

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: K'nesseth Israel Synagogue
Other name/site number: Congregation K'Nesseth Israel; CKI
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 100 West Sterling Avenue
City or town: Baytown State: Texas County: Harris
Not for publication: [ ] Vicinity: [ ]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[n] 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 [x] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[ ] national [ ] statewide [x] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [x] A [ ] B [x] C [ ] D

Signature of certifying official / Title: [Handwritten Signature] State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 12/27/23
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[ ] entered in the National Register
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

K'Nesseth Israel Synagogue, Harris County, Texas

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### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property:** Private

**Category of Property:** Building

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** RELIGION – religious facility

**Current Functions:** RELIGION – religious facility

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** Modern Movement: Neo-Byzantine

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Brick; Other: Cast stone

**Narrative Description** (see pages 7-12)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** A, C

**Criteria Considerations:** A

**Areas of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage/Jewish; Architecture (local level)

**Period of Significance:** 1930-1974

**Significant Dates:** 1930, 1948

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Gabert, Lenard (architect) / Fortinberry, C. I. (contractor)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see pages 13-45)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see pages 46-50)

**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 (January 31, 2020)
- 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 (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** less than one acre (0.34).

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.734124° Longitude: -94.968072°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The K'nesseth Israel Synagogue boundaries follow the parcel boundaries of Harris CAD Property No. 0500190000030, within the Goose Creek Town Plat, Block 7, Lots 1, 2, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary contains the area historically associated with K'nesseth Israel Synagogue.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: David Moore, Historian  
Organization: HHM & Associates, Inc.  
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Date: September 2023

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see pages 51-53)

**Additional items** (see pages 54-75)

**Photographs** (see pages 76-96)

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**Photograph Log**

All photographs reflect the current appearance of the nominated property.

K'Nesseth Israel Synagogue  
Baytown, Harris County, Texas  
Photographed by Kristina Kupferschmid, May 23, 2022

Photo 1

Oblique of south and east façades with residential buildings to the west. Camera facing northwest.

Photo 2

Oblique of west and south façades with railroad right-of-way to the east. Camera facing northeast.

Photo 3

Oblique of east and north façades of synagogue (left) and community house (right). Camera facing southwest.

Photo 4

Oblique of north and west façades of community house (foreground) and synagogue (background). Camera facing southeast.

Photo 5

Front (south) façade of synagogue. Camera facing north.

Photo 6

Oblique of east and north façades. Camera facing southwest.

Photo 7

Entrance vestibule of synagogue. Camera facing east.

Photo 8

Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.

Photo 9

Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of sanctuary. Camera facing northwest.

Photo 10

Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of sanctuary. Camera facing north.

Photo 11

Detailed view of ark and Palladian motif on north wall. Camera facing north.

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Photo 12

Detailed view of *ner tamid*, Star of David light, and Ten Commandments on north wall. Camera facing northeast.

Photo 13

Interior view of sanctuary showing double-door entrances, memorial plaque, and interior lights at south end of synagogue. Camera facing south.

Photo 14

Detailed view of memorial plaque mounted on south wall of synagogue. Camera facing south.

Photo 15

Detailed view of stained-glass window on east wall of sanctuary. Camera facing east.

Photo 16

Oblique view of south and east façades of community house. Camera facing northwest.

Photo 17

Oblique view of north and east façades of community house. Camera facing southwest.

Photo 18

Interior view of community house with original building in background and partition wall at right that creates separate spaces for restrooms and kitchen. Camera facing southwest.

Photo 19

Interior view of community house showing doorways for restrooms (left) and kitchen (right). Camera facing west.

Photo 20

Interior view of community house showing the free-standing columns in the 1948 addition and other classically inspired wood trim. Camera facing northeast.

Photo 21

Interior view of community house showing the kitchen (left) and mostly open space of the 1948 addition. Camera facing northwest.

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*This project was funded through an Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service that addresses damage inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. In January 2021, NPS staff concurred that this property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*

## **Description**

The K'nesseth Israel Synagogue is a one-story, brick-clad building at the northwest corner of West Sterling Avenue and North Commerce Street in Baytown, Harris County, Texas.<sup>1</sup> Located two blocks from the historic Goose Creek (now Baytown) central business district, the building and its associated community house were built in 1930 to serve the local Jewish population. The Congregation K'nesseth Israel (CKI) property includes lots 1, 2, 21, 22, 23, and 24 in block 7 of the Goose Creek town plat, and the outer limits of this parcel of land delineate the boundaries for the property being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The synagogue is the primary building and focal point of the property. The building, which faces south onto West Sterling Avenue, presents a simply detailed Byzantine Revival design that exhibits modest influences of the Art Deco style. Distinctive physical features include the elaborate brickwork, a broad parapet with a chevron-like band along the top, a series of round-arched openings, and an embedded plaque above the entrance bay with the congregation's name in Hebrew on the front façade. Noteworthy interior features include a barrel-vaulted interior ceiling and a classically inspired ark, the recessed chamber at the front of the sanctuary that contains the Torah scrolls. Both the exterior and interior retain their historic architectural character to an exceptional degree. The ancillary building is a one-story community house that is just north of the synagogue. It, however, has been modified since its original construction. An expansion in 1948 more than doubled its size, but the addition complemented the existing architectural character. The building was severely damaged during Hurricanes Ike and Harvey, and while repairs changed the fenestration and removed some architectural elements, it still retains sufficient historic integrity to be classified as a contributing resource. Overall, the property remains easily recognizable to the period of significance (1930-1974) and conveys a strong sense of the past (Figure 4).

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## **Setting and Site**

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue sits at the northwest corner of West Sterling Avenue and North Commerce Street, just north of the central business district of historic Goose Creek – one of three municipalities (along with Pelly and Baytown) that incorporated in 1947 to become the community now known as Baytown (Maps 1-2). K'nesseth Israel property presently encompasses the easternmost lots of the Goose Creek town plat (Map 3) and includes two buildings: the synagogue and community house. The synagogue is at the south end of the parcel, and the community house occupies the property's north-middle section.

K'nesseth Israel's property fronts onto West Sterling Avenue, a thoroughfare that extends through a predominately residential area with modestly sized single- and multi-family dwellings (Photos 1 and 2). Most of the nearby residences date from the second quarter of the twentieth century and include Craftsman bungalows and other popular domestic architectural forms from the period. The property's east side extends along North Commerce Street, which parallels the right-of-way for the former Dayton-Goose Creek Railroad – now part of the Union Pacific Railroad system (Photo 3). Most of the land between North Commerce Street and the railroad tracks historically featured warehouses, lumberyards, and other buildings used for light industrial purposes; however, almost all of the structures have been demolished over time as the railroad's dominance declined in the postwar era. The property's north side abuts West Wright Avenue, which, like West Sterling Avenue, extends through a residential neighborhood with similar housing stock. A notable exception is

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<sup>1</sup> The Jewish congregation in present-day Baytown was originally known as K'nesseth Israel but has come to be called "Congregation K'nesseth Israel," or it is often referred to as "CKI." For the purposes of this nomination, the building where the congregation meets will be referred to as "K'nesseth Israel Synagogue." Please note that spelling of the congregation's varies (Knesset, K'Nesseth, etc.) since the word is transliterated from Hebrew. The name "K'nesseth Israel" means "assembly of Israel."

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the metal-covered warehouse at the northwest corner of West Wright Avenue and North Commerce Street, directly across (north) the street from the K'nesseth Israel property. The west side of the property abuts onto residential lots.

The land is flat (as is much of the surrounding area), and the undeveloped part of the property features a Saint Augustine grass-covered lawn with concrete curbing along the three streets that define the south, east, and northern limits of the property. A chain-link fence that extends north from the community house to West Wright Avenue delineates the lot line and creates an undeveloped grass lawn that serves as a buffer between K'nesseth Israel-related improvements and the residences on the adjoining lots (Photo 4; the fence has been removed since the photo was taken). Concrete sidewalks extend parallel to the streets on the south (West Sterling) and east (North Commerce) sides of the property. Both sidewalks are set back from the streets, which leave narrow grass-covered strips of land. The only plantings of note include a fig tree and pomegranate bush just north of the community house, as well as a small fig bush near the northwest corner of the sanctuary. The synagogue's placement, relatively close to West Sterling Avenue, leaves a shallow, grass-covered lawn at the front (Photos 1 and 2). The concrete sidewalk on this side of the property connects to an American Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant composite-decked ramp built in 2018-19 that extends to the synagogue's primary entrance, which includes paired sets of double doors.<sup>2</sup> The two concrete curb cuts along Sterling Avenue include a concrete driveway near the property's southwest corner and a narrow strip of grass, plus a second ADA-compliant concrete ramp between the street and sidewalk. The driveway curb cut extends only a few feet into the lot. The concrete sidewalk on the lot's east side is set back from North Commerce Street and extends along the thoroughfare. Although an ADA-compliant ramp is at the corner of West Sterling Avenue, the corner at West Wright Avenue is unchanged and has a stepped curb. A concrete pad in front of the community house provides expanded surface areas for easy pedestrian access from the street to the two separate entrances on the east side of the building. Another concrete ADA-compliant concrete ramp extends along the base of the community house to a separate entrance on the building's north side. The only other feature on the land is a concrete slab at the north end of the lot that formerly served as the base for a satellite dish that was used by a local cable company.

### Architectural Description

The primary edifice and focal point of the property is the synagogue: a one-story, brick-clad building with a barrel-vaulted roof. The building's rectangular footprint is approximately 35 feet wide and 50 feet deep and includes a continuous concrete foundation wall along the perimeter.<sup>3</sup> This feature largely obscures the building's substructure, which includes a pier-and-beam foundation that rises approximately two-and-a-half feet above grade. The sanctuary's structural system is of wood-frame construction with brick veneer. The building has a semi-barrel-vaulted roof that extends along a north-south axis. The north and south ends, however, do not terminate at the walls but instead slope down.<sup>4</sup> This pitch creates the need for metal rods to provide structural support to the subtle pointed-arched parapet on the south wall, which is one of the building's most distinctive architectural features. The roof system also includes two arched metal trusses that support the roof and define the barrel-vaulted ceiling within the interior.

Overall, the building conveys a sense of stoutness and permanence with expansive exterior surface areas of brick and relatively few window and door openings. Low brick cheek walls frame each side of the concrete steps that extend to the concrete landing on the front (south) façade and mark the synagogue's primary entrance (Photo 5). This façade presents a symmetrical arrangement with two pairs of double doors in the middle bays and narrow round-arched windows with stained glass in the outer bays. Each cheek wall has a low-slung, trapezoid-shaped concrete planter. Capped by a molded belt course of concrete, the front entry bay includes two sets of wooden double doors with panels and Art Deco-influenced

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<sup>2</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability. Case Study Analysis: Findings of Summary Vulnerability Assessment of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Texas, 2022, 15.

<sup>3</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability, 54.

<sup>4</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability, 15-16.



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hardware. The doors were installed in 2001 following a donation from member Neal Manne and his wife Nancy McGregor. On either side of the entryway are Art Deco-inspired outdoor lights with elongated triangular glass panels that illuminate the primary entry bay. Elaborate masonry work above the entry includes a series of broad and slightly recessed round archways; each of these arches extends to the exterior wall's base and the main entry landing. Set within this large archway and directly above each set of double doors is a pair of smaller round arches created by finely crafted brickwork. Another example of the skilled artisanship displayed on the building is the cast-stone Star of David detailing that is integrated into the brick surface, all of which is set within these smaller arches. The outer bays flanking the entry bay include narrow round-arched window openings with cast-stone arches and brick sills. These and all other exterior windows have stained-glass lites that are original to the building. Although most of the upper half of the front façade is a solid brick surface, noteworthy details include a cast-stone panel with the translation for "K'nesseth Israel" in Hebrew. The cast stone frieze of the parapet and gable returns include a chevron-like detailing and accentuate the sanctuary's barrel-vaulted roof. All of the cast-stone work was manufactured by Houston Art Stone Company, which touted these architectural elements in a Houston newspaper article published while the building was being constructed.<sup>5</sup>

Like the front, the east exterior wall fronts onto a public thoroughfare (North Commerce Street) and is visible to passersby (Photo 6). Most of the surface area is of brick which contributes to the building's overall sense of permanence – an effect that is largely defined on the front (south) façade. The east wall has four metal-frame window openings, three of which have large round-arched transoms at the top. Each round-arched window is three lites wide and five lites tall. The bottom row is hinged at the base (hopper window), while the middle two rows have a center pivot. The top two rows, set within the round archway, are fixed. Although the southernmost window lacks the transom, it has the same lite and pivoting configuration as the bottom and middle rows of the other windows. In lieu of the stained-glass round-arched transom, the southernmost window has a decorative round-arch motif in the brickwork above the window that replicates the size and rhythm of the arches over other openings. All of the windows are filled with stained glass and are currently inoperable due to the installation of single-pane storm windows. Another distinctive architectural feature of the southernmost bay is the Star of David, which is intertwined into the brickwork of the exterior masonry surface. This Star of David resembles those above the pair of double doors on the front. Near the façade's base are three vent openings in the same vertical plane of the round-arch windows. A set of circular attic vent openings are above these same windows, again in the same vertical plane.

While the west façade is identical to the east side, the building's rear contains two round-arched window openings with stained glass similar to those on the east and west sides (Photo 6). The rest of the rear wall is a solid brick surface that lacks vent openings; however, it does have metal downspouts that drain water from the roof.

### **Synagogue Interior**

The interior contains approximately 1,653 square feet of usable space (Figure 5).<sup>6</sup> Interior finishes include wood flooring, plastered walls, and wood trim with a more traditional classically inspired character. The two sets of exterior doors on the front open onto a vestibule that functions as a transition area between the exterior and the sanctuary (Photo 7). Each end of the vestibule contains a small room. The one on the east side is a small restroom, and a storage room is on the opposite (west) side. Two sets of interior double doorways open into the sanctuary – the building's main interior space. Each doorway has a flat panel door with a small stained-glass window and round-arch motif that is such a common architectural feature throughout the building.

The sanctuary has a barrel-vaulted ceiling that creates a sense of openness. The wooden pews take up most of the interior floor space, but the sanctuary's focal point is the ark, which contains the Torah scrolls at the front wall of the sanctuary.

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<sup>5</sup> "Art Stone In Variety Made By Firm Here," *Houston Chronicle*, August 4, 1930, 20, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>6</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability, 27.

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The ark serves as the central backdrop to the Bimah, a raised platform at the center of the north wall (Photos 8-10), from which the rabbi or local religious leader conducts services and reads the Torah. In contrast to the more modernistic architectural components on the building's exterior, most interior features present more classically inspired detailing, especially around the ark. The character of these interior elements is far more traditional than the modernistic detailing featured on the exterior. The ark's recessed cabinet-like space has an interior light source illuminating the Torahs – scrolls upon which the five books of the Hebrew bible are handwritten (Photo 11). The Torah in the ark is prominently displayed and secured in a vertical position. Sliding panels on rails can enclose and protect the ark and its contents. The trim framing the ark presents a three-part Palladian-like configuration that has two narrow sections on each side of a larger central segment capped with a round arch. The ark is set within the central mid-section. The wood trim in this Palladian configuration has two sets of fluted pilasters with Doric-like capitals that visually support a similarly detailed entablature. The round arch has molded trim that is similar to that of the entablature and has a back-lit circular window with a Star of David motif at its center. The *ner tamid*, a symbol of eternal light, hangs above the ark from a centrally placed metal bracket (Photo 12). Metal chains with a Star of David pendant extend to the light. Above the ark is a wood-framed, round-arched *dyptych* with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew. These panels are illuminated with a light at its base that showcases this distinctive feature, an important symbol of the Jewish faith. A centrally placed staircase leads to the reading table, also sometimes referred to as the *bimah*, from which the Torah is read after being transferred from the ark (Photo 10). A simply detailed balustrade encloses most of the raised platform; however, the rear sections have solid wood-paneled enclosures that extend slightly higher than the balustrade. The two free-standing podiums on either side of the *bimah* serve the cantor, the vocalist who leads prayer in songs, or speakers to stand and address the congregation. The chairs at the back of the platform are for the rabbi or layperson leading the service and the cantor.

The rear of the sanctuary features a large memorial plaque that commemorates selected deceased members of the congregation whose families purchased them in their honor (Photo 13). The plaque is affixed to the wall between the two double doors that allow entry into the sanctuary from the foyer, and it is also capped with a stylized *menorah* (Photo 14). The plaque also has a nameplate in both English and Hebrew at the base that identifies the synagogue and the city of its founding (Goose Creek, as the community was known at that time). The plaque includes the year "1944," which likely signifies the date of the plaque's installation. All the other plates identify former members. Each includes the name and date of death of every individual in both English and Hebrew, although some of the newer plates also include dates of birth. The small lights to the left of each plate are illuminated every time services are held. The spaces are usually, but not always, grouped by families, which sometimes leaves unused spaces that are reserved for future use. The original plaque has been enlarged on each side to provide additional space for other members and their families.

Other noteworthy features include the stained-glass windows, the large Art Deco-styled light suspended from the ceiling, sconces between the stained-glass windows, and recessed lights in the barrel-vaulted ceiling with Star of David designs (Photos 13 and 15).

### **Community House Exterior**

The one-story community house (Photos 16 and 17) is contemporaneous with the synagogue but was enlarged in 1948, and its present configuration dates to that year. It is directly behind (and north of) the synagogue. Used for more informal purposes, this building contains approximately 2,205 square feet of interior space – slightly more than that of the sanctuary (Figure 6). The exterior of the community house lacks the architectural sophistication and sense of importance of the synagogue; nonetheless, it fulfilled an important role for the local Jewish community because it provided a space for a variety of social, educational, and holiday-related activities and celebrations.

Resting on a pier-and-beam foundation, the building has wood-frame construction and horizontal fiber-cement (Hardie plank) siding that was installed in October 2018, replacing asbestos siding that previously covered the walls. A short concrete foundation wall extends around a portion of the building's perimeter; otherwise, the pier-and-beam foundation is exposed. The roof is not visible from the street because of a parapet that extends around the building. Aerial photographs reveal that the roof has two components. The southern portion extends over the original building, while the northern part

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covers the 1948 addition. The roofs appear to be mostly flat with slopes that direct water toward drainpipes on the south and north sides of the building.

The primary (east) façade fronts onto North Commerce Street and presents a stark appearance with minimal architectural embellishment (Photo 16). The most noteworthy element is the slightly pedimented parapet; however, it is a subtle feature that draws little attention to itself. Small indentations at the base of the parapet create a crenelated effect. The only openings of this façade are two single doors, with one at the center of each half of the symmetrical two-bay composition. They were installed in 2008 following damage sustained from Hurricane Ike. Each of the present multi-paneled doors has a narrow round-arched lite. Each door opens onto a raised concrete landing that has steps leading to a central concrete pad and then toward the sidewalk along the Commerce Street easement. The profile of the original concrete steps that lead directly to the street is still visible from the sides, although the orientation and platform have been changed to have the steps lead inward to a new concrete pad at the base. The landings at each doorway have slender metal railings and handrails and an ashlar cast stone veneer. The south side façade has a similar doorway with a concrete landing and steps, positioned toward the back (east) side of the building, as well as three window openings with fixed-light windows (Photo 16). The original window types have not been identified. Historic photos from the 1930s and 1940s note window openings on the west façade; however, they have since been covered. There are three evenly spaced vent openings that pierce the upper portion of the wall. The north façade has a double-door entry that opens onto a concrete pad. The double doors were installed during the post-Hurricane Ike renovations; previously there was no door opening on this façade. A recently installed concrete ramp leads away from this door toward the front of the building, while steps lead to the grass lawn to the side (Photo 17). The only other openings are three vents similar to those on the south façade. The only architectural feature on the west façade is a small fixed-light window that pierces the otherwise unadorned exterior wall.

### **Community House Interior**

The interior presents a mostly open plan – a characteristic consistent with its intended purpose for various social gatherings. The only partition walls are toward the rear (west) of the original building, creating spaces for restrooms and a kitchen (Photos 18-19). In contrast to the utilitarian character of the exterior, the interior has well-crafted woodwork and trim that exhibit classically inspired detailing, especially in the addition. Prime examples include the trim around door openings, wainscoting, free-standing columns, and ceiling beams (Photo 20). Placed on wood half-piers, the columns are four-sided and slightly tapered toward the top. Classically inspired engaged pilasters mark the doorways and add a sense of grandeur when entering or leaving the buildings. A series of pendant lights with frosted glass “schoolhouse” shades illuminates the interior (Photo 21).

### **Integrity**

The synagogue has changed only minimally since it was completed in 1930 (Figure 4). The building retains its original form, massing, and exterior finishes and closely resembles its appearance in photographs appearing in local newspapers around the time of its opening. The only alterations of note are changes to the entrance, including the construction of a ramp to provide wheelchair access as well as the partial infilling of the front steps to provide sufficient room to maneuver at the entrance landing. This alteration does not detract from the building’s overall historic character and makes it more accessible to the public. Thus, the synagogue retains all seven of the aspects of integrity to an exceptional degree. The interior has been subject to more changes, including a slight reconfiguration of the ark and changes to the podium; however, salient and character-defining interior features remain intact.

While the synagogue retains its integrity to an exceptional degree, the community house has been modified over the years. Some alterations are compatible with the property’s historic character and other more recent changes are not. The 1948 expansion took place within the period of significance (1930-1974) and thus is part of the building’s historic physical evolution and contributes to its overall significance. The addition was sensitive to the original design and followed its aesthetic. More recent changes, however, have led to the removal of historic architectural features (windows and doors), the introduction of new materials (siding), and changes to the fenestration. Window openings on the front (east) and side (north) façades (presumably on the west side as well but no historic photographs have been found to date) have been

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covered, and the single-paned fixed lights in the windows on the south side appear different from the original windows. The most recent changes consist of repairs following damage the building sustained during Hurricane Harvey in 2017. These more recent alterations diminish the building's integrity of material, design, and feeling, but the edifice still resembles its original form and remains recognizable from photographs dating to the 1930s and 1940s.

**Contributing Resources**

Both the synagogue and the community house contribute to the historic character of K'nesseth Israel (CKI) property at 100 West Sterling Avenue.

*Table 7-1. Inventory of contributing resources.*

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Construction Date</b>	<b>Contributing Status</b>
Synagogue	1930	Contributing
Community House	1930 (enlarged 1948; renovated 2008 and 2017)	Contributing

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### Statement of Significance

The 1930 K'nesseth Israel Synagogue in Baytown, Harris County, Texas, provides a tangible link to the community's numerous Jewish families who made substantial contributions to the physical and economic development of the city through the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> The synagogue represents the incalculable contributions and rich legacy of the many Jewish residents who helped shape local commercial, social, and economic development. While many descendants of those who established and worshiped in the synagogue have since relocated to nearby Houston and other cities, current members remain committed to the continued use, upkeep, and maintenance of the synagogue. The synagogue is noteworthy for the quality of its design – a modernistic take on traditional Byzantine Revival architecture that combines distinctive temple forms with delicate Art Deco-inspired embellishment. It also derives significance as an important work of Lenard Gabert, a noted Jewish architect from Houston who designed a wide range of buildings and complexes for many of Houston's Jewish citizens over a half-century. The property meets Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Jewish and Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance, thus satisfying Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties). The period of significance of 1930-1974 extends from the year of construction to the 50-year threshold.

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### Baytown and the Tri-Cities Communities (1916-1974)

Baytown is a city of approximately 82,000 people in southeastern Harris County, about 25 miles east of downtown Houston. The present-day municipality of Baytown encompasses three formerly separate communities that developed during the early twentieth century along the east side along the lower end of the Houston Ship Channel. The "Tri-Cities," as the area was called during its formative years, included the communities of Goose Creek, Pelly, and Baytown. Consolidation efforts began in 1945 and culminated in 1948 when voters approved "Baytown" as the name of the new municipality. K'nesseth Israel Synagogue was built in what was originally the city of Goose Creek where most of the local Jewish population lived, but its members hailed from all of the Tri-Cities.

Two major themes of Baytown's history that are directly relevant to the historical significance of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue include: the discovery of oil and subsequent construction of the Humble (later ExxonMobil) refinery; and the ascent and decline of local, family-owned retail stores and businesses in the three historic commercial nodes, especially on West Texas Avenue, which is two blocks from K'nesseth Israel Synagogue. Many of these enterprises were owned and operated by Jewish merchants who came to the area following the discovery of oil in the area. The numerous profound contributions of these Jewish families were critical to the development of the entire community, and the synagogue remains the single most important physical representation of their collective influence in local history.

### Oil and Early Development (1916-1929)

Just prior to the local discovery of oil, the area near the mouth of the San Jacinto River, which encompasses present-day Baytown, was sparsely populated. Its agriculture-based economy relied principally on rice cultivation and cattle ranching. The only noteworthy industrial-related activities included small-scale brick-making and shipbuilding. No formally organized cities existed in the area, but dispersed settlements included the communities of Cedar Bayou and Wooster.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In this nomination, the expression "Tri-Cities" refers to the three distinct communities (Goose Creek, Pelly, and Baytown) that now comprise the historic core of the present-day municipality of Baytown. The term "Tri-Cities" was used as early as May 12, 1925, in a special edition of the Semi-Weekly Tribune, a Goose Creek newspaper. Within a pre-1948 context, the name "Baytown" refers to the unincorporated area that developed just outside of the Humble Oil and Refinery plant. Following the 1948 consolidation of the communities into a single municipality, the use of the name "Baytown" represents the geographic area of the combined Tri-Cities communities.

