

Kew Hebrew Congregation

Prepared by: Context

Address: 53 Walpole Street, Kew

Name: Kew Hebrew Congregation	Survey Date: 8 & 15 June 2020
Place Type: Community (religious)	Architect: William Salway (1886 residence); Bridge Hayden & Associates (Bet Nachman Synagogue, Norman Smorgon House and School)
Grading: Significant	Builder: Clements Langford Pty Ltd
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Dates: c.1886 (residence); 1954 and 1957 (additions to Norman Smorgon House), 1959 (Classrooms), 1963-66 (Bet Nachman Synagogue and school building), 1970 (Cottage)



Figure 1. View of Bet Nachman Synagogue building from the south-east corner of Walpole and Malmsbury streets. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 2. View of the two-storey school wing from Malmsbury Street. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 3. Entrance to Norman Smorgon House via Malmsbury Street. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Historical Context

The first survey of the Kew area was by government surveyor Robert Hoddle, who divided the 1400 acres (570 hectares) of the Parish of Boroondara into 150 blocks of different sizes in 1837 (Morrissey 2008). Kew was divided into large allotments to encourage the establishment of small farms and market gardens to supply the growing settlement of Melbourne. These larger allotments meant that future subdivision proceeded in a piecemeal way (Sanderson 1988:4/2).

Access to Kew from the central city was originally via a punt across the Yarra in the 1840s, then via a bridge to Hawthorn which opened in 1852, and by the privately owned Studley Park Bridge (nicknamed the Penny Bridge), which was opened in 1857. The construction of the Johnston Street Bridge in 1858 enabled direct access to Kew from Collingwood. The Boroondara Road Board District, comprising Kew, Hawthorn and Camberwell, was proclaimed in 1856 (*Victorian Places* 2015).

The first houses in Kew were mostly built in the 1850s around the area now known as the Kew Junction. During the gold rushes of the 1850s, speculation on land purchases increased and the region experienced rapid expansion. As Jane Carolan writes, Kew became a 'suburb of British expatriates who built their homes and gardens to replicate those left behind'. A number of fine homes were built in Kew by wealthy merchants, industrialists and politicians, and by graziers seeking a town address. Many of the villas and mansions were built to overlook the city of Melbourne and were set on large allotments of land, sometimes of many acres (Carolan 2003:3).

The subdivision of land to form residential estates occurred in the Kew area from the 1860s, although subdivision plans from the 1860s and 1870s suggest that the scale of subdivision was quite small. In the 1880s, Melbourne's land boom was influential in establishing Kew's residential street pattern (Sanderson 1988:4/7-9).

Subdivision slowed with the economic depression of the 1890s. However, by the end of 1897, housing construction had begun anew. In 1903, Kew was described by the *Australian Handbook* as a 'very favourite place of residence for the merchants and upper tradesmen of the city, and is dotted with their elegant mansions, villas, and well-kept gardens' (cited in *Victorian Places* 2015).

From 1920, with the war over and suburban development in full swing in Melbourne, Victoria experienced the highest marriage rate in its history and families sought homes away from the crowded inner suburbs of Melbourne. Following the tramlines, new estates were established in Kew. The pattern of expansion continued through the rest of the decade, and was reflected in the construction of 'State Bank houses' and War Service Homes; both schemes were administered by the State Savings Bank of Victoria, with houses in Kew built mostly on new subdivisions in the north and east of the suburb. New subdivisions in the 1920s changed the rural nature of North Kew, as housing and large recreation reserves began to replace dairy farms and market gardens. Estates were also established on the grounds of former mansions. Between 1921 and 1933, Kew's population increased by 46.62 per cent and its house numbers by 62.73 per cent (Sanderson 1988:4/11-17). As a result of council policy to limit industry, Kew had only 29 factories in 1927 compared with Hawthorn's 140 factories (Morrissey 2008), further reinforcing its reputation as a genteel residential suburb.

Subdivision slowed once again with the economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, but new estates appeared in the mid-1930s. Most of the new estates were of a modest scale built around small courts or short streets that bisected the former grounds of large houses. However, some in the northern part of the suburb had more substantial houses. Further subdivision occurred after World War II (Sanderson 1988:4/20 and 4/24).



The Studley Park area of Kew underwent intensive and significant infill development in this period (Built Heritage 2012:17).

Today, Kew retains evidence of this historical growth and development. As the *City of Kew Urban Conservation Study* states:

To the north and east twentieth century housing predominates, the result of the suburban expansion that followed both World Wars. In the rest of the suburb the housing is more mixed, a legacy of constant subdivision. For this reason Kew does not have significant nineteenth century streetscapes, but in the mixture of housing styles numerous important buildings remain, and in the individual examples both old and new, Kew's built heritage is almost a compendium of domestic architecture in Melbourne, from smaller family houses through to grand mansions (Sanderson 1988:4/25).

Sub-theme: Jewish settlement in Melbourne

The first Jewish settlers came to Melbourne in the 1830s, including some who had been British convicts. Melbourne attracted a diverse range of immigrants from the 1850s, including many English and European Jews, however the bulk of the nineteenth century Jewry in Melbourne had English origins. In the 1920s there was an increase in Jewish immigration to Melbourne, with many settling in Carlton. After the Second World War there was a large number of European Jews immigrating to Melbourne, many of whom were displaced persons. A great many amongst this group were Holocaust survivors and the need for this group to establish a supportive, connected community life was paramount. There was a concentration of Jewish settlement in St Kilda, Caulfield and Kew (particularly in the Studley Park area). (Catherine Townsend, 'Making Jewish Modern Melbourne'; Bernard Retcher 2008, 'Jews and Judaism' in eMelbourne)

Sub-theme: History of churches / synagogues

From the 1850s, places of worship appeared in the area now constituting the City of Boroondara. Early places of worship were relatively primitive, but in the second half of the nineteenth century the major Christian denominations erected larger, more impressive buildings. In the early development of Kew, the early churches were often the recipients of a Crown grant of land. The early church sites often had a sufficiently large allotment to allow a generous set back and a garden setting.

While church buildings were erected for Christian denominations in the nineteenth century, there was no early place of worship for the Jewish community established in Kew nor in the wider area of the City of Boroondara. The Catholic church established a particularly strong presence in Kew with the establishment of Xavier College (1876), Sacred Heart Primary School and Genazzano girls' school (1890), followed by the establishment of the residence for the archbishop's palace at 'Raheen' in 1918. Other church-affiliated schools in Kew included Methodist Ladies' College (1892), Trinity Grammar School (1903) and Carey Baptist Grammar School (1918). It is likely that there were more church-affiliated schools established in Kew than any other suburb of Melbourne.

Prior to the Second World War, in the absence of a Jewish school in the City of Boroondara, some middle-class Jews in Melbourne sent their children to Christian church-affiliated schools, including Scotch College and Methodist Ladies' College (McCalman 1994, *Journeyings*: 102-03). Following the Second World War, several Jewish schools were established in Melbourne. Mount Scopus Memorial College opened on St Kilda Road in 1949 and moved to a large site in Burwood in 1954. Bialik College, which originated in Carlton in 1942, was established in Hawthorn East in the late 1970s, but the school has no associated synagogue.



In Melbourne there were Jewish schools established in St Kilda, and later in Caulfield and Kew. While there was a large number of religious-affiliated schools attached to Christian churches in the City of Boroondara, the school in Kew was the only religious day school that was Jewish.

