

REPORT  
of the Bachelor's Thesis  
entitled

A HEBREW COMMUNITY CENTER FOR LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

Presented by  
EUGENE B. WEISBERG  
May 11, 1938

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175 Newbury Street  
Boston, Massachusetts  
May 11, 1938

Mr. William Emerson, Dean  
School of Architecture  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

Herewith is presented the report on my thesis, entitled  
"A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell, Massachusetts",  
which has been done in partial fulfillment of the re-  
quirements for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture.

It is my sincere wish that this Thesis will, at least  
partially, atone my errors of omission in the past five  
years. Should it be so this effort will not have been  
in vain.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature redacted

Eugene B. Weisberg  
IV '38

To Dean Emerson, and to the Faculty of the School of Architecture, I owe my deepest gratitude for their patience and kindness in making it possible for me to obtain the training which has brought this thesis into being.

Miss Hester Marmer is to be praised for the accurate work she did in supplying statistical information. I am everlastingly her debtor for this service.

Rabbi Joseph Warren, of Lowell, gave his time and help freely to the betterment of this thesis. My obligation to him is as profound as my respect.

To Professor Anderson I owe a debt of gratitude for his assistance in my problems, and for his attitude which has made me search much more deeply than if I had been forced to go on without his aid.

175 Newbury Street  
Boston, Massachusetts  
February 20, 1938

Mr. William Emerson, Dean  
School of Architecture  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

As subject for my thesis, to be done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture, I propose "A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell, Massachusetts".

The Hebrew Community of Lowell, of which I am a member, is in need of a new building to house its Religious, Fraternal, Social and Athletic activities. The purpose of this project will be to so design and locate a building that the whole Hebrew community of Lowell shall derive benefits therein.

Yours truly,

s/ Eugene B. Weisberg

Eugene B. Weisberg  
IV '38

February 18th, 1938

Mr. Eugene B. Weisberg  
175 Newbury Street  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Weisberg:

In reference to your favor of the 20th instant proposing as the subject for your Bachelor's Thesis "A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell, Massachusetts" - I am glad to approve this herewith.

In connection with this approval, I would point out to you that part of your problem, in developing your drawings and your report, is to present evidence of a convincing nature to justify the creation of such a Community Center for such a purpose. You will later let me have your program in detail, as well as a list of the drawings that you propose to include and the scale at which they will be presented.

In approving this, which may be your last performance at Technology, I should like to point out to you what a relatively unsatisfactory use you have made of your opportunity here. You have only spasmodically used, to its fullest extent, both the opportunity and your abilities, having generally been content to work only hard enough to meet a passing standard. I am saying this in the hope that you will be stimulated to do so good a Thesis that it will redeem some of the omissions of your other years.

Sincerely yours,

s/ William Emerson

William Emerson, Dean  
School of Architecture

WE/h

## FOREWORD

### Choice of the Thesis Subject

The choice of a subject suitable for a thesis has been a difficult problem for many students who have no definite preferences within the field of Architecture. It is the aim of each student to choose a subject that is new and fresh, and one that will show to his best advantage his grasp on the subject. To this end should he find a problem that is more difficult than any he has yet undertaken, or should he pick a topic that will be no more difficult than his school problems yet one that will be handled more fully? Since the school voices no preference in this matter, it is a question for the student alone to answer.

It is my belief that the school is going away from the idea of the 'grand projet' and is becoming more interested in the problem of character. In other words, if the school were to voice an opinion on the type of thesis to be presented each year, I think it would favor the thesis that is no more difficult than the usual school problem.

The school seems inclined to the belief that the manner in which a problem is solved is more important than which problem is solved. It is, of course, understood that there are limitations in the choice of subject. The prob-

lem must be one that will require sufficient effort to be commensurate with the student's ability.

"A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell, Massachusetts" was chosen for the subject of this thesis with the views set forth above as a basis. It may well be asked why the City of Lowell was chosen and why the Community Center was fixed as Hebrew. To these questions there is the answer that both were so chosen because they are familiar to me. My home is in Lowell, and I have been a member of the Hebrew Community of Lowell all my life. The needs and problems of the two are known to me and thus the problem becomes more real than if it dealt with some less familiar principals.

Although there is little chance of the proposed building being constructed, the problem deals with actual conditions no less honestly than if the building were to be erected. Conditions surrounding the project are actual to the best of my knowledge.



## PRELIMINARY STUDY

### Existing Conditions

The letter of authorization from Dean Emerson left the way open for the preliminary study preparatory to the writing of the program. In this study it was the principal object to find the true conditions for the proposed building and to discover if they would warrant the continuance of the thesis on this subject.

That there now exists a unit called the Lowell Hebrew Community Center did not influence this study. Its presence alone did not offer sufficient evidence that its existence was warranted, so the problem began at its rightful origin.

Are there enough Jewish people in Lowell who would use such a building as the proposed? This question was the one to be answered if the project was to justify itself. In searching for the answer many interesting facts were brought to light, which, when examined by anyone not familiar with the Jewish problems would be meaningless.

The first study showed that there were between three and four hundred Jewish families in Lowell. These people had grouped themselves into various organizations according to age, six and ideals. If all of these groups, encompassing almost the entire Jewish population, banded together to use one common building, there was cert-

ainly reason enough to build one. With the facts gained in this survey, the program was written.

(COPY)

PROGRAM.

March 17, 1938

To: Professor William Emerson, Dean

From: Eugene B. Weisberg, IV '38

Subject: Preliminary program for the Bachelor's Thesis  
entitled "A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell,  
Massachusetts"

#### The APPROACH to the Problem

Lowell is a city of some 300 Jewish Families distributed, as will later be shown on a spot map, mainly over the Upper and Lower Highlands Districts.

To serve their Religious needs the Jewish People have built 3 Synagogues; 2 Orthodox and one Conservative.

One Orthodox and one Conservative Synagogue each has a religious school.

To serve their social, fraternal and cultural needs these same people have developed many organizations, most of which are housed in one antiquated building.

There are now no facilities for athletics.

#### The Problem

It is the Problem to find what groups properly belong in a Center, and to then comfortably and economically house them.

#### The Location

A site must be chosen for the Center that will best serve the most number of people.

#### The Components

The following is a list of components that would properly be the Lowell Hebrew Community center: (present numbers)

Conservative Synagogue or Temple  
100 in attendance each Friday evening  
15 in attendance each morning but Friday  
300 in attendance for High Holydays

Rabbis Study or Residence

Hebrew School  
10 classes  
20 per class  
2 teachers

Bar Mitzvah Club  
Those children recently confirmed meet with Rabbi  
for discussion

#### Organizations

Lowell Hebrew Community Center, Inc.  
144 Members; growing  
70 at quarterly meetings  
This organization is in general charge of the  
building and is the general clearing agency for  
all activity.

