



B'NAI ABRAHAM

Virginia, Minnesota - St. Louis County



The History of Jewish Life on the Minnesota Iron Range



B'nai Abraham, built during 1909-1910, is the last remaining synagogue on the Minnesota Iron Range and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It ceased functioning as a working synagogue in the late 1990s after which it underwent significant deterioration. In 2005, the **Friends of B'nai Abraham** was organized as a non-profit 501(c)3 with the mission of restoring and preserving the building to function as a community cultural center for all the people of Virginia and surrounding communities, as well as providing a small museum space to tell the story of the Jewish presence and its contributions on the Iron Range. Together with our partner, The **Virginia Area Historical Society**, we look forward to seeing this lovely building used for many cultural and educational programs for the community.

SAVE THE DATE JULY 9 - 10 - 11, 2010

The Centennial Celebration and Rededication of B'nai Abraham in Virginia, MN

July 9, Friday,

7pm - A short evening musical performance and welcome reception

July 10, Saturday

10 am Shabbat morning service, rededication and Kiddush

1-3 pm Afternoon open house, brief presentation about the stained glass windows, the history of B'nai Abraham and the Jewish community followed by a tour of historic sites in Virginia

6 & 8 pm Two evening Klezmer concerts by *Millie and the Mentshn*

July 11, Sunday

Possible afternoon community concert by *Millie and the Mentshn* - place to be determined

4 pm: Also available - Carmina Burana - by the *Northern Lights Music Festival* at the Virginia High School info@NorthernLightsMusic.org

B'nai Abraham
under construction

For updated information about the Centennial Celebration visit our web site:
www.IronRangeJewishHeritage.org

**A limited number of hotel rooms have been set aside by B'nai Abraham.
Call to reserve before June 1.**

Mountain Iron: Americinn 218-741-7839 and Holiday Inn Express 218-741-5075

Virginia: Coates Hotel 218-749-1000

Event seating is limited. Reservations are needed for the Friday evening, Saturday morning and Saturday evening events. The Saturday evening event will be performed twice. Please contact Ann Phillips at phill037@umn.edu or 612-377-5075 after making your room reservations to be assured of seating for events, or for further information.

**Centennial funding has been provided by the Minnesota Humanities Center
and contributions to the Friends of B'nai Abraham.**

Celebration Details

A handicap lift is available in the building.

Northern Lights Music Festival

FRIDAY EVENING: The B'nai Abraham Centennial and Rededication Weekend begins on Friday night, July 9, at 7:00 PM at B'nai Abraham. Musicians from the Northern Lights Music Festival will perform a short program of string music including selections by Jewish composers. Following the concert, there will be a rededication ceremony and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. We will gather for a welcoming reception, in the Sanford I. Berman Social Hall, so that everyone can reconnect and recollect and say L'Chaim!, a toast to life and to 100 more years of B'nai Abraham, now a Museum and Cultural Center.



SATURDAY MORNING: A Special Centennial Shabbat Service Whether you go to Shul, to Temple, or to Synagogue, daily or once a year, we all have memories associated with services. For most of its 100 year history, the B'nai Abraham building was the site of many Shabbats and special life-cycle events. The Friends of B'nai Abraham have lovingly restored the building, the Bimah, the stained glass windows and the Ark, and have preserved the ritual objects of the congregation, from the Torah Yad to the Kiddush Cup, to use in services. Our Shabbat service will, as a part of the 100th Anniversary Weekend, observe a Shabbat service both for those who wish to celebrate Shabbat and for those who are curious and wish to learn about the service.

In celebration of Shabbat and the B'nai Abraham building's 100th anniversary, please join us for Shabbat services on Saturday July 10, 2010 at 10 am for a Reform-style Shabbat service with music followed by a light Kiddush lunch. Bring your Kippah and Talit if it is your custom. The small community rarely had a full time rabbi, so for many years members of the congregation led its religious services. We will continue this tradition with descendants of former congregants and other Board Members leading the Shabbat morning service. If you have a yahrzeit on that date, let us know by email to alanmilavetz@comcast.net by June 15th. (Alan Milavetz).

SATURDAY AFTERNOON: During the **open house**, visitors will have an opportunity to tour the building, see the display cabinets containing artifacts found in the synagogue and some from Jewish homes, view the posters describing the history of the Jewish immigration and settlement of the Iron Range and view the photo display in the social hall of early Jewish businesses in Virginia and other range communities. Also in the social hall, visitors will have an opportunity to identify those individuals who once belonged to B'nai Abraham and see a map of Jewish homes and businesses. Marilyn Chiat, an architectural historian and Board member will speak about the **history of the Jewish community and B'nai Abraham**, followed by a **tour of some Jewish homes and businesses in Virginia**. Mike Blehert, Board member and project manager, will **speak about the stained glass windows** and how he was able to decipher and interpret the Hebrew lettering, the symbols and the history of the windows.



