



FRIENDS OF B'NAI ABRAHAM

Virginia, Minnesota - St. Louis County



The History of Jewish Life on the Minnesota Iron Range



B'NAI ABRAHAM 1927

The B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia Minnesota is a story of loss and reuse. Built in 1909-10, it was the last remaining active synagogue on the Iron Range until its congregation dwindled to a handful of members who could no longer maintain the handsome brick structure. It closed its doors in the mid-1990s. It was acquired in 2004 by a not-for-profit organization, The Friends of B'nai Abraham, who raised funds, and continue to do so, for the building's restoration and reuse in order to serve as a cultural center for all the citizens of Virginia, Minnesota and surrounding areas, and to preserve the history of its Jewish community, of which it was so much a part. Together with our partner, The Virginia Area Historical Society (VAHS), we look forward to seeing this lovely building used for many cultural and educational programs for the community.

This year has been especially rewarding as we are seeing rapidly increased utilization of the facility with the participation of multiple community organizations as well as our local partner, the Virginia Area Historical Society.

Exhibits and Programs at B'nai Abraham's Museum and Cultural Center in 2013

BUILDING HOURS: *The building is open for exhibits starting June 5: Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-3 PM, by appointment with the Virginia Area Historical Society (218) 741-1136
It will also be open an hour before and after performances*

SAVE THESE DATES

EXHIBIT: Early Jewish Settlers in Virginia, Minnesota - Opens, June 5
Where they lived, worked and worshipped

EXHIBIT: Children of the Finnish Homestead - Opens, June 5

The musical group, "White Covered Trees" - Fri, June 7 at 6:00 PM

David Paul Wellstone Remembers - Fri, June 7 at 7:00 PM

Maria Jette & Dan Chouinard - popular, jazz & Operatic Music

Sat, June 8 at 7:00 PM

Northern Lights Music Festival - Sat, July 13 at 7:00 PM

Pat Surface and wife Donna - an evening of nostalgic music

Sat, August 10 at 7:00 PM

- The B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center is located at 328 5th Street South, which is the corner of 4th Avenue and 5th Street South. Please check for parking restrictions.
- For updated information about the various programs visit the B'nai Abraham website's, "**Calendar of Events**": <http://www.ironrangejewishheritage.org/>
- If you plan to stay overnight, places to stay include Americinn 218-741-7839, Coates Hotel 218-749-1000, and the Holiday Inn Express 218-741-5075. • **Event seating is limited. First Come First Serve.**

* These activities are made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Although there is no charge for many of these concerts, we will happily and gratefully accept contributions.

Look at what's coming to B'nai Abraham this Summer

Opens June 5: EXHIBIT: **Early Jewish Settlers in Virginia, Minnesota - where they lived, worked & worshiped – immigration in the late 1800s and early 1900s:** It is likely that you know many descendants of these immigrant families. The exhibit features historic photographs incorporated into posters that also discuss specific family histories. Also on display are numerous preserved Virginia Synagogue ritual objects and home artifacts. This is part of a double exhibit (see next).

Opens June 5: EXHIBIT: **Children of the Finnish Homestead:** The Virginia Area Historical Society is bringing a traveling exhibit from the St. Louis County Historical Society. Finnish immigrants were attracted by the 1862 Homestead Act and the area's forests and mining jobs. The exhibit features, "Growing up in Northeastern Minnesota during the years 1900 to 1945". The exhibit contains photos and narratives of second generation Finns born and raised in the area and documents daily family and farm life including hardships, pastimes and transportation. Check the Virginia Area Historical Society web site for additional programs.

<http://www.virginiamnmuseum.com/>

Friday, June 7 at 6:00 PM: The musical group, "White Covered Trees" will appear before David Wellstone's talk.

Friday, June 7 at 7:00 PM: **David Paul Wellstone**, son of Senator Paul Wellstone, is the founding partner of Family Place Home Builders, dedicated to building affordable housing. Dave, and his brother Mark, are founders of Wellstone Action, a new non-profit devoted to mental-health parity issues. He is a co-founder of the Wellstone Center in California, which seeks to promote an atmosphere of tranquility and calm and to bolster the talents and capabilities of people through workshops, seminars, and residencies. Most recently, Dave wrote his memoir, *Becoming Wellstone: Healing from Tragedy and Carrying on My Father's Legacy*. He will be available to sell and sign his book after. He is a founder of the Wellstone Barlow Mental health Initiative, and most recently has been involved with working to end human trafficking.



