

# SYNAGOGUE

5-11 Synagogue Place

The synagogue complex is of particular historical significance as it has always been the place of worship for Adelaide's Jewish community. The earliest section of the structure dating from 1849-50 appears to have survived although much altered and encased in later building work. The piecemeal development of the synagogue from its foundation reflects gains in the social standing and resources of the Jewish settlers.

Because of the lack of adequate numbers it was twelve years from the foundation of the colony before the Jews formed a congregation. Ten men were needed for a service and in 1844 there were only twenty-five Jews in the colony, with fifteen living in the metropolitan area. The Jewish congregation was established at a meeting in Solomon's Temple Tavern on 10 September 1848, and a committee was formed to obtain weekly subscriptions to fund the erection of a permanent place of worship.

Three early Jewish settlers who had a major impact in South Australia and who formed the nucleus of the Adelaide Hebrew congregation were the brothers Emanuel and Vaiben Solomon and their nephew Judah Moss Solomon.

Their central role in the creation of the Adelaide congregation represented a step upwards in what has been described as 'the fall and rise of the brothers Solomon'. They were born in about 1800 in London and both became pedlars or cloth sellers whose humble careers abruptly ended in a brush with the law. Both were transported in 1818 to Sydney where they had further clashes with authorities while serving their seven year sentences. When they had served their sentences the brothers set themselves up in business, buying shipments of goods and selling the items at auction.

In 1838 Emanuel came to South Australia as a wealthy merchant and became the owner of the well-known Auction Mart. As in Sydney, he bought a ship, the *Dorset*, to bring out luxury items. Soon his business ventures included the Gilles Arcade with the theatre (see Royal Victoria Theatre), and the Temple Tavern. He took part in forming the SA Mining Association (Burra) and became prominent in philanthropic and literary institutions. When the colony celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary Solomon hosted the old colonists' dinner. The seal of social respectability was his election to the House of Assembly for the electorate of West Adelaide (1862-65) and in 1867-71 as a member of the Legislative Council.

Judah Moss Solomon, Emanuel's nephew, was elected first president of the congregation, which was called 'Beth Israel' or 'House of Israel'. J.M. Solomon came from Brisbane in 1846 to join his uncle's partnership and also distinguished himself. He became a well-known auctioneer, a member of the Adelaide City Council, and mayor in 1869. He was elected to the City of Adelaide seat in the House of Assembly, 1858-60, and in 1861-66 was a member of the Legislative Council.

In 1848 W. Weir, architect, provided plans and costs of erecting a place of worship. In 1849 the building committee proposed to erect a room 35 feet by 20 feet as a place of worship and

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schoolroom using, it is assumed, Weir's plans of 1848. This building was erected on land fronting Rundle Street which was purchased late in 1848. On 18 July 1849 the *South Australian Register* commented, 'We are happy to learn that a Synagogue is about to be immediately erected in Rundle Street, near Tavistock building, by our brethren of the Jewish persuasion'. As the congregation decided against applying for government assistance the *South Australian Register* recommended public donations for the building, particularly as '... many Hebrews had pecuniarily helped to rear some of our Christian places of worship'. This provides a rare glimpse of the cooperation which existed at some levels of early South Australian society, and of the financial standing of prominent members of the Jewish community. The first synagogue was consecrated in August 1850.

The synagogue was described as Egyptian in style, the internal fittings corresponding with the appearance of massive construction which characterised the exterior. The Jewish population numbered only 48 in 1846, but by 1860 had increased to 360, some 0.3 per cent of the total population of metropolitan Adelaide. By that time Edmund Wright had designed a committee room adjoining the synagogue off Rundle Street. No doubt due to cramped accommodation, a new synagogue alongside the earlier one was mooted in 1869 which was designed by Wright, Woods and Hamilton 'in the Italian style' of Dry Creek stone, the main quoins being of freestone. Dedication of this building took place on 26 March 1871. This represented a major consolidation of the Jewish community in Adelaide, the Adelaide Synagogue Act of 1881 securing its position.



(CD Ref 3964/77)

By 1891 the Jewish population in Adelaide had reached its peak with some 840 adherents. Levi Isaacs proposed redeveloping the property to provide an income for the community. The Act of 1881 was amended for the '... building and erection upon the said parcel of land of certain shops, buildings and dwelling houses'. Edward Davies architect had prepared plans for five shops yielding a profit of £375 per annum. These plans were approved in 1896 and the construction led to the present massing of the complex and the moving of the synagogue entrance to Synagogue Place. In 1936 the buildings were refaced to a design by the architect Chris A. Smith with detailing similar to 'picture palaces' of the day.

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(CD Ref 3964/74)

The complex of synagogue and shops is of importance to Rundle Street being of similar scale to its neighbours and development elsewhere along Rundle Street. The complex has been little altered since the refacing in 1938 and the synagogue interior retains much of its 1870s character.

