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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria

other names/site number Congregation B'Nai Israel

2. Location

street & number 692 Joseph Avenue | N/A | not for publication

city or town Rochester | N/A | vicinity

state New York code NY county Monroe code 055 zip code 14621

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** X **local**

Robert Pierpont DSHPO 9/21/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Joe Edson for Beall 11.9.15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
Name of Property

Monroe County, NY
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

x	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

x	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/synagogue

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Early 20th century: Georgian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone, concrete
walls: Brick, stone
roof: asphalt
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria synagogue, now known as the Congregation B'Nai Israel synagogue, is a two-story Georgian Revival style building located at 692 Joseph Street in the north side of the city of Rochester, east of the Genesee River. The brick building was built in 1928 and has decorative stone quoining and other decorative cast stone classical details. When viewed from Joseph Avenue, the building is five-bays wide with the end bays being square towers that contain interior stairs and double wood doors that access the lower level of the building. A recessed triangular parapet is between the two towers. The main floor is raised and accessed by several steps that lead to three recessed doors in a portico with four Ionic order round columns. Doors are double wood with panels and a glass transom with the Star of David. North and south elevations are similar with three rows of evenly spaced windows with one row in the lower level and two rows in the upper level (one row providing light to the balcony). The east elevation also has evenly spaced fenestration with two long, stained glass windows flanking a projecting area that corresponds to the space for the ark. Above it is a pair of smaller rounded windows. The north side of the elevation has a one-story concrete block addition. The interior lower level consists of a large open area with sliding wood dividers. The upper level consists of a large worship space with a balcony around the north, south and west edges of the room. The space shows severe deterioration but retains its plan, bimah and ark, most of its decorative windows, furniture, a period chandelier and a decorative large trompe l'oeil ceiling painting of the heavens. Overall, the building is deteriorated but is structurally sound. In spite of its condition, the building retains a high degree of integrity in terms of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. The building retains much of its historic features and a clear sense of its function as a house of worship.

Narrative Description

Joseph Avenue is a major north-to-south route that runs from downtown Rochester north towards Irondequoit in the northeast section of the city. The Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria synagogue, now known as the Congregation B'Nai Israel synagogue, is located on the east side of Joseph Avenue past the intersection of Joseph and Clifford Avenues, before Loomis Street. The official address for the building is 692 Joseph Avenue. The buildings surrounding the former synagogue are a mix of commercial and residential buildings, except for the large vacant lot and church directly across from the synagogue. Streets running parallel or perpendicular to Joseph Avenue are largely residential, with a mix of early to mid-twentieth century housing stock. The view of the synagogue from Joseph Avenue is partially obstructed by a tree and a chain link fence that skirts the property.

Sited facing Joseph Avenue (west), the building is of American bond brick with cast-stone accents and appears as a five-bay-wide, three-story building, when in reality it is only two stories. The fenestration and height of the end bay towers give the illusion of height, as these house inner staircases to access a balcony in the upper level. A series of 15 brick steps also adds to the appearance of height, as these steps lead to the entrance. Basically, the west elevation consists of a recessed entrance with a triangular parapet and flat roofed portico with stone cornice and four Ionic order columns. The three entrances consist of double wood paneled doors with raised circle decoration and a glass transom with a floral design or a Star of David in the center. Doors are set into brick arch surrounds and separated by Ionic order stone pilasters. Ghost lettering indicates where the name “Congregation B’Nai Israel” used to adorn the building. The parapet has a large semi-ocular window (now boarded) flanked by two panels with scroll and branch reliefs and a stone coping with the center piece missing. Two stone urns (one on each side) are barely visible on the roofline where the parapet and end bay stairwells intersect. The end bays have cast-stone quoining, two inset stone panels (one plain and one with a swag) and two paired casement windows with stone sills and corbels. One window has a rounded brick lintel and transom. A header row in the brick work extends over the lower window. Paired wood paneled doors are at ground level and there is a cornerstone in each bay end, one with the date of construction in Hebrew and the other with 1928.