Forum  
Discussion group with guest speaker  
200 at least quarterly

B'nai Brith (Men)  
140 Members; growing  
40 at monthly meetings

Mogan David (Men)  
90 Members; growing  
60 at weekly meetings

Aleph Zadig Aleph (Boys)  
25 Members  
20 at weekly meetings

Boy Scouts of America  
18 Members at each weekly meeting

Beth-El Boys  
20 Members at weekly meetings

Senior Hadassah and Sisterhood of Temple Beth-El  
170 Members; growing  
90 at monthly meetings

Business and Professional Women  
24 at monthly meetings; growing

Junior Hadassah  
30 members  
20 at monthly meetings

Hadassah Buds  
20 members  
13 at weekly meetings

Girl Scouts of America  
22 members at weekly meetings (growing)

Jewish War Veterans  
35 Members  
18 at weekly meetings

Community Center Players  
30 Members; growing  
14 at weekly meetings

#### Aid Societies

Israel Brotherhood Society of Lowell  
250 Members; growing  
100 at quarterly meetings  
50 at monthly meetings

Merrimack Lodge, Ind. Order B'rith Abraham  
90 Members; decreasing  
10 at monthly meetings

The Ladies Gomelos Chasodem Assn.  
125 Members; growing  
50 at monthly meetings

Ladies Helping Hand Society  
150 Members  
50 at monthly meetings

Arbeitering or Workman's Circle  
45 Members  
25 at bi-monthly meetings

#### General Activities

Library  
small with only Jewish works

Banquet Hall  
attendant facilities

Auditorium with Stage

Dance Hall

Games

Children's Games

Gymnasium

Men's and Women's lockers, showers, etc.

Handball

Swimming Pool

Baseball

Tennis

outdoor and indoor

Ping Pong

Billiards

Bowling

Card and quiet Game Room

Service

Storage

Heating and Ventilating

Janitors Quarters

Conclusion

This program is merely temporary, to be used only as a place of departure, and is subject to such changes as seem advisable after further study.

In the 'approach to the problem' in the Program, is the statement that the Jewish population of Lowell has three Synagogues to serve its religious needs. This statement to the uninitiated means little. It does not preclude, to him, the idea of these three sub-groups from joining in common activity. Here, he is misled. Fortunately, this is not a characteristic of Jewery as a group but is peculiar to the Jewish population of Lowell.

There is a distinct disunion between the Orthodox and the Conservative Synagogues. It is believed by the people of the Two Orthodox Synagogues that the members of the Conservative, despite its name, are wanderers from the fold of Orthodoxy. There is no love of the Older Synagogue for the newer. To the Orthodox person each one outside his fold is a non-Jew. Although he is taught toleration from childhood, to any who believe the supremacy of a one God, he feels a coldness towards any who cannot see the shining light of Orthodox Judaism.

This religious difference, which has no need for explanation here, is not the sole reason for a disunion of social activity.

In Lowell, the members of the Orthodox synagogues are first generation Americans. These patriarchs still converse mostly in the language of the 'old country' and their entire activity is centered about their God. These people are completely Orthodox, with no exception. They

retain many of the customs and prejudices of their parent country and in these actions they can accept no change. (Nor do any who know the simplicity and honesty of these old people want a change.) It is unfortunate, but true, that this group has been less successful financially.

In contrast, members of the Conservative Synagogue are as completely Americanized as their home life allows. This group is made up mostly of the children of an Orthodox group and, to a lesser extent, of some first generation Americans who felt the need of a less stringent church. It is this Conservative Synagogue that claims the greatest number of the Jewish population. It is this group too, that has the greatest number of affluent business and professional men, their wives and children. This grouping is not a rule of Judaism but is just an accident peculiar to Lowell.

So we can see that the major differences are not religious, which are not so great, but are social and economic.

Unfortunately, the differences are irreparable. Despite the fact that there is no antagonism between the two groups, each goes his separate way without the other. The Orthodox thinks the Conservative a stranger; the home of the Conservative is too lavish for the Orthodox; the Temple of the Conservative is too impressive for the



Orthodox; to the Conservative, the Orthodox is backwards and consequently is left out of the Conservative social functions.

In short, there has arisen a class difference in the midst of the Jewish population of Lowell.

To prove this rule there are exceptions. Many Orthodox people become members of the social orders of the Conservative group and the children who retain Orthodoxy are more friendly than their parents with the Conservative group.

What facts we gain, pertinent to this thesis, from these questions, are that the social attachments to each Synagogue must remain distinct and separate. And we can expect no change in this until the two groups become one.

This gives rise to the question of which group is to be served by the proposed building. As is stated above, the Conservative Synagogue has the more wealthy congregation. It too, is more inclined to be socially active, as the number of organizations will testify. Hence, this thesis will deal with the Conservative Synagogue and its attendant activities.

