

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

REFNUM 86001919

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Listed 7/24/86

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Akron Jewish Center

and or common

2. Location

street & number 220 South Balch Street

not for publication

city, town Akron

vicinity of

state Ohio

code 039

county Summit

code 153

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name 220 South Balch Partnership

street & number ²⁷⁷ 227 South Broadway Street

city, town Akron

vicinity of

state Ohio 44308

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Summit County Recorder's Office

street & number 175 South Main Street

city, town Akron

state Ohio 44308

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ohio Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August, 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records Ohio Historical Society

city, town Columbus

state Ohio 43211

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1929, The Akron Jewish Center was designed by the local architectural firm of Fichter & Brooker. It presents an elongated rectilinear facade of two and a half storeys, rendered in a free Romanesque Revival style with strong Byzantine influence in its detailing. The building is of masonry construction with brownish-red textured brick laid in American bond. Trim is executed entirely in flecked grey terra cotta to suggest granite. The raised basement is defined by a prominent terra-cotta water table, with the main entrance set up six steps from ground level. The flat built-up roof is hidden by a low parapet with a terra-cotta frieze in imitation of corbelling, and an ornamented cornice of low profile.

A colossal round-arched main entry is set off center to the right. The boldly embellished arch with multiple archivolts springs from a pseudo-purlin boss at each side on which rests a Biblical lion form, the boss itself depicting a stylized Old Testament male figure. The deep soffit is ornamented with a floriated square pattern. The entire arch is supported at either side by two half-round ionic columns placed at right angles to each other. Four wood access doors with paned glass have the center two as a pair. A wide cross beam of wood separates the glazed tympanum and is incised with the words AKRON JEWISH CENTER.

Centered above the entry is a double window, each unit with its own spiral-ornamented round arch resting on engaged ionic columns. This same device of paired windows with terra-cotta surrounds is repeated on the second floor in four other of the original six front bays, each time aligned with a trabeated first-floor double window whose broad lintel bears a floriated diamond design and rests at the center on an engaged ionic column. Flanking the window over the entrance are two large round terra-cotta panels with a Star-of-David symbol. All of the window sash is metal casement.

Set at ground level to the left is a subordinate entry with a deep transom and decorated lintel, affording immediate access to the athletic facilities. Above is a storey-and-a-half round-arched window designating the stair landing within. At the left of the original facade is a large addition of great depth built in 1951, expanding the Center's classroom and athletic departments. Fronting a wide double side entryway placed in an ell of this addition and serving as transition between the old and the new sections is a projecting straight bay. Its outside first-floor window and smaller one above are set in a wide two-storey terra-cotta panel, surmounted by a blind stilted arch with a Star-of-David motif. The set-back part extending leftward has simple row fenestration on both floors, with a wide band of terra cotta serving as a frieze along the top of the building. Michael M. Konarski, architect for the Akron Board of Education, designed this addition in somewhat sensitive consideration of the earlier structure. Matching brick was used, and the terra cotta suggests, in a simplified almost Art Deco interpretation, the Byzantine feeling of the original.

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The physical facilities of the interior are impressive and all-encompassing: a balconied multi-purpose auditorium seating 1,000 people before a full proscenium stage with ancillary space and dressing rooms; a gymnasium 45' x 70' with a complete range of athletic apparatus (replaced by a larger gymnasium in the 1951 addition, with this space then divided for other uses); an Olympic-size swimming pool 25' x 60' finished in white mosaic tile with green trim, with a spectators' gallery and a triple filter system. In addition to offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, and requisite auxiliary rooms to the gymnasium and pool, there were adult lounge rooms, a library, two dining rooms with a complete kitchen, a junior game room, a men's health club with closed handball court, a billiard room, and a laundry.

The Center building is situated on a large multiple lot on a wholly residential street, close to its north lot line on the right but with a substantial paved parking area to the south and rear. Placed close to the street but in line with adjacent houses, allowing a narrow lawn, the former Akron Jewish Center, with its low, restrained facade, continues to sit unobtrusively among its neighbors.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929

Builder/Architect Fichter and Brooker

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria A and C

In the nearly forty-five years that it was headquartered in this building, the Akron Jewish Center contributed greatly not only to the city's Jewish community but also to the citizenry at large through its many and varied cultural, educational, social, recreational, and athletic services. Aside from its own comprehensive Jewish-oriented programming the Center offered to the general public the vents of its Center Theatre Guild, Sunday Evening Concert Series, the Akron Civic Forum, often with speakers and artists of national repute. The Center building itself was a major work by a premier Akron architectural firm, J. Adam Fichter and Harry A. Brooker, whose public and domestic commissions had been highly visible on the local scene for two decades, culminating in the ten-storey Akron Y.W.C.A. building in 1930.

