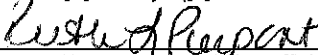


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedekother names/site number N/A**2. Location**street & number 109 Clara Street [] not for publicationcity or town Brooklyn [] vicinitystate New York code NY county Kings code 047 zip code 11218**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 as 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 [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Signature of certifying official/Title



Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [] entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined not eligible for the National Register

[] removed from the National Register

[] other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck**Kings County, New York**

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings
sites
structures
objects

1

0

TOTAL**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(enter categories from instructions)

Religious Facility/ Synagogue

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religious Facility/ Synagogue

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Rivals**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt Shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Kings County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance:

1928-32

Significant Dates:

1928-32

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by historic American Building Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other repository: _____

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek**Kings County, New York**

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property Under one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 585915 4499599
Zone Easting Northing3 18
Zone Easting Northing2 18 4 18 **Verbal Boundary Description**

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Anthony Robbinsorganization _____ date 4-14-15street & number 50 West 67th Street telephone _____city or town New York state NY zip code 10023**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's locationA **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)name Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, contact Mr. Otto Shlesingerstreet & number 109 Clara Street telephone 718-627-0364city or town Brooklyn state NY zip code 11218**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)**Estimated Burden Statement:** public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20500

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

Description: Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck is located at 109 Clara Street, on the south side of the street, between 36th Street and Chester Avenue, in the Kensington neighborhood of the borough of Brooklyn in New York City. The boundaries of the property are described as Brooklyn Tax Block 5310, Lot 11.

The synagogue was constructed 1928-1932, most likely as an alteration, by architect Benjamin Goldberg, to an existing building. The surrounding neighborhood is largely residential; the synagogue is flanked by two-story houses on the east and three-story apartment buildings on the west, with two-story two-family houses across the street. Today Chevra Linath Hazedeck still functions as a synagogue. It is a remarkable survival of an early-20th-century synagogue in Brooklyn reflecting the vernacular “tenement synagogue” type developed on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Exterior: Clara Street

Chevra Linath Hazedeck is typical of early 20th-century American vernacular synagogue design, combining classical ornamentation with Judaic symbols.

The building’s buff brick façade, occupying most of its lot’s 40-foot-wide frontage, is two stories tall with a full parapet, behind which rises a small, recently added extension to a third story at the rear of the building – this extension now has a roof that slopes from the parapet up to the level of the rear third story. The façade’s first two stories are organized in a tripartite design, defined by two simple double-height cast-stone piers, each with simple caps and classical moldings. These support a simple frieze – also with classical moldings – in which are inscribed in Hebrew letters the words *חברה לינת הצדק* (“Chevra Linath Hazedeck”). Atop the frieze a pediment is outlined in cast-stone, leaving the brickwork of the wall visible beneath it. Directly beneath the frieze, at the second story, is a brick-enclosed ocular window with colored glass in a design of an encircled *magen david* (shield or star of David) at its center. There is a small rectangular double-hung window, also with colored glass, at either side of the ocular window. At the first story, directly below the ocular window, is a round-arched entrance of cast-stone supported on either side by a column with a spiral pattern topped by a curving capital with a small floral pattern at its center; a cast-stone rope molding within the arch surrounds the paired paneled entrance doors. A colored glass fanlight fills the arch above the entrance doors and centers on another *magen david*. A parapet above the pediment includes three panels: a central panel with the twin tablets of the Ten Commandments - cast-stone panels bearing the Roman numerals for 1 through 5 (I through V) on the left (east) and 6 through 10 (VI through X) on the right (west); a panel to the left (east) inscribed, in Roman letters, “Linath,” and one to the right (west) inscribed “Hazedeck.”

At the first story, the central entrance is flanked on the right (west) by a small rectangular opening with a cast-stone sill supporting a covered window opening with a small curved glass area at the top, and a paneled secondary entrance. It is flanked by a similar window and door on the left (east). The entrance on the left leads

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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Section 7 Page 2

to the building's basement. At the second story, to either side of the central entrance bay, there is a pair of double-hung aluminum windows with a simple cast-stone sill.

In front of the building, at the sidewalk, is a wrought-iron fence and pair of entrance gates.

Exterior: side and rear elevations

The side (east and west) elevations are absolutely plain, red brick with windows as required, with white vinyl siding at the third story and an overhanging roof.

The rear (south) façade is also plain brick, with an added half-story below a sloping roof. At the first story there is a doorway on the west leading into a basement area, and two narrow windows. A metal staircase leads up to a second-story metal balcony, where there are two doors leading into the sanctuary, and a central small rose window. The rear yard is plain.