SATURDAY EVENING: Come prepared to sing, tap your toes and dance Saturday night July 10th at the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center. You'll be entertained by "**Millie and the Mentshn**" ('Mentshn' is Yiddish for honorable people), a Klezmer (Jewish Jazz) band based in Bellingham, WA. Reviews have said, "this band could stir passions in a stone statue." The "Mentshn" are a five-person combo of classically trained musicians; violin, oboe, clarinet, piano and drums and Millie, whose soprano voice and vibrant personality will draw you into the music. Audiences of all cultural backgrounds enjoy the unusual combination of instruments, the intricate harmonies and the variety of musical styles including Russian, Ukrainian, Israeli, Arabic, Yiddish, Ladino, Gypsy, Swing, Jazz and even Country Western. The Mentshn play extensively in Washington and have toured the Twin Cities, Alaska and represented the US at the 2007 International Klezfiesta in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



There are only two Saturday Evening performances and limited seating. Make a reservation (see page 1). ***So, come and enjoy the energy, emotion and humor and you will be refreshed, reinvigorated and full of life. L'Chaim!***

Minnesota Humanities Center Teachers Conference at B'nai Abraham

"Building America: Minnesota's Iron Range, U.S. Industrialization, and the Creation of a World Power"



The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) has once again received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to bring seventy teachers from all over the nation to the Iron Range to expose them to the significance of Minnesota's Iron Range in America. The workshop is available at no cost to educators. Two sessions will be held: the weeks of June 13-18 and August 1-6, 2010. <http://www.MinnesotaHumanities.org>

The first Building America program, held on the Range in the summer of 2008, was a great success. A lecture on the history of Jewish settlement on the Range was given in the sanctuary of B'nai Abraham by Marilyn Chiat. She also spoke about the history of the synagogue, its design, and the stained glass windows. The response to her talk was very positive, and she has been invited back in 2010 to not only speak again in the sanctuary about Jewish settlement, but to also take the teachers on a Bob Dylan pilgrimage. The historians who made presentations on the Range were invited to participate in a video produced by Twin Cities Public Television, Iron Range Resources, and the MHC entitled "Iron Range: Minnesota Building America." B'nai Abraham was featured in this 2009 documentary video that won a regional Emmy Award. Friends of B'nai Abraham are pleased that the building will again serve as a site for this year's program.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AS PART OF THIS EVENT:

June 14 - 7 pm: The three time *Minnesota State champion fiddle player, Mary La Plant*, will perform at B'nai Abraham. Her performance is co-sponsored by The Friends of B'nai Abraham and the Virginia Area Historical Society with funding provided by the Minnesota Humanities Center.



WANTED: MEMORABILIA, ARTIFACTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DOCUMENTS

It is time to do spring cleaning. We are hoping that in the process you may uncover items related to the history of B'nai Abraham. We would like to expand the collection of memorabilia, artifacts, and documents currently on display in the synagogue. Please notify Marilyn Chiat at chiat@earthlink.net or 612-926-7936, if you have items that you believe are directly related to the history of B'nai Abraham and its congregants. Provide a description of the item, its date, and its relationship to the synagogue. For example, a ritual object used in the synagogue, a document or photograph related to an event that occurred in the building. If possible, include a photograph of the item or a photo copy. If you prefer, the information can be mailed to Marilyn at: 3812 Drew Ave. So., Mpls. MN 55410. We will contact you about your donation. We are hoping to have the objects on display for the synagogue's centennial celebration this July, so please contact Marilyn ASAP.



Newsletters, in full color, may be found and downloaded from our website:
www.IronRangeJewishHeritage.org

A handicap lift is available in the building

The summer of 2009 - Memories of B'nai Abraham

By Linda J. Mack

Last year on a glorious July Sunday, I headed to Virginia, Minnesota, to attend a special concert at the last synagogue on the Iron Range, B'nai Abraham. I spoke with Ann Phillips who grew up in Virginia. She is part of a group of committed women and men, Friends of B'nai Abraham that have worked for over five years to restore the modest brick building built in 1910 and closed since the 1990s.

“Did the Jews live in one part of town?” I asked Ann. “No,” she said. “Were you discriminated against?” “No,” she replied. Unlike in Minneapolis, where anti-Semitism was rampant until the late 1950s, the Jews were just another part of the polyglot Range population of Slavs, Italians, Finns, Germans and others. When the synagogue was built a hundred years ago, 121 Jews lived in Virginia. Over the years, they owned clothing stores, movie theaters, dry-cleaning establishments and car dealerships. They also practiced law and medicine. Ann’s father, Monroe Shanedling, who owned a women’s clothing store, was a Virginia sports figure. Ann graduated from Virginia High School and went to Vassar College. The synagogue was an important part of her childhood, and she has worked hard for its revival as a cultural venue and museum of the Jewish community.

