Congregation Chevra Thilim

4429 South Claiborne Avenue

Chevra Thilim Synagogue was founded in 1875 as an orthodox congregation to serve the religious needs of Jewish merchants of Eastern European origin working in the Rampart Street area. Many of these lived above their stores, and because of the prohibition against traveling on the Sabbath, the location at 826 Lafayette Street met their needs (the dilapidated. building still stands in 2020).

As its members prospered, however, they opted to move their families to nicer living quarters. By the 1940s many had acquired homes or apartments in the vicinity of Napoleon and Claiborne avenues, and the Sabbath walk downtown was excessive. Accordingly, property was bought and plans were drawn up for a synagogue at the intersection of those two streets. The firm of Dreyfous and Seifert served as architects, and the structure was dedicated in May 1949. A second building, designed by Maurice Singer, was added on the neighboring Jena Street in 1965.

In the late 1960s members advocating for mixed seating (men and women) left the congregation, forming Congregation Tikvat Shalom. The two groups reunited in 1999, however, and became the Conservative Congregation Shir Chadash, now at 3737 West Esplanade Avenue in Metairie.

The original windows were frosted amber glass. Following the relocation uptown, the congregation gradually moved away from the strict tenets of Orthodox Judaism, becoming Conservative. Similarly, a desire to install more inspiring windows grew. Working with the Milton Pounds Studio in Covington, the congregation welcomed the striking designs of the *dalle de verre* windows, which were dedicated in 1989. As befits Jewish worship, they included no human representation. The symbolism, strong colors, and boldly faceted glass made a stunning impression, and the dual themes of Remembrance (left side) and Rebirth (right side) were exceptionally powerful.

After Hurricane Katrina flooded that area, the congregation sold the Uptown synagogue to the New Home Baptist Church, and in 2011 it was demolished to make way for a pharmacy. Efforts to locate the glass have not been successful.

**Windows**

Star of David Flowering of Israel

Menorah Israel the Hope

Torah Israel the Dream

*Visited March 20, 1994*

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