A comparison with New York City Department of Finance photos taken c. 1980 and c. 1940 with current photos clearly shows the small addition at the front extending the third story, as well as the side walls before vinyl siding was applied.

Interior:

First floor

Entrance Vestibule

The central entrance leads into a small entrance vestibule; its ceiling is slightly lower than the arch of the central entrance, which it appears to cut off. The walls and ceiling are plaster, the doors are wooden. A secondary entrance from the façade (on the west) opens into the corner of the vestibule. Opposite the main entrance, there are two separate entries leading to the sanctuary, each with a single paneled door; between these doors, the wall is covered with a set of memorial plaques, listing, among others, members, building committee members, and ladies' auxiliary members. On the east wall, there is a doorway, and a wall painting of a scene in the Holy Land.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is a long, relatively narrow room with long galleries supported on square columns with curved brackets on either side, with a tall ceiling above. The gallery walls are adorned with a series of 12 small wall paintings of the Hebrew months depicted as zodiac signs (*mazelos*) – a rare survival of the type, though they have recently been repainted. Each gallery wall has six paintings; each zodiac symbol is placed within a circle; the circles are connected to each other by painted vines which meet in a small painted *magen david*.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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Section 7 Page 3

Following the traditional Eastern European synagogue layout, there is a plain wooden *bimah* (reader's platform) in the center towards the south, the wood painted to resemble marble, surrounded by a balustrade; and a raised platform at the southern wall, with a similar balustrade, supporting an elaborate faux-marble wooden ark holding the Torah scrolls. Two short columns in front support tall metal standing lamps in the shape of a classical column. The ark has paired wooden faux-marble columns on either side, in turn supported on shorter but similar paired columns; sliding wooden doors; and an ornamental curtain. Atop the ark, at the level of the upper galleries, there is a small arcade with classical detailing. Above the arcade is a large gilded panel including a crown flanked by carved American and Israeli flags, supporting the twin tablets of the Law which are flanked on either side by a carved lion; the panel includes several Hebrew inscriptions. Directly above, just below the ceiling, is a round window with colored glass, of recent design, including a *magen david* in the center surrounded by various scenes. The ark is flanked on the lower level, on either side, by a window and then a door leading outside to yard at the rear of the building. The other walls have windows, set between which are bookcases and memorial plaques, and a painting of the Holy Land similar to the one in the entrance vestibule.

There are two small ornamental chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, but most lighting is provided by fluorescent fixtures which might date to the 1950s or '60s.

Seating is provided by rows of wooden benches, which may be original to the synagogue; they have hinged supports for prayer books. Towards the rear, a number of benches are arranged around tables.

Second floor

A narrow wooden staircase leads to the second floor. In the space directly above the first-floor entrance vestibule, a small room currently serves as a study.

The galleries overlooking the sanctuary have plain walls, and wooden benches similar to those below. The walls are paneled in their lower half; in the upper half there are windows. Each gallery at the southern end has a door leading out to a metal balcony with stairs leading to the rear yard.

Third story

The third story, part an original apartment at the rear of the building and part an extension to that space at the front of the building, is occupied by a warren of spaces, recently in office use, of no architectural significance.

Basement

A staircase accessed by the door at the far left (east) of the main façade leads to a utilitarian basement of no architectural significance.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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Despite the roof-top addition behind the façade parapet, in general Chevra Linath Hazedeck retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It has been continuously maintained as a synagogue since its construction. Alterations primarily affect minor spaces such as offices and classrooms. The main façade, vestibule and sanctuary survive largely intact.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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Significance: Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck at 109 Clara Street, in the Kensington neighborhood of Brooklyn, is historically significant under Criterion A in the area of social history as an early 20th-century "tenement synagogue" surviving in Brooklyn. Constructed in 1928-32, most likely as an alteration by architect Benjamin Goldberg to an existing building, the synagogue housed a congregation founded in 1926. It dates from a period when Brooklyn was emerging as one of the world's major Jewish population centers.

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck is architecturally significant under Criterion C as an example of an intact early 20th-century vernacular synagogue in Brooklyn, one that adapted the narrow "tenement synagogue" type initially developed on the Lower East Side of Manhattan to a wider lot available in a newly developing Brooklyn neighborhood. As such, Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck survives today as a distinctive architectural, cultural and religious landmark of the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jewish community of Brooklyn, and New York City.

