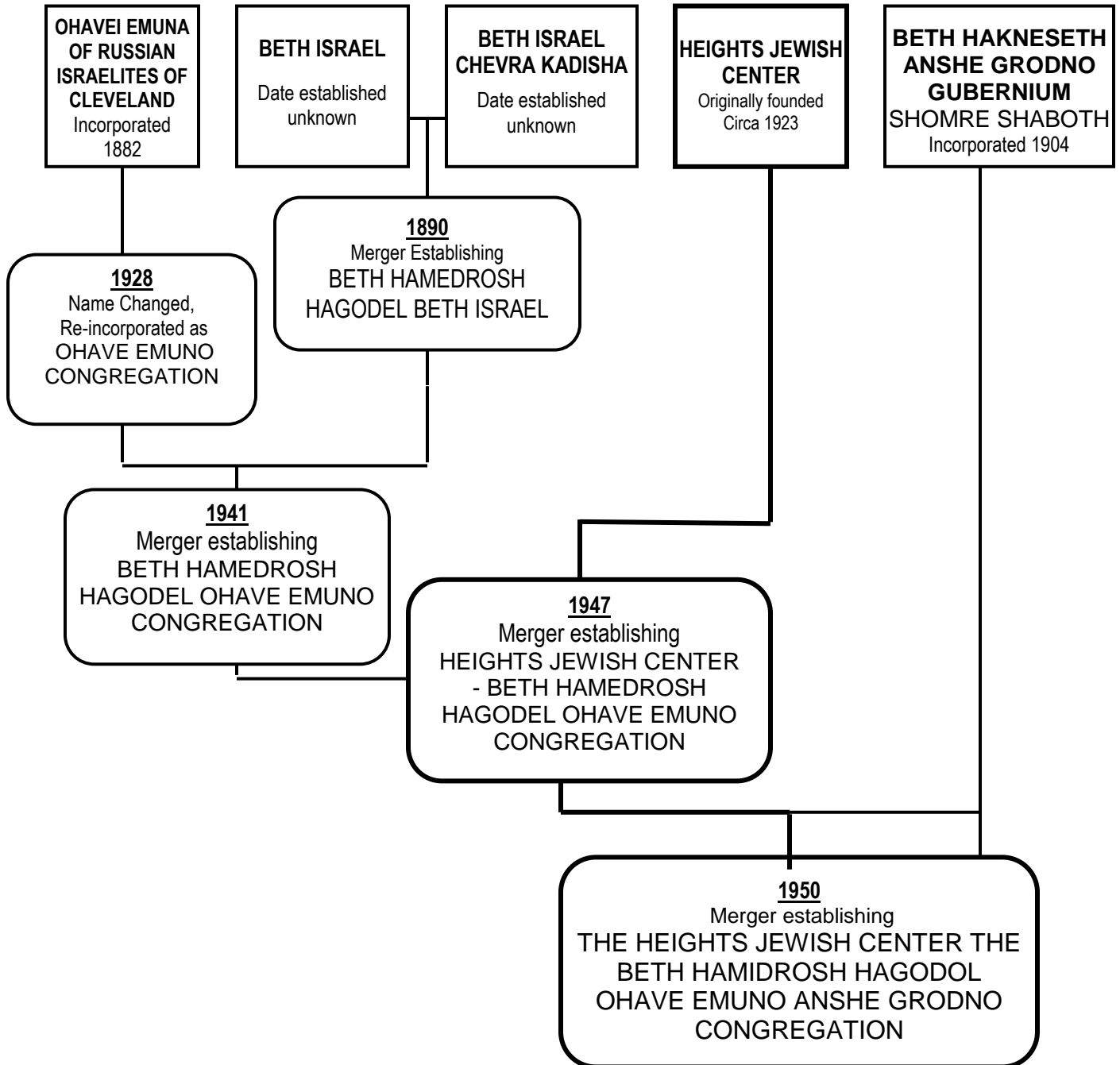


# Heights Jewish Center

© 2013 Jeffrey Morris Cleveland Ohio



Note Hagodel became Hagadol, and Hamedrosh became Hamidrosh In the 1950 Merger

Established in 1923 as **The Heights Jewish Orthodox Congregation** members first met in the home of Jacob and Mina Makoff located on Euclid Heights Blvd. in Cleveland Heights, with the High Holidays services held at the Heights Theatre which had been built by Makoff. In 1928 the congregation was able to hire its first Rabbi, Seymour M. Zambrowsky who would serve for the next ten years before relocating to Canada. With the financial help of the Makoff family a home was acquired January 4, 1928, at 14274 Superior Ave. and their name changed to **The Heights Jewish Center**. That home was built in 1909 by Moritz Stone and just prior to being acquired by the congregation, had been known as the Rest Haven Sanitarium.

The late 1940's saw a substantial influx of Jews, including the Orthodox, relocating to the Heights. At that time, The Heights Jewish Center was the only Orthodox congregation in the area until 1953 when **Beth Hamedrosh Anshe Galicia** changed its name to **Sinai Synagogue** and relocated to the corner of DeSota and Euclid Heights Blvd.

The growth in membership due in part by a merger January of 1947 with **Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Ohave Emuno**, then located in Glenville, compelled the leadership to look at expanding the current facility on Superior Ave. or relocating. They decided to add an auditorium and social hall to the western portion of the building. Completed in early 1948, the non-descript, functional building was built by member Hyman Epstein. At the same time (1947) Rabbi Israel Porath a long-time leader in Cleveland's Orthodox Community became their rabbi and served 27 years until his death in 1974.

