

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



STONE TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH BUILDING

(FORMER) FIRST ROUMANIAN CONGREGATION

[ALSO KNOWN AS ANSHE ROUMANIA, SHAARI SHOMAYIM]

3620-24 WEST DOUGLAS BLVD

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, April 7, 2016



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
David Reifman, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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(FORMER) FIRST ROUMANIAN CONGREGATION

[ALSO KNOWN AS ANSHE ROUMANIA, SHAARI SHOMAYIM]

3620-24 WEST DOUGLAS BLVD

BUILT: 1925-26

ARCHITECT: JOSEPH W. COHEN & CO.

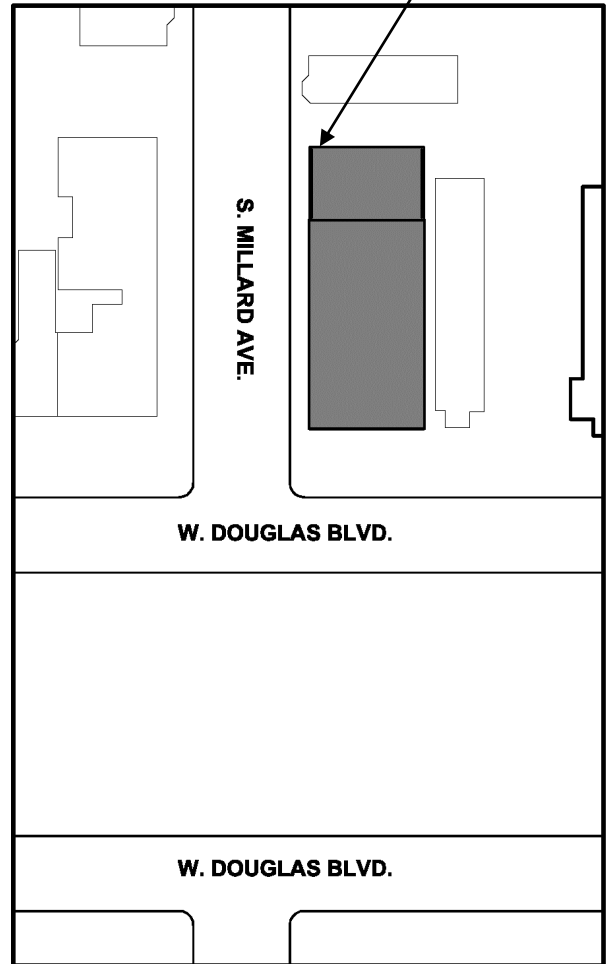
Layers of Chicago history converge at the monumental brick and limestone house of worship at 3620 W. Douglas Boulevard in North Lawndale. The structure was built in 1925-1926 as a synagogue for a community of Jewish immigrants who had come to Chicago to escape anti-Semitism and pogroms in their native Romania. They named their synagogue the First Roumanian¹ Congregation. From 1926 to 1954 the building served as a house of worship and an anchor for Chicago's Romanian Jewish community, a community that provided aid to and demanded justice for the Jews of Romania and Europe from the 1920s through the 1940s. In addition to its history, the building is one of several religious and institutional buildings that tell the story of Jewish settlement in North Lawndale, once known as "Chicago's Jerusalem."

After World War II, Lawndale transitioned from a Jewish to an African American neighborhood. In 1954 the First Romanian Congregation sold their synagogue to a Baptist congregation led by Rev. James Marcellus Stone. Rededicated as the Stone Temple Baptist Church, Rev. Stone led his congregation to support the civil rights movement. When Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. brought his crusade for civil rights from the South to Chicago, Stone Temple was one of a small number of African American churches that hosted him. Rev. Stone, who knew King's father, welcomed King and Stone Temple Baptist Church became a forum for programs and preaching during King's Chicago Freedom Movement, the most far-reaching civil rights campaign in the North. The Stone Temple Baptist Church Building opens a window onto this important chapter in the civil rights movement.

¹ When it was founded the congregation used the archaic spelling of "Roumania" for their name. In later years the modern spelling was adopted and that spelling is used in this report.



Stone Temple Baptist Church Building



The Stone Temple Baptist Church Building, formerly the First Romanian Congregation, is a brick-and-limestone building built from 1925 to 1926. It is located on the northwest corner of W. Douglas Blvd. and S. Millard Ave. in the North Lawndale community area on Chicago's far West Side. From 1926 to 1954 the building served as a house of worship and an anchor for Chicago's Romanian Jewish community. In 1954 the building was bought by an African American congregation and rededicated as the Stone Temple Baptist Church.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF JEWS IN CHICAGO AND THE FOUNDING THE FIRST ROMANIAN CONGREGATION

Chicago was incorporated as a village in 1833. By 1841, its first Jewish settlers had arrived in the frontier settlement. Soon after, the increase in Jewish residents brought about the founding of Chicago's first synagogue, Kehilath Anshe Mayriv (KAM) Synagogue in 1847.