<sup>8</sup> Pricilla Myers Benham, "Goose Creek, TX," Handbook of Texas Online, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/goose-creek-tx>; Anne R. Daniels, "Baytown during the Depression 1929-1933", Master of Arts Thesis, Lamar University, 1981, 5.

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The presence of oil was first noted as early as 1903 near the confluence of Goose Creek into Tabbs Bay, and the first producing well was drilled on June 2, 1908. Continued explorations generated only modest successes, but a major discovery on August 23, 1916, finally tapped into the vast reserves of oil. The gusher heralded a new era for the region that dramatically transformed the marshy lands and nearby coastal prairies into a hub of activity.<sup>9</sup>

As with the 1901 discovery of oil at Spindletop near Beaumont, and soon after at other locations in Texas, people flocked to the area hoping to reap the benefits from the ensuing boom. Exploration soon extended beyond the shoreline into Tabbs Bay itself and led to the state's first offshore drilling efforts (and the second in the nation).<sup>10</sup> Initial settlement developed in proximity to the bay and the rigs but proved to be unsustainable due to frequent flooding and other issues. Residents soon began to move further inland. The few remnants of the original community became known as "Old Town," while the new settlement was briefly called "New Town." The former soon faded from existence, but the latter thrived and was then formally designated as "Goose Creek," the waterway that flowed near the oil discovery site. Yet another settlement developed between New and Old Town. Initially called "Middletown," this village was later renamed "Pelly," in honor of Fred Pelly who owned most of the land and laid out a formal town site.<sup>11</sup> The 1920 federal census identifies both "New Town" and "Middletown" as unincorporated areas in east Harris County.

Among the early fortune seekers who came to the Goose Creek Oil Field was Ross S. Sterling. After founding the Humble Oil & Refining Company in the city of Humble in north Harris County in 1911, Sterling turned his attention to the Goose Creek discovery.<sup>12</sup> Ever-increasing amounts of oil being drilled locally led Sterling and his company to invest in the construction of a refinery near Black Duck Bay on the west side of the Goose Creek waterway. The company also provided housing and other amenities for its workers just outside the refinery. This informal company town became known as "Baytown" and derived its name from the many nearby bays at the mouth of the San Jacinto River and Houston Ship Channel.

After building the Dayton-Goose Creek Railway in 1917-18 to link the refinery with the vast Southern Pacific network, Sterling set aside land for a town site that became known as Goose Creek (Map 3). The plat depicted the placement of both the passenger and freight depots on railroad right-of-way at the intersection of Texas Avenue. This strategic location quickly bustled with activity and led to the development of nearby lots in the city's new business district.

While the discovery of oil attracted people who sought jobs directly in the oil business, it also drew others who understood the need for businesses to meet growing consumer demands of the local population. Several of the new residents were Jewish merchants who relocated from Houston, Galveston, and other communities in the region.

The rapid growth of the Tri-Cities and the substantial financial capital invested in these communities is depicted by the first set of Sanborn fire insurance maps for the Tri-Cities area, which was completed in 1926. The maps show that the present-day 100-200 blocks of West Texas Avenue in Goose Creek boasted the greatest concentration of commercial development (Figure 1). Many of these buildings were built and occupied by Jewish merchants who had moved to the area (Figure 7). Although the Humble refinery and surrounding properties in Baytown were not documented at that time, the Sanborn maps show a scattering of brick and wood-frame commercial buildings along 300-500 blocks of Goose Creek Road (present-day Main Street) in Pelly.

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Rundell, *Early Texas Oil: A Photographic History 1866-1936* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 119.

<sup>10</sup> Rundell, *Early Texas Oil: A Photographic History 1866-1936*, 119.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Swett Henson, 96.

<sup>12</sup> "Sterling, Ross Shaw (1875-1949)," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/sterling-ross-shaw>.

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### **The Great Depression and World War II (1930-1945)**

The local economy remained robust through the 1920s and into the 1930s. The Humble refinery employed an estimated 3,300 people and continued to be the dominant economic force in the area.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most symbolic event of the ascendancy of the Tri-Cities was the election of Ross Sterling as the 31st governor of the state of Texas (Figure 8). During Sterling's single term in office (1931-1933), the Texas Highway Department approved the creation of State Highway 146 from Texas City to Dayton. Its route extended through Pelly and Goose Creek by way of a ferry that operated at the Houston Ship Channel.<sup>14</sup> While the highway ran through downtown Pelly, it bypassed downtown Goose Creek and extended along what became known as Alexander Drive. Nonetheless, West Texas Avenue remained the largest and most vibrant of the commercial districts of the Tri-Cities area.

While the Tri-Cities avoided many of the hardships of the Great Depression, World War II had a profound effect on the area, much of which centered on the Humble plant in Baytown. In fact, this industrial complex was the source of a variety of products that contributed significantly to Allied victory. It served as the southern terminus of the "Little Big Inch" pipeline, which was part of a costly and highly ambitious effort to convey oil via underground pipelines from oil fields in Texas to refineries on the East Coast. Operation of this 20-inch pipe and its larger counterpart—the 24-inch "Big Inch" pipeline—enabled oil companies to avoid using oil tankers that were vulnerable to German submarine attack. During the war, these two pipelines conveyed 350 million gallons of both crude and refined oil to the East Coast.<sup>15</sup> Other Baytown-related industrial activities included the manufacture of high-octane aviation fuel, the development of toluene from oil rather than coal tar that was used to produce TNT for bombs, and the production of synthetic rubber for military vehicles, all produced at or near the Baytown refinery. These operations contributed significantly to the war effort and received widespread praise from political and military officials. The construction of these facilities was just a small part of an innovative and massive government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) program that in the short term proved critical to the war effort. GOCO facilities in and around the Humble plant had enduring economic and social effects for the Tri-Cities that continued in the postwar era and beyond and, importantly, had direct consequences for K'nesseth Israel.

### **Postwar Era and Decline (1946-1974)**

After the war, previously unsuccessful efforts to combine the Tri-Cities into a single municipality finally came to fruition. The initial step began on December 7, 1945, when the city of Pelly annexed the unincorporated community of Baytown under a previously enacted home-rule amendment to the state constitution. Using the same law, Pelly later sought to annex Goose Creek. On February 15, 1947, affected voters approved the merging of Goose Creek and recently expanded Pelly communities into a single municipality, which was officially named Baytown following the adoption of the city charter on January 24, 1948 (Figure 9).<sup>16</sup>

The consolidation of the Tri-Cities into a single entity marked a pivotal moment in local history, and the 1950s began on a positive note with the construction of a new tunnel under the Houston Ship Channel as part of long-desired improvements to State Highway 146.<sup>17</sup> The tunnel improved transportation between Baytown, the Humble refinery, and the expanding petrochemical complex and also provided a new route to the greater Houston metropolitan area. Further highway improvements included the rerouting of the highway and the approaches on the Baytown (east) side of the channel. The

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<sup>13</sup> Anne R. Daniels, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Minute #6272, Texas Highway Commission Minute Orders, June 30, 1930, 145, <https://publicdocs.txdot.gov/minord/MinuteOrderDocLib/003673816.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Wooster, "East Texas in World War II," *East Texas Historical Journal*, September 2007, 44, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol45/iss2/9>.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Swett Henson, *History of Baytown, Texas* (Baytown, Texas: Bay Area Heritage Society, 1986), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Swett Henson, 136. The Baytown Tunnel, replaced by a cable-stayed bridge in 1995, was demolished in 1998, leaving the nearby Washburn Tunnel between Pasadena and Galena Park as the only subaqueous vehicular tunnel in Texas.

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work was completed in 1953.<sup>18</sup> Upgrades in the road network also supported operations at the Humble plant, which continued its successful operation and even expanded its capacity during the 1950s. The refinery increased its workforce, which included the hiring of a new generation of engineers and other professionals, some of whom were Jewish. Despite such positive developments during the immediate postwar era, increased suburbanization and decentralization in subsequent years led to the slow decline of West Texas Avenue. Such trends were not limited to Baytown and were common in downtowns throughout the state and nation.

In 1970, the U.S. Steel Company announced the construction of a new plant in Baytown. The story gained national attention as an unidentified company official thought it could become “one of the greatest, steel-producing complexes in the nation if not the world.”<sup>19</sup> Such expectations were never realized (it closed in 1986 during the collapse of the nation’s steel industry), and the plant did little to help revitalize older parts of the Baytown area, and West Texas Avenue continued its decline.<sup>20</sup> Multiple families who owned some of the stores that had served as the bedrock of the business district closed their establishments. Some moved to Houston, accelerating a trend that had begun years earlier.

### **Modern Era (1974-present)**

A failed effort to revitalize West Texas Avenue occurred in the mid-1970s when the Central Baytown Business and Professional Association led efforts to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The plan relied on reconfiguring the street’s traffic pattern with a “serpentine” effect. The resulting design established a winding path in the 100-400 blocks of West Texas Avenue. The layout created a series of small island-like parks with benches and plantings.<sup>21</sup> While the project briefly fostered a sense of optimism for an area that had once been a hub of activity in an oil boom town, it ultimately failed and had no lasting positive effect.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the downtown has experienced renewed vitality as many of the abandoned buildings along West Texas Avenue (several of which were built and owned by Jewish merchants affiliated with K'nesseth Israel) have been razed to make way for the creation of a new Town Square. This new park has helped to revitalize the area and is now a source of local pride; however, that gain has come at the expense of the local Jewish heritage and its associated cultural landscape.

### **Overview of Jewish Immigration and Culture in Texas (1821-1974)**

The story of Jewish Texans can be traced to the Spanish and Mexican colonial eras. Most of the state’s earliest Jewish settlers were Sephardic Jews whose heritage can be traced to the Iberian Peninsula when fifteenth-century rulers of Spain and Portugal ordered their expulsion. They arrived in Texas in limited numbers and in a largely dispersed and random manner rather than as members of large, organized groups. Jewish immigration to the US increased dramatically during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the arrival of mostly Ashkenazi Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe. New York was their primary US port of entry, and some Jewish immigrants made their way to Texas. Although many settled in the state’s existing urban areas where small pockets of Jewish culture already existed, others established themselves along the increasingly complex rail network being built during the late nineteenth century. The short-lived Galveston Movement also brought a number of Jewish immigrants directly to Texas when a privately funded society worked to bypass New York and other cities on the eastern seaboard and helped immigrants to settle in other parts of the US including Texas. The discovery of oil and the resulting boomtown mentality it spawned was yet another important

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<sup>18</sup> “New Highway 146 Section Opened To Tunnel Traffic,” *The Baytown Sun*, October 21, 1953, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1042283/m1/1/>.

<sup>19</sup> “U.S. Steel Readies Its Texas Works,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1970, 112, <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/06/28/archives/us-steel-readies-its-texas-works.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Buck A. Young, “Baytown, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/baytown-tx>.

<sup>21</sup> “Council To Get Plan For Texas Avenue 'Facelifting',” *The Baytown Sun*, August 8, 1974, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1061931/m1/1/>.



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trend of the early twentieth century that affected the growing Jewish population. Jewish merchants established businesses to serve the local populace in many of these towns, and they often became leading figures in their respective communities. As Jewish immigrants established themselves in Texas, they organized congregations, built synagogues, and set aside land for cemeteries in cities across the state. In the postwar era, the state's Jewish population shifted toward the major metropolitan areas. While the Jewish presence in many smaller communities has faded over time, several congregations, including K'nesseth Israel, have survived and remain a direct link to this chapter of history in the state's diverse ethnic heritage.

### **Jewish Pioneers in Texas (1820s-1865)**

The earliest Jewish settlers known to have moved permanently to Texas arrived in the 1820s and included Samuel Isaacks, who lived along the Brazos River in Fort Bend County by 1821, and Adolphus Sterne, who settled in Nacogdoches by 1826.<sup>22</sup> A few early pioneers who attained significance include David Levi Kokernot who moved to Gonzales around 1830 as well as Jacob de Cordova, Joseph and Rosanna Osterman, and Michael Seeligson, all of whom lived in Galveston in the 1830s. By 1838, Jews reportedly lived in Velasco, Bolivar, Goliad, and San Antonio.<sup>23</sup> Another prominent Jewish immigrant of the era was Henri Castro, who received a land grant from the Republic of Texas in 1842. Despite his background, Castro did not actively promote Jewish immigration to his colony west of San Antonio Texas; rather, he simply facilitated people to emigrate from his native German-speaking region of Alsace, France.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the number of Jews coming to Texas increased, albeit at a modest pace. They remained a very small ethnic minority that largely assimilated into the prevailing culture, yet they continued to practice their faith and honor traditions. Over time, however, Jewish Texans began to make their mark on the cultural landscape as more moved to the state. The establishment of cemeteries, the organization of congregations, and the construction of synagogues demonstrate the increased presence and prominence of the state's Jewish population and its growing distribution across Texas. The first known Jewish cemetery in Texas was established in Galveston in 1852. Soon thereafter, Jewish citizens established cemeteries in Houston (1854), San Antonio (1856), Victoria (1858), and Jefferson (1862).<sup>25</sup>

### **New Opportunities with an Expanding Railroad Network (1866-1900)**

Texas enjoyed a vigorous economic rebound during the Reconstruction era, and the flow of Jewish people into the state likewise began to rise. The state's major ports, particularly Galveston, bustled with activity, and the expanding rail network provided inland transportation systems that facilitated the flow of goods and people. This network also led to the establishment of new towns and cities at strategic locations along the railroad routes. These communities spawned localized commerce and trade that led to the opening of retail stores and businesses to serve local populations. Jewish immigrants were among the most active in establishing new commercial enterprises. The Sanger brothers, for example, opened a series of stores along the Houston & Texas Central (H&TC) Railway as it extended from the Gulf Coast into the fertile farmlands in the coastal prairies and on into north-central Texas. Cities along the H&TC Railway with sizeable

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<sup>22</sup> "Council To Get Plan For Texas Avenue 'Facelifting'," *The Baytown Sun*, August 8, 1974, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1061931/m1/1/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - Texas," *Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life*, <https://www.isjl.org/texas-encyclopedia.html>; Rabbi James L. Kessler, "Jews."

<sup>24</sup> Amelia W. Williams, "Castro, Henri," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/castro-henri>.

<sup>25</sup> "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - Texas," *Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life*, <https://www.isjl.org/texas-encyclopedia.html>.

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enough Jewish populations, such as Hempstead (1880); Navasota (1874); Calvert (1873); Bryan (1870); Corsicana (1875); Ennis (1892); Dallas (1872); and Denison (1879), soon had synagogues and/or Jewish cemeteries.<sup>26</sup>

### **Oil Industry and Greater Jewish Diversity (1901-1945)**

The state's Jewish population continued to grow during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, yet congregations typically remained small. Most of those who came early in the era originally hailed from Germany and central Europe; however, that trend later changed as pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe led to a new wave of Jewish immigration. These new arrivals introduced their own Jewish traditions that changed the dynamic of the state's Jewish population. Since most Jewish populations continued to be modest in size, synagogues helped to unify their increasingly diverse membership. The synagogues enabled those of different Jewish traditions (e.g., Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative) to follow their faith in one central place. Increased numbers in larger cities, such as Galveston and Houston, over time led to the formation of multiple synagogues that catered to a specific tradition. In smaller cities, however, congregations often were more diverse. They typically became less rigid and more accommodating of differing traditions, a trend that continued for decades. Such a practice helped to unify local Jewish populations, which remained distinct minorities in communities throughout the state, as has been the case in present-day Baytown.

Texas's burgeoning oil industry brought dramatic change and unprecedented growth to locales where oil was discovered. As with railroad expansion, this new economic force led to the creation of boomtowns and triggered tremendous influxes of people hoping to reap economic rewards. Many of them were Jewish merchants. This trend began in Beaumont in 1901 with the Spindletop gusher. The discovery brought tremendous change and growth to the community, and the local Jewish population swelled during the ensuing rush. The same pattern emerged in other oil boom towns in subsequent years including Brackenridge, Wichita Falls, Odessa, Kilgore, Longview, and notably, Goose Creek. Some of the oil discoveries were in or near existing cities, and others, like Goose Creek, led to the establishment of entirely new communities.

Jewish diversity in Texas is also associated with the Galveston Movement, which largely was a response to a mass migration of eastern European Jews to the US around the turn of the twentieth century. Their swelling numbers soon overwhelmed traditional ports of entry, particularly New York. With limited resources, most of these immigrants remained in the cities where they first arrived and settled, living in crowded tenements where their opportunities were limited. To end this cycle and ease the hardships these immigrants endured, multiple Jewish organizations in the US and Europe sought to redirect these immigrants to another port of entry where they could settle in less-congested western states. Ultimately these organizations chose Galveston as an alternative site. An island city with limited space to grow, Galveston was unable to absorb such an influx of people, which in turn, forced these new immigrants to settle inland. In these locations, they had greater opportunities to build new lives in their adopted homeland. The first group of Jewish immigrants to arrive in Galveston came in July 1907 amid a sense of optimism for the program's success. However, the effort soon encountered a number of obstacles that hampered the number of new arrivals, and in 1914 the program ceased operations. Nonetheless, the Galveston Movement brought about 10,000 European Jews through the port, a few of whom later moved to eastern Harris County where oil was discovered in 1916.<sup>27</sup>

Prior to World War I, Jewish Texans were generally accepted in the communities where they lived. As Jewish historian Hollace Weiner noted:

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<sup>26</sup> Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - Texas," *Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life*, <https://www.isjl.org/texas-encyclopedia.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Jane Manaster, "Galveston Movement," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/galveston-movement>; Hollace Ava Weiner, "The Role of Rabbis Deep in the Heart of Texas," *American Jewish History*, September 1997, 319, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23885566>.

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Texans' racial prejudices were exacerbated by the wars against the Indians, the Mexicans, and the Union. But Texans had no historical conflict with the Jews, nor were Jewish people as discernible as racial minorities. The frontier ethic judged Jews as individuals and gave them a chance to prove their mettle.<sup>28</sup>

As the Jewish population increased and became better organized, the types of rabbis recruited to serve the growing number of synagogues in the state shifted away from those well-versed in Jewish traditions and rituals. Instead, organized congregations sought "mixers" who would be better skilled for integrating the Jewish population into their host communities.<sup>29</sup> Part of that expanded mission led to rabbis encouraging greater interaction with neighbors and fellow citizens of other faiths. They often worked with local newspapers to publish articles informing readers about important Jewish holidays and traditions. Such actions, they hoped, would promote greater acceptance and assimilation while maintaining their cultural identity as the number of Jewish immigrants to Texas continued to rise during the twentieth century. Rabbi Benjamin Wade, who served the K'nesseth Israel congregation soon after the construction of its synagogue, adopted such an approach when he arrived in Goose Creek in 1931.

While well-intentioned efforts to integrate Jewish life into the consciousness of Texas continued, more systemic and overt discriminatory practices directed toward Jews and other ethnic minorities increased after World War I. Such trends were especially common in housing as racial and ethnic biases became more open and blatant. For example, new subdivisions often restricted the sale of property to Jews, African Americans, and others through implicit means or with explicit language included in deeds and covenant restrictions. A particularly transparent example is the River Oaks neighborhood in Houston. Established in the mid-1920s, River Oaks was promoted as an exclusive and deliberately planned residential area for the city's elite. However, its developers adopted a "gentlemen's agreement" to restrict sales to Jews.<sup>30</sup> Spurned by such a practice, many locally prominent Jews subsequently built houses in the new Riverside Terrace neighborhood in Houston's present-day Third Ward. Its developers catered to a growing Jewish residential market that included some of the city's wealthiest citizens. Local architects who worked in Riverside Terrace comprised something of a "who's who" within the local architecture profession at that time. Among the notable designers who received commissions in the neighborhood included John F. Staub, Birdsall Briscoe, and Joseph Finger, considered by many to be Houston's most successful Jewish architect.<sup>31</sup> Yet another designer who worked in the neighborhood was Lenard Gabert, a young Rice Institute-educated architect who lived in the neighborhood and provided plans of many stylish houses throughout the 1920s and 1930s (see Criterion C: Architectural Significance discussion).

#### **Urbanization and Shifting Demographics (1946-1974)**

After World War II, the state's Jewish population began to migrate to larger urban areas such as Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas. Larger congregations led to the construction of new synagogues and other facilities, and as a wave of new synagogues were built, many presented more modern architectural expressions that contrasted with the more traditional forms that characterized most previously built synagogues in the state. Temple Emanu El (1949) in Houston is a prime example. While this demographic shift resulted in new synagogues in urban areas, it came at the expense of smaller communities. Dwindling memberships forced many congregations across the state to eliminate regular services and even abandon their facilities. Notable exceptions include the Temple Israel (1951) in Schulenburg and Shearith Israel (1957) in Wharton, both of which were designed by Jewish architect Lenard Gabert. Still, the concentration of the state's Jewish population in the major urban areas continues to the present day. In some communities, like Baytown, historic synagogues

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<sup>28</sup> Manaster, 304.

<sup>29</sup> Manaster, 332.

<sup>30</sup> Charles O. Cook and Barry J. Kaplan, "Civic Elites and Urban Planning: Houston's River Oaks," *East Texas Historical Journal*, October 1, 1977, 31, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol15/iss2/8>.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Fox, "CiteSeeing: Riverside Terrace and Environs: An Architectural Tour," *Cite*, Winter 1987, 21-22, [https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/03/RiversideTerrace\\_Fox\\_Cite19.pdf](https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/03/RiversideTerrace_Fox_Cite19.pdf); Stephen Fox, "Finger, Joseph (1887-1953)," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/finger-joseph>.

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have assumed a new role, serving as a direct and tangible link to an important and underappreciated chapter in the state's ethnically diverse heritage that has assumed greater significance over time.

**Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage of Baytown's Jewish Community (1930-1974)**

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue meets National Register Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage based on its association with the Jewish population of the Tri-Cities communities, now known as Baytown.<sup>32</sup> Multiple K'nesseth Israel charter members were prominent in the early history and development of all three of the Tri-cities in the Baytown area, and their influence and contributions are keenly associated with downtown Goose Creek, in particular. They operated stores, developed properties, and joined various civic and social groups that enabled them to become leading figures in the Tri-Cities area. Over time, however, many of these businesses and the buildings associated with the local Jewish community ceased to exist. The loss of these direct and tangible links to local Jewish heritage adds to the significance of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue and what it represents to the local Jewish community. The building survives as an iconic local cultural landmark within greater Baytown and is symbolic of a segment of the community's rich and diverse ethnic tapestry that has been largely underappreciated. K'nesseth Israel Synagogue is also associated with the subtheme of Jewish history—the Galveston Movement—because several members of the original congregation immigrated to the US via the Texas port. Finally, K'nesseth Israel Synagogue is noteworthy as an example of how a small-town congregation, throughout its entire existence, has united all local followers of Judaism, regardless of their background, traditions, and beliefs. The number of such institutions across the state has dwindled over the years, but K'nesseth Israel Synagogue continues to serve the local Jewish community and remains a source of pride among those linked to the congregation.

The broad themes associated with the local Jewish community of present-day Baytown are shared among those in many municipalities across the state, especially those established during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. New and strong economic forces triggered the establishment of new towns across the state at that time. Railroad expansion was the primary catalyst for the influx of Jewish immigrants to smaller cities throughout the state during the late nineteenth century. As railroad expansion ebbed, the discovery of oil at Spindletop in 1901 and the emerging oil extraction and refining industries became motivators behind the creation of a new wave of cities and towns. Regardless of the underlying causes, people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, and geographic origins came to these communities, lured by enhanced opportunities and the potential financial rewards they offered. Among those who participated in this trend were Jewish immigrants who typically established retail stores and businesses. The discovery of oil in Goose Creek in 1916 and the resulting influx of multiple Jewish families who followed such a pattern led to the creation of K'nesseth Israel and the construction of its synagogue and community house in 1930.

**Early Jewish Residents in the Tri-Cities Lead to the Establishment of K'nesseth Israel (1910s-1927)**

The first Jews to move to the area now known as Baytown have not been confirmed; however, Charles Trifon and his wife Bessie are believed to be among the earliest when they reportedly opened the Cozy Theater in Pelly by 1913.<sup>33</sup> The earliest and most reliable data source about the local Jewish population is the 1920 federal census. It identifies several individuals (Sol Aron, Abe Aron, Alexander Grenader, Ira Guberman, and Henry Lerner) and their respective families who later signed K'nesseth Israel's articles of incorporation. However, the census also identified other individuals who likely were Jewish but were not explicitly identified as such and do not appear in the next decennial census. Examples

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<sup>32</sup> Much of the following information is based on the work of Don Teter, a former member of Congregation K'nesseth Israel who died in 2012. He worked tirelessly to capture the history of the group and led efforts for the synagogue to be declared a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1991. His unpublished manuscript, entitled "Oil Gevalt: The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community, 1928-2008" is the single most thorough and complete source of information about Congregation K'nesseth Israel and the many contributions of its members over time.

<sup>33</sup> "Charles Trifon: Baytown's first movie mogul," *The Baytown Sun*, June 29, 2020, 4, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1468142/m1/4/>.

