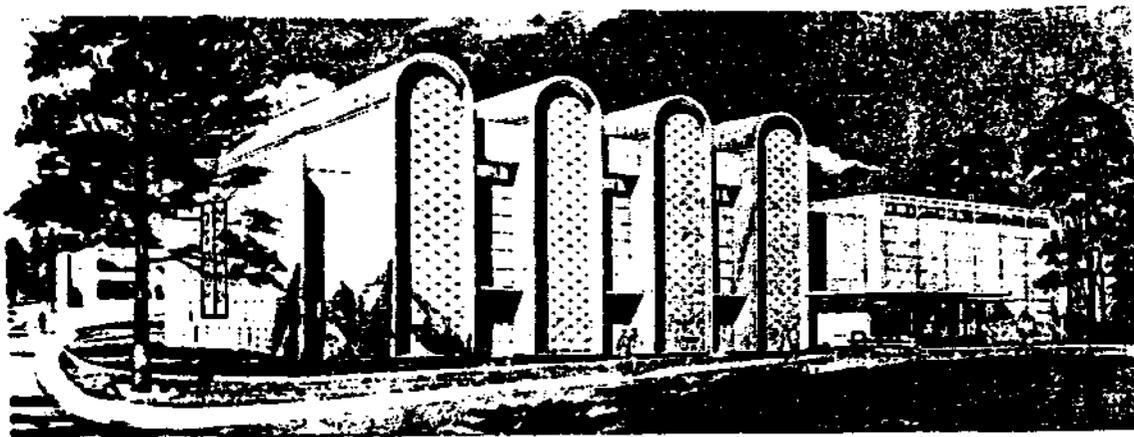


Temple Oheb Shalom
7310 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland

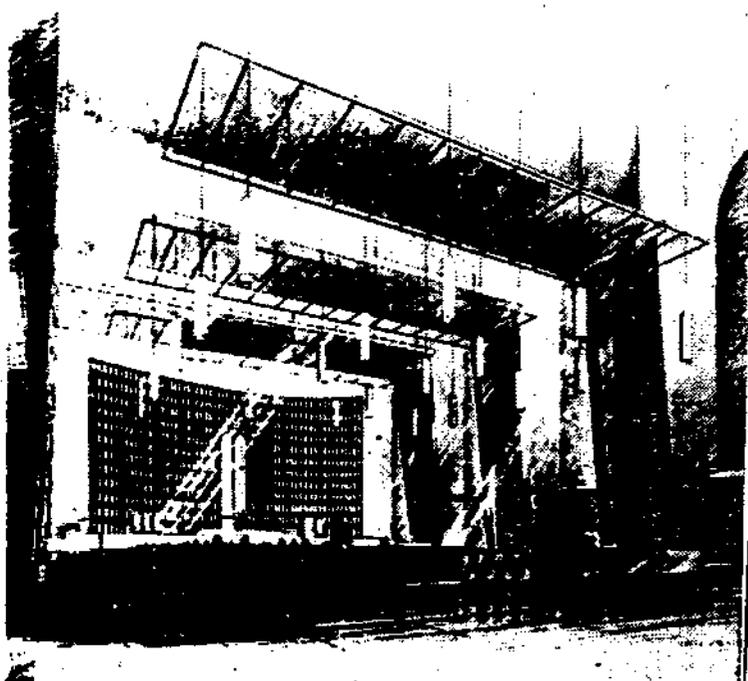




Scale: 1" = 2000'