Both the north and south elevations of the building have similar fenestration. Three round-arched casement windows are in the space directly behind the end bays, each admitting light to the lower level, the lobby area and the balcony. Eight more windows along the upper portion of each wall indicate the level of the interior balcony. Eight more windows are directly below, marking the main worship space and another row is in the ground level. Many of the openings have been boarded either to protect the windows or in an attempt to secure the interior.

Visible from Loomis Street, the east elevation is an end gabled wall with stone coping and brick corbeling along the roofline. An ocular window is in the center of the gable. Below the ocular window is a pair of small round-arched windows over the projecting brickwork for the ark. The ark and smaller windows are flanked by a much larger/longer pair of decorative around-arched windows and two smaller rectangular windows, also with decorative glass. The north end of the ground level has a square, one-story concrete block addition with a flat roof. The south end of the elevation has a door and long rectangular window at ground level.

Interior space is divided into two levels. On the main level, a lobby and stairs on the west enter into the large worship space on the main level. The north and south ends of the lobby have stairs to the lower or ground level. This lower level has restrooms and closets in the west end and a large open space that can be

partitioned off for various uses. Originally, the space used sliding wood partitions to divide it and some of the original dark stained wood paneled partitions and many of the partition ceiling and floor guides are still extant. A small ark is in the center of the east wall with stained dark wood cabinets closed off by a wood paneled door, painted white. The floor in the lower level is concrete. Much of the plaster has deteriorated and fallen from the ceiling and walls. The stairs are intact and feature plain metal newels and rails with flat balusters.

The stairs allow access to the main floor lobby and balcony in the worship space. The lobby still has its marble wainscoting and two commemorative plaques between the doors. Three sets of leatherette-covered double swinging doors are on the east side of the lobby for access to the worship space. The most prominent features of the worship space are the Classical Revival style ark in the east wall and the balcony that runs along the west, north and south sides of the room. The ark has sliding panel closures that are set into a square-edged molding and flanked by two pairs of fluted pilasters topped with a plain panel block supporting a large broken pediment. Above the pediment is a trompe l'oeil painting of two columns supporting a tent against a background of blue sky and stars. In the center of the painting is a paired window with stained glass depicting the Torah. A Star of David is painted on the wall in the center part of the pediment. In front of the ark is a bimah of plain, light colored wood panels with matching rails and slats. Two long windows flank the ark and the windows have arched transoms with a Star of David and decorative panels in the upper portion.

Wood pews are arranged in two long rows with a center aisle, facing the bimah. A period chandelier hangs from the ceiling at the end of the aisle and consists of ornate metal designs in brass and enamel with glass beads. Exposed light bulbs are arranged around the edges. Behind the light is a large ceiling painting, another trompe l'oeil depiction of the heavens. The chandelier and painting are in remarkably good condition. Most of the windows along the north and south elevations are also extant and have decorative center panels, many with zodiac symbols. The walls and support pillars on the other hand have fared poorly with much of the plaster fallen away and sections of the volutes are missing from the pillars. The original carpeting still exists and presumably is protecting the original wood flooring.

Along with a long term of vacancy, missing or broken portions of windows contributed to the deterioration of the plaster and sections of the balcony. In spite of the deterioration, the building is in fair shape and it is the intent of the current owner to rehabilitate the building for use as a community art center/performance space. Since its construction in 1928, the building has served the local community as a house of worship, school and a gathering place and plans are underway to revive its function as a neighborhood gathering place.

