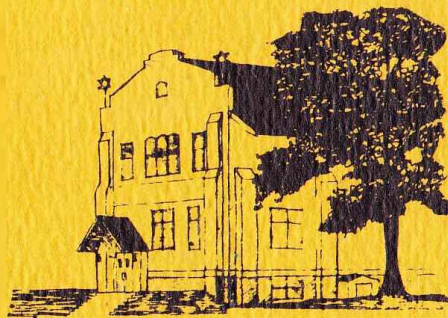
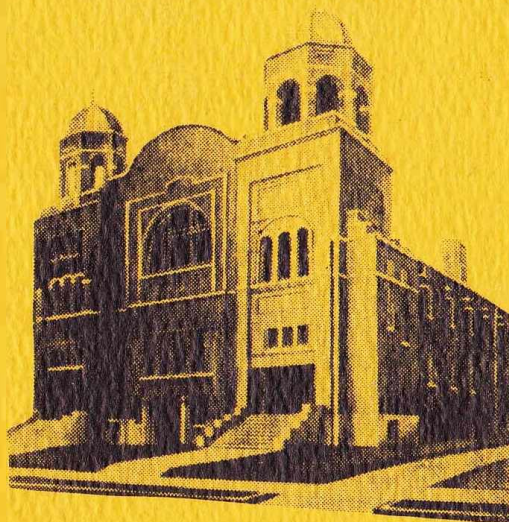
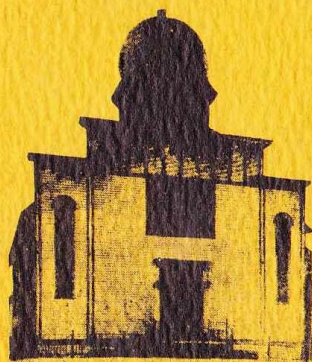




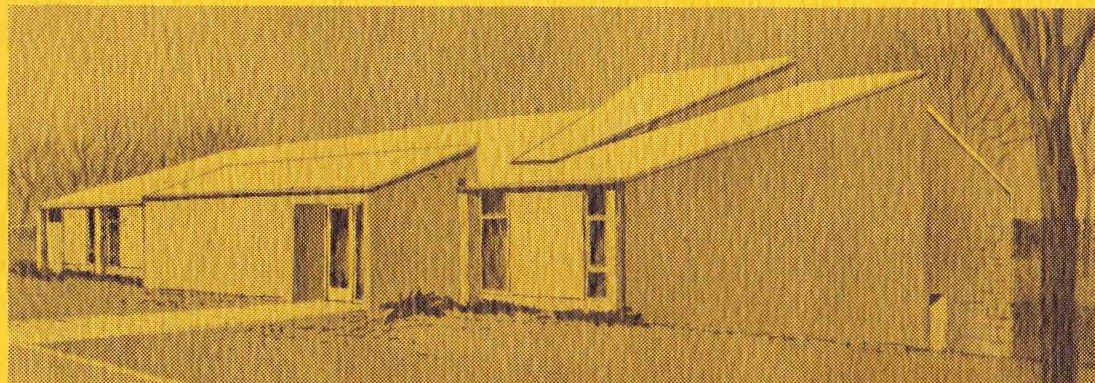
1948 - PLYMOUTH AVENUE



1913 - LYNDAL AVENUE NORTH



1894 - NORTH FOURTH STREET



1969 - 4330 WEST 28th STREET, ST. LOUIS PARK

In consonance with the example set by its Fathers, to relocate the synagogue in the area of its worshippers, the members of Congregation Keneseth Israel have erected a new synagogue building at 4330 West 28th Street in St. Louis Park. To record and preserve the story of these same Founding Fathers the Historical Society of Keneseth Israel is pleased to present this brief outline of the history of the synagogue.

---

The history of the Jewish community in Greater Minneapolis is reflected in the history of Congregation Keneseth Israel and the vision of its founding fathers.

An outstanding example of this early vision is the Minneapolis Talmud Torah, which was born in the halls of Keneseth Israel. From 1894, when Hebrew school classes were first conducted in the Synagogue building on Fourth Street, members of the congregation were, and still are, active in the development and leadership of the Talmud Torah. "The congregation played an important role in the development of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah," says Rabbi Albert I. Gordon in his book entitled "Jews in Transition."

Another example is the early cooperation between Temple Israel and Keneseth Israel when Keneseth Israel granted the use of its Hebrew

(continued on inside back overleaf)

school to Temple Israel and thus enabled that congregation to establish a Sunday School for children on the Northside.

In the field of secular education, Dr. Max Seham, a renowned Minneapolis pediatrician, recalls that when he was Secretary of the Menorah Society of the University of Minnesota in 1908, that society organized the first night school for immigrants in Minneapolis. Classes were held in four rooms at Keneseth Israel then on Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue North. Again, for the first year all the funds needed for this school were donated by the Congregation. The idea proved so vital that in the second year, Mr. Webster, then Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools, recognizing the need for this service took over the program. This was the beginning of the night school classes in Minneapolis public schools.

This concern for the community which has characterized the history of Keneseth Israel was also evidenced by Rabbi S. M. Silver, its distinguished spiritual leader, who, at the turn of the century became the acknowledged leader of the Jews of Minneapolis. He broke precedent when, contrary to the practice existing among Orthodox Rabbis at that time, he participated in the affairs of the community and helped plan and guide its destiny. Keneseth Israel's spiritual leaders and congregants have continued to play leading roles in communal affairs to this day.