In 1954 there were merger talks with **Shaarei Thora** also located in Glenville however; the last known document between the two is a letter from Charles C. Goldman then President of The Heights Jewish Center dated Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 1954, indicating a vote was to take place by members of both congregations on December 14<sup>th</sup>. It is unknown if the vote took place and no further documents have surfaced. Shaarei Thora merged a year later with the **Oheb Zedek -Taylor Road Synagogue**.



14274 Superior Road. Note the building in the front was the original home purchased in 1928. The addition was built in 1948. Both buildings would be used by Heights Jewish Center until relocating in 1991 Source: Cleveland State University. Michael Schwartz Library. Special Collections.



Heights Jewish Center 14270 Cedar Rd, Photo taken by Jeff Morris April, 2009

After the merger in 1950 with **Beth Haknesseth Anshe Grodno** Congregation also located in Glenville would necessitate the need to once again expand, or find a new location in the Heights area. By 1957 one location that came close to reality, was less than a mile east at the corner of Mayfield Road and Cleveland Heights Boulevard from

the estate of William Hoge. However, the plan was rejected by the zoning commission. A second plan which included adding several classrooms to the existing site was approved with the stipulation that an adequate number of parking spaces contiguous to the site be included in the plan. One of the traditions of Orthodox Jews is to avoid operating equipment on the Sabbath; hence, the need to have an additional parking was unnecessary however, that reasoning was not compelling enough to the rigid zoning commission.

In 1978 with an aging property and no space to expand the Masonic Lodge at 14270 Cedar Road was purchased. The lodge was completed in 1954 on a portion of land consisting of 3 acres acquired in late 1952. For many years the Hoge Family operated what was known as a "Truck Farm" and in the 1940's used the western portion from Warrenville Center for as a golf course, which included a restaurant and gasoline station. The sale of this specific parcel to the Masons was one of the last portions of the Hoge family farm to be sold.

Under the direction of long - time stewards Alex Adelman and Morris Sudman, the property underwent extensive renovation with a traditional procession in October 1981 carrying the Torahs from the Superior Ave location to the new location on Cedar. An addition to the Cedar Road location completed in July 1991 includes multi-purpose space, an extension of the social hall and a *milchige* (dairy) kitchen. The Superior Road property was sold to Jaguar Cleveland in 1979 with an agreement allowing the Synagogue to continue to use the building for a period of time. In 1980 the Superior road property was then sold to the city of Cleveland Heights. The original building, (former sanitarium) was demolished, and the lot used for parking, while the main building now supports a variety of functions used by the Police Department including a firing range.

The oldest of congregations' to become part of Heights Jewish Center was **Congregation Ohavei Emuna of Russian Israelites, [Lovers of Righteous Belief of Russian Israelites].**

Incorporated in 1882 various spellings included Ohavu Amunah, Ohaveh Emuan and Oaive Emuno. *The Jewish Independent* of August 12<sup>th</sup> 1921 indicates that congregation's first meeting place was a rented hall on Erie St (E.9<sup>th</sup>) near Central Ave. In October 1883, the congregation purchased a building at 115 Hill Street from Mr. David Heller.

The **Haymarket** was originally that, a market to purchase fresh food and amongst other staples, hay for the horses that were kept in nearby stables located just south of what is now **Tower City** formerly the **Terminal Tower**. The Haymarket ran south beyond Carnegie Rd. to the east up to East 14th<sup>th</sup> St. The western border would essentially be the Cuyahoga River and Canal St.