These earliest Jewish Chicagoans were immigrants from Germany and Central Europe, and they settled primarily on the South Side. Although early Jewish Chicagoans practiced traditional Orthodox Judaism, the new Reform Judaism, which advocated a modernized approach to the faith, was making inroads among the City's German Jews in the late nineteenth century.

In the years immediately after the Civil War, a second wave of Jewish immigration began to come to Chicago, this time from Eastern Europe. Jews from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Romania and other areas historically associated with Russia made up this population. Unlike the first German Jews, who had largely been city dwellers in Europe, these Eastern European Jews were mainly rural and village dwellers and Orthodox in their faith and traditional in their lifestyles. The Jewish population in Chicago grew from just ten thousand in 1880 to nearly a quarter million in 1920, and most of these came from Eastern Europe. They largely settled in Chicago on the Near West Side in the Maxwell Street neighborhood. Centered on Maxwell and Halsted streets, the neighborhood grew through the late nineteenth century into the center of life for Jews from Eastern Europe. The First Romanian Congregation traces its origins to the Maxwell Street neighborhood. There in 1896 a group of eleven Jewish immigrants from Romania formed a benevolent organization to support recent immigrants to Chicago from their homeland. The group met in a rented room above a store in the Maxwell Street neighborhood.

Many Romanian Jews came to Chicago to escape anti-Semitism. The Kingdom of Romania was one of several sovereign states carved out of the Ottoman Empire by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin which ended the Russo-Turkish War. The terms of the treaty granted full civil and religious liberty to the citizens of the new states, but this provision was not implemented in Romania where the Jewish population remained oppressed well into the twentieth century. In addition to ignoring the treaty, Romania also passed laws which barred Jews from the skilled trades as well as commercial and professional occupations. By 1914 Romania was the only European power that had not granted citizenship to its Jewish population, and in the 1930s a fascist government regime came to power in Romania that equaled Germany's Nazi regime.

By 1899 the benevolent organization formed by the eleven Romanians had evolved from a social organization to a religious congregation and the First Romanian Congregation of Chicago was established. Worship services were in a rented room above a store on Roosevelt Road and Clinton Street. The congregation soon outgrew this space and rented a larger space above a grocery store nearby. As the congregation continued to grow, in 1902 they were able to purchase a former school building at 14th Street and Union Avenue which the congregation converted into a synagogue.

As the Eastern European Jewish community of Maxwell Street grew and prospered, many began to move in the 1910s from west to the North Lawndale, East Garfield Park and West Garfield Park neighborhoods bringing their synagogues and institutions with them. In 1911 the First Romanian Congregation began to hold services at the Douglas Park Auditorium, a center of Jewish social, political, and cultural life at 3202 W. Ogden Avenue in North Lawndale. In the same year the congregation bought the parcel of land at Douglas Boulevard and Millard Avenue and built a one-story brick community house building for religious, education and social events.



Members of the First Romanian Congregation gathered on the raised platform, or bema, of the synagogue during a celebration of Yom Kippur in 1934. Rabbi Goldstein's sermon prayed for respect for the Jewish people and a change in German policy as Hitler was gaining power. (*Chicago Tribune* Sep. 19, 1934.)



Anti-Semitic policy compelled many Romanian Jews to seek safety in American cities like Chicago. The photo above documents the beginning of a government-sponsored pogrom on June 27, 1941, in the Romanian City of Jassi that resulted in the murder of 13,266 Jews. From the 1920s through the 1940s members of the First Romanian congregation demanded justice for provided aid to Romania's Jews. (From the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*)

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

By the 1920s the congregation had grown to 400 families, far exceeding the capacity of the community house building. On February 22, 1925, the *Chicago Tribune* announced that the congregation had commissioned architects Joseph W. Cohen & Co. to design a monumental brick and stone synagogue with seating for 1,500 in the main sanctuary and balcony. Below the sanctuary a ground floor level contained school and prayer rooms. The one-story community house building was expanded with a second story to house dining and ball rooms for weddings and other social occasions. The synagogue was dedicated on August 15, 1926.

The former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, now the Stone Temple Baptist Church, faces Douglas Boulevard, which is one of Chicago's park boulevards that form a landscaped "necklace" that connects the large West Side parks—Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas—with the lakefront parks of Washington and Jackson. The synagogue historically was one of several large-scale buildings built for Jewish institutions and congregations along Independence and Douglas boulevards during the 1910s and 1920s.