ACA, Assessments, Smith Survey 1880, fieldbook No. 12, p. 49; Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol. 2, 1909, P. 59; Carlton, P., 'The worship of God in a strange land', MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1986, pp. 43-51, 71, 110-12, 113, 226; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 37); Munz, H., *Early Jewish settlers and the origin of the community*, 1936, pp. 19, 22, 31; Richards, E., 'The fall and rise of the brothers Solomon', in *Australian Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 8, Part 2, 1975, pp. 1-28; *South Australian Register*, 18 July 1849, 5 September 1850.

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The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

*The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.*

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*Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.*

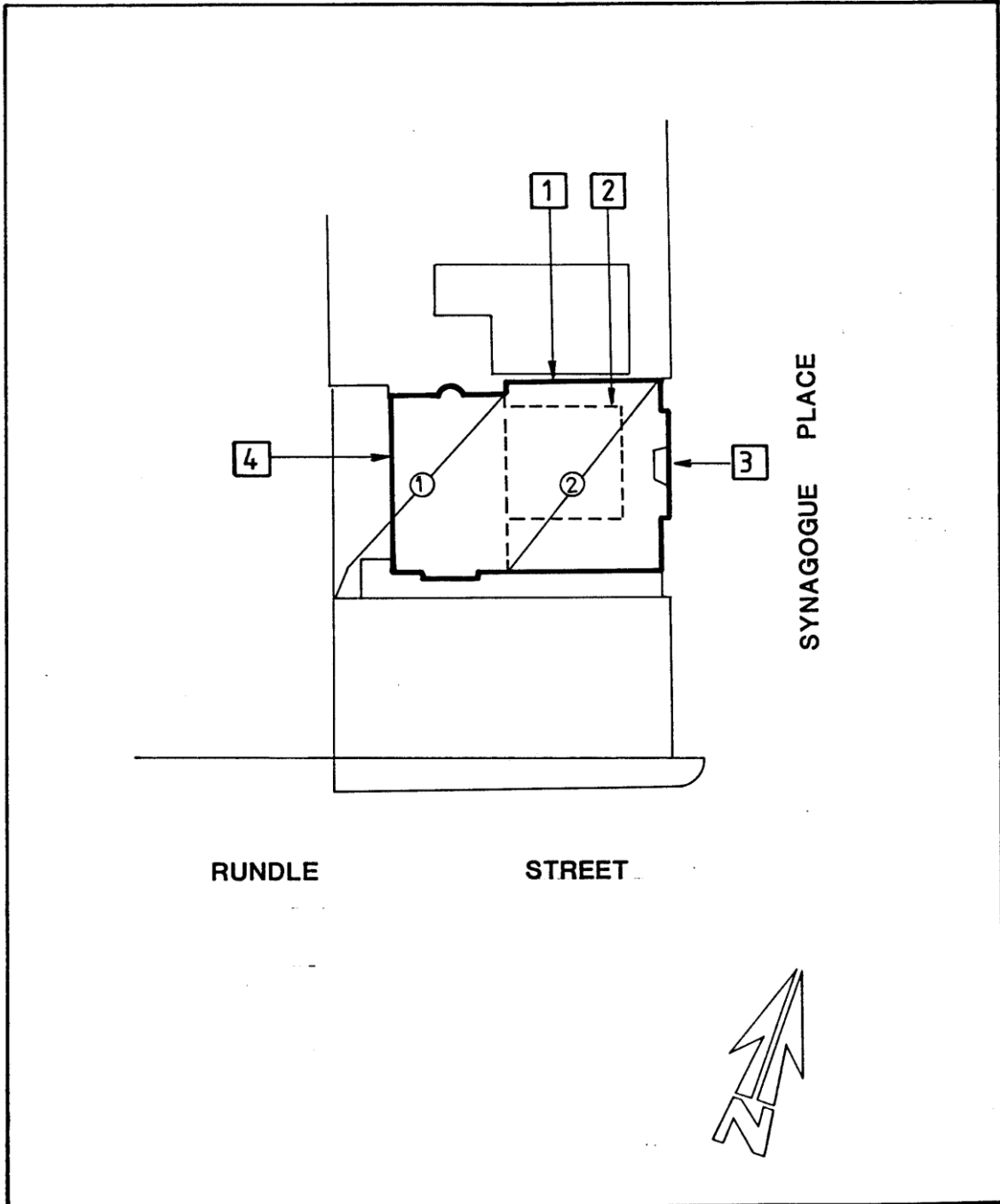


# CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

## The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	SYNAGOGUE	Building No	4/0127-1 & 2
Address	5-11 Synagogue Place	GM 98 Book	541



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