

PROGRESS
THROUGH
EXPANSION

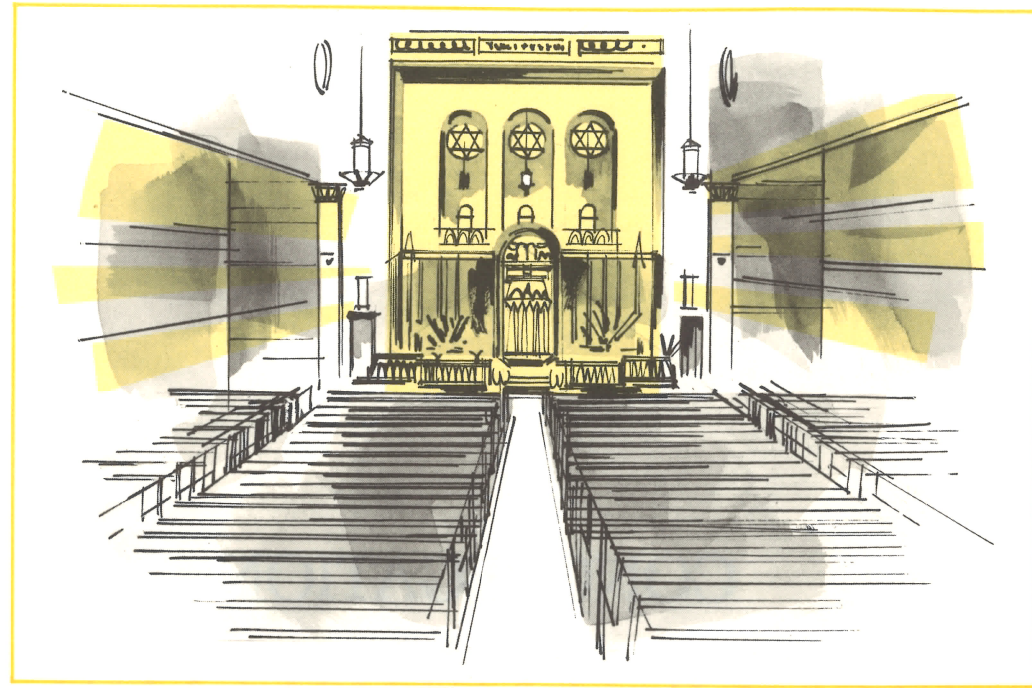


CONGREGATION
SHAAR HASHOMAYIM

Building Extension
Campaign

June 8-28, 1965

Objective: \$ 1,873,950



1. Main Synagogue

History repeats itself.

In the beginning, there was an ambition for progress, a desire for a house of worship uniquely theirs, a need for a home of their own.

The forerunners of Shaar Hashomayim chose well the verse: "This is none other than a House of God and this is the Gate of Heaven" for both the motto and the name of their Synagogue. (see illustration 15)

Then, as now, there was the conviction that the Synagogue must be a home. A home with its connotations of family life, of love and fellowship.

A home as a gate to a fuller and richer view of the world and humanity. A home indicating the presence of God.

This was the need which inspired a small group of Jewish families to found a Congregation of their own in a small rented room on Great St. James Street and St. Gabriel Street. The year was 1846, one hundred and nineteen years ago.

The same restless seeking for progress impelled them to build their own Synagogue twelve years later. Their dream was fulfilled in "a very handsome brick building of spacious



3. New Chapel

size capable of seating 150 gentlemen, with a front gallery for 50 ladies."

On July 12, 1859 the cornerstone was laid at 41 St. Constant Street. They used the historic trowel which will be displayed in a place of honour in the new Museum. (See illustration 2)

At last, their own House of God. A home of their own.

These builders, men and women of vision, were the forerunners of Shaar Hashomayim. As today, many were men of culture, refinement and enterprise. They participated actively in their Synagogue, their community and

the affairs of their country. They also respected the traditions of their past.