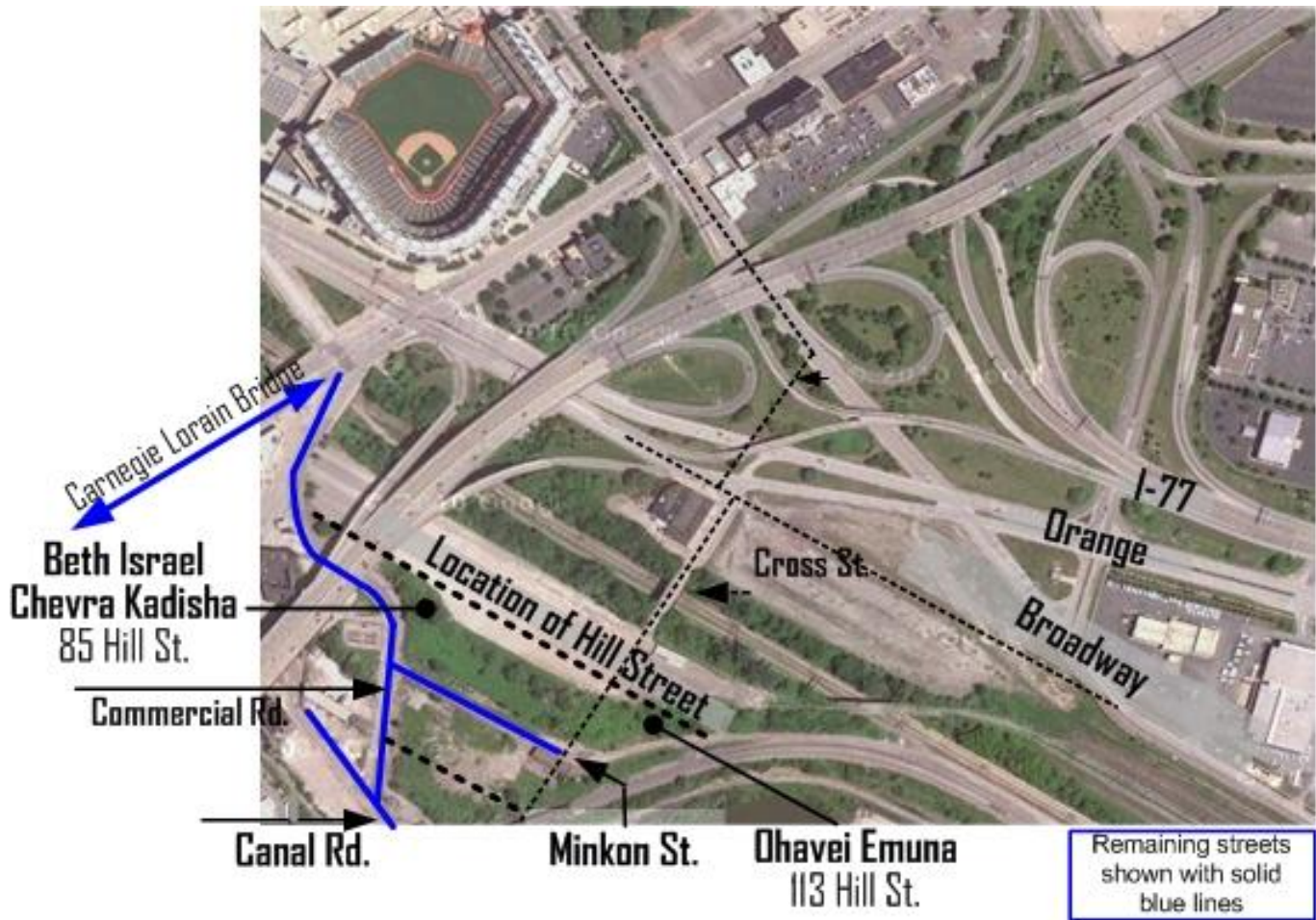
From 1860's to the 1890's many Jewish and Italian immigrants lived and worked in this area. By the very early 1900's this area had become the home to vagrants, prostitutes and undesirables.



Photo of the 500 block of Hill St., taken April 1924 in preparation for the construction of train tracks into the rail station beneath the Terminal Tower. Source: Cleveland State University. Michael Schwartz Library. Special Collections

On July 18<sup>th</sup> 1884 Abraham Brown, A.S. Friedberg and James Jackson trustees of the congregation received approval from the Court of Common Pleas to allow the congregation to sell the property.

The process of asking the court to review and grant approval of a resolution to sell property owned by religious or fraternal organizations based on the by-laws of the organization was commonplace. By doing this the Board of Directors of the organization can easily fight off any member in disagreement from taking legal action to delay or stop the transaction.



In 1885 property at 280 Perry Street, (now 2530 E.22<sup>nd</sup>) was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Weil. It is unclear if the property included an existing structure or a new building was built. However, it is known that renowned architect and member of the congregation, Morris Gleichman, was involved in the project, and at the time of the dedication the President of the congregation was George Laufman. The congregation stayed at this location until 1908 when a move east to Scovill and E. 37<sup>th</sup> occurred. The Perry property was sold in 1908 to David Lifshitz owner of The Eagle Grocers Supply Inc. one of several food service suppliers to consolidate in 1956 to form one of the region's largest wholesale food distributors, Seaway Foods. The property would stay in the Lifshitz (Lipson) family until November of 1960, when the City of Cleveland acquiring the land for the redevelopment commonly known as the St Vincent triangle. The property remained undeveloped until the early 1990's when the Visiting Nurse Association acquired a portion of the land and built their new headquarters.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map  
1890 Vol. 2  
shows Jewish Synagogue  
Wooden structure

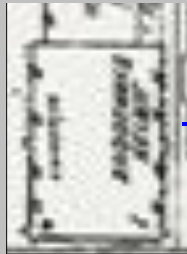
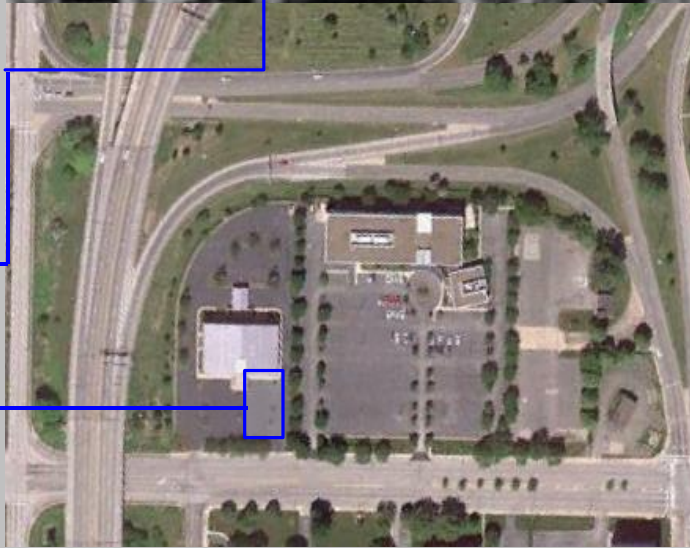
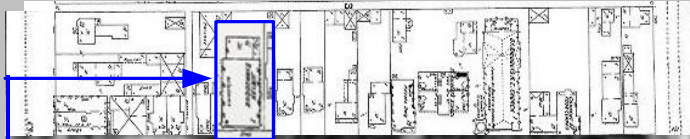
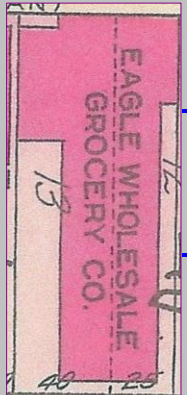


Photo taken 1951  
by the Cuyahoga County  
Engineer shows brick building  
known as  
Eagle Wholesale Grocery Inc.