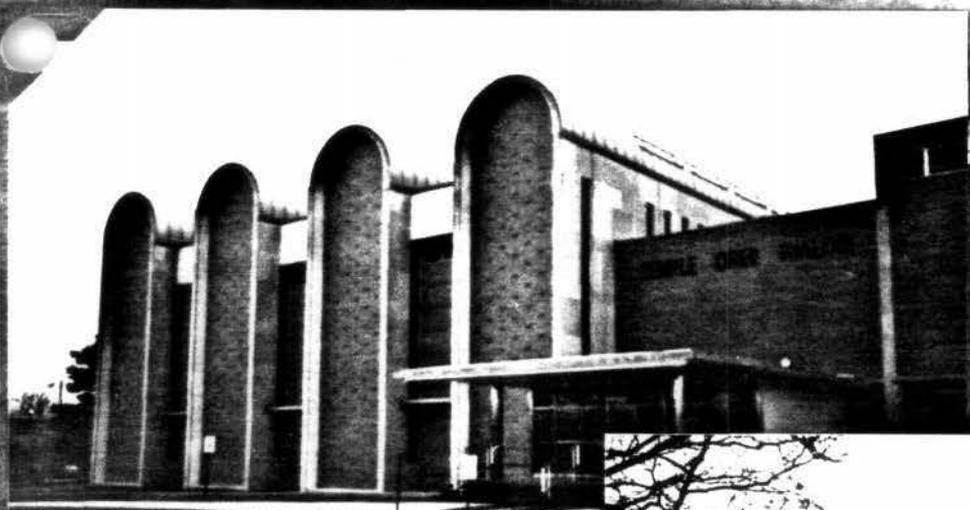
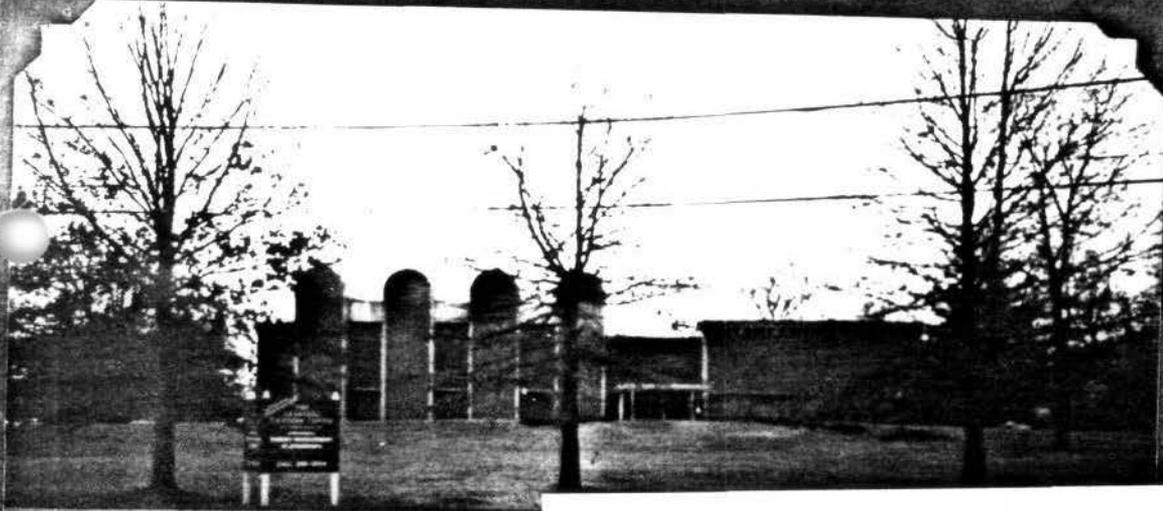


1. Temple Oheb Shalom
2. City of Baltimore
3. sketch and photo copies from brochure
4. December 1992 (vintage 1960)
5. Federal Highway Administration
6. Front facade looking northeast
- 7.



1. Temple Oheb Shalom
2. City of Baltimore
3. sketch and photo copies from brochure
4. December 1992 (vintage 1960)
5. Federal Highway Administration
6. Interior of sanctuary
- 7.

1



B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue
front of Sanctuary & Auditorium 12/92

