

Temple B'nai Israel Laredo, TX

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Laredo is a romantic town and its Jewish community an exotic and charming mixture of Hispanic and American elements. Before WWII refugees from Nazi Germany bided their time in Nuevo Laredo just across the border, and pregnant Jewish women daily crossed the border to the US side hoping to give birth to a genuine US citizen before having to return.



The two-story building erected in 1938 lacks regional flavor, and the articulated exterior brickwork establishes a sensible rhythm characteristic of a more northerly architecture. The classical portico is reminiscent of Temple Freda in Bryan, and the predominately Reform congregation suggests a similar cultural model.



The double-decker assembly halls served a congregation which was, at least in the early years, both Reform and Orthodox requiring simultaneous but separate facilities. The raked (sloped) upper floor is characteristic of the audience/presentation aspect of Reform, while the flat floor below better served the participatory service-in-the-round aspect of the typical Orthodox minyan.



Temple seen through yard of house across the street in a neighborhood now largely Hispanic. Apartment house typical of the neighborhood and the time.