

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 Property

historic name Shaari Zedek Synagogue

other names/site number Achavat Achim Synagogue; St. Leonard's Church

2. Location

street & number 767 Putnam Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Brooklyn ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county Kings code 047 zip code 11221

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Ruth A. Purpurt / DSHPO

Signature of certifying official/Title

10/20/09

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

Shaari Zedek Synagogue
Name of Property

Kings County, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style.

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Cast stone (ornament)

roof

other Glass

Narrative Description

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

Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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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

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

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage: Eastern European Jewish

Ethnic Heritage: West Indian

Religion

Period of Significance:

1909-1959

Significant Dates:

1910

1922

1944

Significant Person:

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect/Builder:

Schoen, Eugene

Shaari Zedek Synagogue
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 118 590338 4504503
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 118

4 118

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By (See continuation sheet for author)

name/title Contact/editor: Kathy Howe, Historic Preservation Program Analyst

organization NYSOPRHP, Field Services Bureau date October 14, 2009

street & number P.O. Box 189, Peebles Island telephone 518-237-8643, ext. 3266

city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name St. Leonard's Church, Inc., AAO

street & number 765 Putnam Avenue telephone 718-573-0403

city or town Brooklyn state NY zip code 11221

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. 20503

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Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

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DESCRIPTION

Summary

The former Shaari Zedek Synagogue, later Congregation Achavat Achim, and today known as St. Leonard's Church, is located at 767 Putnam Avenue, on the north side of the street between Stuyvesant Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of the borough of Brooklyn in New York City. It was built in 1909-10 to designs by architect Eugene Schoen. The boundaries of the property are described as Brooklyn Tax Block 1646, Lot 54.

Shaari Zedek is a two-story building faced in brick with cast-stone trim. Its design combines a classical vocabulary with modernizing elements of design such as abstract geometric patterns. While St. Leonard's Church made a few modifications to the former synagogue after acquiring it in 1944, the building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Exterior

Main facade

The building's main façade is approached by a flight of steps.¹ Its design centers on its main entrance, a tripartite surround composed of a wide central double door flanked on either side by a narrow single door, separated by paneled pilasters supporting an extended attic and architrave. Above is a round arch with a blind bulls-eye at its center. Three narrow windows directly above the triple entrance, with polychromatic glass panes, are linked as a triple arcade by cast-stone capitals. The arches are formed by patterned brickwork. The three panels directly above the doorways are adorned with stylized floral and geometric patterns. The entire façade is flanked by a giant pilaster at either side, with an entablature and frieze above which originally rested a cast-stone pediment. Pilasters, frieze and architrave are formed by geometrically patterned brickwork, some projecting and some recessed. This ornament includes rectangles, squares and diamond shapes. While the triangular shape of the pediment remains, the ornament does not. The pediment has been removed and the exposed surface covered with stucco. A small arch that fits inside the former pediment has been filled in with a small square window.

To either side of the flight of steps leading to the entrance, a doorway leads into the building's basement level.

Eastern elevation

The eastern elevation is plain, faced in brick, with the tall arched windows of the sanctuary's balcony visible in the upper portion, and the short rectangular windows of the sanctuary's main level visible in the lower portion.

¹ The entrance originally included brass handrails and flanking decorative lamps; unfortunately, these were vandalized and removed in the 1970's.

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Shaari Zedek Synagogue

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A long access ramp has been added here to permit wheelchair entry; the simple entrance on this façade has a new canopy.

Interior

Entrance vestibule

The main entrance leads into a wide, shallow entrance vestibule, divided into five bays by five arches supporting the ceiling. In the entrance wall the three central bays mark the three entrances. The walls are plaster and painted white. The door frames are of wood, paneled in their lower halves, with windows in their upper halves. The floor is tiled with small mosaics, including a polychromatic *magen david* inscribed in a circle in the center of the floor. On the inner wall of the vestibule, each of the three entryways is faced by a similar entryway leading into the main sanctuary. These have multi-light doors with a transom above each one. At either end, a doorway leads to a staircase that goes up to the balcony level and down to the basement.

Main sanctuary

The sanctuary is organized by a series of round arches stretching from side to side and across the ceiling, suggesting the form of a barrel vault. The foremost arch in turn encloses an ornamental arch that opens into a recessed area housing the former ark, with an organ loft and organ pipes above. This arch maintains much of its original ornament, but a set of five roundels within the arch that originally had abstract ornament have been repainted with Christian symbols (the alpha and omega, and a lamb), and a New Testament inscription has been added: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32). A similar arch at the rear of the balcony opens to an area with a rose window; this area is now hidden by an organ. All these arches are adorned with painted abstract geometric patterns. Early photographs show that originally there was even more painted ornament, since painted over.

Within the recessed area is a raised platform where an altar is now placed in front of the former ark area. The former ark with the organ above is a large wooden structure whose center is modeled on a triumphal arch: a pair of columns on either side of an arch, the whole topped by an entablature, with the paneled organ loft above, supported on elaborately ornamental console brackets; to either side, in the side walls, is a roundel with a stained glass window in the form of a *magen david*. At ground level, to either side of this central area is a paneled door leading to stairs to the organ loft above and the social hall in the basement below.

The sanctuary's side walls are divided into five bays by the series of arches. Each bay has a tall round-arched opening with a stained-glass window with simple geometric patterns and new roundels with Christian symbols.

The rear wall beneath the balcony is plain, except for the three doorways leading into the vestibule.

The balcony rings three sides of the sanctuary. It is paneled, and adorned with classically-inspired ornament including pairs of short paneled piers, as well as ornamental shells and swags.

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Shaari Zedek Synagogue

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An original metal chandelier hangs from the center of the ceiling; it is adorned with *magen david* motifs. Small light fixtures are affixed to the walls at various points around the sanctuary.

Basement

The staircases from either side of the entrance vestibule lead down to a basement vestibule with simple plaster walls. Beyond the vestibule is a social hall with a beamed ceiling supported on simple columns. There is a stage at the far end, and a small kitchen. Staircases at the far end lead up to the area behind the former ark, and then up to the choir loft.