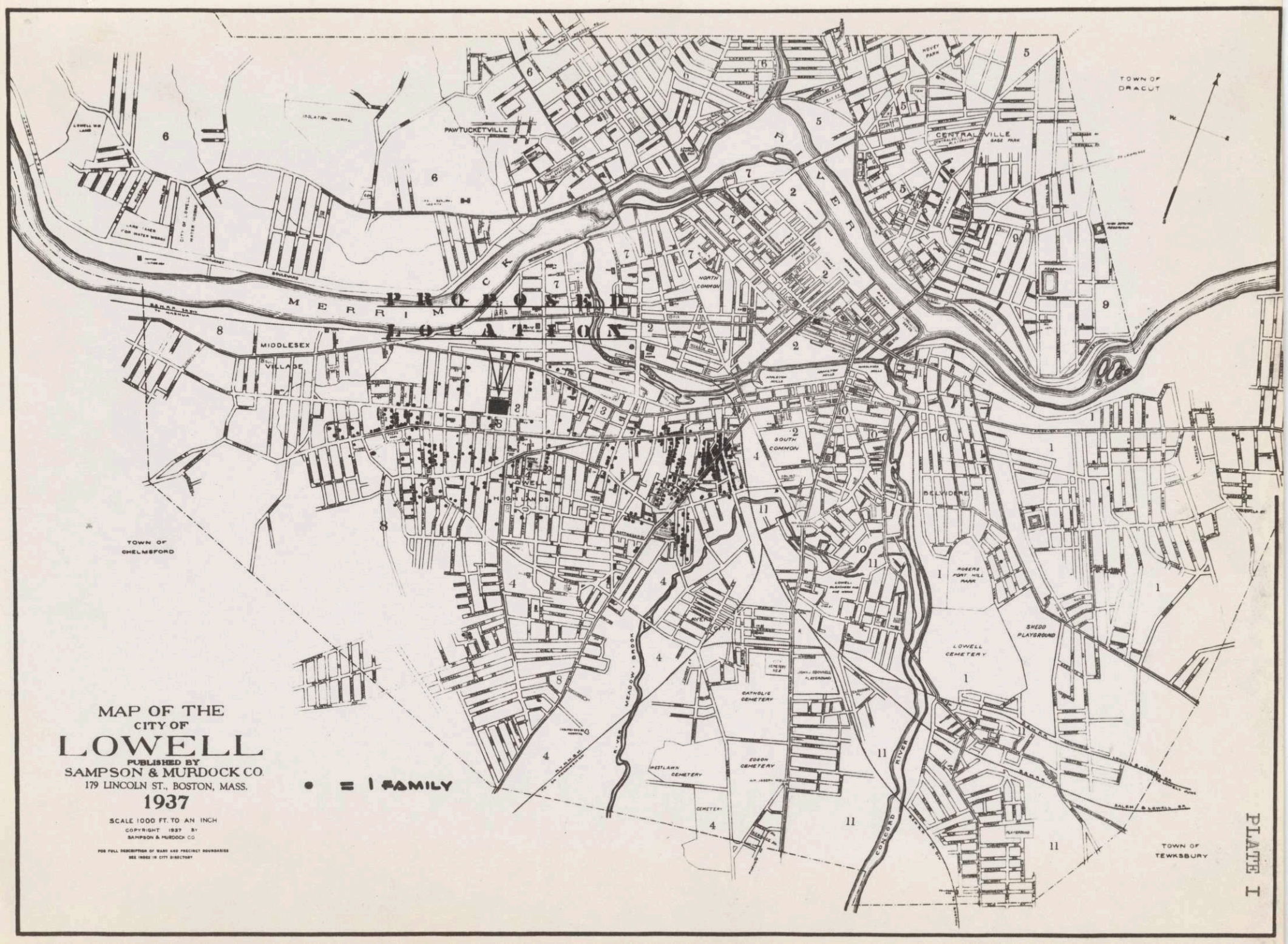
Thus the program must be changed to omit the "Aid Societies" and five (5) of the Hebrew School classes which belong to the Orthodox group. There then remain the components which rightly belong in the "Hebrew Community Center for Lowell".

MAP OF THE  
CITY OF  
**LOWELL**  
PUBLISHED BY  
SAMPSON & MURDOCK CO.  
179 LINCOLN ST., BOSTON, MASS.  
1937

SCALE 1000 FT. TO AN INCH  
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FOR FULL DESCRIPTION OF WARD AND PRECINCT BOUNDARIES  
SEE INDEX IN CITY DIRECTORY

• = 1 FAMILY



LOCATION

Once the choice has been made as to the groups to be served, it is the next problem to find a site that is convenient for all those concerned.

Unfortunately there is no agency now in Lowell or Boston, that has the accurate listing of the number and location of Jewish families in the City of Lowell.

Hence, it fell in the province of this thesis to make a listing of that nature so that a proper site might be chosen. It was necessary to obtain the names of the members of the various organizations in the city, each from the separate organization, and to supplant this list with personal acquaintances. This information was then transferred to a map of the city of Lowell, and the result is an estimation of the distribution of the Jewish population. Needless to say, this list is not all inclusive but it is as comprehensive as it can possibly be without the benefit of a house-to-house canvass of the entire city.

This map shows that the heaviest distribution of population occurs about Chelmsford Street, between Liberty and Westford Streets. It is this heavy mass of population that coincides with the majority of people who attend the Orthodox Synagogue. However, despite the fact that this area has relatively more people in it, this group does not comprise the majority of the Jewish population.

It is also a recognized fact that the tendency is for these people to move out of this district, called the Lower Highlands, when conditions allow, into the Highlands proper. There are many small grocery and bakery shops in the immediate vicinity and the buildings, in general, are of the poorer grade.

As the map indicates, there is no other district predominantly Jewish. The rest of the population of the Hebrew Community is scattered in the part of Lowell called the Highlands. It is this widely distributed population that must be served by the proposed building. Up to this point there has been no indication that there will be a concentrated Jewish Community in the Highlands region. When the people from the Lower Highlands move into the Highlands there has been no favored location for settlement.

It is, then, the problem to locate the Center for a group that has no apparent focus. It must be remembered that the distance of the Lower Highlands to the present Community Center is not so great that it cannot be walked in less than thirty minutes. Therefore, there is no location in the district to be served that is at too great a distance from the mass of population.

Availability, size and orientation would then seem to be the determining factors in the choice of a lot. For these reasons it was deemed advisable to choose the lot on which

the present Center is located. This lot is owned by the present Hebrew Center Corporation and there would be no difficulty in having this land turned over to the use of a new Center.

Princeton Street, the principal roadway, is on the south side of the lot and is level. It is bordered on the other three sides by Harvard Street for a distance of 295 feet, Nicolette Street, 463 feet and Stevens Street, 295 feet. There is the present Community Center located on the part of the lot adjacent to Harvard Street going for a distance of 298 feet towards Stevens Street. On the remaining 165 feet of the land is a residence, of no great value. Since this whole parcel of land is the property of the Community Center Corporation there would be no trouble in claiming the entire land for the proposed building.

It was impossible to find the exact contours of the land without employing a new survey. The nearest figures that can be used with any confidence are those of the City of Lowell, Engineer's office. They state that the level of Princeton Street is 19 feet above the level of Nicolette Street. There is, however, a slight embankment at the Nicolette Street side of the lot. In addition to this, there has been grading done about the present buildings, so that in the proposed building we will assume that grading will have to be done over almost the entire lot.

There has been no attempt at a proper landscaping of the existing two buildings so that there are no trees on the

property that are worth saving. Hence, the planning of the proposed center must start with the barest essentials.

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Union of Religious and Social Functions

Jewish Communal life has always been based on Religious existence. As long as persecutions and memories of past persecutions remain, the Jewish people will have their entire social structure built about the Synagogue. Much suffering has made these people cling to themselves and the natural place for any such contact has been the Synagogue. The church fosters social life and is integrally related with it. There are extremely few examples of Hebrew Religious buildings standing apart from the housing of its social activity. In Boston can be seen many examples of this close union of the two functions.

