

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **2501-2515 South Marshall Street**

Postal code: **19148-4632**

Councilmanic District: **2nd**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Jewish Education Center #2**

Common Name: **Stiffel Senior Center**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use:

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1928-2011**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1928**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Frank E. Hahn**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner: **Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia**

Other significant persons:

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

SEE ATTACHED

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title: Sharon Reid (Volunteer)

Email: sharon.c.reid@gmail.com

Organization: Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

Date: 31 October 2012

Street Address: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620

Telephone: 215.285.1420

City, State, and Postal Code: Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. Boundary Description:

Beginning at the southeastern corner of the intersection of West Porter and South Marshall Streets in South Philadelphia, the Jacob and Ester Stiffel Senior Center of the Jewish Community Centers of Philadelphia's (from hereon, the Stiffel Center) property boundary extends a distance of 48 feet 0 inches eastward, thence south, running parallel to Marshall Street for a distance of 113 feet 0 inches, thence west running parallel to Porter Street for a distance of 48 feet 0 inches, and thence again northward, along Marshall Street, a distance of 113 feet 0 inches to the aforementioned beginning point.¹

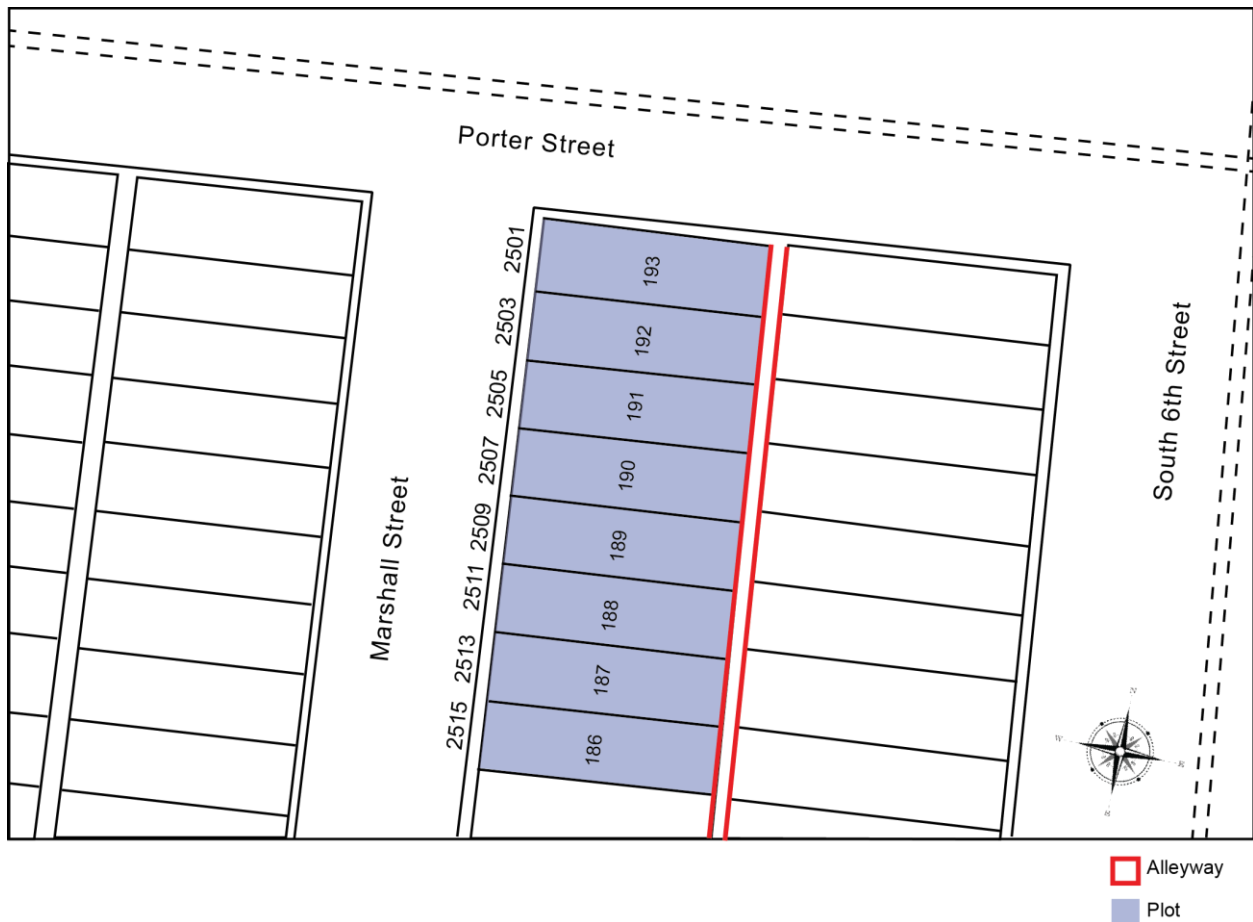


Figure 5A: Stiffel Center, boundaries

¹ Poles, Maurice J., Transfer of Deed to the Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia, March 3, 1927, Deed Abstract 30-S24-186 – 193 Marshall Street, Philadelphia City Archives, Philadelphia, PA. This deed abstract does not directly provide the dimensions listed above. Instead, the dimensions of each plot, numbers 186 through 193 are independently listed as being: Plot 193, "Front 15ft on Marshall Street, Depth East along S. Porter 48ft to a 3-foot wide alley, Use of alley," and each Plot 186 through 192 being: "Front 14ft, Depth E- 48ft to a 3-foot wide alley, Use of alley."

6. Description

The Stiffel Center, a building originally constructed in 1928 as the Jewish Education Center #2 (from hereon, JEC #2), is positioned at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Porter and Marshall Streets in the 39th Ward of South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Fig. 6A). This modestly sized, freestanding building rises two full stories above a significantly raised basement and is capped by a flat roof that sits approximately 41 feet above street level. Framed in steel, with brick bearing walls and both concrete floors and a concrete roof, the building has a rectangular massing that fills the entirety of its seven-parcel-deep lot (see fig. 5A).² Its primary north elevation faces Porter Street and its secondary west elevation faces Marshall Street; both are clad in multi-hued, textured brick laid in stacked, chevron, and random-ashlar bond and capped by a terra cotta cornice. A 3-foot wide and 113-foot deep alleyway runs southward along the east elevation, which is clad in common red brick and largely concealed from public view by the adjacent rowhouse properties. The Stiffel Center's south elevation is currently a freestanding brick party wall but was originally shared by an adjoining two-story rowhouse that has since been demolished.

The building's Beaux-Arts-influenced design and unique materials stand out from the unassuming, predominantly two-story rowhouse neighborhood that surrounds it. Though it has experienced minor alterations since the time of its construction, it retains a high degree of integrity. A circa 1930 photograph confirms that the building's current configuration, with an ornate primary entrance on Porter Street and a utilitarian secondary entrance on Marshall Street, is original to the building (Fig. 6B).³ The only major exterior alterations consist of an at-grade elevator door along Porter Street and the infill of all basement windows along Porter and Marshall Streets.

North Elevation

The Stiffel Center's north elevation rises two and one-half stories above the Porter Street grade and stretches 48 feet in width. Its five bays are arranged symmetrically around a central, classically styled entranceway. The building's base is composed of a 1-foot 10-inch high limestone water table set below a field of large, striated facing brick laid in a stacked bond pattern. The bricks vary in colors, from very dark grey and deep brownish-red, to light grey, light orange-brown, and buff, and are set in half-inch wide beds of grey mortar. This base rises approximately 6.5 feet above grade and is capped by a 1-foot high limestone half-round belt course (Fig. 6C). The base is pierced by the main entranceway, which sits three concrete steps above sidewalk grade and is set within a limestone surround embellished with diamond pattern rope molding and four small goat head reliefs along the top rail (a central fifth goat head appears to have been removed). A limestone fascia inscribed with Hebrew text followed by the words "Jewish Educational Center"⁴ is set below a flat neoclassical pediment supporting two limestone urns (See Fig. 6D). Set within the doorway are two contemporary metal clad double doors—each an active leaf and containing one vertical rectangular windowpane. Above the doors is a casement transom that has been enclosed with drywall. A circa-1930 photo (See Fig. 6B) shows that two tall doors, each set with a tall and narrow pane of glass, originally occupied this space.⁵ Two basement windows in the

²Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, "Philadelphia, Volume 16." Plate 147, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1916 updated through 1951). Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA.

³See "Photo of Educational Center No. 2. Marshall and Porter Streets, Philadelphia," in Frank E. Hahn, *Selections from the Work of the Offices of Frank E. Hahn, Architect and Engineer*, (Philadelphia, PA: Architectural Catalogue Company, 1930).

⁴The Hebrew text translates to Talmud Torah, meaning, "learning torah." Rakhmiel Peltz, Personal correspondence, October 24, 2012.

⁵Hahn, *Selections from the Work*, "Jewish Education Center No. 2."

second and fourth bays of the building originally flanked the central entranceway. The window to the left of the entranceway has been infilled with concrete and a small metal louver. The window to the right has been altered to accommodate a utilitarian elevator entrance set behind an overhead mounted, commercial-style metal rolling fire door.⁶ A date stone inscribed with the numbers “5688” and “1928”—marking the date of the building’s construction according to both the Jewish and the Gregorian calendars—is set to the right of the elevator door, near the northwest corner of the building (Fig. 6E).