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
Name of Property

Monroe County, NY
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History
Architecture

Period of Significance
1928-1961

Significant Dates
1928, 1937, 1961

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Louis H. Friedman

Period of Significance (justification)
The period reflects its initial construction and function as a house of worship.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria synagogue, now known as the Congregation B'Nai Israel synagogue, is significant under criterion A in the area of social history for its for its association with the Jewish Immigrant group, mostly from Austria, who settled in the northeast section of the city of Rochester in the early twentieth century. Joseph Avenue became the commercial center of an immigrant community that was home to a sizable Jewish middle and working class population, and the Congregation B'Nai Israel synagogue became a community gathering spot and worship center. Built in 1928, the building is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an example of early twentieth century Georgian Revival design, combining the historic tradition of the early American past with ancient Jewish tradition and ritual. The immigrant community was clearly embracing their adopted country by using historic American elements of colonial style pediments, columns and other decorative features, which also expressed their patriotism for their new home. A local draftsman, Louis H. Friedman (whose name appears on the plans), is credited with the design of the building. Friedman appears to have been influenced by another local architect, Siegmund Firestone. The construction of the synagogue predates Firestone's Jewish Young Men's and Women's Association Building (NR listed 1985) but shares similar design features such as prominent rounded windows, a façade divided by tall pilasters, use of paired casement windows, even fenestration and brick construction. The building was used as a synagogue until 1961 and is currently vacant, but plans are underway to rehabilitate the space as a community center. Recognizing its history and importance to the local community, the city designated the building as a local historic landmark in 2014.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Context

Rochester was established in 1803 when three partners from Maryland, led by Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, purchased a 100-acre tract on the west bank of the Genesee River and began selling off the land. By 1823, the rapidly developing village known as Rochesterville expanded to 1,011 acres to accommodate its growing population. In that same year, the Erie Canal was finished as far as the village, and in 1825, the entire length of the canal was open, connecting the village to a vast transportation network that reached from the Great Lakes to the Hudson River and the Atlantic Ocean. Rochester became a major commercial center for Western New York, as well as a leader in the milling and shipping of flour. Rochester's population increased 600

percent in the decade following the canal's opening and the village was recognized as one of America's early nineteenth-century boom towns. [1]

In 1834, the New York State Legislature issued a charter for Rochester incorporating it as a city, acknowledging its rapid growth to 4,819 with access to the canal and the Genesee River, which ran through the center of the village. After a region-wide failure of the wheat crop (1850s), Rochester business owners converted mills to new industrial ventures, increasing the city's industrial potential by adding new industries such as shoe and clothing manufacturing, carriages, tools, brewing, tobacco and perfume, as well as commercial horticulture, earning Rochester the nickname "The Flower City" in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Erie Canal also provided an easy and affordable source of transportation for new immigrants, with the most prevalent groups arriving from Ireland and the German principalities. Crop failures also led to people moving to Rochester from surrounding farmlands, causing the population to swell to 43,877 by 1860.[2]

In the 1840s, Jewish names began showing up in the city directories. The first documented Jewish resident was Meyer Greentree (1819-1890), a merchant who first settled in New England, where he had been a peddler. In 1843, he moved to Rochester, where he met and married Elizabeth Baker, who ran a shop specializing in children's clothing. By 1849, the business was known as Greentree and Wile, after they were joined by another German-Jewish immigrant, Joseph Wile. In addition to being Rochester's first Jewish resident, Greentree became known as the "Father of the Clothing Industry in Rochester:"

> Little could Mr. Greentree have dreamed of what a mammoth industry he was to be the progenitor. Little could he have imagined that in a city of 225,000 inhabitants [in 1912], more than one-fifth of the entire population would derive their sustenance from the manufacture of men's, boy's and children's clothing of high quality. Yet such is the indisputable fact. From the little Front Street pant shop have sprung about 40 commercial houses…Some idea of the magnitude of the industry and its meaning to the growth of the City of Rochester, may be had from the statement that ROCHESTER, twenty-second among the Cities of the United States, in population, is third in the amount of its clothing output. A conservative figure from an inside source, places the total amount of business done as approximately $22,000,000.00 annually… It all proves that the pioneers of the clothing business in ROCHESTER, and all of them were JEWS, were the kind of men upon whom a city may draw for its inspiration and life; who by their energy, pluck, public spirit and knowledge of affairs, qualities shared by their successors, contributed to the establishment of an industry which is closely interwoven with the busy and pulsing life of a great American city.[3]

[1] Blake McKelvey, "A Panoramic View of Rochester's History," *Rochester History*, vol. 11, no. 2, (April, 1949), 3.
[2] J. H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State* (Syracuse, NY: R.P. Smith, Publisher, 1860), 403.
[3] Isaac M. Brickner, ed., *The Jews of Rochester* (Rochester, NY: Historical Review Society, 1912), 15-16.