On that beautiful July day, townspeople and visitors like us from farther afield crowded into the simple space, where pews mixed with folding chairs added to accommodate the large turnout. The stained glass windows donated by the synagogue’s founding fathers spoke of the dedication of those first families. A red curtain contributed in honor of an early family hung in front of the Ark which had held the sacred Torah. Two carved wood lions—symbols of the Lions of Judah—guarded the tablet inscribed in Hebrew with the Ten Commandments.

The Northern Lights Chamber Players, a project of another energetic woman, Veda Zuponic, presented the concert. Originally from nearby Aurora and now a professor of music at Rowan University in New Jersey, she brings young classical musicians from around the world to the Iron Range for three weeks to refine their talents and to perform.

The program opened with Max Bruch’s musical interpretation of Kol Nidre, a sacred Yom Kippur prayer, played by Tom Rosenberg, cellist and professor of music at the University of Minnesota.



Northern Lights Chamber Players – July 2009

Then followed a delightful cavalcade of young performers from Italy, The United Kingdom, Minnesota, Brazil, Honduras, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia. Haeji Kim from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, an 11-year-old Japanese girl in a pink silk flowered dress who was so young and delicate she looked like she might blow away, bowled us over with her fancy finger work and huge sound. The rafters shook with applause. Once again, the synagogue was full of life.

By preserving this historic synagogue, we preserve for future generations the memory of those who built and worshipped in it.

Newsletters, in full color, may be found and downloaded from our website:

www.IronRangeJewishHeritage.org

A special thanks to our supporters

Grants awarded to the Friends of B'nai Abraham

Matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society - \$5,000
Matching grant from the Iron Range Resources - \$15,000
Minnesota Center on Energy and the Environment - \$10,000
Virginia Community Foundation - \$2,500
Matching grant - Minnesota Historical Society Grant in Aid - \$10,000
Beverly Foundation - \$60,000
Matching grant from Iron Range Resources - \$75,000
Matching grant from St. Louis Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) \$75,000
Matching grant - Minnesota Historical Society Grant in Aid - \$48,500
Wells Fargo Bank Foundation - Minnesota - \$15,000
Minneapolis Jewish Federation - \$1000
Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation - \$5000
A Special Gift from Sanford I. and Sande Berman - \$20,000
Jeffris Heartland Fund - \$5,956
Mount Sinai Community Foundation - \$1,800
Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund - \$6994
Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund - \$38,826
Minnesota Humanities Center - \$5000
United Jewish Fund and Council of St. Paul - \$500
Temple Israel - Minneapolis

Individual Contributions: November 2009 – April 2010

Anonymous	Harold Grossman	Francie and Mark Paper
Theresa Berman	Lisa Heilicher	JoAnn Pasternak
Mike and Sue Blehert	Lynn Hiti	Norman Pink
Marilyn Chiat	Morris and Gerre Hoffman	Nancy Powell
Syma and Jay Cohn	Thomas and Vicki Hurwitz	Felix and Ann Phillips
Jeanne Corwin	Harriet Joseph	Bob and Sally Roscoe
Berwyn and Gail Davies	Martin and Susan Kanter	Paul and Connie Ross
Jill and Bob Edelstein	Miriam and Erwin Kelen	Marly Rusoff and Mihai Radulescu
Jane Effress	Linda and Jon Ketokski	Bill and Bea Siegel
Robert and Sylvia Fine	Harry and Joan Lamppa	Leighton and Dianne Siegel
Heidi and Howard Gilbert	Bob and Judy Marans	Artie and Morton Silverman
Mimi and Sherry Gleekel	Allen and Marcia Oleisky	Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker
Rivoli Golden	Marjorie and Charlie Ostrov	Katherine and Jeffrey Tane
Susan and Bill Goldenberg	Robert Palen	