The upper two stories of the building are clad in a unique random-ashlar-coursed face brick of various dimensions. The bricks vary in color, from buff and light grey, to light and dark brownish-red, to dark grey, though all feature an extruded, ribbed texture. The color variation, texture, and unique bond pattern combines to give the building an overall stone-like appearance (Fig. 6F). This façade is arranged into five distinct, symmetrical bays. The outermost corner bays each feature a small, narrow rectangular window at the first floor level. These windows are set in red wooden frames behind modern metal security screens. At the second floor level, the two outer bays feature larger rectangular windows with one-over-one wood sashes. Each window is accented by a small projecting metal balconette featuring a decorative floral pattern (See Fig. 6F).

The three central bays share a fenestration pattern consisting of tall, round-arched second-floor windows and rectangular third-story windows of equal width, separated by inset brick spandrel panels set in a chevron bond. The second-floor window arches feature large projecting scroll-shaped terra cotta keystones, and a large terra cotta tile is set above each of the three central second-story windows, each embellished with a unique floral relief pattern (See Fig. 6F). The window sashes themselves exist in a variety of original and altered configurations. Historically, both the first- and second-floor windows were three-over-three double hung sashes, with the exception of the central first-floor bay, where the top of the central entranceway took the place of the lower window sash. Currently, this bay retains its historic fixed sash configuration along with its original arched transom. The transoms of the two flanking bays have been covered in plywood, and modern replacement windows have replaced the historic sashes in the bay to the left (east) of the central bay. Pairs of one-over-one double-hung sashes have replaced all third-floor windows.

An ornate, buff-colored terra cotta cornice set approximately 3.5 feet above the tops of the second-floor windows caps the north elevation. The cornice is composed of an astragal base set below a fascia band featuring projecting animalistic mascarons and a crowning band of dentils (Fig. 6G).⁷ Presently, two modern antennae can be seen projecting above the flat roofline.⁸

West Elevation

The Stiffel Center’s west elevation rises two and one-half stories above the Marshall Street grade and extends 113 feet in length. It consists of fourteen bays, the central twelve of which are symmetrical (Fig.

⁶ When looking at the building it is evident that this opening now contains an elevator shaft. When speaking to Dr. Rakhmiel Peltz of Drexel University’s Center for Jewish Studies, I learned that this elevator was not installed until sometime after the December 1985 fire. Rakhmiel Petlz, personal conversation with author, October 15, 2012.

⁷ It is unclear as to the origin of the materials used in the construction of the JEC #2. The building’s architect, Frank E. Hahn, was known to have ordered terra cotta from the O. W. Ketcham Company for the construction of the 1922 Federation of Jewish Charities building. See Frank E. Hahn, *Selections from the Work of the Offices of Frank E. Hahn, Architect and Engineer*, Philadelphia, PA: Architectural Catalogue Company, 1930. *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*, “Chester Grows Like Schoolboy; Trebles Wealth,” 25 August, 1916. The location of the O. W. Ketcham Company is mentioned in this article.

⁸ These antennae were installed between 2009 and 2012. See “Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit, Application No. 380090, City of Philadelphia, Department of Licenses and Inspections, 2012; “Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit, Application No. 209254, City of Philadelphia, Department of Licenses and Inspections, 2009.

6H). The outermost corner bays, while not symmetrical in terms of fenestration, are of equal width and height. Like the north elevation, the building's base is composed of a 1-foot 10-inch high limestone water table set below a field of large, striated facing brick laid in a stacked bond pattern.⁹ Because the Marshall Street's grade slopes, the water table tapers in height as it runs from the northwestern to the southwestern corner of the facade.¹⁰ The bricks above the water table vary in colors, from very dark grey and deep brownish-red, to light grey, light orange-brown, and buff, and are set in half-inch wide beds of grey mortar. This base rises approximately 6.5 feet above grade and is capped by a 1-foot high limestone half-round belt course. Thirteen equally sized windows that have been infilled and an unornamented secondary entranceway pierce the water table. The windows are located in bays 1 through 13 and the entranceway, at the southernmost end of the building, is located in bay 14. This entranceway features a grey metal door and doorframe.

The two upper stories of the building are clad in a unique random-ashlar-coursed facing brick of various dimensions. Like those on the north elevation, the bricks on this facade vary in color, from buff and light grey, to light and dark brownish-red, to dark grey, though all feature an extruded, ribbed texture. The color variation, texture, and unique bond pattern combines to give the building an overall stone-like appearance. This facade is arranged into fourteen distinct, symmetrical bays. The outer, north corner bay features a small, narrow rectangular window at the first floor level. In contrast, there is no first floor level window in the outer, south corner bay. At the second floor level, both of the outer bays feature larger rectangular windows with one-over-one wood sashes. Each window is accented by a small projecting metal balconette featuring a decorative floral pattern.

The twelve central bays share a fenestration pattern consisting of tall, round-arched second-floor windows and rectangular third-story windows of equal width, separated by inset brick spandrel panels set in a chevron bond. The second-floor window arches feature large projecting scroll-shaped terra cotta keystones, and a large terra cotta tile is set above each of the three central second-story windows, each embellished with a floral relief pattern (Fig. 6I).¹¹ Some of this facade's windows retain their original wooden frames, but none features an original sash. All second-story arched windows are set behind modern metal security screens. Historically, both the first- and second-floor windows featured three-over-three double hung sashes. Each of the twelve arched transoms has been covered in plywood. All of the second and third-floor windows have been replaced. The replaced windows feature a number of different sash and pane styles (Fig. 6J).

Modern electrical conduit and an electric meter are located in the first bay, at the northwest corner of the facade. The conduit begins on the level of the raised basement, wraps around the belt course, and spans the full height of first above-basement-level floor. Mounted to the brickwork, to the right of the tall arched window in the second, northernmost bay, is a small video camera.

Like the north elevation, an ornate, buff-colored terra cotta cornice set approximately 3.5 feet above the tops of the second-floor windows caps the west elevation. The cornice is composed of an astragal base set below a fascia band featuring projecting animalistic mascarons and a crowning band of dentils.

East Elevation

The east elevation is largely obscured by a series of two-story buildings; thus, the majority of the facade

⁹ This brick measures 5 inches in height by 8 inches in width.

¹⁰ There is an 8-inch difference between the northern and the southern corner of the facade.

¹¹ There are three styles of terra cotta tiles on the building. Along the west facade the three styles are repeated four times.

is not visible from the public right-of-way.¹² Only three vantages provide minimal views of this elevation: 1) a narrow, vertical section can be seen when looking at the building, through a 14-foot wide opening along South 6th Street; 2) from the corner of South 6th and Porter Streets, an approximately 30-foot wide section of wall containing two windows is visible; 3) from the south side of Porter Street, where at the corner a vertical strip of the building is visible through the narrow, gated alleyway (Figs. 6K, 6L, and 6M). As a consequence, Google's "birds-eye-view" was used to garner additional descriptive information about the elevation (Fig. 6N).

The east elevation rises two and one-half stories above the alleyway grade and stretches 113 feet in length. The elevation also features a series of non-distinct bays, only eight of which are symmetrical on the upper two full floors.¹³ With the exception of a narrow strip of decorative brickwork that wraps around the northeast corner of the building and extends a distance of approximately two feet onto this elevation (See Figs. L and M), the east façade is clad entirely in common red brick. This brick is laid in a common bond pattern and set in quarter inch wide beds of mortar.

A series of approximately 3-foot high windows line the base of the building, at grade. The exact number of these windows is indeterminable.¹⁴ One utilitarian entranceway sits flush with the façade, in the outermost bay at the elevation's south end. The upper two stories of the building consist of twelve bays. Two bays at the elevation's south end, bays 1 and 2, and one large bay at the north end, bay 12, flank eight symmetrical and one a-symmetrical central bays. The eight symmetrical bays—bays 3 through 10—share a fenestration pattern consisting of tall, round-arched second-floor windows and rectangular third-story windows of equal width. The ninth central bay, bay 11, also features the tall, round-arched second-floor window, but along its third story it features two, adjacent rectangular windows.¹⁵ Some of the windows along this elevation retain their historic wood frames. None that is visible, however, retains its original sash; each contains a replacement sash, the style of which varies. Each of the tall arched windows that is visible from the public right-of-way is set behind a simple metal security grill and has its transom covered in plywood that is painted dark red.

At the south end of the façade, the two outer bays, bay 1 and bay 2, feature along the top story a large rectangular window with a one-over-one sash. Bay 1 has no window opening along the second-story level. Bay 2, however, features one small, square window (See Fig. 6N).

The east elevation's bay number 12 is approximately twice the width the other bays. Near its outer, northern corner, a tall arched window is featured between the raised basement and the second-story level See Fig. (6M). Directly above this window, along the level of the third story, is a rectangular window. The window is equal in both shape and size to those found along the top story in bays 1 through 11, but it is set at a lower position along the elevation (See Figs. 6M and 6N). The window also features a one-over-one sash set in a replacement frame.