Placed in an older, completely residential neighborhood of modest architectural character, the Center was therefore designed in a straightforward revival style, rather than the popular Art Deco of the time, its exterior openly suggesting its occupancy and use. Through the years, as the Center prodigiously fulfilled its intentions of service to the Jewish community, it was the public-event series that constantly drew attention and attendance. The Theatre Guild offered its own plays ranging from "The Man Who Came to Dinner: to "The Diary of Anne Frank," while the Women's Day Program on occasion brought such speakers as Joan Crawford and Mrs. Cyrus Eaton. The concert series presented outstanding regional musicians alternating with renowned artists such as the Budapest String Quartet and Leonard Rose. The Akron Civic Forum, continuing today as a television and radio show dealing with subjects of area concern, was begun shortly after the Center's opening. It caught the interest and acclaim of Northeast Ohioans with such luminaries as Drew Pearson, Edward R. Murrow, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., Robert A. Taft, and Eleanor Roosevelt. "America's Town Meeting of the Air" twice originated from the stage of the Center auditorium

Although there had been several Hebrew congregations in Akron since the late 1800's, it was in 1924 that a small group of prominent Jewish men organized to secure a charter for the building of a Jewish Center. In 1926 a women's auxiliary was formed, and that same year plans were set for a \$125,000 building on South Balch Street, with additional land being acquired, where Anshe Emeth Congregation had been meeting. A board of trustees was established, and by April of 1928 \$58,000 had been raised, with further and sufficient funds soon following. On November 4, 1928, the cornerstone was laid; hardly a year later, the Akron Jewish Center was dedicated and opened on September 22, 1929.

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With changing times and emphasis, the need for larger quarters with a more expansive, open plan centered mainly on one floor, coupled with the need for outside recreation space, led in 1973 to the Center's move to a new building on White Pond Drive. Subsequently, the old property was sold to Shadyside Baptist Church, which has occupied it until the present ownership on October 1, 1985. The classroom section of the building is being used by the Head Start Program of the Akron Public Schools, and a local community theatre group has already begun presentations in the auditorium. Renovation work is now in progress on the physical education facilities, with a December, 1985, opening scheduled for the new Balch Street Athletic Club.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Dedication Booklet (September 22, 1929), Akron Jewish Center
Ohio Historic Inventory (1978), #SUM-255-11 (M. Craig Allen)
Art Work of Akron, Ohio (1930), Part 8, Gravure Illustration Co., Chicago
Interview with George A. Fichter, Son of J. Adam Fichter, Architect
Interview, Hyman L. Tabachnick, Executive Director, Akron Jewish Center

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1.43 Plus .95 Additional Parking

Quadrangle name Akron West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	7	4	5	5	1	0	0	4	5	4	8	2	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Lot Nos. Eight (8), Nine (9), Ten (10), Eleven (11), Twelve (12), Thirteen (13), Twenty-eight (28), Twenty-nine (29), Thirty-one (31), and Thirty-two (32), Balch Addition to City of Akron, plotted and recorded in Summit County, Ohio Book 2, Page 42

