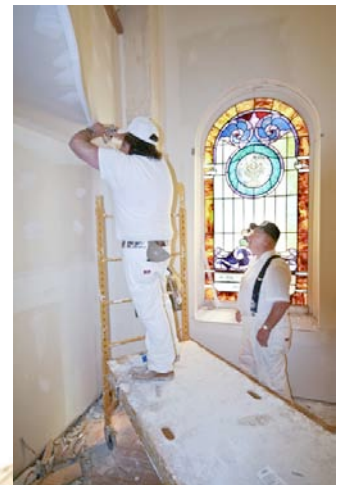


B'nai Abraham, built in 1909, is the last remaining synagogue on the Minnesota Iron Range. It is on the National Register of Historic Places. It had not functioned as a working synagogue since the late 1990s and had undergone significant deterioration. In 2005, the Friends of B'nai Abraham (FBA) was organized with the mission of restoring and preserving the building so that it can function as a community cultural center for all the people of Virginia and the surrounding communities as well as a small museum space to tell the story of the Jewish presence and contributions on the Iron Range. We are a non-profit organization, receiving our 501(c)3 designation in 2005. Together with our partner, The Virginia Historical Society, we look forward to seeing the building used for many cultural and educational programs for the community.

THE DUST IS STARTING TO SETTLE

Restoration has been on going since the April 2007 newsletter. In that newsletter, it was noted that the roof had been replaced and the basement gutted to remove damp carpet and ceiling tile.

Then: The real work began starting from the top and working down. Work on the main architectural feature of the building, the sanctuary, is about 85% complete. The 1950's stained and water damaged ceiling tile, wall paneling and the buckled floor were removed. All the wiring was then brought up to code with provisions added for two ceiling fans, additional lights over the Bimah and two additional fixtures. Amazingly, two light fixtures that match the 1909 originals were located by our preservation architect, Bob Roscoe, and are now hanging in the sanctuary. Other improvements included ceiling insulation which will greatly increase comfort and reduce energy consumption and sheetrock over the cracked lathe and plaster walls. The new arched double layer sheetrock ceiling and off-white paint on the ceiling and walls brings back the original grandeur of this room. Restoration of the original Bimah with wood fencing and the sub floor will be completed in conjunction with the new heating system to be installed in the next few months.



When: Taking advantage of the mild fall weather, work has started on the concrete footings and block walls of the handicapped lift tower addition at the rear SE corner of the building. The goal is to complete this project and basement bathrooms this winter.

What's next: Construction of a handicapped accessible lift and bathrooms required to make the building handicapped accessible.



REPORT FROM OUR PRESIDENT - Marjorie Ostrov

We are happy to report that a number of pews and the Bimah chairs and Torah stands belonging to B'nai Abraham are now safely back home. Many thanks to Board member Alan Milavetz who made the arrangements and drove the moving truck loaded with our precious cargo from Minneapolis to Virginia. They had been stored for safe keeping in a Minneapolis synagogue until our sanctuary was restored and deemed safe for their return.

(Continued on page 2.)

Board of Directors of the Friends of B'nai Abraham

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(representative JHSUM)



Culture and Cuisine evening

Report from the President (continued from page 1) The very successful Culture and Cuisine Program sponsored by the St. Louis County Historical Society on August 18, 2007 at the Duluth Depot focused on the history of Jews on the Iron Range and B'nai Abraham's restoration. We have continued to be in touch with their wonderful staff and are delighted to report that they have agreed to a long term loan of two display cases like those we used for our display at the event in Duluth. Virginia resident, Brian Gunderson, has volunteered to transport the display cases to B'nai Abraham so that we can again set up our displays of the religious artifacts and other items for visitors to see.

Our grant requests to Iron Range Resources (IRR) and to the St. Louis County Community Development Block Grant Board (CDBG) have been approved. The funds from those two outstanding agencies along with generous contributions from many private individuals will enable us to restore much of the lower level of the building. We plan to begin the construction of this next important phase of the project this winter.

In order to receive an occupancy permit and open the building, it is imperative that we be in compliance with the ADA requirements for a handicap accessible lift and bathrooms. Help with sources of funding for handicap accessibility would be much appreciated.

St Paul Talmud Torah Fifth Grade Class Retreat to the Virginia Synagogue

By Zoe Milavetz and Talia Milavetz of the fifth grade class

In May, 2007, our 5th grade classes, teachers, some parents and director, Bob Tornberg traveled to Virginia, Minnesota to volunteer helping with B'nai Abraham Synagogue, a synagogue built by some of our ancestors. Years ago, our great great grandfather, and his brothers moved to Virginia from Russia and discovered there was no synagogue. So they formed a committee and built one. It is a very special place with beautiful stained glass windows, purple velvet chairs on the Bimah and hard wood floors.