Google Earth view of E. 22<sup>nd</sup> former location of Ohavie Emuna Mar. 2011

Property's address had been 280 Perry Street until 1906 when the City revised the numbering of the address and changed North South roads to numbered streets The new address of this property became 2530 E. 22<sup>nd</sup>.



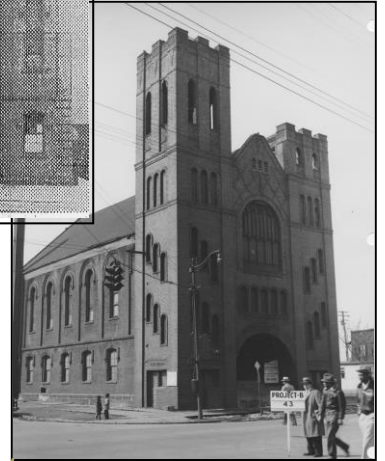
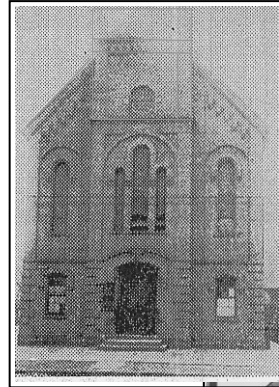
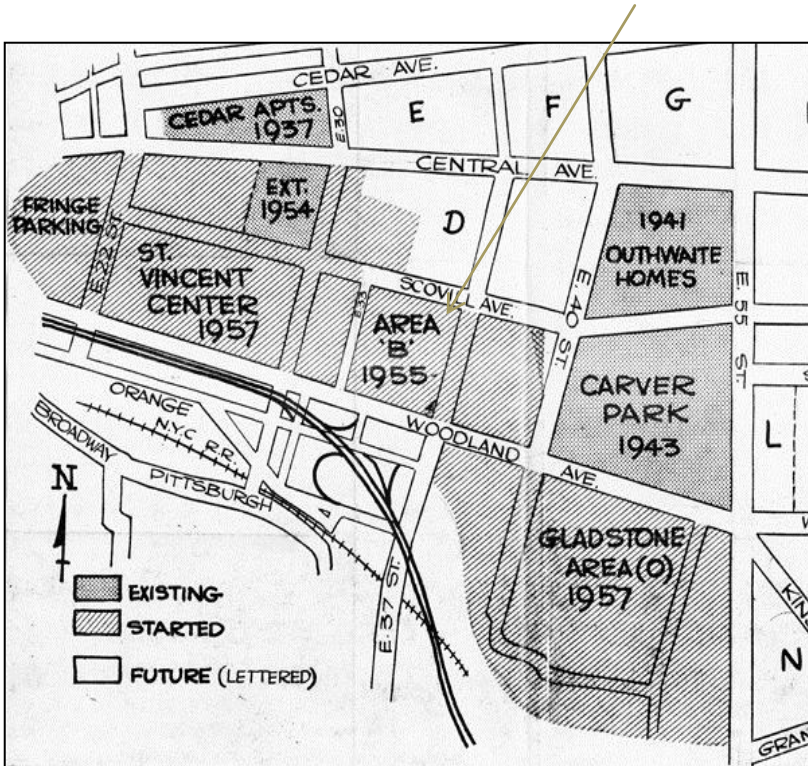
Photo of 2530 E.22<sup>nd</sup> taken by the City of Cleveland June 1960 in preparation of their acquisition of parcels for the St. Vincent Triangle as part of the overall urban renewal project.

Take note the sign held by photographers assistant indicated the Project number being R-13 and asset number 505

Source: City of Cleveland, Archives of the Council. Cleveland Ohio

The congregation relocated in 1908 to the **First German Baptist Church** at the south west corner of Scovill and E.37<sup>th</sup>. Twelve years later in December of 1920, the Congregation sold the property to member M. Bruml. The same day Bruml would sell the property to Mary Spiegle, would then sell the property in April 1922 to pastor Anderson Hawkins of the **Friendship Baptist Church**. The building was the home to the Friendship congregation until August 1943 when they sold the property to the **Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church**. Friendship had moved to its current location in 1940, that being; the former Tifereth Israel building on E.55<sup>th</sup> and Central. In 1954 the Abyssinian congregation was forced to relocate for the construction of the Longwood Estates; a government funded housing project. The Abyssinians' congregation acquired the former Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel location at 1161 E. 105<sup>th</sup> in 1947 as the congregation prepared for their merger into the Heights Jewish Center. This is a perfect example of many where structure moves from one religion to another and back again.