The Jewish community of Brooklyn and its synagogues

Since 1898, when the City of Brooklyn became the Borough of Brooklyn within the City of Greater New York, the Jewish population of Brooklyn has formed a major portion of the Jewish population of New York City. Long home to roughly half the city's overall Jewish population, Brooklyn remains to this day one of the chief Jewish communities in the country and in the world.

Unlike Manhattan – whose first Jewish settlement dates to the 17th-century Dutch colony – Brooklyn traces its Jewish population to the middle of the 19th century. Jewish immigrants to Brooklyn during this period – like Jewish immigrants generally – came largely from the German-speaking states of central Europe. Samuel P. Abelow, the author of a 1937 history of Brooklyn Jewry, lists the earliest residents he could ascertain:

When the Jews first settled in Brooklyn is not known definitely. In the Brooklyn directory for 1838-1839, published by A.G. Stevens and Wm. H. Marschalk, appear such names as Benjamin Levy, auctioneer, at 79 Fulton St., Benjamin Levy, variety store, at 137½ Fulton St., and Daniel Levy, cartman, 175 Pearl St. According to a tradition, the pioneers used to row across the East River to New York to attend services there Friday nights, Saturdays and holidays.¹

The earliest Jewish residents of Brooklyn chronicled by Abelow included Solomon Furst, who emigrated in the 1850s and

...settled on Atlantic Avenue, where he earned his living as a merchant tailor and invested money in real estate in that section. [He] joined Congregation Baith Israel and became its president.

¹ Samuel P. Abelow, *History of Brooklyn Jewry* (Brooklyn: Scheba Publishing Company, 1937), p.5.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

Name of Property

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His son, Michael, was

...the first Jewish boy of Brooklyn to attend any college. Although he was the only Jewish boy in Yale, he spoke at the graduation exercises on the topic, "The Modern Jew." He was selected as one of the speakers because of his high scholastic attainments. He graduated in 1876. Then he studied law at the Columbia Law School and, after graduation, opened an office in Brooklyn. He was proud of the fact that he never moved out of Brooklyn and was associated with many of the leading Jewish and civic movements.²

Elias Isaacson

...came from London, England, in 1838, and settled on DeKalb Avenue, near Myrtle Avenue.... Elias Isaacson became one of the "Forty-niners" who rushed to California to dig gold out of the soil but returned to Brooklyn with a bag of misfortunes. Elias' son, Mark N., was a great violinist and occupied a very important part in the history of Brooklyn music. The son of Mark, Charles D., who died in 1936, was also a famous musician.

Levi Blumenau came from Germany in 1845 and settled "in the Court Street section." Bernhard Schellenberg, "born near Frankfort...opened a merchant tailor shop at 119 Myrtle Avenue" in 1857. That same year, James Gru "settled in Brooklyn... [and] established a men's hat business on Atlantic Avenue near the East River..."³

Distinct from the Brooklyn Jewish community was a sister community in Williamsburg, a separate village before uniting with Brooklyn.

The first known settler here was Adolph Baker, who arrived in 1837.⁴

The Jewish community grew, but it was some time before it achieved great numbers. In 1870, Henry Stiles' *A History of the City of Brooklyn* listed only four Jewish congregations, and stated only that "there are in Brooklyn nearly one thousand families of the Jewish faith."

Over the next few decades, however, as Brooklyn grew into the country's third largest city, reaching a population of approximately 600,000 by 1880,⁵ its Jewish population grew enormously. The subsequent opening of the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges, and the extension of the IRT subway into Brooklyn, facilitated the continuing growth of both the borough and its Jewish population.

² Abelow, 6-7.

³ Abelow, 8-9.

⁴ Abelow, 9.

⁵ Ilana Abramovitch and Seán Galvin, *Jews of Brooklyn* (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life; Brandeis University Press, 2001), "Introduction," p. 5.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

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Following a major wave of immigration from Eastern Europe of Jews fleeing poverty, religious discrimination, expulsion and massacres – a wave beginning in the 1880s and reaching its peak in the early decades of the 20th century – New York City, including Brooklyn, became home to an enormous Eastern European Jewish immigrant community. From about 1880 up until World War I, some two million Jews – roughly one third of all the Jews in Europe – arrived in the United States.⁶ The vast majority first settled in New York City, many settling in the crowded tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side. The Jewish immigrants created an enormous Yiddish-speaking community, in which they were able to find *kosher* (ritually acceptable) food, Yiddish-language newspapers, and mutual aid societies. Major Jewish immigration stopped only with the passage in 1924 of new immigration laws.