From its beginnings, Keneseth Israel was the center of Jewish activity on the Northside. Swiftly emulating the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Silver, a distinguished group of laymen emerged in the early part of the 20th century. In December, 1901, with Mr. Nathan Lowenthal as president, the synagogue approached this challenge with zest. In 1905, Mr. Lowenthal was joined by Vice-President Max Davis to consider ways and means of securing a new and larger synagogue nearer to the ever-moving center of population. These plans were crystallized in 1907 under the presidency of I. I. Schochet.

In 1912, Nathan Lowenthal was again called upon to fulfill the plan for creating a new synagogue building on Lyndale at Sixth Avenue North. The building committee included Isaac Segal, who later became president, Abraham Kaplan, who served also as Vice-President, Nathan Waisbren, Abe Witebsky, Nathan Eisenstadt, Morris Borowsky, Myer Segal, H. Fieweles, and also Max Davis, who, having dreamed the dream, now bore the responsibility of making it come true. A grateful congregation subsequently elected Max Davis president. Another distinguished founder was Yerucham Dworsky. Also serving with great credit was Abraham Chapman.

The predecessor of Congregation Keneseth Israel was Ohel Jacob. The change in name from "Jacob" to "Israel" is significant when we recall that the name of our patriarch Jacob was also changed to Israel when he triumphed in his wrestling match with the realities of his day. Similarly, Ohel Jacob, upon achieving the maturity to build, changed its name to Keneseth Israel. Symbolic of this emergence into maturity, seasoned leaders like Joseph Markus, a leading figure in Ohel Jacob, assumed his rightful position at the helm of Keneseth Israel. Other congregants active among the founders were Morris Borowsky, Moses Strimling, H. S. Lippman, and J. Kaplan. (Other early presidents included Henry B. Cohen and David Abrams.)

Mobilizing the congregation for worship services and performing the many vital chores which hold an Orthodox congregation together and in smooth functioning order, are the Shamashim. Distinguished Shamashim of Keneseth Israel in its early years were Nathan Wolpert, and Koppel Baiman, who served in this exacting capacity.

Also prominent among the early members of Keneseth Israel were those who led the study groups of the congregation: men such as Nathan Weisbren who was a leader of the Chevra Gemara and later also became the first president of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah; Israel Cohen, who was also the leader of the Chevra Gemara, and Hessel Spodeck, who served as president of the Chevrah Mishnah; Jacob Goldberg, who could always be found in the congregation reciting the Psalms, taking pride in his ability to serve as Shalich Tzibbur, and who was a member of the Board of Directors.

Among the prominent members of Keneseth Israel Congregations may be found families where the precedent of serving the congregation, set by the father, was followed by the son. Such families include the Mark family; Harry Mark, serving as second vice-president, was followed by his son Israel C. Mark, who served as second vice-president of the Men's Club and as a member of the congregation Board. The Swiller family gave us our early founder, H. Swiller, followed by his son, Myron Swiller, an active member of the Board in the 1930's. The Horwitz family, followed by Harry Horwitz; Louis B. Friedman, followed by his son, Ben Friedman; A. Isaacs, followed by his son, Harry Isaacs. An early pioneer of the synagogue was Myer Moses, followed by his son, Felix Moses who became a Bar Mitzvah in the synagogue. Meyer Bank was followed by his sons, Charles, David, and Henry Bank; Jacob Skool was followed by his grandson, David Freeman.

Other active members at the turn of the Century included H. Mell, Peter Dworsky, H. I. Broude, Benjamin Nathanson, J. Crown, R. J. Weinberg, Sam Levin and Moses Levin. The membership list also included Mr. Fineman, who was one of the earliest members to purchase a lifetime pew in the Synagogue, H. Richter, H. Myers, B. Myers, William Dworsky, A. S. Loss, Abraham Wolk, Max Haspel, Isaac Berenson, Joseph Frisch, Abe Naftalin, David Berman, Ephraim Berman, Alexander Berman, Myer Segal, Henry Segal, Julius Weiner, William Cable, Abraham Berman, A. Y. Ansel, and Harry Gensler. Special note must also be made of the contribution of the congregation's subsequent presidents: David Abrams, Henry B. Cohen, Herbert Hillman, David Kassler, and Helman Neimark.

These early founders and members, confronted as they were by the everyday problems of resettlement in a new world, nevertheless manifested a sense of historic continuity which impelled them to build a living synagogue in their new land. Now, in its 81st year Keneseth Israel once again keeps pace with its obligations to the community by moving its sanctuary to the area of its worshippers, St. Louis Park. Keneseth Israel members, many in modest circumstances, have laid the groundwork by contributing sacrificially for the erection of a new edifice in St. Louis Park.

It is now planned to enshrine the names of these revered Founding Fathers among the archives and historic artifacts of the synagogue, as they are recorded here. With the publication of this record, a cordial invitation is extended to the families of the Founding Fathers to join with the Keneseth Israel membership in signifying their support of the building fund campaign by reserving dedicatory plaques in honor of their family names or in affectionate memory of their loved ones. What an appropriate tribute to a distinguished ancestor.