The building's street elevations facing Douglas and Millard are built of yellow face brick, while common brick clads the less visible north (alley) and east elevations. Overall the building reveals a high degree of skilled craftsmanship in traditional masonry construction. The building is 65 feet tall and topped with a pitched roof, though this is obscured by a raised parapet. The structure of the building consists of a concrete foundation supporting a riveted-steel structural framing encased within non-load bearing brick walls. Indiana limestone is used at the base of the building and for detailing and trim, most dramatically for arcades framing the windows.

The symmetrical front (Douglas) elevation consists of a limestone base with three recessed double doors reached by a low stone stairway from the sidewalk level. The doors appear to be original and have a simple wood panel design with opalescent glass lights. Above this base the front façade is arranged as an arcade of three, two-story tall arches that frame the window openings. Each arch consists of Moorish-style horse-shoe shaped arches, formed from limestone voussoirs, carried by Classical columns with capitals decorated with Stars of David. Within each of these arches the windows are set within triple-arched, Romanesque-style surrounds with slender columns. Limestone spandrels mark the floor lines of the sanctuary and balcony. Limestone medallions, carved with Jewish religious symbols including menorah and the Torah, are set into the front façade above the arcade. The front façade is topped with a gabled parapet which rests on a limestone corbel band which allows the parapet to project slightly from the wall plane lending the building a monumental presence. The brick at the parapet level is laid with a tapestry pattern, another motif drawn from Moorish architecture. At the center of the parapet carved stone tablets with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew script proclaim the building's Jewish legacy. A bronze Star of David at the top of the parapet was removed when the original congregation moved.

The west (Millard) facade closely follows the design of the front elevation. The first story is faced in limestone pierced by rectangular window openings that have been infilled. Above that the arcade consists of a mix of Moorish and Romanesque arches, though the Classical columns found on the front elevation have been eliminated. The corbel band and projecting parapet with tapestry brick continue from the front elevation.

The building retains most of its original stained glass windows which consist of caramel-white opalescent rectangles, simple borders and stars of David typical in roundels. Some stained glass has been replaced with clear glass though the translucent glass on the east elevation of the sanctuary appears to be original.

The overall design of the exterior of the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, now the Stone Temple Baptist Church, is an eclectic mix of Moorish, Romanesque and Classical architectural styles that were frequently used for synagogue buildings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most rare of these three styles in Chicago is the Moorish, a term that is used to describe elements from Islamic architecture. It became popular for synagogue design in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century and would have been familiar to the



The First Romanian Congregation built this synagogue according to plans prepared by architect Joseph W. Cohen. The eclectic design combines Romanesque, Classical and Moorish styles of architecture, a rare combination in Chicago but one that reflects synagogue design trends that emerged in the late nineteenth century in Eastern and Central Europe. The Ten Commandments in Hebrew script, the Star of David and menorah which adorn the building convey the Jewish heritage of North Lawndale.





The interior of the former synagogue, now church, includes an unusual cantilevered balcony that eliminates the need for intrusive columns. Though the building became a Christian house of worship in 1954, the congregation has preserved the Torah ark and other Jewish symbols on the interior.

Romanian congregation. The popularity of the style for synagogue architecture grew out of Jewish assertions in the nineteenth century of their “Oriental” origins in the Middle East. Typical features of the style found on the building are the horse-shoe arch, the slender columns framing the windows on the front façade and the tapestry brick on the parapet level.

Inside, the building has an entrance vestibule opening into the ground floor designed for school, prayer and play rooms. The sanctuary on the second floor is reached by stairs from the vestibule. The bright, spacious sanctuary has an arched ceiling and a U-shaped balcony which is cantilevered from the building’s steel structural frame, thus eliminating columns that would visually obstruct views in the sanctuary. The plaster walls and arched ceiling are simply treated; however the front fascia of the balcony is decorated with Stars of David in cast plaster. The end of the sanctuary has a raised platform and a built-in Torah ark from the original Jewish congregation. Above the ark is a group of leaded windows with Stars of David and the Torah rendered in a deep blue opalescent glass. The sanctuary is lit with four meticulously-detailed brass chandeliers with opalescent glass shades and the Star of David symbol. Simpler chandeliers, though of an original related design, are also located above the balcony. It should be noted that the Jewish religious symbols on both the interior and exterior of the building have been retained by the Baptist congregation which has occupied the building for the past six decades.

The community house building, now known as the Stone Temple Dining Room, located to the north of the main building was built as one-story brick structure in 1911 as a multi-purpose building to serve the original Jewish congregation. When the synagogue was built in 1926 a second story was added to the community house building and is internally connected with the synagogue. The small building is clad in red brick with limestone trim and a corbel band that relates to the corbeling of the synagogue.