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Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Shaari Zedek Synagogue, later known as Achavat Achim, and today as St. Leonard's Church, at 767 Putnam Avenue in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, is historically significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of ethnic history and religion as an early 20th-century synagogue building surviving in Brooklyn, with a significant subsequent history as a church. Built in 1909-10 for Shaari Zedek, a congregation of Eastern-European origin, to designs by Brooklyn architect Eugene Schoen, it dates from a period when Brooklyn had emerged as one of the world's major Jewish population centers, and Bedford-Stuyvesant had a significant Jewish population. The building is architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C as an example of an intact early 20th-century synagogue in Brooklyn, and an early design by Schoen, an influential modernist. Schoen's design combines classically-inspired elements with a more modern sensibility, reflected in the use of geometrically-patterned brick and abstract painted ornament. The building changed hands in 1922, becoming home to Achavat Achim, a descendent of Brooklyn's oldest synagogue. In 1944, as the surrounding neighborhood's population evolved, the building became home to St. Leonard's Church, a congregation of predominantly West Indian origin, belonging to the Afro-American Orthodox denomination. The building's period of significance – 1909 to 1959 – encompasses its construction and use as a synagogue to its conversion and new use as a church. St. Leonard's has occupied the building for 65 years.

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.²

² Samuel P. Abelow, *History of Brooklyn Jewry* (Brooklyn: Scheba Publishing Company, 1937), p.5.

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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.

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.³

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...."⁴

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 1837.⁵

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."

³ Abelow, 6-7.

⁴ Abelow, 8-9.

⁵ Abelow, 9.

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Over the next few decades, however, as Brooklyn grew into the country's third largest city, reaching a population of approximately 600,000 by 1880,⁶ 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.

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.⁷ 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).⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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,

⁶ Ilana Abramovitch and Seán Galvin, *Jews of Brooklyn* (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life; Brandeis University Press, 2001), "Introduction," p. 5.

⁷ 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).

⁸ *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917-1918* (New York: Kehillah [Jewish Community], 1918), p.86. [FIX check page number]

⁹ Abramovitch and Galvin, p. 5.

¹⁰ Abelow, p.13.

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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.¹¹

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.¹²

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.¹³

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 temporary¹⁴

¹¹ Abramovich and Galvin, p.3.

¹² 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."

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ *Jewish Communal Register*, op. cit.

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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 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.¹⁵

Today Brooklyn still has hundreds of active synagogues. In neighborhoods that have historic or new Jewish communities, synagogues continue to thrive. In 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. Such is the case with the former Shaari Zedek, which now functions as a church.

Bedford-Stuyvesant and its Jewish community

Bedford-Stuyvesant is known today as the largest African-American community in the United States. In past years, however, it was also home to many other groups, including Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.¹⁶

The neighborhood today known as Bedford-Stuyvesant was a largely rural area from the time of its original colonial settlement. Streets were cut through the area's farmland in the 1850s -- by which time a rapidly expanding Brooklyn had become the country's third largest city -- but the area didn't develop into a densely settled urban neighborhood until the introduction of an elevated train line on Fulton Street in 1888. Land values consequently increased, and speculative developers erected rows of houses and apartment buildings. By 1900, most of the neighborhood had been developed with residential buildings, as well as commercial structures and a great many churches.

Late 19th-century residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant included mostly middle- and upper-middle class Protestants, including both Anglo-Americans and other European immigrants and their descendants. Many Protestant churches built for those communities still survive in the area.

The first decades of the 20th century saw major growth in the area, including an influx of Eastern European Jews as well as Italian immigrants. Though Bedford-Stuyvesant was never as large or well-known a Jewish community as, for instance, nearby Crown Heights, it supported several synagogues, among them Shaari Zedek.

¹⁵ Jackson, "Jews," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, p. 622.

¹⁶ See Mario A. Charles, "Bedford-Stuyvesant," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, pp. 94-95.

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Congregation Shaari Zedek

As described by Abelow in his 1937 history of Brooklyn:

Congregation Shaari Zedek was organized in 1902 by the residents of the Stuyvesant Heights section. A meeting was held in Stanwix Hall...on Sunday, October 12, 1902.... The members decided to conduct the meeting in the English language although German was permitted for those who preferred to use it.... It was decided to call the new congregation Shaari Zedek (The Gates of Righteousness) because one of the members came from Shaari Zedek of New York [Manhattan].

On November 2nd, 1902, the congregation incorporated, with Max Reiss appointed president. The synagogue's first building was located on Quincy Street.¹⁷

Max Reiss served as president until his death in 1926 at age 70. His obituary described him as a "manufacturer."¹⁸ The Reiss family were active leaders of the congregation for decades. Max's brother Elias Reiss – also among the founders – served as the congregation's treasurer; according to his obituary:

Mr. Reiss retired several years ago. He had been president of Elias Reiss & Co. and the Reiss Factors Corporation, both of New York, and Howard-Arthur Mills of Fall River, Mass. For many years he was a director of the Manufacturers Trust Company and the Graham-Newman Corporation. He was the first treasurer of the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, which has since been merged with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.¹⁹

Max's son Joseph Reiss later served as vice-president. Max's wife, Honora Reiss, at the time of her death, was the Sisterhood's

...Honorary Director, lovingly styled Queen Mother of the organization, for whom she worked from its inception.²⁰

Abelow described the synagogue's growth:

In the course of time, the congregation prospered. The services were conducted on the conservative basis as the members called it. Men and women sat together. An organ was introduced as well as a mixed choir. The men wore hats; tallithim [sic] (praying shawls) were optional. The prayer book was modified in accordance with the Jastrow ritual. The principles were a mixture of Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism. The rabbis as a rule were selected from the Hebrew Union College, the reform school. The

¹⁷ Abelow, p. 38.

¹⁸ "Max Reiss," *New York Times*, May 1, 1926, p. 17.

¹⁹ "Elias Reiss is Dead; Textile Executive"; *New York Times*, July 19, 1958, p.15.

²⁰ Obituary notice for Honora Reiss, *New York Times*, April 2, 1941, p. 23.