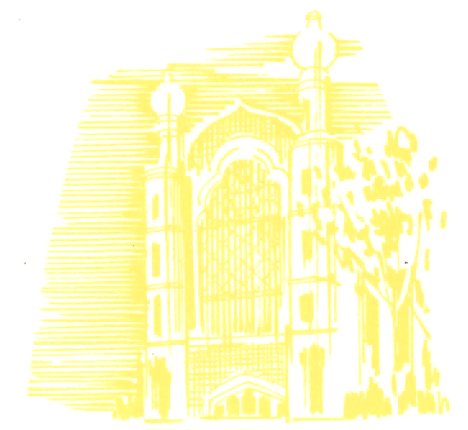
They had founded the first Ashkenazic house of worship in British North America.

With the passage of time, the Congregation outgrew its quarters. The location had also ceased to be central. The population had moved westward with the expansion of the city. By 1885, the Jewish population had risen to almost 5,000.

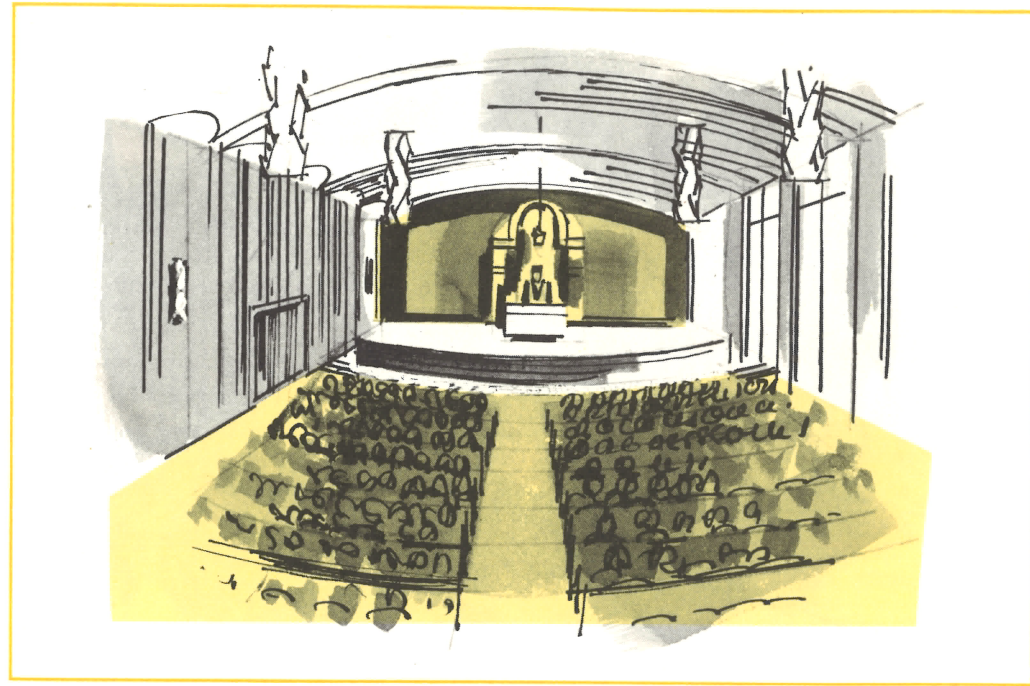
Progress again. The need for further growth to maintain the spirit of Shaar Hashomayim and its dynamic invol-



2. Trowel, 1859



4. McGill College Synagogue, 1886



5. New Community Hall

vement in the spiritual, educational and social life of its community.

A more suitable home was planned to accommodate all its members. In October of 1885, the cornerstone was laid at a new Synagogue on McGill College Avenue.

September 15, 1886 the new Shaar Hashomayim was consecrated and "dedicated to the worship of God according to orthodox Jewish customs." Again they felt pride in their progress. They claimed that their new Synagogue was the finest in the Dominion. (see illustration 4)

The entire cost of the building and grounds amounted to the princely sum of \$40,000.

A historic photograph was taken in 1890 showing 127 members attending service in the McGill College Synagogue. (see illustration 6) This memorable document will also be displayed in the new Museum.

Time marched on. Shortly after the turn into the 20th century, Dr. Herman Abramowitz became the rabbi of Shaar Hashomayim. In addition to his spiritual leadership, he became the beloved friend of all. His thoughts



7. New Library

synthesized the feelings of the Congregation when he declared: "Our aim is not a Synagogue for the old only, nor the young only, but a family synagogue. It shall make provision and have an attraction for every member of the family."