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include Abraham Goldstein, Abraham Stern, Abe Nathan, and Abe Freshman, who emigrated from Russia, Austria, and Poland, respectively.<sup>34</sup>

The 1920 census reveals a degree of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about Jewish culture as enumerators listed the native tongue of some residents (Sol Aron) as “Hebrew” (possible but unlikely) or (Elias Hoffman) as “Jewish.” (The enumerator’s narrow worldview was further evidenced when the word “Mexican” was used to record the native language of those residents born in Mexico.) The majority of people known or believed to be Jewish largely lived dispersed from one another within unincorporated “New Town” (Goose Creek). A few lived in “Humble Rental Housing” (Baytown) or along such vaguely defined thoroughfares as “Oil Field Road” in Humble housing or Goose Creek Shell Road and Goose Creek–Refinery Shell Road. The heads of household (males) listed their occupations as merchants, clerks, or peddlers, but a few others made a living with specialized skills such as shoemaker, carpenter, tailor, and clothier.<sup>35</sup>

The *Texas Jewish Heritage*, a Houston-based newspaper, began reporting on events in Goose Creek by 1923 when it noted that A. Grenadier (Grenader), T. Guberman, D. Aron, H. Lerner, C. Trifon, A. L. Stein, Dave Pepl, and D. Axelrod made contributions to Keren Hayesod, a group that raised funds for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>36</sup> While many of the articles that the newspaper published were typically social in nature, they also revealed the growing stability of the Tri-Cities communities and their Jewish population.

Tri-Cities Jews began to meet (date unknown) regularly for Shabbat services in a store owned by Sol Aron. While it provided a place to gather, the space was limited and proved insufficient for weddings and other ceremonies.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence, they often met in their own homes to conduct special events and services. In 1924, for example, Joseph and Betty Guberman provided their home for the wedding of his niece, and in 1927, the wedding of Sonia Lerner and Ira Guberman took place at the residence of Pinchus (also spelled Pincus) and Rose Goldfield.<sup>38</sup> Sometimes, formal ceremonies took place in Houston. The Bar Mitzvah of Alfred Aron, the son of Sol and Sadie Aron, was held at the Adath Yeshurun Synagogue and the reception was held at the Hebrew Institute.<sup>39</sup>

### **Establishment of K'nesseth Israel and Its Building Program (1928-1930)**

With a growing Jewish population, important events and milestones such as weddings and Bar Mitzvahs likely helped the local Jewish population organize the creation of K'nesseth Israel. Additionally, political causes like supporting Jewish communities in Palestine also brought together Jewish citizens of the area. On June 13, 1928, Jewish women created a Goose Creek chapter of the Hadassah, a group that raised funds to support Jewish communities in Palestine.<sup>40</sup> The creation of a local Hadassah chapter presaged the creation of K'nesseth Israel and the signing of the articles of incorporation on November 3, 1928. The charter included a 50-year expiration provision; however, an amendment passed

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<sup>34</sup> Ancestry.com, U.S. Census Records, 1920,

[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4390418\\_00466?ssrc=&backlabel=Return](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4390418_00466?ssrc=&backlabel=Return).

<sup>35</sup> Ancestry.com.

<sup>36</sup> “Congregation Adath Emeth,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, June 14, 1923, 6, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520637/m1/6/>.

<sup>37</sup> “Congregation K'Nesseth Israel Burns Mortgage,” *The Daily Sun*, January 4, 1944, 5, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1028635/m1/5/>.

<sup>38</sup> “Goose Creek,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, November 13, 1924, 3, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520711/m1/3/>; “Locals,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, January 13, 1927, 5, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520824/m1/5/>.

<sup>39</sup> “Locals,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, October 27, 1927, 5, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520865/m1/5/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Goose Creek,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, June 21, 1928, 12, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520899/m1/12/>.

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in 1978 extended the charter indefinitely.<sup>41</sup> A list of the 20 founding members and their spouses, as noted by K'nesseth Israel historian Don Teter, is available in Table 8-1.

With one exception, all of the charter members and their families are listed in the 1930 federal census.<sup>42</sup> Most lived in Goose Creek, but others lived in Pelly or Baytown. The census also identified several other Jewish residents in the area who were not charter members of K'nesseth Israel, most notably Harry Aron, a tailor, whose four brothers signed the charter. The 1930 census recorded additional information that sheds further light on the background, education, and lives of those tallied. The form allowed enumerators to record the year of first marriage; the ability to read, write, and speak English; more detailed information about occupations; and the year of immigration and country of origin. With this census data along with immigration records available from Ancestry.com, patterns emerge that show how the Tri-Cities Jewish population followed broad historical trends among other Jewish immigrants from that era. The majority emigrated from Russia and other eastern European countries and arrived in the US via New York. Charles Trifon, Joseph and Ira Guberman, and their brother Harry Lerner (who changed his name) were among those who entered the US at Galveston and appear to be associated with the Galveston Movement. Mose and Joe Sumner, as well as Morris Wilkenfeld, were born in the US and thus were already citizens. The census also recorded information about the status of any veterans and where they served. Five charter members were veterans of World War I. While two (Mose Sumner and Morris Wilkenfeld) were US-born citizens, the other three (Esidore Aron, Joe E Moskowitz, and Alexander Grenader) were recent immigrants that had arrived just a few years before the war. Their military service attested to their patriotism, loyalty, and dedication to their newly adopted homeland.

As the 1930 census indicates, K'nesseth Israel included a diverse group of people from both the US and Eastern Europe; however, the desire to establish a place to worship, celebrate, and honor their faith unified them. Many newly organized Jewish congregations across the state prioritized the establishment of a cemetery and delayed constructing a synagogue until the population planted firmer roots in their respective communities. Congregants of K'nesseth Israel chose a different path (a Jewish cemetery still does not exist in Baytown). Soon after organizing, the congregation discussed the building of a synagogue. Such a step was not universally embraced among its members.<sup>43</sup> The community of Goose Creek had only existed for a decade, and some congregants worried that the oil boom town was too new and volatile to support such a major capital investment. In the end, however, proponents prevailed, and K'nesseth Israel moved forward with the project.

The initial step began in the summer of 1929 when K'nesseth Israel hired Lenard Gabert, a young Jewish architect in Houston with existing ties to Goose Creek. He had previously designed a store on West Texas Avenue for K'nesseth Israel charter member Abe Aron. He had also been the architect of the recently completed lodge for the local chapter of the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.), an organization that was introduced to Texas in the 1830s by Jacob de Cordova. Cordova was a Jamaica-born Jewish pioneer who was prominent in early Texas history.<sup>44</sup> Sol Aron was a member of the lodge, and other K'nesseth Israel members likely were too.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Donald L. Teter, "OIL GEVALT. The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community," 3, Unpublished manuscript. From DocPlayer, <https://docplayer.net/20890146-Oil-gevalt-the-history-of-the-baytown-texas-jewish-community-1928-2008-donald-l-teter.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Elias Hochman was struck and killed by an automobile in 1929. The 1930 census is available at Ancestry.com, U.S. Census Records, 1930, Goose Creek, Districts 0169-0172; Pelly, Districts 0173, 0174; Precinct 3, Districts 0177, 0178, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4547975\\_00589?ssrc=&backlabel=Return](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4547975_00589?ssrc=&backlabel=Return).

<sup>43</sup> Donald L. Teter, 3.

<sup>44</sup> "Natalie Ornish, "De Cordova, Jacob Raphael (1808–1868)," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/de-cordova-jacob-raphael>.

<sup>45</sup> The dedication stone on the lodge has deteriorated significantly but the names "Guberman" and "Aron" are still discernible as members of the building committee.

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Gabert completed his first set of plans for K'nesseth Israel in August 1929, and a brief article in *The Houston Post-Dispatch* reveals that the original design was grander than what was ultimately built. The newspaper described the project as a “one-story, 38x80 feet, hollow tile, brick and stone synagogue.”<sup>46</sup> The lowest bid was reported to be about \$18,000. The cost likely was considered excessive since some K'nesseth Israel members had already expressed concern about the congregation's sustainability over time and being burdened with such a debt.<sup>47</sup> Five weeks later, *The Houston Post-Dispatch* reported that Gabert was revising his plans for the synagogue.<sup>48</sup> The project was apparently shelved since no follow-up stories appeared for several months.

The delay in the construction of the synagogue led K'nesseth Israel members to seek alternate spaces for important gatherings. The I.O.O.F. lodge became the preferred location during the interim. In November of that year, the wedding between Dora Lerner and Isidor Wiener took place in the I.O.O.F.<sup>49</sup> The event was among many K'nesseth Israel-related celebrations and gatherings held at the lodge both before and even after the construction of the synagogue.

By the summer of 1930, *The Houston Post-Dispatch* reported that Gabert was completing plans for a steel-trussed arched synagogue in Goose Creek. Its dimensions (36x51 feet) were substantially smaller than those described in August 1929. In addition, the article stated that the project included a separate, one-story, 26x41-foot “community house” of frame construction.<sup>50</sup> Later that month, the same newspaper heralded Goose Creek's vibrant construction activity and identified the synagogue as the city's largest building project for the first six months of that year. The synagogue's construction cost was reported as \$8,400, while that of the community house was \$3,104, a combined cost substantially less than the originally reported bid of about \$18,000.<sup>51</sup> About two weeks later, the newspaper announced that C. I. Fortinberry of Goose Creek had received the contract to build the synagogue for an approximate cost of \$11,500.<sup>52</sup>

With the aid of Goose Creek founder and soon-to-be Texas governor Ross Sterling, the congregation secured lots 1 and 2 in Block 7 of the Goose Creek town plat in 1930 for the synagogue. Sterling not only suggested the site, but he also contributed \$1,000 towards its purchase.<sup>53</sup> Sanborn maps of 1926 show the property as unimproved at that time, but multiple newspaper accounts over the years state that a gable-roof building with an elongated rectangular plan once stood on the property (Figure 2). It reportedly was a mess hall for the Humble refinery, although that claim has not been confirmed. Multiple newspaper articles and interviews note that the building served temporarily as the high school when the Goose Creek school district was organized in 1919 (Figure 10). In March 1923, the school moved to a new permanent facility (later Horace Mann Junior High School), and the property was cleared by 1926.<sup>54</sup>

Following the award to the contractor in June 1930, construction proceeded at a rapid pace, and the almost-completed sanctuary was made available in time for the congregation to hold its inaugural services for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, on September 23, 1930 (Figure 11), although a formal dedication was held later at an unknown. Rabbi Jacob Danziger, with the help of Melvin Goodman, led the initial Rosh Hashanah observance, which was conducted in both

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<sup>46</sup> “Synagogue Bids To Be Opened Wednesday,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, August 11, 1929, 52, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>47</sup> “Congregation K'Nesseth Israel Burns Mortgage,” 5.

<sup>48</sup> “\$22,000 Store And Apartment,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 29, 1929, 23, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>49</sup> “Goose Creek,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, November 14, 1929, 2, Portal to Texas History,

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1054912/m1/2/>.

<sup>50</sup> “Goose Creek Gets Jewish Synagogue,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, June 1, 1930, 21, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>51</sup> “Goose Creek Permits Rise,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, June 26, 1930, 3, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>52</sup> “Fortinberry Gets Synagogue Contract,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, June 22, 1930, 24, Genealogybank.com. Fortinberry's career as a contractor appears to have been quite limited, but he was involved in numerous business and civic activities and served as mayor of Goose Creek before its consolidation into Baytown, *The Baytown Sun* November 11, 1975-6A).

<sup>53</sup> “Ego,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, August 14, 1930, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1054882/m1/1/>.

<sup>54</sup> “Goose Creek Schools,” *Semi-Weekly Tribune* May 12, 1925, 5, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1145532/m1/5/>.

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English and Yiddish.<sup>55</sup> Rabbi Danziger, a graduate of the Hebrew Theological Seminary of Chicago, had been serving the congregation for the previous two years, according to an article appearing in the *Texas Jewish Heritage*.<sup>56</sup> With both a synagogue and community house, the congregation now had facilities to hold both traditional ceremonies and informal gatherings central to their faith. The synagogue provided a space for regular Shabbat services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings as well as services for Yom Kippur, Rosh Hosannah, and other Jewish holidays. It was also used for weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, and additional consequential rabbi-led rituals.

Like other religions, the Jewish faith is not monolithic, and subgroups within this extended umbrella adhere to differing interpretations of its theology. Since most K'nesseth Israel members were from Eastern Europe, services generally followed Orthodox traditions. Men and women typically were separated from each other (no documentation has been to suggest a *mechitza* being used), although a few families reportedly sat together in the sanctuary.<sup>57</sup> Such flexibility and compromise were necessary in a community with one synagogue, a practice that was common in smaller communities where a single synagogue served the entire Jewish population.<sup>58</sup> Activities in the community house were more casual and offered a setting for everyone to intermingle for social meetings, dinners, and other events.

### Early Years of K'nesseth Israel (1931-1944)

The organization of K'nesseth Israel and the construction of its synagogue heralded a new era for the local Jewish population in the Tri-Cities area that suggested widespread acceptance and respect within the greater community. The wedding of Ruth Aron, daughter of K'nesseth Israel charter members Sol and Sadie Aron, and Dr. Harry S. Kessler of Tyler, for example, made front-page headline news in the local newspaper. More than 100 guests attended the ceremony at K'nesseth Israel and another 700 reportedly went to the reception at the I.O.O.F. lodge.<sup>59</sup> Another story that the newspaper published in the summer of 1933 touted the devoutness of the residents in the Tri-Cities and nearby La Porte. Of the 18 institutions described, the article featured images of only four institutions to represent the entire group; a photograph of K'nesseth Israel was among the four presented (Figure 12). Its inclusion underscored how the local Jewish population was integral to and prominent in the greater community at that time.<sup>60</sup>

Such reporting reflected the hard work, values, and dedication of K'nesseth Israel members, many of whom owned businesses that served the greater community. They constructed many of the buildings along West Texas Avenue in Goose Creek, Main Street in Pelly, and Market Street in Baytown, which helped to create commercial districts in each community. They were joined by other Jewish merchants who arrived after the establishment of K'nesseth Israel and likewise became successful. Harry and Sadie Blum, who moved to the area from nearby Mont Belvieu in 1929, for example, opened the Style Shoppe.<sup>61</sup> Collectively, these Jewish-owned businesses were so important to the general public

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<sup>55</sup> "Jews To Open Synagogue On Rosh Hashana," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 21, 1930, 23, Genealogybank.com; "Rabbi Danziger To Hold Goose Creek New Year Services," *Houston Chronicle*, September 16, 1930, 4, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>56</sup> "Goose Creek Congregation," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, September 18, 1930, 39, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1054704/m1/39/>. Local tradition maintains that Rabbi Ronlee Gray led K'nesseth Israel during its formative years; however, that fact has not been confirmed. Newspaper and census searches have failed to identify anyone by that name. Since a reputable publication identified another individual as the spiritual leader of K'nesseth Israel in 1930, this nomination recognizes Rabbi Jacob Danziger as the first rabbi to serve the congregation.

<sup>57</sup> In Orthodox tradition, a partition called a *mechitza* was used to separate women and men; however, no documentation has been uncovered to suggest that such a feature was used at K'nesseth Israel.

<sup>58</sup> Donald L. Teter, 16.

<sup>59</sup> "700 Attend Brilliant Aron-Kessler Nuptials Here," *The Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1931, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1020033/m1/1/>.

<sup>60</sup> "Tri-Cities And LaPorte Community Served By 18 Churches," *The Tri-Cities Sun*, July 29, 1933, C-2, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1020384/m1/29/>.

<sup>61</sup> Donald L. Teter, 24.



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that when the stores were closed in observance of high Jewish holidays, newspapers ran stories and business owners placed ads to let customers know in advance (Figure 13).

The prominence of the local Jewish community extended beyond retail sales and business enterprises, as several emerged as civic and social leaders in the Tri-Cities area. Dave Aron, for example, served on the Pelly City Council from 1928 to 1930 and assured his constituents and customers of his ability to run his store and serve the community.<sup>62</sup> The arrival of Rabbi Benjamin Wade from Beaumont in September 1931 to be K'nesseth Israel's first officially designated spiritual leader helped to raise the profile of the synagogue and its members further.<sup>63</sup> His community outreach efforts promoted acceptance and tolerance of Judaism throughout the greater community.

Soon after Rabbi Wade's arrival, Goose Creek's newspaper began publishing articles about Jewish holidays such as Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Purim. These stories not only noted the time and location of services at K'nesseth Israel, but they also described the history and significance of these holidays. The articles often appeared on the front page – a tradition that lasted for years. Rabbi Wade participated in non-congregation-related events that included addressing local service clubs, holding interfaith talks at churches, and speaking at high school graduation ceremonies.<sup>64</sup> He conducted what was reported to be the first Bar Mitzvah in Goose Creek in February 1932 for Eugene Sampson, son of Jake and Mamie Sampson of Pelly.<sup>65</sup> The event marked the congregation's stability and permanence since such events previously were held in Houston.

In addition to his religious duties, Rabbi Wade shared his thoughts and opinions about political and current affairs at all levels. The local newspaper published a lengthy article he wrote about the controversial firing of the Goose Creek city manager, urging that the two sides forge a compromise.<sup>66</sup> He also sought to engage and inform K'nesseth Israel members and the general public on global issues. On March 3, 1933—the day before Franklin D. Roosevelt became the nation's 32nd President—Rabbi Wade brought Mendel N. Fisher of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency of New York City to present a lecture entitled "Hitlerism, A Jewish Menace" at K'nesseth Israel. Fisher warned those in attendance of the dangers that Adolph Hitler posed to Jews in Germany and elsewhere and pleaded that Americans provide financial support for their plight.<sup>67</sup> Fisher made these appeals just months after Hitler came to power in January.

Rising antisemitism also reached K'nesseth Israel two years later, when someone threw rocks that broke stained-glass windows on the North Commerce Street façade on the night of May 5, 1935.<sup>68</sup> Fortunately, no one was hurt. Rabbi Wade discovered the damage the next morning and immediately notified local law enforcement. The newspaper seemed to downplay the incident and suggested that children may have been responsible. Although those responsible for the vandalism were never caught, the act no doubt alarmed members of the congregation who quietly repaired the damage.

Rabbi Wade continued to lead the congregation until 1936 when, based on city directories information and the 1940 census, he moved to Galveston and operated a drug store. The last reported ceremony he led at the K'nesseth Israel

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<sup>62</sup> "Engaged in Business But Has Time to Devote to His Town," *The Houston Post-Dispatch*, December 12, 1928, 26, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>63</sup> "World Wide," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, October 1, 1931, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520966/m1/1/>.

<sup>64</sup> "Rotarians Hear Jewish Singing," *The Daily Tribune*, June 1, 1932, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1020835/m1/1/>.

<sup>65</sup> "Goose Creek," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, February 11, 1932, 3, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520985/m1/3/>.

<sup>66</sup> "Rabbi Wade Pleads For Tolerance," *The Daily Tribune*, April 10, 1932, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1020056/m1/1/>.

<sup>67</sup> "Jewish Editor Will Speak Here," *The Tri-Cities Sun*, March 3, 1933, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1020582/m1/1/>.

<sup>68</sup> "Windows Broken From Synagogue" *The Daily Sun*, May 6, 1935, 1, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1023296/m1/1/>.

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Synagogue was the wedding of Lillie Aron and Herman Vogel on June 6, 1936.<sup>69</sup> For the next several years, guest rabbis led services for many high holidays. Rabbi Eskin of Madison, Wisconsin, and Rabbi D. L. Schnayerson of Dallas, Texas, came to K'nesseth Israel in 1936 and 1937, respectively.<sup>70</sup> Harry Aron and Pinchus Goldfield were among the laypeople who led the congregation at various times. Without a rabbi to lead the congregation, community outreach and involvement efforts appeared to wane as the number of articles about Jewish holidays, services, and other K'nesseth Israel-related activities in the local newspaper diminished over the next few years.

The situation changed in 1939 when Rabbi Benjamin (also known as Bennie) Danziger arrived in Goose Creek to serve K'nesseth Israel and became the face of the congregation.<sup>71</sup> He was the brother of Rabbi Jacob Danziger, who had temporarily led the congregation after its organization. Like his immediate predecessor, Rabbi Benjamin Danziger embraced a variety of public outreach efforts, gave talks at local churches, and participated in inter-faith unity events that local clergy organized during World War II.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps his most visible role was his involvement with a “mortgage-burning” ceremony that was held in December 1943 in conjunction with the annual Hanukkah candle-lighting festivities (Figure 14). The event was the subject of a lengthy article in the local newspaper celebrating the final payment of the loan that financed the construction of the synagogue and community house. The article also detailed the congregation’s early history.<sup>73</sup>

#### K'nesseth Israel in the Postwar Era (1945-1959)

Rabbi Danziger served the congregation for the duration of World War II, and K'nesseth Israel remained the religious, social, and cultural hub of the local Jewish community. Not long after the war’s conclusion, however, the rabbi resigned effective November 1, 1945.<sup>74</sup> To find a replacement, K'nesseth Israel placed an advertisement in the *Texas Jewish-Herald Voice*. The search continued until December 1946, when K'nesseth Israel president Mose Sumner announced that Rabbi Samuel Schwartz of Tredegar, England, would lead the congregation. Until he could relocate to the US, his brother, Rabbi Maurice Schwartz of Houston, would serve as temporary rabbi.<sup>75</sup> The new rabbi (Samuel Schwartz) had an impressive academic background. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Manchester, England, and served as a professor at the institution.<sup>76</sup> Almost two years passed before he was able to make the journey to Goose Creek. He arrived during the week of August 23, 1947, and met the congregation for the first time.<sup>77</sup>

During Schwartz’s tenure as rabbi, the number of articles about K'nesseth Israel in the local newspaper increased. As with those published when Rabbi Wade led the congregation, these articles explained the history and significance of the services and holidays. In addition, Rabbi Schwartz accepted a donation of land adjoining the synagogue from charter

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<sup>69</sup> “Miss Lillian Aron Bride Of Herman Vogel,” *The Daily Sun*, June 8, 1936, 3, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1095520/m1/3/>.

<sup>70</sup> “Yom Kippur Will Be Celebrated In Rites Late Today,” *The Daily Sun*, September 25, 1936, 2, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1095356/m1/2/>.

<sup>71</sup> “Rabbi Danziger Installed Here,” *The Daily Sun*, February 16, 1939, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1100446/m1/1/>.

<sup>72</sup> “All-Faiths Service Mapped,” *The Daily Sun*, February 18, 1942, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1101257/m1/1/>.

<sup>73</sup> “Congregation K'Nesseth Israel Burns Mortgage,” 5.

<sup>74</sup> “Goose Creek Rabbi Tenders Resignation,” *The Jewish Herald Voice*, October 18, 1945, 4, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1103045/m1/4/>.

<sup>75</sup> “Rabbi Schwartz Takes Temporary Assignment Here,” *The Daily Sun*, December 7, 1946, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1101498/m1/6/>.

<sup>76</sup> “English Rabbi Due To Take Over Pulpit In Tri-Cities Soon,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 23, 1947, 3, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>77</sup> “Congregation To Meet New Rabbi,” *The Daily Sun*, August 23, 1947, 4, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1027962/m1/4/>.

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members Morris Wilkenfeld and Dave Aron and oversaw the expansion of the community house in 1948.<sup>78</sup> The newspaper reported the construction cost to be \$5,745, but the contractor was not identified. The addition more than doubled the square footage and extended into the recently acquired lots to the north (Figure 3). The construction complemented the building's existing aesthetic and retained or incorporated many of the architectural features of the original 1930 design, such as the pedimented parapet on the front (Figure 4).

The newly enlarged community house also accommodated the growing number of Jewish families who moved to the Tri-Cities area in the postwar era. In 1947, the congregation reached what turned out to be its peak membership level with 47 families.<sup>79</sup> Many of the new arrivals were professionals who worked at the Humble plant or other nearby industrial facilities and joined K'nesseth Israel. The 1948 wedding of Gertrude Moskowitz and Donald Teter illustrates the trend. She was the daughter of Joe E. and Blanche Moskowitz, who were related to Sol and Sadie Aron (Sadie and Joe were siblings), all of whom were charter members of the congregation. Teter was a Rice Institute (University)-educated chemist who moved to the area from Fort Worth in 1948 to work at the synthetic rubber plant that was constructed in Baytown during World War II. He and Gertrude were married at K'nesseth Israel on December 26, 1948, in a ceremony that Rabbi Samuel Schwartz officiated. Other engineers and chemists, like Teter, who moved to the area in the decade following World War II included Richard Manne and Mervin Rosenbaum.<sup>80</sup> They were among a new generation of congregants that, unlike most of their predecessors, were US-born, college-educated professionals.

After serving the congregation for a few years, Rabbi Schwartz resigned from his position in September 1953 and returned to academic life. He joined the faculty of the Beth Yeshurun Hebrew School in Houston.<sup>81</sup> The rabbi did, however, return to Baytown to lead services for high holidays in 1953 and 1954.<sup>82</sup> Otherwise, K'nesseth Israel failed to attract another rabbi, and lay members of the congregation led services.