Special Contributions: November 2009 – April 2010

Joanne Bergman and Edward Borowiec: In memory of Jon Borowiec; In memory of Minerva A. Balke of the Mesabi Unitarian Congregation of Virginia, MN
Trudy Bers: In memory of mother, Saragrace Kenner Haffron and Pearl Sakol;
Marc Blehert: In honor of Mike Blehert;
Mike and Sue Blehart: Wishing Marjorie Ostrov a speedy recovery;
Lou Ann Bongard: In honor of Charles Ostrov
Sherill and Irving Borkon: In memory of Harvey Chiat;
Myron H. Bright: In honor of Roy Bright's 95th birthday in January, 2010;
Marilyn Chiat: In honor of birthday of Dick Fink
Bobby and Elliot Cohen: In thanks for Margie Ostrov's speedy recovery and many years of friendship;
Ben and Karen Deutsch: In honor of Larry Chiat's 60th Birthday;
Dr. M and Mrs. (Nomi) Dworkin: In honor of Ann Phillips birthday;
Myrle and Jack Erlich: In memory of Ann Kaufman;
Dana Fox: In honor of Ann Phillips;
Neal and Barb Frank: Wishing Marjorie Ostrov a speedy recovery;
Bonnie and Gary Goldish: Wishing Marjorie Ostrov a speedy recovery;
Nancy Green: In memory of Lawrence M. Green
Joanne and Bruce Gruen: In honor the Ostrov and Milavetz families;
Phyllis and Buddy Harris: In honor of the anniversary of Sandy and Allen Harris;
Lawrence J. Heilprin: In memory of Tillie, Max, Joe and Harry Rubenstein and Howard Schibel;
Ruthie Jolowsky Hiney: In memory of Sherman H. Jolowsky, parents Jake and Doris Jolowsky and daughter Sally Berdt;
Brian and Francine Gunderson: In honor of Marjorie Ostrov;
Barbara and Dan Gustin: In memory of Sherman Walt;
Colette and Peter Johnson: In memory of Jeanne Schibel Gross and in honor of Audra Keller's birthday;
Nancy and Elliott Karasov: In honor of the 50th birthday of Bonnie Resnick;
Rabbi Michael Katz: Thank you for hosting the Shir Tikvah confirmation class;
Audra Keller: In memory of Liba Stillman's Aunt Hilda; In memory of Jeanne Schibel Gross;
Gene Kishel: In memory of Paul Ostrov and in memory of Carl Kaufman;
Barbara and Keith Knoop: In memory of Bob Langer; In honor of the Virginia High School class of 1953;

Terry Nolan and Carl Markus: In memory of Bob Wolfson; Wishing Phyllis Robinson an speedy recovery;
Judy, Barry and Gary Milavetz: In memory of our parents, David and Frances Milavetz;
Ann and Felix Phillips: In honor of Dick Fink's birthday; Best wishes to Morrie Levy for a quick recovery; Best wishes to David Sanders for a quick recovery;
Wishing Linda Mack a very Happy Birthday;
Barbara Ratner: In memory of Harvey Ratner;
Amos Rosenbloom and Marsha McDonald: In memory of Eli and Esther Rosenbloom;
Mark and Gail Satz: In memory of Dina Fischbein;
Robert and Linda Schibel: In memory of "All those cherished members of B'nai Abraham with whom we share so many memories;"
Suzanne Schiff: In memory of her grandparents Sara Kaner Flax and George Flax
Alan and LouAnn Stone: In honor of Melanie Kett;
Jerry and Elaine Stulberg: In memory of father, Herbert Stulberg who lived in Virginia as a single man 1905-1919; In honor of brother Stuart Stulberg; In honor of brother Myron Stulberg; In honor of friend Sheldon Siegel;
Ellie Siegel and Bill Warren: In honor of Ann Phillip's energy and optimism;
Sheldon Siegel: In memory of Priscilla Siegel;
Sharron and Oren Steinfeldt: In memory of Jack Bankman (yahtzeit); In memory of Leo Hodroff;

If we have inadvertently missed your name, please let us know so that you can be included in our next newsletter.

Board of Directors of the Friends of B'nai Abraham

Marjorie Ostrov, <i>President</i>	Alan Milavetz, <i>Legal Counsel</i>	Elayne Deutsch Chiat
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Michael Blehert, <i>Engineering Consultant</i>		

B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center
On the corner of 5th Street South & South 4th Ave.
Virginia, MN 5579



Your continuing interest and contributions are vital to our success.

Still needing funding are, among many other things: completion of the front entry vestibule; restoration of six stained glass windows; creation of a serving kitchen with appliances; installation of a security system; interior stairway resurfacing; a permanent floor for the lower level social hall; landscaping to replace the current weedy muddy ground outside; and not the least the, creation of an endowment for future maintenance of the building.

We've made great progress but are still short of our goal.		All donations are fully tax deductible.	
<p>Please send your donation to:</p> <p>Friends of B'nai Abraham c/o Charles Ostrov, treasurer 1788 Maryland Ave. North Golden Valley, MN 55427</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip: _____</p> <p>Amount: _____</p>	<p>To contribute stock contact: York Securities, Inc. 800-221-3154 directed to Kathleen -or- costrov@gmail.com -or- phill037@umn.edu</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Memory of: <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of: _____</p> <p>Send acknowledgement card to: Name: _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Address: _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">City, State, Zip: _____</p>			

Clip and mail or donate online. Go to the "How You Can Help" page of our website.