Hence, as incongruous as it may first seem, there is justification in combining other activity with the Synagogue. Quoting from Uriah Zevi Engleman, writing on "The Jewish Synagogue in the U. S." in the American Journal of Sociology for July, 1935, "-----Communal worship was not only a religious but a social function. It was the sine qua non of Jewish existance."

This easy union of the two functions is not mere theory. The Synagogue asks no great sacrifices of its offspring. It asks only that its Holydays be kept sacred. There has never been any demand for a complete abstinence from social contacts. On the contrary, the organizations flourish with the blessing and material support of the Synagogue.

## The Rabbi

Since the religious and the social function in harmony, it is the Rabbi who emerges as leader of the Community. His position as leader of the religious life of the community has been so made by the community itself. This position establishes the Rabbi as a man of wisdom and good counsel, and as a man who is well versed in the history of the people he is to guide. He has been to a school to prepare himself for his position to which he is to devote his entire life. In the Jewish community, the Rabbi is respected for his knowledge of all things and as such he may equally well be the leader of a social group as of a religious group. The Rabbi has never been believed to hold a position closer to God than his flock, and so he is not forced to preserve an aloof dignity away from all worldly objects.

Since there is no higher clerical force than the Rabbi, and there is no Rabbinical governing body, it may be said that the Rabbi represents more the opinion of his congregation than the congregation the opinion of a united Rabbinate. In fact, the term Rabbi is one of respect and may be endowed upon any chosen leader of a Jewish group, whether trained at a rabbinical school or not.

All these points must be reflected in the space and position given to the Rabbi in the plan of the Center. He must be close to his Synagogue, physically as well as



spiritually. His position with his congregation must be one inviting frequent contact. He is one of the community.

### The Synagogue

What is the Synagogue in Jewish life? Is it the earthly residence of God or is it a shelter for the worship of God? Are there parts of the Synagogue that are more sacred than others? Is there anything in the Jewish Faith that makes any physical requirements of the Synagogue? These questions are the ones that arise with any problem dealing with the Jewish Religious Building. A simple answer to them is that there is no article in any Holy Book stating that there are certain correct ways to construct a temple of worship. With this statement is answered the problem of what type of building the Synagogue must be. It is merely a comfortable quiet place in which the people may come to worship their God in unison.

There are, however, many customs and traditions that have been handed down through the generations, and it is usually the wish of the Rabbi and the community to have these folkways continued. Certain communities may differ from the general in their ideas on this subject and it is the wish of the people for whom the Synagogue is being built that determines the type of building it is to be.

It is, for example, usual to have the Synagogue face east. That is, the congregation should face east, the

direction of Palestine, homeland of Israel. Now, should the congregation be geographically located so that it would be foolish to face east, there is no ruling that states that the Temple cannot face west. Many Hebrew Temples face in the general direction of east but due to the conditions of the lot face more to the south or north.

Among other things that are left to the discretion of the community is the matter of lighting, seating, position of the platform with the Arc containing the Scroll. Even the matter of the perpetual light, that many believe to be essential, is a matter for the group to decide.

It is not hard to understand that there should be a unity of expression between the architecture and the tone of the religious service. The service is a simple one, in the Conservative Synagogue. There is hardly any ritual, what there is being reserved for the High Holydays. The entire service is made up of readings and responses, with a sermon at the end of the service. The ancient scroll work and the rich brocades of the ancient Orthodox Synagogues may be recalled, but it is entirely fitting that the general aspect of the architecture be as simple as the service to take place within it.

Misguided congregations in the past have decided on the oriental touch to the Temple, thinking to instill character into their building. This thought is wholly out

of keeping with the spirit of the Conservative ideal. This ideal of freeing an ancient tradition of its useless encumbrances and making it more attractive to the majority of people is far from the notion of oriental domes. If it were a choice between two extremes, the simple six sided rectangle would be preferable to the gaudy multi-angled and domed confection.

It is pleasant to encounter a belief such as the Conservative faith after seeing so much of blind following of dogmas. We who have been raised as Americans should fully appreciate this belief that right lies in the heart and soul and not in a prayer book. Who can claim to be mortal man to write a book telling the rest of us mortals what will take our souls to heaven and what will condemn them to the eternal pit! As a radio speaker nicely phrases it "let each to his own heart be true, and it follows as the night the day that he can<sup>then</sup> be false to no other man".

Just so, who can claim to be mortal man to dictate the architectural "style" of a building? There has been enough of dogmatic misleading in architecture. That this discourse be not mistaken for a "too-late Sullivan-ism" let it be said it is equally true that there has been too much modernistic in architecture and not enough modern. This project offers an opportunity to study a modern approach as no other project might. Here we have all the essentials for a fine example of truly modern. There is tradition, with which is mingled a spirit of freedom;

there is age along with youth and there is tested beauty alongside the adolescent freshness of the untried. That is the Synagogue. May it also be the architecture!

### The Organizations

It was during the middle of 1920 that the Jewish men of Lowell felt the need of an organization so strongly that they instituted a chapter of the Independent Order B'nai B'rith. The object of this order, as taken from its handbook, is as follows: "The Independent Order B'nai B'rith has taken upon itself the mission of uniting Israelites in the work of promoting their highest interests and those of humanity; of developing and elevating the mental and moral character of the people of our faith; of inculcating the purest principals of philanthropy, honor and patriotism; of supporting science and art; alleviating the wants of the poor and needy; visiting and attending the sick; coming to the rescue of victims of persecution; providing for, protecting and assisting the widow and orphan".

From this organization grew, in 1926, the desire to have a building to house its religious and social needs. In due time, an unused clubhouse was purchased and from that time onward, there has been an increasing interest in Jewish affairs in the city. To administer this new building and its attendant responsibilities "The Lowell Hebrew Center, Inc." was formed. It has since flourished and functioned as the clearing house for all Jewish activity

in Lowell. It has been parent to every fine ideal in Jewish communal life. Within its walls it has seen rise orders of national and international groups as well as independant organizations, so that now there is no age group that is without its own organization.