The former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, now the Stone Temple Baptist Church, was identified as having architectural and historical significance in the 1996 *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* and is listed in the *AIA Guide to Chicago*.

Architect Joseph W. Cohen & Co.

The building permit for the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue identifies Joseph W. Cohen & Co. as the architect. Research has uncovered little information about Mr. Cohen or his practice. Records indicate that during the 1920s he designed four apartment buildings, two commercial buildings and one other synagogue (Congregation Anshe Lebovitz, 1500 S. Drake Avenue, 1922). A brief obituary for Cohen in the *Tribune* indicates he died in 1958 at age 72, and for the five years prior to his death he was working as an architect for the Chicago Board of Education.

THE NORTH LAWNDALE COMMUNITY AREA

The North Lawndale community area, where the former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue is located, was renowned during the early twentieth century as the center of Orthodox Jewish life and culture in Chicago. While the German Jewish families that had arrived in the city earlier in the nineteenth century largely lived on Chicago's South Side in the early twentieth century, Orthodox Jews with Eastern European roots were migrating west from Maxwell Street and had settled on North Lawndale as the community's "second-generation" neighborhood.

Started in the nineteenth century, but largely developed in the early twentieth century, North Lawndale had newer houses and small flat buildings than did the Maxwell Street neighborhood, and its buildings typically had larger, more modern interiors that allowed for more gracious living. Anchored by the broad Douglas and Independence Boulevards with their park-like medians, and with Douglas Park on its eastern border and Garfield Park to the north, North Lawndale had much more expansive green space than the older Maxwell Street neighborhood and was more upscale in feel. The first residents of North Lawndale were German and Irish

working class families, and many refused to rent to Jews when they began to move to North Lawndale, however by 1930, 40 percent of Chicago's Jewish population lived in North Lawndale, making it the largest Jewish community in the city.

By 1930, North Lawndale was largely built up. Its main commercial street, Roosevelt Road, was lined with stores, offices, and theaters. To the north, the headquarters of the Sears, Roebuck & Co. (a designated Chicago Landmark), had its giant mail-order campus which provided thousands of jobs, many for North Lawndale residents. To the west stood the Western Electric complex, another large employer, across the city border in Cicero. Graceful greystones and handsome apartment buildings lined Douglas and Independence, while typically smaller, but still pleasant, houses and two- and three-flats could be found on side streets. Transportation to downtown was convenient with two branches of the Metropolitan West Side Rapid Transit Co. lines serving the neighborhood; these are now the CTA Blue and Pink lines.

Schools and institutions dotted the entire neighborhood, but many, including the most prominent, were concentrated on or near Douglas and Independence boulevards. The Jewish Peoples Institute at 3500 W. Douglas Blvd. was famous as a cultural and social center for the larger Chicago Jewish community. (Now the Lawndale Community Academy, the building is a designated Chicago Landmark.) Theodore Herzl Junior College was located on the south side of Independence Square. Many of the community's largest and most prominent synagogues were located on the boulevards, including Anshe Kneseth Israel Synagogue (demolished), and the former Anshe Sholom Synagogue (now Independence Boulevard Seventh-Day Adventist Church and a designated Chicago Landmark)

