



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.

- The B'nai Abraham Museum & Cultural Center is located at 328 5th Street South, at the corner of 4th Avenue & 5th Street South.
- For updated information visit the B'nai Abraham website: www.ironrangejewishheritage.org

Construction – Ascend and Welcome

When one is called to the Torah, the person is said to ascend or go up to the Torah. It is the same for one that goes to Jerusalem; you ascend to Jerusalem. Similarly, when you enter the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center, you ascend the concrete front steps that were finished two years ago. These steps and the entrance foyer set the stage for entering the sanctuary. So, finishing the front steps and the entrance foyer has been our priority for this last year and the present.

This summer almost all front step brick and stonework were completed with a generous grant from Wells Fargo. In addition, the foyer hardwood floor and two sets of steps, one leading from the foyer to the balcony and the other from the foyer to the lower level social hall were restored or rebuilt.

As you can see in the picture of the front steps, there are now newel posts, red brick on the vestibule walls and cast concrete capstones on the sides.

But, to finish the steps, an additional \$5500 is needed to fabricate and install *powder coated steel railings* and *balusters* and lay *red brick on the inside of each side wall*. The foyer is also complete except for \$2500 worth of work needed to *stain and seal the new Maple hardwood floor* and *install the door threshold* under the entrance doors.

We welcome you to help us finish the entrance and to ascend these steps when you visit.



The 2015 season in retrospect *with free admissions* **Wonderful Performances, Lectures and Exhibits**

This year has been wonderfully 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.

June through October - Summer/Fall Exhibit (See below.)

June 26	Cowboy Angel Blue
July 11	Northern Lights Music Festival under the direction of Veda Zuponic
July 22	Kanteleen and Soitajat , two American-Finnish groups that sing and perform on the kantele
August 1	Sam Miltich a Gypsy Jazz guitarist
August 15	Pat Surface and the Boundary Water Boys
Sept 12	Full Range Quartet
Sept 20	Antique Road Show style Appraisals
Oct 20	Harbormasters Barbershop Chorus

SUMMER EXHIBIT

June, July & August, 2015

The Friends of B'nai Abraham were proud to bring this special exhibit honoring past local musicians who were active in a variety of musical circles and a display of vintage musical instruments, two seen below, and historic recordings as well as other displays. by Harry Lamppa



Victrola phonograph



Sousaphone

The exhibit displayed a 32 string Finnish Kantele, Finland's national musical instrument, a Civil War era button box, a 100 year old violin purchased from a mail order house in addition to many other violins, a Sousaphone, a home-made wash tub bass, a variety of band instruments, a working 1906 Victor Talking Machine Company Victrola phonograph and the history of John Koskie, an immigrant local violin-maker. Other items of interest were vintage radios from the society's collections. An interactive addition to the exhibit was a computer program designed by Charles Ostrov that featured excerpts from famous speeches of the past including FDR's 1933 inauguration, his 1941 "Infamy speech" and many old radio programs.

Honored past local musicians:

Sherman Walt, a Virginian who became the prestigious Boston Symphony's principal bassoonist;

Dorothea Helenius Tomes, a soprano who toured with the Carleton College Symphony Band for three seasons, competed nationally and became a well known music teacher and choir director;

Vernon Malone, the school band director who also directed the city band and symphony orchestra and brought Virginia into its "Golden Age of Music."

Elmer Lamppa, Virginia-born Finnish American folk singer who made Finnish records for RCA in 1927 and can be heard on YouTube today

From the Archives

Adolph Keller and his Virginia Horse Company

by Audra Keller, granddaughter

Mr. Keller purchased the lot on which B'nai Abraham now sits



Adolf Keller, my grandfather, was born in Eau Claire, WI to William and Lucy Keller (originally from Saarbrucken, Germany). He was married to Henrietta Kann in Chippewa Falls, WI in 1891 and moved with infant son Nate to Virginia in 1894. He had horses and mules from their horse company in Eau Claire and Duluth. The mines were recently opened and they needed horses and mules. The business was in the original part of town known as *Finntown*. They lived above the stables after my Tante (aunt) Ruth was born. Two years later they moved to the "country" which became 4th street and 4th avenue (a block north of the B'nai Abraham Synagogue).

