

Robert P. Davis, Architect  
revised 4 July 1996

## Wichita Falls

### The House of Jacob



As a reminder that synagogues are always about people, the treasures of Beth Jacob are presented here: those whose energy and resources built the congregation in the past, and Maxine Simpson, who has kept the community alive and thriving in recent times.



The original building was constructed in 1921. In later years a social hall and mikvah were added to the property. In 1957 the old wood-clad synagogue and social hall were hauled to the present location, reconfigured with a few new school rooms, and encased in brick. The old sanctuary is seen with its modern cover (on above and off below) and the original social hall is on the right. The mikvah had been left behind, long forgotten.



**"Unless the Lord builds the house, they who build it labor in vain:** unless the Lord keeps the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." (Psalms 127). This inscription could not be removed from the Reform temple when it was renovated as a senior citizen center in 1975. The House of Jacob's rival congregation had dwindled to two families when they threw in the towel.



Reform congregations were generally more socially ambitious and culturally sophisticated than Orthodox congregations. This building is architecturally distant from the simple wooden shed that housed The House of Jacob. From the entrance one goes down 1/2 level to the social and up 1/2 level to the sanctuary, entering behind the bimah and choir loft. The nicely proportioned sanctuary is accented with exposed (clad) structural roof members and tension rods, embellished with "Magen-David" turnbuckles. Many of the details turn up the in the later Breckenridge synagogue, also a product of an oil boom.



What was once a thriving, largely Jewish, commercial area is barely breathing now. Wichita Falls like almost every other town and city has disbursed to its periphery.