

Shearith Israel Congregation Wharton, TX

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The lineup of cornerstones depicts the continuous history of this community from early in the century to the present. With the exception of the 1921 structure which was located elsewhere and demolished (see below) the birds-eye view shows a historically composite configuration of elements.



In 1940 the structure at the upper right was constructed as a social hall on property located on the outskirts of town and some miles from the original shul. A school wing (upper left) was constructed in 1960 but was severely damaged in a storm and was torn down. The Magen-David shaped synagogue designed by Lenard Gabert, Houston, Texas, (also synagogues in Baytown, Houston, and Schulenburg) and built in 1957 now serves a radically diminished congregation (less than 20). Most important is the BBQ pit seen in the middle right and shown below.



For many years the congregation has held an annual BBQ attended by many from the town, surrounding region, and returning families of present and former congregants. Its reunion function is as important as its fund-raising.



The original Shearith Israel at Rusk and Burlison and the rabbi's house across the street would probably provoke radically opposite views in the middle '50's and now. With the benefit of hindsight one wonders why this lovely old shul was replaced by its modern successor. There was tremendous optimism then, pre-war models were *passe*, and no one expected the *Malka-Mauvet* to arrive and all the children to leave.



The last of the Jewish-owned and operated stores in town, the Hollywood Shop, represents what was once a large and active presence in a trading area which encompassed agriculture, sulphur, and petroleum.