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sermons were delivered in the English language. In time, the congregation built a large edifice at 765-767 Putnam Avenue.²¹

The synagogue was commissioned in 1909 from architect Eugene Schoen,²² and dedicated on September 25, 1910.²³

Max Reiss apparently ran the congregation with an iron fist, and clashed with several of the synagogue's rabbis. In 1903, one year after the congregation's founding, Rabbi Morris Luebke fell afoul of the leadership when his son married out of the faith.²⁴ A later rabbi, the Polish-born Max Raisin, served the congregation from 1913 to 1921. His successor, the Lithuanian-born Rabbi Maxwell Silver, did not last:

Accusing him of radicalism and of inciting class feeling among members of his synagogue, the Board of Trustees of the Congregation Shaari Zedek, Reid and Putnam Avenues, Brooklyn, have suspended Rabbi Maxell Silver. The rabbi was barred from the synagogue Friday night, but, accompanied by a number of his congregation, held a protest meeting.... The congregation is now divided into two camps, with Rabbi Silver at the head of one and Max Reiss, President of the Board of Trustees, leading the others. Members of the congregation who are standing behind Dr. Silver assert that Mr. Reiss frequently has used autocratic power to oust rabbis who may offend him by their preaching.... A meeting is scheduled...when, it is said, action will be taken looking to the impeachment of President Reiss and the Board of Trustees.²⁵

Rabbi Silver was exonerated, but resigned from his post and indeed left the rabbinate altogether, becoming a banker, writing numerous books, and eventually retiring as a vice president of Bankers Trust. Together with his more famous brother, Abba Hillel Silver, he was instrumental in founding what became the Zionist Organization of America.²⁶

Despite such problems, Shaari Zedek prospered, and in 1922 decided to build a grander building. As described by Abelow:

The Congregation, in the course of time, became very prosperous, decided to leave the Putnam Avenue section and build a new home on the southeast corner of Kingston Avenue and Park Place. This was accomplished in 1924.... The building contains a synagogue, a Sunday School, a dance hall, a gymnasium and special rooms for the meetings of the board of directors and other attractive features.

²¹ Abelow, pp 34-35.

²² Karen J. Rigdon, *Eugene Schoen: Designs for Furniture, 1927-1936* (Master's Thesis, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 1986), which includes Lee Schoen's "Eugene Schoen: Commission List, 1905-1940" as Appendix I; p. 101: "Job No. 567, 1909 - Sharvi [sic] Zedek Synagogue, Bkln."

²³ *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 13, 1911-1912, p.291.

²⁴ "Cupid May Oust a Rabbi," *New York Times*, July 8, 1903, p. 16.

²⁵ "Suspend Rabbi as Radical," *New York Times*, January 4, 1920, p.14.

²⁶ "Maxwell Silver, Banker, Zionist," *New York Times*, October 10, 1966, p. 41.

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So prominent had the congregation become by this time, that the dedication of its new building involved the President of the United States:

By pressing a button in the White House President Coolidge yesterday afternoon caused the new temple and community house of the Congregation Shaari Zedek, at Park Place and Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn, to glow with electric light. This formally opened the Sunday afternoon session of the dedicatory exercises which began Friday evening and will conclude with a banquet this evening.²⁷

When the Shaari Zedek congregation moved to its new temple, it sold the Putnam Street synagogue to the Achavat Achim congregation. Though Shaari Zedek's new home was larger than the Putnam Street building, that first building was designed by architect Eugene Schoen, and considered worthy enough of notice to be published in *The American Architect* in 1911.²⁸

Eugene Schoen²⁹

²⁷ "Coolidge in Capital Lights Temple Here," *New York Times*, October 12, 1925, p.16.

²⁸ "Shaari Zedek Synagogue, Brooklyn, N.Y. Eugene Schoen, Architect," *The American Architect*, Vol. XCIX, No. 1835, February 22, 1911.

²⁹ This section on Schoen is taken almost in its entirety from the Landmarks Preservation Commission designation report on the Public National Bank, LP-2263, prepared by Jay Shockley, with the author's permission. His sources include: LPC, architects files; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Arch. Recs., 1989); New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., archives; "Board of Education Lectures," *New York Times* (NYT), Jan. 13, 1901, 10; "Free Lectures," NYT, Oct. 19, 1901, BR12; "Manual Training High School," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 17, 1901, 28; "Eugene Schoen," U.S. passport application (1904); "The Building Department," NYT, May 18, 1906, 15; "Synagogue of the First Hungarian Congregation, Ohav Zedek, West 116th Street, New York, N.Y.," *American Architect & Building News*, Sept. 28, 1907, 104, pl. 1657; "New Home Uptown for German Theatre," NYT, Mar. 1, 1908, 9; "The German Theatre in New York," *Architectural Record*, Dec. 1908, 408-416; "The Decoration of the New German Theatre," *Architects' & Builders' Magazine*, Dec. 1908, 89-92; Bill Morrison, "The Theaters of Herts & Tallant," *Marquee* (No. 4, 1990), 15, 17, 20; "Latest Dealings in Realty Field," NYT, May 15, 1910, X11; "Four New Lecture Centres," NYT, Sept. 25, 1910, 16; "Shaari Zedek Synagogue, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *American Architect & Building News*, Feb. 22, 1911, pl. 1835; "Factory for the Simms Magneto Co., Watsessing, N.J.," *American Architect & Building News*, June 14, 1911, 232-233; "20,000 at Funeral of Jacob Schoen," NYT, June 30, 1913, 7; "Art at Home and Abroad," NYT, Jan. 4, 1914, SM15; *American Jewish Yearbook* (1916), 98; "The Real Estate Field," NYT, May 24, 1916, 19; "Manufacturing Building for Nathan Manufacturing Company, Flushing, Long Island, New York," *American Architect*, Oct. 24, 1917, 293-296, 303-305; "Eugene Schoen," World War I draft registration card (1918), U. S. Census (Queens, 1920), and U.S. passport application (1920); "Architect's Home for Sale," NYT, Sept. 19, 1920, RE6; "Public National Bank, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *Architecture & Building*, June 1923, pl. 141-142; "New Bronx Plans Filed by Builders," NYT, Mar. 12, 1926, 33; "Modernist Furniture Calls for Unity," NYT, Feb. 5, 1928, 83; Nellie C. Sanford, "An Architect-Designer of Modern Furniture," *Good Furniture*, Mar. 1928, 116-118; "Value of Modern Art Subject of a Debate," NYT, Mar. 7, 1928, 2; "The Latest Art-in- Industry Exhibit," NYT, May 27, 1928, 81; "Bringing Art to the Factory and the Machine," NYT, July 1, 1928, 74; "New Twists Enliven Modern Furniture," NYT, Dec. 9, 1928, SM8; "Stewart Opening...," NYT, Oct. 6, 1929, RE1; "The Decorator's Art in the New Age," NYT, Feb. 23, 1930, 86; "A Blend of Old and New for Interiors," NYT, June 15, 1930, SM8; "Eugene Schoen," U. S. Census (Queens, 1930); "Empire State Wins Architects' Award," NYT, Apr. 22, 1931, 18; "A Branch Bank in New York City," *Architectural Record*, May 1931, 383-388; "Named for Chicago Fair," NYT, July 31, 1932, 14; "Radio City Theatres to be Opened Soon," NYT, Oct. 30, 1932, RE1; "Plan New York Room at Chicago Exhibition," NYT, Nov. 20, 1932, RE2; "Modern Decorations on a Grand Scale," NYT, Dec. 25, 1932, SM12; "Walls and Sculpture Scandal," NYT, Jan. 1, 1933, X9; "Portray New York in Exhibit at Fair," NYT, May 21, 1933, N2; "Plans Liquor Sale in Rockefeller City," NYT, Nov. 21, 1933, 15; "To Repair Soviet Embassy," NYT, Nov. 30, 1933, 28; "Embassy Occupied by Troyanovsky," NYT, Apr. 7, 1934, 5; "National Safety & Trust Company, New York City," *Architectural Forum*, Aug. 1937, 99; "Mark Twain House Sold for Altering," NYT, Apr. 19, 1938, 39; "Eugene Schoen," *Who's Who*