¹² The narrow, 3-foot wide alleyway running between the back of the South 6th Street rowhouses and the Stiffel Center is gated, locked, and not accessible to the public.

¹³ As noted in the following paragraph, the number of grade level windows is indeterminable due to a lack of visibility from both the public right-of-way, and Google's "birds-eye-view."

¹⁴ See footnote 13.

¹⁵ Each of these two windows is equal in size and width to the windows found in bays 3 through 10.

A short, approximately two-foot long strip of the north elevation's ornate, buff-colored terra cotta cornice wraps onto the east elevation covering the bearing wall's parapet.¹⁶ A strip of terra cotta flashing caps the remaining stretch of the building's unadorned parapet.

South Elevation

The Stiffel Center's south-facing façade is constructed of common red brick that laid in a running bond pattern and set within quarter-inch wide beds of mortar. This façade is devoid of both ornamentation and fenestration. A circa-1930 photo, a 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, and physical remains that project from the Stiffel Center's façade reveal that, the building was previously adjoined to a smaller, two-story rowhouse, number 2517 Marshall Street.¹⁷ The remains of 2517 Marshall Street's bearing wall, now project physically, in both height and depth, from the bottom two-third of this south elevation (Fig. 6O).¹⁸

The south elevation is not capped with a cornice. The bearing wall extends, however, beyond the building's roofline forming a parapet. This parapet is equal in height to the adjoining cornice that caps the west elevation. A strip of terra cotta flashing tops and spans the length of this parapet. An approximately 1-foot wide stretch of decorative facing brick also wraps the western corner of this elevation and sits flush with the common brick façade (Fig. 6P). Also sitting flush with the south elevation is a squat, 2-foot tall by approximately 3-foot wide brick chimney (See Fig. 6P).

¹⁶ Google's "birds-eye-view" function makes it clear that the building's brick bearing walls extend slightly beyond its roofline, thus, creating a parapet. This parapet is concealed along both the north and the west facades by the building's decorative cornice.

¹⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, "Philadelphia, Volume 16," Plate 147, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 1916 updated through 1951). Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA.

¹⁸ A thickness of approximately 1-foot of house 2517 Marshall Street's north wall remains *in situ*.



Figure 6A: Stiffel Center, north (Porter Street) and west (Marshall Street) elevations

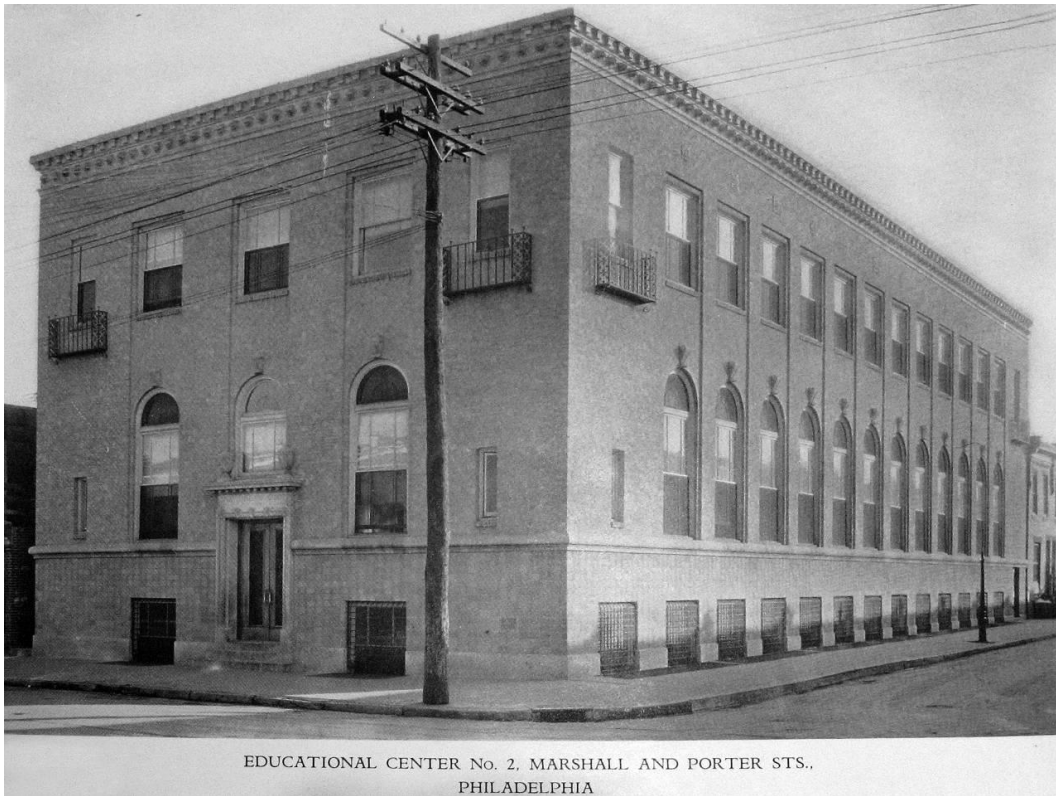


Figure 6B: "Jewish Education Center No. 2" Image shows the building's original fenestration details. From Frank E. Hahn, *Selections from the Work of the Offices of Frank E. Hahn, Architect and Engineer.* Philadelphia, PA: Architectural Catalogue Company, 1930.



Figure 6C: Base of the north elevation



Figure 6D: Detail of the Stiffel Center's main, Porter Street entranceway

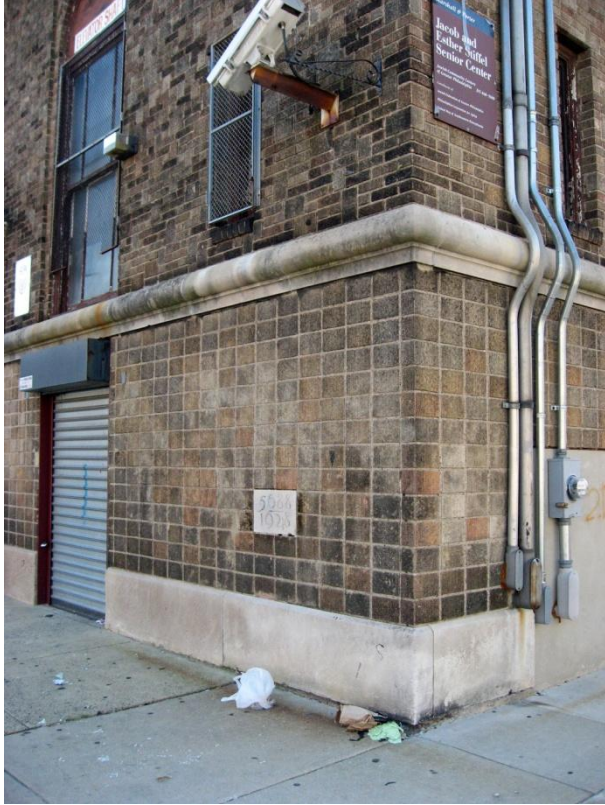


Figure 6E: Northwest corner of the Stiffel Center, showing the location of the building's date stone.



Figure 6F: North-facing, Porter Street façade detail showing the two above-basement-level stories, the balconette, cornice, keystone, and brickwork detail.



Figure 6G: Detail of cornice



Figure 6H: West-facing South Marshall Street façade, photo taken from northwest corner of Porter and South Marshall Streets.



Figure 6I: The building's terra cotta cornice and the three different styles of terra cotta tiles found below the cornice along both the building's north and west façades



Figure 6J: The variation of window sashes found along the west elevation



Figure 6K: Fenestration pattern along the Stiffel Center's east elevation. Photo taken from 2506 South 6th Street, looking west, through the an opening in the fence that currently fronts a vacant lot.



Figure 6L: Photograph taken from the northeast corner of Porter Street, at the intersection of Porter and South 6th Streets. Looking southwest, the photo reveals how the decorative cornice and facing brick wrap onto the building's east elevation.