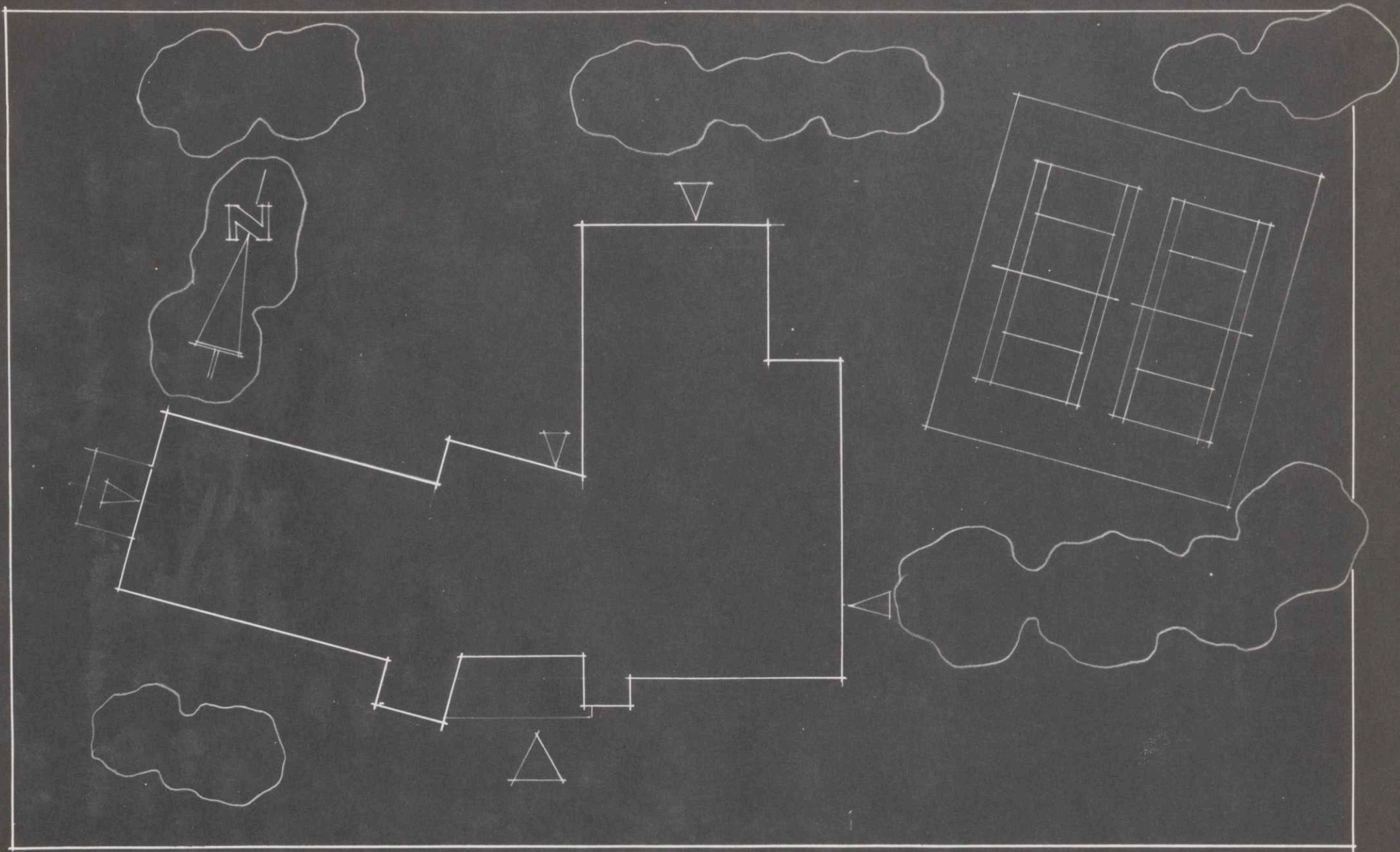
It is in these many organizations that the Jewish people of Lowell find the expression of their ideals. Not only is each adult order within the Community Center helping to support at least one charity, but each has native activity to educate and amuse its members. To raise funds, over the sum obtained by due taxation, there are several social functions conducted each year. These usually take the form of a theatrical production, a dance or a card party. In spite of the fact that there have been many such affairs each year, there has never been a lack of interest in them. The knowledge that the funds raised by such action is going to a desirable cause, and not to some selfish aim, has kept the spirit of cooperation alive.

Members of these organizations gather together, as a group, frequently, to discuss matters of policy and to hear speakers of national repute. These meetings often last between one and two hours, after which refreshments are served. It is then not uncommon for the group to adjourn to the basement for bowling, table tennis or billiards. Others prefer companionship around a table of cards after the meeting has been dismissed. From Monday to Friday evening at sun-down, there is hardly a moment when the

building is not in use by some group.

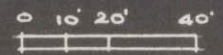
#### Athletics

There has been felt a need for athletic equipment for a long time. Unfortunately, the present building offers no opportunity for basket ball or even gymnasium activity. With the creation of such equipment there would be at least four men's groups eager for its use, and many of the women would want at least one day set aside for them to make use of such equipment. With a place to practice near at hand, the Mogan David Men's Club would be able to add to its fine collection of trophies. Then too, with a place large enough for basket ball games, the Boy and Girl Scout troupes would have a place for the practice of marching maneuvers, under the direction of the War Veterans.