My class had a lot of fun!! We helped plant bushes, pack up kitchen supplies and sort through old prayer books. Dana Prottas led an art project where we used colored markers to create our own stained glass windows. The town Mayor even came by the synagogue to speak to us. We participated in a service led by Wendy Goldberg and all of the 5th graders read Torah along with some of the teachers. Our parents told us that our Grandpa Bob and our Savta both prayed in the same synagogue when they were kids. During the trip, we stayed overnight at Camp Warren in Eveleth and went canoeing and stayed up late telling scary stories. Raya Israelson's grandparents met us at



the MineView in the Sky and talked to us about what life is like for a miner. Then we climbed up on a lookout over the mine pit. At the end of the trip, we said goodbye to Camp Warren and Virginia, Minnesota and got on our bus to go home. We all had a great time and took some awesome pictures. When we got back to Talmud Torah, our art teacher, Anita White helped us recreate our trip by painting pictures on a scroll to retell our retreat to the Virginia Synagogue. We look forward to going back to Virginia again.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO SPECIAL FRIENDS – The Virginia Area Historical Society

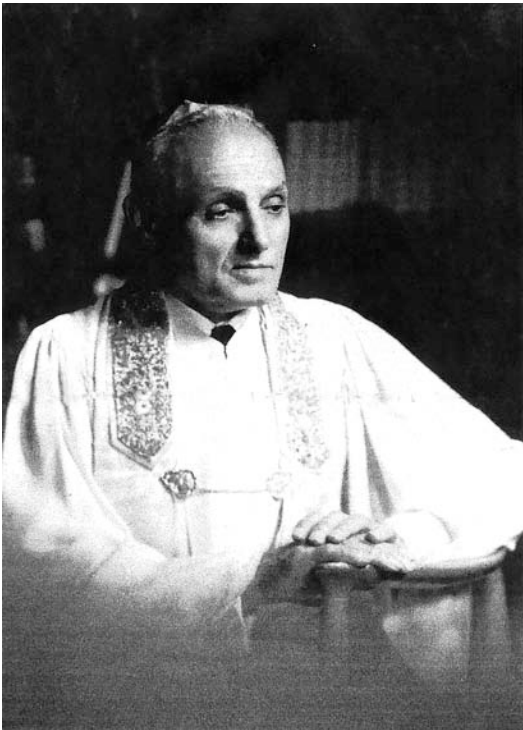


The Friends of B'nai Abraham wishes to acknowledge the Virginia Area Historical Society (VAHS), our wonderful Virginia Partner. During the summer, the staff and volunteers of the VAHS generously provided tourists with information on B'nai Abraham, displayed our poster in the VAHS museum, testified before grant funding agencies, and even lead private tours of the synagogue building.

Special thanks go to Harry Lamppa who always goes the extra mile, and epitomizes all that's admirable in a ideal volunteer, to the Staff, notably Betty Birstihl, and to the Board of the VAHS, whose President is Dorothy Petroskey.

We look forward to working with them in the coming months on future events, on-site management and on museum programming.

Archives of B'nai Abraham and Jewish history on the Iron Range



Rabbi Alexander Katz (1897-1990)

Alexander Katz a Rabbi on the Iron Range from 1924 to 1927

(Excerpts from an email from Don Nogg, Rabbi Katz's son in law.)

Alexander Katz was born in January 1898 (or at least that was the date he used) in Lithuania, probably in a shtetl near Vilkomir (Russian) or Ukmerge (Lithuanian). He was the son of Zundel and Esther Katz. Zundel was also a Rabbi, and the family tradition is that they were descended from Rabbonim all the way back to Ezra the Scribe. My brothers-in-law and I, I'm afraid, broke that long string. He was sent to Cheder as a four year old and went there and to the local Yeshiva until he received his Smicha from the chief Rabbi of Vilna. He married Rivke Tabachovitz in 1922. His first pulpit was in Kurkel (or Kurkliai in Lithuanian), a small shtetl near Vilkomir. They were able to get out of the country and come to the States in either late 1922 or early 1923.

They came to Duluth because his oldest brother, who had escaped during the 1908 revolution was already there. (The second brother and the fourth brother went to South Africa, and the youngest ended up in Cuba.) Rivka was pregnant when they came here and he was able to get a position as the rabbi in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Rabbi Katz was only there for 9 months when he was offered the position in Virginia and moved there in late 1923. In those days there were a number of Jews on the range, and he talked often of not only Virginia, but also of Hibbing, Mountain Iron, Biwabik and Chisholm. My second brother-in-law, David was born in Virginia in October of 1926. Rabbi Katz remained there until sometime in 1927 when he was retained in Fargo. He had been offered a pulpit in Stockton, California, but preferred to stay in the Midwest. His parents had been brought over by then and lived in Superior, Wisconsin.