Figure 6M : Photo of the vertical strip of the building's east elevation that is visible through the narrow, gated alleyway

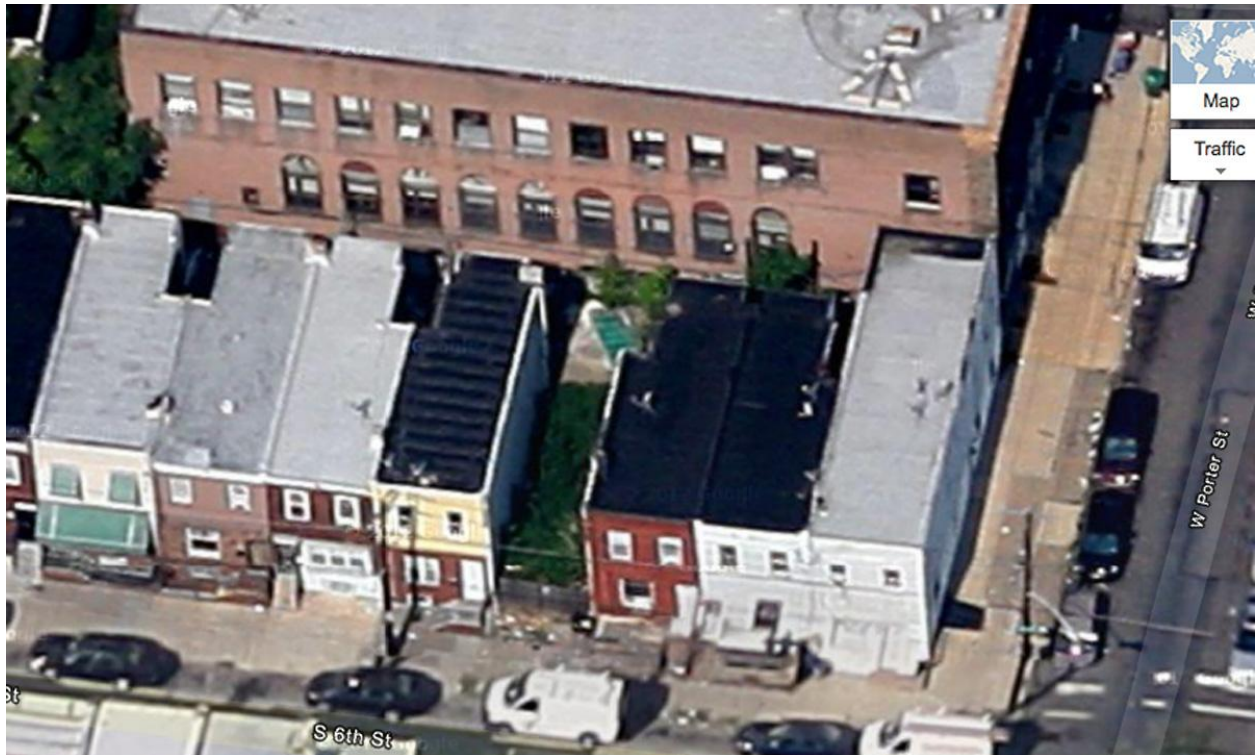


Figure 6N: Image of the Stiffel Center's east elevation as seen from Google, www.maps.google.com.



Figure 60: Exposed southern façade of the Stiffel Center. Image shows remains of the two-story rowhouse that was once adjoined to this façade.



Figure 6P: Detail showing the exposed cornice profile, the manner in which the decorative facing brick wraps onto the south façade, the bracketed metal flashing, and the chimneystack.

7. Significance

Statement of Significance

The Stiffel Center building, erected as the JEC #2, and later home to both the Neighborhood Center South, and the Jewish Y's and Centers (JYCs) Multi Service Center, currently stands vacant, but largely unaltered and with high integrity. The building is a veritable architectural palimpsest of eighty-five years of Jewish life and culture in South Philadelphia.¹⁹ Constructed in 1928 as part of a building campaign that was designed to meet the educational and cultural needs of the rapidly expanding Jewish immigrant community's children, and to ultimately ensure the perpetuation of Jewish culture, the JEC #2 was one of only two structures of its kind in Philadelphia to ever be built. Of the two JEC's constructed in the City, the JEC #2 was the only one designed by the Philadelphia Jewish community's own prolific and well-known architect and engineer, Frank E. Hahn.²⁰ Moreover, the JEC #2 is the last of the edifices that Hahn designed specifically for any of the Federation of Jewish Charities agencies. It is also the only Federation building that Hahn designed while solely in private practice.

The purposeful move of the Neighborhood Center—the descendant institution of the City's original Jewish settlement house—to this building also augments its historical significance. Rather uniquely, the building continued service to the local Jewish immigrant community throughout its lifecycle. Many of the community's seniors aged in place and speak fondly of having attended the Talmud Torah and the youth cultural and recreational programs in earlier years and also the Center's senior programs during the later decades of their lives.²¹ As Dr. Rakmiel Peltz of Drexel University's Jewish Studies Program explains, "... the Stiffel Center, the descendant institution of the original settlement house, reminds the Jews of South Philadelphia that they are, indeed, the children and grandchildren of east European Jewish immigrants, who are spinning further the stories, rituals, and recipes of their ancestors for future generations to acquire."²² Furthermore, starting in the 1980s and continuing until the summer of 2011, this building and its settlement house descendant intuition, the Neighborhood Center-turned-Stiffel Center, began servicing other elderly members of immigrant groups that had since relocated to the community. Thus, in true settlement house-style fashion, this building's lifetime has been spent both meeting the needs of and helping to perpetuate the culture of its neighboring residents.

The Stiffel Center meets the following criteria for designation as set forth by the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-2007(5), of the Philadelphia Code:

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and

¹⁹ Greifer 121. Greifer estimates that between 1882 and 1904, approximately 60,000 Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe to Philadelphia.

²⁰ Another Jewish architect from Philadelphia, Edwin L. Rothschild, designed the JEC #1. Unlike Hahn, Rothschild had neither a long nor as distinguished a career. See "Projects: Rothschild, Edwin Leo." American Architects and Buildings, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012, http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm/87643.

²¹ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 15; Rakmiel Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," in *Global Philadelphia: Immigrant Communities Old and New*, edited by Ayumi Takenaka and Mary Johnson Osirim, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 34; Natalie Caplan and Warren Reed, personal conversation with author, September 27, 2012.

²² Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," 34.

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community

(a) *Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and (j): Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community*

Jewish settlement in Philadelphia

The history of Jewish settlement in Philadelphia dates back to the early eighteenth century, and is marked by the arrival of Spanish and Portuguese Israelites.²³ Starting in the late eighteenth century and spanning through the 1880s, however, the majority of the Jewish immigrants who put down roots in Philadelphia emigrated from Germany.²⁴ As the German-Jewish community expanded over time, its more established members endeavored to meet the religious, educational, and cultural needs of their newly emigrated fellow community members through the founding of numerous philanthropic institutions. In addition to the formation of new congregations and the building of synagogues, some of the early charitable organizations established in Philadelphia were: the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (1817), the Hebrew Sunday School (1938), the Hebrew Education Society (c. 1847), and Maimonides College, the first training school in the country for Rabbis (1867). Later, six additional charities merged and formed the Society of the United Hebrew Charities (1869)—an organization intended to “relieve the destitute of the Jewish people of the city of Philadelphia and discourage pauperism.”²⁵ These early educational and philanthropic entities were the forerunners of the numerous organizations later established to educate, acculturate, and ameliorate the everyday living situations of the masses of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and their children who would soon make Philadelphia their home.

Resulting from the 1881 assassination of the Russian Tsar Alexander II and the succession of pogroms and repressive campaigns that followed, prodigious numbers of Eastern European Jews fled from their homes in what had been the former lands of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.²⁶ Thus, 1882 marked the commencement of the immigration of scores of southeastern, or “Russian” Jews to Philadelphia.²⁷ Those who reached the docks along the Delaware River and who did not immediately continue on to other parts of the United States most frequently settled in the northeastern-most section of South Philadelphia, between 3rd and 6th, and South and Wharton Streets.²⁸ Over the next forty years the number of newly arriving Jewish immigrants increased exponentially. It was estimated that between 1882 and 1904, nearly 60,000 Jews settled in Philadelphia and that South Philadelphia, alone, had a Jewish population of 55,000 in 1907, and one that reached nearly 100,000 by 1920.²⁹ By the early 1900s, many of the more established immigrant families were noted to have moved from South Philadelphia to

²³ Henry Samuel Morais, *Jews of Philadelphia: Their History from the Earliest Settlements to the present Time*, (Philadelphia: The Levy Type Company, 1894), 10-11; Julian Greifer, “Neighborhood Center: A Study of the Adjustment of a Culture Group in America,” PhD diss., (New York University, 1948), 119-120. There is a discrepancy of approximately twenty years between the date that Greifer ascribes to the arrival of the first settlement of Jewish people in Philadelphia and that which Morais mentions.

²⁴ Greifer, “Neighborhood Center,” 120; Rakhmiel Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture: American Yiddish in South Philadelphia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 120-121. It is worth noting that the Hebrew Sunday School, founded by Rebecca Gratz, was the first of its kind to be established in the United States. Morais, *Jews of Philadelphia: Their History from the Earliest Settlements to the present Time*, 113-114.

²⁶ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 15; Rakhmiel Peltz, “125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia,” 29; Greifer, *Neighborhood Center*, 155, 157.

²⁷ Greifer (1948) often references the Eastern European Jewish immigrants as simply “Russian” Jews.

²⁸ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 15; Greifer, “Neighborhood Center,” 141.