History of the place

This present site on the north-west corner of Walpole Street and Malmesbury Road, Kew, occupies a site that was part of a larger part of land defined as Crown allotment 87 in the Parish of Boroondara, which was first purchased from the Crown by N. Fenwick in 1853 (Boroondara parish plan). This area developed into a middle-class residential area, and a number of fine villas were erected here in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In 1885, the site facing Malmsbury Street was a vacant block owned by John Donaldson, manager. In 1886 Donaldson commissioned the renowned Melbourne architect William Salway (1844-1902) to build a single-storey villa on the allotment (*Argus*, 5 May 1886:3). Salway designed a large number of public and residential buildings in Melbourne, including the Italianate mansions 'Nareeb', Toorak (1888, demolished) and the extension to 'Raheen', Kew (1884; VHR H0515), as well as the grandstand at the MCG (c.1880s). The MMBW detail plan dated 1904 shows the large house at 71 Malmsbury Street, named 'Koorooanda', set amidst an extensive garden with a rear summer house (MMBW 1904). John Donaldson lived at this address with his wife Alice (née Chapman) and their four children (RB 1897, ER 1919). The address was changed by the early 1900s to 53 Walpole Street. In late 1920, John Donaldson advertised 'Koorooanda' for sale. The house was described as a 'spacious brick villa residence' in 'beautiful grounds'. Other details provided about the house included its 'solid construction ... specially ventilated, hollow walls, slate roof, and containing ten large rooms and offices, verandahs on three sides and lookout roof' (*Herald*, 11 December 1920: 28).

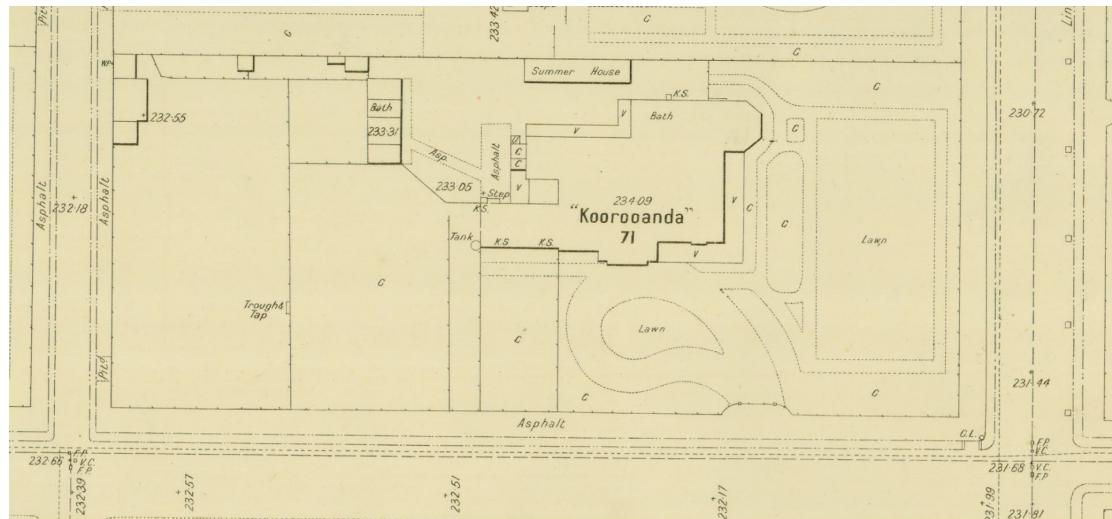


Figure 4. The original residence at 53 Walpole Street, Kew (formerly addressed as 71 Malmsbury Street), shown in MMBW Detail Plan No. 1583, dated 1904. The house 'Kooroonda' was set on a large block with generous areas of garden to the south and east. (Source: State Library Victoria)

From the early 1920s the house was named 'Elstow' and was owned by Alfred Harold Gaze, general manager of the British Phosphate Commission. Gaze and his wife resided here with their four children.

A large Peppercorn tree, located close to the southern boundary of the property, appears to have formed part of the garden at 'Kooroonda' (MMBW 1904); this tree had a large canopy in 1945 which indicates that it is at least 75 years old (Melbourne 1945).



Figure 5. Detail of an aerial photo, dated December 1945, showing the house and grounds. Note the mature Peppercorn tree (*Schinus molle*) located at the south of the site appears to be already well established at this time. (Source: Melbourne 1945)

The Jewish population in the Kew area had increased significantly in the postwar period and were in need of a place they could gather for social events and for worship. In 1949 the former Donaldson house on the corner of Walpole and Malmsbury streets was acquired by businessman and philanthropist Norman Smargon, representing the Jewish community of Kew, for the purpose of establishing a Jewish Centre. Smargon was a Kew resident, living at the time in Holroyd Street.

Whereas in the late nineteenth century there had been a concentration of Jewish immigrants in Carlton, the central city and St Kilda, the postwar Jewish immigrants settled in suburbs east and south-east of Melbourne, particularly in Caulfield, but also in Kew, North Balwyn and Doncaster. The embryonic Jewish congregation at Kew was a combined group, bringing together members of the established Melbourne Jewry as well as more recent arrivals from Eastern Europe, mainly from Hungary, Poland and Germany, many of whom were Holocaust survivors. A large number of European Jewish immigrants settled in Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s.

The existing Victorian-era villa and large established garden at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, were initially used by the congregation for social activities and Shabbat services. A front room in the building was also used for a shule, for the purpose of worship, which was possible when there was a minyan, or ten men present. It was furnished with a temporary Ark, a reading desk and school benches (Kew Hebrew Congregation website 2020).

Over the following years, there was significant growth of the Jewish population in Kew (and North Balwyn) and the need for a larger space for a synagogue. The existing residence was adapted over the following ten years. In 1954, a new section, designed by congregation member Ben Fink, was added to the north side of the existing house to accommodate 120 people. Other internal walls were removed to provide more space for social functions (*Australian Jewish News*, 13 August 1965, cited in Lenkiewicz et al. 2017).



Figure 6. Detail of an aerial photo of the site, dated 1956, showing the c.1886 house largely intact with the flat-roofed addition to the north. (Source: Landata)

In 1957 a second addition was built on the southern side of the house to create a large room designed to serve as a synagogue. The new space, which could accommodate around 500 people, was consecrated on 25 August 1957 (Kew Hebrew Congregation website 2020). This would later be referred to as the 'old synagogue' and was also known as Norman Smargon House.

For both the 1954 and the 1957 extensions, an external wall of the existing house was demolished to enable the addition of a new section (Kew Hebrew Congregation website 2020). Following these additions, the core of the original residence remained extant as did many of the internal features of the house, despite the reconfiguration of the internal spaces.

Rabbi Jacob Schreiber was appointed part-time Minister to the Kew Jewish Centre in 1956. Schreiber was also a teacher at Mount Scopus Memorial College in Burwood and developed a kindergarten and eventually lower primary level classes at the site in Kew.

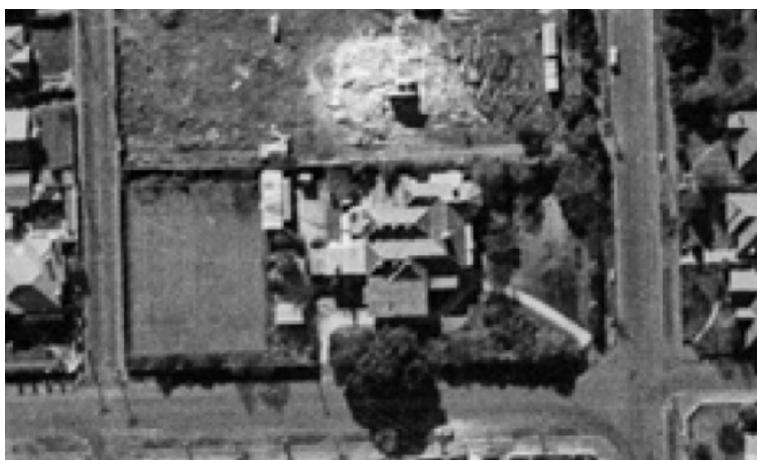


Figure 7. Detail of an aerial photo of the site, dated 1958, showing additions to the north and the south of the house. (Source: Landata)

With a growing congregation and relatively prosperous times, the complex was further developed through the 1960s. Four classrooms were erected on the north side of the site in 1959 ('Golden Anniversary', 1999).