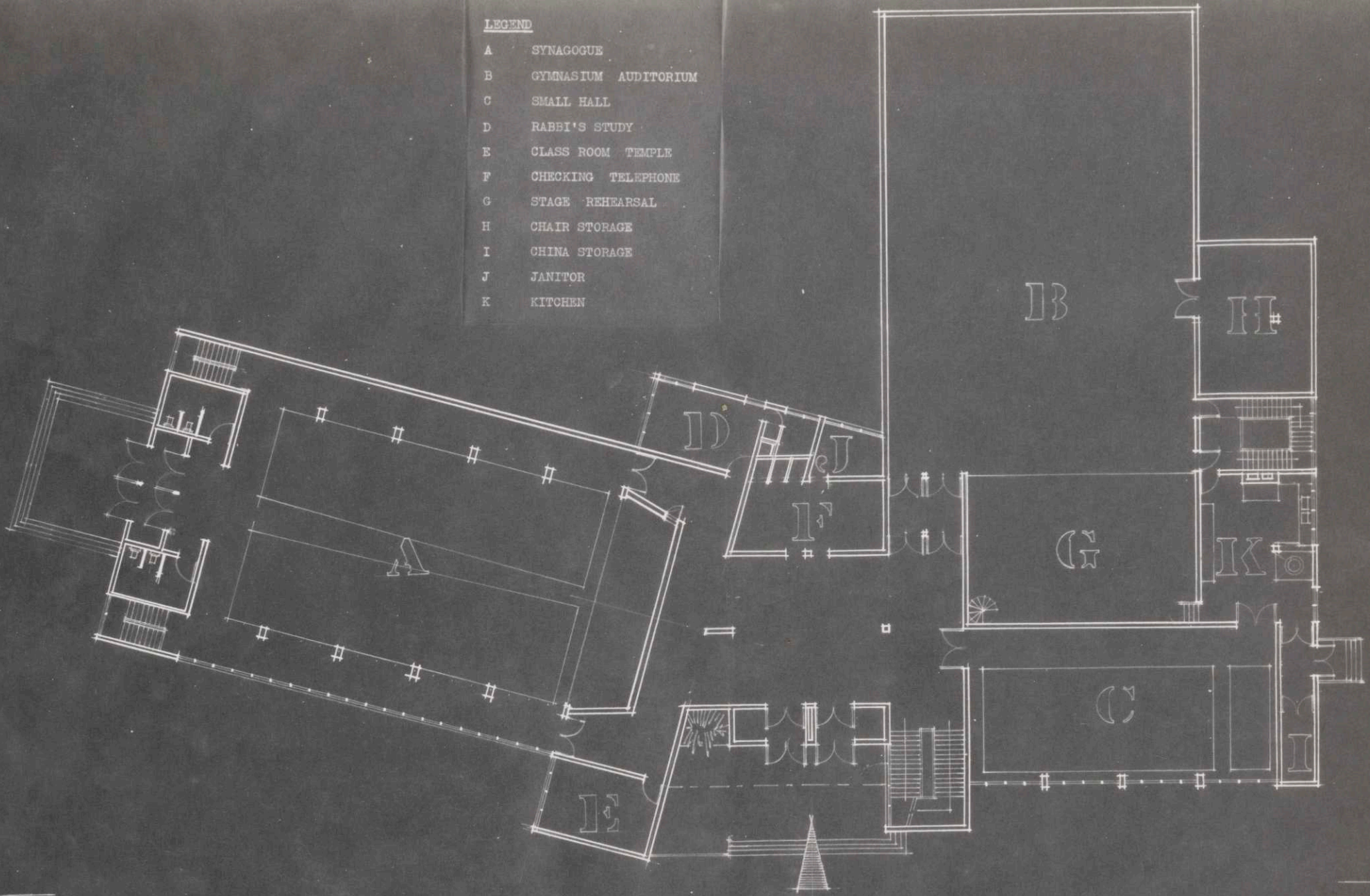
**PRINCETON STREET**

**SCALE**

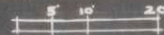


LEGEND

- A SYNAGOGUE
- B GYMNASIUM AUDITORIUM
- C SMALL HALL
- D RABBI'S STUDY
- E CLASS ROOM TEMPLE
- F CHECKING TELEPHONE
- G STAGE REHEARSAL
- H CHAIR STORAGE
- I CHINA STORAGE
- J JANITOR
- K KITCHEN



1ST FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE





THE PROPOSED SOLUTION  
to May 10, 1938

The Synagogue

Just as the daily life of the Jewish people is built around the Synagogue, so here the entire plan of the proposed building is dependent on the synagogue. Since it has been the wish of the congregation to have the Synagogue face as near east as conditions will allow, it has been decided to fix this position as a basis for the entire building. With the congregation facing due east, and the platform with the Arc on the eastern end of the Synagogue room there were only two possible means of entering the Synagogue in this problem. The entrance to this room must perforce be either at the back of the room or on either side of the platform.

As in the comic strips, the Conservative Synagogue has "Sunday church goers and Monday sinners". The number of people who attend the weekly Friday evening service is fairly constant, remaining at about one hundred. To the daily morning service there come only approximately fifteen people. It is the High Holydays that claim the largest congregation. To these services come approximately four hundred people. It is a great problem to create a room that will be pleasant for all three of these groups. There must be no crowding during the High Holydays since it is at this time that the greatest revenue to the Synagogue is obtained. Before these days there is a tradition-

al sale of seats, and no Jewish family will go without purchasing at least one seat. This group that contributes about fifty per cent of the Synagogue revenue cannot be slighted even though they use the building only on these three important days a year.

It is also imperative that the regular weekly and daily congregation be given a pleasant place in which to worship. Yet how can all these three groups be satisfied in one room?

These considerations made the solution of the problem a difficult task. In spite of the apparent simplicity of the plans, it was no small matter to obtain the proper solution to this question. It was finally decided to use the scheme that had the entrance to the Synagogue, from the main lobby, alongside the platform. In this manner, the seats nearest the platform will be filled first and there will not be created the vacant feeling that empty front seats give. The principal floor will seat three hundred, caring for any Friday attendance. To care for the additional people to come during the Holydays there will be a balcony with seats for approximately one hundred. During these days, the rear entrance will be in use.

In order that such a large room need not be fully heated and ventilated each day in the week to care for just a group of fifteen people, there was created a special small Temple to be used by this morning congregation.

Would it not be possible to use this small Temple as a school room? It was later found that a room to be used by the Hebrew School classes would be extraneous. Since the two different uses to which it might be put come at different times in the day it is possible to use one room for the two functions. The Synagogue has no objection to a Temple room being used as a class room since it is itself fostering the school movement. It is true that the two go hand in hand towards the same goal.

The Rabbi finds his study off the circulation space used by both the Synagogue and the school Temple. Here he is close to his religious duties and is yet not too far removed from the other functions of the building to prevent contact with them. His office-study is ample, and yet it is not so pretentious that it is out of keeping with the general tone of the entire community. It was deemed proper to place this important office away from the street, so that the Rabbi, who makes this place his working hour home, will not be disturbed by the usual street noises.

In order to reach the final position of the Rabbi's Room it was difficult to affect a compromise amongst the elements of proper natural light, avoidance of street noises and good relationship to the other parts of the building. Weighing these elements finally brought the position of the Rabbi's office to its present location, receiving west light, having no noise from the street and being in contact with the rest of the building.

There was never any question about the placing of this group of elements, listed under Synagogue, on any other level but the level of the first floor from Princeton Street. It is too important a group of functions to be relegated to any other, a secondary floor. In addition, there are old people who will use this group and their comforts must be secured.

It would be pleasant to have stained glass in the windows of the south side of the Synagogue although there could be no animal representation in the design of this glass because of definite Hebrew laws forbidding such representation. Yet since most of the services are in the evening, it might be futile to have such an expense with so few people enjoying the benefits derived therefrom. However, in the summer months, when the sun is still up at a late hour, there would be reason enough to have stained glass. Then, too, the High Holyday services are during the day and what beautiful glass there is could well be appreciated. Hence, it was decided to employ stained glass with no pictorial effect, merely for a color interest. With this glass would be used a system of outside lighting so that even in the usual evening Friday service the result would be almost as good as by daylight.