²⁹ Greifer, “Neighborhood Center,” 121; Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 15.

other Philadelphia neighborhoods.³⁰ New, Eastern European Jewish immigrants desiring to settle in South Philadelphia, in the established community of their kinsmen and near places of employment, were, however, still arriving at a steady quip. To accommodate both this ever-growing population of Eastern European Jews and immigrants of other ethnicities, the City between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries expanded southward.³¹ As more housing became available and as the neighborhood became better connected to other parts of the city via new and extended trolley lines, Philadelphia's expanding Jewish community moved further south.³² In an attempt to follow their constituencies, between 1905 and 1925 numerous Jewish institutions were either being founded in, or relocating their preexisting headquarters to the area roughly bound on the north side by Snyder Avenue. Despite the fact that a number of Jewish families continued to reside north of Snyder Avenue into the 1980s it was this southeastern section of South Philadelphia that, by 1940s had become the City's most recognized and populated Jewish neighborhood in the City.³³

History of Jewish Education in Philadelphia

During the nineteenth-century, the religious educational needs of the City's Jewish children were primarily met via the work of congregational schools and the private teacher and *heder*.³⁴ Congregational schools were institutions affiliated with the city's largest synagogues. For a fee, each provided religious and cultural training to the children of its congregants, but only provided a few hours of instruction per week and typically did not employ trained teachers.³⁵ The private teacher, however, traveled from home to home and provided an education to those students whose parents could afford to pay for his services. Similarly, the *heder* was a private, but not always competent teacher who, independent of a synagogue, set up a classroom in a private space and conducted Jewish educational classes following public school hours.³⁶ Also developed during this time period were the Hebrew Sunday School and the Hebrew Educational Society. These institution employed competent teachers and, as a result of private donations, were able to educate larger numbers of Jewish children for free.³⁷ Still, neither the Hebrew Sunday School nor the Hebrew Educational Society could alone provide an education to all of the children of Jewish immigrants who started arriving in the 1880s

Problematically, the majority of the voluminous numbers of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who began arriving in Philadelphia the 1880s had large families and no means of offering their children a proper Jewish education. In an effort to allay this particular problem, in 1892, Philadelphia's first of ten Talmud Torahs, the "Central Talmud Torah, was founded on the 600 block of South 9th Street in the northeastern region of South Philadelphia. The Talmud Torah was a religious community school that taught Hebrew and provided a four-year religious education program to the elementary school aged children of the predominantly poor, Eastern European Jewish immigrant population. Although an institution of Orthodox orientation, the Talmud Torah was a community school and not affiliated with

³⁰ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

³² In 1895, the area south of Jackson Street remained almost entirely undeveloped but just fifteen years later nearly every block stretching from Jackson south to Shunk, and from South 5th Street west to Broad had been developed. George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1893, (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Company, 1893; George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* 1910, (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Company, 1910). Meyers, *Images of America: The Jewish Community of South Philadelphia*, 41, 43, 49; Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 17.

³³ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 17.

³⁴ Diane A. King, "Jewish Education in Philadelphia," In *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830-1940*, editor, Murray Friedman, 235-251, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983). As explained below, a *heder* was a term for a teacher who set up a small classroom space and privately educated a group of pupils.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 235-237.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 235-237

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 239-241.

any particular synagogue.³⁸ Also, unlike many of the other Jewish schools that operated with volunteers, the Talmud Torah's instructors were highly qualified, and paid for their work.³⁹

As the number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Philadelphia increased, so did the need for additional Talmud Torahs. By 1906, three Talmud Torahs were reported to be operating in Philadelphia. The growing number of individual Talmud Torahs was eventually incorporated into an organization known as the Association of Talmud Torahs, and this association became, in 1919, affiliated with the auspicious Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia.⁴⁰ Still, the size of the buildings and the classrooms, and the conditions in which the students were receiving an education through the Talmud Torahs were considered outmoded and inadequate.⁴¹ It took time, but finally, in 1928, the Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia (the Federation) was able to fund the construction two out of the six proposed Jewish religious education buildings that it intended for Philadelphia's Associated Talmud Torahs to inhabit.⁴²

The History of the Jewish Educational Center #2

For years, great concern had been expressed by members of Philadelphia's established German-Jewish population—many of whom headed or were staff members of the Federation's associated philanthropic, educational, and social service-oriented organizations—that the children of Eastern European Jewish immigrants were lacking the religious and cultural training necessary to “perpetuate Jewish life.”⁴³ The aforementioned “inadequate and outmoded” Talmud Torah facilities, as well as the less than “proper” milieu of other institutions offering religious and cultural training were thought to further compound the city's Jewish educational problems. Therefore, in an effort to correct the existing problems and assure the children of the community the proper training that would lead them on the path to “useful citizenship,” and “rectitude of moral conduct,” and also aid in both the strengthening of traditions and the unification of the City's Jewish community, the Federation was prompted to raise money for the construction of new educational facilities.⁴⁴ At this time it was thought that new, spacious buildings filled with light, fresh air, and modern amenities would provide students with the much-needed “new spiritual impetus.”⁴⁵ By the time that the Federation was endeavoring to raise funds for the construction of what would soon afterward be termed “Jewish Educational Center Number 1” (JEC #1) and “Jewish Educational Center Number 2” (JEC #2), there was a marked change in the Jewish community of Philadelphia's outlook toward Jewish education. Whereas the education of children had previously been seen as the responsibility of the parents, by the 1920s it was stressed that the community, as a whole, was responsible for the education of Jewish children.⁴⁶

The JEC #2, designed by local architect and Philadelphia Jewish community member, Frank E. Hahn, was erected between the months of June and September of 1928.⁴⁷ The building was purposefully located at

³⁸ Ibid., 244-245.

³⁹ Ibid., 245.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 244-245.

⁴¹ Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building,” *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), January 13, 1928.

⁴² Ibid. This article states that there were six buildings planned for construction. Other articles explain that the Federation of Jewish Charities planned to build five schools.

⁴³ “Two Jewish Educational Centers Celebrate 13 Years of Endeavor,” *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), March 28, 1941.

⁴⁴ Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building,” *The Jewish Exponent*; Two Jewish Educational Centers Celebrate 13 Years of Endeavor,” *The Jewish Exponent*; “Albert M. Greenfield and Justin P. Allman at cornerstone laying,” *The Jewish Exponent*; Ben Rosen, “Our federation and Jewish education,” *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), April 25, 1930.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rosen, “Our federation and Jewish education”.

⁴⁷ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, “Projects: Hahn, Frank Eugene (1879-1962): Architects and Engineers,” (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012), http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm#references.

the southeastern corner of Porter and Marshall Streets in South Philadelphia, in a geographical locus that by the 1920s had already become the center of the City's Eastern European Jewish population.⁴⁸ The JEC #2 was erected under the auspices of the Federation's Building Committee for the purpose of "the cultural and [religious] educational advancement [of Jewish youth]."⁴⁹ As intended, it was immediately afterward placed under the direction of the Federation's affiliated educational agency, the Associated Talmud Torahs.⁵⁰ Funding for the \$170,000 JEC #2 building came from thousands of the Philadelphia area Jewish community members who responded to the Federation's appeals.⁵¹

As its name indicates, the JEC #2 was the second of two "Jewish Educational Centers" constructed in Philadelphia—the first being JEC #1, a building erected just months earlier, at 508 Moore Street.⁵² Although the Federation's Building Committee called for the construction of additional centers of this kind, the JEC #2 turned out to be the second and final building of its type and purpose to ever be erected in Philadelphia. Like the JEC #1, when the JEC #2 was completed it housed "a spacious auditorium with a well-equipped stage, a large indoor playroom, a library and eight classrooms."⁵³ By the end of its first year of operation, The JEC #2 also showcased a library filled with a highly lauded 500-volume collection of Yiddish, Judaic, and Hebraic materials.⁵⁴

While operating under the auspices of the Associated Talmud Torahs, the JEC #2 had no affiliation with a synagogue. The school was instead assigned a principal whose job it was to directly oversee the institution's programming. From its inception, the JEC #2 included a kindergarten for children ages 4-6, a Hebrew school for those ages 7 to 18, Hebrew high school classes for students 14 to 18 years of age, and a series of Sabbath and holiday services, a series of Jewish clubs, and lectures and classes for adults.⁵⁵ This array of programming, offered both Monday through Thursday and on Sundays rendered the JEC #2 but one out of only four institutions in the whole region of Philadelphia stretching from Spring Garden Street south to Oregon Avenue and from the Delaware River west to the Schuylkill (Fig. 7A). Among the thousands of elementary school aged children and teenagers who attended the JEC #2 and benefited from its programming was Eddie Fisher, one of America's most loved 1950s era pop singer.⁵⁶

While the primary focus of the JEC #2's programming remained religious education and Jewish culture-focused, over time, the JEC #2 became known in the community as rallying space for adults and also as a locus where various neighborhood groups could freely hold meetings and events.⁵⁷ As the years passed, programming was added that reflected the needs and the interests of the JEC #2's constituency. One of the most popular, widely attended programs was the summer school course run by the Hebrew Sunday School Society.⁵⁸ Interestingly, although both the JEC #1 and #2 were reportedly outfitted with the same

⁴⁸ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 17.

⁴⁹ Albert M. Greenfield and Justin P. Allman at cornerstone laying," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), June 1, 1928.

⁵⁰ Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building," *The Jewish Exponent*.

⁵¹ "Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building," *The Jewish Exponent*; "Albert M. Greenfield and Justin P. Allman at cornerstone laying," *The Jewish Exponent*.