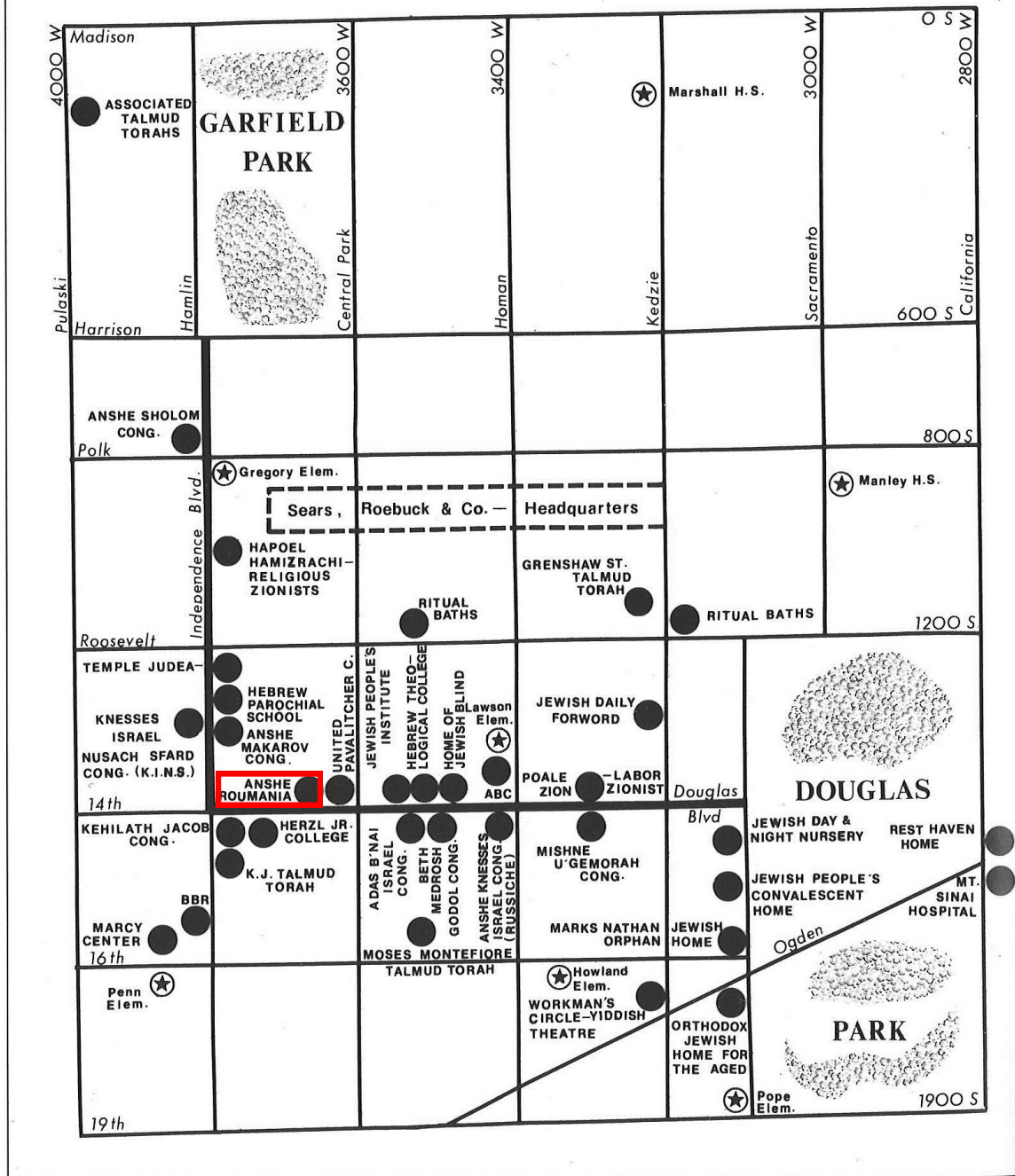
LATER HISTORY OF THE FIRST ROMANIAN CONGREGATION

Within a few months of the dedication of the new synagogue, the First Romanian Congregation was visited by Marie of Romania, Queen consort of Romania from 1914 to 1927. Queen Marie was on a tour of the United States to encourage investment in her economically-depressed country. The First Romanian Congregation was painfully aware of the anti-Semitic policies and crises of the country they had left behind, nevertheless Queen Marie was given a warm welcome. The event was attended by Mayor Dever, Ambassador Ira Nelson Morris and congregation member Judge Fisher, who expressed to the Queen the congregation's 'It is our prayer that the time will soon come when our people over in Roumania will not need any help. And we are confident that under your benign influence it will soon be that our people in your country will be enjoying hospitality.'

The "help" that Judge Fisher referred to was financial assistance the congregation provided to Jews left behind in Romania, as well as efforts to raise public consciousness of the plight of Romanian Jews. On December 9, 1927, pogroms spread throughout Romania resulting in the burning of synagogues and beatings of Jews. In response, the First Romanian Congregation hosted a meeting attended by Christian clergy, local politician and Jane Addams where resolutions denouncing anti-Semitism in Romania were adopted and programs to aid Romanian Jews were organized. The congregation would continue to work for justice for Romanian and European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. When Adolph Hitler became German Chancellor in 1933, Rabbi Goldstein of First Romanian condemned increasing persecution of German Jews, the following year Rabbi Goldstein's Yom Kippur sermon prayed for respect for the Jewish people and a change in German policy. When the U.S. entered World War II against Germany and its allies including Romania, the congregation dropped "Romanian" from its name resolved to support the war effort. After the war, the congregation marked its 50th anniversary in 1947 by sending a delegation to visit Romania to identify ways in which the congregation could assist in the post-war reconstruction.

