

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common "Old Synagogue"	(2) Historic (if applicable) Shaare Shomaim Synagogue
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II. Location

(1) Street Address 300 Block, East Gorham Street	(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk) 4
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III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) Building	
(2) Zoning District Conservancy	(3) Present Use Under Restoration

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s) City of Madison	
(2) Street Address 210 Monona Avenue	(3) Telephone Number

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number 0709-144-0101-6 (Tax Exempt)	(2) Legal Description
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VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins) Deteriorated, project to restore underway.	
(2) Altered or Unaltered? Unaltered (exterior)	(3) Moved or Original Site? Moved on July 16, 1971.
(4) Wall Construction Sandstone front; brick sides and rear	

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

A 28- by 51-foot one-story sandstone and brick structure reflecting a degree of Victorian eclecticism, with German and Gothic influences in a style identified by New York Times architectural writer, Ada Louise Huxtable, as "Rundbogenstil." Designed by August Kutzbock, a prominent Madison architect of the 1850's to mid-1860's, it was built in 1863. Principal exterior features include an ornate battle-mented facade with parapets at the front gable end and a central facade rise of several feet over that of the roof ridge line and terminating in a triangle whose sides parallel the roof slopes. The triangular portion is capped with a stone coping. In the center of the triangle is a large, circular, stone-framed opening which once contained a decorative wheel window. The opening no longer contains glass but is closed with woven wire fencing for protection. The original wheel-shaped window mullions remain under this covering.

In front of the main facade is a small, gable-roofed vestibule about two-thirds story high, the facade of which also rises as a triangle covered with stone coping but terminating in a flat, square cap. There is a pilaster at either side and a doorway with a denticulated lintel and stone sill. The original doors and framework have been replaced with a metal frame and glass door. The original steps on the original West Washington Avenue site were replaced with concrete with handrails of metal pipe.

Fenestration includes tall, narrow, round-arched windows on the sides of the vestibule and on either side of the front elevation. The latter windows are set within a decorative recessed panel framed in stone arches, with a narrow portion of stone separating the paired windows sharing a common stone sill. Side windows are wider, mullioned and round-arched, having semi-circular transoms with three panes separated by radial mullions.

The original appearance of the much-altered interior is not definitely known. The building was used as a synagogue only for 16 years, after which it was used by a succession of other denominations and eventually converted to commercial uses. The huge original oak joists in the basement are still firm and solid. The interior of the building was recently (late-1971) gutted for restoration.

This building was originally sited at 214 West Washington Avenue, but successfully moved, with federal matching funds, to its present site at the corner of East Gorham and North Butler Streets in James Madison Park on July 16, 1971. It is, therefore, presently resting on double-thick concrete-block foundation walls.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Shaare Shomaim congregation	(2) Original Use Synagogue
(3) Architect or Builder August Kutzbock, architect	(4) Architectural Style "Rundbogenstil" (Ada L. Huxtable)
(5) Date of Construction 1863	(6) Indigenous Materials Used Sandstone front
(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.	

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Swarensky, Manfred, From Generation to Generation, The Story of the Madison Jewish Community, 1851-1955; Madison, Wis. 1955.
2. Holmes, Fred L., Ed., Wisconsin, Lewis Pub. Co., Chicago; 1946, Vol 2, pp. 564-5.
3. Custer Frank, "City's First Synagogue...Is Sold Again," Madison, Wis. The Capital Times, July 12, 1962.
4. Kutzbock, August, "Leaves from a record book," 1855-68, kept by A. Kutzbock, Madison Architect; manuscripts collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title - Compiled from a National Register Form prepared by Donald N. Anderson, Assistant Director, Hist. Sites & Markers Div., State Historical Society of Wisconsin.	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) State Historical Society of Wisconsin	
(3) Address 816 State Street, Madison	(4) Telephone Number 262-0746
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared National Register Form prepared Dec. 17, 1970; compiled Dec. 14, '71	

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The "Old Synagogue" conforms to Nos. 1, 2 and 3, and even perhaps of No. 4, of the Designation Criteria. It was the first synagogue erected in Wisconsin and has figured prominently not only in association with the first Madison Jewish congregation, but also with several Christian congregations as well. It is thought to be the third oldest synagogue still standing in the United States. It was designed by the architect, August Kutzbock, of the second state capitol built in Madison (the third is now standing), and of several Landmark and landmark-quality houses in the city.