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Although little remembered today other than as a furniture designer (whose objects are highly sought by collectors), Eugene Schoen (1880-1957) was for the first half of the 20th century in the forefront of modern American architecture and interior design, a revered contemporary of many well-known colleagues. He was born in New York City of Hungarian Jewish ancestry. His father, Jacob Schoen, born in Esperies, Hungary, immigrated to the U.S. in 1878 and was a teacher; as the esteemed Grand Secretary of the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham, his funeral in 1913 was attended by an estimated crowd of 20,000. Eugene graduated from the first class of the Manual Training High School, Brooklyn (the first such school in what became Greater New York City) in 1897, then from Columbia University in 1902, having studied architecture. During the summers, he worked in the architectural office of McKim, Mead & White. From 1901 into the 1910s, he lectured on art and architecture at public schools in Brooklyn and Manhattan. He also became involved in leftist political causes.

According to his son, Lee Schoen, after his parents' marriage in 1902, they traveled through Europe (Eugene Schoen's passport application is dated 1904), ending their tour in Vienna. The founder of Columbia University's Department of Architecture, William R. Ware, had arranged for a travel stipend and for Schoen to meet architect Otto Wagner, the leader of the Viennese modern movement, who also introduced him to Josef Hoffmann and artist Alphonse Mucha.³⁰ Schoen later spent five months in Europe in 1913. According to the monograph Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work (1985) by Eduard F. Sekler, "Schoen brought back lasting impressions of Hoffmann's work from a tour of study in Vienna and effectively transposed them into designs of his own in New York."³¹ Hoffmann (1870-1956), a student of Wagner, was one of the founders in 1897 of the Vienna Secession, a group of painters, sculptors, and architects breaking away from the prevailing conservatism in the arts. He became a professor at the Kunstgewerbeschule (Arts and Crafts School) in 1899. In 1903, along with Kolomon Moser, Hoffmann formed the Wiener Werkstatte, initially a branch of the Secession but independent by 1905, which intended to stimulate cooperation among manufacturers and artists. Viennese architects were considered the most influential of professionals in the design fields at this time, with Hoffmann the acknowledged leader.

in *American Jewry*, John Simons, ed. (N.Y.: Jewish Biographical Bur., 1938), 943; "Suites for House in Gramercy Park," *NYT*, June 2, 1939, 47; "Jewelry Firm Builds," *NYT*, July 14, 1940, 126; "Family Building Colony of Homes on 10,000 Acres," *NYT*, June 15, 1941, RE1; Eugene Schoen, "Architectural Work of Ernest Flagg," *NYT*, Apr. 19, 1947, 14; Rudolph Rosenthal and Helena L. Ratzka, *The Story of Modern Applied Art* (N.Y.: Harper & Bros., 1948), 158; "New Home Opened by Parke-Bernet," *NYT*, Nov. 11, 1949, 28; "Building Plans Filed," *NYT*, July 4, 1951, 36; Harold H. Schoen obit., *NYT*, July 5, 1951, 25; Eugene Schoen obit., *NYT*, Aug. 17, 1957, 15; Karen J. Rigdon, *Eugene Schoen: Designs for Furniture, 1927-1936* (Master's Thesis, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 1986), which includes Lee Schoen's "Eugene Schoen: Commission List, 1905-1940" as Appendix I; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930* (N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1987); Stephen N. Greengard, "Interview: Alan Moss and the Revival of American Modernism," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Spring 1989, 76-77, 89; "Eugene Schoen," Mel Byars, *The Design Encyclopedia* (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 503; Lee Schoen obit. notice, *NYT*, Sept. 1, 1994, D19; "RKO Roxy, New York City: Long Gone and Almost Entirely Forgotten," *Marquee* (2002), 20-23; Christopher Long, *Paul T. Frankl and Modern American Design* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 2007); "Lee Schoen," www.ancestrylibrary.com website; Paul Donzella, 10 "Eugene Schoen," www.greenbriarwoodworks.com website (2007).

³⁰ Lee Schoen, in Rigdon, 2.

³¹ Eduard F. Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1985), 189.

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After his return to New York, around 1904, Schoen entered architectural practice, working briefly in the office of Robert W. Gibson. He was a partner in Hedman & Schoen, with the Swedish-born Axel S. Hedman (1861-), from 1905 to around 1918, during and after which time he practiced independently. Hedman & Schoen designed the First Hungarian Congregation, Ohab Zedek Synagogue (1906-07), 20 West 116th Street, and Bnai Sholaum Synagogue (1913-15), 401 9th Street, Brooklyn; and were associate architects for the remodeling of former Lenox Lyceum as the New German Theatre (1908, Herts & Tallant; demolished 1929), Madison Avenue and East 59th Street. Rudolph Rosenthal and Helena L. Ratzka, in *The Story of Modern Applied Art* (1948), called it "one of the first [American] buildings free of any style influence,"³² though it was clearly inspired by contemporary Viennese design, with murals by Alphons Mucha. Schoen was responsible for the design of the Shaari Zedek Synagogue (1909-10), 767 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn; the reinforced concrete Simms Magneto Co. factory (1914), Watsessing (East Orange), N.J.; Israel Orphan Asylum (1914-17; demolished), 274 East 2nd Street; and the reinforced concrete Nathan Mfg. Co. brass appliance factory complex (1916-17), Flushing, Queens; and participated in the design of houses in Forest Hills Gardens (after 1910). His own residence on Olive Place in that community was where he was said to have held artistic salons. During World War I, he was forced to find other employment, and served as general manager of the firm of his uncle, Emanuel Schoen, the International Oxygen Co., Newark, N.J., which dealt in electrolytic oxygen and hydrogen generating apparatus, cylinders, compressors, etc. In 1921, Schoen received the lucrative patronage of the Public National Bank of New York, which lasted until 1930, and is known to have designed many branch banks, including the neo-Classical style temple at No. 47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street), Brooklyn (1921-23), featuring rusticated columns and corner piers; No. 106 Avenue C (1923); No. 319 Grand Street and No. 896 DeKalb Avenue (c. 1925), Brooklyn; No. 177 East Broadway (c. 1927); and the Art Moderne style No. 503 Claremont Parkway, Bronx (1930-31; altered).