Brooklyn shared in this massive growth. From 1905 to 1930, the Jewish population of Brooklyn grew eight-fold, from 100,000 to 800,000. In 1918, New York City's Jewish population was estimated at 1,330,000, most of whom lived in Manhattan (696,000) and Brooklyn (568,000).⁷ Some of Brooklyn's new Jewish arrivals moved there from the more crowded neighborhoods of the Lower East Side, while others settled directly in Brooklyn after arriving in the United States.

By 1927, Jewish residents accounted for roughly a third of Brooklyn's population, and made up almost half the Jewish population of the entire city.⁸ In this pre-Holocaust period, wrote Abelow,

...as the estimated Jewish population of the world is 16,240,000, according to Jacob Lestschinsky, of the Jewish Scientific Institute, Brooklyn has about one-sixteenth of all the Jews. In view of the fact that Brooklyn Jewry began with a handful of settlers about 1837, the growth of the community presents one of the most remarkable social phenomena in history.⁹

Today's Brooklyn Jewish community is made up of many different elements.

In 1990, Brooklyn Jews numbered about 420,000 out of New York City's 1.13 million Jewish inhabitants.... Brooklyn's Jewish life is breathtaking in its diversity. Major groupings in the borough include Jews from the former Soviet Union, from Syria, Jews of central and eastern European origin, Israeli Jews, Jews from Arab lands, Iranian Jews. There are large numbers of elderly Jews, yuppie Jews, Holocaust survivors, Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox.... Within its borders, Brooklyn has contained major centers of Jewish religious, educational, and all varieties of Zionist and anti-Zionist life.¹⁰

⁶ Moses Rischin, *The Promised Land: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (New York, 1970), p.20, cited in Andrew Dolkart, *National Register Nomination: Lower East Side Historic District* (New York: 1999).

⁷ *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917-1918* (New York: Kehillah [Jewish Community], 1918), p.86.

⁸ Abramovitch and Galvin, p. 5.

⁹ Abelow, p.13.

¹⁰ Abramovich and Galvin, p.3.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

Name of Property

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Synagogues have always played a major role in the life of New York's Jewish population, and Brooklyn's first synagogues date back to the pre-Civil War era. Brooklyn's synagogues reflect the varied modern history of Judaism – there are synagogues associated with the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements, as well as Modern Orthodoxy and the synagogues of the borough's many Hasidic communities.¹¹

Brooklyn's first Jewish congregation, Beth Elohim, met informally in 1848 in Williamsburg, and officially incorporated in 1851. Its founders were a group of German and Alsatian Jews; perhaps not coincidentally, the year 1848 was the year of the various failed revolts in German-speaking European states. In 1859, the congregation bought a Lutheran church on South First Street and converted it to use as Brooklyn's first synagogue.

Just three years later, in 1862, Brooklyn's second Jewish congregation, Baith Israel, constructed Brooklyn's first purpose-built synagogue at the corner of Boerum Place and State Street.

In the words of Rabbi Israel Goldefarb, the Congregation's first historian, it was "the first altar dedicated to the God of Israel" to be built on all of Long Island, for it was not until 1876 that Williamsburg's Kahal Kodesh built its own synagogue on Keap Street.¹²

Within 40 years, Brooklyn synagogues numbered in the hundreds. New York's 1918 Jewish population was served by 700 synagogues, of which not quite 300 were located in Brooklyn. Brooklyn's synagogue count that year, broken down by district, included (and this listing is indicative of the location of the major Jewish communities within the borough at that time):

Borough Park: 27 permanent, 13 temporary
Brownsville: 48 permanent, 23 temporary
Bushwick: 5 permanent, 6 temporary
Central Brooklyn: 26 permanent, 26 temporary
East New York: 24 permanent, 29 temporary
Williamsburg: 49 permanent, 20 temporary¹³

After World War II, Brooklyn began losing much of its population and industrial employment. In particular, the population of Jewish neighborhoods in the Bronx and Brooklyn shrank due to death and movement away from city neighborhoods. The 1980s and '90s saw a resurgence of Brooklyn's Jewish

¹¹ Though Judaism is small in numbers of adherents, compared to such religions as Christianity and Islam, it has many different theological manifestations. For a description and history, see Isidore Epstein, *Judaism* (Penguin Books, 1959, reprinted 1973), especially Chapter 21, "Modern Movements in Judaism."

¹² Judith R. Greenwald, "First Synagogues - The first 144 Years of Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes (the Kane Street Synagogue)," in Abramovitch and Galvin, *Jews of Brooklyn*, p. 33.