Polish-born and British-trained architect Anthony Hayden was commissioned to design a new purpose-built synagogue in c.1963, which was planned for the area to the east of the

existing building. As a local resident, Hayden had connections to the Kew Hebrew Congregation and had attended the synagogue when it operated in the older building (Lenkiewicz et al. 2017). The Australian Prime Minister and local Member for Kooyong, Sir Robert Menzies, with his wife Dame Pattie laid the foundation stone for the new synagogue on 25 August 1963 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 1963:1). In a plan prepared by the architect in 1964 the building to the west of the new synagogue was marked as 'Social Hall' (existing) (Lenkiewicz et al. 2017).

The new synagogue was completed, dedicated and officially opened in mid-1965. This period of growth and relative prosperity of the Jewish population in Melbourne saw an increasing demand for Jewish education. Norman Smorgon House in Kew had been used by Mount Scopus Memorial College for an affiliated kindergarten from 1951. Mount Scopus College, established on St Kilda Road in 1949, had moved to a large site in Burwood in 1953. Following the opening of the new synagogue, the rapidly growing community commenced construction of a two-storey block for a school and , also to a design by Bridge, Hayden & Associates [and modernised community centre] in 1966 (*Age*, 11 November 1966:14). Many members of the congregation lived locally and wished to send their younger children to a local Jewish school so instead of a primary school being built at Mount Scopus in Burwood it was built at Kew. In 1966 the new double-storey school building, designed by architects Bridge, Hayden and Associates, was opened to serve as a primary school for Mount Scopus College. The complex was financed jointly between the community and the expanding Mount Scopus Memorial College, and later moved to purpose-built facilities designed by the noted Jewish architect Anatol Kagan in Burwood in 1953. The building facing Malmsbury Street was to serve as the Kew division of Mount Scopus College, accommodating the primary school aged children (*Age*, 11 November 1966:14). The kindergarten continued to operate from the Norman Smorgon House (*Age*, 11 November 1966:14). The school building continued to be used as such until the 1990s. There was a fall in enrolments at the primary school section of Mount Scopus Memorial College and the school was closed in 1996.



Figure 8. Proposed extensions to the Kew Jewish Centre, 1965. (Source: *Age*, 11 November 1966, p. 14)

The *Age* newspaper reported that the school block was to adjoin the 'proposed modernised community centre, which was originally a small synagogue' (*Age*, 11 November 1966:14). Designs for the new building and renovations were from the firm of Bridge, Hayden & Associates (*Age*, 11 November 1966:14). Tony Hayden, a partner with the firm, had earlier designed the adjacent synagogue, and plans indicate that the school block and modernised community centre were likely part of an initially conceived scheme for the broader site (Lenkiewicz et al. 2017).

The two 1960s additions effectively enclosed the site on the east and south sides. Recent aerial images that show part of the Victorian-era roofline of the former villa suggests that the area adjoining the new synagogue on its western side is the remnant core of the 1886 villa designed by William Salway.

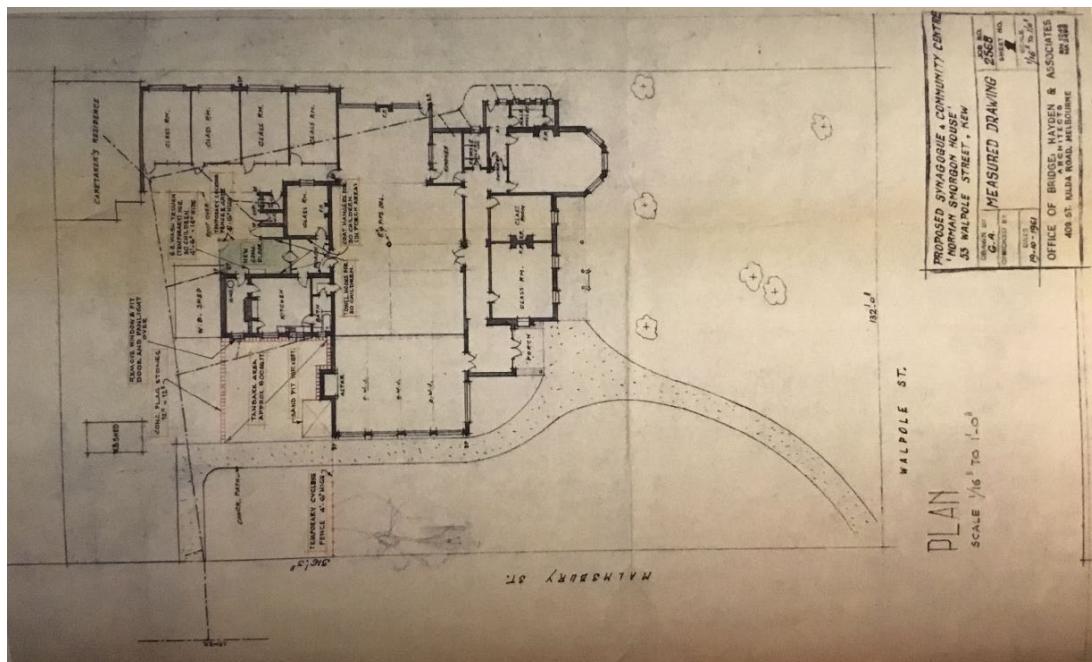


Figure 9. Bridge, Hayden & Associates, existing conditions plan for 53 Walpole Street, Kew, 1961. Note the Peppercorn tree is drawn as a substantial tree. (Source: Public building file, Unit 306, PROV, reproduced in Lenkiewicz et al. 2017, 'Bet Nachman Synagogue', student project, University of Melbourne)

There had been an existing 'caretaker's cottage' on the site by 1961, which occupies the site of a small habitable detached building that was marked on the MMBW plan of 1904 as being plumbed with a bath; the earlier building was possibly a former external washhouse or servant's room situated to the west of the former villa (MMBW 1904). A new caretaker's cottage was built on the west side of the complex in c.1970 ('Golden Anniversary', 1999).

The Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen and Lady Cowen were guests of honour for the dedication of new stained glass windows on the western side of the synagogue. These windows were designed by local artist Louis Kahan and presented to the synagogue by Mr and Mrs Eric Smorgon in 1982. The heritage citation for the synagogue prepared by Lovell Chen notes that 'the Kahan windows were installed to the western side of the auditorium, which spans the full width of the building from east to west, and as highlight windows to the north and south sides respectively' (Lovell Chen 2011). A ten-page booklet on the meaning of the ten stained glass windows, written by Kahan, was produced by the Kew Hebrew Congregation in 1982.

From the 1950s, a Hebrew language school operated at the site on Sundays, which was attended by children who attended non-Jewish schools in the wider area (Sally Berkowic 1999, *Straight Talk*: 142). Four purpose-built classrooms were erected for this purpose in 1959.

The Kew Hebrew Congregation Library holds a significant collection of memorial books on Eastern European Jewry, written before and after the Holocaust. These books, known as *yizker* volumes, are an important historical record of the people from a particular place in Eastern Europe and form part of a highly significant wider global collection (Rosemary Horowitz (ed.) 2011, *Memorial Books of Eastern European Jewry*: 287).

The funerals of several high-profile figures have been held at the Kew synagogue, including Senator Samuel Herbert Cohen QC in 1969 and Richard Pratt in 2009 (*Age*, 10 October 1969:10; 22 June 2009:5).