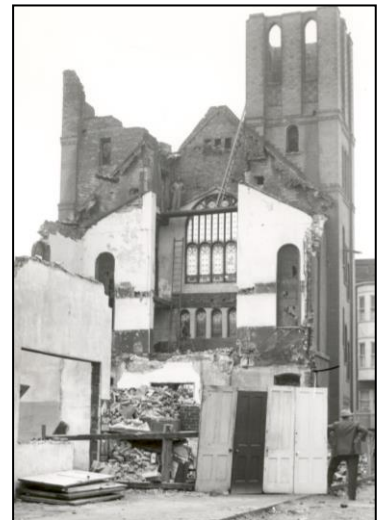
It should be noted that in October 1928 a second Article of Incorporation were filed and acknowledged by the Ohio, Secretary of State by the congregation with the spelling being **Ohave Emuno Congregation**. From that point on the spelling appears to be consistent as Ohave Emuno.



The above map published by the Cleveland Press Jan 4th 1957. Caption reads as follows: "Central area rebuilding which started in the 1930s with Cedar Apartments public housing project is scheduled to move faster in 1957. City officials hope to begin clearing slums for St. Vincent Center and Gladstone Industrial project and to start building in Area B."

Top Photo was published in the 1914 Jewish Blue Book indicating Ohavei Emuna's building at E.37th and Scovill Ave. Source Siegel College of Jewish Studies. Cleveland Ohio

The photo (above right) is the same structure with a new façade thought to be added in 1923 by then owner The Friendship Baptist Church. The photo was taken by Cleveland Urban Renewal Agency, (CURA) a federally funded oversight department to assist the City of Cleveland's Division of Slum Clearance and Blight Control conduct a full inventory and establish the value of property acquired for the construction of Longwood Estates ad the surrounding area



The photo to the right taken June 1959 shows the demolition of the building. Source: Cleveland State University, Michael Schwartz Library. Spécial Collections At this point in the demolition the former front of the building when owned by the Synagogue can be seen and appears to match the photo above from Jewish Blue Book published in 1914.



Photo to the left is the southwest corner of Scovill Ave. now known as Community College Drive and E. 37th taken June 2012. Source Jeff Morris

Note: The housing shown in the photo is not the original Longwood Housing project built in 1959. Those properties were replaced in 2001 – 2006 and remarketed as Arbor Park Village.

Ohave Emuno's next location was a new building at 7115 Cedar Rd. designed by Meyer Altschuld and built by M. Wittenberg. According to news clippings and plat maps, one could surmise that an older home at the rear of the property was used as a temporary meeting place until the new building was completed. According to documents filed with the Cuyahoga County Clerk of Court, Sheriff, Martin O'Donnell sold the property December 16<sup>th</sup> 1938 as required by law due to the

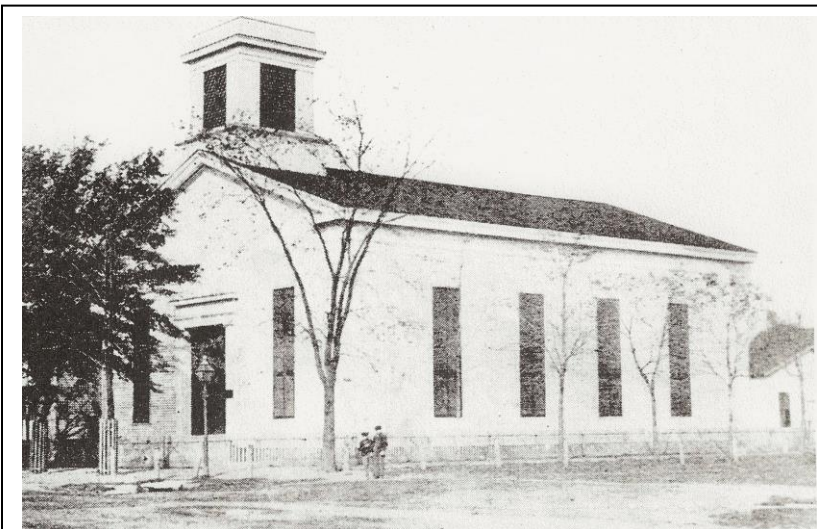


synagogue defaulting on their loan to Union Bank and trust in the amount of \$18,400. Limited data could be found regarding events of the congregation from the time they moved from Scovill and E.30<sup>th</sup> and their merger in April 1941 with Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel then located at 1161 E.105<sup>th</sup> The newly merger group would be known as **Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Ohave Emuno.**

The current owner, Sardis Baptist Church, acquired the property in 1941 from Union Properties Inc. a corporation created by the State of Ohio's banking regulators to liquidate the assets of the Union Trust Bank, a victim of the Great Depression of their defaulted outstanding loans along with the Union Trust's own assets.

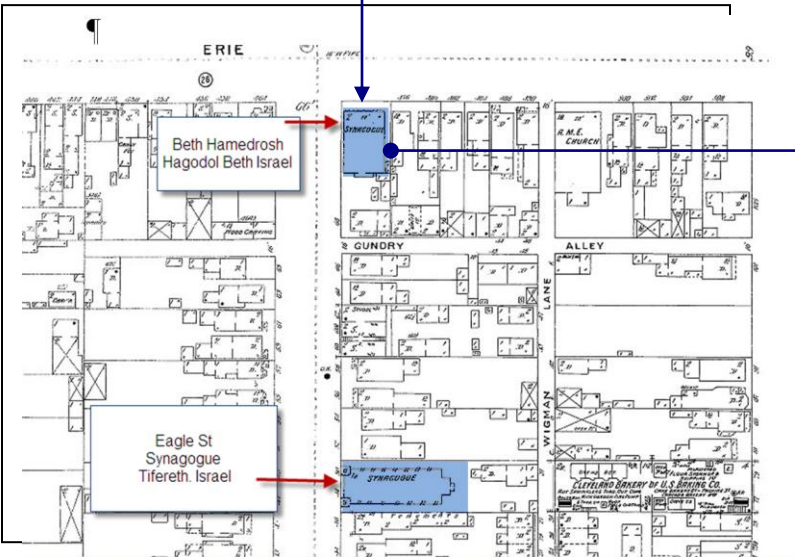
**Beth Hagodol Hamedrosh Beth Israel** [**Great House of Israel**] was incorporated in 1890 when **Beth Israel Chevra Kadisha** and **Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol** merged. Beth Israel Chevra Kadisha had been formed by Russian immigrants in 1869 and first met in rented space on Erie Street (E. 9<sup>th</sup>) and Central Ave. until 1873 when property was purchased from David Heller at 85 Hill Street in the heart of the Haymarket. That property would be sold to Louis and Nettie Sachroff in April of 1891. In 1898 the property would again be acquired by Orthodox Jews establishing the first meeting place of Congregation Agadath Achim.

