

TIMELINE
B'NAI ABRAHAM CONGREGATION, VIRGINIA, MN
by Marilyn Chiat

- 1900 Virginia's population: 7,684. Number of Jewish residents: 119
1900 Range population: 23,490
1905 October 21: 18 families form B'nai Abraham Society
1906 Sunday School established with twenty members
1908 March: Several members travel east to visit synagogues for plans
1908 October: Contractor hired and ground broken for new synagogue
1909 September: synagogue dedicated
1909 Ladies Aid Society formed with fourteen members. Known as "Sunshine Club"
1909 First full time rabbi hired: S. Siegel.
1910 Virginia's population: over 10,000. Number of Jewish residents: 121
1910 Range population: 77,655. Number of Jewish residents: approximately 1,000
1915 Rabbi Siegel departs and Rabbi A. Booth hired
1920 Range population: 100,385
1920 Virginia's Jewish population: 332
1926 Rabbi Booth departs and Rabbi A. Katz hired
1927 Virginia's Jewish population: 160
1929 Rabbi Katz, the congregation's last full time rabbi departs. Services now led by lay people or visiting rabbis
1930 Range population: 99,355
1936 Congregation consists of twenty-two families
1937 Virginia's Jewish population: 135
1940 Range population: 96,950
1950s Wooden addition on façade; sanctuary and lower level remodeled
1983 Synagogue placed on the National Register of Historic Places; only synagogue in MN on list.
1985 Congregation numbers less than ten members. Fate of building uncertain.
1995 Synagogue no longer in use
2000 Last surviving member donates benches and bimah furniture to Minneapolis synagogue
2004 Friends of B'nai Abraham formed
2005 Friends receives 501 (c)3 status.
2006 Friends receives grant from State Historic Preservation Office for a reuse study. Study recommends restoring building as a museum and cultural center.
2007 Fundraising and grant applications for restoration begins.
2008 Building is now handicap accessible and occupancy permit obtained. Several rows of benches and bimah furniture returned.
Ongoing: fundraising and grant applications to complete restoration and to provide the building with an endowment.