¹³ *Jewish Communal Register*, op. cit.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

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population. The flight to the suburbs slowed, and many Jews moved to the city in the '80s from the Soviet Union, Israel, Iran and from other Middle Eastern countries. By 1990, there were 420,000 Jews in Brooklyn.¹⁴

Today Brooklyn still has hundreds of active synagogues. In some neighborhoods which formerly had Jewish communities but no longer do, notably Brownsville and East New York, synagogues have been either demolished or converted to churches or other uses. In neighborhoods that have historic or new Jewish communities, however, synagogues continue to thrive.

Kensington

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek is located on Clara Street, a largely residential street in the Kensington neighborhood, not far from the adjoining neighborhood of Borough Park. As described in a recent publication, *Brooklyn By Name*:

Kensington, named for the western borough of London, developed coterminously with Prospect Park South at the end of the nineteenth century. But there were distinct differences in how the neighborhoods were built up: the majority of Kensington's housing – one-family Victorians, rowhouses, and six-story apartment buildings – was not constructed until the 1920s, and unlike Prospect Park South, Kensington experienced a great influx of diverse immigration.¹⁵

According to the same publication:

Clara Street and neighboring Louisa, Tehama, and Minna streets are believed to have been named for the daughters of a real estate developer in the area. Curiously, San Francisco's SoMa, or South of Market district, presents the exact same street names in identical order, quite possibly taken from the Flatbush example.¹⁶

Kensington and Borough Park (also spelled Boro Park) experienced a boom in residential construction beginning in 1919, thanks to the opening of a new subway line. As described in the press at the time:

Exceptional opportunities for dwelling and apartment house development are offered in Borough Park, Parkville, Kensington and West Flatbush, Brooklyn, territory which has been brought many minutes nearer Herald square through the opening of the Culver elevated line as far as Kings Highway.

¹⁴ Marc D. Angel, Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Jews," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 622.

¹⁵ Leonard Bernardo, Jennifer Weiss, *Brooklyn by Name: How the Neighborhoods, Streets, Parks, Bridges, and More Got Their Names* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p.103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.105.

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Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

Name of Property

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Although served with good transit for some years, real estate brokers contend that direct connection with the subway system, which means a five cent fare into the heart of Manhattan, will bring to this section of Brooklyn many people who have never viewed its advantages except from car windows while on a pleasure jaunt to Coney Island.

The scarcity of homes and apartments already has carried seekers into this territory, and to-day the situation there is as tense as in other parts of the metropolis. But there is the following difference to be seen:

Builders are already on the job, and at least two small house operations are under way, one in Louisa street, between Chester avenue and Thirty-sixth street, where Nathan Rollnick is erecting eight buildings. He has also started to build seven more in Clara street, near Thirty-sixth street, and intends to start ten more within a month.¹⁷

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek

As described in the synagogue's original certificate of incorporation, dated November 20th, 1926,¹⁸ the founders of the congregation initially named it Chevra Linath Hazedek D'Chidushei Hori'm. The certificate gives no particular reason for the name. A "chevra" is a community, and "Linat Hazedek" means "place of righteousness" in Hebrew. Chidushei Hori'm (more commonly spelled HaRim) was an alternate name for Rabbi Yisrael Meir Alter, the founder of the Ger Hasidic dynasty, though it is not known if the congregation had some connection to that sect. The certificate of incorporation has little additional information other than the names of the original Trustees – Abraham L. Geller, Herman Lann, and Harry Bernstein – and that "the principle place of worship and meeting place of such Congregation, is to be located in the Borough of Brooklyn, County of Kings, City and State of New York."

In May 1928, the Congregation purchased the lot on Clara Street.¹⁹ The details of the building's construction are difficult to pin down²⁰, but its Certificate of Occupancy²¹, issued in 1932, references a Brooklyn Buildings Department alteration permit from 1928²² – the year the property was purchased. The deed of sale to the congregation references "All those certain lots of land with the building and improvements thereon erected." Taken together, these documents suggest that the synagogue building is the result of an alteration to an earlier

¹⁷ "Culver Line Has Opened Field For Brooklyn Builders," *New York Herald*, May 11, 1919, second section, page eight.

¹⁸ November 20th, 1926, copy on file at the synagogue office.

¹⁹ Deed of sale, copy on file at the synagogue office; recorded May 14, 1928. The property was purchased from Francesco Campagna, Girolama Campagna, Gesualdo Geraci, and Rosalia Geraci.

²⁰ The Brooklyn office of the New York City Buildings Department cannot find the building's block and lot folder.