Figure 10. Map identifying key elements of the subject site and their corresponding build dates.
(Source: Nearmap 2020)

Community connections

The site as a whole has played an ongoing role in both the spiritual and social life of the Jewish community, locally and across wider Melbourne, since 1949, when the first synagogue was established in the existing Victorian-era house on the site.

Norman Smorgon House has served the community for over sixty years as a gathering place for various functions and activities, including for ceremonial observances and rituals from 1949-c.1965 when it was used as a synagogue, as an affiliated kindergarten (with Mount Scopus College) from 1951, and for hosting Shabbat dinners, weddings and school functions up until the present day (V. Rosenberg, pers. comm., 15 June 2020).

The Bet Nachman Synagogue has served the community for over 50 years as a purpose-built place of worship, and as a place where the community's culture and identity is celebrated through the observance of festivals and events throughout the Jewish year and the marking of life cycle events such as births, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings and funerals. The school building facing Malmsbury Street, constructed in c.1965-66, has long connections with the Jewish community through its affiliation with Mount Scopus College, as it served as the Kew division of the college until the 1990s.

Anthony (Tony) Abraham Hayden (1921-1984)

Anthony Hayden was born Abraham Hershman in 1921 in Warsaw, Poland, to Jewish parents. His family relocated to Britain in 1930, and by 1937 had permanently settled in Manchester, where Hayden undertook an architecture course at the Manchester Municipal School of Art. Hayden completed his course in 1942, and received scholarships and prizes in each year of his studies. Hayden was admitted as an associate of the RIBA the year following his graduation (Built Heritage 2020).

After serving in the armed forces with the Royal Engineers during the Second World War, Hayden anglicised his name and undertook work with an architectural firm in Manchester. It is likely that he also undertook work in his own practice following this period (Built Heritage 2020).

In 1949, Hayden and his brother migrated to Australia. Hayden joined the office of Arnold Bridge & Associates, located in Collins Street, and he was registered with the Architects'

Board of Victoria the following year. By 1956, Hayden had been elevated to partnership within the firm (Built Heritage 2020). The bulk of Hayden's work with the firm appears to have been small and medium scaled commercial projects, often retail buildings in suburban Melbourne. Dickin's New World, a chain of grocery shops that was later taken over by G. J. Coles, was a regular client (Built Heritage 2020).

Hayden was also able to make use of his connections within the burgeoning postwar Jewish population in Melbourne. Due to this clientele, Hayden's work can often be found in the suburbs of Kew, Caulfield and St Kilda East, where many fellow Jewish migrants had settled upon arriving in Melbourne. Hayden received three important community commissions: the Kew Synagogue, the Caulfield Synagogue, and the monument to Jewish war victims in the Melbourne General Cemetery (Built Heritage 2020).

By 1973, the firm had become known as Anthony A. Hayden & Associates, following Arnold Bridge's retirement. Hayden died in 1984 (Built Heritage 2020).

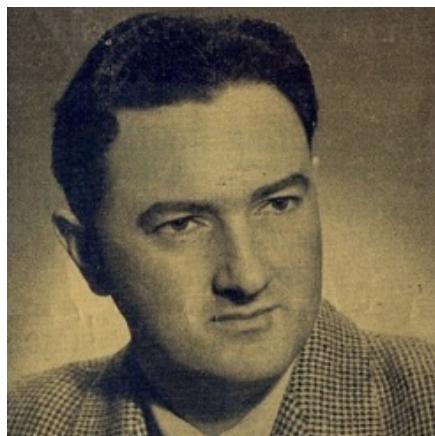


Figure 11. Anthony A. Hayden, photographed in the 1950s. (Source: Built Heritage)

Louis Kahan AO (1905-2002)

Louis Kahan was born in Vienna and later moved to Paris where he became immersed in the bohemian life of the city in the 1930s. He worked as a war artist for the French Foreign Legion during the Second World War. He and his wife Lily settled in Melbourne in 1950 and lived in Kew. Kahan worked as an artist of various forms, including paintings, drawings, costume design and stained glass windows. He was offered numerous private and public commissions. He won the Archibald Prize in 1962 for his portrait of Patrick White.

Norman Smorgon OAM (1884-1956)

Norman Smorgon was born Naum Smorgon at Heidelberg, Ukraine, Russia, the son of a butcher. Following the Second World War, he settled in Melbourne and by the 1950s he and other family members had achieved success in a range of business enterprises, commencing with a butcher's shop in Carlton. Later living in Kew, he was a member of the Jewish community in that area and gave generously to enable the acquisition of the property in Walpole Street for the purpose of a Jewish Centre and later a synagogue. The Norman Smorgon Foundation is an education endowment fund provided by the Norman Smorgon Estate, which provides scholarships to Mount Scopus Memorial College. (Reference: Rod Myer 2002, 'Smorgon, (Naum) Norman (1884-1956)', ADB, vol 16, online)

Jacob Schreiber (born c.1920s)

Jacob Schreiber was born to Jewish parents in Hungary in the c.1920s and moved to Czechoslovakia at the age of 5. He was educated in Jewish day schools and studied to become a teacher. He married and worked as a school teacher prior to World War II, when he and his wife escaped to Hungary. Following the Nazi occupation of Hungary in 1944,

he and his wife were taken to a concentration camps. They survived the war and afterwards went to Israel where Schreiber completed his rabbinic training. In 1956 they immigrated to Australia and Schreiber accepted a position as a master at Mount Scopus Memorial College in Burwood. The same year Rabbi Schreiber was appointed a part-time minister at Kew Jewish Centre in 1956. Following the completion of the new synagogue at Kew in 1965, and the establishment of the Kew Hebrew Congregation, Schreiber was appointed first Minister to the Congregation, and left his teaching position to become a full-time spiritual leader for the Kew Hebrew Congregation. Committed to the teachings of Judaism and Jewish education more broadly, he was instrumental in establishment of the Jewish day school at Kew in 1966. He encouraged Hebrew language school, the observance of Shabbat, and the kosher home. He retired from the Kew Hebrew Congregation in 1988.

Description and Integrity

The Kew Hebrew Congregation Centre is situated on a parcel of land bounded to the east by Walpole Street, the south by Malmsbury Street and to the west by Brougham Street, Kew.

The Bet Nachman Synagogue, on the corner of Malmsbury Street and Walpole Street, and the two-storey school block facing Malmsbury Street were both designed by architects Bridge, Hayden and Associates, with the Synagogue opening in 1965 and the school wing in 1966. While the two buildings present characteristics of the Modernist movement they demonstrate different stylistic influences that were being explored at the time. The Bet Nachman Synagogue building exhibits characteristics of the Brutalist style with its boldly composed form expressed through its use of a pre-cast concrete portal frame, sloping elements and large areas of unbroken wall surfaces. In contrast the two-storey school wing is cubiform in shape with horizontal bands of continuous glazing giving a lightness and transparency to its principal elevation which is more representative of the influences of the postwar International style.

Bet Nachman Synagogue (1963-65)

The main double-height synagogue building is included on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme (HO559). The description of the building provided in its citation reads:

'...the Bet Nachman Synagogue is a pre-cast concrete portal frame building, with infill panels of chocolate brick laid in stretcher bond. The building is set on a plinth of brickwork. The building addresses Malmsbury Street and the angled façade of staggered panels of brickwork interspersed with elongated concrete framed windows projects forward, like the bow of a ship to the centre of the façade. A row of timber-framed highlight windows is set below the portal frame, here rendered and over-painted. The building is double-height, and a painted concrete awning cantilevers forward over the three pairs of flush paneled painted metal sheathed entrance doors. These form an acute angle, like the structure above. There is an entry podium and shallow steps of terrazzo and painted metal handrails. The Star of David, formed of painted cast concrete or of cement is set to the 'prow' of the building above the entry, flanked by stylized Chanukahs (Menorahs) set high on the façade brickwork and also of painted cast concrete or cement. To either side travertine clad planter boxes are set below the windows and those to the east and west sides are set below narrow windows and also support the stones commemorating the foundation of the building in 1963 and its dedication in 1965 respectively. The centre's name is formed in painted metal lettering to the edge of the awning. The roof is completely concealed from view to the public domain, but is a shallow-gabled form, clad in corrugated asbestos cement sheet.'