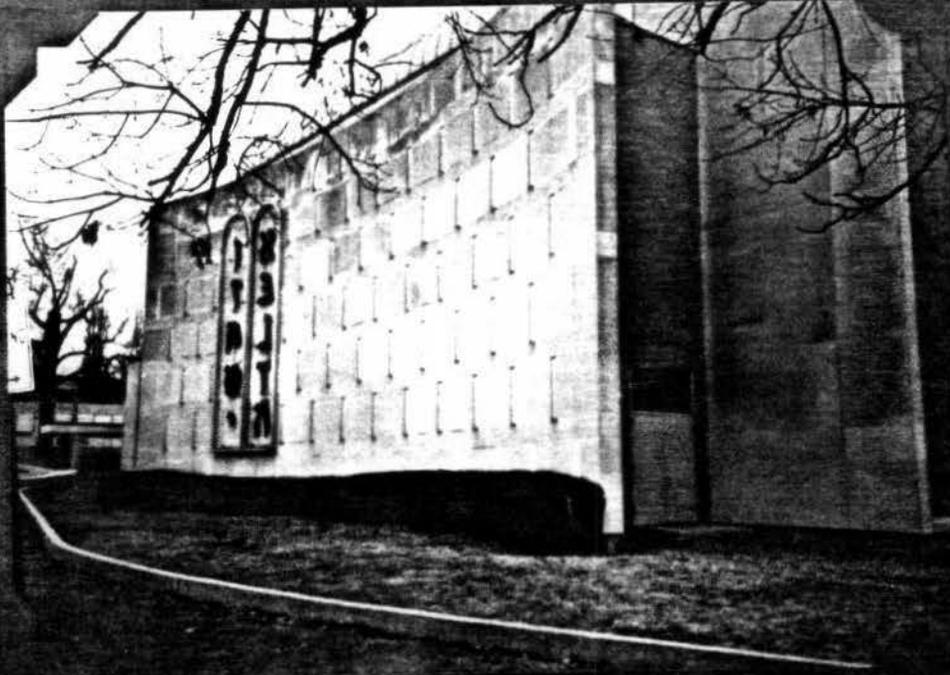
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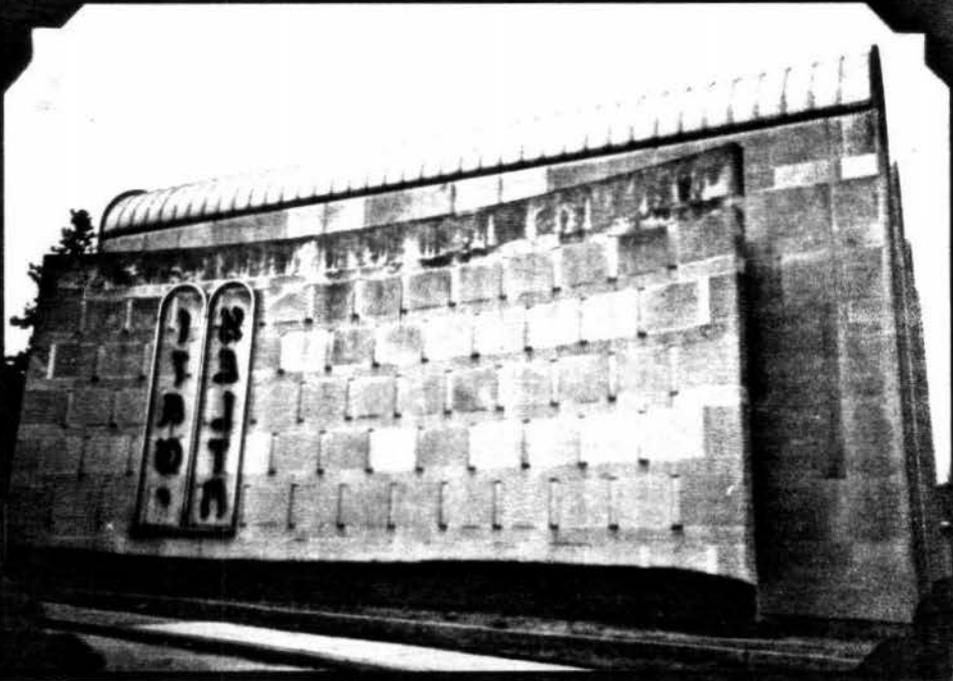
B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom
vault-- front of Sanctuary

