

Adas Israel Photo Project Write-up for JGSCV Newsletter

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The Adas Israel congregation is the longest continuously operating Orthodox congregation in Duluth, Minnesota. It was founded in 1885 by Lithuanian immigrants, incorporated in 1899, and a dedicated synagogue building constructed in 1900. The building (below) was almost 120 years old when it was completely destroyed by fire on 9 Sep 2019.



Although the fire was proven to be arson, it was not a hate crime. A homeless man had gone behind the building to keep warm and set a pile of clothing on fire. When it started to burn out of control, he ran away. Firefighters came and put out the fire, but it was too late. This beautiful building was deemed “a total loss.” Ten of 14 Torah scrolls were rescued and one firefighter received a concussion. The perpetrator pled guilty and received a sentence of one year in jail. Below is a picture of the aftermath.



Hanging on the wall of the synagogue was this October 1914 photo of 40 founding members of the Congregation celebrating Simchas Torah. (This is a cropped version.)



Of course, this photo was destroyed in the fire. Luckily, there are other copies. However, this tragic event inspired Karen Alpert Entous and Allan Garon, both descendants of Duluth-area Jewish families, to try to complete a genealogical project they had started several years ago; namely, to identify all the men in the photo, and to develop genealogical information on each man and his family. Karen and Allan asked me to assist them with the genealogical research. Although I am not closely related to the Duluth-area Jewish families, I am related to them by marriage in several different ways.

Using all available information, the men in the photo were numbered and a list made. This numbered list was compared with a caption that accompanied the photo in a *Jewish Fellowship News* article from 1949. Of course, the two lists were different, and there were still a few question marks. For example, Rabbi Israel S. Teplitz, who was the Rabbi of Adas Israel in 1914 when the photo was taken, could not be identified in the photo.

Using our combined genealogical experience and all the information at our disposal, including sources like Ancestry, JewishGen, FamilySearch, and a large database created by Jack Abramson (another Duluth Jewish Families descendant), we did our best to produce a “definitive” list of the men in the photo. Karen created an Excel spreadsheet including the following information on each man: Name (including other names he was known as), Birth Year, Birthplace, Addresses, Immigration Year, Spouse’s Name, Spouse’s Birthdate, Marriage Year, Occupation, Children’s Names (including married names of daughters), and Children’s Birth Years. Each name was linked to the person’s page on a huge Duluth-area Jewish Families website that Allan Garon created and maintains. Although there are still a few remaining questions, we published the spreadsheet on the website, and it is available directly at: <http://www.garon.us/AdasIsrael.html>. If you would like to explore the password-protected areas of the website, you may e-mail Allan at: allan@garon.us for a User ID and password.