To Walpole Street the synagogue is set back from the property line, and there is no fence to the boundary, with lawn areas and some low height shrubs. Here the portal frame formed of precast panels is clearly evident with infill panels of brickwork incorporating elongated and narrow tripartite windows, protected by non-original security mesh screens and set above sloping sills of manganese tiles.

The front bay of the Walpole Street elevation has a commemorative war memorial of rendered brick and incorporating a marble tablet set hard against the wall. This also incorporates three painted timber flagpoles of varying heights. Above a further painted cast concrete or cement symbol is mounted to the wall.

The north and west elevations, less visible from the public domain, are part formed of white cement brickwork. Windows here are metal-framed and fitted with wired opaque glass panes.' (Lovell Chen 2012).



Figure 12. View of Bet Nachman Synagogue building from the south-east corner of Walpole and Malmsbury streets. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Norman Smorgon House (c.1886, 1954, 1957)

To the west of the Bet Nachman Synagogue building is 'Norman Smorgon House', comprising part of the original house built on the site in c.1886, and additions to the north and south made in 1954 and 1957 respectively.

The 1886 part of the building is enveloped in the later additions. Its tiled M-shaped hipped roof is visible when looking east from the courtyard created by the various buildings on the site (Figure 13). Internally, it comprises a hallway, a large room to the west of the hall, enlarged through the removal of internal walls (housed beneath the M-shaped roof form) (Figures 14 and 15), bathrooms to the north (providing access to the Bet Nachman Synagogue) and skillion wing to the east housing a kitchen. Remnant details from the c.1886 house include ceiling heights, architraves and panelled doors, and intact decorative moulded plaster detailing such as cornices, skirtings, and corbelled archways.



Figure 13. View of 1886 part of Norman Smorgon House, looking east. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 14. Internal view of the c.1886 part of Norman Smorgon House, looking east. Note internal walls originally sectioning off a hall have been removed to create a large open space. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 15. Internal view of the c.1886 part of Norman Smorgon House, looking south toward the c.1957 addition. (Source: Context, June 2020)

The 1954 addition is located to the north of the c.1886 part of Norman Smorgon House and presently houses bathroom facilities. It is of cream break construction with a flat roof, with a brick chimney and timber framed windows to the north elevation.



Figure 16. View of c.1954 addition from the northern property boundary. (Source: Context, June 2020)

The 1957 addition, designed as the original synagogue on the site, sits along Malmsbury Street (between the Bet Nachman Synagogue and the school wing). This part of the building comprises two built elements with different roof heights, with the lower roof demarcating the entry. The larger section of the addition with the higher roof has projecting eaves, large fascia boards and no gutters with the soffit to the eaves lined with slatted timber straps. Facing Malmsbury Street, the building presents as a sheer painted brick wall punctuated with four timber-framed windows with brick on edge sills and bronze coloured aluminium security grills (Figure 19). The lower roof of the building projects forward from its recessed building line and is supported by a slender metal post set on a dwarf brick wall at its eastern end. This creates a porch and entry that is fitted with a contemporary aluminium-framed door assembly (Figure 17). Fitted across the front of the porch is an aluminium-framed security grill above which letters spell out 'Norman Smargon House' that are attached to the fascia.



Figure 17. Entrance to Norman Smargon House via Malmsbury Street. (Source: Context, June 2020)

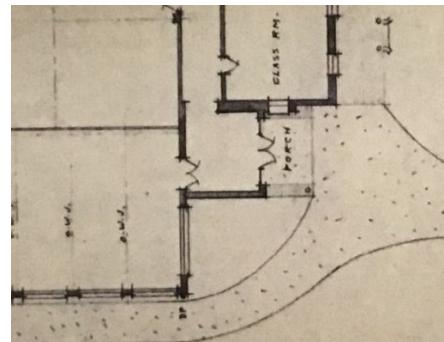


Figure 18. Detail from 1961 existing conditions plan which shows the entrance to Norman Smargon House through the eastern wall rather than via Malmsbury Street. Presumably this was altered when the Bet Nachman Synagogue was built. (Source: Public building file Unit 306, PROV, reproduced in Lenkiewicz et al. 2017)



Figure 19. Southern elevation to Malmsbury Street. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Internally, this space comprises an entry foyer, which meets the hall of the 1886 house (Figure 20), and a large room to the west of the foyer (Figure 21). This room is separated from the c.1886 part of the building by timber concertina doors with upper panels of ribbed

glazing. This originally allowed for flexibility in the space to cater for different events of varying capacity, as well as for men and women to be separated during worship (Figure 23). A section of the western wall is recessed to house the ark (Figure 22).



Figure 20. Entry foyer of Norman Smorgon House built in 1957 as part of the southern extension to the original 1886 house on the site. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 21. The internal southern extended space of Norman Smorgon House. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 22. Ark in recess in the western wall of the 1957 extension. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 23. To the north, concertina doors separate the southern space of the 1957 extension from the 1886 house. (Source: Context, June 2020)

School wing (c. 1965-66)

To the west of Norman Smorgon House, and running parallel with Malmsbury Street, is the two-storey school wing built in 1965-66. Set back off the street line this face brick and precast concrete building sits beneath a flat roof with no eave and a flush set fascia that is divided horizontally into three. Cubiform in shape, the principal façade of the building, facing Malmsbury Street, is divided into six equal bays that sit between structural cream brick end walls. Each bay is separated by a brick column that rises through both levels. These columns are constructed using two tones of cream brick, which provides a subtle textural quality to the façade. At each level a band of steel-framed window sits between each of these columns with the exception of the eastern lower bay that is left open creating an undercroft. A typical bay is divided into two window modules separated by a wider vertical element. Each window module is then divided into four vertically proportioned windows above and two horizontally proportioned windows below. The horizontal windows are fixed pane, while the vertical windows are side opening casements. The exception to this is four of the lower level horizontal windows at the buildings eastern end that are fixed open, sloping inward from their base and fitted with mesh at their top, providing for ventilation. Beneath each window module is a painted spandrel panel of pre-cast concrete in which can be seen the horizontal line of the concrete floor slab demarcating the floor level.

Contemporary additions have been attached to each end of the building. At the eastern end a steel-framed, glass-enclosed stair hangs off the wall, while at the western end a recently added entry is constructed of cream brick at the lower level and painted cement sheet and timber at the upper level. Recessed off Malmsbury Street and sympathetic in design, these additions do not impact on the legibility of the building's original design intent.



Figure 24. View of the two-storey school wing from Malmsbury Street. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Across the rear of the school wing, and partially visible from Brougham Street, a recent second floor addition runs the length of the building. Lightweight in construction with a deep eave and exposed rafters this addition is sympathetic to the modernist styling of the original building.

Classrooms (1959)

Adjoining the 1954 addition to Norman Smorgon House is a rectangular building constructed of cream brick with a gable roof clad in corrugated sheeting, which is fitted with four ventilators along the ridge line and features a distinctive crow-stepped parapet at its western end. A verandah, supported on slender metal posts, is incorporated under the southern slope of the roof. Under the verandah, the southern wall of the building is constructed using a light timber frame with vertical timber boarding and glazing above. Four timber doors provide access into classrooms (Figure 25). There are plaques on two of the classroom doors and one on the western wall, acknowledging community involvement in the building's construction.