By 1875, it was estimated that there were 3,000 Jews in Rochester, mostly of German origin, and as eastern European immigration increased in the late nineteenth century, this was also reflected in the Jewish community. Estimates for 1890 put the Jewish population around 5,000, with 40 percent being from Eastern Europe and a majority were employed in the clothing industry.[4] Clothing factories remained the main means of employment, but after 1910, Jews increasingly found work as jewelers, tinsmiths, paper wholesalers, machinists, produce dealers, insurance agents and optical good distributors.[5]

As the Jewish community grew, the first Jewish religious meeting held in Rochester was held on Yom Kippur, October 7,1848, in the residence of Henry Levy at the corner of North Clinton and Bowery (Cumberland) streets. A congregation was subsequently formally organized and congregational meetings continued to be held at the Levy residence until space was procured in the third story of No. 2 Front Street in 1849. The city directory for 1849 recorded the first established Jewish congregation as follows: “Jews Synagogue, No. 2 Front St., in the third story. Priest, Marcus Tuska.” The congregation was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, November 16, 1854 and by 1857, the congregation relocated to St. Paul Street near Andrews Street. Rabbi Marcus was succeeded in 1857 by the Rev. Isaac Mayer who officiated as rabbi of the congregation until he was succeeded by a Dr. Sahner in 1860.

With the surge in Jewish immigration that began in the 1880s, the already established German Jewish community created programs and organizations to assist their Russian and Eastern European brethren by founding agencies such as the United Jewish Charities of Rochester (1882), Hebrew Benevolent Society at Beth Israel (1887), Independent Hebrew Friends Association (1888), Hebrew Charity Association (1893), Baden Street Settlement (1901), and the Associated Hebrew Charities (1908). Sensitive to the political upheaval sweeping through Germany and Eastern Europe in the 1930s, the local Jewish community began to call attention to conditions abroad through newspapers and other publications such as *The Jewish Ledger*, first published in 1924. Throughout the 1930s, it was one of the first American publications to consistently detail the growth of Nazism. Rabbi Philip Bernstein from Rochester’s Temple B’rith Kodesh visited Germany several times during the 1930s and lectured from his pulpit recounting the horrors he witnessed. Ultimately Rabbi Bernstein was chosen by the national American Jewish Congress to lead a speaking tour of the United States to engender support for American involvement overseas. The agencies and organizations founded by the Rochester Jewish community assisted with the influx of refugees arriving in Rochester during and after World War II.

[4] Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Rochester, 1843-1925* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 148-150.
[5] Ibid, 156.

In 1914, the Jewish district of Rochester was described as the area bounded by Vose, Edward, Gilmore, Hudson, Rhine and Hanover Streets. As immigration increased, the boundary partly expanded south along St. Joseph Avenue. The newer groups of Jewish immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, settled in the St. Joseph Street area on the northeast side of the city and, according to one account, successfully lobbied the city to drop the Saint part of the name and simply call the street Joseph Avenue. Ruth Schafer Lempert described Joseph Avenue in her reminiscences of growing up during the 1930s and of her father's fish market:

> My father could greet his customers in Russian, Polish, German, Yiddish, or broken English. We were surrounded by immigrants, newly arrived, who's [sic] English was halting and heavily accented…Like my parents, many of our customers were Jewish and had come from Eastern Europe. They had lived in small villages or shtetls. Like my parents, they had fled from poverty, persecution, and danger. Besides their language, the immigrants had brought with them their religion, their customs, and their hunger for a better life for themselves and for their children…The neighborhood was a mixture of vastly different cultures and ethnic groups, and the stores and houses that lined the avenue reflected this diversity. Tony, who came from Italy, had a barbershop around the corner on Clifford Avenue…My father preferred Tony to Leo, the Polish barber, a few doors away.[6]

Her reminiscences painted a picture of a vibrant street of shops and shoppers:

> We lived above the fish market and I never even noticed the smell…Living on such a busy street, it was easy to go shopping. We went to Simon's creamery next door for milk, butter and cheese. At Applebaum's Kosher Meat Market down the street we bought meat of every kind…Close by were a number of bakeries and we bought bread, rolls, cakes, pies, and on Friday, challah…There were almost a dozen fish markets on the avenue. The huge plate glass window of our store had "Schafer's Fish Market" printed in big white letters…Thursdays and Fridays were our busiest days. No meat on Fridays for Catholics meant big sales for all kinds of fish. Haddock fillets were especially popular. Jews bought whitefish and pike for making gefilte fish, traditionally served on the Jewish Sabbath—Friday night and Saturday…On Saturday nights after sundown the Sabbath was over, and we reopened the store for business, as did most of the other Jewish shop owners. Although the avenue was quiet all day Saturday, at night it burst into life. People thronged the streets, and often a line was waiting to get in before we opened…Sunday was a busy day, too. Even years later when the neighborhood had already changed, women came with their husbands or grown sons who drove them to the store.[7]

She also mentioned that her father was one of the founding members of an orthodox congregation known as Congregation B'Nai Israel. She described the synagogue as having wide, brick stairs leading to the entrance and thick columns across the front. She continued:

> Its membership included many neighborhood people. It was located within easy walking distance of us, which was very important because my father and other observant Jews would not drive on the Sabbath or religious holidays. He served as an officer of the congregation and participated in the politics of its everyday life. Because he enjoyed being with people and taking

[6] Ruth Lempert, "Growing Up in the Old Neighborhood—A Memoir of Joseph Avenue Part Two," *Rochester History* Vol LXIV No. 3 (Summer 2002), 7.
[7] Ibid, 3-6, 14-15.

> charge, he eventually became president of the congregation. He went to worship services every day and three times on the Sabbath, Friday night, Saturday morning, and late Saturday afternoon. Ten men (a minyan) were required at each service in order to perform the prayers. If the group did not reach the minimum number, someone would rush outside to try to haul in a passing Jewish male over the age of thirteen. In our neighborhood it was not too hard to make up the quorum.[8]

She went on to describe her worship experience:

> Women were not allowed to sit with the men, nor could they be counted in the minyan. They sat in the balcony, and I and my sisters often waved to our father as we sat with our mother and looked down at all the men below…During the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we children spent more time in the synagogue than we did at any other time. Participating in the prayer service on those holidays was an all day affair. The most exciting moment for me came when the shofar (a curved ram's horn) was blown in a series of shrill compelling blasts…Sometimes we children, tired of the long service went outside. The boys ran around chasing the girls and teasing them. The boys picked up chestnut burrs that fell from the trees lining the street…After a while we all went dutifully back inside.[9]

Ruth knew the synagogue as Congregation B'Nai Israel, but it was originally formed as Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria in 1921, and the building was constructed in 1928. In 1937, a group of younger members formed Congregation B'Nai Israel and bought the building, which they sold it to Congregation B'Nai Israel Ahavas Achim in 1961. Prior to the sale, it served the active congregation as a place for worship. At times it served as a religious school and a venue for concerts given by the choir. It remained a synagogue until 2004, was briefly used as a church by an African American congregation and has been vacant since. Currently, the Joseph Avenue Business Association is supporting efforts reuse the building, possibly as a museum or as an arts venue.

