

The B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia Minnesota is a story of loss and reuse. Built in 1909-10, it was the last remaining active synagogue on the Iron Range until its congregation dwindled to a handful of members who could no longer maintain the handsome brick structure. It closed its doors in the mid-1990s. It was acquired in 2004 by a not-for-profit organization, The Friends of B'nai Abraham, who raised funds, and continue to do so, for the building's restoration and reuse in order to serve as a cultural center for all the citizens of Virginia, Minnesota and surrounding areas, and to preserve the history of its Jewish community, of which it was so much a part. Together with our partner, The Virginia Area Historical Society (VAHS), we look forward to seeing this lovely building used for many cultural and educational programs for the community.

And the Music Played On – At B'nai Abraham in the Summer of 2012

Ann Phillips

B'nai Abraham, even while undergoing active restoration, still serves as a meeting space for concerts, forums and many other programs as well as a museum site for exhibits.

It was a marvelous 2012 summer of music at the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center!

June brought **Connie Evingson** and her world-class Jazz group to B'nai Abraham, and once again the audience snapped their fingers, succumbed to her beauty and her luscious voice and gave her - and her quartet - a rousing standing ovation at the end – and wished they would play on for hours. But that was only part of it!

Her outstanding fellow musicians from both the Twin Cities and locally were: Dave Karr, saxophonist extraordinaire; the two Miltichs – father Matthew on bass, and son Sam on the guitar, and a new addition – Jay Epstein on the drums. And what a quartet they were! If you love Jazz, performed by such stars, June 8 at B'nai Abraham was the jumpin' and jivin' place to be. With your support, we hope they will return next summer – for their third annual appearance.

Then, in July, a surprise **DOUBLE HEADER!** **Yevgeni Shapovalov**, an internationally acclaimed tenor, often referred to as the **GOLDEN VOICE OF ISRAEL**, took a break from rehearsing his role in the Northern Lights Music Festival's opera "Pagliacci" to sing glorious music from all over the world – and even led a lively sing-a-long with the audience loving every minute of it. The second half of the **DOUBLE HEADER** took place the following

evening when the remarkable young musicians from the **NORTHERN LIGHT MUSIC FESTIVAL**, founded by Aurora native **VEDA ZUPONCIC**, wowed the audience with their youth, their beauty, their talent, and the maturity of their playing. These top performers came from all over the world: Poland, Ukraine, Argentina, London, and our neighbor, Duluth. Their program included music composed by Bach, Brahms, Schoenfield and other greats. Their instruments were violins, piano, and the clarinet. We have every hope that Veda will bring her people back next summer – it wouldn't be summer at B'nai Abraham without them!

And in August, we bowed to popular demand, and completed the summer music season, by once again having a **Klezmer** concert. We were fortunate to lure three remarkable musicians from St. Paul: **Mark Stillman on accordion, Shelly Hanson, on clarinet, and Sima Shumalovsky, a famous vocalist from Odessa** who sings in Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish. They had the audience dancing in the aisles, and clapping to the beat.

You can see and hear excerpts from the performances by Yevgeni Shapovalov and the Klezmer Musicians by going to the Friends of B'nai Abraham Web site: www.IronRangeJewishHeritage.org Click on **videos**, and enjoy the great music. We hope you will visit next summer and hear musicians like these in person.



CONCERT SCENES

Connie Evingson (top left)
 Stillman Klezmer (top right)
 Yevgeni Shapovalov with Margie and Charlie Ostrov (bottom left)
 Northern Lights (bottom right)
 Post concert reception (bottom center)



Additional programs at B'nai Abraham during 2012

On Friday evening, August 17th, Rabbi David Steinberg, the rabbi of Temple Israel in Duluth, MN led a memorable Shabbat Service at B'nai Abraham. A number of Jews who live on the Range, as well as some who came from out of town, participated in the service and commented that it was the first Friday evening service in B'nai Abraham in a very many years. With the restored sanctuary and beautiful restored stained glass windows, it was a perfect setting for a meaningful Shabbat celebration.

