

## Temple of Israel <sup>[1]</sup>

## Temple of Israel

by Janet K. Seapker, 2006



One of the Temple of Israel's golden onion domes, Wilmington, N.C. February 19, 2011.

Image from Flickr user Donald Lee Pardue.

<sup>[2]</sup>The Temple of Israel, begun in 1875, is the oldest Jewish <sup>[3]</sup> house of worship in North Carolina. Jews, mainly of German descent, had been a prominent part of the Wilmington <sup>[4]</sup> population since the eighteenth century but had not had a permanent place to worship. The Jewish population of Wilmington increased during the Civil War <sup>[5]</sup>. In 1867 an Orthodox congregation, the Wilmington Hebrew Congregation, was organized by Rabbi E. M. Myers of Charleston. This group was short-lived, but a Reform congregation was organized in 1872 and three years later began building the Temple of Israel.

Recently discovered information ascribes the design of the temple to Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan. <sup>[6]</sup> Previously it had been attributed to Alex Strausz, a local builder and congregation member. If Sloan was the designer, the Temple of Israel is the third Wilmington house of worship he designed. The others are the current First Baptist Church <sup>[7]</sup> and the previous First Presbyterian Church <sup>[8]</sup>, both begun in 1859. The temple's Moorish-style <sup>[9]</sup> building, which was restored in 1982 and 2000, features twin towers with onion domes painted gold. The main body of the building is covered by a gable roof and spans the two towers.

### Reference:

Tony P. Wrenn, *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historical Portrait* (1984).

### Additional Resources:

Temple of Israel official website: <http://www.temple-of-israel.org/> <sup>[10]</sup>

"Temple of Israel." North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=D-44> <sup>[11]</sup> (accessed July 12, 2012).

"Sol Bear's cane, May 12, 1876." Cape Fear Museum. <http://www.capefearmuseum.com/index.php?flag=collection&cat=Pray&id=222> <sup>[12]</sup> (accessed July 12, 2012).

"Overview-north carolina-Wilmington." Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of

Southern Jewish Life. 2006. <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/nc/wilmington.html> [13] (accessed July 12, 2012).

Smith, Marjorie. "100 years of proud history." *Wilmington Star-News*. May 16, 1976. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=gXU0AAAAIBAJ&sjid=DhMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=2037%2C3087463> [14] (accessed July 12, 2012).

Steelman, Ben. "What is the oldest Jewish house of worship in North Carolina?" MyReporter.com, StarNews. <http://www.myreporter.com/?p=726> [15] (accessed July 12, 2012).

Steelman, Ben. "Temple of Israel to install 20th rabbi." StarNews Online. February 4, 2012. <http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20120204/articles/120209854> [16] (accessed July 12, 2012).

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