

Robert P. Davis, Architect

Victoria B'nai Israel

ERECTED 1923
Simon Levy Pres.
Morris Yonet Sec'y
Building Committee
Jules G. Levy
R. Kleinsmith
A. Simon

The cornerstone of Temple B'nai Israel is a compact immigration history of the community. The first "Levi" family came from Alsace-Lorraine before the Civil War, establishing an influential banking company in the region. The second "Levi" family came from Eastern Europe after the turn of the century and became successful merchants. The pre-Civil War community of Victoria grew up on the coastal plain as an agricultural, later oil, transshipment point equally distant from San Antonio, Houston, and Austin.



Despite the presence of both Reform and Orthodox elements, one institution served everyone without much apparent friction. The building shown above was constructed in 1923 in the local commercial/institutional vernacular of the time. It was renovated and enlarged in 1986 (addition not shown) and certain essential repairs to the original structure were also made.



The entry is screened by a short wall from the fixed (pew) seating area terminated by a bimah and ark built into the wall. In the room beyond are service facilities, restroom, and kitchen. The bimah and ark as well as some of the furnishings and fittings are original. The congregation maintains a display of early confirmation photos, invitations, certificates and other memorabilia in the new addition to the building.



(left) Mr. Dave Lack, resident since 1941, conducts a tour of the Jewish cemetery. (right) WWII brought prosperity for many. Abandoned airfield buildings are all that remains from the extensive pilot, navigation, and bombardier training facilities established in Victoria because of its geographical resemblance to certain theaters of combat.



The Levi family home, now a well-preserved city landmark.