He was in Fargo from 1927 until 1944, most of the time as the only Rabbi in North Dakota. In 1944 he was then offered a job as assistant Rabbi and teacher at our synagogue, Beth El (Conservative) in Omaha, Nebraska and spent the rest of his life here. He was also a Talmudist and taught all of his knowledge to 40 years of congregants.

If you know any Duluth people you may know of the European Bakery. The Glazman family, who are my wife's cousins, own it. She's also related to the Sam Horowitz and Sid Kaner families.

Hope this is of some interest to you. I can guess that it's a lot more than you cared to know about him, but I feel the man should be honored everywhere. I am prejudiced. We have an active and vibrant Nebraska Jewish Historical Society on which I have been active and know the value of preserving history. Any questions at any time, just let me know. Good luck in your work on the history of the community.

Don Nogg donnogg@cox.net

If you can identify any of these individuals or know about these groups please email or write us.

costrov@gmail.com or phill037@umn.edu

Friends of B'nai Abraham, 1788 Maryland Ave. North, Golden Valley, MN 55427



The Sunshine Club (Ladies Aid Society) early 1900s



Fishermen 1937

Maintaining Traditions on the Iron Range

By Marilyn J. Chiat, Ph.D.



B'nai Abraham Synagogue

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, as Jewish settlers moved westward with the frontier, they brought in their 'baggage' their religious beliefs and traditions. It would not have been difficult for them to leave this 'baggage' behind and begin life anew in the New World bereft of the faith that caused them so much hardship in the Old World. The wonder is that the vast majority of Jewish immigrants chose to retain their Jewish identity in a country where they could have easily been lost in the crowd. This retention of Jewish identity and tradition in a remote frontier location is what the preservation of B'nai Abraham Synagogue celebrates.

Jews began to arrive in northeastern Minnesota in the 1880s following the discovery of iron ore on what became known as the Vermillion Range. A decade later a much larger ore deposit was discovered on the Mesabi Range and a series of mining towns began to develop. The Jewish people who ventured into this remote region of Minnesota were not attracted by jobs in the mines, but rather by the potential for businesses that would cater to the needs of the miners and the mining companies. Jewish merchants could be found in small towns throughout the region,

from Ely to Coleraine, but four towns in particular had large enough Jewish communities to establish congregations: Chisholm, Hibbing, Eveleth and Virginia. The congregations in Hibbing and Eveleth purchased churches and transformed them into synagogues by removing their steeples, adding a large Star of David in an oculus window on their facades, and transforming their interiors by the addition of a *Bimah* and *Aron ha Kodesh* to house the sacred Torah Scrolls. Virginia and Chisholm erected synagogues. The one in Chisholm was a white frame structure set on a high foundation. The building was unique in that it housed the only *miqvah* (ritual bath) on the Range. For many years the Chisholm congregation had the services of a learned man who functioned as a rabbi, teacher, *mohel* (performed circumcisions), and *shechet* (ritual slaughterer), the only one on the Range. Many still recall how observant he was, to the degree that on the Sabbath he would not walk on freshly fallen snow for fear of making a pathway.

Virginia's synagogue, B'nai Abraham, dedicated in 1909, was described in the local press as "the most beautiful church [sic] on the Iron Range." Built of red brick with beautiful stained glass windows, at the time the only house of worship on the Range to have them, the structure located on a corner lot in a quiet neighborhood not far from its members' shops on Chestnut Street, was a testament to the Jewish community's commitment to its new home in Virginia. Except for B'nai Abraham, the other three Range synagogues have disappeared, or as is the case in Hibbing, converted for another use. Only B'nai Abraham remains as visual evidence of the Jewish settlers desire to not only retain their Jewish identity and traditions, but to make certain that they were passed on to future generations. By restoring B'nai Abraham for use as a cultural center and museum, we ensure that the memory of those who ventured forth into the wilderness to start new lives and maintain old traditions is not forgotten.

Scenes from our recent history



2007 - From the left: Charles Ostrov, Tom Rukavina, Margie Ostrov and Ann Phillips. Tom Rukavina, the Virginia representative in the Minnesota House of Representatives, has been a strong supporter of the Friends of B'nai Abraham restoration project.



2007 - Viewing our B'nai Abraham poster at the National Trust for Historic Preservation Meeting this October. It was also seen at a Men's Club presentation at the St. Paul Jewish Community Center and elsewhere. It will be part of the future museum at B'nai Abraham.