⁵² Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building," *The Jewish Exponent*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ "Libraries at Educational Centers," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), February 28, 1929.

⁵⁵ Registration Begins at Talmud Torahs," in Philadelphia City News, *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), September 14, 1928. Dr. Joseph Levitsky, Principal of the JEC #2, was appointed in 1928 and remained until at least the early 1940s. See "Reunion of Camp Tel-Hai," *Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), February 23, 1940.

⁵⁶ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 18. For additional information regarding Eddie Fisher, see William Grimes, "Eddie Fisher, Pop Singer Dies at 82," *New York Times*, September 24, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/25/arts/25fisher.html?_r=1&.

⁵⁷ "Ten Years of Educational Centers," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), April 1, 1938.

⁵⁸ "Jewish Children in Summer Schools," *Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), July 7, 1933.

amenities, and despite the fact that the JEC #2 was the second of the two Centers built, this Marshall and Porter Street building became the more recognized of the two facilities.⁵⁹

While never explicitly stated, the JEC #2's continued popularity within the Jewish community likely resulted from its physical location, which, over time, became known as the heart of South Philadelphia's Jewish community⁶⁰ Interestingly, the JEC #1, which was located further north, in a location with a dwindling Jewish population, reportedly closed its doors in the 1941 and was immediately thereafter taken over by the Downtown Jewish Home for the Aged.⁶¹ In contrast, during this same epoch the JEC #2 continued serving children, teens, and adults. Then, in 1948, the Neighborhood Center, direct descendant of the Young Women's Union, relocated its efforts from 5th and Bainbridge to deep South Philadelphia, where it joined the Talmud Torah school in the JEC #2 building.⁶² Although classes in religious education continued to operate out of the JEC #2 at this time, in 1949 the building was officially inaugurated as a "community center" and largely programmed to meet what were seen as the recreational needs of community members of all ages.⁶³ Over the next two years the JEC #2 building underwent several additional permutations. First, its auditorium was remodeled and made into a gym. Then, in 1953 the building was officially renamed the "Neighborhood Center South."⁶⁴

Over the next few decades the former JEC #2 building continued to experience changes name. As time passed, the building also underwent changes in programming that reflected the life cycle of the area's Jewish community members.⁶⁵ In 1965, when the Neighborhood Center combined its services with the Jewish Y's to form the Jewish Y's and Centers (JYC), the Neighborhood Center South was renamed the "JYC Multi Service Center."⁶⁶ Resulting from large numbers of young adults moving out of the neighborhood and the remaining Jewish residents aging in place, the Center's activities were once again altered; by 1975, if not sometime prior, the Center was catering strictly to seniors.⁶⁷ Despite enduring a damaging fire in 1985,⁶⁸ the building was completely restored and reopened in 1987 thanks to a generous grant from Jacob and Esther Stiffel. At that time, the building was renamed the Stiffel Senior Center. In the fashion of both the Stiffel Center and the Neighborhood Center's progenitor, the Young Women's Union, until the time of its closure by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia in 2011, the building continued to service Jewish neighborhood seniors as well as senior members of other immigrant groups who had since moved into the neighborhood.⁶⁹

⁵⁹ The schools were reported to be "the best equipped Jewish schools in the City [of Philadelphia]." Two Jewish Educational Centers Celebrate 13 Years of Endeavor," *The Jewish Exponent*.

⁶⁰ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 17.

⁶¹ Meyers, *Images of America: The Jewish Community of South Philadelphia*, 85. During the course of this research I did not find any additional sources noting the closure of JEC #1. It is interesting to note, however, that after 1941 I never ran across another republished article that mentioned anything about the JEC #1. The JEC #2 continued, however, to receive mention.

⁶² Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 18.

⁶³ Newspaper articles explained that the new programming at the JEC #2 would include "hikes and excursions, "dance and drama units," "arts and crafts," and "old age recreation." "Launch Program Monday at Jewish Education Center," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), November 12, 1948; "New Recreation Program," *The Evening Bulletin*, June 27, 1948.

⁶⁴ "New Gymnasium to Be Opened Sunday," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), January 13, 1950. Showers and a locker room were included in the remodeling plans. The project was made possible as a result of a grant. Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," 32-33.

⁶⁵ Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," 33-34.

⁶⁶ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*, 18.

⁶⁷ Peltz, personal correspondence with author, October 12, 2012.

⁶⁸ Lisa Hostein, "Flames damage senior's center, not their spirit," *Jewish Exponent*, December 20, 1985.

⁶⁹ Peltz, *From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture*,

History of the Settlement House and the Significance of the Neighborhood Center

From the point of view of most Eastern European Jewish immigrants, Jewish identity was inextricably linked to national group identity, culture, and religion.⁷⁰ For these reasons, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who arrived in Philadelphia before the turn of the twentieth century frequently founded benevolent societies known as *landsmanshaftn*.⁷¹ Each *landsmanshaftn* was designed to assist immigrants from a particular town or region as they endeavored to find shelter, medical care, employment, and connect with friends, relatives, and religious facilities.⁷² In the eyes of the longstanding German Jewish community of Philadelphia that viewed Jewish identity solely in terms of religious practice, these *landsmanshaftn* were problematic; they perpetuated “old world” ideas and customs instead of hastening the acculturation of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants.⁷³ In an effort to ameliorate this problem and oversee the “care and improvement of Israelites,” in 1885 a group of philanthropic-minded women of German-Jewish descent formed the Young Women’s Union (YWU).⁷⁴ This agency, which in 1918 became the Neighborhood Center, was considered to be one of the Philadelphia Jewish community’s first settlement houses.⁷⁵

During the second half of the nineteenth century English social reformers and theorists devised the idea of the settlement house, a philanthropic institution intended to improve the lives of poor laborers and ensure them the possibility of a brighter, more successful future.⁷⁶ The first settlement house, Toynbee Hall was afterward opened in 1884, in an impoverished London neighborhood.⁷⁷ Soon after, in 1886, the first settlement house in the United States, the Neighborhood Guild, was established in New York City. This house was soon followed in 1889 by the establishment of Chicago’s Hull House and Boston’s South End House.⁷⁸ Each of these settlement houses catered to an immigrant constituency that was racially, ethnically, culturally, and nationally mixed. It focused on meeting the social service needs of the immigrants and their children while simultaneously providing them with a forum for intercultural educational and recreational activities, and aiding them in the processes of acculturation—through classes in civics and English.⁷⁹

The 1885 opening of the YWU’s kindergarten marked the Philadelphia Jewish community’s first settlement house-like effort to improve the lives of and “Americanize” the Eastern European Jewish immigrants.⁸⁰ Inculcating the children of immigrants with “the best American ideals” was considered the

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Rose, “From Sponge Cake to “Hamentashen”: Jewish Identity in a Jewish Settlement House, 1885-1952,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, 3 (Spring, 1994):6.

⁷¹ Peltz, “125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia,” 30.

⁷² Meyers, *Images of America: The Jewish Community of South Philadelphia*, 19; Peltz, “125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia,” 30; Greifer, “Neighborhood Center,” 152; Rose, “From Sponge Cake to “Hamentashen,” 7.

⁷³ Peltz, “125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia,” 30; Rose, “From Sponge Cake to “Hamentashen,” 5-6. Rose explains that the German Jews who had “received relative social acceptance” in the largely Protestant society of Philadelphia were embarrassed by the differences—in dress, politics, politics, and religious practices—that their Eastern European kinsmen exhibited.

⁷⁴ Greifer, “Neighborhood Center,” 180.

⁷⁵ Peltz, “125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia,” 30; Rose, “From Sponge Cake to “Hamentashen,” 5.

⁷⁶ Greifer, *Neighborhood Center*, 42-44.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 47-52.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 151-152. Between 1889 and 1910 the City’s Jewish community founded a number of other settlement houses: the College Settlement house, the Starr Center, Social Settlement House, and the Southwark House. It is important to recognize while the YWU’s efforts were originally settlement-like in nature, the agency was not founded as a settlement house. As explained in the preceding “History of Jewish Settlement in Philadelphia” section, a number of other types of benevolent societies founded in the mid- to late-nineteenth century to assist immigrants.

most effective means of assuring the quick and suitable acculturation and assimilation of the entire Jewish immigrant family.⁸¹ Within a short time, the growing need for charity in the ever-enlarging immigrant community combined with the YWU's ideas about the best instruction for adolescents influenced the agency's leadership to also develop a day nursery, health clinic, playground, and short-term shelter care for youth.⁸² Around the turn of the century, when the YWU became affiliated with the Jewish community of Philadelphia's newly formed charitable umbrella organization, the Federation of Jewish Charities, the YWU expanded its programming even further to include a variety of classes—including English courses—and clubs.⁸³ Then, around 1910, recreational activities such as dancing were added to the YWU's programming and its leadership moved to openly identify their agency as a settlement house.⁸⁴

Resulting from both permutations in the organizational makeup of the Federation and in the shifting concept of Jewish identity in Philadelphia, in 1918 the YWU was renamed the Neighborhood Center and its mission was refocused. As of 1918, the agency's refocused mission statement proclaimed that the Neighborhood Center operational objective was to, "provid[e] opportunities for social and educational activities in the neighborhood."⁸⁵ As a consequence, programming was expanded to meet the needs of family members of all ages. Programming was also largely directed at reinforcing, thus, perpetuating Jewish identification.⁸⁶ While the neighborhood surrounding the Neighborhood Center remained predominantly Jewish the agency thrived. As the demographics of its constituency shifted, however, and as the nucleus of South Philadelphia's Jewish community moved deeper into South Philadelphia, the Neighborhood Center made attempts to relocate. Finally, in the late 1940s, the Neighborhood Center moved its efforts to the JEC #2 building at the corner of Marshall and Porter Streets. Throughout the subsequent decades, the Neighborhood Center changed names—becoming first JYC Multi Service Center and later, the Stiffel Senior Center—and was time and again reprogrammed to directly reflect the needs of its Jewish neighbors. Thus, as Dr. Rakhmiel Peltz explains, from the 1885 inception of the YWU inception through the 2011 closing of the Stiffel Senior, the agency's life cycle has "coincided with the personal and family life cycles of the Jews of South Philadelphia."⁸⁷

⁸¹ Rose, "From Sponge Cake to "Hamentashen," 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸³ Greifer, *Neighborhood Center*, 240-253; Rose, "From Sponge Cake to "Hamentashen," 7.