The late 1940s and 1950s proved to be something of a transitional period for K'nesseth Israel and the local Jewish community due to the shifting demographics of congregation membership. Almost half of the charter members and at least five of their spouses died between 1945 and 1960. Notable deaths included Alexander Grenader (1945), Joe Sumner (1946), Harry Lerner (1946), Charles Trifon (1948), Mamie Sampson (1948), Lillie Feinberg (1949), Abe Aron (1950), Alex Lensky (1951), Sadie Aron (1953), Yetta Hochman (1954), Schprina Lerner (1957), Sol Aron (1958), Ira Guberman (1958), Jake Feinberg (1959), and Bessie Trifon (1960). Almost all were naturalized citizens who emigrated from Europe; however, their children, most of whom were born in the US and thus had automatic US citizenship, became increasingly active in both the operations of the retail businesses and of K'nesseth Israel. Harry and Sadie Blum, for example, established the Style Shoppe in 1929, and their daughter Helen married Alfred (Al) Melinger of Austin in 1941. The ceremony took place in the synagogue and the reception was held at the community house.<sup>83</sup> The Melingers later moved from Austin by 1949 to join and eventually run the family business on West Texas Avenue.<sup>84</sup> Like so many of their

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<sup>78</sup> Donald L. Teter, 4; "1948 Building Costs Top \$3,000,000 Mark," *The Daily Sun*, September 10, 1948, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1027431/m1/1/>.

<sup>79</sup> "Synagogue historic landmark," *The Baytown Sun*, March 29, 1992, 12, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1153899/m1/12/>.

<sup>80</sup> Donald L. Teter, 10-12.

<sup>81</sup> "Registration for Hebrew School at Beth Yeshurun Begins Tuesday, Sept. 2," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, August 28, 1952, 3, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1527047/m1/3/>.

<sup>82</sup> "Jewish Holiday Is Thursday," *The Baytown Sun*, September 9, 1953, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1041670/m1/1/>; "Rosh Hashana Rites Set In Baytown," *The Baytown Sun*, September 27, 1954, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1041960/m1/1/>.

<sup>83</sup> "Helen Blum, Alfred Melinger Were Married Here Sunday," *The Daily Sun*, August 18, 1941, 3, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1027564/m1/3/>.

<sup>84</sup> "Style Shoppe Adds Newsman To Staff," *The Baytown Sun*, October 1, 1949, 6, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1029411/m1/6/>.

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colleagues, the Blums, and later the Melingers, closed the store during Jewish high holidays and ran advertisements to inform their loyal customers.

As they advanced in age, some of the older members of the congregation moved to Houston and either retired or continued to run their family businesses remotely. They typically joined other congregations, yet they maintained their membership with K'nesseth Israel. This trend only accelerated over time. The congregation continued to hold regular services, which typically were led by lay members including Pincus Goldfield, Harry Rothkopf, and Leon Paine. For the high holidays, the congregation brought A. Papperman of Houston to conduct services in Hebrew through at least the early 1960s. By that time, K'nesseth Israel combined aspects of Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox traditions that one congregant regarded as "Conformadox."<sup>85</sup>

### Transitions and 50th Anniversary Celebration (1960-1978)

For much of the 1960s and into the 1970s, K'nesseth Israel struggled to survive as membership slowly declined. Friday night services continued to be led by Pincus Goldfield, and the community house remained a place for parties, gatherings, and meetings for groups such as the local chapters of Hadassah and B'nai B'rith. More formal ceremonies such as weddings and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs began to be held at synagogues in Houston. For example, Neal Manne and Steven Rosenbaum, whose fathers were chemical engineers who came to Baytown in the postwar era, had a joint Bar Mitzvah in 1968 at Temple Emanu El near Rice University in Houston.<sup>86</sup> Following the March 1973 death of the congregation's spiritual leader Pincus Goldfield, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah were not held at K'nesseth Israel for the first time since the synagogue's construction in 1930.<sup>87</sup>

The hardship that K'nesseth Israel endured during the 1970s also coincided with a dramatic decline in the number of Jewish-owned businesses in Baytown. That was especially true along West Texas Avenue where merchants already struggled with competition from new national and regional franchise stores, such as Kmart, Woolco, and Gibson's, in the 1960s. The situation became more dire in 1979 with the announcement of the San Jacinto Mall to be built at Garth Road and Interstate Highway 10 in Baytown. Garth Road subsequently became the city's new "main street." Cognizant of the trend, the owners of the Style Shoppe relocated their store to a new strip shopping center on Garth Road.<sup>88</sup> The relocation or shuttering of so many of the retail stores that had once defined the city's historic downtown created a downward spiral that was hard to reverse. The demise of so many local, family-owned and operated businesses undermined the foundation that had led to the founding of K'nesseth Israel a half-century earlier.

Within this context, K'nesseth Israel celebrated its 50th anniversary with a rededication ceremony that was held on May 6, 1979. While the celebration took place at a challenging time for the congregation, it also sparked the beginning of renewed interest and pride among congregants and others with historical ties to K'nesseth Israel. The event attracted an estimated 140 people, some of whom had come from as far as Connecticut and Florida. Since the congregation did not have a rabbi, Rabbi James Kessler of Congregation B'nai Israel in Galveston delivered a sermon. His selection to lead the ceremony was both meaningful and quite relevant. His parents, Harry and Ruth Kessler, were the first couple to be married in K'nesseth Israel. Moreover, he was the grandson of Sol and Sadie Aron, who were instrumental in the founding and organization of the congregation. Rabbi Kessler, who died in September 2022, went on to write several books on Texas Jewish history and became only the second rabbi emeritus at Galveston's Congregation B'nai Israel.

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<sup>85</sup> Donald L. Teter, 18.

<sup>86</sup> "Joint Bar Mitzvah Is Scheduled For Friday," *The Baytown Sun*, March 12, 1968, 5, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1061582/m1/5/>.

<sup>87</sup> "Rites For Longtime Baytown Grocer Here," *The Baytown Sun*, March 20, 1973, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1104827/m1/1/>; "Jews Here To Mark New Year," *The Baytown Sun*, September 26, 1973, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1105014/m1/1/>.

<sup>88</sup> "Style Shoppe Is Now Open In New Location," *The Baytown Sun*, August 14, 1979, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1074832/m1/1/>.

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Morris Wilkenfield was among those in attendance, and he was the only one of the original charter members to join the festivities.<sup>89</sup>

### The Modern Era (1979-present)

The 50th anniversary of K'nesseth Israel helped Baytown's Jewish community coalesce as a group that developed a greater appreciation of the synagogue and community house as the hub of local Jewish culture, religion, and society. As early as February 1978, members distributed a one-page newsletter that informed readers of important events and activities of the synagogue and its members. The publication not only helped to maintain personal relationships, but it also fostered a shared sense of community that had waned in recent years. By April 1978, K'nesseth Israel began to hold regular services on the first Friday of each month and celebrated the high holidays in 1982, again relying on lay members to lead the congregation.<sup>90</sup> The initiative's success led the congregation to resume the annual tradition of holding services at K'nesseth Israel for the high holidays. By the following year, *The Baytown Sun* published an article with a photo announcing the upcoming Yom Kippur/Rosh Hashanah services that year, a practice from long past that has now continued to the present. By January 1991, K'nesseth Israel added regular morning member-led services for the third Saturday of every month.<sup>91</sup>

Growing pride and a renewed sense of purpose led the congregation to seek historic designation for the synagogue with the Texas Historical Commission. Through the thorough work of members Don Teter and Merv Rosenbaum, the Texas Historical Commission designated K'nesseth Israel Synagogue as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1991.<sup>92</sup> A dedication ceremony was held on March 22, 1992.<sup>93</sup> Teter later used much of the information in the marker application to prepare a more detailed history of K'nesseth Israel and its synagogue that was completed in 2008, marking the congregation's 80th anniversary. This unpublished manuscript, entitled "Oil Gevalt: The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community, 1928-2008" is the basis of the statement of significance in this National Register nomination. The manuscript includes additional historical information from Teter's own research, as well as biographical and anecdotal material from other congregants.

K'nesseth Israel has remained stable and continues to hold regular services monthly and on minor Jewish holidays and High Holy Days. However, the congregation has had to deal with a new set of challenges in recent years as the facilities have been damaged by devastating hurricanes striking the Texas Gulf Coast with greater frequency and strength. Natural disasters are not a new phenomenon as Baytown has experienced a number of hurricanes and tropical storms since it was founded. Among the most severe were the so-called "Surprise Hurricane" of 1943 and Hurricane Carla in 1961. Both caused widespread flooding throughout Baytown but did little physical damage to K'nesseth Israel Synagogue. In September 2008, Hurricane Ike made landfall near Galveston and caused much harm throughout the upper Texas coast including K'nesseth Israel Synagogue. Both the synagogue and community house sustained damage; however, the effects were more severe to the community house, where a new kitchen had just been installed a few months earlier.<sup>94</sup> An

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<sup>89</sup> "140 At 'Kesseth [sic] Israel's 50th Anniversary Fete Here," *The Baytown Sun*, May 14, 1979, 1, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1074609/m1/3/>.

<sup>90</sup> "Congregation K'nesseth Israel Records, c. 1950s-2010s," Rice University, Fondren Library, Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives," Baytown Jewish Community News, April 1, 1978, <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/108888>.

<sup>91</sup> "Congregation K'nesseth Israel Records, c. 1950s-2010s," January 1, 1991, <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/108983>.

<sup>92</sup> Texas Historical Commission, "Historic Marker Application: K'Nesseth Israel Synagogue." The Portal to Texas History, crediting the Texas Historical Commission, 1991, Portal to Texas History, [https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph477729/?q="22K"27Nesseth"20Israel"22](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph477729/?q=).

<sup>93</sup> "Synagogue historic landmark," *The Baytown Sun*, March 29, 1992, 12-A, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1153899/m1/12/>.

<sup>94</sup> "Congregation K'nesseth Israel Records, c. 1950s-2010s," various months in 2008, [https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/108804/discover?filtertype\\_0=dateIssued&filter\\_relational\\_operator\\_0>equals&filter\\_0=%5B2000+TO+2009%5D&filtertype=dateIssued&filter\\_relational\\_operator>equals&filter=2008](https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/108804/discover?filtertype_0=dateIssued&filter_relational_operator_0>equals&filter_0=%5B2000+TO+2009%5D&filtertype=dateIssued&filter_relational_operator>equals&filter=2008).

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insurance settlement awarded K'nesseth Israel \$70,000 for repairs, which were completed in 2009.<sup>95</sup> K'nesseth Israel also received a small grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston to help offset renovation costs.<sup>96</sup>

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused extensive water-related damage to the sanctuary. The building was subsequently deemed unsafe for occupation until some type of remediation could be implemented. A massive fundraising effort was initiated at the end of 2017, and over \$215,000 was collected through personal donations and grants. Many donors were former members, families of former members, or Baytown citizens who still had a love and attachment to the synagogue.<sup>97</sup> Then K'nesseth Israel applied for and received a large grant from the National Park Service's Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund.<sup>98</sup> The grant also enabled The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability to prepare a case study analysis to assess the synagogue's structural vulnerability. The study was completed in October 2022. The synagogue is now safe to occupy and is used again on a regular basis.

### Criterion C: Architecture

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture in part because of its association with Lenard Gabert (1894-1976), a Houston-based architect whose career extended from the early 1920s to the 1970s (Figures 15 and 16).<sup>99</sup> Gabert was among the earliest and most prominent Jewish architects in Houston. Most of the commissions over his lengthy career were in the city of Houston, but he also worked across southeast Texas, including Baytown, Liberty, La Grange, Wharton, and College Station. He mostly served a Jewish clientele and designed a wide range of buildings that included single- and multi-family residences, stores, warehouses, offices, schools, and synagogues. Among his best-known works are Eldorado Ballroom (1939), Temple Emanu El synagogue (with Mackie and Kamrath, 1949), the Houston Jewish Community Center (1950), Temple Israel in Schulenberg Congregation Beth Yeshurun (1962 with Eugene Werlin).

### Lenard Gabert (1894-1920)

Lenard Gabert was born in Navasota, Texas, on June 27, 1894, the only child of Morris and Rilda Gabert. After his mother died in 1898, he lived with his maternal grandparents, Gustav (Gus) and Berta Lewis, at their residence at 1928 Avenue L, according to 1900 census records.<sup>100</sup> The next decennial census notes that he lived with his father and his second wife Marie at 1902 Hamilton Street in Houston. He was confirmed at Temple Beth Israel in Houston in 1909.<sup>101</sup> Although he initially attended Texas A&M College (now Texas A&M University) from 1910 through 1912, he returned to Houston and enrolled in the inaugural class of Rice Institute (now Rice University) in 1912. He was one of six students in the architecture program that was led by noted local architect William Ward Watkin.<sup>102</sup> Four years later, he graduated

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<sup>95</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability, 9.

<sup>96</sup> "Congregation K'nesseth Israel Records, c. 1950s-2010s," September 1, 2009, <https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/109047/wrc12217.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>97</sup> "For Future Generations," *The Baytown Sun*, January 28, 2018, 10, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1450972/m1/10/>; Shana Bauman, email message to David Moore, April 16, 2023..

<sup>98</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio, Center for Cultural Sustainability, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Much of the existing documentation about Gabert's life and professional career relies on the work of noted Houston architectural historian Stephen Fox whose keen insights are cited in multiple reports and historic designation applications of Gabert-designed buildings. While these materials serve as the foundation of this overview of Gabert's career and significance as a designer, this nomination also presents supplemental material gleaned from census records, city directories, newspaper articles, and other sources of information. Perhaps the most valuable and extensive documentation of his work is the collection of his architectural records that has been donated to the Woodson Research Center at Rice University (<http://archives.library.rice.edu/repositories/2/resources/1113>).

<sup>100</sup> Ancestry.com, U.S. Census Records, 1900, [https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/54287315:7602?gsfn=Lenard&gsln=Gabert&ml\\_rpos=1&hovR=1](https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/54287315:7602?gsfn=Lenard&gsln=Gabert&ml_rpos=1&hovR=1).

<sup>101</sup> "Galveston," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, June 3, 1909, 4, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph84771/m1/4/>.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Fox, "Rice University's School of Architecture Turns 100," *Texas Architect*, September/October 2012, 21, <https://magazine.texasarchitects.org/2012/09/02/september-october-2012/>.

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with a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture. Not long after his graduation, the U.S. entered the World War, and he served in the U.S. Army Hospital Corps. Following Armistice, Gabert returned to Houston and resumed his civilian life.

The following decade marked a pivotal time in Gabert's personal life. The 1920 federal census notes that he lived with his father and stepmother at their residence on Hamilton Street, and he listed his occupation as architect. By 1922, he shared an office with his father, who was in the real estate business, in the Binz Building in downtown Houston. That same year, he married Gladys Thelma Rotholz in Kansas City, Missouri. On October 29, 1925, their first child, Lenard Morris Gabert, was born, and by the time the Gaberts announced the birth of their daughter Rilda on July 31, 1929, they had moved to a house at 2506 Arbor Street designed and built by Gabert the previous year.<sup>103</sup>

*Launching His Professional Career and Early Work (1922-1941)*

Although he may have had earlier commissions, the first building that Gabert is known to have designed was a two-story edifice (demolished) constructed in 1922 at Chartes and Clay Streets for the B'nai Abraham Association of Houston (Figure 17).<sup>104</sup> In its article announcing the building's proposed construction, *The Houston Post* touted the unconventional nature of its subscription-based financing and identified Gabert as the architect. This was the first of many articles in local newspapers that tracked Gabert's growing success as an architect.

Soon after the B'nai Abraham building was completed, newspapers noted Gabert as both the designer and owner of several multi-family properties in Houston that no doubt augmented his income and supplemented his nascent architectural practice. As he began to develop these properties, he identified himself as "Architect and Builder" in the city directory of 1923-24. However, that was the only year he described himself that way and subsequently listed himself as "Architect." Notable and still-extant examples of multi-family buildings that he designed and built include a two-story brick house at 1307 Isabella Street (1923) and the Peacock and Plaza Court Apartments at 1414-1416 Austin Street (1924).<sup>105</sup> He also owned at least one other at 1107 Eagle Street (demolished).<sup>106</sup> For additional information, please see Table 8-2.

As Gabert's practice began to grow, he also designed duplexes, private residences, retail stores, and, in 1927, even his own office (demolished) at 1315 Bell Avenue (Figure 18). This modest Spanish Colonial Revival-style building was indicative of Gabert's early reliance on traditional architectural expressions as the basis of his designs. The building also provided space for a store, a somewhat common attribute of his early apartment designs. A good and relatively unaltered example is the building at 4212 Emancipation (formerly Dowling) Avenue that Gabert designed in 1929 for Carl Leshin. An article in *The Houston Post-Dispatch* notes that "two stories will occupy the ground floor and two apartments will be on the second floor."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ancestry.com, U.S. Census Records, 1920, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4390418\\_00466?ssrc=&backlabel=Return](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4390418_00466?ssrc=&backlabel=Return); Ancestry.com, Birth, Marriage & Death, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/34/>; Ancestry.com, Houston, Texas, City Directory, 1922 <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1121579731:2469?tid=&pid=&queryId=437e59b1b7637c58a940cf9dd1d5bb70&phsrc=XZp15&phstart=successSource>; "Gabert Builds \$10,000 Duplex," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, April 1, 1928, 64, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>104</sup> "B'rith Association Lets Contract For Building," *The Houston Post*, January 23, 1922, 10, Genealogybank.com; "Novel Method Used to Raise \$20,000 for This Building," *The Houston Post*, February 8, 1922, 14, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>105</sup> "January Building Permits \$2,039,814," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, January 31, 1924, 7, Genealogybank.com; "Peacock and Plaza Court Apartments Landmark Designation Report," City of Houston Planning and Development Department,

[https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/Commissions/docs\\_pdfs/hahc/reports\\_ACTION/JunAction/C1\\_1414-1416\\_Austin\\_LM\\_ACTION.pdf](https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/Commissions/docs_pdfs/hahc/reports_ACTION/JunAction/C1_1414-1416_Austin_LM_ACTION.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> "Give Them Comfort with 'Franklin' Gas Steam Radiators," *The Jewish Herald Voice*, October 16, 1924, 6, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1520707/m1/6/>.

<sup>107</sup> "\$22,000 Store And Apartment," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, February 2, 1929, 21, Genealogybank.com.

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Most of his clientele were members of Houston's growing and increasingly affluent Jewish community. He became popular among the many residents in the predominately Jewish neighborhood of Riverside Terrace in the present-day Third Ward where he maintained his own residence (Figure 19).

Gabert's reputation soon expanded beyond Houston and again involved working primarily with Jewish clients. Notable examples included the Fair store and a hospital in Liberty, the Leon Abovitz house in Wharton, and several projects in the Tri-Cities area of eastern Harris County. His first known commission in Goose Creek was a one-story store on West Texas Avenue that he designed in 1926 for Abe Aron, a Jewish dry goods merchant and later one of the founding members of K'nesseth Israel.<sup>108</sup> Aron built several other commercial buildings on West Texas Avenue, the locations of which have not yet been documented. It is not known if Gabert designed any of these buildings.

In 1929 the Goose Creek chapter of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) lodge hired Gabert to design a two-story building at the corner of West Texas Avenue and North Jones Street. The building, which remains a distinctive architectural landmark in present-day downtown Baytown, was constructed for \$30,000 (Figure 20). At the building's dedication on April 26, 1930, Daniel E. Garret, U.S. Representative whose 8th Congressional district encompassed the Tri-Cities area, came to Goose Creek and spoke at the ceremonial laying of the corner stone.<sup>109</sup> His presence confirmed the building's importance to the community. Many I.O.O.F. members were leading citizens of Goose Creek and the Tri-Cities area; notable among them was Sol Aron.<sup>110</sup> He owned and operated a successful dry goods store and was the brother of Abe Aron, who had previously hired Gabert. He, too, was a founding member of K'nesseth Israel. Since Sol Aron was on the building committee, he likely would have had interactions with Gabert. Thus, Gabert and members of the newly organized K'nesseth Israel had connections by the time the congregation decided to proceed with the construction of a synagogue in 1929 about two blocks due east of the I.O.O.F. Lodge (see Criterion A discussion for more information about the construction of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue).

Gabert's practice flourished during the 1930s despite the economic turmoil that affected much of the country at that time. He continued to design residences, apartments, and stores for some of the more affluent members of Houston's Jewish community, many of whom built houses in the Riverside Terrace and Braeswood neighborhoods.<sup>111</sup> Another notable building of the era was the Eldorado Ballroom at 2310 Elgin Street (National Register, 2020).<sup>112</sup> This two-story, Moderne-style building was constructed in the heart of Houston's predominately African American Third Ward and quickly became an important music venue and cultural landmark for Black Houstonians.

Gabert again served in the military when the country went to war after Japanese Imperial forces attacked Pearl Harbor. He registered under the so-called "Old Man's Registration" (men who were 45 to 64 years old) but was a captain, presumably in the US Army or US Army Corps of Engineers. He initially reported to San Antonio, but by July 1943, he was stationed at Camp Swift near Bastrop where he worked in the Engineer's office. He likely stayed there for much of the (if not the entire) duration of the war since he and his wife Gladys announced the confirmation of their daughter Rilda while living at 1035 East 44th Street in Austin. He was discharged on December 31, 1945.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "Architect L. Gabert" *Houston Post-Dispatch*, July 18, 1926, 7, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>109</sup> "Goose Creek Fete Planned," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, April 27, 1930, 47, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>110</sup> "Odd Fellows Hall Work Started," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, October 30, 1929, 15, Genealogybank.com.

<sup>111</sup> Stephen Fox, "CiteSeeing: Riverside Terrace and Environs: An Architectural Tour;" Stephen Fox, "Braeswood: An Architectural Tour," *Cite*, Winter 1986, 12-13, [https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/02/CiteSeeing\\_Fox\\_Cite16.pdf](https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/02/CiteSeeing_Fox_Cite16.pdf).

<sup>112</sup> "Eldorado Ballroom," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2020, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/100007402/100007402.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> Ancestry.com, Draft, Enlistment and Service; "Keeping Up With Our Boys In The Service," *Jewish Herald-Voice*, September 3, 1942, 2, Portal to Texas History, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1102755/m1/2/>; *Jewish Herald-Voice*, May 17, 1945, 3, Portal to Texas History, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1102606/m1/5/>.



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*Postwar Career (1945-1976)*

Gabert resumed his architectural practice after concluding his military service in 1945, but he began to take on new kinds of projects of a larger scale. William Jackson Wisdom, a University of Texas graduate, joined the firm by 1949 as an associate architect and later became a partner. After Wisdom left the firm in 1957, Gabert changed the name to Lenard Gabert and Associates.<sup>114</sup>

While the bulk of Gabert's pre-World War II work focused primarily, but not exclusively, on residential designs, the firm received commissions that were considerably grander and more complex than those before the war. He and his firm designed warehouses, public schools, and even shopping centers. See Table 8-2 for more information.

As the breadth of his practice expanded during the postwar era, Gabert also received a number of commissions for the design of synagogues and other Jewish-related organizations. These projects represent some of his most celebrated work and largely define his architectural legacy. Temple Emanu El (1949) at 1500 Sunset Boulevard in Houston won widespread praise both locally and nationally. Built near Gabert's alma mater, the synagogue was a collaborative undertaking with Mackie and Kamarath, another prominent Houston-based architectural firm. This now-iconic architectural landmark incorporates Usonian design principles that Frank Lloyd Wright espoused at the time. Upon the temple's completion, critics praised its modern, non-traditional form, and it was even highlighted in the December 1949 issue of *Architectural Forum* (Figure 21). Another national publication, *Architectural Record*, featured the Jewish Home for the Aged, which is extant on Herman and Almeda Road (Figure 22). The lengthy article provided numerous examples of new design ideas and concepts to accommodate the growing number of senior citizens in the U.S. Gabert designed the building with his associates W. J. Wisdom and Joseph Krakow.

In 1949-50, Gabert designed the Jewish Community Center at Alameda Road and Herman Drive which served the entire Houston community's still-growing Jewish population. He also received other commissions outside of Houston including the Temple Israel in Schulenburg in 1951. A few years later, he designed a synagogue for Congregation Shearith Israel (1956, but destroyed by fire in 2010) in Wharton that was noteworthy for its building footprint configured in the shape of the Star of David.<sup>115</sup>

Demographic changes in Houston's predominately Jewish neighborhoods during the late 1950s and 1960s triggered a wave of new synagogue construction in Meyerland and surrounding areas as the African American population in the Third Ward area increased and Jewish residents moved out. Gabert remained popular within many of the congregations, evidenced by the numerous commissions the firm secured to design new facilities during this period. Examples include Adath Emeth Synagogue (1960, demolished 2018) at South Braeswood Boulevard and Green Willow Drive, and Temple for Congregation Beth Yeshurn on Beechnut Street in Meyerland (1962, remodeled).

The success of Gabert and his firm continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s as is evident by the Inventory of architectural records on file at the Woodson Research Center at Rice University.

Gabert died on September 12, 1976, and his son, L. M. Gabert, a civil engineer, took over the firm, which was later renamed Gabert-Abuzalaf & Associates, Inc. In 2017, drawings from the firm were presented to the Woodson Library at Rice University where Lenard Gabert had been among the first graduating class of this institution and its architecture program.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/overview?homepageId=20644018>.

<sup>115</sup> "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - Wharton, Texas," *Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life*, <https://www.isjl.org/texas-wharton-encyclopedia.html>.

<sup>116</sup> An inventory of the records is available online at the following link: [http://archives.library.rice.edu/repositories/2/archival\\_objects/265584](http://archives.library.rice.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/265584).