In September, close to 200 women members of the Soroptimists toured B'nai Abraham as part of their yearly fundraiser. They found both the building and the various exhibits very interesting as they celebrated their 30th year. *(The Soroptimists are an international organization of business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls.)*

Restoration, Grant Awards and Needs: 2012 & 2013

- Progress Report -

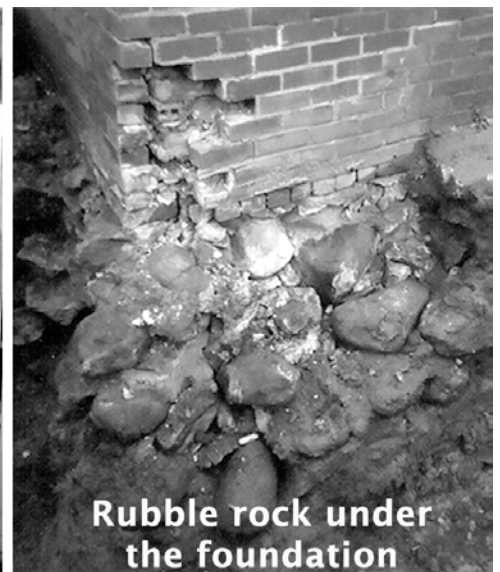
Mike Blehert

In addition to the new walls and floor in the entrance foyer, we now have quarry tile on the floor of the new glass enclosed front vestibule. With completion of the foyer, vestibule and woodwork, one can't help but stop and take a long admiring look when entering the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center. Much of this work was done with generous donations from so many supporters!!

Earlier this year we received a Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Grant to restore the last two stained glass windows in the balcony and complete the trim surrounding stained glass windows on the East wall. Donations also enabled the Friends to restore the woodwork on the large set of windows on the West wall. There are still four more stained glass windows in the sanctuary that need similar woodwork restoration and some molding strips to be installed.

Other good news: We have received notice of a very generous grant from the Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Fund to restore the lower level rear exit. Over the years, the rubble rock used under the exit, rather than cut granite block foundation, which is under the main part of the building, has settled causing the exit steps to tilt and the walls of the exit structure to bow. This part of the restoration is needed to meet building codes and to make the building safe.

We have applied for a Culture and Tourism grant from the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board to begin the process of building a serving kitchen adjacent to the Sanford I Berman Social Hall. Groups that use the building have asked for a space that has a refrigerator, counter space, and a coffee maker so that refreshments can be served and stored. **Should we receive this grant it will need a \$6000 matching cash grant, which we are hoping to meet with donations. Please consider us as you make your donations this year.**



Works Project Administration (WPA 1935-1943) Art Exhibit at B'nai Abraham during the Summer of 2012

Harry Lamppa of the Virginia Area Historical Society

The WPA Art exhibit at the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center this past summer featured original paintings and reproductions created by Depression-era easel artists employed by the government's art projects. Other artifacts were storybook characters and decorative items produced by WPA woodcarvers and used in the county school's "Little Gallery" that visited all the county's schools during the Depression years. Of interest to many was the art work of a local miner who attended evening WPA art classes in Virginia, discovered his talent and painted for the rest of his life. A companion exhibit featured Babbitt, the world's first commercial taconite plant that was constructed by the Mesabi Iron Company in 1921, operated for several years and closed in 1924 due to its inability to compete with natural ores. This is an ongoing exhibit with additional panels to be added in the future.

PLANS FOR 2013

Plans are in the works for another interesting exhibit at B'nai Abraham during the summer months.

THE WAY WE WORKED, is one of the Smithsonian's Museum on Mainstreet (MoMS) exhibits and will be at the B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural center in Virginia from March 26 through May 4, 2013. The exhibit traces changes affecting the workforce and work environments in the last 150 years while showing the diversity of the American workforce. It shows how we work as individuals, and visitors can hear workers tell their own stories or view films of various industries. To add local color, the Virginia Area Historical Society will supply exhibits on range industries, musical groups rendering work-related music and speakers re-living work experiences.



Harry Lamppa and some of the WPA Exhibit



From the Archives

B'nai Abraham is seen under construction during the winter of 1909-1910.

This building in particular, the only extant synagogue left on the Range, and the only synagogue building in Minnesota to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, provides people with a window into understanding the history of the Range and the people who contributed so much to its unique character.

Let's insure the preservation of this wonderful building

Board of Directors of the Friends of B'nai Abraham

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Elayne Deutsch Chiat
Audra Keller
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Katherine Tane
(Executive Dir. JHSUM)

From the Archives



David Schibel, a member of Finland's small Jewish community, immigrated to America in 1902 and opened a Virginia clothing store.

This Finnish-language advertisement is headlined, "FELLOW CITIZENS. NOTICE THE HELSINKI BOY'S CLOTHING STORE."