⁸⁴ Rose, "From Sponge Cake to "Hamentashen," 10.

⁸⁵ Rose, "From Sponge Cake to "Hamentashen," 10.

⁸⁶ Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," 32.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

In January of 1879, Frank E. Hahn was born into to an education advocacy-minded and established Jewish mercantile family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.⁸⁸ After graduating from Philadelphia's Northeast High School in 1896, Hahn pursued a course of advanced study at the University of Pennsylvania where, in 1900, he was awarded Bachelors of Science and Civil Engineering.⁸⁹ Hahn's early career directly reflected his educational training. From 1900 until 1906 when he and Andrew J. Sauer formed the Philadelphia firm, Sauer and Hahn, Architects and Engineers, Hahn worked as an engineer first for the Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company, then the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company, and afterward, Detroit, Michigan's Trussed Steel Company.⁹⁰ While employed with the last company, Trussed Steel, Hahn was reported to have been involved in the structural design of "thirty important structures of Philadelphia", including the Bulletin building, and both Atlantic City, New Jersey's Hotel Marlborough-Blenheim and Hotel Traymore, and Annapolis, Maryland's government building.⁹¹

Although not confirmed, it is likely that the building engineering experience that Hahn gained at the Trussed Steel Company proved one of two factors that motivated him to direct all of his future efforts toward building design and the establishment of his architectural and engineering partnership with Sauer. Hahn's early twentieth-century involvement with Philadelphia's prominent architectural atelier, the T Square Club, proved to be his other influential, career-changing catalyst.⁹² This Club, which was founded in 1883, was both "a meeting place for informal design competitions and professional fellowship."⁹³ The T Square Club also functioned as a forum for hosting architectural exhibitions that were both recognized and supported by the American Institute of Architects.⁹⁴ In this epoch, the T Square Club was dominated by the *École des Beaux-Arts*-trained Paul Philippe Cret and Paul A. Davis III. Paul Philippe Cret, specifically, proved a significant mentor; he enlightened Hahn about *Beaux-Arts* style design principles and undoubtedly influenced his designs.⁹⁵ Still, considering that many architecture schools did not start including structural engineering classes as part of their curricula until around 1912, and that the *École des Beaux-Arts*, itself, did not include construction courses until 1920, Hahn's engineering background and his early fusion of structural steel framing with *Beaux-Arts* design is notable.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ Sandra L. Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene (1879-1962): Architect and Engineer," (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on September 21, 2012. Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm?ArchitectId=A0552; Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, "Frank Eugene Hahn," In *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People: A Record of 225 Years*, (Philadelphia: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., n.d.), 363.

363-364. According to both authors, Frank E. Hahn's father was a long-time member of the Philadelphia Board of Education and an active member of several Jewish organizations in Philadelphia.

⁸⁹ Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene"; Oberholtzer, "Frank Eugene Hahn", 363.

⁹⁰ Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene"; "Frank E. Hahn," "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster And/Or Register of Architects Qualified for Federal Public Works," May 14, 1946, (The American Institute of Architects: Washington, DC.), 1.

⁹¹ Frank E. Hahn, "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster," 1; Oberholtzer, "Frank Eugene Hahn," 363-364.

⁹² Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene."

⁹³ Bryn Mawr University, "Architectural illustrations in T Square Club annuals," Bryn Mawr University, December 8, 2011, <http://www.brynmaur.edu/iconog/tsq/tsqdefault.htm>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene"; Sandra L. Tatam, "Sauer & Hahn (fl. 1906 – 1915): Architects and Engineers," (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on September 21, 2012. Philadelphia Architects and Buildings.

⁹⁶ Hahn's engineering background and both his knowledge of and his ability early on to use structural steel in the design of *Beaux-Arts* styled buildings is notable. Carnegie Mellon's architectural program, for example, did not incorporate structural

The firm of Sauer and Hahn was most recognized for its design of numerous commercial and industrial buildings. The firm was, however, also awarded contracts for a smattering of residential and entertainment venues. Although these men received contracts from a diversity of clients, a significant number of their projects were completed for members of the City's Jewish community.⁹⁷ While partnering with Sauer, Hahn did not act as the firm's chief designer. Hahn did, however, work as the firm's principal engineer and business manager, bringing to both plans and awarded contracts his expertise in the use of reinforced concrete and structural steel, and the design of "labor-saving devices" such as power plants and other structural designs that proved important to the owners of factories and manufacturing facilities.⁹⁸ A sampling of Sauer and Hahn's completed Philadelphia projects includes the Yiddish, Orpheum, Logan, and Tioga theatres, North Philadelphia's Standard Hosiery Company and Diamond Textile Machine Company factories, and Center City's Metzger and People's Trust Company office buildings. For the charitable arm of the City's Jewish community, these men were awarded contracts for the Hebrew Educational Society's Headquarters and the Young Men's Hebrew Association building in North Philadelphia, the alteration of the Jewish Foster Home in Germantown, and the construction of West Philadelphia's Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue.⁹⁹

Toward the end of 1915, Hahn dissolved his partnership with Sauer. He afterward set up an office on the 1100 block of Chestnut Street and practiced independently for a number of years as both an architect and engineer. During this time, it was predominantly a Jewish clientele for whom Hahn was designing and erecting stores, factories, warehouses, automotive repair shops and the occasional dwelling, office building or apartment. Among Hahn's list of clients was Philadelphia's prominent banking and real estate magnate Albert M. Greenfield, and also Abraham and Morris Wax, the developers of Philadelphia's renowned Royal Theatre.¹⁰⁰ Then, in the early 1920s, the *École des Beaux-Arts*-trained architect, S. Brian Baylinson, briefly joined Hahn in practice—but not in partnership.¹⁰¹ Baylinson quickly

engineering into its curriculum until 1912. The addition of this course of study was considered "a necessary corrective in the country which had invented the steel frame skyscraper..." See Carnegie Mellon University, School of Architecture, "School History," <http://www.cmu.edu/architecture/about/history.html>. See also, Antonio Bruccheri, "Renewal and Tradition in the Teaching of Building Construction at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Paris: the Course of Edouard Arnaud, 1920-1934, 417-440, University of Cambridge, Department of Architecture, <http://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/Downloads/ichs/vol-1-417-440-bruccheri.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Frank E. Hahn, *Modern Buildings*, Philadelphia: Frank E. Hahn, 1917, 2.

⁹⁹ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Projects: Sauer & Hahn (fl. 1906 – 1915): Architects and Engineers," (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012), http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm?ArchitectId=A1212. Accessed on September 21, 2012; Sandra L. Tatam, "Sauer & Hahn (fl. 1906 – 1915): Architects and Engineers," (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on September 21, 2012. Philadelphia Architects and Buildings. In addition to Philadelphia, the firm was awarded contracts in both New Jersey and Philadelphia's surrounding counties. Oberholtzer, "Frank Eugene Hahn," 364.

¹⁰⁰ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Projects: Hahn, Frank Eugene (1879-1962): Architects and Engineers," (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012), http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm#references, 1-3. Interestingly, at this time, Hahn designed this and other buildings with a New Jersey, not a Pennsylvania State architectural license. "Frank E. Hahn," "Questionnaire for Architects," 2. In 1915, Hahn was first licensed as an architect in New Jersey. It was 1921 before he became licensed in the State of Pennsylvania. Kathy McLeister, "The Royal Theater's fall from grace," October 19, 2011, The Theatre Historical Society Readerboard,. Theater Historical Society of America, <http://theatrehistoricalsociety.wordpress.com/2011/10/19/the-royal-theaters-fall-from-grace-philadelphia-pa/>. For more information about the Royal Theater see Alan Jaffe, "Preservation Row: Wither the Royal Theater," *Plan Philly*, November 7, 2011. Accessed on September 22, 2012, <http://planphilly.com/preservation-row-whither-royal-theater>.