At same time of the congregation's 50th anniversary North Lawndale began to change rapidly from a Jewish to an African American neighborhood. By 1960, less than two decades later, more than 90% of the community area's population was African American as Jewish residents and institutions moved to other city neighbor-

JEWISH INSTITUTIONS ALONG DOUGLAS AND INDEPENDENCE BLVDS. AND OTHER NEARBY MAJOR FACILITIES - 1948



The First Romanian Congregation built there synagogue in the North Lawndale community area, an important center of Jewish life in Chicago from roughly World War I until the 1950s. This map, prepared by historian Irving Cutler and used for several of his publications, illustrates the numerous Jewish institutions, synagogues and temples in North Lawndale. The First Romanian Congregation is marked with a red box.

hoods, including West Rogers Park, and suburbs such as Skokie. As members of the First Romanian Congregation moved out of the neighborhood it appears they were absorbed into other congregations and its rabbi, Harris Goldstein, assumed leadership of a summer congregation at Benton Harbor, Michigan. Like many former synagogues in North Lawndale, the First Romanian Congregation's synagogue was sold to an African American congregation led by Rev. James Marcellus Stone in 1954.

STONE TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Stone was born in 1906 in Georgia and during the Depression he joined the Great Migration and moved to Chicago to earn money to bring his family north. He began working in a factory during the day and pursued his education at night. After earning a divinity degree in 1933 he served as pastor to Second Timothy Baptist Church, initially located in a storefront on Wabash Avenue, and by 1935 relocated 2950 S. State Street in Bronzeville. The construction of the Chicago Housing Authority's Dearborn Homes public housing project in 1950 displaced Second Timothy, and in 1954 Rev. Stone and the congregation purchased the synagogue of the First Romanian Congregation. On July 11, 1954, the Second Timothy Baptist congregation paraded the 9 miles to their new church in a motorcade of floats and ribbon-covered cars. The congregation marked the occasion by changing its name to Stone Temple Baptist Church in honor of their pastor.

At Stone Temple, Rev. Stone gained a reputation for training young ministers, hosting emerging gospel singers and attracting new members living on the West Side. He also counseled local political leaders and became active in the civil rights movement. Within a year of moving into the new church, in November 1955, Stone Temple Baptist Church hosted a protest rally against the killing of Emmett Till. A year later, Edith S. Sampson, lawyer and judge, and the first African American U.S. delegate appointed to the United Nations spoke about civil rights at Stone Temple.

Rev. Stone was a friend of Atlanta pastor Martin Luther King, *Sr.*, and on December 16, 1959, Martin Luther King Jr., spoke for the first of many times at Stone Temple. At the time King was leading the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, and came to Chicago to explain the boycott and to support an integrated housing development that was being blocked by city officials in suburban Deerfield.

King returned to Stone Temple in July 1960 when the city hosted the National Convention of the Republican Party. On July 24, 1960, King addressed a rally at Stone Temple Baptist Church with Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The audience was urged to join King's march the following day to the convention headquarters at the International Amphitheatre near the Stock Yards. The demonstrators urged the Republican Party to repudiate segregationists in its ranks and adopt a strong civil rights plank in the party platform (King brought the same message to the Democratic Convention in Atlanta).

From 1960 Stone Temple Baptist Church began to host a steady stream of civil rights speakers and rallies: in 1960, Stone Temple hosted a protest against the overcrowded conditions in Lawndale's schools; in 1961, the church staged a support rally for African American sharecroppers evicted from their farms in Tennessee because they registered to vote in the 1960 presidential election; in 1962, Stone Temple supported the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission's effort to fight blight; in 1963, attorney Horace Ward, the first African American to seek admission to the University of Georgia which led to desegregation of the university spoke at Stone Temple; in 1964, a rally at Stone Temple supported a school boycott to protest school segregation, and the church held "freedom schools" for the children who stayed home from school; in 1964, an educational program at Stone Temple described the Mississippi Freedom Project which saw three civil rights workers murdered; in 1965, Stone Temple participated in a march to remove controversial school superintendent Ben Willis. In the same year, Rev. Stone participated in Martin Luther King's marches in Selma, Alabama, which led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Martin Luther King, Jr. at Stone Temple Baptist Church with Reverend James Marcelus Stone on the left. Reverend Stone led his congregation to support the civil rights movement and Stone Temple provided a forum for preaching and programs led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others in the national struggle for racial equality. (Courtesy of Stone Temple Baptist Church)

MARCH FOR FREEDOM NOW!