Thus, there is the continued feeling for progress, for the Synagogue as a home for the family, which pervades the history of Shaar Hashomayim.

In addition to its own work in religion and education, the Congregation supplied leaders and workers to all activities of a philanthropic and

cultural nature both local and national in scope.

The relentless march of progress once again forced a major decision.

By 1920, the Jewish population was close to 60,000.

For the third time in history, Congregation membership had advanced beyond its capacity. There was an increasing need for new space and expanded educational facilities. With their traditional enterprising spirit, the leaders chose to meet the challenge of progress.

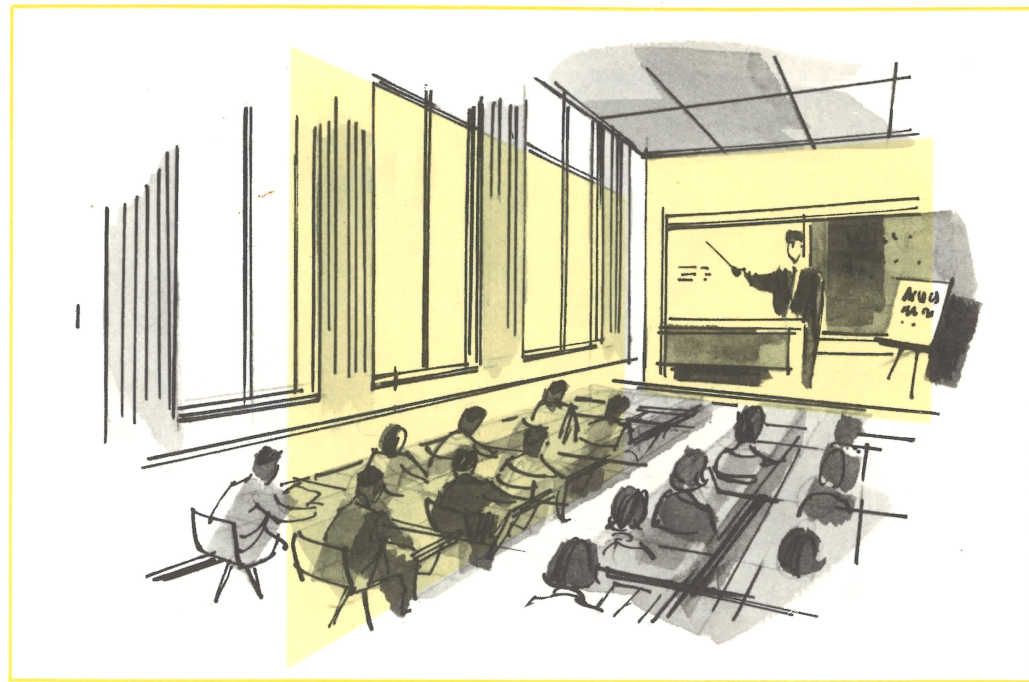
A beautiful plot of land was ob-



6. McGill College Interior, 1890



8. Westmount Synagogue, 1922



9. New Classroom

tained at the corner of Cote St. Antoine Road and Kensington Avenue in Westmount. On November 21, 1921 the cornerstone of the present Synagogue was laid at the new site.

The Westmount Synagogue was an achievement which was the fulfillment of their greatest dreams. It was to house 300 families in its vast and lofty main Synagogue. In addition, there was to be a large Assembly Hall and Chapel plus a dozen school rooms and other much-needed facilities.

It was to be "a structure, cathedral-like in its imposing proportions, and

dominating its immediate surroundings. It would breathe the very life of stateliness and permanence. Built in a grey, vitrified brick and sandstone, it is capped by a series of Moorish cupolas that lend a touch of mystic orientalism to the whole." (see illustration 8)

Over the entrance to the Main Synagogue the verse containing the name and motto of Shaar Hashomayim was engraved in stone for all to see. (see illustration 15)

On September 12, 1922 the new Synagogue was "Dedicated to the worship



11. New Meeting Room

of God and the cause of traditional Judaism." (see illustration 19)

Throughout its lifetime, the history of Shaar Hashomayim was synonymous with the history of Canadian Judaism. Its members continued to be among the leading figures of Jewish life in Canada.

