A LOST NEIGHBORHOOD:
AN EARLY IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY
in Grand Forks, North Dakota

Prepared by Susan Caraher, Coordinator, Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission
with census data prepared by William Caraher, PhD, University of North Dakota

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INTRODUCTION

In the heart of Grand Forks, North Dakota, a once-vibrant multicultural neighborhood, deeply rooted in the history of immigrants and a thriving early Jewish community, has been physically transformed, becoming a "lost neighborhood." This report delves into the origins, evolution, and eventual redevelopment of this neighborhood, uncovering the stories embedded within its streets and structures.

From Settlement to Village to Town to City

Grand Forks, like many emerging towns during the settlement period, relied heavily on immigration from other states and countries to settle, work, and contribute to its growth. Opportunities to acquire land, develop commerce, and find employment, as well as an entrepreneurial spirit drew people from East Coast cities and Canada to the area. The Homestead Act of 1862 further encouraged westward settlement by allowing claimants one hundred and sixty acres of government-surveyed land provided they improved and cultivated their plot. Early promotional brochures enticed new settlers to the region, boasting the rich, fertile soil of the Red River Valley as ideal for farming.[1]

Henry Vernon Arnold's *Forty Years in North Dakota* notes that, by 1871, approximately fifty people had settled in Grand Forks, establishing river and stagecoach transportation.[2] Two steamboats, *The Selkirk* and *The International*, operated on the Red River, moving people and goods between Winnipeg and Minneapolis-St. Paul. Grand Forks, located at the junction of the Red River of the North and the Red Lake River, also was an inviting location for settlement. In 1871, Captain Alexander Griggs, M. L. McCormack, and others staked claims on what would become the Original Town, Riverside, and the Southside. Griggs, with Thomas Walsh, also built the first sawmill and a merchandise store. The opening of the first school in 1872 reflected optimism for the town's future.

Railroads would also aid in the settlement of the Red River Valley, but the financial panic of 1873 paused railroad construction before reaching Grand Forks, and significantly limited settlement for the following two years. During this period, the Canadian-owned Hudson's Bay Company, realizing an opportunity for economic investment in Grand Forks, built a hotel, stores, and houses. The company purchased Griggs' mill and merchandise store. Hudson's Bay

[1] John F. Carrère, *The Metropolis of the Red River Valley: Its Commerce, Manufactures, and Progress*, (Saint Paul: Northwestern Publishing Co, 1882) p. 5.
[2] Henry Vernon Arnold, *Forty Years in North Dakota in Relation to Grand Forks County* (Larimore, N.D., 1921) p. 27.

Company agent, Walter S. Traill, also took over several other stores, effectively creating a monopoly.[3] In 1874, the United States Land Office in Pembina began accepting claims, formalizing sales for Grand Forks County and allowing entrepreneurial pioneers to become landowners, thus ending their squatter status. Alexander Griggs filed the deed for the Old Township plat in April 1875, and, gradually, Grand Forks took shape. By 1878, a government was formed with offices of president, clerk, and three trustees, an act Alexander Aas described as transforming Grand Forks from a settlement into a village.[4]

The first available federal census data for Grand Forks, still part of Dakota Territory in 1880, before the town was officially incorporated, showed the population had increased to 1,843 during the first decade.[5] Although locust infestations and an economic downturn had slowed growth into Dakota Territory during the 1870s, promising wheat yields and the arrival of the railroads in 1880 attracted settlers. Occupations recorded in that first census reflect a nascent village maturing into an organized and booming town, with construction workers, carpenters, painters, laborers, masons, and brick makers contributing to the changing built environment. Other occupations, such as steamboat mate, boat builder, ferry superintendent, railroad agent, and wagon maker, reflect the intersection of river, rail, and road transportation, all in operation in the first year of the St. Paul-Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad's (later, the Great Northern) arrival in the Territory. Farm laborers, mill workers, harness makers, blacksmiths, machinery agents, and engineers also reflect the emergence of various industries upon which the town was built, while saloon keepers, bartenders, barbers, butchers, merchants, and clerks are typical of occupations necessary for daily life. Occupations for women were limited primarily to "keeping house", dressmakers, and servants. The small number in the professional class included physician, lawyer, "druggist," and real estate agent.

The City of Grand Forks was officially incorporated in February 1881, seven years after the County was organized. In the 1882 promotional publication, *The Metropolis of the Red River Valley: Its Commerce, Manufactures, and Progress*, author John Carrère described the growth of the town as "phenomenal," with immigration from almost every state, as well as from Europe and Canada. The large number of businesses, manufacturing firms, and trade establishments positioned Grand Forks as the market center of a growing number of towns and settlements across the region, reinforced by the river and railroad infrastructure reaching in all directions

[3] Alexander Aas, "The History of the City of Grand Forks to 1889" (1920). *Theses and Dissertations.* 3504, pp.42-43
[4] Ibid, p 53.
[5] *U. S. Federal Population Census, 1880*. (NARA microfilm publication Series T9). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D. C. accessed April 22, 2024. https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6742/images/4240104-00383?ssrc=&backlabel=Return

from the city. By the early 1880s, the city was thriving during the period that would later be referred to as the First Dakota Boom.