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Gabert enjoyed considerable success for over a half-century. While the bulk of his work was in Houston, he received commissions throughout southeast Texas and mostly worked with the area's Jewish population. He is best known for his synagogue designs, but he also was the architect of numerous residences, apartment buildings, retail stores, offices, and industrial and warehouse facilities. He has made a lasting imprint on the architectural history and development of Houston and surrounding areas, including K'neseth Israel in Baytown.

**Noteworthy Example of an Early Modernistic Jewish Synagogue**

Besides its association with Lenard Gabert, K'neseth Israel Synagogue possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a noteworthy example of a Jewish synagogue that retains its salient features and embellishment to an exceptional degree. While the synagogue is not a textbook example of any academic style or architectural expression, it is noteworthy for the quality of its design. The intricate brickwork, tall and narrow round-arched windows and motifs, expansive front parapet with a subtle point arch, and stylized ornamentation are particularly significant. Stylistically, however, K'neseth Israel is something of an outlier when compared to other early twentieth-century synagogues in Texas and appears to be more of a blend of both traditional (Byzanto-Romanesque Revival) and Modernistic architectural ideals.

Based on a cursory examination of secondary sources, synagogues built in Texas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often featured symmetrically arranged primary façades similar to that of K'neseth Israel.<sup>117</sup> However, they incorporated ornamentation and embellishments based on traditional architectural movements. Notable examples include Temple Beth-El in Corsicana, Temple Freda in Bryan, and Temple B'nai Israel in Victoria, all of which were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>118</sup> Temple Beth-El was completed in 1900 in the Moorish Revival style, a rare and somewhat out-of-the-ordinary architectural expression in Texas. Both Temple Freda (1913) and Temple B'nai Israel (1923) exhibit elements of the more common Classical Revival style, which was popular during the early twentieth century.

While K'neseth Israel Synagogue shares many of the same physical qualities of these and other synagogues, the building also displays characteristics associated with the Modernist movement, representing a departure from synagogue design norms at that time, at least in Texas. This new style was innovative and turned away from historic precedents and reinterpretations of older and more familiar styles; instead, it embarked on a new path. One can argue that K'neseth Israel Synagogue even heralded the beginning of a new trend in synagogue architectural design in Texas, albeit at a modest level. Architects of Jewish synagogues in later years, and especially after World War II (including Lenard Gabert), embraced modern architectural forms that changed perceptions of how a synagogue should appear – looking to the future, not the past.

When completed in 1930, the building immediately became a source of pride not only to its members but also to the entire community of Goose Creek. Photographs of the synagogue appeared in the local newspaper, highlighting the synagogue as yet another part of the rich mosaic of the still young but increasingly stable community of Goose Creek. The building's design also contrasted with other religious buildings in Goose Creek of the era. An article in *The Tri-Cities Sun* 1933-28 includes several photos of the city's most important religious buildings (Figure 12). Most were examples of Gothic and Classical Revival-inspired architectural forms and expressions that were common throughout the state and nation.

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<sup>117</sup> "Texas Historic Sites Atlas," <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov>; "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish communities – Texas," <https://www.isjl.org/texas-encyclopedia.html>; Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, *Lone Stars of David: the Jews of Texas* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2007).

<sup>118</sup> "Temple Beth-El," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1986, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/86003687/86003687.pdf>; "Temple Freda," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1982, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/83003128/83003128.pdf>, and "B'nai Israel," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1983, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/86002613/86002613.pdf>.

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K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, on the other hand, presented a far more unique and innovative design that departed from standard religious architectural norms of the time, and it remains a distinct architectural landmark in the community.

The building's architectural significance is also representative of broader trends beyond the community of Goose Creek (now Baytown). Up until World War I, synagogue designs in Texas and other southern states typically relied on conventional forms firmly rooted in the past, which was especially true for those that served larger congregations in major cities. Samuel D. Gruber, PhD., is a noted architectural historian and historic preservationist who has written extensively about historic Jewish art and architecture in the US and abroad, and he has assembled a collection of historic postcards that presents a quick overview of these architectural trends in an online exhibition entitled "Synagogues of the South: Architecture and Jewish Identity."<sup>119</sup> Most examples are from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and showcase high-styled buildings based on traditional forms and display sophisticated designs and intricate details; many of them are in Texas. As the collection reveals, synagogue designs during the interwar period (1919-1939) began to shift away from historical precedents and instead embraced new, more innovative architectural ideals that are reflective of the "Modernist" movement. Noteworthy illustrations include those that can be classified as examples of the Art Deco and Moderne Styles, which presented a simpler and more massive aesthetic that often incorporated geometric or stylized repetitive ornamentation.

Some synagogue designs of the era, however, were more transitional in their approach and incorporated elements from both traditional and contemporary ideals. K'nesseth Israel Synagogue is such an example. Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, a prominent architectural critic at the time, wrote about the trend as early as 1947. In an article entitled, "The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style of Expressive of America," she explored the evolving nature of synagogue design in the US. She wrote that "the synagogue style of the 1920s' was a Byzanto-Romanesque revival adapted, to be sure, to modern dynamism."<sup>120</sup> Such an assessment certainly could apply to K'nesseth Israel Synagogue. Moreover, this analysis is consistent with Gruber's own relatively recent observations about the building.

Writing in his blog entitled "Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art & Monuments," Gruber examined Lenard Gabert's K'nesseth Israel Synagogue design within a broad contextual view of Jewish synagogue architecture at the time. (It is important to note that Gruber has a direct connection to K'nesseth Israel as the nephew of Mose and Joe Sumner, both of whom were founding members of the congregation and pioneer merchants in Goose Creek.) He stated that the building "has been described as conveying 'a hint' of the exotic," but added that "K'nesseth Israel is by far the simplest and most streamlined-pointing the way to modernist synagogues of the post-World War II period."<sup>121</sup> He also wrote that the synagogue is a relatively common design of the era and specifically cites B'nai Jeshurun (1918) in New York City and the Breed Street Schul (1923) in Los Angeles as earlier examples (Figures 23 and 24). Both buildings have symmetrically arranged front façades with large, round-arched motifs in the central entrance bays, extended parapets that mirror vaulted roofs/ceilings, and tall and narrow round-arched windows.

The National Register nominations for these two buildings reinforce Gruber's observations and the transitional nature of their respective designs. Furthermore, they illustrate how architectural historians have grappled with the complex design qualities of these buildings. The Congregation of B'nai Jeshurun was listed in NRHP 1989 and classified as an example of "Semitic Style." The nomination argues significance under Criterion C because the synagogue's design is representative of what Robert A. M. Stern described in his book, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*, as "a new phase of synagogue design." The nomination adds that the synagogue's architects rejected the popular

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<sup>119</sup> "Synagogues of the South: Architecture and Jewish Identity," <https://synagoguesofthesouth.cofc.edu>.

<sup>120</sup> "The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style of Expressive of America," *Commentary* (March 1947), <https://www.commentary.org/articles/rachel-wischnitzer-bernstein/the-problem-of-synagogue-architecture-creating-a-style-expressive-of-america/>.

<sup>121</sup> "Samuel Gruber, "USA: Baytown, Texas Celebrates Synagogue Restoration," Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art & Monuments. <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/search?q=goose+creek>.

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Classical Revival mode and returned to a Middle Eastern design vocabulary. However, their design differed from the idiom used for nineteenth-century synagogues. The exterior of the synagogue does not have the ornate decorative quality seen on the façades of the Central Synagogue and other early Moorish synagogues. Rather, B'nai Jeshurun is an austere stone building with ornament limited to the tall centrally placed entrance portal.<sup>122</sup>

The other precedent cited by Gruber is the 2001 nomination of the Breed Street Shul (listed in the NRHP as Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles), which classifies the building's architectural style as Byzantine Revival. The nomination posits that the building possesses significance under Criterion C for its design qualities and notes:

[t]he exterior of the brick synagogue includes dichromatic (alternating bands of sandstone-colored) brickwork on the façade, round-arched windows and doorways characteristic of Byzantine Revival style, as well as 'dense prickly foliage carving,' and other organic motifs (palmettos) and Stars of David in bas-relief cast stone detail. Following Byzantine tradition, the intersecting barrel vaults of the sanctuary ceiling depict the firmament and overall hand-painted decoration blend art with architecture.<sup>123</sup>

The interior of K'nesseth Israel synagogue likewise possesses significance for its physical attributes but for reasons that are somewhat contradictory to many modernistic design qualities displayed on the exterior. Gabert's scheme for K'nesseth Israel's interior relies almost exclusively on classically inspired features, as Gruber observed in his blog. The seemingly visual incongruous stylistic approach might be the architect's desire to provide congregants with a more familiar surrounding for services conducted within the sanctuary.<sup>124</sup> While the motive and rationale behind such stylistic differences have not yet been documented, the result presents a somewhat contradictory visual experience that underscores the synagogue's transitional design qualities.

Gabert's design for the interior is also noteworthy because it reflects the challenge he faced to accommodate the multiple branches of Judaism practiced within the modestly sized Jewish population of the Tri-Cities area. While the synagogue did not have a formal affiliation with any denomination, most congregants followed Orthodox traditions.<sup>125</sup> While synagogue designs of the era shared many essential interior architectural features—such as the bimah, ner tamid, and ark—that characterize any synagogue and identify such an edifice as a distinct building type, other design elements were sometimes added as a response to the practices of a particular branch of Judaism. An important tradition associated with the Orthodox denomination, for example, required that men and women be separated during services. As a consequence, many Orthodox synagogues featured a gallery or balcony reserved for women. Such an architectural element clearly would have increased construction costs and likely would have been cost prohibitive for smaller congregations like K'nesseth Israel. An alternative was the use of a partition or mechitza to separate the genders. In some synagogues, the mechitza was a permanent physical feature (wall), while in others it simply was a curtain. In his design for K'nesseth Israel, Gabert did not include a permanent mechitza, and the sanctuary remained open. While no written documentation has been found during research nor have oral histories indicated that a curtain was ever used, a mechitza possibly could have been utilized.

## Conclusion

Since its completion in 1930, the synagogue and community house that serve K'nesseth Israel have been the center of the Jewish community of Baytown and surrounding areas. Although some windows were broken in an act of vandalism in 1935, and swastikas and a misspelling of Hitler was spraypainted on the exterior in 1992, K'nesseth Israel and its

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<sup>122</sup> "Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue and Community House," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75319426>, p. 8-6.

<sup>123</sup> "Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles (Breed Street Shul)," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123859047>, p. 8-10.

<sup>124</sup> Gregory W. Smith, email to David Moore, August 4, 2023.

<sup>125</sup> Donald L. Teter, 16. The other branches of Judaism besides Orthodox include Conservative and Reform traditions, and each of these denominations includes subsets with differing customs and practices of varying degrees and subtleties.

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members have not been the subject of other reported antisemitic acts. Indeed, many congregation members historically had been held in high regard throughout the community of Baytown and have volunteered their time to a variety of public causes. Mose Sumner, Don and Gertrude Teter, Merv and Jean Rosenbaum, and Benjamin Moskowitz are among the many notable examples. While the local Jewish population has been relatively small (K'nesseth Israel membership reached its high of 47 families, approximately 200 people, in 1947), its members have remained a tightly knit community that represents an important yet underappreciated legacy of Baytown's heritage.<sup>126</sup> Jewish settlement began soon after the discovery of oil, and most of those who came were merchants who operated family-run businesses that provided goods for local consumers; however, these businesses have since closed, and many of the stores have been severely altered or demolished. The loss of so many establishments founded by Jewish individuals only underscores the significance of the synagogue and the remaining Jewish community to Baytown's local history. The continued preservation of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue and other Jewish houses of worship helps to overcome growing antisemitic sentiments of recent years and reminds all residents of the state that Jewish Texans had important roles in business, political, social, and cultural circles and remain significant within the rich tapestry of Texas history.

Furthermore, K'nesseth Israel Synagogue represents an important commission of one of Houston's earliest and most successful Jewish architects, Lenard Gabert. Other buildings of his design that have been subject to historic designation at local, state, and national levels typically refer to the synagogue at K'nesseth Israel as noteworthy within the context of his lengthy career. While most of Gabert's work was in Houston, he also received commissions throughout southeast Texas that have left an indelible footprint on the region's architectural character. His reputation as an architect continues to grow as more people have begun to recognize and appreciate his thoughtful designs, including K'nesseth Israel Synagogue.

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<sup>126</sup> "For Future Generations," *The Baytown Sun*, January 28, 2018, 10, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht1450972/m1/10/>.

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Table 8-1. List of CKI charter members in alphabetical order.

Member	Life Span	Occupation	Port of Entry*	Country of Origin	Year Arrived	Spouse	Life Span	Port of Entry*	Country of Origin	Year Arrived
Aron, Abe	1876-1950	Merchant	New York	Russia	1905	Rosie Wilkenfeld	1886-1978	New York	Austria	1900
Aron, Dave	1889-1979	Merchant	New York	Poland	1908	Sarah Krakower	1890-1965	unknown	Romania	1899
Aron, Esidor	1895-1941	Merchant	New York	Russia	1911	Orina Wilkenfeld	1900-1978	unknown	Hungary	1903
Aron, Sol	1888-1958	Merchant	New York	Russia	1906	Sadie Moskowitz	1893-1953	N/A	USA	
Feinberg, Jake	1886-1959	Merchant	Philadelphia	Poland	1908	Lillie	1886-1949	unknown	Poland	1908
Goldfield, Pinchus	1898-1973	Merchant	New Orleans	Russia	1923	Rose Lerner	1899-1990	unknown	Russia	1923
Grenader, Alexander	1889-1945	Merchant	New York	Russia	1913	Grace Keilin	1897-1978	unknown	Russia	?
Guberman, Ira	1882-1958	Merchant	Galveston	Russia	1920	Selma Schneider	????-1984	unknown	Austria	1920
Guberman, Joseph	1878-1963	Hotelier	Galveston	Russia	1917	Betty Aptkar	1886-1949	unknown	Russia	1922
Hochman, Elias	1878-1929	Died	unknown	Unknown		Yetta Wachstein	1878-1954	unknown		
Kaplan, Harry	1890-1964	Merchant	New York	Russia	1913	Sara Rosenstock	1898-1972	unknown	USA	N/A
Lensky, Alex	1889-1951	Merchant	unknown	Russia	1909	Toby Croft	1903-1974	Galveston	Poland	1921
Lerner, Harry	1867-1946	Merchant	unknown	Russia	1909	Schprina Guberman	1877-1957	unknown	Russia	1909
Levin, Samuel	1892-1966	Merchant	unknown	USA	N/A	Edna Levin	1889-1992	N/A	USA	N/A

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Moskowitz, Joseph	1896-1955	Merchant	Galveston	Hungary	1912	Blanche (Bertha) Lowenberg	1895-1960	New York	Poland	1921
Sampson, Jake	1891-1967	Merchant	unknown	Russia	1907	Mamie Massin	1896-1948	unknown	Russia	1913
Sumner, Joseph	1891-1946	Merchant	N/A	USA	N/A	bachelor	N/A			
Sumner, Mose	1890-1966	Merchant	N/A	USA	N/A	Tillie "Tee" Jacobs	Unknown	unknown		
Trifon, Charles	1886-1948	Merchant	Galveston	Russia	1905	Bessie	1892-1960	unknown	Russia	1905
Wilkenfeld, Morris	1900-1982	Merchant	N/A	USA	N/A	Beatrice Shafer	1909-1998	N/A	USA	

Source: Donald L. Teter. *OIL GEVALT. The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community*; *Census and Naturalization Records, Ancestry.com.*

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Table 8-2. Newspaper articles noting the work of Lenard Gabert in chronological order.

Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
B'rith Association Lets Contract For Building	1922-01-23	10	Houston Post	B'rith Abraham association lets contract for building at Chartres and Clay to L. W. Allen; L Gabert, architect
no headline	1923-10-07	10	Houston Post	L Gabert is erecting a two-story brick veneer house at 1307 Isabella to cost \$10,000
January Building Permits \$2,039,814	1924-01-31	9	Houston Post	Two-story apt house with 16 units with three rooms each; L Gabert is owner
With Houston Buildings: Courtesy of Builders' Exchange of Houston, Inc.	1926-07-01	7	Houston Post	Store for A. Aron in Goose Creek; A.T. Hinge wins contract
Construction News	1926-07-04	34	Houston Post	Two-story, four-unit building at La Branch near Alabama Ave for M. Stein
\$40,000 Brick Store Planned on Houston Avenue	1926-11-21	14	Houston Post	Two-story brick veneer store and apartment building for D. Laufman; on Houston Avenue and Enid Street
Architect's New Office	1927-01-30	37	Houston Post	Rendering: L Gabert's Office at 1315 Bell; Spanish Colonial Revival
Freeman Home Let To Roberts	1927-11-06	21	Houston Post	For Harry W. Freeman at 2216 Rosedale Avenue in Riverside Terrace; J.A. Roberts contractor
Gabert Builds \$10,000 Duplex	1928-04-01	64	Houston Post	For L Gabert at 2506 Arbor in Riverside Terrace; 2-story brick veneer
no headline	1928-04-22	20	Houston Post	L. A. Gabert building two-story brick veneer on Arbor between Dowling and Live Oak
Store and Flat Built on Dowling	1928-05-20	24	Houston Post	For Carl Lechin; two-story brick veneer store and apt building at Dowling and Barbee
Synagogue To Be Built At Conti-Maura	1928-07-01	29	Houston Post	For Rodesei Sholon on Conti at Maury Street
Freeman Home In Riverside Terrace	1928-07-08	15	Houston Post	Rendering: M/M Harry W. Freeman at 2316 Rosedale Ave corner of Dowling in Riverside Terrace
Pulaski Plans Warehouse	1928-09-09	17	Houston Post	For L. Pulaski; Warehouse and Office building at Leeland and Dowling; one-story concrete tile construction
Berlowitz Buildings \$15,000 Residence	1928-11-11	17	Houston Post	For J. O. Berlowitz, cotton broker at 2321[?] Southmore in Riverside
Pulaski Iron & Metal Company Opens New Building	1928-12-30	28	Houston Post	Photos of building and interior
New Building Is Located At 2307 Leeland	1928-12-30	28	Houston Post	Investment of over \$75,000; contains approximately 6500 sf for both offices and warehouse at rear; served by Southern Pacific RR
\$22,000 Store and Apartment	1929-02-17	21	Houston Post	Rendering: at Dowling and Barbee
Berlowitz Home In Riverside Terrace	1929-04-21	12	Houston Post	Rendering: for Mrs. J. O. Berlowitz at Southmore Blvd and Dowling in Riverside
Jewish Synagogue	1929-08-04	20	Houston Post	In Goose Creek; one-story 38x80 feet of hollow tile, brick, and stone
Synagogue Bids To Be Opened Wednesday	1929-08-11	52	Houston Post	Also reference one-story brick residence at Rosedale and Chenevert streets for H. Levine



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Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
Jewish Synagogue	1929-09-29	53	Houston Post	Gabert revising plans; also one-story brick veneer store and one-story brick veneer residence to be built adjacent; owner not announced
Gabert Plans New Store Building	1929-10-06	23	Houston Post	For B. D. Kaufman; one-story brick veneer store and adjacent brick veneer house at Oxford and Sixteenth Street; also triplex for A. Silverman at La Branch and Wentworth Ave
Heights Store Award Goes To M.W. Gilliam	1929-10-13	22	Houston Post	To M. W. Gilliam; for B. D. Kaufman; one-story brick veneer store and adjacent brick veneer house at Oxford and Sixteenth Street; also triplex for A. Silverman at La Branch and Wentworth Ave
Odd Fellows Hall Work Started	1929-10-30	15	Houston Post	Award to J. T. Gaught; Sol Aron a member of building committee
Thriving Community	1929-12-31	58	Houston Post	Photo: A. Aron Building on Texas Avenue
Fair Store At Liberty	1930-02-23	20	Houston Post	Rendering: Myers-Knight Construction of Beaumont wins bid
Myers-Knight To Build Fair Store At Liberty	1930-02-24	3	Beaumont Journal	L Gabert architect
La Branch Home Soon To Be Ready	1930-03-02	73	Houston Chronicle	A Silverman House at La Branch and Wentworth
Liberty Hospital	1930-04-06	20	Houston Post	Hospital for Drs H. Caplovitz and R. L. Harris; two-story brick veneer building
Goose Creek Gets Jewish Synagogue	1930-06-01	25	Houston Post	Gabert completing plans; steel trussed arched ceiling and built-up roof; also erected a one-story 26x41 community house
Goose Creek Gets Jewish Synagogue	1930-06-05	6	Texas Jewish Herald	Architect Leonard [sic] Gabert; also mentions community house
Synagogue Bids to Be Opened Tuesday	1930-06-08	24	Houston Post	Includes synagogue and community house
Fotinberry Gets Synagogue Contract	1930-06-22	24	Houston Post	Approximately \$11,500
Art Stone In Variety Made By Firm Here	1930-08-04	20	Houston Chronicle	Houston Art Stone Co. and reference to cast stone at K'nesseth Israel
Goose Creek Congregation	1930-09-18	39	Texas Jewish Herald	Rabbi Cantor Jacob M. Danziger and Rabbi Melvin Goodman will conduct services for new synagogue in Goose Creek
Jews To Open Synagogue On Rosh Hashana	1930-09-21	23	Houston Post	Photo of synagogue and community house; description of services
New Wharton Residence	1935-06-16	21	Houston Chronicle	Leon Abovitz - Gabert architect
Home To Be Built on Southmore	1935-07-07	22	Houston Chronicle	Rendering; Mr./Mrs. Robert S. Jarrett; Gabert, architect

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Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
Bids Being Taken To Build Two Residences	1935-08-04	31	Houston Chronicle	For Nathan Krakower in Riverside Terrace; Morris Rauch in Braeswood
Contract Let To Build Riverside Terrace Home	1935-08-18	30	Houston Chronicle	Krakower House; to I. Falls, contractor
Krakower Residence Work Paused, Will Be Finished Nov. 15	1935-09-01	28	Houston Chronicle	At Alameda and Wichita
Home Will Be Built On University at Stockton	1935-09-15	22	Houston Chronicle	For Leon Radinsky, head of a local finance company
Erection of Brick Duplexes Planned	1935-09-29	30	Houston Chronicle	For Isadore Rauch; at Chenevert and Wichita; for Mrs. J. Gaber in Washington Terrace
Duplex Under Construction	1935-12-22	49	Houston Chronicle	Rendering: Rauch Duplex and Abovitz House
Plans Out For Bids On Building Tailor's House	1935-12-22	50	Houston Chronicle	M/M S. B. Collins in Washington Terrace at Ennis and Rosewood
Plans Being Drawn For House To Cost \$25,000	1936-03-01	23	Houston Chronicle	Article mentions three houses including one by Gabert for M/M Michael Levis. He is president-treasurer of the Houston Pipe and Supply Company; on Green Briar Drive
Duplex Bids Asked By Leonard [sic] Gabert	1936-03-15	28	Houston Chronicle	For M/M H. M. Farwood in Armand Place just off South Boulevard
Building To Be Erected On Main At Wentworth	1936-03-22	24	Houston Chronicle	Rendering: for Leon Lewis; 19 efficiency apartments
Bids to Be Opened On \$10,000 Home	1936-08-16	24	Houston Chronicle	For M/M M.N. Dannenbaum; he is president of the M.N. Dannenbaum Co.
New Duplex At West Alabama And Mandel	1937-01-17	19	Houston Chronicle	Rendering: for Mrs. W.A. McNabb
The Modern Attic	1937-02-07	77	Houston Chronicle	Photo of attic of Leon Radinsky's house at 2047 University Blvd
Nathan's Inc. Remodeling Contract Let	1937-03-28	30	Houston Chronicle	Gabert design Nathan's Store and Leon Gordon Jewelry Store next door
Rubenstein Home On Chenevert	1937-11-28	29	Houston Chronicle	Photo: for Sol Rubenstein at 5012 Chenevert
Store Building For N.J. Klein Being Erected	1938-01-02	15	Houston Chronicle	For N.J. Klein, president of Klein Ice Cream Co., at Fannin and Tuam

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Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
Home Being Built For J.R. Orloff	1938-08-14	17	Houston Chronicle	At Wichita and Dowling; he is with the Southern Transfer and Storage Co.
no headline	1939-03-26	26	Houston Chronicle	Store for Butler-Grimes Co. Inc., 300 block of West 19th Street
Bids Are Slated on Apartment house	1939-07-30	14	Houston Chronicle	Eight-unit brick-veneer apartment house on Chenevert; owner not identified
Work Started On \$25,000 Building For Food Market	1940-02-11	13	Houston Chronicle	Broadway Food Market at Broadway and Brutus
Dannebaum Firm To Erect Building	1940-04-21	18	Houston Chronicle	Firm makes mechanical equipment for refineries and other industries
no headline	1941-05-25	46	Houston Chronicle	Reference to L Gabert frame building 1316
Rain Delays W. E. Sampson's \$50,000 Home	1941-07-27	40	Houston Chronicle	Separate residence in article; for L. Pulaski, junk dealer, to be built in Riverside Terrace; two-story brick veneer; J. O. Jones general contractor
New \$75,000 Residence of Louis Pulaski	1942-04-12	49	Houston Chronicle	Photo: at 3416 South Parkwood in Riverside Terrace
no headline	1946-04-07	38	Houston Post	Rendering: Lone Star Bag and Bagging Company, 40,000 sf at Calhoun Road and Dumble
\$25,000 Expansion Program Started By Star Furniture Co.	1947-03-16	25	Houston Chronicle	At Milam and Rusk; addition and renovation
Bids to Open on Church Building	1947-09-26	7	Jewish Herald-Voice	Revised plans for Congregation Emanu El ready
Working Plans Almost Finished	1948-01-20	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	JCC plans will be finished by Feb 1 and then submitted for bids
Store Building Is Started By Suburban Co.	1948-02-29	42	Houston Post	Rendering: for I. S. Deutser, president of Suburban Building Co., at 6636-38 Harrisburg
Lone Star Bagging Company Office Underway	1948-04-18	29	Houston Chronicle	At Calhoun and Dumble; Le Blanc Inc., contractor
New Center Becomes Reality	1948-07-01	1	Jewish Herald-Voice	JCC Building Committee accepts plans of Lenard Gabert
Building Plans Develop	1948-07-22	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	Revising plans for JCC; ground breaking in early fall