The only other pieces of pure decoration will be on the Arc itself and in a tapestry hanging in back of it.

There will be separate heating and ventilating equipment

for this group, so that it will not be essential to heat the unused portions on Friday evenings. In addition, the system servicing the rest of the building will be connected with the circulation space directly in the rear of the platform, with the Rabbi's study and with the class room Temple.

#### The Auditorium-Gymnasium

When the program was being written it was intended to include all the functions needed for the Community Center, and not necessarily the rooms. Early studies attempted to incorporate a separate gymnasium apart from an auditorium in the layout. It was soon realized, however, that to have both was a useless duplication of space. With little effort a schedule could be devised whereby there would be no conflict between the two uses to which this hall is to be put.

One of the first objections to the use of a gymnasium as a hall to be used for dances, theatricals and large banquets was that lockers, needed in connection with the gymnasium, would not be pleasant in contact with the other functions. No matter how well the hall were air conditioned there would still remain that unpleasant "locker room odor". To meet this phase of the problem, lockers for both men and women were placed on the level lower than the main hall. In this manner two problems were solved at once, for this also gave the opportunity to

use the lockers in connection with outdoor tennis courts, and any other outdoor games. Thus, with merely the removal of the athletic equipment from the floor, and the spreading of a carpet before placing movable chairs, the hall is transformed from a gymnasium into a theater or a lecture hall.

Space is provided for the storage of one thousand chairs, adjacent to the main floor. In this space rugs could be kept out of danger when not in use. When the hall changed functions and when the athletic equipment was not in use it too would be put away in this storage space.

In the past few years the Jewish community has kept pace with the growth of the little theater movement. The size of the present theater group is deceptive, for when calls are issued for participants in the several large musical productions a year there is evidenced a tremendous interest. With the inclusion of a large stage, any size production could be accommodated and the community would not be forced to take its presentation outside its own building. For the service of the stage, and above it, will be found two dressing rooms with plenty of wash basins.

Each organization has at least one large banquet a year, at which time they inaugurate officers. To cope with this it is wise to have a large room where a caterer may prepare food to be served. In the past it has been the custom for the caterer to cook the food at his own

establishment and to then bring it to the center for rewarming, preparatory to serving. As part of his contract he usually supplies the tables or table arrangements, hence it is not necessary to supply a table storage. The food preparation room is ample for even the largest of banquets and is still of a size that does not make a small tea service inconvenient.

#### The Small Hall

To complete the first floor, there is a small hall that may be used for meetings, small banquets and dances.

The kitchen for the large hall is so placed that it serves the small hall too, without any discomfort. To serve as a meeting room is the principal function of this small hall but it may equally well be used as a lounge when there are no meetings in progress. During dances in the large hall, this hall would be well used as a lounge. Lighting on the south side makes it an ideal room for afternoon use when the women's organizations would enjoy this room for teas or afternoon musicals.

#### The Organizations

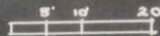
On the second floor are the offices of the organizations. Since these rooms are not used by the community as a whole but are merely for the use of the officers and committees of the organizations they are placed out of the

LEGEND

- A LIBRARY
- B B'NAI BRITH COMMUNITY CENTER INC.
- C WAR VETERANS DRAMA GROUP
- D MOGAN DAVID JUNIOR HADASSAH
- E SENIOR HADASSAH BUSINESS WOMEN
- F A.Z.A. HADASSAH BUDS
- G BOY AND GIRL SCOUTS
- H WOMEN'S TOILET
- I MEN'S TOILET
- J JANITOR



2ND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE





way of people who are to use other parts of the building. In these offices will be found files and desks at which the officers will formulate the ideas for the organizations.

Most of the members of the various organizations are employed during the day so that there is no question as to which offices should receive the better positions. It was therefore decided to place the Boy and Girl Scout rooms, the A.Z.A. and Hadassah Buds, and the Senior Hadassah and Business Women's Club on the south side of the building where they can get the afternoon sun. The others are placed on the north side; since these offices are to be used in the evenings only.