Built in 1928, the design is credited to Louis H. Friedman (1896-1981), who was listed in the local city directories as a draftsman. Unfortunately, research to date has only provided minimal biographical information on Friedman, limited to birth and death dates and scant information from city directories. Later census records stated that Friedman's occupation was as an architect and information at the University of Rochester revealed that he worked for the Rochester firm of Dryer and Dryer, located at 217 East Avenue. Although the firm specialized in religious buildings, the synagogue was not listed among the company's commissions. There was some speculation among local architectural historians that the building may have been the work of Siegmund Firestone, a well-known Rochester architect who designed an number of significant buildings, including the B. Forman Company retail store, the Iola Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Highland Hospital, the

[8] Ibid., 11.

Monroe County Home, and the Jewish Young Men's and Women's Association. Stylistic similarities between the synagogue and the Jewish Y building suggest the link, but it's highly circumstantial since the synagogue fails to appear in Firestone's list of work. [10] Furthermore, Friedman's name appears on drawings for the Congregation B'Nai Israel synagogue at 692 Joseph Avenue.

Built for an orthodox congregation, the building combined the design of an older, familiar form used by another nearby synagogue on Hanover Street with a more up-to-date, popular architectural style. Built in 1911, the building for Beth Hamedresh Hagodel Congregation was modeled after a synagogue in Toronto and was one of the largest in Rochester with a seating capacity of 2,000. Unfortunately, the name of the architect for Beth Hamedresh Hagodel is unknown and the building was demolished in 1960 for an urban renewal housing project. The building for the Beth Hamedresh Congregation had two tall end columns with a recessed entry that was highlighted by a pair of massive doors surrounded by heavy pilasters and cornice. Banks of round windows were set into arched openings and the towers had rounded domes capped with the Star of David. The worship space also had a large gallery along three sides and a dome that was painted to look like the night sky. The synagogue at 692 Joseph Avenue had the same form of two end towers and recessed entrance, but was smaller in scale and set back on the lot to enhance its appearance. Both synagogues used a large bank of steps to access the main entrance and both had ground level entry doors in the columns.

While the synagogue for Beth Hamedresh Congregation reflected an earlier style, Congregation B'Nai Israel was part of the early twentieth century movement in American synagogue architecture that adopted classical design elements.[11] The building at 692 Joseph Avenue displayed a purely American style of architecture reminiscent of late eighteenth century historic American buildings. For an immigrant and Jewish community, the building was a familiar expression of a common form used for synagogues wrapped with materials and details that displayed its American character. Like many Georgian Revival buildings, the building at 692 Joseph Avenue was a brick building accented with brick quoining. The recessed entrance was divided by smooth, freestanding columns with Ionic capitals and doors had rounded fanlights that were separated by stone pilasters, also with Ionic capitals. Prominent windows were rounded with the remainder set into square openings. Other late eighteenth/early nineteenth inspired details included swag designs in stone panels, a large ocular window with evenly placed corbels. Like Beth Hamedresh, the interior worship space contained a gallery or balcony along three sides and a painting simulating the sky on the ceiling.

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Otis Dryer and Siegmund Firestone studied architecture in Stuttgart, Germany and both established firms in Rochester that were within two city blocks of each other. Firestone also used Dryer and Dyer to assist with his Monroe County Hospital project.

In the mid twentieth century, the Joseph Avenue neighborhood changed as many residents found new homes in the suburbs and the shops and synagogues disappeared. The building at 692 Joseph Avenue is one of the few reminders of the Jewish community that settled in the area and the only one founded by Austrian immigrants, tying it to the larger wave of the southern and eastern European immigrants to the United States and Rochester. The synagogue's location in an urban core allowed its members to walk to religious services and still reflects this by having a shallow set back, narrow lot and no parking lot. The city of Rochester designated Congregation B'Nai Israel as a local landmark in 2014, celebrating its history and architectural significance as the most intact early twentieth century synagogue in the city.