Saturday, June 8 at 7:00 PM: **Maria Jette**, a lyric soprano, and **Dan Chouinard**, two stars of the Twin Cities musical scene, will perform popular, jazz, and operatic and show tunes. Maria sings, Dan plays the piano, and together they have appeared on "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor, and on nearly every stage in the Twin Cities. *Tickets - \$10.00 at the door after 6:15 PM day of concert or in advance beginning May 20 from the Virginia Area Historical Society (218) 741-1136 or Louise Grams (218) 749-2037 (cash or check only). **



Saturday, July 13, 2013 at 7:00 PM: It would not be summer without a much anticipated 5th appearance by the **Northern Lights Music Festival** instructors and students, under the direction of their remarkable Festival founder, **Veda Zuponcic**. The Northern Lights International Music Festival is an intensive 20 day classical music performance program that brings solo and chamber music before large and enthusiastic audiences on Iron Range cities including in Aurora, Virginia, Gilbert, Hoyt Lakes, Duluth, and Ely. *



Saturday, August 10, 2013 at 7:00 PM: We again welcome a local musician, **Pat Surface** who, along with John Ely and Jeff Menten, will perform an evening of nostalgic music which Pat titles: "REMEMBER WHEN....the songs of the 60's and the 70's that underscored our lives." He has won two Grammy Awards, and has been named MN Instrumentalist of the Year. Pat's wife, **Donna Surface**, is a performance artist in sign language (ASL); she is compelling and moving to watch. Be prepared to wear your bell-bottoms, and sing along to the music of John Denver, Gordon Lightfoot, Dan Fogelberg, The Beatles, and Simon & Garfunkel. *



Look at what's already happened this year, *all with free admission*

April 18, 2013 - Casey Aro performed campfire songs and sing-alongs.

April 20, 2013 - Virginia High School student concert.

April 24, 2013 – Shirt Factory display and History by Betty Birnstihi with music by Paul & Julie Sersha.

Also in April, 2013 - Oral History Project by the Roosevelt School Fifth Grade Class.

Also in April, 2013 - Vance Gellert - Iron Range Photographic Exhibit.

April 28, 2013 - The three times *Minnesota State champion fiddle player*, *Mary La Plant* and family presented a program of folk music.

March 26 - May 3, 2013 – THE WAY WE WORKED, one of the Smithsonian's Museum on Mainstreet exhibits. The exhibit traced changes affecting the workforce and work environments in the last 150 years while showing the diversity of the American workforce. It showed how we work as individuals, and visitors heard workers tell their own stories and viewed films of various industries. To add local color, the Virginia Area Historical Society supplied exhibits on range industries, musical groups rendering work-related music and speakers re-lived work experiences.



From the Archives

B'nai Abraham is seen under construction during the winter of 1909-1910.

This building in particular, the only extant synagogue left on the Range, and the only synagogue building in Minnesota to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, provides people with a window into understanding the history of the Range and the people who contributed so much to its unique character.

Let's insure the preservation of this wonderful building

- Progress Report - Restoration, Grant Awards and Future Needs

The rubble rock under the lower level emergency exit of the building had settled causing the exit steps to tilt and the walls of the structure to bow and crack. The entire emergency exit did not meet building code. The rubble rock has been replaced with a new concrete foundation, drain tile has been installed and new stairs, door and roof are in place. External brickwork is underway. The exit structure is in its finishing stage of rehabilitation incorporating a solid fabrication with security features while closely following historic preservation requirements as set forth in the United States Secretary of the Interior Standards. The exterior architecture remains true to its early design.

The Emergency Exit restoration has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Your generous donations continue to accomplish a great deal.

Since the last newsletter the following have been completed:

- *Stairway to the balcony and the balcony are now sheet rocked
- *Vestibule has a quarry tile floor
- *Stairway to the social hall has been sheet rocked and painted
- *Kitchen area is sheet rocked
- *Lower level lighting has been completed

Work yet to be done: Our list requiring private donations includes:

- *Interior trims around three stained glass windows in the balcony and four in the sanctuary
- *Floor of balcony refinished
- *Stairs from the social hall to the sanctuary need maples treads
- *Ceiling, floor and walls in the kitchen need to be finished & appliances purchased and installed
- *Baseboard trim in the Sanford I. Berman Social Hall needs to be completed



Vestibule Entry



Stairway from Social Hall to Sanctuary

Board of Directors of the Friends of B'nai Abraham

Marjorie Ostrov, *President*

Ann Shanedling Phillips, *Vice President of Administration*

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Marilyn Chiat, PhD, *Architectural Historian*

Leighton Siegel, MD, *Webmaster/Editor*

Judy Karon

Elayne Deutsch Chiat

Audra Keller

James Rubenstein

Grants awarded to the Friends of B'nai Abraham for 2013 restoration

Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (Legacy Funds) - \$28,760

This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through the Minnesota Historical Society from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Grants awarded to the Friends of B'nai Abraham for 2013 programming

US Bancorp Foundation, Virginia MN branch - \$1000

Arrowhead Regional Arts Council - \$2920

Legacy Funds are made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Fund.