Little is known about the first meeting place or when the members of Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol



House of worship at the S.W. corner of Erie street (E.9th) and Eagle Ave. Purchased by Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel in 1890 from the Salem Evangelistic Church. Date of Photo unknown Source: Cleveland Public Library, Photo Collection

organized. The first document to identify both congregations having some form of consolidation is the deed that listing both congregations as one purchasing the **Salem Evangelist Church** in August 1890, located on the southwest corner of Erie St. (E.9<sup>th</sup>) and Eagle Ave. Their official incorporation as Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel and is dated May 13,1890.



The congregation would stay on Erie Street until property on the southeast corner of Woodland and E. 27th was purchased in 1899 from the Estate of John Erwin, one of Cleveland's early settlers. The local papers covered the groundbreaking of this 1000 seat Synagogue on Sunday, July 9th, of the same year. The journalists covering the event were able to report firsthand the unexpected collapsing of the platform over the freshly dug cellar sending several dignitaries to the nearby St. Vincent Hospital. News clippings indicate the cost of the building being \$15,000.00. The Erie street property was sold in 1904 to the Salvation Army who constructed a five story structure known as the "Citadel." This five story building was the first reinforced concrete constructed building in Ohio and was used by the Salvation Army's Harbor Light Center until the mid 1970's

According to deeds filed with the county between 1905 and 1911 several members took ownership of the Woodland Ave. property by purchasing specific seats. The synagogue would take the ownership back in June 1919, allowing the property to be sold one month later to the Maurice Company. According to an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer dated June, 11, 1920 The Maurice Co, 1104 Woodland Ave sold the church property to Max Greenhut for an undisclosed term then leasing the property to The "Mexclson" Tobacco Co. for several years. One can conclude that the name "Mexclson" Tobacco was an incorrect spelling for Mendelsohn Tobacco, one of Cleveland local cigar manufactures.



Estate of John Erwin. Woodland Ave at e. 27<sup>th</sup> formerly Jackson Street. Per his will John Erwin's home was torn down. This was not all that uncommon amount the early aristocratic leaders during that time period.

Source Cleveland State University, Michael Schwartz Library. Digitized image from the Atlas of Cuyahoga County, from actual surveys by and under the direction of D.J. Lake Co. Publisher 1874 Titus Simons and Titus.

**To the Cigar Retailers  
in the Cleveland Territory:**

*We are pleased to announce  
that the following jobbers*

Amster Co.	3582 Woodland Avenue
Anster Bros.	423 Eagle Avenue.
A. D. Gittelsohn Co.	2546 E. 55th St.
A. Kirtz.	506 Woodland Avenue.
Wm. Kirtz Cigar & Tobacco Co.	2688 E. 9th St.
David Saffer.	5588 Superior Avenue.
H. H. Serrer & Son.	6104 Clinton Avenue.
The Weideman Co.	1280 West 9th St.

*will distribute the following brands of cigars*

**"Student Prince"**  
**"Paramount"**    **"Decision"**

*They will appreciate your business  
and will be pleased to serve you.*

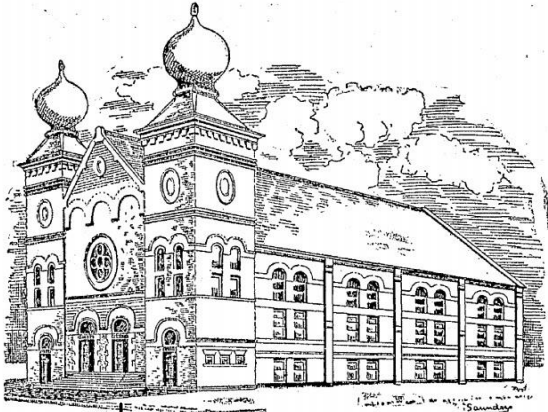
*For further information call*

**THE MENDELSON COMPANY**  
Prospect 0816    2700 Woodland Ave.  
Cleveland, Ohio

Advertisement in the  
Cleveland Plain Dealer  
1927.