Figure 25. Southern elevation of the classrooms. (Source: Context, June 2020)



Figure 26. Northern elevation of the classrooms. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Cottage (c.1970)

Adjoining the classroom building at its west, is a single-storey light orange brick building with a terracotta tiled hip roof, known amongst the congregation as the cottage, and currently used by the Rabbi during Shabbat. The main façade of the cottage faces the courtyard and access is provided by concrete steps up to a raised porch with mild steel balustrade. On the western wall there are four narrow vertical panels of brown brickwork. Windows are framed with natural anodised aluminium. The cottage is of modest architectural interest.



Figure 27. View of the cottage looking north west from the courtyard. (Source: Context, June 2020)

Landscape elements

Along Malmsbury Street a high black cyclone wire fence runs across part of the property line creating a small landscaped area in front of Norman Smorgon House, where a mature Peppercorn tree (*Schinus molle*) is located. The Peppercorn tree appears to be well established with a broad canopy in the 1945 aerial photo of the site, indicating it was planted before 1945. The boundary along the front of the school building facing Malmsbury Street is unfenced. Between the building and the property line there is a narrow strip of lawn planted with a row of Alders. Along Brougham Street a small section of timber picket fencing at the Malmsbury Street end abuts a paling fence behind which sits a high black cyclone wire fence. At the rear of the school building the paling fence returns separating a play area from the rear carpark. The black cyclone wire fence continues along Brougham Street and is fitted with a pair of drive gates giving access to this carpark. A large Eucalypt is located in the north-west corner of the school building yard and a Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*) is located in the centre of the site.

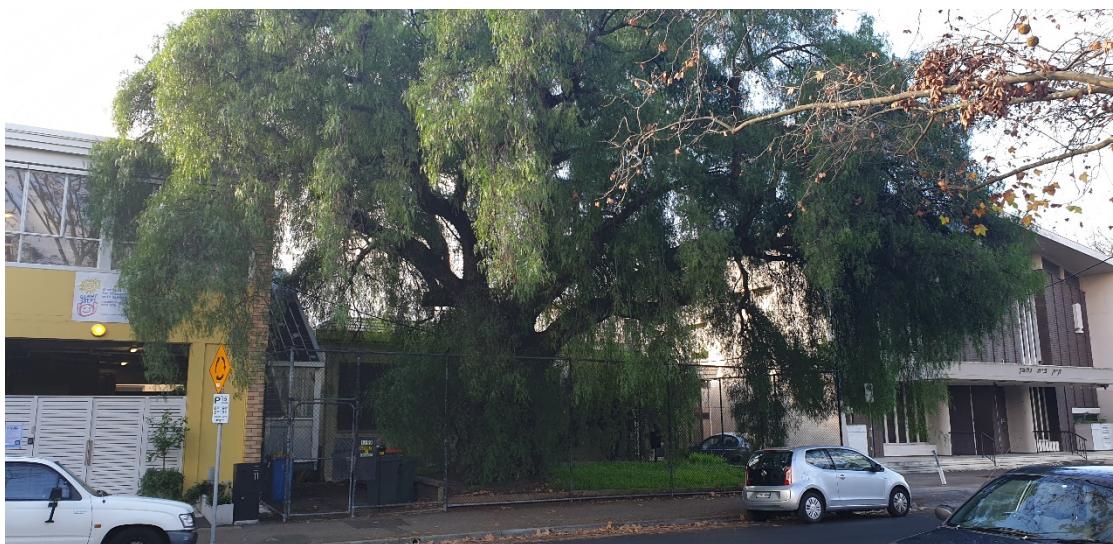


Figure 28. Mature Peppercorn (*Schinus molle*). (Source: Context, June 2020)

Integrity

The Kew Hebrew Congregation site is largely intact with limited changes to the original or early development and fabric of the site. The Bet Nachman Synagogue (c.1965) and the two-storey school building (c.1966) both retain their original built form and scale, materials,

and stylistic details, and continue to be used in accordance with the original intentions of the place.

Bet Nachman Synagogue (1963-65)

The Bet Nachman Synagogue is highly intact with very few changes visible to early fabric. The building retains its original built and roof form, materiality and pattern of fenestration, and details such as stained glass windows.

Norman Smorgon House (c.1886, 1954, 1957)

The various elements that form Norman Smorgon House are largely intact and together demonstrate the evolution and continued use of the building for worship and other community purposes. Surviving elements of the original Victorian house include the M-shaped hipped roof form, and internally, ceiling heights, architraves and panelled doors, and intact decorative moulded plaster detailing such as cornices, skirtings, and corbelled archways. Internal alterations and additions to the existing Victorian house were made to accommodate the needs of the growing congregation. These include the original space created for use as the first synagogue on the site constructed c.1957, and the removal of internal walls in the c.1886 house to provide a large and flexible space. This addition in particular remains highly intact, except for an alteration to the entrance (presumably when the Bet Nachman Synagogue was built in 1963-65) which saw it moved from the eastern wall to the southern wall. Notwithstanding this small alteration, the c.1957 addition retains a high degree of intactness both externally and internally.

School wing (c.1965-66)

The school wing is relatively intact with some changes visible to early fabric. The building retains its original built and roof form, materiality and pattern of fenestration. While additions to the eastern, western and northern elevations of the school building have slightly diminished the integrity of this building, these have been sympathetically implemented and do not impact on the legibility of the architect's original design intent.

Classrooms (1959)

The classrooms are highly intact with very few changes visible to early fabric. The building retains its original built and roof form, materiality and pattern of fenestration, and details including the crow-stepped gable end, light timber framed principal elevation with vertical timber boarding and glazing above, and verandah supported on slender posts.

Cottage (c.1970)

The former caretaker's cottage is highly intact with very few changes visible to early fabric. It retains its original built and roof form, materiality and pattern of fenestration.

The retention of elements of the original Victorian house and subsequent additions demonstrate the layered development and continued use of the site by the congregation since 1949. Overall, the Kew Hebrew Congregation site is of high integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Comparisons for the Kew Hebrew Congregation site in Kew are discussed in this section with reference to other post-World War II synagogues in Melbourne, and more generally with other postwar school buildings in the City of Boroondara. There is only one other synagogue in the City of Boroondara: the Leo Baeck Centre (Temple Beth Israel) at 31-33 Harp Road, Kew East, built in the 1970s. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to look outside the municipality for comparable sites included in Heritage Overlays.

Synagogues

The subject building sits within the broader context of other post-World War II synagogue designs in Melbourne. The 1960s saw an increase in the construction of synagogues across Melbourne, coinciding with the growth of the Jewish community brought on as a result of the large number of displaced Jews following World War II. A number of émigré architects settled in Melbourne, bringing with them the ideals of the Modernist movement that was developing in pre-war Europe. Earlier synagogue designs referenced classicism, as seen in the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation Synagogue consecrated in 1927 (H1968 and HO89 – City of Port Phillip), East Melbourne Synagogue completed in 1883 (H0495 and HO124 – City of Melbourne) and Melbourne Hebrew Congregation (included in HO6 South Yarra Precinct – City of Melbourne). The following examples of synagogues built in the post-war period all represent a break from traditional forms with their designs expressing differing interpretations of the Modernist influence. Despite their importance in demonstrating the significant immigration of Jews to Australia in the post-war period, synagogues built in this period are underrepresented in Heritage Overlays across Victoria.