¹⁰¹ Hahn, *Modern Buildings*, 1. The cover page of this book lists Hahn's address as 1112-1114 Chestnut Street. Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene." For additional information about the work of S. Brian Baylinson, see Allee Berger, "Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination for 1501-15-5 Fairmont Avenue," (September 11, 2012), 21-22. Office of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

became Hahn's chief designer, but neither did Hahn stop working at an architect nor did he stop seeking contracts from members of his fellow Jewish community. Although the Warwick Hotel at 17th and Locust Streets became the most well-known of Philadelphia buildings designed and engineered by Hahn and Baylinson, this same epoch was also marked by Hahn and Baylinson's design and construction of two important Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia buildings: the 1923 Young Men's Hebrew Association (subsequently known as the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association building) at 401-409 South Broad Street, and in the same year, the Federation of Jewish Charities Administration building at the corner of 9th and Pine Streets.

The need during the first quarter of the twentieth century for new, grander, and more capacious social service-centered buildings to serve the ever-growing South Philadelphia Jewish community was great.¹⁰² To meet this need, the Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia formed a Building Committee—a committee chaired for a time by none other than Albert M. Greenfield—and after raising the necessary monies, commissioned local architects, most of whom were members of Philadelphia's Jewish Community, to design its buildings.¹⁰³ Not surprisingly, Hahn, who was not only a well-known member of the City's greater Jewish community, but a "life director" for the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the architect and engineer of many of Albert M. Greenfield's downtown Philadelphia buildings, received these commissions.¹⁰⁴

The Young Men's Hebrew Association building is exceptionally notable because its design resulted from Hahn and Baylinson's direct collaboration with Hahn's former T Square Club mentor, the architect Paul Philippe Cret.¹⁰⁵ This building's mix of classical design elements, its notable tri-partite design, its symmetrical fenestration, and its defined entranceways would be seen at least two additional times in buildings designed by Hahn for Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia organizations. The first of these two designs, the Federation of Jewish Charities Administration building was completed in 1923 while Baylinson was still working in Hahn's office. The second building of a similar design was Hahn's own 1928 JEC #2. Although much smaller in size and punctuated by more decoratively applied ornamentation than its two aforementioned predecessors, it is evident when looking at the JEC #2 building that it was heavily influenced by these earlier works. Also, while perhaps not intentional on the part of Hahn, the styling of the JEC #2 serves as an inextricable link between it and the other two Federation of Jewish Charities-owned buildings.

After Baylinson's departure from Hahn's office in 1928, Hahn returned to practice independently as an architect and engineer until his death in 1962.¹⁰⁶ Despite the fact that he continued throughout these many years to be awarded contracts from members of the greater Philadelphia Jewish community, Hahn never again designed a building for any organization operating under the auspices of the Philadelphia Federation of Jewish Charities.¹⁰⁷ As a consequence, the JEC #2 stands today as Hahn's final, and most independently designed contribution to the Jewish community's charitable, culture-centered and culture-perpetuating causes. Also, it is important to recognize that both the coloring of and the random ashlar patterning of the brick applied to both the building's Porter and the Marshall Street façades are

¹⁰² "Jew Leaders Plan to Get \$3,500,000," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 11, 1925. Clippings Files of the Philadelphia Inquirer: "Federation of Jewish Charities." Courtesy of the Temple University Special Collections Research Center, Philadelphia, PA;

¹⁰³ "Cornerstone laid of new Talmud Torah building," *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), January 13, 1928. Accessed October 1, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com>; Alan Meyers, *Images of America: The Jewish Community of South Philadelphia*, (Charleston: Arcadia, 1998), 91.

¹⁰⁴ Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene"; "Frank E. Hahn," "Questionnaire for Architects," 7-8.

¹⁰⁵ Tatman, "Hahn, Frank Eugene."

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Projects: Hahn, Frank Eugene," 1-8.

unusual and not design elements used on any of the other buildings that either Hahn or Hahn and his partners designed for the Federation of Jewish Charities.

Whether the architect or the engineer responsible for the construction of a building, Frank E. Hahn contributed prodigiously to the built environment of the City, the region, and especially to the Jewish community of Philadelphia and its charitable organizations. Hahn's buildings stand as vestiges of his deft engineering capabilities fused with a style of architectural design that was cultivated as a result of his knowledge of and appreciation for the École des Beaux-Arts design. The JEC #2, stands importantly as one of three of Hahn's most similarly styled buildings constructed for the Federation of Jewish Charities of Philadelphia and the only building of its kind and style in the area of South Philadelphia—a locus that was formerly home to the City's largest Jewish community.

Conclusion

The Stiffel Center is a vestige of early- to mid-twentieth century Eastern European Jewish immigration in Philadelphia. Home to both the JEC #2 and the Neighborhood Center, the direct descendant of the Philadelphia Jewish community's original settlement house, the building directly reflects the history and the development of Jewish settlement, charity, education, and cultural and community life within the City. The building currently stands largely unaltered, it exhibits high integrity, and should be preserved.

Throughout its eighty-three year operational lifetime, the building remained the home of agencies that cared for and worked to reinforce and perpetuate Jewish identity amongst its constituents. Resulting from its ever-changing programming, the life cycle of the building continued to directly mirror the personal and family life cycles of the South Philadelphia Jewish community that it served.¹⁰⁸ The Stiffel Center stands as one of only two of the four to six Jewish Educational Centers originally planned for Philadelphia's large Jewish community. Furthermore, the building's architect and engineer, Frank E. Hahn, was considered to be one of the Philadelphia Jewish community's most well-known and respected architects.¹⁰⁹ The building stands today as the only Federation building that Hahn designed while solely in private practice, and the last of the edifices that his office designed for the Federation.

¹⁰⁸ Peltz, "125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia," 33.

¹⁰⁹ Another Jewish architect from Philadelphia, Edwin L. Rothschild, designed the JEC #1. Unlike Hahn, Rothschild had neither a long nor as distinguished a career. See "Projects: Rothschild, Edwin Leo." American Architects and Buildings, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012, http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm/87643.

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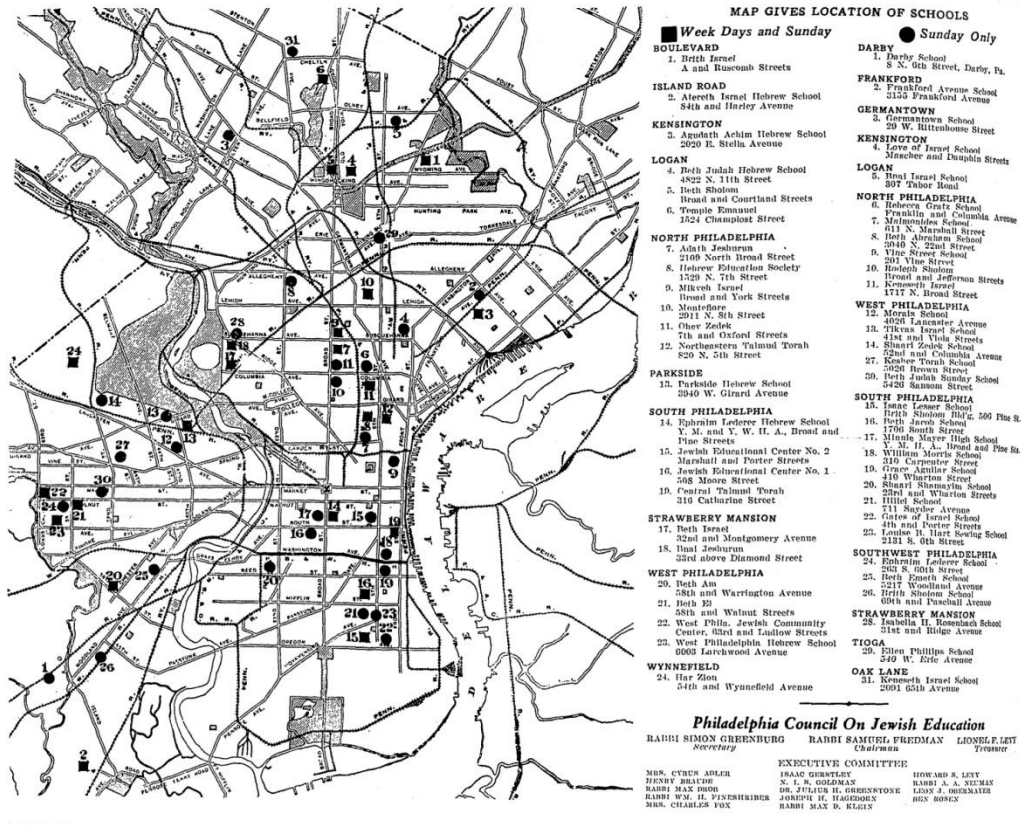


Figure 7A: "Display Ad 48 -- No Title" *The Jewish Exponent* (1887-1990), September 14, 1928: 26. This graphic shows just how few schools in both Center City and South Philadelphia offered both weekday and Sunday Jewish education classes.

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