The first Jew to settle in Madison was Samuel Klauber, who came in the late 1840's near the time of Wisconsin's statehood. By 1856 there were seventeen Jewish families in town and they met to form a congregation. This was originally named Ahavath Achim (Brother Love) but was later changed to Shaare Shomaim (Gates of Heaven). The members were German Jewish immigrants who had come directly from Europe to Wisconsin and therefore represented a distinct cultural transplant to the midwest (further reinforcing Miss Huxtable's definition of this building's Germanic style). The congregation purchased the West Washington Avenue site in 1862 and the building was dedicated on September 5, 1863, in a ceremony attended by the Governor of Wisconsin, the mayor of Madison, members of the State Supreme Court and the architect. In 1865 the Wisconsin Legislature gathered in this synagogue for a public memorial meeting after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

The congregation remained small, at no time with more than twenty families as members, and eventually dwindled to five members in 1879, when the congregation rented the building to the Unitarian Society. The building was not sold, however, until 1916. Thereafter it was used as a funeral parlor, a government storage facility, the Church of Christ, and for a succession of professional and business ventures, the last being a veterinary clinic. The existence of the Shaare Shomaim congregation did not finally end until 1922. During its official history, from 1856 to 1922, it kept the only complete record of any Jewish organization in Madison; a record now housed at the Jewish Historical Society in New York City.

The most recent chapter in the dramatic history of this building, a history still on-going today, began in July, 1970, when its then-owner, Fiore Coal and Oil Company, decided to demolish it for a major new office complex. A citizens organization was formed, under the leadership of Mrs. Lois Stoler, and it named itself after the second name of the building, "Gates of Heaven." A last-minute fund drive was successful and, after the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places around Christmas of 1970, an application for federal matching funds was submitted to HUD on March 22, 1971. In May, funds were approved for the \$60,000 project. On July 16, 1971, after being jacked-up and placed on 96 aircraft wheels, the Old Synagogue was rolled about one mile through downtown Madison streets to its new site where, on July 19, 1971, it was lowered gently on to its new foundation walls. The completion of the restoration of this building is scheduled for 1972 under the auspices of the City of Madison. In the future it is to be used as a public meeting hall. (12/14/71)

The Capital Times - January 11, 1971

By New York Times' Writer

## Design of Synagogue Here Is Identified

The architectural design of the Gates of Heaven Synagogue, 214 W. Washington Ave., has been established by the architectural columnist for The New York Times.

Ada Louise Huxtable, authoritative architectural writer for the New York daily, has identified the historic Madison synagogue's style as "Rundbogenstil," a design she said is equally fashionable in New York in a type called Lombard Romanesque.

A simple translation of the terms, "Rundbogenstil," means round arch style.

Miss Huxtable's description of the local building, which the Gates of Heaven Preservation Foundation is seeking to have moved from its present site to one in James Madison Park, was contained in a recent article in The New York Times.

The old synagogue has been selected as a national landmark. The Madison foundation currently is attempting to raise \$20,000 in a drive to move the building.

The Fiore firm has given the Gates of Heaven Foundation time to attempt to save the building from being razed and to move it.

The City Parks Commission approved a new site for the building. The City Council is to consider approving the park site. Approval of the site will enable the Foundation and city to apply for federal money to move the building.

Miss Huxtable's item in The New York Times follows:

"In Madison, Wisconsin, the Gates of Heaven Preservation Fund is trying to save Wisconsin's first synagogue, one of the oldest remaining in the country.

"The 1863 building has had a remarkably checkered career. It has been a temple, a church several times, headquarters for the Women's Christian Temperance Union, an undertaking parlor, a tearoom, a wartime repository of government records, a dental and veterinarian's office.

"No wonder there's some confusion about its style. It has been placed under the umbrella of 'Moorish' influence and called a 'Victorian interpretation of the Spanish missions of the American Southwest.'

"Designed by an immigrant German architect, August Kutzbock, who also built Wisconsin's second state capitol, it is actually a version of the fashionable mid-19th century German style called Rundbogenstil, equally fashionable here in a type called Lombard Romanesque.

"Its gables and parapets are of local sandstone and remote Italianate recall. Lots of luck, Gates of Heaven."

The appeal for funds for the saving and restoration of the building continues here: About \$13,000 of the needed \$20,000 goal has been obtained, according to Mrs. Norion Stoler, who heads the fund drive.

Persons wishing to help in the drive to save the synagogue are asked to send contributions to the Gates of Heaven Preservation Fund, Box 5514, Madison, Wis., 53705.

# Wisconsin State Journal

MADISON

MADISON, SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1971

SECTION 2, PAGE 1 SUBURBAN

## Synagogue Move Has Lots Agog

By STEVEN LOVEJOY  
Of The State Journal Staff

Slow and easy—easy—easy—the Gates of Heaven Synagogue wound its way to a new home in James Madison Park Friday as hundreds watched, some skeptically.

But the old building arrived safely after being trucked through the downtown area, ducking wires and poles and disrupting traffic slightly during its seven-hour, one-mile trip.

Police provided a safety escort as the building creaked along, discarding a few bricks under the strain.