²¹ New York City Buildings Department, Certificate of Occupancy No. 68481, issued September 21, 1932.

²² New York City Buildings Department, Brooklyn office, alteration application 9624 of 1928.

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structure. If so, then the architect responsible for the alteration that created Linath Hazedek would be the one referenced in the Certificate of Occupancy, Benjamin Goldberg, about whom almost nothing is known.²³

The history of New York synagogues extends back to the construction in 1729 of the original “Shearith Israel” or Mill Street synagogue (demolished). In the intervening three centuries, synagogue architecture has gone through many iterations. Surviving New York synagogues include a number of distinct types, ranging from “stieblach,” or store-front synagogues; to vernacular “tenement synagogues” – long narrow structures suited to the 100x20 foot lots typical of the Lower East Side (e.g. the NR-listed Stanton Street Shul, 02NR04917); to grand, high-style “cathedral” synagogues (e.g. the NR-listed Central Synagogue, 90NR00862).

The Linath Hazedek synagogue was designed as a local synagogue for a small neighborhood population, not as a grand architectural statement. Though built in an outlying neighborhood, Linath Hazedek is remarkable in that it closely resembles the vernacular “tenement synagogues” that sprang up on the Lower East Side. Small vernacular synagogues on narrow tenements lots were the most common type there – much as vernacular synagogues were by far the most common in Europe and the Middle East.²⁴

The architects of such Lower East Side synagogues, which had to be shoehorned onto narrow tenement lots, developed what has been characterized as a unique vernacular style. On their exteriors, these buildings were similar in size, materials and proportions to neighboring tenements or small commercial buildings. Their facades were often an adaptation of forms popular for larger synagogues. The resulting designs often featured a brick and stone tripartite façade, in a neo-Classical or Beaux-Arts style, with a central entrance and corner towers. Inside, the architects had to adapt the long, narrow proportions of a typical tenement lot to the ritual requirements of the congregation: an ark at the far end to hold the Torah scrolls, a *bimah* in the middle, facing the ark, from which services were led and the Torah scrolls read, and a gallery for women worshippers (who sat separately from men, in accordance with Orthodox Jewish practice). Traditionally, synagogues faced east so that congregations could pray in the direction of Jerusalem. Many small synagogues, however, with limited budgets, had to make do with narrow lots facing north or south, and so were unable to have sanctuaries facing east.

Linath Hazedek follows the “tenement synagogue” pattern almost exactly, though it is able to take advantage of a wider, 40-foot lot. The building is oriented north-south rather than east-west. Its façade is arranged in a typically tripartite design with a central entrance. Ornament reflects both Classical and Jewish influences. The façade’s three bays are separated by cast-stone pilasters, which carry a frieze and pediment with classical moldings. Hebrew lettering incised in the entablature spells out the congregation’s name –

²³ Searches in ProQuest and fultonhistory.com turned up just a few references to minor jobs; Goldberg doesn’t appear in Withey’s *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased*, published in 1956, or the 1956 American Institute of Architect’s Directory – meaning he doesn’t figure in listings that year of architects whether living or deceased.

²⁴ Interview with Dr. Samuel Gruber, author of *Synagogues* and Director of the Jewish Heritage Research Center in Syracuse, N.Y., quoted in Shari Goldberg, “Vernacular Synagogue Architecture,” *Common Bond* (New York: New York Landmarks Conservancy, Winter 2001), Vol. 16, No 2., page 2.

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“Chevra Linath Hazedek.” A parapet above the pediment includes three panels: a central panel with the twin tablets of the Ten Commandments, a panel to the left inscribed, in Roman letters, “Linath,” and one to the right inscribed “Hazedek.” A circular stained glass window directly above the central entrance centers on a *magen david* - a Star or Shield of David.

Inside the synagogue, the long, narrow sanctuary includes a raised reader’s platform, and a built-in ark for the Torah scrolls at the south end. Rising above the room on either side are galleries for the women’s section, and a flat plaster ceiling. The gallery walls are adorned with a series of 12 wall paintings of the months, with zodiac signs – a rare survival of the type, though they have recently been repainted.