THE STORY OF THE SCHIBEL FAMILY IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA

The Schibel Family's entrance into the Iron Range, specifically Virginia, Minnesota, began in 1907, with the arrival of David Schibel, who was born in 1881 in Helsinki, Finland, the son of Shmul Schaibel, born 1840, and Haine, born 1848. Shmul and Haine started to live in Helsinki, Finland in 1870 and had 11 children, all of whom were born in Helsinki, Finland.


David Schibel, as a Finnish Jew, emigrated to the United States from Helsinki in 1901 at the age of 20 years old, originally living in Ishpeming, Michigan and then later moving to Virginia, Minnesota where he then married, Irene Simon, and went into business with her brother, Gust Simon in a clothing store in Virginia, Minnesota. The store, known as "The Palace Clothing Company" existed from 1907 to 1997. David Schibel, who spoke 9 languages, including Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, English, Polish and Hungarian, as well as Yiddish and Hebrew, originally had his brother-in-law as a partner and later, starting in the 1930's, David and Irene's son, Howard became a partner in the family store.

Later, Howard Schibel, who married Jeanne Rubinstein of Gilbert, Minnesota, had two sons, Robert and Don, and Don, after the death of his grandfather, David, also became a partner in the store with Howard.

Historically Jews in Finland, when Finland was under the control of Russia, which began from the early 1800's, could only reside in Finland if they had served 25 years in the Czar's army, which Shmul Schaibel did, and raised his family in Helsinki. Shmul originally came from a small steddell (suburb) outside of St. Petersburg. At the time that Shmul and his wife settled in Helsinki, Jews were only allowed to live in 3 Finnish cities and were confined to the occupation of selling second-hand clothing. Eventually, the Schaibel family established a department store in Helsinki.

David and Irene Schibel were amongst the first members of the B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia, Minnesota. David and Irene's son Howard was Bar Mitzvahed in the Synagogue and Howard's children, Robert and Don were also Bar Mitzvahed in the B'nai Abraham Synagogue. Don's sons, Dan Schibel and J. Isaac Schibel, as well as his son, Stephen (Budd) were also Bar Mitzvahed in the B'nai Abraham Synagogue.

The Family uses a small Kiddish cup, Silver engraved that had belonged to Shmul Schaibel dated 1871, which had come from Helsinki.


ROBERT L. SCHIBEL



HOWARD, DOLLY, HARRIET & KEN SIMON



HOWARD, IRENE (NANA), DAVE (POPS) & DOLLY
RITA & HARRIET

Grants awarded to the Friends of B'nai Abraham 2012 for restoration

Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (Legacy Funds) - \$28,760

Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund - \$6,995

Grants awarded to the Friends of B'nai Abraham 2012 for programming

Arrowood Regional Arts Council - \$3,000

John T. and Elizabeth C. Adams Arts Fund, Administered by the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation - \$1000

US Bancorp Foundation, Virginia MN branch - \$1000

Individual Contributions: May 2012 - November 2012

Marc and Amy Blehert

Gail and Berwyn Davies

Lois and Dale Dobrin

Jo Doig

Barbara Eiger

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Evingson

Ross Fefercorn

Susan Gillespie

Mimi and Sherry Gleekel

Howard and Barbara Gordon

Harriet and Joel Katz

Susan and Walter Malec

Lesli and Mike Marasco

Judi and Aaron Natenson

Virginia Nelson

Marcia and Allen Oleisky

Margie and Charlie Ostrov

Norman and Dorothy Pink

Linda and Leonard Schloff

Dianne and Leighton Siegel

Carolyn and Timothy Sundquist

Special Contributions: May, 2012 – November, 2012

Naomi and Neil Arnold: In honor of Leighton Siegel's special birthday and Margie and Charlie Ostrov's anniversary;

Lenore Bear: In memory of Harry Bear;

Trudy Bers: In memory of her mother, Saragrace Kenner Haffron;

Bobbie and Allen Bright: In memory of Billie and Leo Bright and Bernice and Max Landy;

Janet Carlson: In memory of Anne Siegel;

Marilyn Chiat: In honor of Britta Blumberg; In honor of the 60th wedding anniversary of Janice and Bruce Waller; In honor of the 50th wedding anniversary of Phillip and Leah Pickman; In honor of the birth of twin granddaughters of Margery and Irwin Weisman;

Jo Doig: In honor of Dr. Sheldon Mandel's 90th birthday; In honor of Cookie Kronfeld's 85th Birthday;

Pearl Favin: In memory of Ada Walt;

Bob and Sylvia Fine: In honor of the marriage of Daniel and Mindy Chiat;

Bette Globus Goodman: Wishing Ann Phillips a speedy recovery;