During two World Wars, its young men and women served with distinction in Canada's armed forces. Those who remained at home, served with equal vigour and enterprise in government, industry, education, the professions and community activities.

In 1946, Shaar Hashomayim celebrated its 100th Anniversary. Among the highlights of the Centennial celebrations were Re-dedication ceremonies and a turning of the sod for a modern new building designed for the education of the young.

Thus, once again there was a manifestation of the desire to maintain traditions and sustain progress.

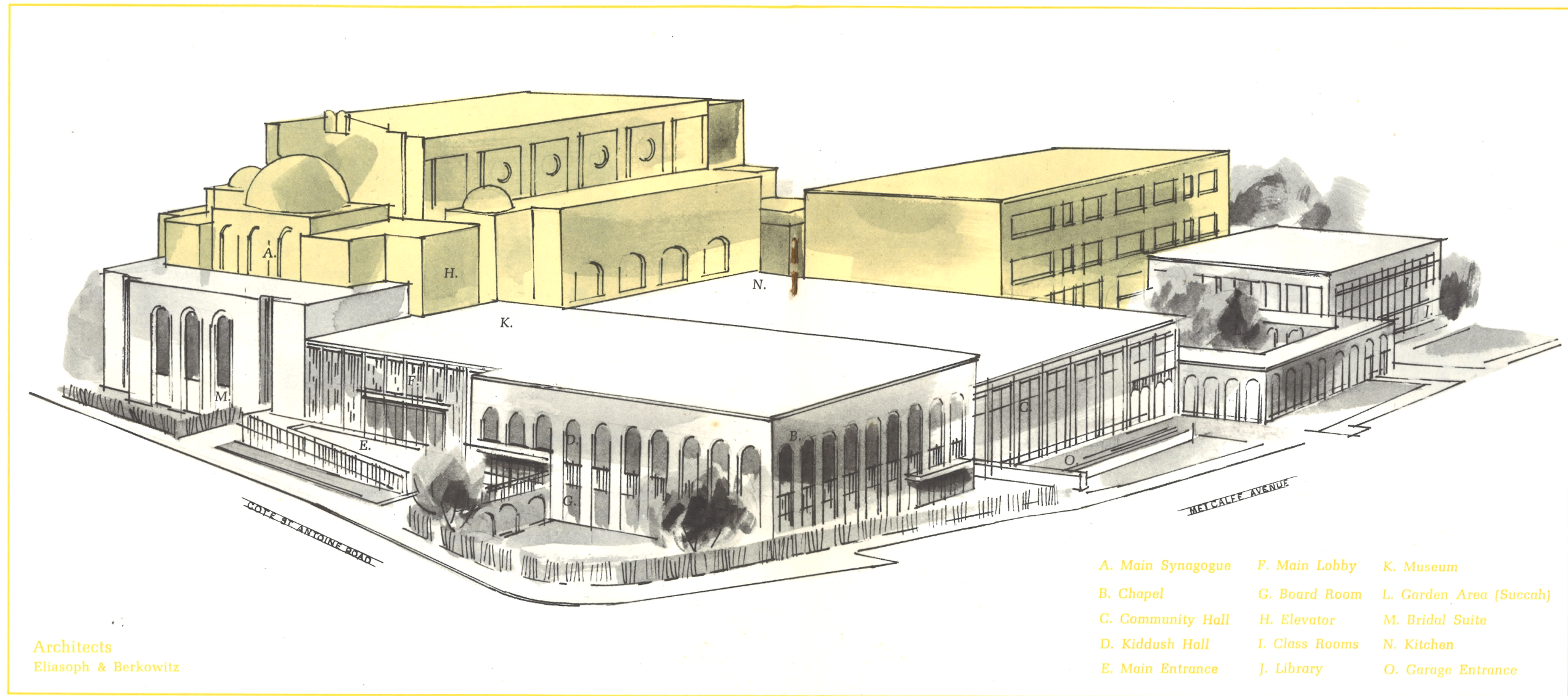
On its completion in 1948, this building was named in memory of Dr. Herman Abramowitz, who had served as rabbi from 1902 to 1947. (see illustration 10)



10. Dedication Plaque to Dr. Herman Abramowitz, 1948



12. Present Chapel



Architects
Eliasoph & Berkowitz

13. Proposed Additions and Present Buildings

The history of an era is the sum total of the contributions of its people. There were many who made important and lasting contributions to the dynamism of Shaar Hashomayim.