Individual Contributions: November 2012 – May 2013

Allen Apter, Apter Family Fund

Lesley Baseman and Roz Rettman

Sanford and Sande Berman

Mike and Sue Blehert

Jeanne Corwin

Nomi Dworkin

Charles Edelstein

Peter and Christine Friedlieb

Renee and Jim Gainsley

Mimi and Sherry Gleekel

Rivoli Golden

John and Sidney Goodman

Lynn Hiti

Steven Hunegs & Jennifer Robins

Jean King and Stuart Appelbaum

Laurie and Joel Kramer

Harry and Joan Lamppa

Joey and Jerry Laurie

Stephen and Katherine Liston

Beatrice Magee

Rhoda and Donald Mains

Lesli and Mike Marasco

Virginia Nelson

Allen and Marcia Oleisky

Margie and Charlie Ostrov

Roberta Palen

JoAnn Pasternack

Ann and Felix Phillips

Dr. Charles Pitzele

Mike and Toni Rosen

Stan Schweitzer

Mort Silverman

Sharon and Oren Steinfeldt

Special Contributions: November 2012 – May 2013

Trudy Bers: In memory of her mother, Saragrace Kenner Haffron;

Helen Brooks: In honor of Ann and Felix Phillips;

Marilyn Chiat: In memory of Margery Weisman; In honor of Phillip Pickman's 75th birthday; In honor of Etta Fay Orkin's special birthday;

Hon. Myron H. Bright: In honor of Kenneth Simon;

Helen Brooks: In honor of Ann and Felix Phillips;

Ben and Karen Deutsch: In honor of Elayne and Larry Chiat;

Pearl Favin: In memory of Nan Schneider (daughter of Sheldon Siegel);

Steven Goldfine: In memory of Lillian and David Finkelstein;

Alan and Gertrude Goldberg: In honor of Ann Phillips;

Marjorie Goldberg: In memory of husband, Dr. Nelson D. Goldberg;

Stuart Goldenberg: In memory of Marlene Kaner Goldenberg;

Lawrence J. Heilprin: In memory of Tillie Rubenstein, Bernard and Edna Rubenstein Heilprin, Joe, Max and Harry Rubenstein, and Howard & Jeanne Schibel;

Morris and Gerre Hoffman: In honor of Marilyn Chiat;

Harriet Israel: In honor of Dianne and Leighton Siegel and Margie and Charlie Ostrov;

Harriet Joseph: In memory of Irene and David Schibel, Howard Schibel, Dolly Schibel and Rita Schibel Marks;

Colette and Peter Johnson: A happy Hanukah to Audra Keller and Frank Clayman;

Helene B. Kaplan: In memory of Marvin Borman;

Miriam and Erwin Kelen: In honor of Ann and Felix Phillips and Family;

Gene Kishel: In memory of Paul Ostrov and Karl Kaufman;

Barbara Levie: In recognition of Dianne and Leighton Siegel;

Bob and Judy Marans: In memory of Anne Rose Siegel Marans;

Marilyn Marker and Bud Shapiro: Wishing Felix Phillips a speedy recovery;

Virginia McBride: In thanksgiving for my many Jewish friends;

Margie and Charlie Ostrov: In honor of the 50th anniversary of Liz and Butch Fishman; In memory of Nan Schneider (daughter of Sheldon Siegel);

Ann and Felix Phillips: In Honor of Leon Luger;

Amos Rosenbloom and Marsha McDonald: In memory of Jean Ann Rosenbloom;

Dianne & Leighton Siegel: In honor of Wendy Salita's special birthday; in honor of Neil Frank's special birthday;

In memory of Nan Schneider (daughter of Sheldon Siegel); In memory of Edna Milavetz Engleson; wishing Lloyd Stern a speedy recovery; wishing Melanie Barry a speedy recovery;

Delores and Mel Sigel: In memory of Stan Schweitzer;

Margot Siegel: In memory of Harold Siegel;

Sharon Stulberg: In memory of husband Myron (Bud) Stulberg;

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

Endowment Fund Creation – help us preserve B'nai Abraham

Now that the building's restoration is well on its way, **The Friends of B'nai Abraham would like to create an Endowment Fund** that will make certain B'nai Abraham can be well maintained long into the future. We have spoken to staff at several experienced community funds who have expressed an interest in being the repository for such an endowment and work with the Friends to assure that these dollars continue to be used to meet the goal of providing a community resource and ensuring that the contribution of the Jews of the Iron Range will not be forgotten.

To quote our Board member, Dr. Marilyn Chiat: B'nai Abraham represents our nation's great religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. When historic buildings such as B'nai Abraham are lost, our nation's magnificent mosaic (to quote Hubert H. Humphrey) loses some of its brilliant color.

This building in particular, the only extant synagogue left on the Range, and the only synagogue building in Minnesota to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, provides people with a window into

understanding the history of the Range and the people who contributed so much to its unique character.

If you have suggestions or may wish to make such a contribution, please contact Margie or Charlie Ostrov at maostrov@aol.com. We need everyone to be a part of this.



Lets insure the preservation of this wonderful building.

Still Needed

We are still short of our goal.	All donations are fully tax deductible.
Please send your donation to: Friends of B'nai Abraham c/o Charles Ostrov, treasurer 1788 Maryland Ave. North Golden Valley, MN 55427 <input type="checkbox"/> Endowment: <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration:	Name: _____ Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____ Amount: _____ To contribute stock -or- appreciated securities, contact: Jackie or Daryl at Morgan Stanley 800-791-8360 -or- costrov@gmail.com
 <input type="checkbox"/> Memory of: <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of: <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ Send acknowledgement card to: Name: _____ Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____	

If you would like to receive emails of our upcoming programs and events or you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please send your email address to Ann Phillips phillo37@umn.edu.