Monday July 25th assemble:

5:00 p.m. Stone Temple Baptist Church
3622 W. Douglas Blvd.
motorcade down Roosevelt Rd to Michigan Blvd.—south to Tabernacle Baptist Church

5:00 p.m. at Metropolitan Community Church
4100 South Parkway

5:30 p.m. Assemble at Tabernacle Baptist Church
4130 So. Indiana Ave.
down 43rd Street to INTERNATIONAL AMPHITHEATER

March with
**Rev. Martin L. King
A. Phillip Randolph
Roy Wilkins**

3 Southern Student Leaders
MARION BARRY
BERNARD LEE
DIANE NASH

march on the convention movement for freedom now

4859 So. Wabash Ave.
WA 4-4422

During the 1960 presidential race, King demanded that both parties adopt a civil rights plank. In 1960 Chicago hosted the National Convention of the Republican Party, and on July 24, 1960, King addressed a rally at Stone Temple Baptist Church urging the gathering to join his march the following day to the convention headquarters at the International Amphitheatre. The poster at left promotes the march and identifies Stone Temple as one of three churches for the marchers to assemble. (From the Timuel D. Black Jr. collection)

While Stone Temple Baptist Church established a reputation as a friend of the civil rights movement in Chicago, the church was also one of a small number of churches in Chicago that supported the Chicago Freedom Movement from 1965 to 1967, Dr. King's first campaign in the North and an important chapter in the civil rights movement in America.

THE CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT

In September 1965, King announced that the SCLC had chosen Chicago as the focus of their movement for Civil Rights in the North in an effort called the Chicago Freedom Movement. By the following month the Movement decided to focus its efforts on the city's West Side. To show his solidarity to the African American community, on January 26, 1966, King and his wife Coretta moved into a run-down apartment building in North Lawndale at 1550 S. Hamlin Avenue (demolished). Rev. Stone located the apartment for King and it was located a few blocks from Stone Temple. The Movement also designated Stone Temple Baptist Church its West Side "Action Center."

The Chicago Freedom Movement set as its goal the elimination of urban poverty with a primary objective of ending housing discrimination in the city, to make Chicago an "open city" with "open housing." To raise awareness of Chicago's closed housing market, King and the Chicago Freedom Movement led marches into neighborhoods in Chicago where African Americans were denied entry. In mid-August, negotiations began between city leaders and movement activists resulted in a "summit agreement" to take positive steps to end housing discrimination. King described the agreement as "one of the most significant programs ever conceived to make open housing a reality" and closed the meeting with a call for unity and action.

Hours after the agreement was reached, King spoke to a crowd of 900 at Stone Temple Baptist Church where he noted that the agreement was reached in good faith, and that it was the "first step in a thousand mile journey," but it was "the most significant and far reaching victory that has ever come about in a northern community on the whole question of open housing."

Following the summit agreement, King and some SCLC remained in Chicago to push forward housing rehabilitation programs, voter registration, Operation Breadbasket and job training programs (Stone Temple Baptist Church hosted some of the job training programs). In early 1967 King also began to speak out against the Vietnam War which was fundamentally at odds with his nonviolent philosophy and which drained resources from the nation's war on poverty. March 25, 1967, King returned to Chicago to lead 5,000 marchers through downtown, the first antiwar march of his career.

On April 11, 1968, one week after King's assassination, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 which prohibits discrimination based on race in the sale or rental of housing. Historians agree that the King's Chicago Freedom Movement raised national consciousness about racial discrimination in housing and helped shape political consensus to pass this legislation.



To immerse himself in the problem of the city's slums, King moved into a run-down North Lawndale apartment at 1550 S. Hamlin Avenue (left) which was found by Rev. Stone and located a few blocks from the Stone Temple Baptist Church. (*Ebony*, April 1966)



In the living room of the Hamlin Avenue apartment, King phones staffers working on a voter registration campaign with SCLC staffer Rev. Andrew Young. (*Ebony*, April 1966)



Hours after the summit agreement was reached, King spoke to a crowd of 900 at Stone Temple Baptist Church. Rev. Jesse Jackson, kneeling, confers with King (center) and Bernard Lee at a meeting held at Stone Temple Church in 1966. (*Chicago Sun Times*)

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sections 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Stone Temple Baptist Church Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, now the Stone Temple Baptist Church Building, exemplifies the importance of houses of worship in the cultural, religious, and social history of Chicago's diverse neighborhoods.
- As the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue from 1925 to 1954, the building exemplifies the significant history of the North Lawndale neighborhood in the early twentieth century when it was Chicago's most prominent Jewish neighborhood. Through its location on Douglas Boulevard, the building reflects the importance of Douglas and Independence boulevards as the center of Chicago's large Jewish community on the West Side from the 1910s through the 1940s.
- As the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, the building reveals the aspirations of many Jews who came to Chicago in search of freedom, community and security and escape from anti-Semitism and violence in Romania and other Eastern European countries.
- When the synagogue became a Baptist church in 1954, Reverend James Marcellus Stone led his congregation to support the civil rights movement and the Stone Temple Baptist Church provided a forum for preaching and programs led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others in the national struggle for racial equality.
- A thread of social justice binds the Jewish and African American congregations that have worshipped in the building. The Jews of the First Romanian Congregation provided aid to and demanded justice for the Jews of Romania and Europe from the 1920s through the 1940s, and from 1954 the African American congregation pushed forward the civil rights movement's struggle for decent housing, quality education and economic opportunity.