There is only one other post-war synagogue protected by a Heritage Overlay—the Elwood Shule Synagogue at 39 Dickens Street, Elwood. The synagogue was designed by Kurt Popper and constructed between 1953 and 1957 and extended in the 1960s, then substantially remodelled in 1972-73 by Popper. Karl Duldig created the copper relief Star of David atop a sunburst aureole that graces the facade. The building is included in HO7 St Kilda, Elwood, Balaclava, Ripponlea precinct as a Non-Contributory place, however, has been identified as being potentially significant as an individual place on historic, social and aesthetic grounds. The building bears similarities to the Kew Hebrew Congregation in its use of infill panels of brickwork incorporating elongated and narrow windows.



Figure 29. Torah Congregation, 39 Dickens Street, Elwood, HO7 - City of Port Phillip. (1953-57, remodelled 1972-73). (Source: St Kilda Historical Society website)

As an earlier example of work by Bridge, Hayden & Associates, the Caulfield Synagogue at 527 Inkerman Road, Caulfield North, built in 1958-61 compares with the Bet Nachman Synagogue. The citation for the Caulfield Synagogue, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, describes the building:

The Caulfield Synagogue, with its eye-catching façade of stack bond brickwork, feature stone cladding, vertical fins, tinted glass and Jewish symbols, is a notable (and notably intact) example of this “Featurist” approach, while its giant Menorah motif stands out as an especially rare manifestation of architectural semiotics,

where a building's function is expressed symbolically through its built form. (Built Heritage Pty Ltd 2020:158)



Figure 30. Caulfield Synagogue, 527 Inkerman Road, Caulfield North, Recommended for HO - City of Glen Eira (1958-61). (Source: Built Heritage Pty Ltd website)

South Caulfield Hebrew Congregation, built 1963 to designs by Kurt Popper, bears the most similarity to the Kew Hebrew Congregation site. It has a symmetrical front in umber brick, with a lighter, segmental awning over the entrance.



Figure 31. South Caulfield Hebrew Congregation, 45 Leopold Street, Caulfield North, City of Glen Eira (1963). (Source: Australian Jewish News 8 September 2016)

Designed by Abe Weinstock and constructed in 1966, the Brighton Hebrew Congregation Synagogue building comprises an octagonal drum form, rendered in chocolate brown brick, with a frieze of highlight windows rising behind a screen wall of alternating panels of white brick and tinted glazing, forming a dramatic contrast in both form and materials of execution.



Figure 32. Brighton Hebrew Congregation Synagogue, 132 Marriage Road, Brighton East, Recommended for HO - City of Bayside (1966). (Source: Brighton Hebrew Congregation website)

Post-war schools in Boroondara

While there are many Christian church-affiliated schools in Boroondara, and Kew in particular, there are no other Jewish schools affiliated with a synagogue in the municipality. The only other Jewish school affiliated with a synagogue in wider Melbourne is the Yeshivah College in St Kilda East. Of the existing post-war school buildings in the City of Boroondara, few are included in the Heritage Overlay.

Camberwell High School, 100A Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, comprises a number of buildings within the complex. The most notable are the original school building, constructed 1940-41, and a later wing constructed c.1969. The later wing is constructed of unpainted expressed brickwork with a corrugated metal sheet roof concealed behind a perimeter parapet. The building extends over three-storeys and incorporates a regular fenestration pattern divided into bays by engaged buttresses sympathetically referencing the design of the 1940-41 building.



Figure 33. Camberwell High School, 100A Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, HO722 - City of Boroondara. (c.1969). (Source: St Kilda Historical Society website)

Balwyn North Primary school, 94 Maude Street, Balwyn North, comprises a single-storey flat-roofed cream brick building on a distinctive plan, comprising a series of hexagonal

classrooms (each with a lantern roof, clerestory windows and glazed frontage) arranged in a gently curving row. Designed in 1947 and opened in 1950, the building represented the prototype for an innovative new type of state school architecture developed by Percy Everett, chief architect of the Public Works Department.



Figure 34. Balwyn North Primary School, 94 Maud Street, Balwyn North (1947-50), recommended for HO - City of Boroondara. (Source: Built Heritage Pty Ltd)

Another postwar school building in Boroondara is the Preshill Classrooms and Hall, 395 Barkers Road, Kew, built in 1962. It has an innovative octagonal plan with an octagonal roof offset against the alignment of the walls, creating a lively play of forms. The form of the hall, and the subsequent manner in which it can be used, represents a major departure from the more common nave-like halls designed for schools. It is not comparable to the subject building.

Discussion

Whilst church-run schools that are affiliated to a particular congregation are common in the City of Boroondara (the former local government areas of Camberwell, Kew and Hawthorn), Jewish schools are not and the Kew Hebrew Congregation site in Walpole Street is a rare example of its type.

The Bet Nachman Synagogue compares well with other postwar synagogues that were built to cater for the burgeoning Jewish community in Melbourne as a result of postwar immigration. Frequently designed by émigré architects who had trained in the ateliers of Europe before the war, these buildings display characteristics of the modernist movement and were seen as symbols of survival and hope to a displaced community looking for a fresh start.

Breaking from the traditional forms used for synagogues that referenced classicism these buildings used simple cubiform massing with flat roofs and sheer unadorned planar surfaces favoured by the International style. This frequently resulted in buildings that possess a certain monumentality in form that is lightened by the use of pale brickwork and large horizontal bands of glazing (see Elwood and Caulfield Synagogues, Figures 29 and 30). What sets the Bet Nachman Synagogue apart is its bold use of pre-cast concrete and steel portal frame that, combined with striking sloped vertical elements and large areas of unbroken wall surfaces, has resulted in a composition that is more indicative of the emerging Brutalist movement of the 1960s than the earlier International style.

In contrast to the bulk of the synagogue building, the school building displays more typical characteristics of the postwar International style. As discussed above there are few examples of postwar school buildings in the City of Boroondara on the Heritage Overlay. The school building is most comparable to the earlier Balwyn North Primary School (1947-



50) with its use of cream bricks, flat roof and large expanses of glazing. The subject site is a more representative example of the International style with its cubiform massing and rectilinear plan, while the Balwyn North example displays a more complex plan comprising a series of hexagonal classrooms.

What is particularly distinctive at the Kew Hebrew Congregation is the combination of a school building and Synagogue built as part of a single building program designed by the same architect. There is only one other known example of a school and synagogue complex in Melbourne at the Yeshiva Colleges in St Kilda East, which has an eclectic mix of buildings built over an extended time frame.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Planning and Community Development, revised August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

The site at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, and known as the Kew Hebrew Congregation, is important for its role in the development of Jewish worship, education, language studies, and community and cultural life in the City of Boroondara from 1949. The complex of buildings, which comprises the Bet Nachman Synagogue (c.1963-65); Norman Smorgon House, which comprises the remnant core of an original brick residence (c1886), which was adapted and used as a synagogue from c.1949-63, and added to in 1954 and 1957; classrooms (1959); a double-storey school building facing Malmsbury Street (1966); and former caretaker's cottage (c.1970), together represent the development of a cohesive social, religious and cultural centre of Jewish life in Kew in the postwar period. It is also historically significant for its use as a Jewish day school, serving as the kindergarten and primary school section of Mount Scopus Memorial College, which was located in Burwood, from 1953, and providing a purpose-built school building from 1966.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

The complex at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, known as the Kew Hebrew Congregation and comprising a synagogue, former Jewish day school and Jewish community buildings, is a rare place type in the City of Boroondara and in Victoria more generally. It is a rare intact postwar example of this place type.

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

NA

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

The Bet Nachman Synagogue is architecturally significant as a fine representative example of a postwar Synagogue. Frequently designed by emigre architects who had trained in the ateliers of Europe before the war, these buildings display characteristics of the modernist movement and were seen as symbols of survival and hope to a displaced community looking for a fresh start.