Schoen was said to have been inspired to become largely an interior designer after attending the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, Paris, and opened his own New York gallery. Christopher Long has described his aesthetic thusly:

Schoen's designs merged the pure geometries and material sumptuousness he had taken from the Viennese with the elegance and softened contours of the French. His innovative mixture was animated and urbane, its evident refinement immediately won over a number of clients.³³

After 1928, at his gallery he displayed complete settings of rooms (including furniture, textiles, and rugs). He also participated in a number of influential design exhibitions, including Macy's International Exposition of Art in Industry (1928); *The Architect and the Industrial Arts: An Exhibition of Contemporary Design* (1929), for which he served on the Co-Operating Committee of Architects (with Raymond Hood, Ely Jacques Kahn, John W. Root, Eliel Saarinen, Joseph Urban, and Ralph T. Walker), and *Contemporary American Industrial Art*, 1934 (1935), the latter two at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Schoen was part of the circle of the 5 leading modernist designer Paul T. Frankl, which also included Kahn, Hood, Urban, as well as Wolfgang Hoffmann (son of Josef) and his wife Pola, architect William Lescaze, designers Donald Deskey, Gilbert Rohde, and

³² Rosenthal and Ratzka, 158.

³³ Long, 61.

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Walter von Nessen, and photographer Edward Steichen. Schoen was credited with bringing Bavarian glassmaker/ceramist Marianna von Allesch to the U.S. in 1928, and gave the sculptor Isamu Noguchi his first solo exhibition at the Eugene Schoen Gallery in 1929. In 1931, Schoen became a professor of interior architecture at New York University, and received a medal of honor "in native industrial art" from the Architectural League of New York, for a metal and glass building entrance.

He was named as technical advisor for the New York State exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933-34, which resulted in two exhibition rooms with decorative panels by Urban and photomurals by Steichen. Among Schoen's significant interior design commissions were the L.C. Smith & Corona Typewriter Co. showroom (1926), Fifth Avenue; Stewart & Co. (1929), Fifth Avenue and 56th Street; the nightclub of the S.S. Leviathan (1929); RKO Roxy Theater (1932; demolished) in the Rockefeller Center complex, for which the New York Times praised its "grace and sophisticated refinement;"³⁴ the 3-story Dunhill tobacco/ specialty shop (1933) in the British Empire Building, Rockefeller Center; Café Loyale and Savoy Room (1936), Savoy Plaza Hotel; Lincoln Bar (1937), Hotel Lincoln; Cafritz House (c. 1939), Washington, D.C.; and Sherry-Netherland and Commodore Hotels. His later architectural work included the remodeling of the Soviet Embassy (1933-34), Washington, D.C.; alteration of the former Mark Twain House (1938), 14 West 10th Street (Schoen was president of the ownership corporation); conversion into apartments of the former Netherland Club (1939), 3 Gramercy Park (Schoen was the owner); and Sons of Israel Synagogue (1948-50, with Fritz Nathan), Woodmere, Long Island. Schoen was a member of the Federal Housing Authority during World War II.

Lee Schoen (1907-1994) was involved in the architectural practice by the late 1920s, and by 1937, they were joined by another son, Harold H. (c. 1905-1951), in the firm of Eugene Schoen & Sons. Their work included the National Safety Bank & Trust Co. (1937) in No. 1400 Broadway (Ely Jacques Kahn, architect); Philwold Estates summer house community (1939-40), Sullivan County, N.Y.; Jacques Kreisler Mfg. Corp. factory (1940, with James Rothstein), North Bergen, N.J.; Parke-Bernet Galleries interiors (1949), Madison Avenue; remodeling of the former Tiffany & Co. building as the Amalgamated Bank (1951), 11 Union Square; and Amalgamated Laundry Workers Union Health Center (1953), 226 East 34th Street.

The *New York Times* at his death in 1957 stated that "Schoen was regarded as one of the leading exponents of modern architecture and design and as such helped to develop the movement here."³⁵

Schoen's design for Shaari Zedek

Though Schoen was in partnership with Axel Hedman when he designed Shaari Zedek, it appears that he designed the synagogue on his own. The publication of the building in *The American Architect*³⁶ in 1911 credits it as "Eugene Schoen, Architect," with no mention of Hedman.

³⁴ Jan. 1, 1933.

³⁵ Eugene Schoen obit.

³⁶ "Shaari Zedek Synagogue, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *The American Architect*, Vol. XCIX, No. 1835, February 22, 1911, p.90-91.

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Designed in 1909, Shaari Zedek was one of Schoen's earliest works. His only known earlier synagogue design was the Synagogue of the First Hungarian Congregation, Ohab Zedek, on West 116th Street in Manhattan, built 1906-07 (though credited by *The American Architect* to "Hedman & Schoen, Architects"). Both those buildings combine classical vocabulary with some of the flavor of a newer, more modern approach. The two buildings' facades are each faced in brick with cast-stone ornament, each has a prominent dentilled cornice (in the case of Shaari Zedek as part of its original prominent pediment, now removed), and the ornament in each, while based on classical forms, includes geometrically patterned brickwork that suggests something of the influence of the modern work that Schoen would have seen in Vienna.

Shaari Zedek has a tripartite entrance composed of a wide central double-door flanked on either side by a narrow single door, separated by paneled piers supporting an attic and architrave, above which is a rounded arch with a blind bulls-eye at its center – all typically classical in inspiration. But even here there are modernizing elements, including geometric patterns directly above the doorways. Three narrow windows directly above the triple entrance are linked as a triple arcade by cast-stone capitals. The entire façade is then flanked by a giant pilaster at either side, with an entablature and frieze above which was originally a cast-stone pediment. Those pilasters, however, as well as the frieze and architrave, are not made of cast-stone – instead they are formed by geometrically patterned brickwork, some projecting and some recessed.