Criterion 2: Significant Historic Event

Its location as a site of a significant historic event which may or may not have taken place within or involved the use of any existing improvements.

- The Stone Temple Baptist Church opens a window onto the Chicago Freedom Movement, when Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. brought his crusade for civil rights from the South to Chicago from 1965 to 1967.
- Stone Temple Baptist Church was one of a few houses of worship that welcomed King during the Chicago Freedom Movement. Rev. Stone, who knew King's father, welcomed King and Stone Temple Baptist Church became a forum for meetings, programs and preaching during King's Chicago Freedom Movement.



King preaching at Stone Temple Baptist Church ca. 1966. (Courtesy of the Stone Temple Baptist Church)

- The Chicago Freedom Movement prompted national debate about housing discrimination that ultimately led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968.

Criterion 3: Significant Persons

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Stone Temple Baptist Church hosted Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader of the civil rights movement in America in the 1950s and 1960s which demanded racial equality African Americans. His speeches and writings are studied worldwide and he is regarded as one of the greatest advocates for social justice and peace in world history.
- In 1955 King led the Montgomery Bus Boycott which demanded racial integration of the Alabama city's bus system. The year-long boycott resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that racial segregation of transportation systems was unconstitutional.
- In 1963, King's nonviolent campaign for civil rights in Birmingham, Alabama, was met with brutality by the city's police. Media coverage of the violence outraged the nation and led to demands for civil rights legislation.
- During the March on Washington in 1963 King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech to a quarter-million people gathered at the national mall. The speech inspired Americans to support the civil rights movement and it established King as one of the nation's greatest orators.
- In 1964, the 35 year old King became the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- King's civil rights campaigns in the South resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 that eliminated legally-mandated racial segregation in the United States, and the Voting Rights Act in 1965 which eliminated barriers that African Americans faced in exercising their right to vote.
- King's leadership of the Chicago Freedom Movement between 1965 and 1967 marked a significant expansion of his objectives to address the fundamental social, economic, education and housing inequalities that African Americans faced.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Stone Temple Baptist Church Building, formerly the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue is decorated with religious symbols of the Jewish faith that identify the building as a historic synagogue, a distinct architectural type within Chicago's religious architecture.
- The design of the former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue exhibits Romanesque, Classical and Moorish styles of architecture, a combination of historic styles rarely found in Chicago.
- The former First Romanian Congregation Synagogue features excellent design, detailing and craftsmanship in traditional brick and limestone masonry materials.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic value.

The Stone Temple Baptist Church Building, formerly the First Romanian Congregation Synagogue, retains very good physical integrity on its exterior, displayed through its historic location, overall design, historic materials, details and ornamentation. The building retains its historic face-brick street elevations and common-brick side and rear walls. The building also retains very good interior physical integrity in its primary significant interior spaces, including the sanctuary and associated vestibule, which retain their overall spatial volumes and historic decorative features, including decorative-metal chandeliers, and some original stained-glass windows.

Changes to the building are relatively minor, reversible and not unusual for houses of worship. The most important change to the building's exterior is the replacement of some of the original stained glass window with new sash windows with clear glass. This is limited to the west elevation at the sanctuary level and at front elevation. All of the windows at the east elevation of the building are wired glass with a ribbed texture and these appear to be original. Another minor and reversible change at the exterior is the infilling of window openings on the first floor, below the sanctuary. Non-historic changes to the sanctuary interior and vestibule include vestibule lighting, sanctuary seating, ceiling fans, audio-visual equipment and the balcony projection booth. Despite these changes, the building retains its ability to express its architectural and historical value.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the Stone Temple Baptist Church Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the church building and the two story addition; and
- The sanctuary interior of the church building with its balcony, as further described below; and
- The entrance vestibule to the sanctuary, from the first floor entrance doors up the staircases to the sanctuary level, as further described below.

The significant features of the interior spaces include: overall historic spatial volumes; historic decorative wall and ceiling materials, historic finishes and ornamentation; historic decorative-metal chandeliers; and historic stained-glass windows. Specifically excluded as significant features of the interior spaces are non-historic elements of the sanctuary and vestibule, including without limitation vestibule lighting, sanctuary seating, ceiling fans, audio-visual equipment, and the balcony projection booth.

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