2007 - This display case was set up for the Culture and Cuisine Program sponsored by the St. Louis County Historical Society this August at the Duluth Depot. They have agreed to a long-term loan of two similar display cases for a permanent exhibit in the future museum at B'nai Abraham.

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

Beverly Foundation - \$25,000

Virginia Community Foundation - \$2,500

Matching grant from Iron Range Resources - \$75,000 (\$50,000 for renovation & \$25,000 endowment)

Matching grant from St. Louis Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) \$75,000

Individual Contributions: Feb. 1 - Oct. 31, 2007

Allan Apter
Mona Armel and Daniel Rutman Families
Ruth Beystrom
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Mike and Sue Blehart
Steven and Maggie Blehert
Judge Myron H. Bright
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Robin and Stuart Seiler
Dianne and Leighton Siegel
Margot Siegel
Dorothy and Edward Slonim
Milton Smith

Special Contributions: Feb. 1 - Oct. 31, 2007

Board of B'nai Abraham: Honor Linda Mack's contribution to B'nai Abraham's historical preservation

Susan and Dale Berns: Memory of Carl and Bess Siegel

Paula and Michael Beugen: Memory of Uncle Art Beugen

Helen Brooks: Honor of Ann and Felix Phillips

Pamela Brunfelt: Honor of Marilyn Chiat

Larry and Elayne Chiat: Memory of Lorraine Frisch

William Chiat and James Gladfelter: Honor of Marilyn and Harvey Chiat's 56th Anniversary

Marilyn and Harvey Chiat: Memory of Beverly Deutsch, Memory of Leland Gottstein, Memory of Marie Segal

Bobby and Elliot Cohen: Honor of Charlie Ostrov's 70th birthday

Gail Davies: Honor of friends from Virginia, especially Paul Ostrov

Derach Noam Congregation: Honor of Marilyn Chiat

Joseph Edelheit and Machele Norling: Memory of Judith Anderson

Jane Efrass: Honor of Ann Phillips

Dolf W. Fieldman: Memory of the Keller family

Betty Flax: Memory of Burton Flax

Arlene Frisch Benjamin and Jim and Myrna Frisch and Mel and Patti Frisch: Memory of beloved grandparents Helen and Charles Frisch, Memory of beloved parents Myrtle and Harold Frisch

Anita Gordon Gamson: Memory of Louis Gordon

Audra Keller and Trissa and Nate Garvis: Honor of Sheila Paisner

Mace and Audrey Goldfarb: Honor of Audra Keller, Honor of Margie and Charlie Ostrov

Beverly Goldfine, Steven Goldfine and Ilene Levin, Amy Goldfine, John and Donde Goldfine, Dan Goldfine and Robbie Schwartz: Memory of Lillian and David Finkelstein

Lynn and Howard Goldman: Honor of Aunt Sylvia Grossman

Charles Edelstein, Jean Schore and Barbara and Richard Goldstein: Memory of Deutsch family, Memory of Max and Sara Lee Edelstein

Howard and Barbara Gordon: Memory of parents Abe and Rose Gordon

Jessica and Brent Griffith: Honor of Leighton Siegel's Birthday

Murry and Myra Eder Helfer: Honor of Leighton Siegel's Birthday

Colette and Peter Johnson: Memory of Nate and Molly Keller

Nancy and Elliot Karasov: Honor of Bonnie and Alan Milavetz

Andrea and Rob Karsh: Honor of Leighton Siegel 70th birthday, Appreciation of Leighton and Dianne's loving hospitality, Honor of Charlie Ostrov's Birthday

Judy Karon: Honor of Bar Mitzvah of Phillip Ostrov, Honor of Charlie Ostrov's special Birthday, Honor of Margie Ostrov's efforts for Duluth event

Miriam and Erwin Kelen: Honor of Ann Phillips and Family

Audra Keller: Recovery of Mort Silverman, Birthday of Amy Langer, Honor of Dean Phillips, Memory Art Beugen, Memory Harvey Resnick, Memory of Beverly Deutsch, Honor of Don Frishberg's 80th Birthday, Honor of Jeanne Schibel Gross 95th birthday, Honor of 65th birthdays of Susan Lewis and Pamela Canning, Honor of Catherine Fischer's 65th Birthday, Memory of Mother of Jane Efrass