He sold mules to all the underground mines and horses to the open pit mines. He also dealt in real estate and owned, until the depression, a lot of the land in Cook, on Lake Vermilion and some land on the Tower end of the lake. He also owned an advertising business and was a partner to another horse business in Duluth. He bought the lot on which the B'nai Abraham Synagogue now stands. The Kellers came from Germany as Reform, not Orthodox Jews. He was also very active in Virginia civic affairs and was the head of the park board for a very long time.

In Memoriam - 2015 - of five former Jewish Iron Rangers:

Sanford I. Berman, born in Virginia, Minnesota in 1924, graduated from the U of Minnesota and received a master's degree from Columbia University and a doctorate in Semantics from Northwestern University. He taught Semantics and public speaking, but is best known as Dr. Michael Dean, the hypnotist with the black pompadour. As Dr. Michael Dean, he was a fixture in San Diego nightclubs for three decades. Dr. Berman wrote several books and was generous in his financial support of UC San Diego, the Institute of General Semantics in San Francisco and the restoration of B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia. When he retired in 1989 he moved to Las Vegas where he died in June 2015. Survivors include his wife, Sande, daughter Michelle, and three grandchildren.

Roy Bright, born and raised in NE Minnesota, died in 2014 at age 99. Roy graduated from the University of Illinois and served as a navigator with the Army Air Force in WWII and received the Silver and Bronze Star and Distinguished Flying Cross awards. After the war he married Dorothea Smith and worked in electronics and real estate in Hawaii. His brother Judge Myron Bright, sons John and Bill, daughter-in law Faith and grandchildren Nicholas, Scott, Allison and Daniel, survive him. Judge Bright commented that his brother "Roy served as an airman hero of the Pacific theatres in WWII, the holder of 23 war decorations and later as an important citizen of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Anne Milavetz, born in Winnipeg, Canada lived most of her life in Virginia, the wife of Dan (Bubs) Milavetz. She died at age 99 in Minneapolis. Anne is survived by her daughter, Gail (Ralph) Rosenberg, Gail's son Andy and Andy's son Kenanu all of Honolulu. Anne often mentioned that all the best years of her life were spent in Virginia with Bubs.

Harriet Schibel Joseph was a true Virginian. Born and raised there, she moved to Denver when she married Leonard Joseph and raised her two daughters - Judy Joseph and Nancy (Tom) Gould. Her grandson Douglas, his wife, Michelle and their sons Elias and Isaac, also survive her. Until Harriet was quite elderly, she would return each summer to her beloved Virginia and the Schibel lake cabin on Sand Lake. She survived until age 100.

Sheldon C Siegel MD, January 30, 1922 - May 19, 2015 was an internationally renowned allergist-immunologist. He was born and educated in Virginia, Minnesota and received his undergraduate and graduate medical degree from the University of Minnesota. After his training he served in the Air Force and then entered pediatric practice in Los Angeles. He was one of the founders of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America which providing asthmatic care and medically staffed summer camps for asthmatic children, and the American Academy of Allergy. Dr. Siegel was a pioneer in the research of new drugs and treatments for asthma and allergy, especially in children. Sheldon Siegel was husband to loving wife Priscilla (deceased), father to Linda Brown and Nancy Schneider (deceased), four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

If you want to visit B'nai Abraham:

The building is open for tours several days a week during the summer months. If you are planning to be in the area, it would be advisable to check and see when the building is open. At other times it is necessary to contact the Virginia Area Historical Society at (218) 741-1136 to arrange for the building to be opened when you will be there. The staff at the Historical Society will be happy to help you.