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James A. Pahlau

organization

date November 18, 1985

street & number 465 South Portage Path

telephone 1-216-535-1120

city or town Akron

state Ohio 44320

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

W. Ray Kuce

title

SHPO

date

6/9/86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

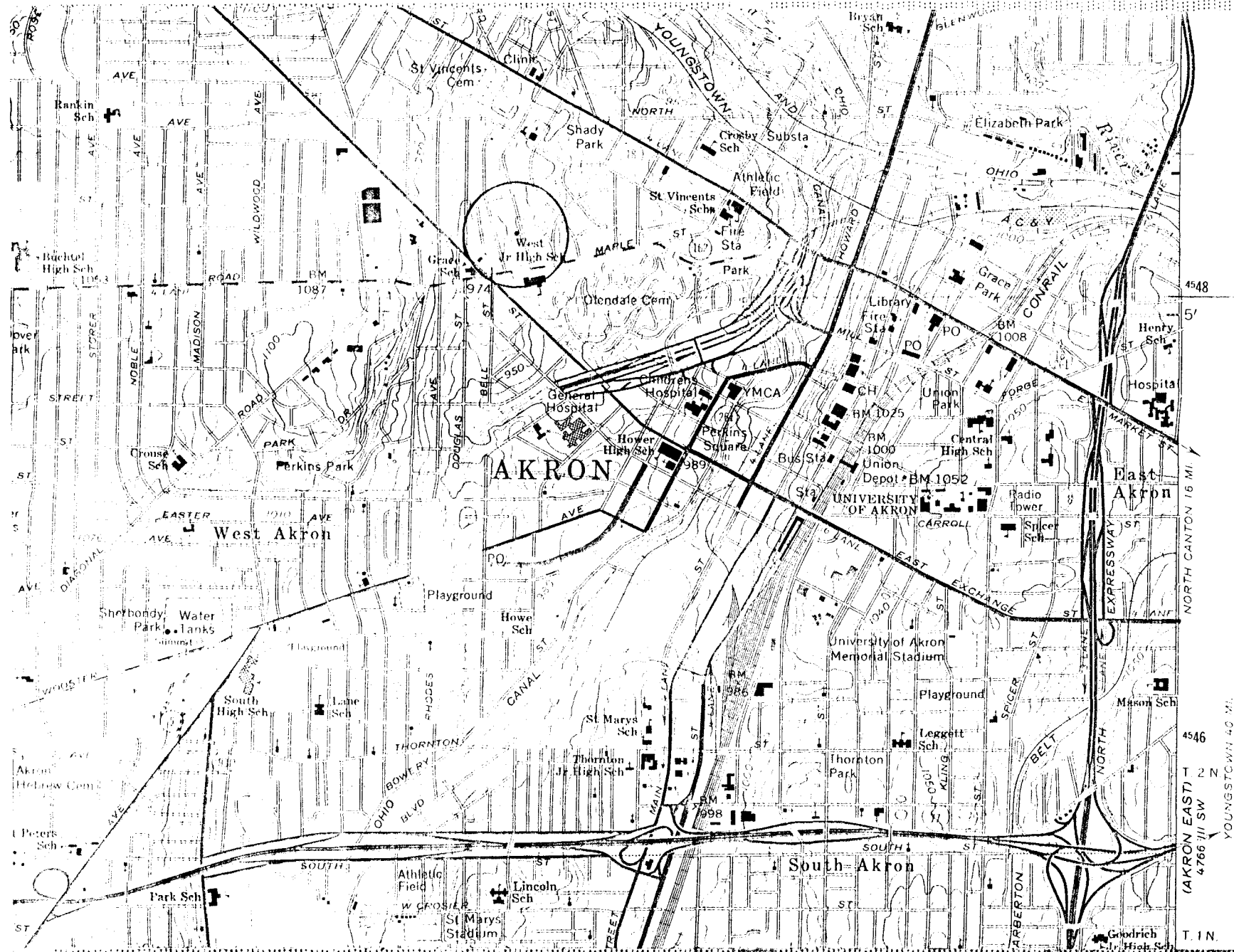
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Akron Jewish Center
Summit County, Ohio
17455100/4548280



4548
5'
NORTH CANTON 16 MI.
4546
T 2 N
AKRON (EAST) T 1 N 99° 4'
T 1 N
YOUNGSTOWN 40 MI.

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

1985 Velma Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43211
614/466-1500



OHIO
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
SINCE 1885

August 20, 1986

220 South Balch Partnership
277 South Broadway Street
Akron, Ohio 44308

Dear Sir:

Re: The Akron Jewish Center, 220 S. Balch Street, Akron, Ohio

We are pleased to inform you that the Akron Jewish Center has been entered into the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. (NR Listed 07/24/86)

The nomination was made in connection with a state plan to identify and document prehistoric and historic places in Ohio which qualify for National Register status under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended. All nominations are approved by the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board.

Enclosed is information explaining the purposes and goals of the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

W. Ray Luce
State Historic Preservation Officer

WRL/DAS:dwm

Enclosure

xc: Jeff Brown, Regional Coordinator
Mayor of Akron
NEFCO
Eric Johannesen, Western Reserve Historical Society
State Senator Oliver Ocasek
State Representative Vernon L. Sykes

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

National Register of Historic Places File Checklist

The following materials are contained in this file of the National Register form for:

Name: Akron Jewish Center

County: Summit

Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form

Multiple Property Nomination form

Photograph(s)

Photograph(s) (copies)

USGS map(s)

USGS map(s) (copies)

Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

Correspondence

Other news clippings

