

**NEW HOME MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
1616 Carondelet Street,  
including 1629 Euterpe Street**

Landmark Designation Report  
March 10, 1998



Architectural Rating: Blue  
Construction Date: 1924  
Architect: Emilie Weil  
Contractor: Charles Gibert

Site Description

Square 209, Lot Undesignated  
1st Municipal District, 1st Assessment District  
Zoning: C-1A, General Commercial  
Owner: New Home Missionary Baptist Church  
1605 Carondelet St.  
New Orleans, LA 70130

Nomination Information

Date Nominated: April 10, 1990

The nomination of this property was based upon its architectural significance. Each of the four areas of criteria used in determining whether a property is worthy of or meets the qualifications for landmark status, as outlined in City Ordinance #5992 M.C.S., will be examined.

History of Property

The building currently known as the New Home Missionary Baptist Church was originally built as the Beth Israel Synagogue, home of an Orthodox Jewish congregation. This synagogue was organized and chartered in 1904, when various groups merged to become Beth Israel. In 1906, they dedicated their first home in the old Shakespeare house at 1616 Carondelet. This was a "Spanish plantation type home, which was built...by Mayor Joseph A. Shakespeare." By the early 1920s, the congregation began to experience a need for more space. They decided to construct a new temple at their same location. The former Shakespeare home was demolished to make way for the new temple. The cornerstone was laid on March 17, 1924. On September 15, 1924, the new temple at 1616 Carondelet which is the current building, was dedicated. It cost approximately \$150,000 and provided a seating capacity for 1,200 people.

The next major accomplishment of the synagogue was the founding of the Menorah Institute, an educational, cultural and social center for the synagogue and the Jewish community. It was built

immediately behind the temple, facing onto Euterpe Street, forming an L-shaped lot. The cornerstone was laid on December 14, 1925, and the building was completed at a cost of approximately \$100,000. The stated aims of the Menorah Institute were to familiarize the children of the synagogue with the Torah, Jewish customs and traditions, and Jewish history through the establishment of a daily Hebrew School, a Sunday Religious School, and a Teachers' Training School. There were also adult lectures and study groups. Within the Menorah building, a complete stage and performance space was utilized for a community theater group.

On April 1, 1957, the Beth Israel Congregation celebrated its 50th Anniversary. While the congregation had continued to grow and thrive, they began to notice that the neighborhood around the synagogue, which had once been "part of the fashionable 'Garden District,'" had begun to deteriorate. Where before size had been the problem, now it was location. The congregation decided to build a new building on a site on Canal Boulevard, where they now reside. The last service held in the old temple on Carondelet was on Friday morning, January 9, 1970.

After various owners, the property was acquired by the current owner, New Home Missionary Baptist Church. This congregation was organized in 1917, and moved to 1616 Carondelet from their previous location on Broad Street.

#### Architectural Significance

1616 Carondelet Street is a two story masonry building constructed as a Jewish temple in the style of the Renaissance Revival with Moorish influences. The entry consists of three double doors (shielded by cast iron gates), separated by two large square pillars, and flanked by six columns. Concrete steps, recently treated to resemble slate or flagstone, rise to the front entrance. A wide cornice and frieze crowns the entry doors. Above this, a large arch containing five arched, stained glass windows separated by pilasters is trimmed with two rows of two-toned brick and stone trim. Extending out from the sides of the arch on both sides are three diamond-shaped tiles which have colored marble centers. Above these tiles, near the top of the arch, are two round cast stone medallions depicting the Star of David. The parapet has a front gable surmounted by a cast stone frame around two, arched, incised, white stone tablets. The parapet has a cast stone coping and cornice. At each end of the front facade is a slightly projecting bay, having the appearance of small towers, that stop short of the roof cornice. Here the ground floor is clad in scored white stucco, and is separated from the second story by a band of coping. This band curves over and around the single arched window set in each bay. Above this band, a line of diamond-shaped tiles with marble centers wraps around the towers. The central area of these bays is recessed above the arched window, and within this recess are a pair of smaller arched windows, divided by a cast stone pilaster and surrounded by cast stone sills and lintels. Cast stone ornament highlights the top of these bays. The corners of the building are recessed and have a lower parapet, but the cornice continues here and also down the sides of the building. A large white cornice breaks this section of the building between the first and second floors, under which runs the line of diamond-shaped tiles

1629 Euterpe Street, built as the Menorah Institute, is a two story masonry structure in a very symmetrical Neo-Classical design. The main facade of the building is a single story and is slightly recessed. It is framed with two square pilasters at the corners and a cornice across the top. This is supported by four Ionic columns. This central section of the facade is clad in white stucco, scored to resemble stone blocks. The frieze contains Hebrew lettering. The cornice is ornamented with a double Greek key style design. The front door, reached by a set of wide steps, has been replaced, but originally was a pair of paneled doors topped by a transom. This changing of the door is one of the few alterations that the building has suffered. (Other alterations consist of the removal of Jewish symbols and Hebrew lettering, and the infilling of some side openings.) There is a gabled pediment over the door, supported on two scrolled brackets. Within the pediment is a menorah in relief. On either side of the door is an oval niche with a semicircular shelf or planter. The main section is flanked by shorter wings of brown brick with concrete bases and a cornice that matches that of the main section. These wings have had large side openings infilled with brick and either smaller windows or a door.

The two story part of the building is stepped back from the front and is constructed in the brown brick of the side wings. The central section reflects the design of the main entrance with square pilasters and three small Ionic columns appearing to support a heavy cornice. Again, the frieze once contained Hebrew lettering and symbols which have been removed. The banded cornice, which appears to be of cast stone, is topped by a stepped parapet. This parapet once terminated in a large menorah, since removed. Again on the second floor there is evidence of large openings having been infilled with a lighter colored brick, and sometimes with smaller windows. The large rear section of the building is executed in a tan brick and features 1/1 double hung windows topped with transoms.

#### Architect

Emile Weil, well known New Orleans architect, was the designer of 1616 Carondelet, and the contractor was Charles Gibert. No architect was discovered for 1629 Euterpe Street.

#### Historic Personages

None

#### Cultural, Political, Economic and Social History

This building has a multi-denominational history. It was of great importance to the Orthodox Jewish community of New Orleans for many years. It continues to thrive and serve a large African American Baptist congregation.

#### Staff Recommendation

The unique architectural nature of these two buildings reflects their dedication to religious activities. Both the exotic Moorish style of the main building at 1616 Carondelet, a fairly rare style for our area, and the symmetrical Neo-Classical style of 1629 Euterpe are particularly well-

executed stylistic examples. 1616 Carondelet is an outstanding work by an architect whose individual ability has been recognized as one of New Orleans foremost architects. The staff recommends that this property be designated as a landmark based on its architectural significance and on its design by a notable architect.

End Notes

“Beth Israel Turns the Corner,” *History of Our Synagogue*, Cohen, Nate and Marshall Gerson, pp.38-42.

*Times Picayune*, March 17, 1924, p.3, c.3.

*Times Picayune*, September 15, 1924, p.22, c.2.

*Times Picayune*, December 14, 1925, p.9, c.4.