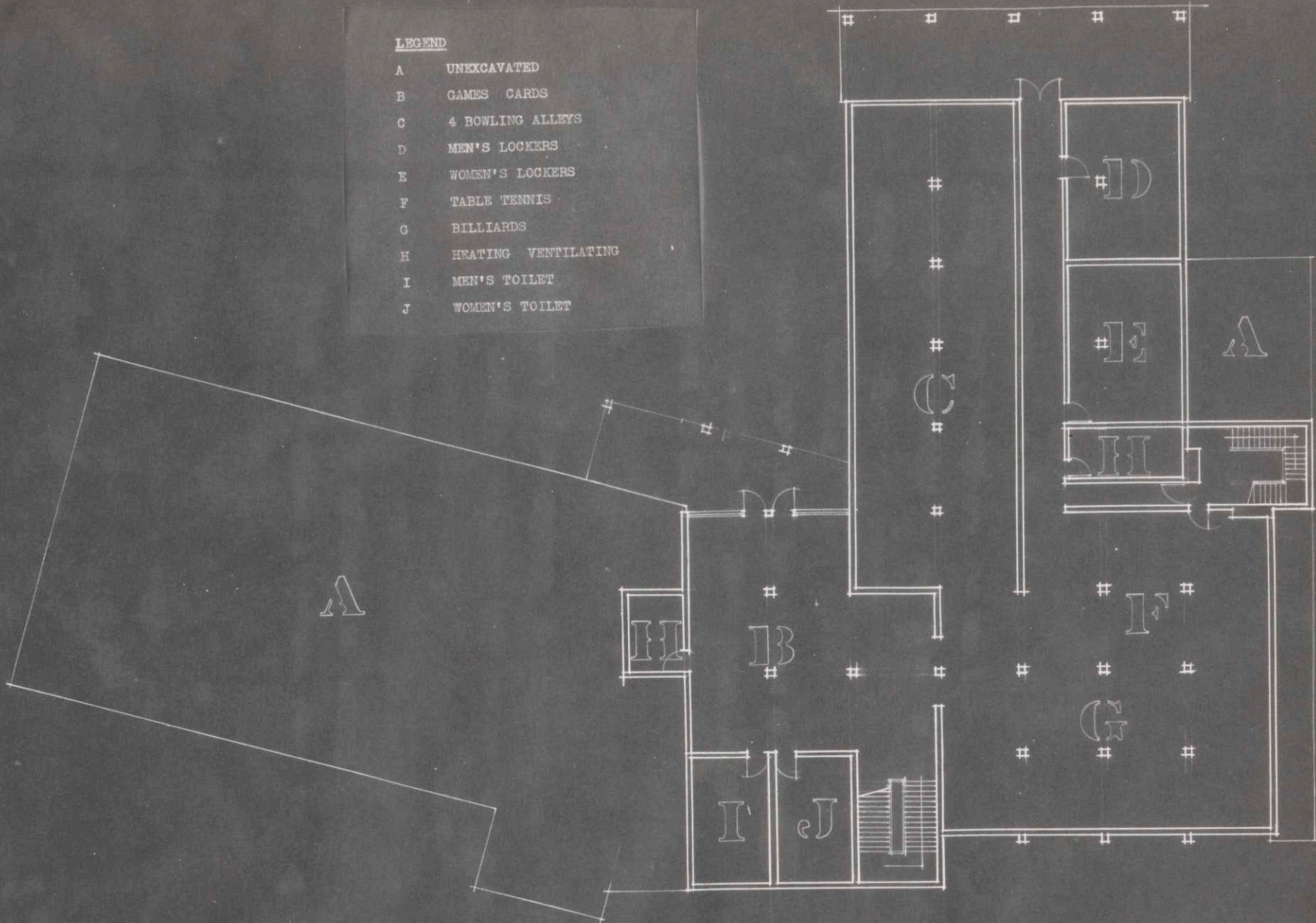
#### The Library

There has been a sad neglect, in the past, of a Jewish library in Lowell. The many fine volumes in the possession of the Community Center have been placed in shelves in a haphazard collection where they have not even been catalogued. In order to stimulate an interest in Jewish works it was decided to create a library, where the general public would be allowed to read at any time. There would be no librarian or caretaker of any sort but a library committee of the Community Center would care for the catalog at intervals, and would arrange for the purchase of new books as well as receive contributions of old books.

To make sure that there is a definite interest aroused,

LEGEND

- A UNEXCAVATED
- B GAMES CARDS
- C 4 BOWLING ALLEYS
- D MEN'S LOCKERS
- E WOMEN'S LOCKERS
- F TABLE TENNIS
- G BILLIARDS
- H HEATING VENTILATING
- I MEN'S TOILET
- J WOMEN'S TOILET



**BASEMENT PLAN**  
**SCALE** 5' 10' 20'

the library has the best position on the second floor. Receiving the best light and being the most easily accessible of any of the rooms on that floor it is in a position to be overlooked by no one. Since the collection of books is at present small, the cases for books would be around the walls in an informal manner, conducive to study for all. With an unencumbered floor area this room will also be used as a meeting hall. The organizations will profit from this contact with the library and a desire to use the library will be stimulated.

#### Games

Out of the main circulation, but not inaccessible are the game rooms in the basement. Four bowling alleys, table tennis and billiards are together in a sound-proofed group. The problem of natural light is again reduced since the people using these facilities, with some few exceptions, will do so only in the evening.

A card lounge may be used for children's games should there be occasion for such use. At the rear of this lounge is an exit to the playing fields so that its use by children will be pleasant. Noise and other interference with adult activity is reduced to a minimum by its position in the basement.

In control of all these basement activities will be the janitor. He will have a central location so that he may best administer his duties of control. At his desk the

users of the games will pay the slight charge collected for the upkeep of the equipment, as well as purchase candy and tonics.

### The Swimming Pool

When the problem was being studied in its early stages, it was thought advisable to include a swimming pool. In the city of Lowell there is but one pool, and that located at the Young Men's Christian Association in the business district. It was believed that a regulation sized swimming pool would be a useful addition to the Community Center, and would be used by the entire Highlands district as well as by the Jewish community. There is still no doubt about its usefulness, but its impracticability is now clear. There would not be enough people using the pool to pay for just its upkeep, even should the initial cost be borne by the Community Center. Furthermore, there would be a reticence about non-Jewish people using facilities in a Jewish Center that would restrict the pool to use only by members of the Jewish community. And with this the fact, it would be too great a tax on the Center members to have to sustain it all alone. Once this is understood it is easy to see that a pool is out of the scale of a project of this size.

### Building Materials

It is unfortunate that this thesis can go into the problem of materials no more fully than it has. The dependance of

material and design on each other is recognized. There is a definite correlation between the two that must be studied if good architecture is to result. Yet such knowledge as this is gained only through experience in practice. What can be used in this case must be only the word of others, more experienced.

To create a uniformity of expression, the entire building is laid out on a sixteen foot framing unit of steel. The figure sixteen was chosen as the one most adaptable to this particular problem, and one that would be economical. Concrete is used for floor slabs that connect the whole system into a unit.

The exterior walls will be faced with field stone, and with granite that is native to the region. It was first thought to continue the granite as an interior material, but a fuller appreciation of the scale of this project showed that wood and plaster are more in keeping with the general theme.

A more detailed evaluation of materials than this is now impossible.

## SUMMATION

Although this problem has dealt with units no larger than the school problems of the past year it has been felt that much has been gained from it because of its personal nature. It has never, in any of its stages been an attempt to incorporate all that has been learned over the period of five years. And yet it was keenly felt that a satisfactory solution to this problem could not have been accomplished without that training.

It is believed that the solution is an honest one. There has been no tampering with actual conditions to obtain a "pretty" solution. What is to be found in the plans should be incorporated into such a building, and what has been omitted was believed to be useless.

The form attempts to follow the function as closely as possible and there is nothing in the building that is merely for affect. Functions flow freely into each other and in no one place is there anything forced. Were the proposed Center ever constructed to these plans it is believed there would be an entirely satisfactory solution to this problem.

The writer can only wish, in conclusion, that this thesis form a satisfactory culmination to his work of the past five years.

March 22d, 1938

Mr. Eugene B. Weisberg  
M. I. T.

Dear Weisberg:

I am glad to acknowledge the receipt of your outline of the 17th instant, giving conditions that affect the program for your Thesis problem of "A Hebrew Community Center for Lowell, Massachusetts".

Your study will have to be largely given to deciding upon the relation between the different elements to be included and the relative amount of space devoted to each, and the counter-balance of all, in such a manner as to bring your building within a reasonable cost limit.

Sincerely yours,

s/ William Emerson

William Emerson, Dean  
School of Architecture

WE/h

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This being an unusual problem, there were few documents that could be consulted with any concrete gain. However, each of the following has been of some use to me, either as direct reference or as inspiration.

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