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Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
Committee Approves Center Building Out Of Planning Stage	1948-09-02	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	JCC Building Committee approves general plans
no headline	1948-10-07	9	Jewish Herald-Voice	Building Plans Critique Here (Temple Emanu El)
Architects Work	1948-10-21	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	Gabert revising plans for JCC
Bread Plant Additions Set	1948-10-24	57	Houston Post	For Southern Bread Co. at 2015[?] Lubbock
Building Plans In Final Stage	1948-11-25	10	Jewish Herald-Voice	Gabert working on final plans for JCC
17a. Bid, Proposals: Notice To Contractors And Bidders	1948-12-01	59	Houston Chronicle	Grant Park Elementary Road at 4200 Liberty
Working Plans Almost Finished	1949-01-20	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	JCC plans will be finished by Feb 1 and then submitted for bids
Building Plans Near Completion	1949-02-10	8	Jewish Herald-Voice	Waiting for submission of structural and other engineering plans for JCC
Houston Printing Firm Awards Building Contract	1949-02-27	55	Houston Chronicle	or Kaplan & McAughan, printers, at Canal and Navigation
17a. Bid, Proposals: Notice To Contractors And Bidders	1949-06-01	6	Houston Chronicle	Grant Park Elementary Road at 4200 Liberty
Bellaire to Get Meyer Brothers' Tenth Store	1949-09-04	16	Houston Chronicle	Rendering: notes W. J. Wisdom as associate; located at Bellaire Boulevard and Third in Bellaire
Grant Park School	1949-09-04	71		Photo: Grant Park School on old Liberty Road; for "negro patrons"
Emanu El Dedication To Be Held September 9-10	1949-09-08	1	Jewish Herald-Voice	built in "modern style;" designed by Lenard Gabert and MacKie and Kamrath, associates
Center Building Will Begin Early In 1950	1949-12-29	1	Jewish Herald-Voice	Contract awarded to Tellespen Construction Co.
Lauterstein's Plans Corporation; New Store One Of Texas' Most Modern To Be Ready About May 1	1950-01-05	1	La Grange Journal	for George Lauterstein; in dry goods business for 40 years; announces retirement but forms new corporation
Store On La Branch Projected	1950-04-30	32	Houston Post	for Harold Turboff; one-story masonry store and warehouse; at 2000 block of LaBranch
WUP [West University Place] Office Building Set	1950-06-29	1	Southwest Citizen	at Notingham and Kirby; reference to Gabert as architect

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Headline	Date	Page	Newspaper	Key Info
Taylor, Moss Named On Zone Board	1950-07-20	1	Southwest Citizen	Triangle Refinery Co. office building approved at Nottingham and Kirby
New Lauterstein's Opens Friday	1950-08-17	1	La Grange Journal	formal opening of new store with photos of key officials of company
Ground-Breaking Held For New WU [West University] Building	1950-09-07	2	Southwest Citizen	for Triangle Refineries office building at Nottingham and Kirby;
\$75,000 Tourist Courts Started on Highway 288	1950-11-16	1	Freeport Facts	For Lee and Frank Arrington; near Velasco; 20 units
Temple And Community Center To Be Built In Schulenburg	1951-04-17	1	Lavaca County Tribune	Photo: at NW corner of Baumgarten Street and Kellet Ave; Bohlmann Brothers contractors were lowest bid
New Store Due Here	1953-01-08	1	Baytown Sun	for Mangel's women's apparel store on West Texas Avenue; Gabert and Wisdom architects; one-story bldg with mezzanine with 3,100 sf
The First National's New Motor Bank Opening Slated Friday and Saturday	1960-12-01	1	La Grange Journal	in 100 block of N. Jefferson St, adjacent to Ed A. Giese Insurance Bldg; designed by Gabert and Associates
1960 Annual Report: Congregation Beth Yeshurun	1961-03-01	5	Message	Lenard Gabert & Associates and Eugene Werlin & Associates working on plans for new building
Story About Wyatt's Cafeteria In Error	1966-07-29	5	Baytown Sun	Baytown Restaurant (ca. 2022 City of Baytown Utility Building)

Sources: Portal to Texas History, Newspapers.com, and Genealogybank.com

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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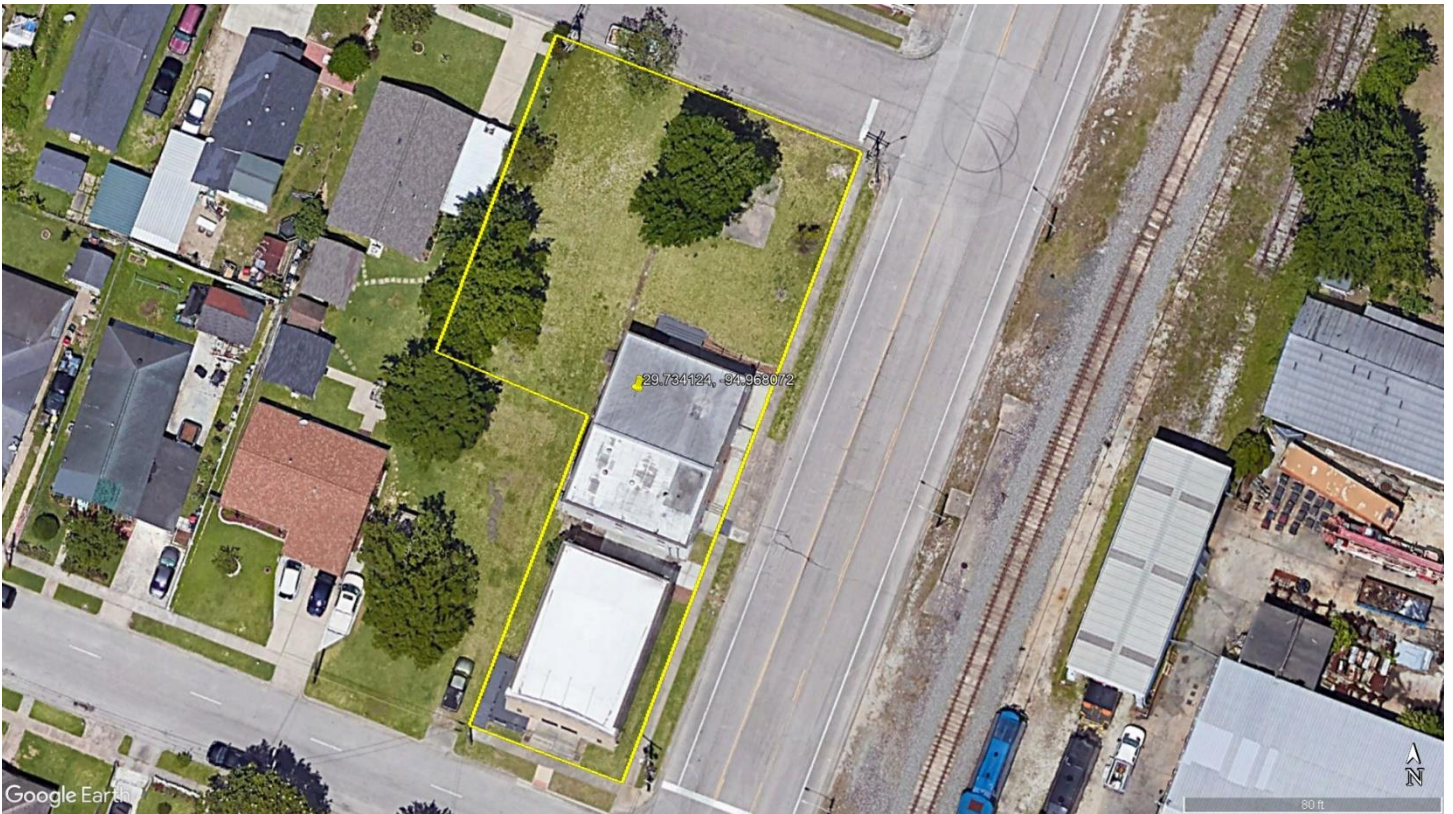
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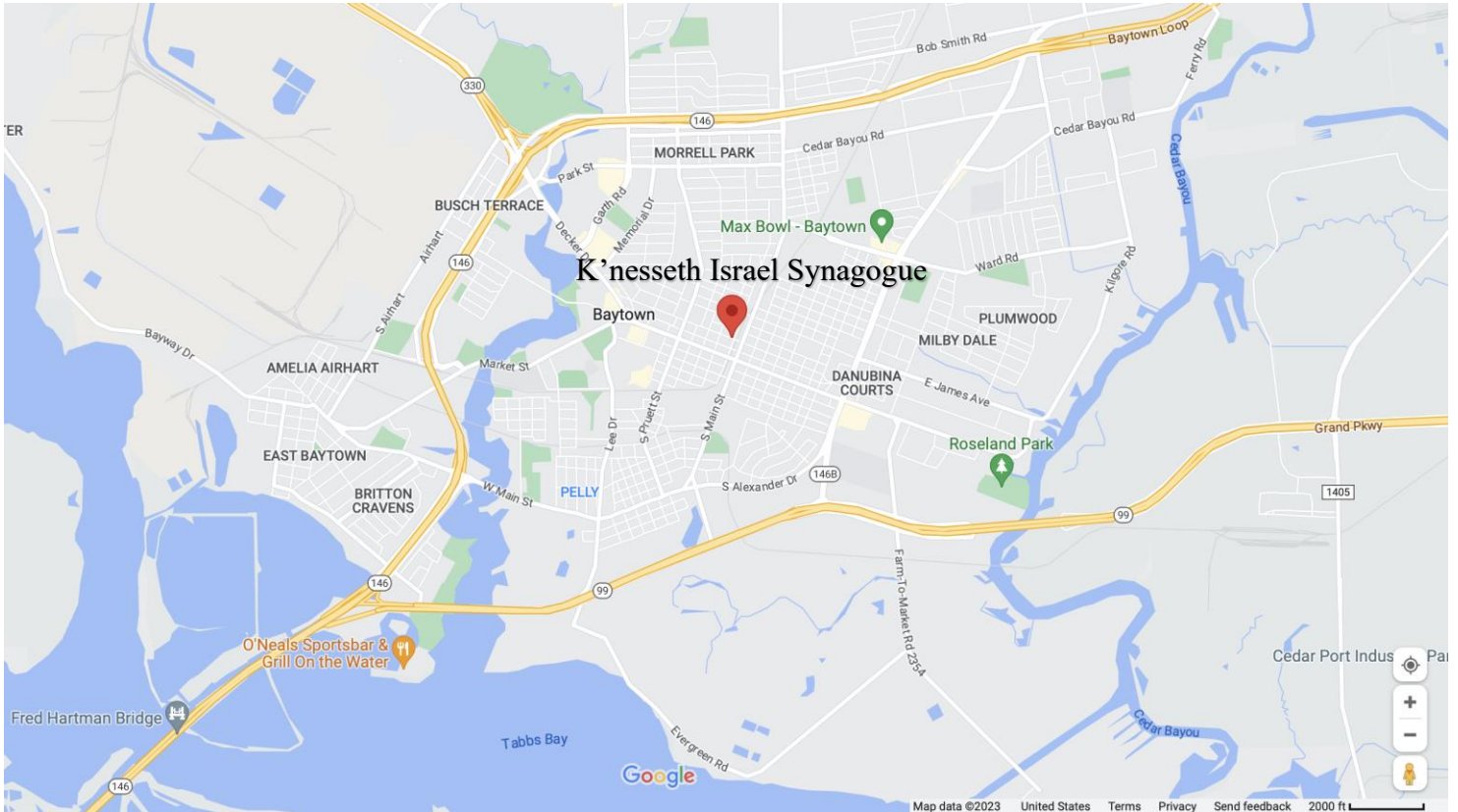
**Maps**

Map 1. Aerial view of K'nesseth Israel in Baytown, Harris County, Texas, showing the National Register boundary and coordinates of the central point. Google Earth (accessed January 8, 2024).



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

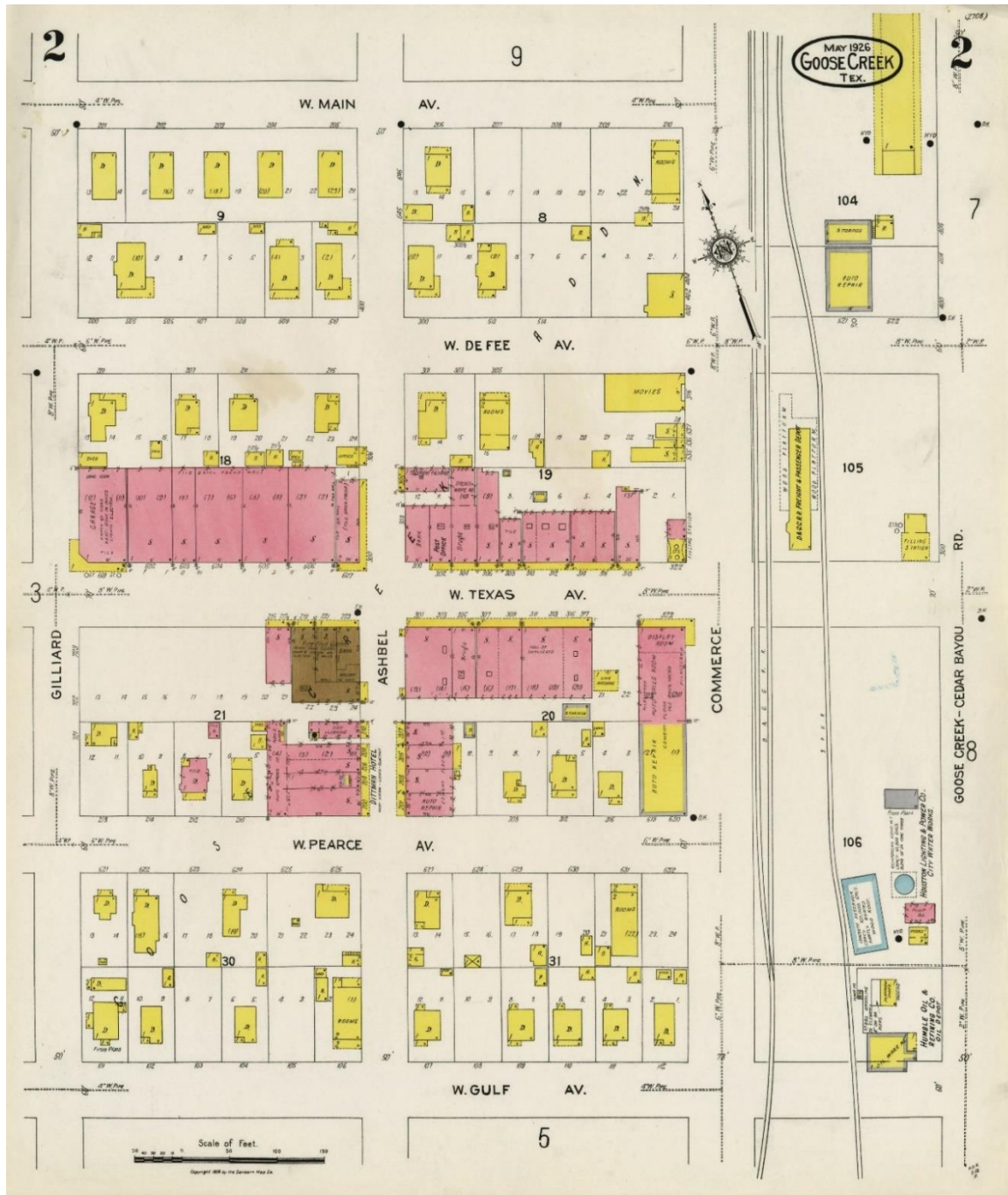
Map 2. Map depicting the location of K'nesseth Israel in Baytown, Harris County, Texas. Source: Google Maps, 2023





K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 1. This insurance map of Goose Creek from 1926 depicts commercial development along the 100 and 200 blocks of West Texas Avenue. Another map in this edition depicts the site (to the north) where K'nesseth Israel was later built; however, the lot is unimproved in 1926. Source: The University of Texas at Austin, Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection.



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2. 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map detail from Goose Creek showing the lots where K'nesseth Israel built the synagogue and community house was unimproved. The large wood-frame building that had temporarily served as the high school was dismantled or moved. Source: The University of Texas at Austin, Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection.

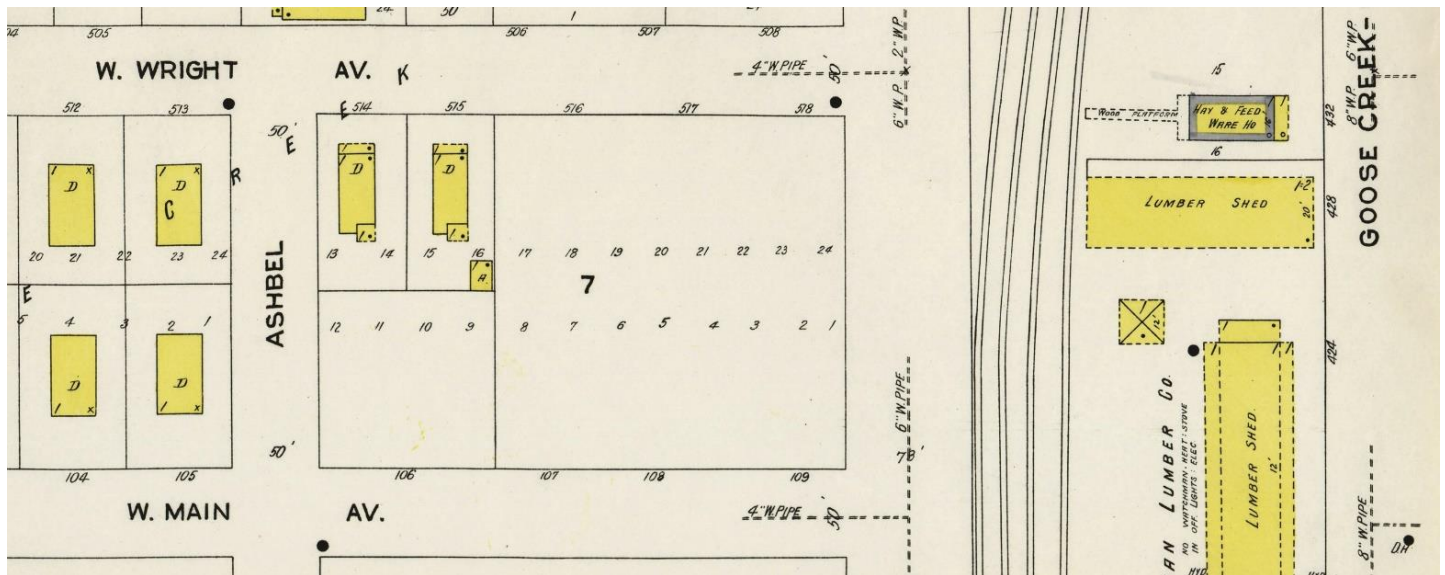
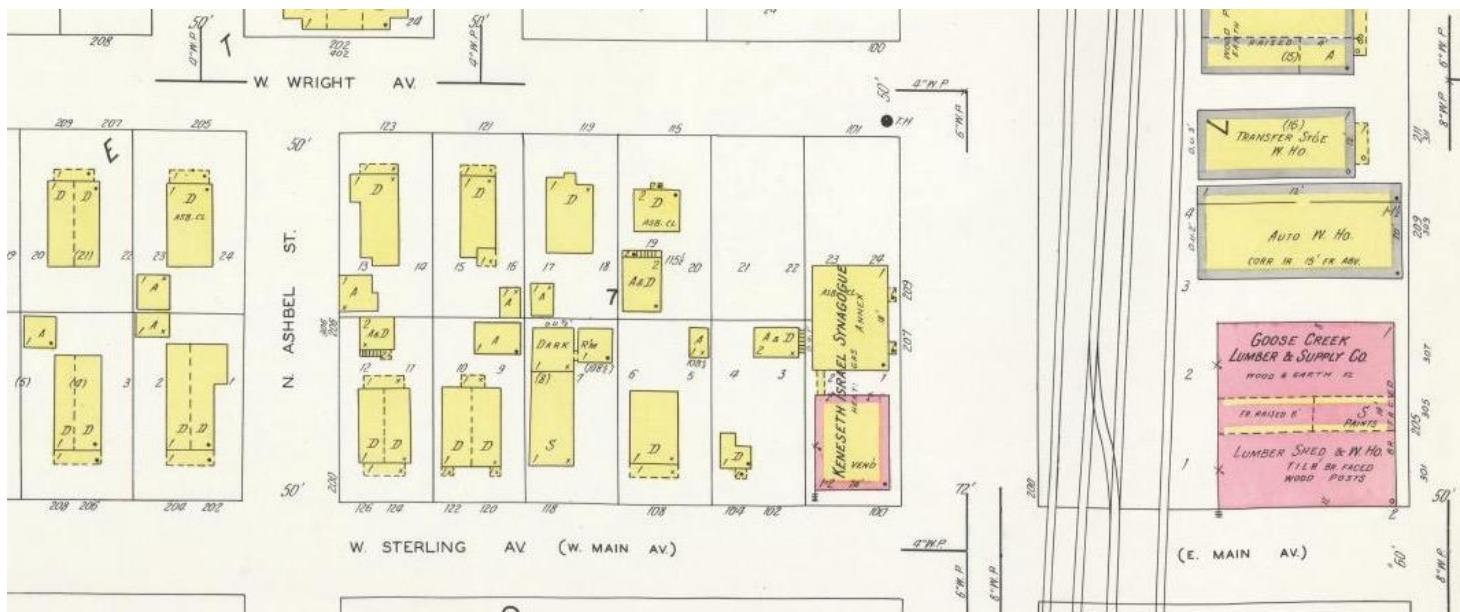


Figure 3. 1949 Sanborn Map detail of Baytown showing the community house extending into newly acquired lots 23 and 24. The addition more than doubled the building's square footage. Source: The University of Texas at Austin, Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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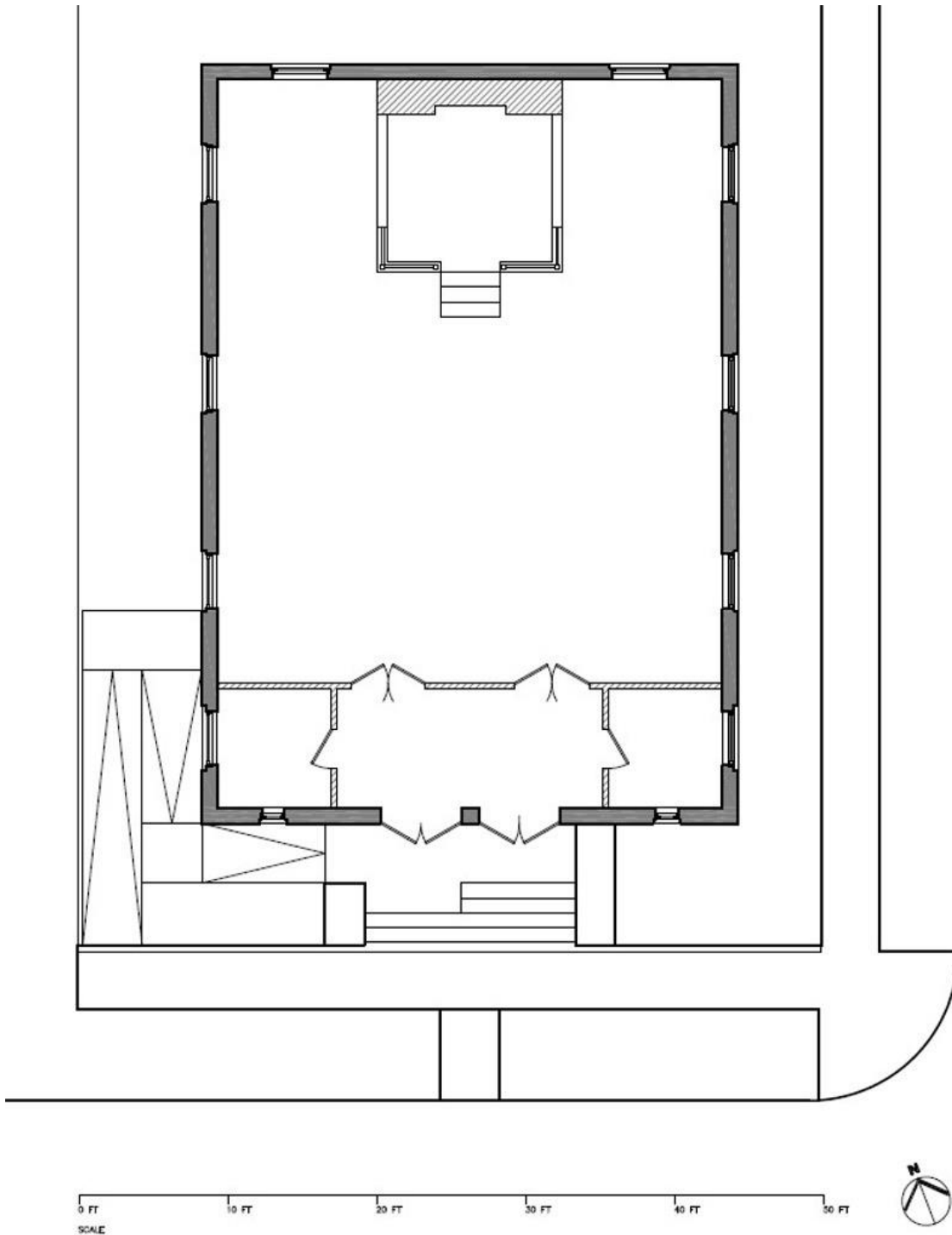
Figure 4. This photograph was taken in the late 1940s and shows how little the synagogue has changed since that time. The community house at the far right of the image has not yet been enlarged (the addition was completed in 1948); however, it presents the same general character of the building as it stands today. Source: Texas Historical Commission Hurricane Harvey DOE Request files.