Those who served the Congregation as Presidents were: M. Ollendorf (1860, 1862-63, 1865), David Moss (1861), Edward Moss (1864), Solomon Silverman (1866-71), H. D. Moss (1871,

1881-84), H. Davis (1872-75), Lyon Silverman (1876-79), L. Abrahams (1880), John E. Moss (1885-90), Moses A. Vineberg (1890-92, 1894-96, 1901-04), D. A. Ansell (1892-94), Lazarus Cohen (1896-1901, 1907-14), Lyon Cohen (1904-07, 1914-32), Joseph Levinson, Sr. (1932-46), Horace R. Cohen, O.B.E. (1946-47), Moses J. Heilig (1948-56), Leon Levin (1957-61), Dr. Harry C. Ballon (1962 —).

Many others who played distinguished roles in the progress of Shaar Hashomayim are fortunately still with us. Their names, are contained on the closing pages as active campaign leaders and workers, as always. Those who have passed on are still with us in the names of their families and descendants.

In 1965, the challenge of progress is faced again.

The problem of physical expansion can no longer be ignored. Membership has grown to 1750 families. 4,000 individuals. The Synagogue was originally designed to serve 300 families in the Main Synagogue, Assembly Hall and Chapel. On High Holidays children are literally forced out.

Similarly the educational and recreational facilities have fallen behind the needs of the Congregation.



14. New Entrance Lobby

Once again the leaders of the Synagogue are meeting the need for progress to maintain the traditions that are the heritage of Shaar Hashomayim.

The Building Committee has accepted the objectives and has come up with the solutions.

The objectives were three. One, no change in site. Two, no disfiguration of the Main Synagogue. Three, to do whatever is physically necessary so that the Shaar Hashomayim will continue to serve its community.

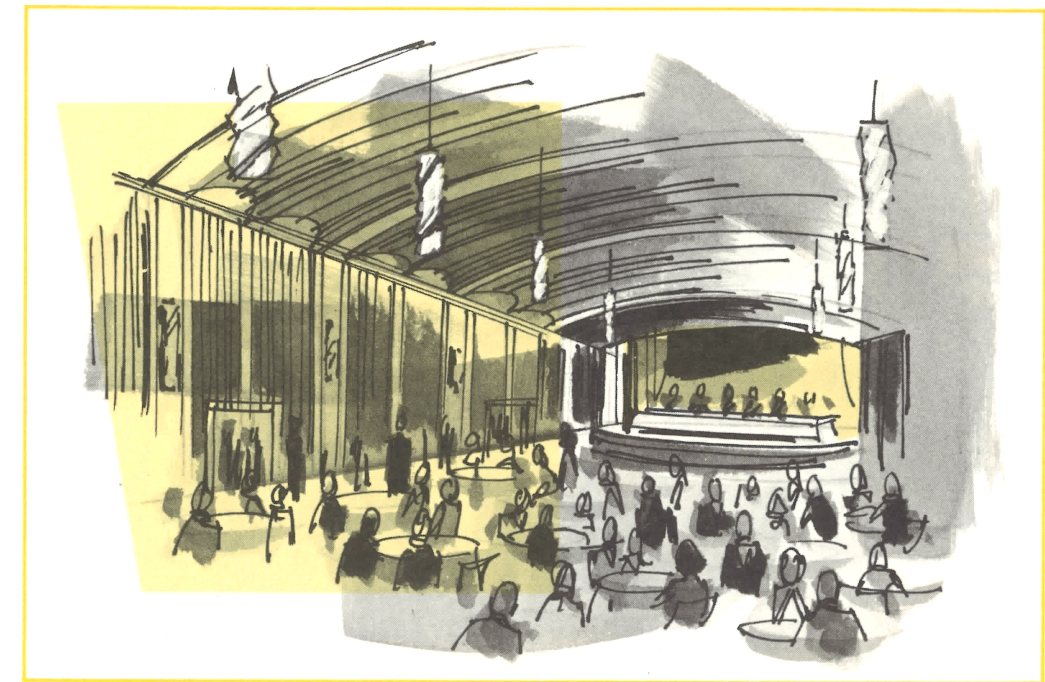
The successful solution to the problem is shown in the imposing,