Inside, the main sanctuary is organized by a series of round arches stretching from side to side and across the ceiling, suggesting the form of a barrel vault. A giant arch at the front opens into an apse which originally housed the ark; a similar arch at the rear of the balcony opens to an area with a rose window, now hidden by an organ. All these arches are adorned with painted abstract geometric patterns.

Later history

Congregation Ahavath Achim

When Congregation Shaari Zedek moved to its new quarters, it sold the Putnam Street building to a much older congregation, Achavat Achim ("Brotherly Love"), which had, in fact, earlier taken over Shaari Zedek's first building on Quincy Street.

Ahavath Achim was an offshoot of Brooklyn's first Jewish congregation, Beth Elohim, founded in Williamsburg in 1848 as an Orthodox congregation. According to Abelow:

When Temple Beth Elohim decided to turn to Reform Judaism, the conservative members seceded and organized Congregation Ahavath Achim ...in 1868 or 1869. Articles of incorporation were not applied for until March, 1873. Services were conducted by various members of the congregation. In February, 1873, just prior to the building of a synagogue on Johnson Avenue, the Rev. Isaac Hes, from Arnheim,

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Holland, was engaged as the first ordained minister. Ahavath Achim was the first conservative congregation in Williamsburg.³⁷

Ahavath Achim bought Shaari Zedek's Quincy Street building in 1910, and then the Putnam Street building in 1922.

Modern services were introduced about twenty-five years ago [c.1912] under the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Joseph D. Spears. German lectures, however, continued to be a feature of the Saturday morning services until 1913.... The men who are responsible for the Reform movement in the congregation and its present sound condition were the men who were at the helm during the past twenty-five years: Max Haas, Ferdinand H. Reinheimer, the late Simon Levy, Israel Perkins, Samuel B. Horn, and Henry J. Mayers.³⁸

St. Leonard's Church

The congregation housed in the building today, St. Leonard's Church, acquired it in 1944. St. Leonard's was founded in 1936, and celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2006. Like the synagogue congregations that preceded St. Leonard's in the building, the new congregation had its origins in an immigrant population, in this case primarily from the West Indies.

The migration to the United States of Afro-Caribbeans from the West Indies (Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados) was largely driven by economic reasons. Migration to the U.S. from the Caribbean began in the 19th century, primarily after the abolition of slavery in the U.S. in 1865. By the end of the 19th century several thousand immigrants from the West Indies resided in Boston, New York City, and Miami. Between 1900 and the Great Depression, well over 150,000 migrated. While migration was halted by the restrictive Immigration Act of 1924, the liberalization of the nation's immigration policy with the 1965 Immigration Act opened the door to large numbers of immigrants from the former colonial West Indies seeking work and economic security.³⁹

Bedford-Stuyvesant is known today as the largest African-American community in the United States. Populations in the neighborhood began to shift by 1910; several African-American families moved into the neighborhood in the 1920s, and by 1930 African-Americans made up slightly more than 10% of the population. The opening of the Independent subway "A" line in 1936, connecting Bedford-Stuyvesant with Harlem, led to a major increase in that population. By 1940, African-Americans comprised about 40% of the population of the area and a decade later close to 90%. That population included both American blacks and West Indians.

³⁷ Abelow, p.36.

³⁸ Abelow, p.38.

³⁹ Aubrey W. Bonnett, "The West Indian Diaspora to the USA: Remittances and Development of the Homeland," The Forum on Public Policy, 2006, p. 5-6.

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Churches have long played a major role in the life of Bedford-Stuyvesant, and each church has its own community and its own history. The history of St. Leonard's church is recounted in the St. Leonard's "Seventieth Anniversary Program":

A small group of Christian believers, were abruptly left to themselves without a spiritual leader and a Church home. For several months, worship services were held in the home of Bro. Joseph T. Haynes and his wife Mary at 461/2 Irving Place, Brooklyn, New York. Those who held a strong faith in someday rebuilding gathered there for Sunday Morning Worship Service. Those with lesser courage found their way into various religious bodies.

In spite of financial difficulties and several location changes, this small group, commonly referred to as the "Faithful Few," banded themselves together and pledged to continue an independent course of Christian Fellowship and Spiritual Communication with each other.

The congregation incorporated in 1936 as St. Leonard's Church, Inc.

The form of worship may be described as a blending of Western and eastern Liturgy, Creeds and Symbols. The Liturgy is usually western, a mingling of Anglican, Greek and Roman patterns. Although free from organized denominational and ecclesiastical control, there was inter-communion with other religious bodies.

In 1944, St. Leonard's acquired the building at 765 Putnam Avenue.

The membership again rallied in order to convert the building for Christian worship. The most memorable event in the life of St. Leonard's was the dedication and consecration of the building on Sunday, October 9, 1955.

The congregation eventually joined a

...new religious denomination which was to be known as Afro-American Orthodox. The founder and first Primate of the Afro-American Orthodox Church, Archbishop Donald M. Forster, S.T.D., D.C.L., was consecrated on Sunday, January 8, 1961, at St. Leonard's Church.

Archbishop Forster remained at St. Leonard's until his death in 1975. As recounted in his obituary in the *Amsterdam News*, which identified him as the "First Archbishop of the Afro-American Orthodox Church":

Archbishop Forster died June 15 in Brookdale Hospital at the age of 84. He had been active as the spiritual leader of one of the largest churches in the borough until four weeks before he was stricken and had to be hospitalized. He came to the United States from Barbados in 1909, joining his brothers Clarence, Charles, Archibald and Edgar. After attending public schools in this city he later became one of the first Black linotype operators here.

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He began his religious work in the U.S. as a layman, serving as assistant superintendent of the Sunday School at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, and left that church in 1933 to join St. Leonard's where he was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School the following year.

As his interest in theology grew, Mr. Forster began devoting countless hours to study, and in 1950 he was appointed Rector of St. Leonard's A.O. Church. The degree of S.T.D. was bestowed upon him in 1946 and the D.C.I. in 1957 by the Most Rev. Reginald Grant Barrow.⁴⁰

St. Leonard's 70th anniversary program notes that while

...there were years of inter-communion between the Afro-American Orthodox Church and St. Leonard's Church, Inc.,... (that with the passing of Archbishop Forster), the titular Head of the Afro-American Orthodox Churchthe relationship of inter-communion ended.

Archbishop Forster was succeeded in the position of Rector by the Most Rev. James H. Rogers, who served until his death in 1991. The church is currently led by the Rev. Iverston Walrond (Priest-in-Charge) who wrote

As we move forward toward new horizons, let our motto be: 'Faith, Courage, Change.' ...With a renewal of our minds, let us be steadfast with courage to change the things we can as an independent, self-empowered congregation.