12/92

W



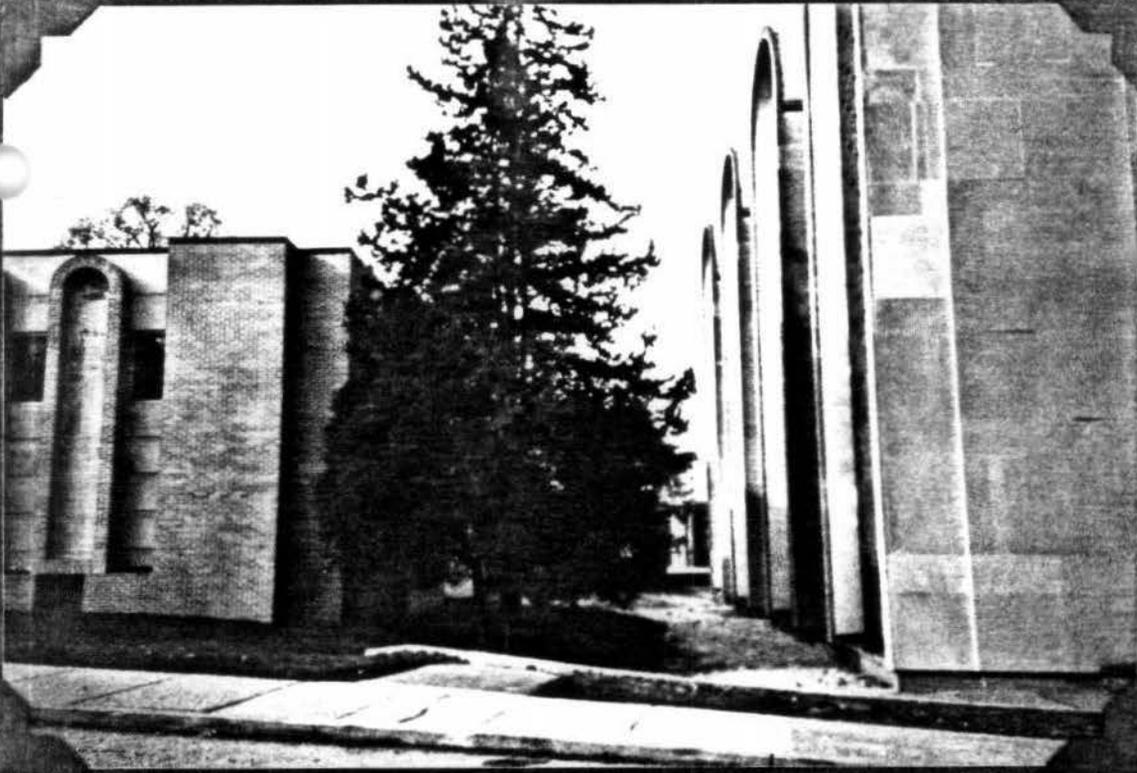
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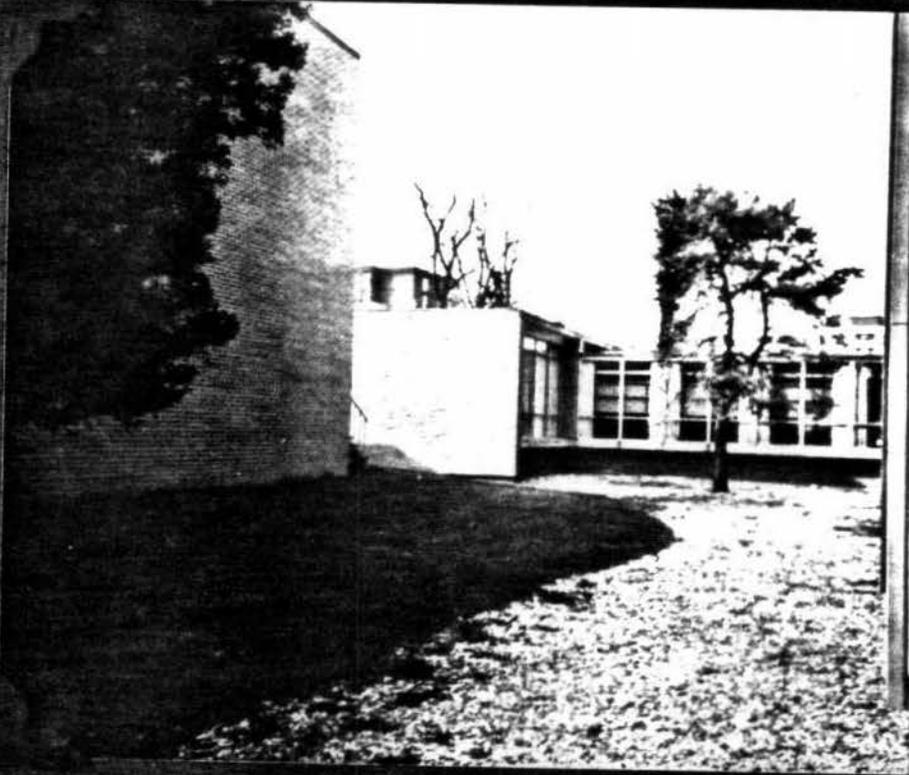
B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue
side and back of Sanctuary 12/92

(Administration Building corner
showing in foreground of bottom
picture)

7E



3



B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue 12/92

(top) back of Sanctuary/front of
Administration Building
(bottom) side of Adm. Bldg. & "spine"

