

Committees for the Building

BUILDING DESIGN

Arnold Potter
Harold Karl Halpert
co-chairmen



ARNOLD POTTER

Dr. David Davidson
Milton Mack
Shepard H. Cutler
Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Percy Finberg, *Chairman*
Philip Reuben
Shepard H. Cutler
Richard J. Carvel



PERCY FINBERG



WORK AND PROGRESS

A Message from the Building Fund Chairmen

The Building Fund Committee thanks every contributor. We are grateful for the ease with which the fund was raised for the new Temple. We hoped but never dreamed we would accumulate the pledges to the fund so quickly. Our experiences in this respect were a constant inspiration.

Although the money pledged thus far will probably only provide for the bare building, the mechanicals and the rough grading, the spirit of the movement, so eloquently expressed to this point, certainly predicts an early attainment of our goal for a completely furnished and equipped building.

We are indebted to many individuals for their help in planning and developing the drive for funds. To thank each one individually would be a pleasure. But for want of space we express to workers, and contributors in these few words our deep appreciation. They have helped a worthy cause in the Jewish community, one which will bring joy to fathers and mothers and happiness to their children. Nothing could be more practical; nothing could be more full of the beauty of living.

LEWIS BERNSTEIN

GEORGE I. LEWIS

Co-Chairmen Building Fund Committee

BUILDING FUND COMMITTEE

Lewis Bernstein
George I. Lewis
Co-Chairmen



GEORGE I. LEWIS

Myer H. Sacknoff
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LEWIS BERNSTEIN

The Design of Temple Beth El

In the early spring of 1949, a special committee was appointed to consider the design of a proposed Temple building. Separate from the building fund committee, its particular concern was with the physical needs of the congregation, and the architectural solution of those needs. This committee, with Harold K. Halpert and Arnold Potter as co-chairmen, consisted of the additional following members: Dr. David Davidson, Milton Mack, Shepard Cutler, and Rabbi Ephraim Bennett.

As conceived by the design group, the need was for a building that provided the following:

- (1) A synagogue to seat 250 for weekly services, Bar Mitzvahs, weddings, or other functions, with a wide center aisle for use at weddings, and a synagogue that could at the same time be expanded for the High Holidays to seat 600.
- (2) A school to serve at least 100 children, in such a way that the children would not interfere with the chapel or other parts of the building.
- (3) A social hall for banquets, receptions, and large meetings, supplemented with a fully equipped kitchen, and equipped with a stage for school plays and speakers.
- (4) A multi-purpose room to serve as a daily chapel, board room, and library.
- (5) The usual administrative offices and mechanical facilities.

In searching for an architect, the committee set as its goal a man understanding the Jewish faith, with previous experience in building Conservative Temples. Several firms were contacted. Finally, Isidor Richmond and Carney Goldberg of Boston were commissioned to make preliminary studies.

In order to fill all the required functions, and remain within the budget, the simplest materials were recommended. To take advantage of the beautiful site, the style of the building was deliberately straight-forward modern in design, taking its shape from the land itself.

Every part of the program was met by the plan submitted, and additional ideas were utilized. An ingenious arrangement permits the two largest areas, the synagogue and the social hall, to be used as one huge room for maximum seating. The Rabbi's office is centrally located, but maintains privacy. The school is almost a separate unit, yet shares the service facilities of the rest of the building. Deliveries to the kitchen may be made without disturbing any other part of the Temple. The social hall is easily accessible by car, or on foot, through its own entrance. The administrative office is near the school for the convenience of the children. Their playground is carefully placed at a distance from the main court. This main court is a beautiful and important element in the design. It provides for outdoor gathering in privacy, and suggests the possibility of outdoor services on Succoth, or even gay social events against a religious setting.

Throughout the building there is a feeling of openness, of light and of airiness, which is conducive to worship, and which imparts a kind of spirituality not necessarily associated with the traditional past.

In planning this Temple, it was of primary importance to make it a public demonstration of faith. At a time when the State of Israel was re-created, when Portland Jews were seeking for themselves a new set of standards in their religious lives, they wanted a Temple building to be symbolic of their ideals.

Yet no practical advantages were overlooked. The synagogue is filled with natural light, and has direct cross-ventilation. The schoolrooms have large glass areas for the best light and air possible. The rest rooms and lounges are removed from the main block for quiet, yet are central in location. With the slope of the land, it is logical to have three floor levels; but each stairway is wide and well-lit for safety.

As an architectural solution, we can be proud of this building. But, more important, it seems to express the Conservative approach to Judaism today.