[11] Samuel D. Gruber, "Arnold W. Brunner and the New Classical Synagogue in America," *Jewish History, vol. 25 No. 1*(2011), 70-71.

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Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
Name of Property

Monroe County, NY
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
_x_Other
Name of repository: **Office of the Rochester City Historian**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18N	288100	4783789	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the same as for the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Neil Scheier & Christine L. Ridarsky (Rochester City Historian) (Virginia L. Bartos, Ph.D., NYS OPRHP, editor)
organization Joseph Avenue Arts & Culture Alliance date September 2015
street & number P.O. Box 30147 telephone N/A
city or town Rochester state NY zip code 14603
e-mail christine.ridarsky@libraryweb.org; nydazzles@aol.com; virginia.bartos@parks.ny.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Congregation B'Nai Israel

City or Vicinity: Rochester

County: Monroe State: New York

Photographer: Virginia L. Bartos

Date Photographed: 11 May 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:
0001 of 0010: Façade looking northeast from Joseph Avenue.
0002 of 0010: Entrance (west elevation) looking east.
0003 of 0010: North elevation and northwest tower, view looking southeast.
0004 of 0010: East elevation, view looking west from Loomis Street.
0005 of 0010: Interior view of entrance, looking southwest.
0006 of 0010: Interior view of worship space looking east.
0007 of 0010: Interior view of worship space looking toward northwest corner.
0008 of 0010: Detail view showing Ark pediment and painting above.
0009 of 0010: Detail view of worship space ceiling painting and lamp.
0010 of 0010: Interior view of extant sliding partitions in lower level of building.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Joseph Avenue Arts & Culture Alliance/Congregation B'Nai Israel

street & number P.O. Box 30147 telephone N/A

city or town Rochester state NY zip code 14603

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
Name of Property

Monroe County, NY
County and State

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
City of Rochester, Monroe Co., NY