Bill and Linda Lapp: Honor of Charlie Ostrov's 70th birthday

Jerry Lavin: Memory Herman K. Lavin and Leonard K. Lavin

Marilyn Marker: Memory of Beverly Deutsch

Terry Nolan and Carl Markus: Wishing Marty Fleisher good health

Matt Matasich: Memory of Dan "Bubs" Milavetz

Susan and Robert Mendelson: Memory of Edward J. Coen and Phillip Coen

Chana Mesberg and Harold Grossman: Memory of great great grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Mesberg

Karen Mesberg: Honor of her great grandfather

Alan Milavetz: Memory of Beverly Deutsch, Honor and with thanks to Sherdell Burton, Rick, Steve Carter, Danny Milavetz, Mike Stonebauer, Steve Blehart for helping move pews and other items to B'nai Abraham

Alan Milavetz, Bonnie Resnick, John and Stacy Gallop, James and Donna Milavetz, Robert Milavetz: Memory of Ruth Milavetz

Anne Milavetz: Memory of husband, Daniel "Bubs" Milavetz

Carrie Olson: Honor of Lana Bernhardt

Margie and Charlie Ostrov: Memory of Paul and Sophie Ostrov, Honor of Leighton Siegel's Birthday, Memory of Priscilla Siegel

Ann and Felix Phillips: Birthday of Harry Lerner, Recovery of Morton Silverman, Memory of Harvey Resnick, Recovery of Gary Tankenoff, Memory of Esther Sher, Memory of Beverly Sher Deutsch, Memory of Marv Kahner, Honor of Jeanne Schibel Gross's 95th Birthday, Honor of Ruth and Ed Cogen's 50th Anniversary, Memory of Judy Ashe Handelman

J. Bertram and Truen Press: Honor of Louis Press

Anita and George Robinson: Memory of parents Abe and Rose Gordon

Barbara (Tudie) Ross: Honor of her grandchildren

James and Rosemarie Rubenstein, Nancy Secher, Debra Secher, Adam, Brandi and Eli Secher, Mike, Judith, Zachery and Jake Secher: Honor of Jean Gross 95th birthday

Larry and Muffy Rudnick: Honor of Charlie Ostrov's 70th birthday

Bud and Barb Sagen: Honor of Ann Phillips and Family, Memory of Ann & Lester Sagen, Memory of Art Gurovitsch, Memory of Dr. Charles & Esther Goodman

Gail Schwartz: Honor of Ann Shanedling Phillips

Stan and Barbara Segal: Memory of Beverly Deutsch

Marvin and Stephanie Segal: Honor of Audra Keller

Dr. Sheldon Siegel: Memory of Carl and Bess Siegel

Diane Siegel & Stephen Peter: Memory of Irving Siegel, Honor of Charlie Ostrov's Birthday

Sam and Ione Siegel: Memory of Carl and Bessie Siegel

JS Signs and Siegel Family of Eveleth, Minnesota: Memory of The Siegel family, The Swartz Family, The Bloom Family, The Mark Family, The Woolfan Family, The Lindeke Family

Leighton and Dianne Siegel: Memory of Pia and Chaim Siegel, Memory of Rose and Clarence Siegel, Memory of Priscilla Siegel, Honor of Charlie Ostrov's 70th birthday

Marvin and Diane Siegel: Honor of Helen Rothschild's 100th Birthday

Delores and Mel Sigel: Honor of Marilyn and Harvey Chiat

Kenneth Simon from the Kenneth D. and Beatrice F. Simon Fund: Memory of Gus and Jeannette Simon, Memory of Bebe Simon, Memory of Marilyn Simon

From Ken Simon, Gwynn, & Harlan; Daniel & Alan. Simon: On the occasion of restoration of B'nai Abraham Synagogue, and for a historic and religious memorial for the Jewish Rangers and Minnesota people.

Jean and Barry Steiger: Memory of Charles and Jenny Ostrov

Sharron and Oren Steinfeldt: Memory of Jack Bankman

John and Kathleen Timmers: Memory of Ed Siegel

Stacy and Jeff Usem: Memory of Beverly Deutsch

Jerome and Susan Wasserman: Honor of Harvey Chiat's return to good health

Marvin and Elayne Wolfenson: Memory of Minnie and Louis Gandell, Memory of Sarah and David Berman

Sheri and Scott Yarosh: Thanks for helping a friend in need

Howard Zimmerman: Memory of Jack and Dorothy Zimmerman

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

Correction to Vol 1, No 1 Newsletter:

Contribution by **Ruth Babich:** in memory of Anna Babich
 Contribution by **Carolyn Sundquest,** Regional Representative National Historic Trust

Newsletters may be seen and downloaded from our website. www.IronRangeJewishHeritage.org

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: Recom Securities at 612-339-5566: Account #300-42525-10 and costrov@gmail.com -or- phill037@umn.edu</p>
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