Recent history

Though located in Kensington, Clara Street is close to the neighboring area of Boro Park, long home to a substantial Jewish population. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek continues to thrive as an active Brooklyn synagogue. It reflects the history of Brooklyn Jews in the early 20th century, when Brooklyn became home to one of the world’s largest Jewish populations, and now also the history of Brooklyn Jews at the beginning of the 21st century. And it is an example of the vernacular “tenement synagogue” as adapted to an outlying Brooklyn neighborhood. As such, Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek remains a vital part of the living history of its neighborhood, of Brooklyn, and of New York City.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck is located at 109 Clara Street, on the south side of the street, between 36th Street and Chester Avenue, in the Kensington neighborhood of the borough of Brooklyn in New York City. The boundaries of the property are described as Brooklyn Tax Block 5310, Lot 11.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the building and lands associated with the synagogue's 1928-32 period of significance.

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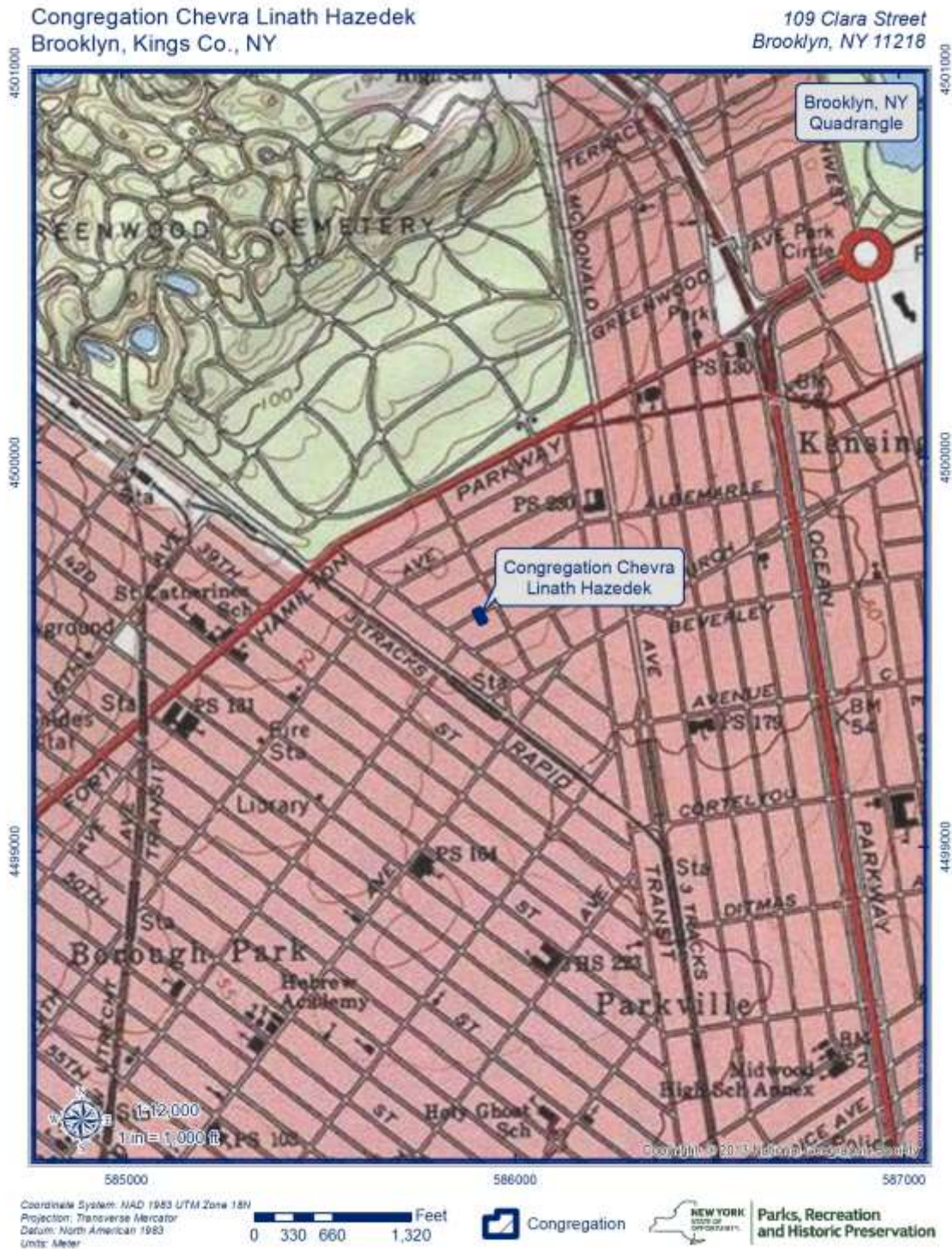
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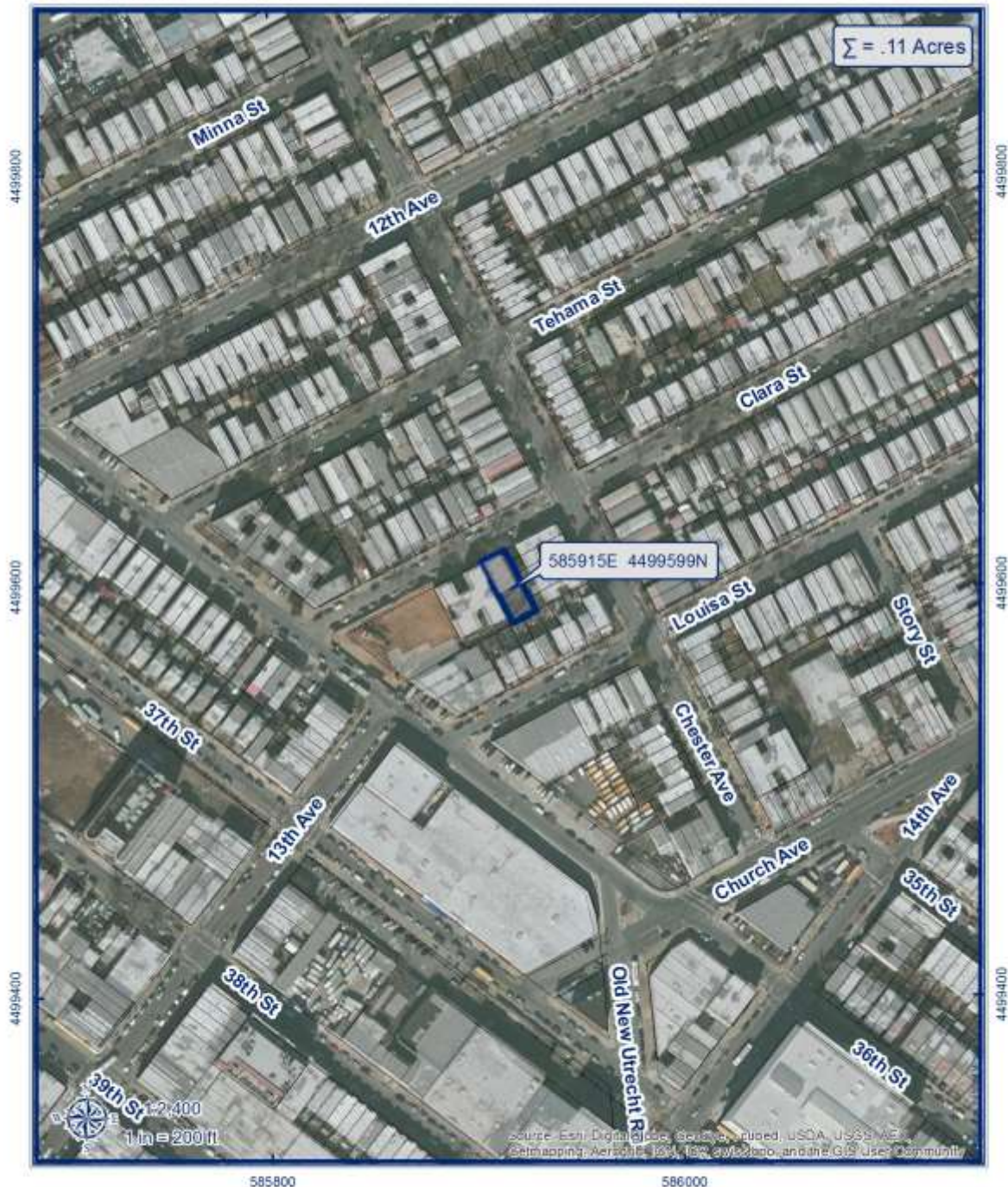
Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedeck
Brooklyn, Kings Co., NY

109 Clara Street
Brooklyn, NY 11218



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

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Congregation



Parks, Recreation
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1. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, Clara Street façade, looking south
2. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, Clara Street façade, entrance detail, looking south
3. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, Clara Street façade, detail, looking south
4. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, west façade, looking south
5. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, east façade, looking south
6. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, rear façade, looking north
7. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, entrance vestibule, looking north at main entrance
8. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, entrance vestibule, looking south (memorial plaque)
9. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, looking south
10. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, looking north
11. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, the ark at the south end
12. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, the ark at the south end, faux marble detail
13. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, the ark at the south end, detail
14. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, galleries, looking south
15. Congregation Chevra Linath Hazedek, sanctuary, gallery wall, *mazelos*, detail

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1940 Tax Photo





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