Peggie and Herb Greuling: In memory of Winnie Goodman Gurovitsch;

Francine and Brian Gunderson: In honor of Charlie and Margie Ostrov and Dianne and Leighton and Dianne Siegel; In honor of Dr. and Mrs. Gene Kishel's 50th wedding anniversary; In memory of Larry Squillace;

Geraldine and Morris Hoffman: In honor of Marilyn Chiat;

Susan and Bert Gross: In honor of Ann Phillips;

Nancy and Elliott Karasov: In honor of Zoe Milavetz and Talia Milavetz's confirmation;

Audra Keller: In memory of Winnie Goodman Gurovitsch;

Gene Kishel: In honor of Margie and Charlie Ostrov;

Gary Lippman and Catherine Gray: In honor of Katie Sokol;

Rabbi David Lochetz: Thank you to B'nai Abraham for opening the doors to Bet Sholom's Confirmation class;

Myrna Orensten: In memory of the Joseph E. Davis Family;

Margie and Charlie Ostrov: In honor of Toni and Mike Rosen's 150-birthday celebration;

Ann and Felix Phillips: In honor of Rep. Tom Rukavina, a true friend of the Friends of B'nai Abraham Museum and Cultural Center; In honor of Marsha and Gary Tankenoff on their 50th Anniversary; In honor of Toni and Mike's 150 birthday celebration; In memory of Winnie Goodman Gurovitsch; In memory of Larry Squillace;

Amos Rosenbloom and Marsha McDonald: In memory of father, Eli Rosenbloom;

Toni and Mike Rosen: In honor of Leighton Siegel's special birthday;

Barb and Bud Sagan: In Memory of Charles Goodman and Esther Goodman; In honor of the birth of Eli Jacob Cherner, son, grandson and great grandson;

Robert and Linda Schibel: In honor of Audra Keller and Jim Rubenstein's efforts to restore the synagogue;

Marvin and Stefanie Segal: In honor of Dr. Leighton Siegel and Dr. Charles Ostrov for 50 years of great medicine;

Diane Siegel and Anna and Issac: In honor of Charlie Ostrov's special birthday;

Dianne and Leighton Siegel: In honor of Toni and Mike Rosen's 150 birthday celebration and Charlotte Berke's special birthday;

Delores and Mel Sigel: In memory of Myron "Bud" Stulberg;

Jerry and Elaine Stulberg: In honor of Aunt Lillian Raen;

Judith and Bruce Tennebaum: In honor of Leighton Siegel's special birthday;

Karen and Richard Weiland: In memory of Munroe Milavetz;

If we have inadvertently missed your name in our contributors list, please let us know so that you can be included in our next newsletter.

Endowment Fund Creation – help us preserve for the future

Now that the building's restoration is well on its way, **The Friends of B'nai Abraham would like to create an Endowment Fund** that will make certain B'nai Abraham can be well maintained long into the future. We have spoken to staff at several experienced community funds who have expressed an interest in being the repository for such an endowment and work with the Friends to assure that these dollars continue to be used to meet the goal of providing a community resource and ensuring that the contribution of the Jews of the Iron Range will not be forgotten.

To quote our Board member, Dr. Marilyn Chiat: B'nai Abraham represents our nation's great religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. When historic buildings such as B'nai Abraham are lost, our nation's magnificent mosaic (to quote Hubert H. Humphrey) loses some of its brilliant color.

This building in particular, the only extant synagogue left on the Range, and the only synagogue building in Minnesota to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, provides people with a window into

understanding the history of the Range and the people who contributed so much to its unique character.

If you have suggestions or may wish to make such a contribution, please contact Margie or Charlie Ostrov at maostrov@aol.com. We need everyone to be a part of this.



Lets insure the preservation of this wonderful building.

Still Needed

We are still short of our goal.	All donations are fully tax deductible.
<p>Please send your donation to:</p> <p>Friends of B'nai Abraham c/o Charles Ostrov, treasurer 1788 Maryland Ave. North Golden Valley, MN 55427</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip: _____</p> <p>Amount: _____</p> <p>To contribute stock <i>-or-</i> appreciated securities, contact: Jackie or Daryl at Morgan Stanley 800-791-8360 <i>-or-</i> costrov@gmail.com</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Memory of: <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of: <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p> <p>Send acknowledgement card to: Name: _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 150px;">Address: _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">City, State, Zip: _____</p>	

If you would like to receive emails of our upcoming programs and events or you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please send your email address to Ann Phillips phillo37@umn.edu. Every newsletter costs the Friends \$.80 to print and mail.