692 Joseph Ave.
Rochester, NY 14621

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

Feet
0 65 130 260

Congregation

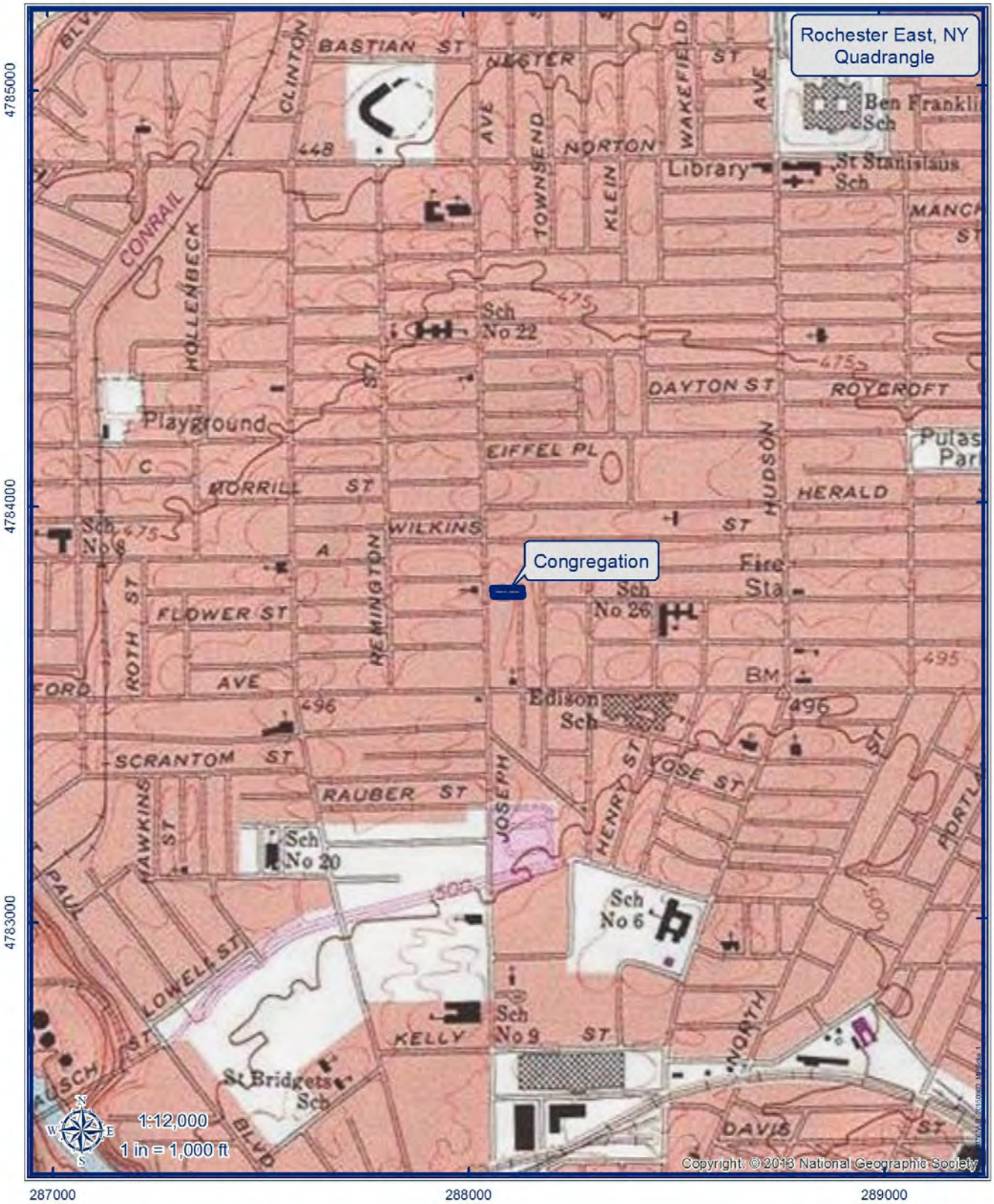
NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
Name of Property

Monroe County, NY
County and State

Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria
City of Rochester, Monroe Co., NY

692 Joseph Ave.
Rochester, NY 14621



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

Feet
0 330 660 1,320

Congregation

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

RRCDC
ROCHESTER REGIONAL COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

THE HUNGERFORD COMPLEX
1115 EAST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER NY 14609
585.271.0520 | WWW.RRCDC.ORG

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July 7, 2015

Virginia L. Bartos, Ph.D.
National Register Analyst, Finger Lakes Region
NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188

RE: B'nai Israel Synagogue
692 Joseph Avenue, Rochester, NY 14621

Dear Dr. Bartos,

On behalf of the Community Design Center of Rochester (CDCR), I write in support of the designation of the B'nai Israel Synagogue at 692 Joseph Avenue as a landmark worthy of the State and National Historic Registries. This early twentieth century religious structure is a significant example of Romanesque Revival architecture. Although it has not been actively used for the past decade, the structure serves as an important anchor for the surrounding community and a reflection of the area's strong history. It holds social importance, representing the Jewish community that settled in Rochester's northeast quadrant in the massive wave of immigration that occurred during the late 19th and early 20th century

The CDCR applauds the Joseph Avenue Arts and Culture Alliance for its effort to find ways to reuse this former synagogue and strongly recommends the landmark designation as a means to bring appropriate attention and protection to this important architectural asset.

Yours truly,

Joni L. Monroe

Joni Monroe, AIA
Executive Director

STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I, RABBI HENRY HYMAN, am the owner of the property at
(print or type owner name)
692 JOSEPH AVENUE ROCHESTER, NY
(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

I support its consideration and inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Henry Hyman 3/7/2015
(signature and date)

184 WILKINS ST. 1
ROCHESTER NY 14621
(mailing address)

BNAI ISRAEL

1928

CONGREGATIONAL
MORTGAGE

ולזהו כל כזכבי אור.