After 65 years at 765 Putnam Street, St. Leonard's has maintained the building twice as long as the two synagogue congregations combined.

Today

St. Leonard's church stands today as a handsome work of architecture by Eugene Schoen, but perhaps more importantly as a remarkable testament to the religious and ethnic history of Brooklyn. The history of the three congregations that the building has housed – Shaari Zedek, Achavath Achim, and St. Leonard's Church – reflects the evolving population of Bedford-Stuyvesant, the history of Jews and of African- and Caribbean-Americans in the borough, and the strength of New York City's immigrant communities – whether originating in Eastern Europe or the West Indies.

⁴⁰ "Archbishop Eulogized and Laid to Rest," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 2, 1975, p.C1.

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National Park Service

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Section 9 Page 2

Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

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National Park Service

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Section 10 Page 1

Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The former Shaari Zedek Synagogue occupies Brooklyn Tax Block 1646, Lot 54, Kings County, New York. The lot is 50' wide by 100' deep. The boundary is delineated on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

The nomination boundary includes the entire lot upon which the historic synagogue building is located.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 1

Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

Form prepared by:

Tony Robins

Thompson & Columbus, Inc.

50 West 67th Street, Suite 10F

New York, NY 10023

212-877-7637

Prepared on behalf of:

The New York Landmarks Conservancy

One Whitehall Street

New York, NY 10004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 2

Shaari Zedek Synagogue

Name of Property

Kings County, New York

County and State

Photographs

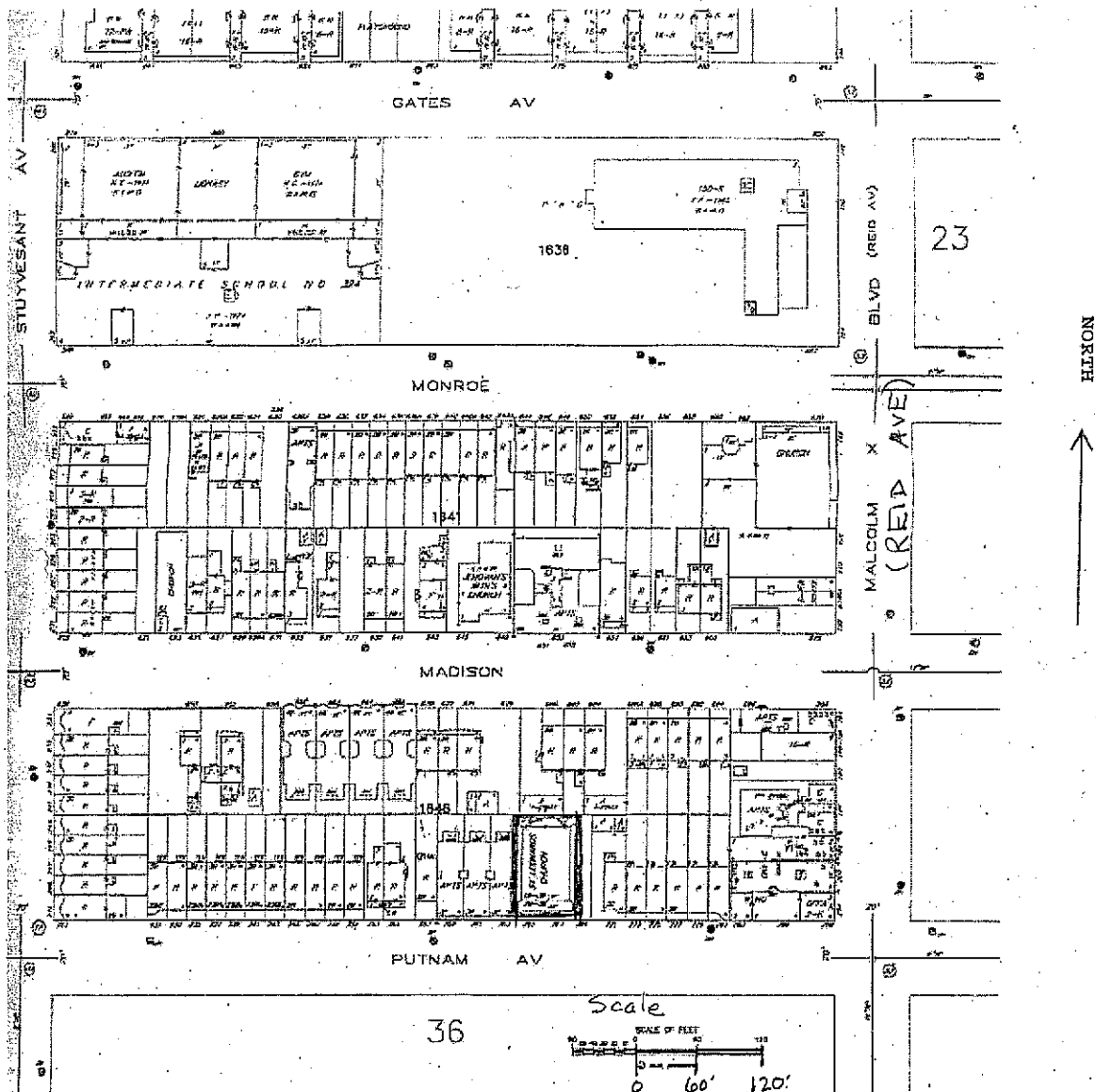
Former Shaari Zedek Synagogue
(Current St. Leonard's Church)
767 Putnam Avenue
Brooklyn, Kings County, New York

Photographer: Tony Robins

Date taken: January 29, 2009

CD-R with .TIF images on file at: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY

1. Shaari Zedek Synagogue (current St. Leonard's Church), 767 Putnam Avenue, north side of the street:
South and east elevations, looking northwest
2. South façade, looking north
3. South façade, entrance, looking north
4. East elevation, looking northwest
5. Entrance vestibule, looking east
6. Sanctuary, looking north towards altar (formerly ark); view from rear of balcony
7. Sanctuary, looking south towards rear, view from altar
8. Sanctuary, ceiling, looking north towards altar
9. Sanctuary, wall above altar (formerly ark), looking north
10. Sanctuary, altar (formerly ark) with organ above, looking north
11. Detail of woodwork over altar, looking north
12. Basement vestibule, looking west
13. Basement social hall, looking north



Shaari Zedek Synagogue
 (now St. Leonard's Church)
 767 Putnam Avenue
 Brooklyn, Kings County, NY

Brooklyn Tax Block 1646, Lot 54

(Lot dimensions: 50' wide x 100' deep)

Source: *The Sanborn Building & Property Atlas of Brooklyn, New York.*

Volume 5, Plate 22. First American Real Estate Solutions, 2006.