VE



6-73
Temple Oheb Shalom
(top) front & side of Administration
Building

(bottom) same as above with back side
of School showing

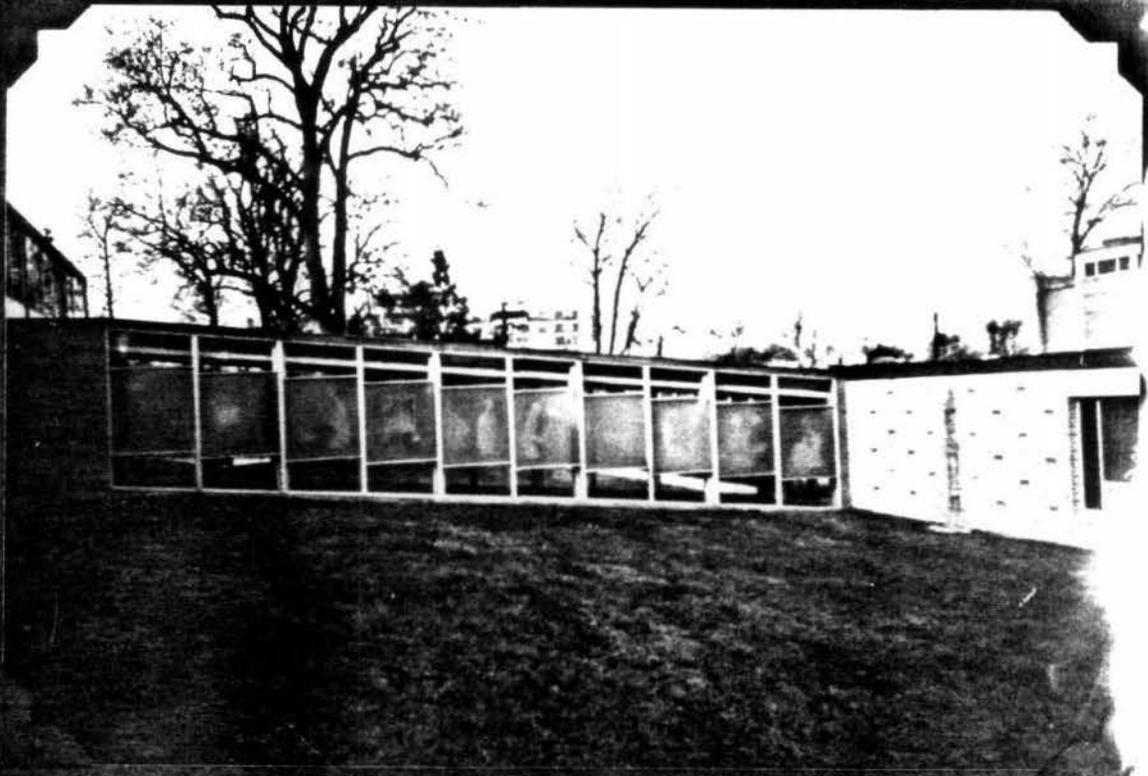
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4



0-73
Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue
sculpture to side of School 12/92

(bottom) "spine" connecting
Administration Building to School
(note etched windows)





V S



B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom
(top) side and back of School
(bottom) Playground