Contributions

Individual Contributions: April 2015 – November 7, 2015

Adath Jeshurun Congregation
Study Group
Susan and Dale Berns
Bernadine and Wayne
Christiansen
Barbara Eiger
Jim and Renee Gainsley
Marlene Gimpel

Malka Goodman
Renate Hiller
Barbara and Keith Knoop
Susan and Walter Malac
Virginia Nelson
Dr. Charles and Marjorie Ostrov
Ann and Felix Phillips
J. Bertram Press

Connie and Paul Ross
John Goodman
Dr. Leighton and Dianne Siegel
Morton and Artie Silverman
Dr. Benjamin Yokel

Special Contributions: April 2015 – November 7, 2015

Joanne Bergman: In memory of Ed Borowiec

Allen and Bobbie Bright: In memory of Uncle Roy Bright; In honor of their six wonderful grandchildren

Marilyn Chiat: Wishing a speedy recovery to William Zats; and Barbara Finch: In honor of Adam Moss 's marriage to Brooke Stein and in appreciation of Susan and Jack Moss's lovely rehearsal dinner; and the hospitality of Ellyn Wolfenson and Mick Belzer

Jo Doig: In memory of mother, Hannah Levinson and uncle Harold Siegel; In honor of Harold Siegel, father of Bill Siegel; In memory of Jeff Charles; In memory of Sandy Fellen

Pearl Favin: In memory of Dr. Sheldon Siegel

Beverly Fitzgerald: In memory of Helen and Robert Silverman; In memory of the Azemove Family

Barb and Neil Frank: Wishing Dianne Siegel a speedy recovery

Paul and Renate Hiller: In memory of Hannah Levinson

Robert Hunegs: In honor of Jack Aleskow

Harriet Israel and Gene White: Wishing Dianne Siegel a speedy recovery; In memory of Dr. Robert Karsh

Barbara Johnson: In honor of Ann and Felix Phillips

Carol Kaemper: In honor of Audra Keller and Frank Clayton

Audra Keller: In memory of Harriet Joseph

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

Rabbi David Locketz and Bet Shalom Congregation: Thank you for all the work that is done so that young people can experience a taste of Jewish history in Minnesota

Alan Milavetz and Bonnie Resnick and family: In memory of Anne Milavetz

Margie and Charlie Ostrov: In memory of Dr. Robert Karsh; In memory of Dr. Sheldon Siegel

Ann and Felix Phillips: In memory of Anne Milavetz; In memory of Louise Rusoff Irving, mother of Marily Rusoff

Dr. Charles and Marietta Pitzele: In honor of Dianne and Leighton Siegel's Special Anniversary

Nancy Powell: In memory of Michael Kiefer

Dianne and Leighton Siegel: In honor of Judy Maran's special birthday; Wishing Lanny Berke a happy 80-1/2 birthday; In memory of Dr. Sheldon Siegel

Delores and Mel Sigel: In appreciation of Carolyn Abramson; In honor of the special birthday of Steve Lieberman

Liba and Tom Stillman: In honor of Audra Keller

Elaine and Jerry Stulberg: In honor of Stulberg-Phillips Families

Rolland Walt and Judy and Ben Perry: In memory of Sanford Berman

Rolland Walt: In memory of Ben and Pearl Walt

If we have inadvertently missed your name out of the Contributors list, 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, *President*

Ann Shanedling Phillips, *Vice President of Administration*

Charles Ostrov, MD, *Treasurer*

Dianne Siegel, *Recording Secretary*

Larry Chiat, *Legal Counsel*

Michael Blehert, *Engineering Consultant*

Alan Milavetz, *Legal Counsel*

Marilyn Chiat, PhD, *Architectural Historian*

Leighton Siegel, MD, *Webmaster/Editor*

Judy Karon

Elayne Deutsch Chiat

Audra Keller

James Rubenstein

Jo Doig

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 Charlie Ostrov at costrov@gmail.com.

We need everyone to be a part of this.



Ensure the preservation of this wonderful building.

WISH LIST - YOUR HELP IS GREATLY NEEDED TO COMPLETE

- *Finish front steps and add railings
- *Trim the last three stained glass windows in the balcony – such trim stabilizes and protects the windows
- *Crown molding in the sanctuary
- *Stain and varnish floor in entry way
- *Repair and add threshold to sanctuary doors

We 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><input type="checkbox"/> Endowment: <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration:</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip: _____</p> <p>Amount: _____</p> <p>To contribute stock <i>-or-</i> appreciated securities, contact: Jackie or Daryl at Morgan Stanley 800-791-8360 <i>-or-</i> costrov@gmail.com</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Memory of: <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of: <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p> <p>Send acknowledgement card to: Name: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Address: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">City, State, Zip: _____</p>	

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 Charlie Ostrov costrov@gmail.com