Breaking from the traditional forms used for earlier Synagogues that referenced classicism, these building used simple cubiform massing with flat roofs and sheer unadorned planar surfaces favoured by the International style. This frequently resulted in buildings that possessed a certain monumentality in form that was lightened by the use of pale brickwork and large horizontal bands of glazing. The Bet Nachman Synagogue is distinguished by its bold use of pre-cast concrete and a steel portal frame that, combined with striking sloped vertical elements and large areas of unbroken wall surfaces, has resulted in a composition that is more indicative of the emerging Brutalist movement of the 1960s than the earlier international style.

The school building is architecturally significant as a representative example of an education building designed in the postwar International style. This is evident in its cubiform massing, flat roof, sheer wall planes of pale brickwork and large expanses of glazing, that combine to give a lightness and transparency to the building that is indicative of the style.

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

NA

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

NA

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

The Kew Hebrew Congregation at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, is significant for its importance as a centre for Jewish worship, Jewish community life (including welfare, social activities, historical records and Hebrew language), particularly for the postwar (Eastern) European Jewish immigrants who came to Melbourne as displaced people following the Second World War. The site as a whole has played an ongoing role in both the spiritual and social life of the Jewish community, locally and across wider Melbourne, since 1949, when the first synagogue was established in the existing Victorian-era house on the site.

Norman Smorgon House has served the community for over sixty years as a gathering place for various functions and activities, including for ceremonial observances and rituals from 1949-c.1965 when it was used as a synagogue, as an affiliated kindergarten (with Mount Scopus College) from 1951, and for hosting Shabbat dinners, weddings and school functions up until the present day.

The Bet Nachman Synagogue has served the community for over 50 years as a purpose-built place of worship, and as a place where the community's culture and identity is celebrated through the observance of festivals and events throughout the Jewish year and the marking of life cycle events such as births, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings and funerals. The school building facing Malmsbury Street, constructed in c.1965-66, has long connections with the Jewish community through its affiliation with Mount Scopus College, as it served as the Kew division of the college until the 1990s.

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

The Kew Hebrew Congregation at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, is of significance to the City of Boroondara for its association with notable members of the Melbourne Jewish society, including the businessman and philanthropist Norman Smargon OAM (1884-1956), notable postwar architect, Anthony A. Hayden (1921-1984), and notable artist and Kew resident, Louis Kahan (1905-2002), who designed the ten stained glass windows in the Bet Nachman Synagogue. It is also significant for its association with Jewish teacher and spiritual leader, Rabbi Jacob Schreiber (born c.1920s). Schreiber led the Kew Hebrew Congregation through the period of significant expansion of its operations from the mid-1950s until the 1980s, and was influential in the development of Jewish community life in the postwar period in the City of Boroondara.

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Kew Hebrew Congregation site at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, established in 1949, including several component buildings constructed between 1954 and 1970. The following elements of the site are significant:

- Bet Nachman Synagogue (c.1963-65), including ten stained glass windows designed by Louis Kahan;
- Norman Smargon House, which comprises the remnant core of an original brick residence (c1886) that was adapted and used as a synagogue from c.1949-63, and the additions dating from 1954 and 1957;
- Classrooms (1959);
- School building facing Malmsbury Street (1966);
- Former caretaker's cottage (c.1970);
- Mature Peppercorn (*Schinus molle*).

The recent additions made to the east and west of the school building facing Malmsbury Street are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Kew Hebrew Congregation at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, is of local historical, architectural (representative), social and associative significance and is of rarity value to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The site at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, and known as the Kew Hebrew Congregation, is important for its role in the development of Jewish worship, education, language studies, and community and cultural life in the City of Boroondara from 1949. The complex of buildings, which comprises the Bet Nachman Synagogue (c.1963-65); Norman Smargon House, which comprises the remnant core of an original brick residence (c1886), which was adapted and used as a synagogue from c.1949-63, and added to in 1954 and 1957; classrooms (1959); a double-storey school building facing Malmsbury Street (1966); and former caretaker's cottage (c.1970), together represent the development of a cohesive social, religious and cultural centre of Jewish life in Kew in the postwar period. It is also historically significant for its use as a Jewish day school, serving as the kindergarten and primary school section of Mount Scopus Memorial College, which was located in Burwood, from 1953, and providing a purpose-built school building from 1966. (Criterion A)

The complex at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, known as the Kew Hebrew Congregation and comprising a synagogue, former Jewish day school and Jewish community buildings, is a rare place type in the City of Boroondara and in Victoria more generally. It is a rare intact postwar example of this place type. (Criterion B)

The Bet Nachman Synagogue is architecturally significant as a fine representative example of a postwar Synagogue. Frequently designed by emigre architects who had trained in the ateliers of Europe before the war, these buildings display characteristics of the modernist movement and were seen as symbols of survival and hope to a displaced community looking for a fresh start. Breaking from the traditional forms used for earlier Synagogues that referenced classicism, these building used simple cubiform massing with flat roofs and sheer unadorned planar surfaces favoured by the International style. This frequently resulted in buildings that possessed a certain monumentality in form that was lightened by the use of pale brickwork and large horizontal bands of glazing. The Bet Nachman Synagogue is distinguished by its bold use of pre-cast concrete and a steel portal frame that, combined with striking sloped vertical elements and large areas of unbroken wall surfaces, has resulted in a composition that is more indicative of the emerging Brutalist movement of the 1960s than the earlier international style. The school building is architecturally significant as a representative example of an education building designed in the postwar International style. This is evident in its cubiform massing, flat roof, sheer wall planes of pale brickwork and large expanses of glazing, that combine to give a lightness and transparency to the building that is indicative of the style. (Criterion D)

The Kew Hebrew Congregation at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, is significant for its importance as a centre for Jewish worship, Jewish community life (including welfare, social activities, historical records and Hebrew language), particularly for the postwar (Eastern) European Jewish immigrants who came to Melbourne as displaced people following the Second World War. The site as a whole has played an ongoing role in both the spiritual and social life of the Jewish community, locally and across wider Melbourne, since 1949, when the first synagogue was established in the existing Victorian-era house on the site. Norman Smargon House has served the community for over sixty years as a gathering place for various functions and activities, including for ceremonial observances and rituals from 1949-c.1965 when it was used as a synagogue, as an affiliated kindergarten (with Mount Scopus College) from 1951, and for hosting Shabbat dinners, weddings and school functions up until the present day. The Bet Nachman Synagogue has served the community for over fifty years as a purpose-built place of worship, and as a place where the community's culture and identity is celebrated through the observance of festivals and events throughout the Jewish year and the marking of life cycle events such as births, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings and funerals. The school building facing Malmsbury Street, constructed in c.1965-66, has long connections with the Jewish community through its affiliation with Mount Scopus College, as it served as the Kew division of the college until the 1990s. (Criterion G)

The Kew Hebrew Congregation at 53 Walpole Street, Kew, is of significance to the City of Boroondara for its association with notable members of the Melbourne Jewish society, including businessman and philanthropist Norman Smargon OAM (1884-1956), notable postwar architect, Anthony A. Hayden (1921-1984), and notable artist and Kew resident, Louis Kahan (1905-2002), who designed the ten stained glass windows in the Bet Nachman Synagogue. It is also significant for its association with Jewish teacher and spiritual leader, Rabbi Jacob Schreiber (born c.1920s). Schreiber led the Kew Hebrew Congregation through the period of significant expansion of its operations from the mid-1950s until the 1980s, and was influential in the development of Jewish community life in the postwar period in the City of Boroondara. (Criterion H).

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External Paint Colours	<i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal Alteration Controls	<i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree Controls	<i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	Yes – Peppercorn, (<i>Schinus molle</i>)
Victorian Heritage Register	<i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Incorporated Plan	<i>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</i>	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	<i>Are there outbuildings and fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	<i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	<i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No

Identified By

Lovell Chen (2012), site reassessed by Context (2020).

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