V S

5



↗
W

B-73

Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue 12/92

(top) Garage
(bottom) back side of School and
back of Auditorium

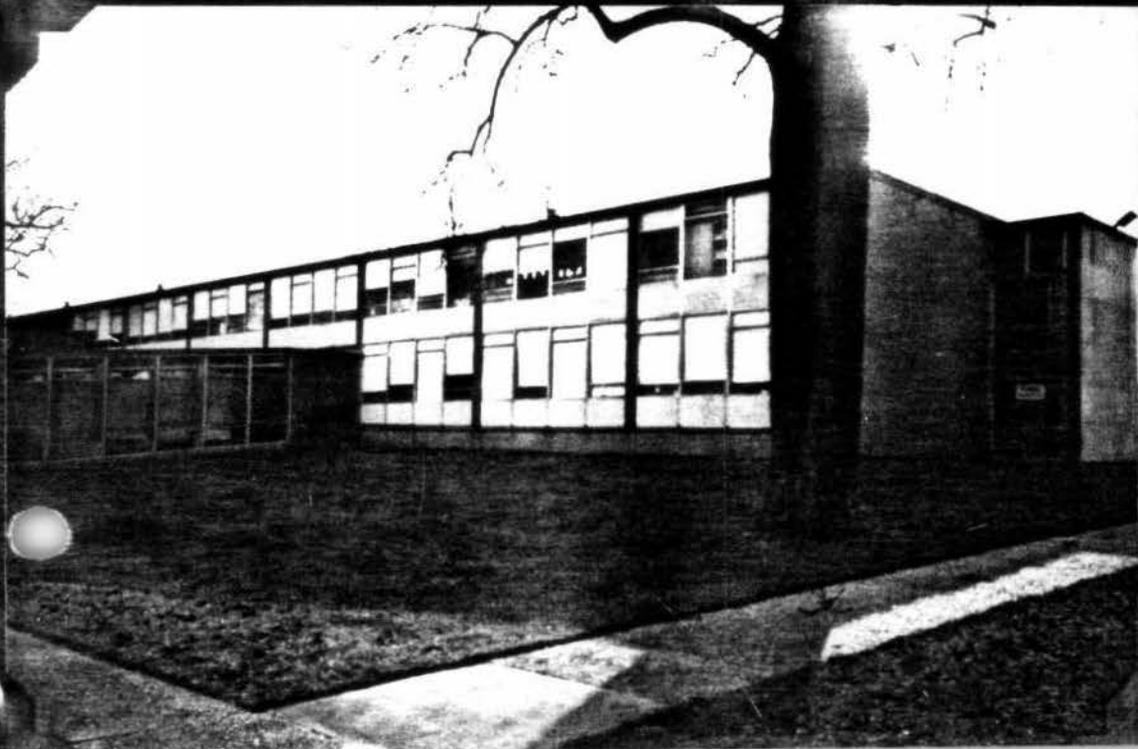
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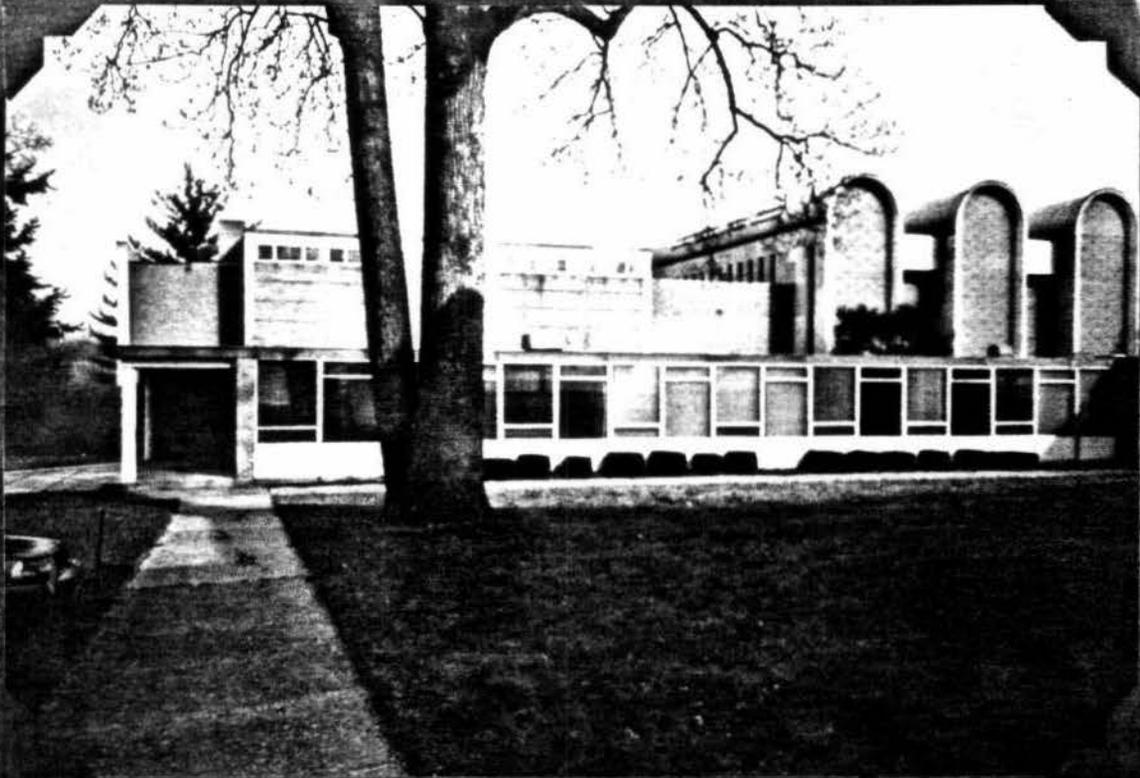


0-73

Temple Oheb Shalom

"spine" between School and Auditorium





6

B-73
Temple Oheb Shalom--Baltimore, MD
7310 Park Heights Avenue
back and side of Auditorium 12/92

7N