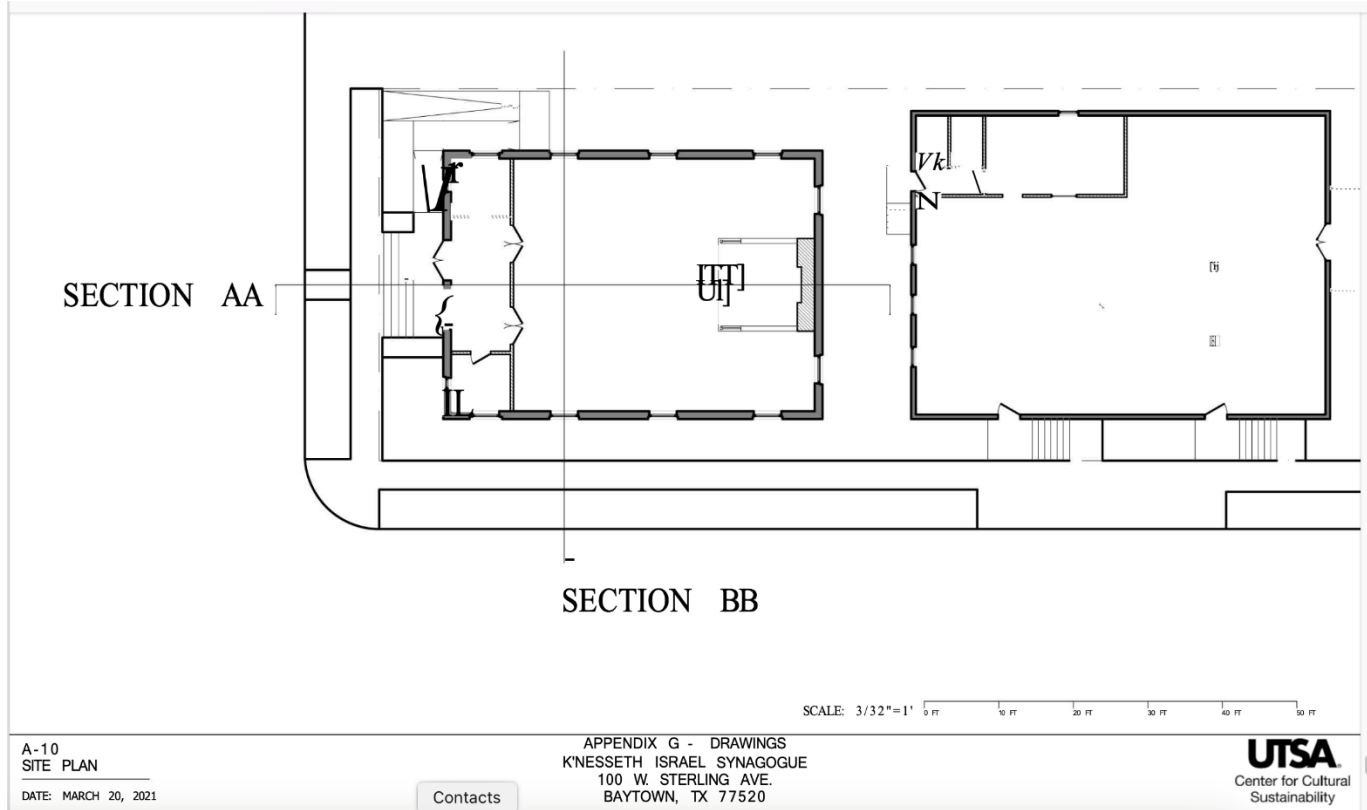
K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 5. This floor plan depicts the mostly open interior of the sanctuary and delineates the Bimah, the raised platform where services are held. Source: Case Study Analysis: Findings of Summary Vulnerability Assessment of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, 2022.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

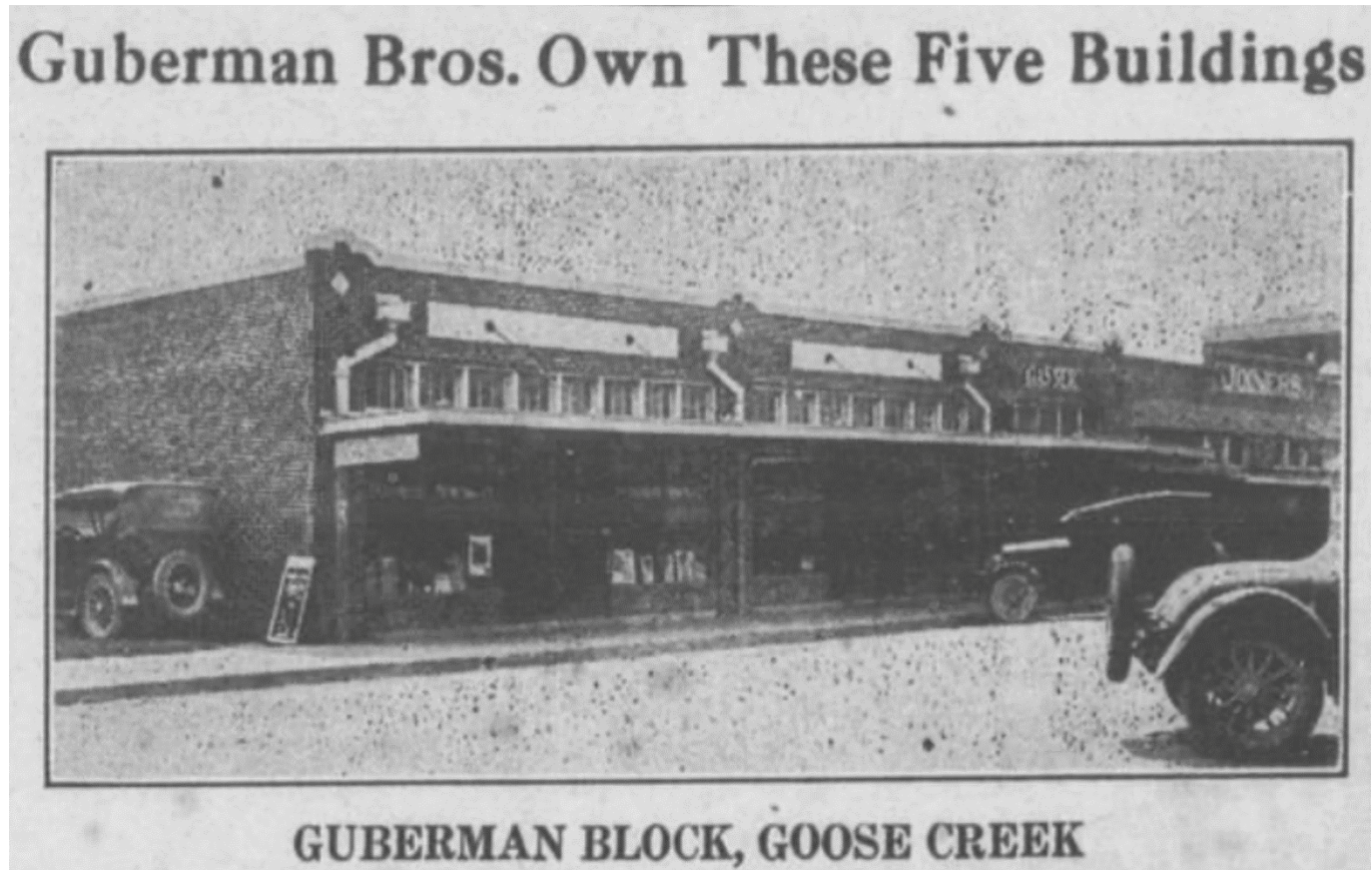
Figure 6. This floor plan shows that most of the interior of the community house is open and provides an ideal space for a variety of functions and activities. The floor plan also notes the two restrooms and kitchen at the southwest corner. Source: Case Study Analysis: Findings of Summary Vulnerability Assessment of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, 2022.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 7. This image appears in a special 1925 edition of Goose Creek's Semi-Weekly Tribune that showcased the community's growing sense of permanence, stability, and growth. Ira and Joseph Guberman, both founding members of K'nesseth Israel, were among the most active developers in the community's new business district. Source: Semi-Weekly Sun, May 12, 1925, The Portal to Texas History.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 8. This full-page ad appeared in the Texas Jewish Herald during the summer of 1930 and illustrates the support Sterling's candidacy enjoyed among members of the greater Houston Jewish community. Notable among the list of supporters are several charter members of K'nesseth Israel including A. Aron, Mose Sumner, E. Aron, J. M., I. Guberman, Joseph Guberman, Joe E. Moskowitz, as well as architect Lenard Gabert who designed the synagogue and community house. Source: Texas Jewish Herald, July 24, 1930, The Portal to Texas History.

THE TEXAS JEWISH HERALD

# STERLING for Governor

The undersigned citizens of Houston and Harris County desire to endorse R. S. STERLING in his candidacy for GOVERNOR OF TEXAS.

They have known Mr. Sterling for a long period of time and, based upon their knowledge of him, wish to express the following statements:

*That Mr. R. S. Sterling is a man of unimpeachable character, integrity and above the slightest reproach as to his honesty.*

*That he is a man of indatigable energy and capacity for civic service.*

*That he is a business man and is conservative yet very progressive.*

*That Mr. Sterling's habits and morals are unassailable.*

*That Mr. R. S. Sterling is considerate of the views of others, not only as to matters of business, but also as to opinions of religion. We are convinced Mr. Sterling holds no religious prejudices.*

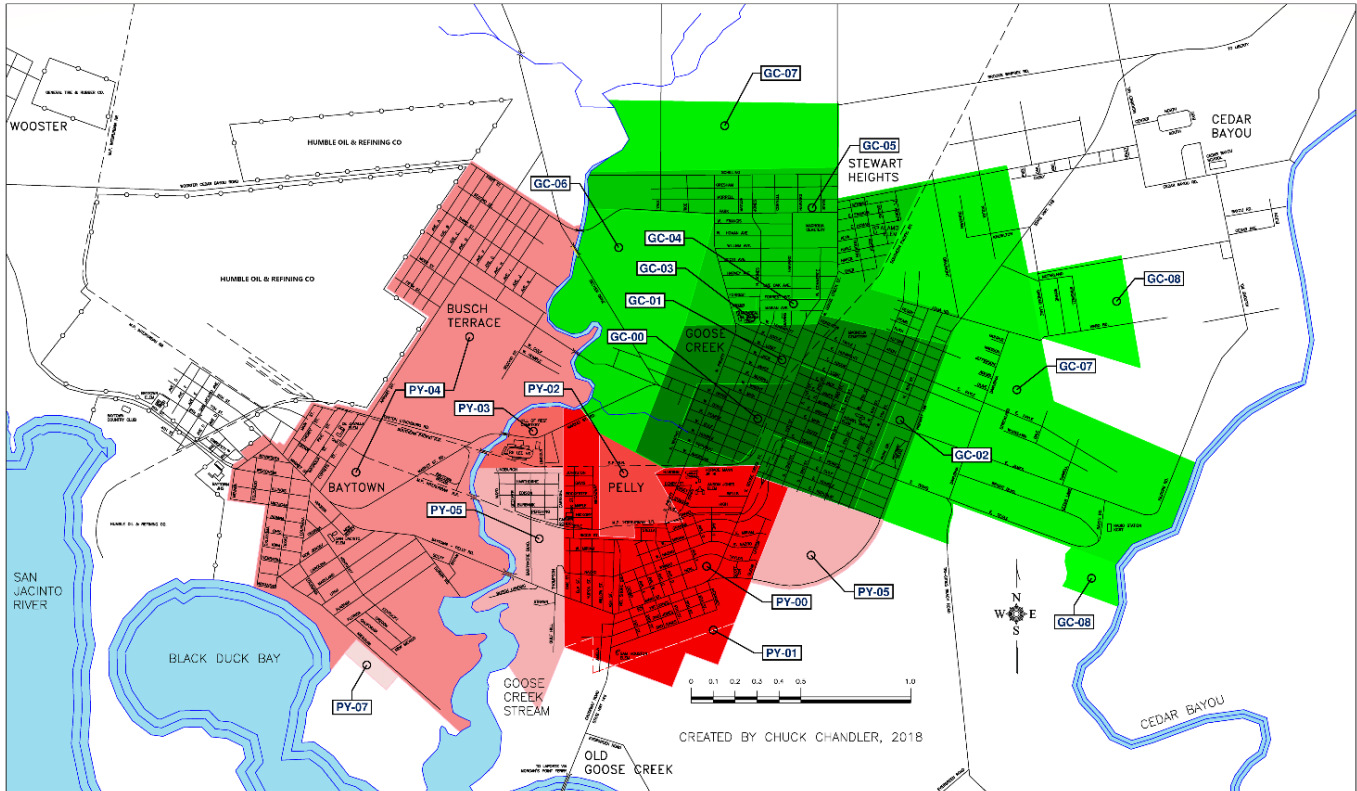
*That we sincerely believe that R. S. Sterling will make one of the best Governors that the State of Texas has ever had, and earnestly solicit our friends and acquaintances to support his candidacy in every reasonable way.*

<p>IKE L. FREED, Manufacturer's Representative N. D. NAMAN, Capitalist BEN TAUB, of J. N. Taub &amp; Sons MAURICE HIRSCH, Lawyer J. B. GREENFIELD, Deputy County Clerk, Harris County, Texas. ABE GORDON, Capitalist. ABE SAMPSON, BEN SAMPSON, H. GOLD- MAN, MAX LEON and JOSEPH KAHN, all of Sampson Machinery &amp; Supply Co. LEO GABER and LEO BLOCK, both of Gaber Plumbing Supply Co. J. M. EDEL, Cotton Factor DR. THOS. FREUNDLICH, Surgeon JAKE LEFF and BEN LEFF, both of Leff Bros. Dry Goods Co. H. E. LEVY, of Hirsch Cooperation Co. MELVIN ROUFF, of Houston Nat'l Bank (Act- ive Vice President) HARRY DOW, Lawyer MAX WESTHEIMER, Insurance SID STRAUSS, Merchant MAURICE K. ROSENBERG and LOUIS K. ROSENBERG, both of Gold Medal Col- fee Company JOSEPH FINGER, Architect MAX SCHNITZER, of Magnolia Paper Co. C. MENDELSON, Merchant JOHN MENDLOVITZ, Real Estate A. B. LEWIS, Automobiles M. M. GORDON, Jeweler JACOB GREENFIELD, Insurance BEN COHEN, Cotton O. N. WIEL, Cotton ABE NUSSBAUM, Merchant ABE LEVY, Lawyer HARRY VINER, Wm. VINER, both of National Bond &amp; Mortgage Co. ABE M. MILLER, Real Estate THOS. FLAXMAN, Capitalist ABE GROSSMAN and DEWITT GROSSMAN, Merchants P. LEVY, Merchant JULIUS ENGL, Furniture MAX JURAN, Grocers' Supply Co.</p>	<p>MORRIS LEWIS, Merchant MANUEL WAGNER, Merchant MAX WAGNER, Merchant DAVID LEVY, Furniture BEN LEWIS, Jeweler A. M. LEVY, Dry Goods L. S. COHEN, Merchant H. C. KAPLAN, Merchant A. E. HEIDINGSFELDER, Lawyer J. WILKENFELD, Merchant F. SEGAL, Tailor CARL J. HERMAN of Binswanger &amp; Co., Glass Manufacturers F. I. GOULD, Furrier D. KOPERNICK, Merchant L. SELINE, Sheet Metal Contractor SIMON LEWIS, Merchant MORRIS RAUCH, Oil Field Supplies SAM LEVIN, Hatler I. MILLER, Real Estate DR. RAY K. DAILY, Specialist DR. LOUIS DAILY, Specialist EDWARD LIPPER, Real Estate H. V. RADOFF and MORRIS RADOFF, both of Radoff Bros., Jobbers. R. DOW, Insurance H. E. SWARTZBERG, Merchant L. LIEDECKER, Dry Goods ABE FINK, Lumber CHARLES BLUM, Iron and Steel ABE COHEN, Real Estate I. N. AXELROD, Shoe Store NATHAN KRAKOWER, Real Estate LYNTON L. SCHARFF, Real Estate and Invest- ments JOE FISHMAN, Byrd's Ready-To-Wear H. PULASKI and I. PULASKI, Scrap Metals RABBI H. B. LIEBERMAN LEONARD GABERT, Architect MEYER RAUCH, Oil Field Supplies A. SCHLOSSER, Second-hand Materials REV. R. KAPLAN, Cantor BEN HURWITZ, of Westheimer Transfer &amp; Stores Co. M. L. HURVITZ, Oil Field Supplies SIGMUND ROTHCHILD, Grain Broker ABE W. WAGNER, Lawyer LOUIS W. WAGNER, Lawyer</p>	<p>ABE ZINDLER, MITCHELL ZINDLER and JEROME ZINDLER, Merchants HARRY MALTZ, MIKE MALTZ and I. B. MALTZ, all of Houston Paper Co. SAM W. BECKER, of J. L. Mitchell Jewelry Co. LOUIS LEON, of Smart Shop DR. MOISE D. LEVY, Physician M. C. WAGNER, Lawyer I. FRIEDLANDER, of Gibraltar Building &amp; Loan Association MAURICE EPSTEIN, Lawyer EDGAR GOLDBERG, Publisher Jewish Herald LAWRENCE LIPPER, Lawyer Wm. A. BLOOM and CHAS. BONART, both of Columbia Dry Goods Co. LEON GORDON, Jeweler BEN WOLFMAN, of the Fashion SIMON SAKOWITZ, TOBIAS SAKOWITZ, both of Sakowitz Bros. A. A. BATH, Cotton Merchant ELI MARKS, V.-Pres. City Bank &amp; Trust Co. LEO M. LEVY, of Dollabaugh-Levy Co. ALFRED ALEXANDER, Cotton Merchant I. A. FRIED, Insurance MORRIS D. MEYER, Lawyer LAWRENCE SOCHAT, Lawyer W. W. MUNZESHEIMER, of Miller Bros. Mfg. Company BEN SUSHOLTZ, Real Estate JACOB WOLFENSTEIN, President Levy Bros. Dry Goods Co. M. N. DAVIDSON, Houston Sash &amp; Door Co. R. B. LECHENGER, Jeweler RABBI MAX GILLER, Adath Israel Cong. Wm. M. NATHAN, Lawyer A. AARON, Merchant, Goose Creek MOSE SUMNER, Merchant, Goose Creek NATHAN WALDMAN, Liberty LEE FISHER, Merchant, West Columbia GUS JACOBS, Merchant, Goose Creek E. AARON, Merchant, Goose Creek J. M. LEDER, Merchant, Goose Creek I. GUBERMAN, Merchant, Goose Creek JOSEPH GUBERMAN, Merchant, Goose Creek JOE E. MOSKOWITZ, Merchant, Goose Creek DAVE PAINE, Merchant, Goose Creek SAM KAUFFMAN, Merchant, Goose Creek MAX FRIEDMAN, Merchant, Goose Creek</p>
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(Political Advertisement, Contributed by Friends)

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 9. Color-coded map depicting final consolidation of the Tri-Cities into the municipality now known as Baytown. Source: Baytown Sterling Municipal Library.



**BAYTOWN, TEXAS**

THIS MAP SHOWS PELLY, TEXAS ON MARCH 6, 1948, THE DAY BEFORE THE NEW CITY CHARTER CHANGED THE NAME TO BAYTOWN. STREETS BUILT AFTER THAT DATE ARE NOT SHOWN. STREET NAMES SHOWN ARE PRIOR TO THE 1948 RENAMING. ALL ANNEXATIONS BY PELLY AND GOOSE CREEK FROM THE BEGINNING ARE SHOWN.

**PELLY ANNEXATIONS IN RED**

NO.	DATE	AREA
PY-00	1919-12-06	INCORPORATION
PY-01	1925-04-03	REDREW SOUTH LINE
PY-02	1928-03-24	PRODUCERS AND ASHBEL SMITH OIL CO
PY-03	1928-06-06	CEMETERY, HIGH SCHOOL
PY-04	1945-12-09	UNINCORPORATED BAYTOWN & BUSCH TERRACE
PY-05	1946-07-27	LEE HEIGHTS, GULF HILL, HUNTER TRACT
PY-06	1947-03-07	CONSOLIDATION WITH GOOSE CREEK
PY-07	1947-04-23	ISENHOUR BAYSHORE

**REFERENCES: GOOSE CREEK AND PELLY CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS, 1926, 1931, 1938 & 1948  
 HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT MINUTES  
 1948 BAYTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MAP  
 GOOSE CREEK DAILY SUN NEWSPAPERS  
 HARRIS COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT  
 1948 BAYTOWN CITY DIRECTORY  
 HARRIS COUNTY DEED BOOKS

**GOOSE CREEK ANNEXATIONS IN GREEN**

NO.	DATE	AREA
GC-00	1919-01-28	INCORPORATION
GC-01	1923-06-27	EXPANDED BOUNDARY
GC-02	1930-06-10	EAST TO TENTH STREET
GC-03	1934-12-03	LAMAR SCHOOL TRACT
GC-04	1939-11-08	LEAVINS ADDITION
GC-05	1940-11-12	MORRELL PARK & STEWART HEIGHTS
GC-06	1945-01-05	WEST TO GOOSE CREEK STREAM
GC-07	1946-01-01	EAST TO CEDAR BAYOU

K'neseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 10. This photograph, taken in about 1919, shows a women's basketball team in front of the wood-frame building that once stood on the site of present-day K'neseth Israel. Source: Baytown Sterling Municipal Library.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 11. Earliest known image of K'nesseth Israel. This photograph appeared in The Houston-Post-Dispatch announcing the building's near completion and its use to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Despite the poor quality of the image, the community is visible on the far right. Source: The Houston Post-Dispatch, September 21, 1930, Genealogybank.com.

### GOOSE CREEK BUILDING ACTIVE

More than \$55,000 is represented in the two Goose Creek structures pictured below. At the top is the McKinstry hotel at DeFee avenue and Ashbel street. The second floor will include 35 guest rooms. The first floor will house a grocery store on the Ashbel street side, while the DeFee avenue store will be occupied by a delicatessen. The building is of brick, reinforced concrete and tile construction and will cost \$35,000. Below is pictured the Jewish synagogue nearing completion at Commerce street and Main avenue. The building is of brick and concrete construction. At the rear is the recreation and educational building. The two buildings represent an investment of more than \$20,000.

### BUILDING SETS RAPID STRIDE

With work well under way on Trinity Episcopal church at Baytown construction in the Tri-Cities continues to set a fast pace for the year with more than \$1,000,000 in private and public construction in sight for 1930.

Included in this list is a \$350,000 school program just completed by the Goose Creek independent district, two church buildings, two hotels, more than a score of commercial structures and many apartment buildings and private residences.

This sum, however, does not include a \$150,000 street paving program in Goose Creek nor the \$250,000 road building program now under way there as a part of the county highway program.

Among the public structures included in the 1930 building program are the Reidland hotel at Baytown, just completed at a cost of more than \$50,000, and the McKinstry hotel at Goose Creek, now under construction. This latter building will contain 35 guest rooms on the second floor. On the first floor will be two store rooms, one to be occupied by a grocery and the other by a delicatessen. The building is being erected by G. A. McKinstry, pioneer Goose Creek hotel man, at a cost of \$35,000.

Completion of the paving on Goose Creek street will mark the last of the present street program in Goose Creek. City, county and property owners are co-operating on this project to provide a 40-foot paved street throughout the entire distance within the city limits of Goose Creek.

Cost of shoulder paving is being defrayed by owners of abutting property.

The Goose Creek street project is a part of the 3.3 miles paving authorized by the board of county commissioners between Baytown and Cedar Bayou. The route is by way of Main street in Pelly and Goose Creek street in Goose Creek.

### COUNTY SCHOOL CLASSES ELECT

With a total of 666 enrolled in the Crosby independent school district during the opening week, plans were rapidly shaping for student activities in the high school.