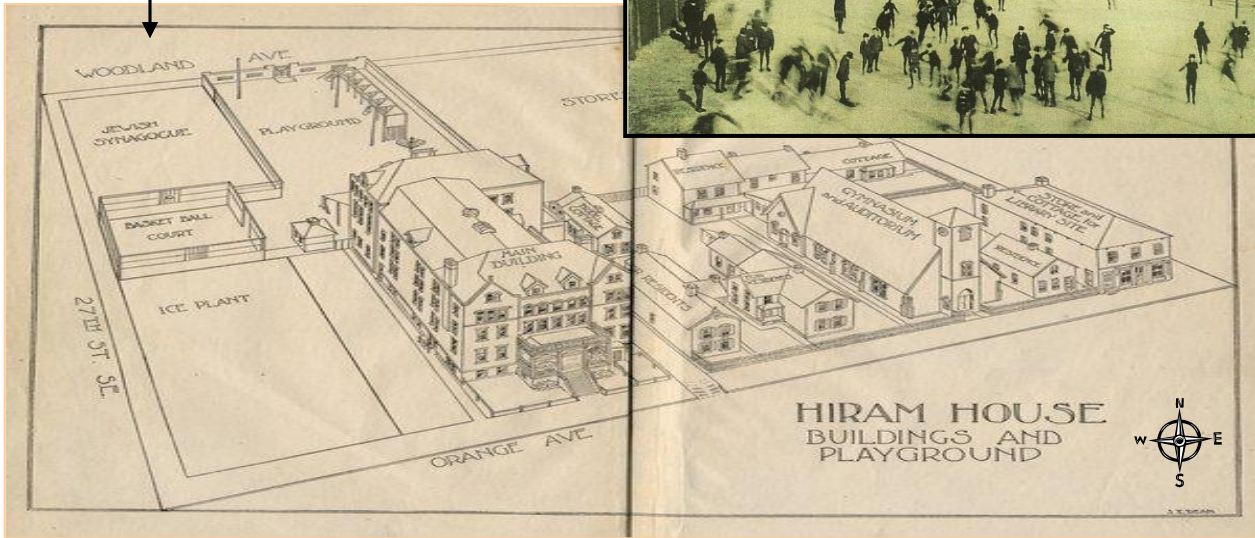
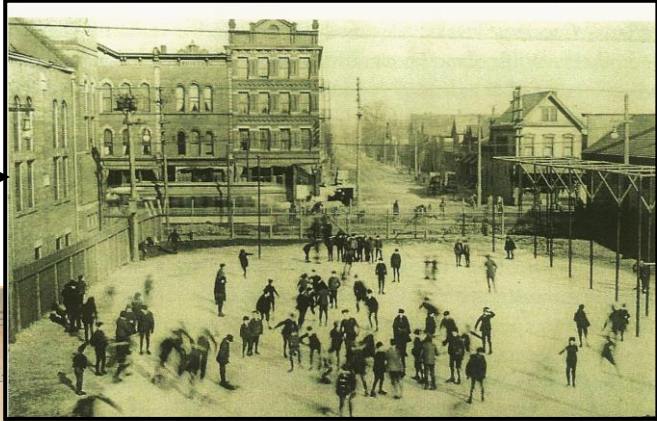


A pictorial story in the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1929 edition of the Cleveland Plain Dealer shows a photo of women making cigars with the caption reading "CIGAR MAKERS at work at the plant of M & N Cigar Manufacturing Company, 2700 Woodland Avenue"



Drawing of Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel at the southeast corner of Woodland and E. 27th (Jackson) built in 1904. Source; Cleveland Plain Dealer June 8<sup>th</sup> 1899

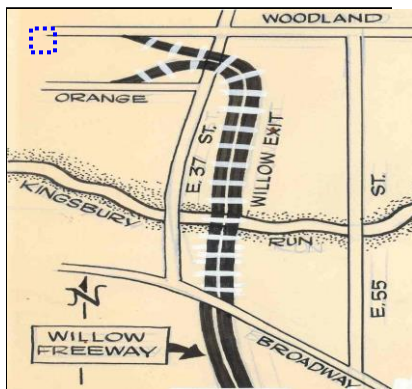
Photo and drawing below shows the east side of the Synagogue and the adjacent Hiram House Playground. Source Hiram House 1913 Annual Report.



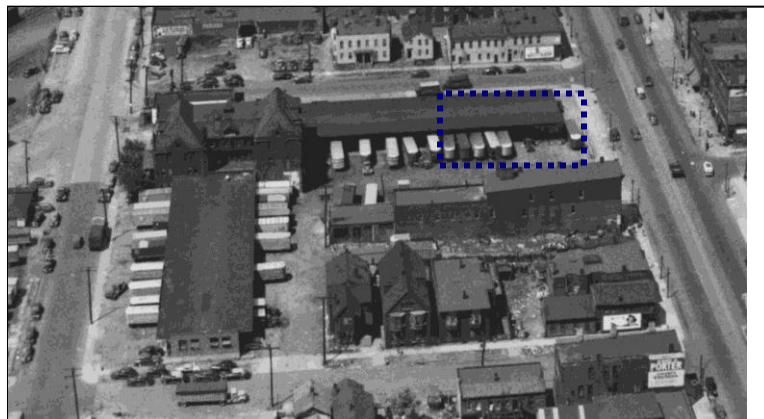
According to an article in the Plain Dealer dated July 12th 1930 the production line at that facility was being relocated as a result of their recent merger with Newman Cigar Co., located at 922 Woodland Ave. The building continued to be owned by Max Greenhut and his family including his daughters' Viola Berk and Lily Mendelsohn. In July 1936 the Sheriff sold the property on behalf of Central National Bank as part of the process when a bank forecloses on a loan in default. In October 1938 the bank sold the property to the former synagogue's neighbor to the south Hiram House. The property was subsequently sold by Hiram house in April 1941, along with their adjacent properties to Wenham Transportation for their new freight terminal. It is unknown when the former synagogue was demolished.