contemporary and practical structures illustrated on pages 8 and 9.

The superb facilities reflect the progressive needs of the Congregation while retaining the spirit of tradition that is its heritage. The carefully planned additions and alterations take full cognizance of the magnitude and character of related requirements of the Congregation's growing family.

Architecturally, the new buildings will be in keeping with the existing structures.

The Main Synagogue has been described as one of the most beautiful



16. New Community Hall, Social Event

in North America. To avoid obscuring this imposing edifice, none of the new buildings will extend above the present window sills.

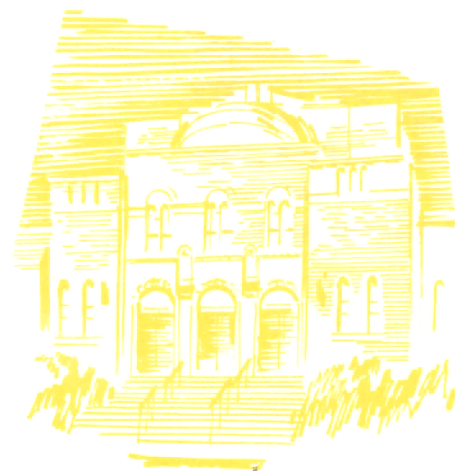
Existing and new facilities will be air-conditioned. The heating, plumbing, lighting and acoustical systems will be brought up to modern standards.

Thus, the planners of a greater home for Shaar Hashomayim see their task as a three-fold obligation. First, as a House of Worship. Second, as a House of Education. Third, as a House of Assembly.

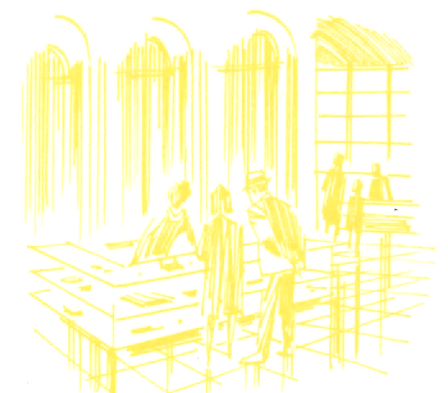
Highlights of the proposed additions and alterations of the New Building Program are:

A HOUSE OF WORSHIP

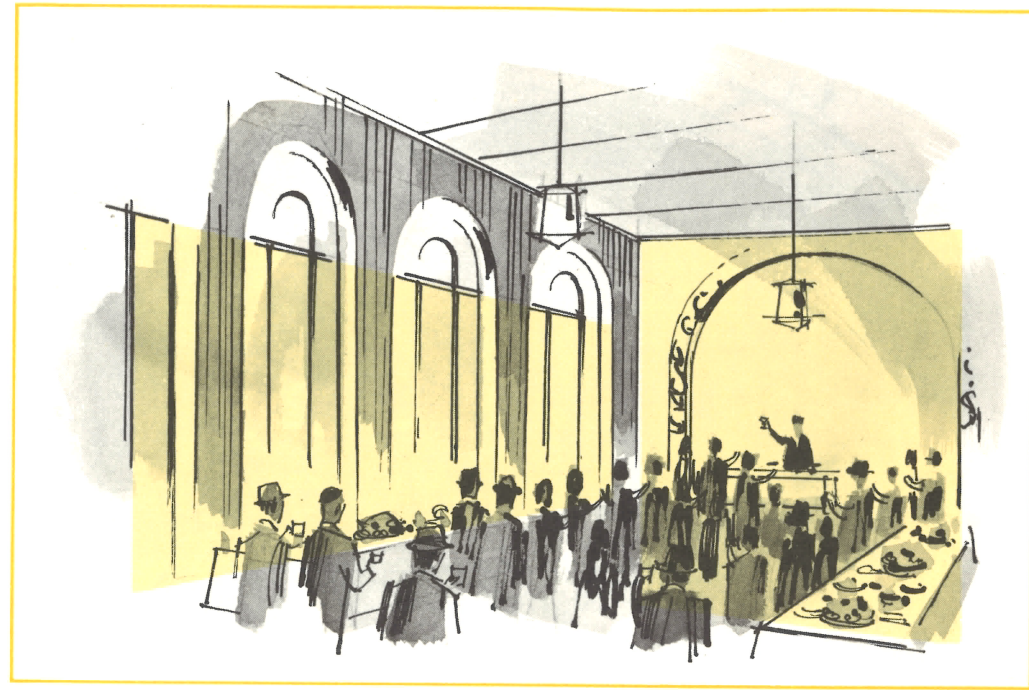
- Main Synagogue. 500 additional seats. These seats will be added at the rear of the present synagogue and balcony. (see illustration 1)
- New Chapel. It will seat 300 people. This chapel will be used for daily services, Sabbath services of Junior Congregation. (see illustration 3)
- New Community Hall. It will accommodate 1,000 people. It will be connected to the existing commu-



15. Entrance, Cote St. Antoine Road, 1922



17. Sisterhood Gift Shop



18. New Kiddush Hall

- nity hall via the new lobby. (see illustration 5)
- New Kiddush Hall.
- New Entrance Lobby. The large lobby will include checking facilities for more than 1,000 coats. (see illustration 14)
- New Main Entrance. Entry to the main synagogue will be situated on a Plaza mid-way between Kensington and Metcalfe Avenues. (see cover)
- New Board Room and Meeting Room. Located at end of lobby on synagogue floor.

- Air Conditioning throughout all existing and new facilities. Modernization of present lighting, heating, plumbing and acoustical systems.
- Automatic Elevator.

A HOUSE OF EDUCATION

- Four New Classrooms. (see illustration 9)
- New Library with reading area. It will connect with the present school building. (see illustration 7)
- New Museum. New music rooms.
- Youth Meeting Room. Office for a youth director. Lounge area. (see illustration 11)



19. Dedication Plaque, 1922



20. Garden Area (Succah)

- The New Community Hall will enable our school children to have the current assembly hall available to them at all times.
- Garden Area. On Metcalfe Avenue. Screened by stone arcade with wrought iron grills. Area will be used for a large Succah and a playground. (see illustration 20)

A HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

- The New Community Hall will seat 800 people at dinner, etc., for social gatherings, etc. It will have a

- large stage. (see illustration 16)
- The New Chapel can be used for weddings, etc.
- New Kiddush Hall can also be used for bar mitzvah receptions, etc. (see illustration 18)
- New Bridal Suite.
- New large, modern kitchen. Also new check rooms, rest rooms, etc.
- New underground garage. Entrance on Metcalfe Avenue. Will accommodate more than 70 cars.
- New modern area for business administration requirements.

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LET US MEET THE CHALLENGE OF PROGRESS

Thus, once again, history repeats itself.

As in the beginning in 1846, there has been an ambition for progress throughout the history of Shaar Hashomayim.

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, the erudite spiritual leader of the Congregation for the past 18 years has stated, "A man is judged not by what he possesses but by what possesses him. Spiritual ownership is not granted by deed of title but by the consent of the heart.

"The strength of the Jewish community in the past was that it built

Synagogues in order to be possessed by the Synagogue, guided and directed by its ideals. Let us now build the greater Shaar Hashomayim so that it should possess us and lead us to the greater service to God and Man."

The solution to the present problem is at hand. What is now required is a dynamic effort toward implementation. This requires understanding, personal dedication and generosity. Above all, it requires the courage to preserve the tradition and the determination to meet the challenge of progress. These are the precious ingredients of Shaar Hashomayim.

We must not fail.