Senior class officers were announced Saturday. Alice Anderson was named president; Earline Hilliard, vice president; Gardina Garbs, secretary; Floyd Curtis, sergeant-at-arms, and H. O. Niemeyer, class sponsor.

Friday night the high school faculty was entertained by the Women's Missionary society with a party at Crosby Methodist church. Mrs. C. A. Fortner was in charge of the program.

Members of the high school faculty are: J. J. Jeusou, superintendent; V. G. Jackson, principal; H. O. Nie-

### TOMBALL FAIR AWARDS FIXED

Premium lists for the Tomball-Euf-smith fair to be held October 24, and 25, are being distributed. Show premiums amounting to \$150 in the departments of agriculture, live stock, home economics, culinary, poultry, canning and preserving, floral, art and needle work are being offered. Any school within 20 miles of Tomball will be allowed to exhibit any kind of farm products, cooking, canning or hand made articles. The school exhibits call for a first prize of \$15, second prize \$10 and for all others \$5.

Rehearsal is being made for two plays to be held in community hall under the direction of Miss Jimmie Rene Org, for October 24 and 25.

Officers of the fair association are: C. E. Hahl, president; William Hal-

### JEW TO OPEN SYNAGOGUE ON ROSH HASHANA

Jews of the Tri-Cities will worship in their new synagogue at Goose Creek for the first time when they gather Tuesday to observe Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year.

The series of religious observances are to be held under direction of Rabbi M. Danziger, temporary pastor of the Tri-Cities congregation, assisted by Rabbi Melvin Goodman.

Rabbi Danziger will preach Tuesday evening on "The Call of Shofar." Wednesday Rabbi Goldman will speak in Yiddish on "A New Year's Message."

Program is also being planned for observance of Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement.

The new synagogue is located at Commerce street and Main avenue. Workmen were busy Saturday putting finishing touches on the new building in preparation for the coming programs. Dedication of the building, however, will not be held until later in the year, according to A. Grenado, president of the congregation, announced Saturday.

In addition to the splendid concrete and stucco synagogue the congregation has also built a frame structure, which is to be used as an educational and recreation center. The entire church building program will cost approximately \$20,000 to complete.

### FIRE PUMPER TO BE BOUGHT

Purchase of a 500-gallon fire department pumper has been authorized by the Pasadena city council, J. L. Griffin, city clerk, announced Saturday.

Order for the new fire apparatus was placed with the American La France company. It is the first piece of fire fighting equipment to be purchased by the city of Pasadena.

The apparatus will cost \$7500 and is to be delivered within 40 days, Mr. Griffin said. Installation of the equipment is expected to help reduce the present insurance key rate.

### PASTOR FETED IN HEMPSTEAD

The Baptist ladies at Hempstead honored the new pastor, Rev. R. L. Dobson and his bride with a shower at the home of Judge and Mrs. W. M. Wheeler with 45 guests present.

The program included a solo by Miss Elma Cooke and readings by Miss Verma Clare Matthews and Mrs. P. A. Smith.

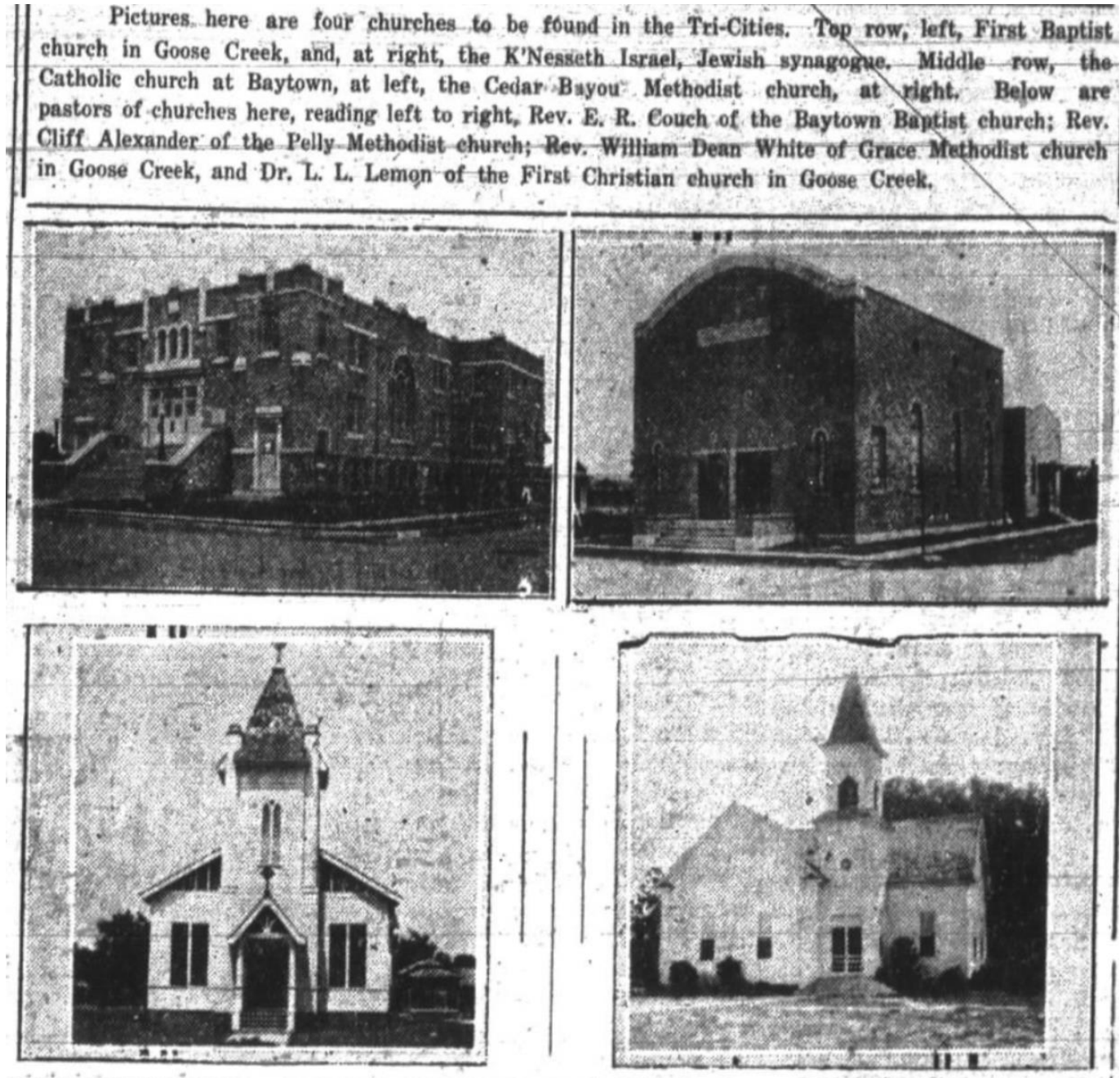
### Egg and Milk Tests To Be Fair Features

COLORADO, Sept. 21.—(Sp)—Poultry and dairy production contests will be held during the Mitchell county Live-at-Home fair to be held here October 2 to 4. Prizes will be awarded the pen of eight pullets or hens laying the most eggs and to the cow that produces the most butterfat.

Other features of the entertainment program are one-act plays by rural communities, old fiddlers contest, horseshoe pitching contests and burro races.

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 12. The local newspaper included an image of K'nesseth Israel in a lengthy article about the 18 religious institutions in the Tri-Cities area. Source: Tri-Cities Tribune, July 29, 1933, The Portal to Texas History.





K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 13. This newspaper ad, published in the Daily Sun, celebrated Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, in 1939 and identifies stores in Goose Creek, Pelly, and Baytown that would be closed for the holiday. Owners of these businesses also took the opportunity to thank their loyal customers. Source: The Daily Sun September 12, 1939, page 3, The Portal to Texas History.

# ROSH HASHANAH

# 5700

# JEWISH NEW YEAR

**The Miracle Store**

"Pioneers in Low Prices"

Sam Davis, Prop. Pelly

Shop Wednesday for school needs.

---

**The Style Shop**

"Where Quality Counts"

Harry Blum, Mgr.

Style, quality and expert fitting are featured at this shoppe for smart women. We will be closed Thursday and Friday.

---

**Economy Dry Goods**

Texas Avenue Goose Creek

You'll find our store one for the entire family.

---

**Bernstein's**

Main Street Baytown

We soon will be in our new home. Watch for our opening.

---

**Goldfield's Grocery**

113 North Goose Creek St.

We will be closed Thursday but will be open Friday and Saturday.

Jewry throughout the Tri-Cities and all over the entire world on the evening of Wednesday, September 13, will converge into synagogues and temples . . . all to worship the approach of the Jewish New Year . . . the Birthday of the World . . . or Rosh Hashanah. Special services are planned for this two-day celebration by the Congregation of K'Nesseth Israel.

\* Rosh Hashanah is a holiday of solemnity and sacredness, a day when family ties are strengthened and friendships are renewed. It also is a holiday of joyous and optimistic hopes as a New Year dawns.

Upon this occasion, Jewry of the Tri-Cities wish to extend words of appreciation to the citizenship of the area for its generous patronage during the past year. The undersigned firms take this means of expressing thanks to you.

---

**DAVE ARON'S**

"Outfitters for the Entire Family"

Our stock is complete with fall goods for the entire family.

---

**ROSENZWEIG'S DEPT. STORE**

Texas At Commerce Goose Creek

Buy your fall goods here, where low prices rule.

---

**THE RAINBOW SHOPPE**

"Next To Texan Theater"

We will observe the Jewish New Year by closing our store for this holiday.

---

**THE CHICAGO**

Main Street Baytown

We're very thankful to all of you for your patronage throughout the year.

**Sampson's Food Market**

'New Stucco Building in Pelly'

We're very grateful for your patronage of our store.

---

**Ira Guberman's**

"The Big Store With Little Prices"

We're very thankful for your friendship the past year.

---

**E. ARON**

"Outfitters for Men"

Shop with us for new fall outfits for stylish men.

---

**Harry Kaplan's Grocery**

Goose Creek St. Goose Creek

We are sincerely appreciative of friendship shown us throughout the year.

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**Sumner Dry Goods**

Texas Ave. Goose Creek

We will be closed Thursday and Friday in observance of Rosh Hashanah.

K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 14. To celebrate the final payment of its debt to fund the construction of the synagogue and community, members hold a “mortgage burning ceremony in December 1943. Source: The Baytown Sun, March 29, 1992, The Portal to Texas History.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 15. Lenard Gabert, date unknown. Source: Public Photo, Ancestry.com.



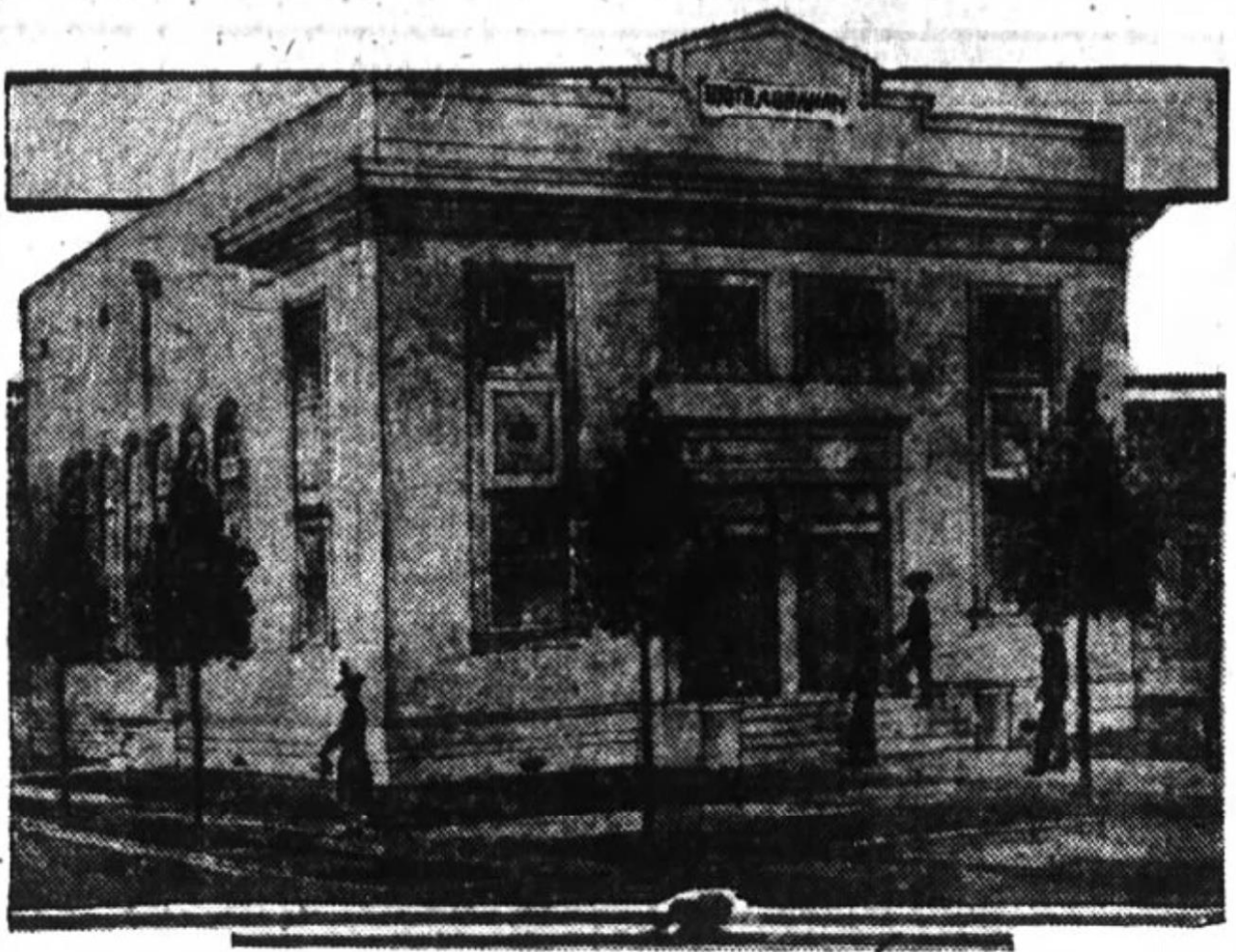
Figure 16. Lenard Gabert (back row, far left) among a group of men associated with the construction of the Jewish Community Center In 1949-1950. Source: Jewish Community Center of Houston Scrapbook, The Portal to Texas History.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 17. One of Gabert's earliest known commissions. Although the quality is poor, the image depicts a conventional design that presents a modest influence of the Classical Revival style, a popular architectural expression of the time.  
Source: The Houston Post, February 8, 1922, Genealogybank.com.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 18. The office Gabert designed for himself in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Source: Houston Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1927, Genealogybank.com.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 19. Renderings published in Houston newspapers of Lenard Gabert-designed residences in Houston's Riverside Terrace neighborhood in the Third Ward. These drawings show how Gabert drew inspiration from traditional domestic architectural forms, which were popular at the time. Top to bottom, left to right, they are: Freeman House (1928) at 2316 Rosedale, Levine House (1929) at Rosedale and Chenevert, Berlowitz House (1929) at Southmore and Dowling, Rauch Duplex (1935) at Chenevert and Wichita, Jarret House (1935) on Southmore, and Krakower House (1935) at Almeda and Wichita. Source: The Houston Post-Dispatch and Houston Chronicle, Genealogybank.com.



K'neseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

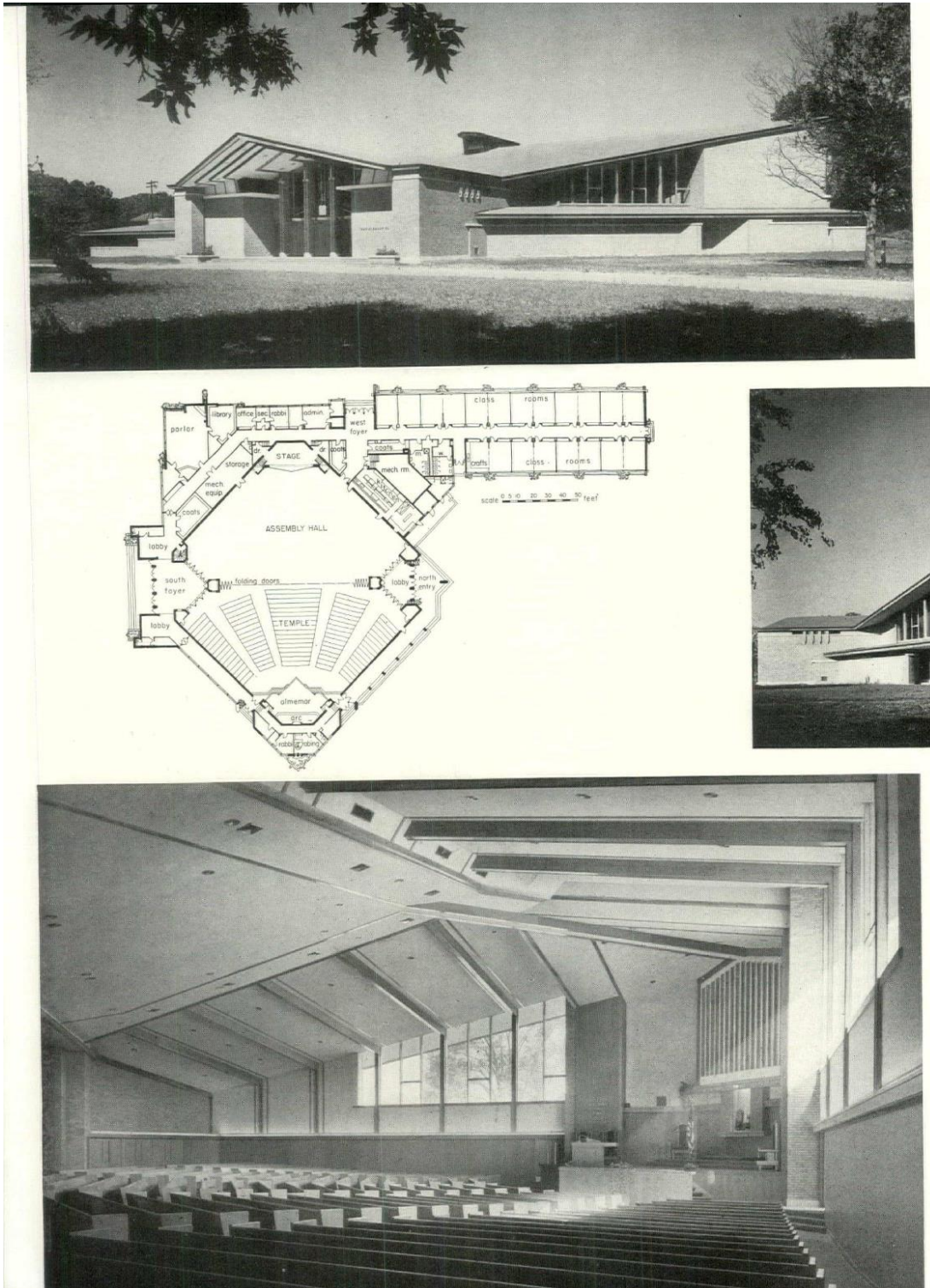
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Figure 20. For the Odd Fellows project, Gabert chose to embellish the building with Art Deco detailing, an architectural style that was becoming increasingly popular throughout the country at that time and typically was used for commercial and institutional buildings. The decision to design the lodge in this style marked a dramatic departure from Gabert's previous commissions, which relied on far more traditional architectural forms and expressions. Source: Baytown Sterling Municipal Library.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Figure 21. The innovative design of Temple Emanu El, designed by Lenard Gabert and Mackie and Kamarath, received national attention. Source: Architectural Form, December 1949, USModernist.org.

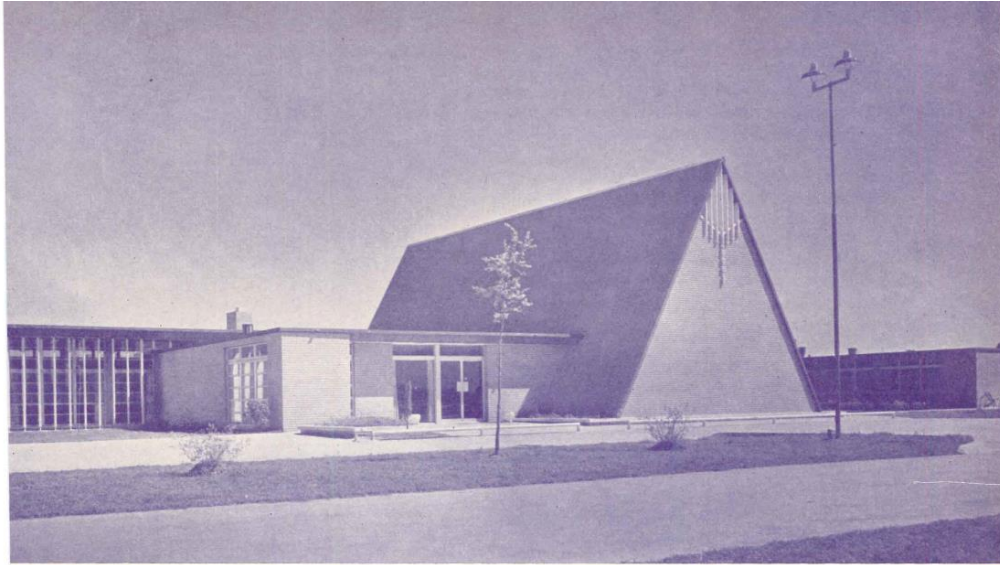




K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 22. Lenard Gabert and Joseph Krakow designed this building as a retirement for Jewish seniors. Source: Architectural Record, May 1956, USModernist.org.



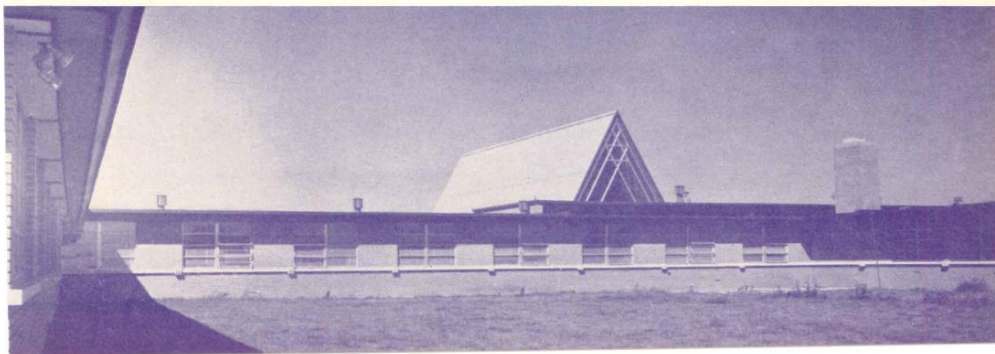
**HOUSTON JEWISH HOME FOR THE AGED**

*Lenard Gabert, Joseph Krakower*

*Associated Architects*

*William J. Wisdom, Associate*

This home began with accommodations for residents in 32 bedrooms, each with private bath, plus administration facilities, lounge, library, music room, chapel, assembly room, dining, kitchen and service areas. Now being completed is a 17-bed addition to the hospital wing, and eventually the home will accommodate 96 residents.



K'neseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 23. Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue in New York, New York. View from the Southwest, 1989. National Register of Historic Places form. Source: National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75319426>.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Figure 24. Congregation Talmud Torah of Los Angeles (Breed Street Shul). View from the Southeast, 2001. National Register of Historic Places form. Source: National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123859047>.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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**Photos**

Photo 1. Oblique of south and east façades with residential buildings to the west. Camera facing northwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 2. Oblique of west and south façades with railroad right-of-way to the east. Camera facing northeast.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 3. Oblique of east and north façades of the synagogue (left) and community house (right). Camera facing southwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 4. Oblique of north and west façades of community house (foreground) and synagogue (background). Camera facing southeast.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 5. Front (south) façade of synagogue. Camera facing north.





K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 6. Oblique of east and north façades. Camera facing southwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 7. Entrance vestibule of synagogue. Camera facing east.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 8. Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of the sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 9. Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of the sanctuary. Camera facing northwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 10. Interior view of sanctuary with stained-glass windows, ark, *bimah*, *ner tamid*, and Ten Commandments at the north end of the sanctuary. Camera facing north.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 11. Detailed view of ark and Palladian motif on north wall. Camera facing north.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 12. Detailed view of *ner tamid*, Star of David light, and Ten Commandments on north wall. Camera facing northeast.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 13. Interior view of sanctuary showing double-door entrances, memorial plaque, and interior lights at south end of synagogue. Camera facing south.





K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

Photo 14. Detailed view of memorial plaque mounted on south wall of synagogue. Camera facing south.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 15. Detailed view of stained-glass window on east wall of sanctuary. Camera facing east.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 16. Oblique view of south and east façades of community house. Camera facing northwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 17. Oblique view of north and east façades of community house. Camera facing southwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 18. Interior view of community house with original building in background and partition wall at right that creates separate spaces for restrooms and kitchen. Camera facing southwest.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 19. Interior view of community house showing doorways for restrooms (left) and kitchen (right). Camera facing west.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 20. Interior view of community house showing the free-standing columns in the 1948 addition and other classically inspired wood trim. Camera facing northeast.



K'nesseth Israel Synagogue, Baytown, Harris County, Texas

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Photo 21. Interior view of community house showing the kitchen (left) and mostly open space of the 1948 addition. Camera facing northwest.



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