The new terminal built by A.M. Higley and Co., would utilize the former Hiram House for offices and freight storage with a newly built cross dock extending north to Woodland, and several years later an additional cross dock extending east along Orange Ave.

By the 1940's the neighborhood from the former Haymarket area (Ontario and Broadway) east to 30<sup>th</sup> street and south of Woodland Road had been transitioning over the last 20 years from a sparse amount of dilapidated homes built before the 1900's, along with miles of train tracks for both passenger and freight trains to a neighborhood of truck terminals and supportive industries. Wenham would stay at this location until 1961 when the property was purchased by the State of Ohio for the construction of the I-77 interchange into I-90, often known as the "interbelt". Wenham relocated to a facility at 3200 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street. The business filed bankruptcy in 1979, several years after the Wenham family sold the business to local inventors.



Drawing from the Cleveland Press April 5, 1957, showing the route the will extend the Willow Freeway (I-77) into Downtown Cleveland and connect with what is commonly called the Inter-belt, which is I-90.



View of Hiram House in upper left corner of photo, Taken Sept 1946. Location of Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel is to the right where Wenham Transportation's freight terminal appears in the photo. Source of the photo: Cleveland State University. Michael Schwartz Library. Special Collections.----- =former location of Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel of Synagogue

The Congregation like so many others relocated to the Glenville neighborhood purchasing a former church in August 1919 at 1151 East 105<sup>th</sup>. The building was built in 1906 by the Trinity United Brethren Church; this location would be commonly known as the “**Tacoma Shul**” as it was on the corner of E. 105<sup>th</sup> and Tacoma.



1151 E. 105<sup>th</sup>. Formerly Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel. Now owned by the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church. Photo Taken circa 1980. Source of Photo: Cleveland State University. Michael Schwartz Library. Special Collections.



Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Beth Israel would change their name when they merged with the smaller Ohave Emuno congregation in 1941 and formed **Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Ohave Emuno**. The newly merged group would continue to be one of several orthodox congregations to sustain its membership through the years of World War II. In 1946 the congregation would consider a merger with Oheb Zedek (Taylor Road Synagogue) also located in Glenville and looking to relocating to Cleveland Heights. However, the preferred merger occurred in February of 1947 with The Heights Jewish Center already located in Cleveland Heights. The building was used by the newly merged congregation until sold in June of 1958 to the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church who continues to occupy the building.



2546 East 39<sup>th</sup>. Photo taken in 1954 in preparation for the demolition of over 300 homes for the Government funded, Longwood Estates. Source Cleveland Public Library, Photo Collection

In 1907 a home at 2546 E. 39<sup>th</sup> was purchased from M.L. Levenson and occupied by the congregation until December 1918 when it was sold to the Sweet Pilgrim Baptist Church until August 1955 when, like other property owners in the area, the property was acquired for the Longwood Estates housing development.

The last congregation to join the Heights Jewish Center was **Beth Haknesseth Anshe Grodno** [**The Congregation of the People of Grodno, Guardians of the Sabbath**] established in 1904 by immigrants from Grodno, a province of the Russian Empire. According to the *Cleveland Encyclopedia* members first held their prayer meetings in the home of Benjamin Zelling, and then in a rented hall on Perry Street (E. 22<sup>nd</sup>) near Orange Ave.



2350 East 55<sup>th</sup>. Source Mt. Sinai Baptist Church Date unknown

In July 1918 the congregation purchased property at 2350 E. 55<sup>th</sup> from Levenson. It is unclear if the purchase included a house or building, however it appears from a photo taken in the 1920's that the two story brick building could have been built circa 1900. The property was sold in March of 1936 to the **Second Mt. Sinai Baptist Church**. In January 1940 the property was acquired by the U.S. Department of Housing for construction of the Outhwaite Public Housing Project. The church relocated to 2690 E. 75<sup>th</sup> street until 1976 when again forced by yet another urban renewal project known as Garden Valley, now known as Heritage View to relocate, resulting in the church building a beautiful new structure at 7510 Woodland Ave that continues to attract members from both the neighborhood and the suburbs.



In 1931, the Congregation purchased a building at 1055 E. 105<sup>th</sup> from Joe Attenson. Built in 1907 for the Presbyterian Church. The congregation would remain at this location until merging in August of 1950 with the Heights Jewish Center Beth Hagodol Hamedrosh Ohave Emuno.

Prior to selling the property, attorney Charles Goldman advised the newly consolidated congregation that the property could not be sold until the deed was properly prepared, as it had 17 “clouds” preventing a proper deed transfer to a buyer.. The more serious issues an encroachment to the north, several incomplete deed transfers over the prior decade and a mortgage remaining to Mr. Barnet Berman who had disappeared several years earlier in California. After several years, and approval of the court Goldman was able to provide the proper document in order to sell the building in June of 1956 to The Greater Cleveland Friendship Baptist Church. The church would change hands again in 1972 to The Cleveland Church of Christ, Citadel of Hope Ministries under the direction of Bishop Lincoln C. Houghton, III. Over the next few decades the Church would remodel the building including a new façade at the entrance on E.105 along with acquiring several properties next to, and behind the building. The Cleveland Church of Christ would continue reinventing in the community constructing a new house of worship and community service building on the northeast corner of E. 105<sup>th</sup> and Massie. Today the former Beth Hakneseth Anshe Grondo building is used as part of their youth programs.

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