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North, New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7926 FAX: 212-669-7797

<http://nyc.gov/landmarks/>



KATE DALY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
kdaly@lpc.nyc.gov

July 29, 2009

Ms. Ruth Pierpont, Director
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Peebles Island
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Re: Shaari Zedek Synagogue, 767 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the Shaari Zedek Synagogue, located at 767 Putnam Avenue in Brooklyn, to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Based on the Commission's review of the property and the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, the Commission has determined that the Shaari Zedek Synagogue appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

Kate Daly
Kate Daly

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Mary Beth Betts



(3)

"NO OBJECTION" STATEMENT BY OWNER

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I, St. Leonard's Church, Inc., AAO ^{is} am the owner of the property at
(print or type owner name)

765-67 Putnam Ave, Bklyn, NY 11221
(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

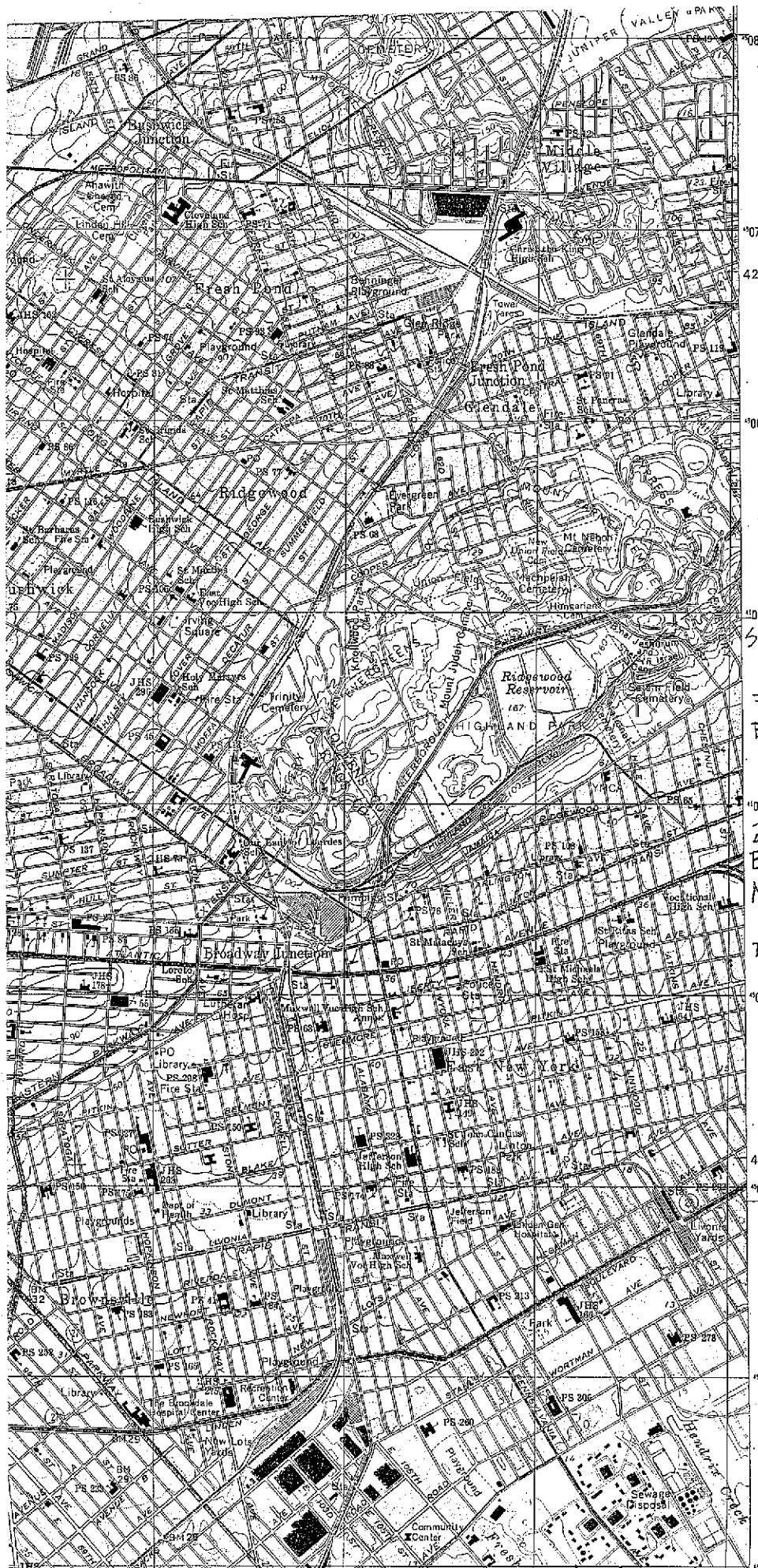
and I have no objection to its consideration and inclusion in the State and National

Registers of Historic Places.

Mawa D. Gable-Jones, Chairperson, Board of Trustees
(signature and date) /

10/29/08

St. Leonard's Church, Inc., AAO
765 Putnam Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11221
(mailing address)



Shaari Zedek
Synagogue
767 Putnam Avenue
Brooklyn, Kings County,
NY

Zone 18
Easting 590338
Northing 4504503

Brooklyn Quad
USGS Topo
1:24000



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com

David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

February 9, 2010

«Salutation» «FIRSTNAME» «LASTNAME»
«Title»
«Street1»
«Street2»
«CITY»

Re: «Property»
«PropertyAddress1» «PropertyAddress2»
«County» County

Dear «Salutation» «LASTNAME»:

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced property was listed December 4, 2009 on the National Register of Historic Places. As you may know, the National Register is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. Listing on the National Register recognizes the importance of these properties to the history of our country and provides them with a measure of protection. In addition, owners of income producing properties may qualify for federal income tax benefits. Properties owned by municipalities and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for state historic preservation matching grants.

If you would like more information about any of these programs, please contact your field representative, in this case, Kathy Howe, at the New York State Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau at (518) 237-8643 ext. 3266. Field Services Bureau staff maintains a continuing interest in all registered properties and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ruth L. Pierpont
Director
Division for Historic Preservation