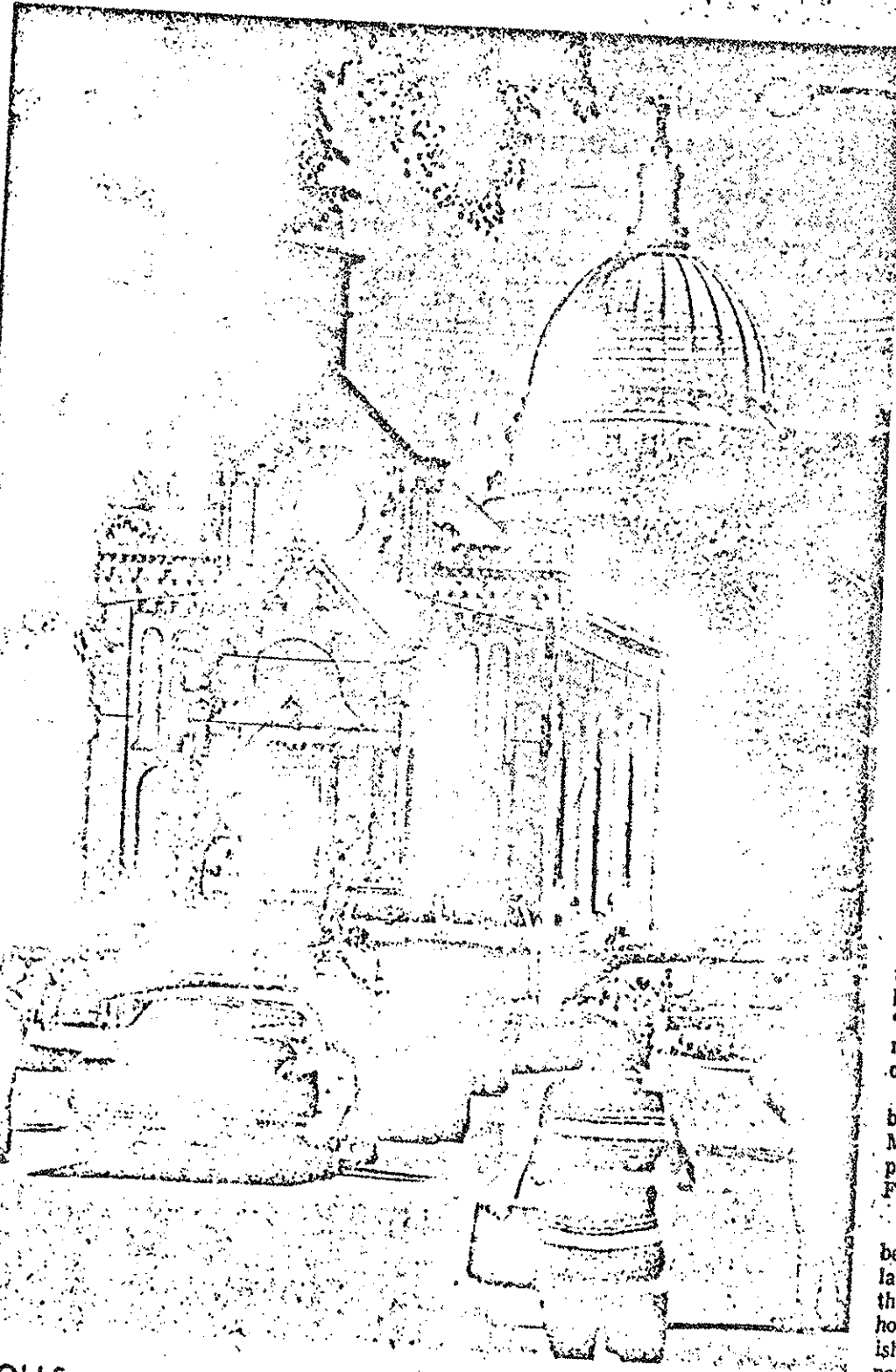
A CROWD of about 200 people gathered in the park about 7 p.m. cheered briefly as the building cleared the telephone pole on N. Butler St. by a few inches and swung across E. Gorham St. into the park, where the movers quickly shored it up for the weekend. "See, still in one piece," crowed one worker.

ANOTHER WORKER crawled into the underbelly of the building and dug out a bottle of champagne from its "lucky" hiding spot, and the movers celebrated the success of their efforts.

They will begin lowering the building onto its foundations Monday. The work is expected to be completed by Friday.

THE TEMPLE, which has been named as a national landmark, was constructed in the late 1850s. It was the home of Madison's first Jewish congregation and is reported to be the second oldest synagogue in the country.

The building also has served as a temperance center, a church, a dentist's office,



The Old Synagogue takes a slow, careful ride down N. Hamilton St.