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The area referred to as the "lost neighborhood" originally covered approximately fifty-four acres across twenty-six mostly-residential blocks close to the Grand Forks central business district. It was bounded on the east by Belmont Road, on the west by South Ninth Street, on the north by the Great Northern Railroad tracks, and on the south by Fourth Avenue. Two platted additions, Traill's and part of Budge and Eshelman's, form the boundaries of this neighborhood. The 1902-1903 City Directory indicated a forthcoming change to the numbering of the avenues and streets in Traill's Addition, with Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Avenues becoming First, Second, Third, and Fourth Avenues South. Girard, Winship, and Garfield Streets in Budge and Eshelman's Addition became South Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Streets after 1916, with further changes in the late 1960s during the period of urban renewal.

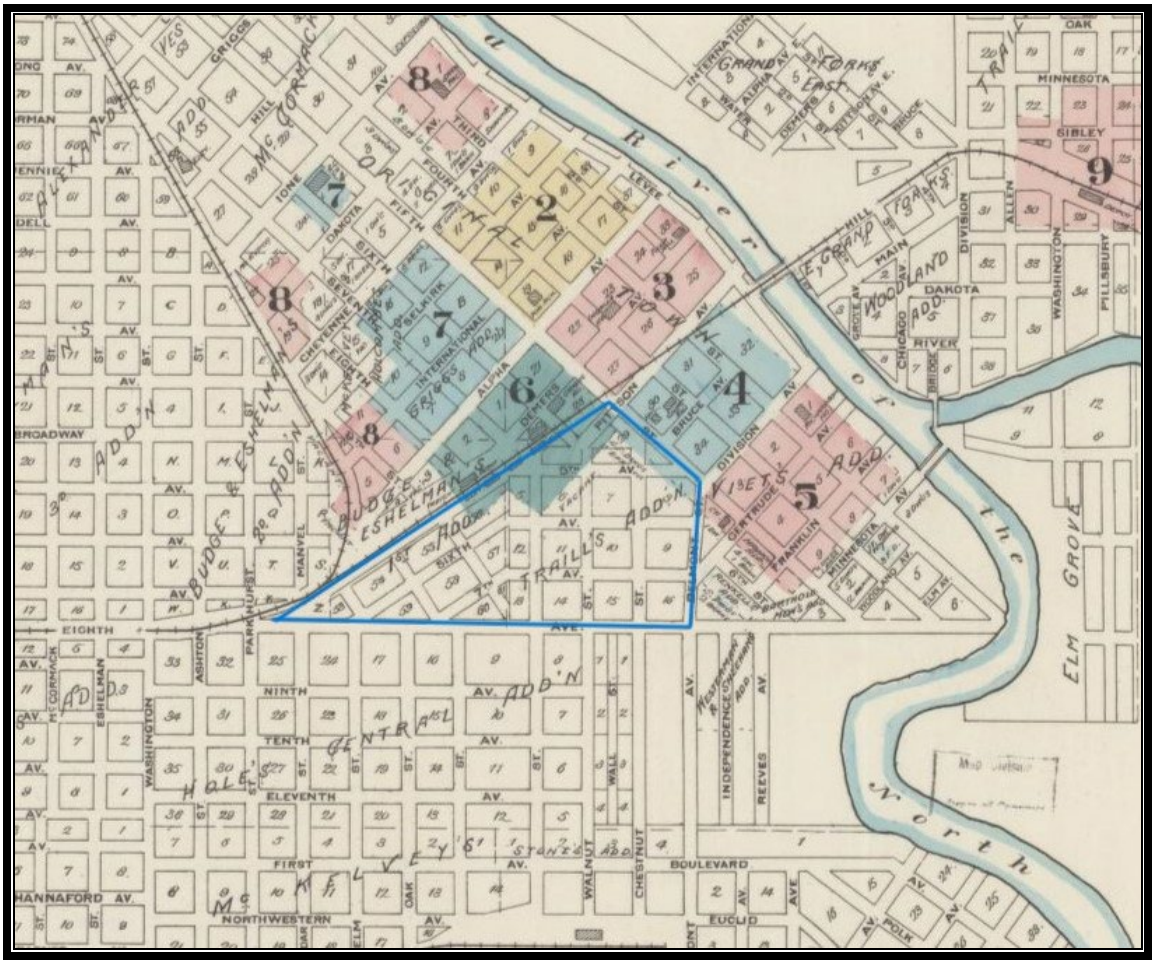

Fig. 1: 1884 Sanborn Map showing the boundaries of the neighborhood in blue.

History of Traill's Addition

On October 16, 1878, Walter John Strickland Traill signed the deed as the owner of a plat of land a short walk to Grand Forks' mercantile center, making it one of the earliest additions to the town. Born in Canada, Walter Traill managed several trading posts for the Hudson's Bay Company, both north of the border and in the Red River Valley, including Grand Forks. He is also the namesake of Traill County, North Dakota. His larger presence and business activity in Dakota Territory in the 1870s was perhaps the result of his brief involvement in the Louis Riel Rebellion in 1869-1870 while working as an agent for the Company.[6] As previously noted, Traill capitalized on commercial interests in Grand Forks during the economic downturn that slowed early development. Hudson's Bay Company took ownership of Griggs' merchandise store and sawmill before withdrawing from Grand Forks in 1877. Traill, however, maintained his personal investment in the town with the purchase of this plat.

The earliest annexed plats, such as Original Town and Viets (May 1878), followed the general direction of the Red River of the North. Traill's Addition, however, aligned with the cardinal points, and, as it abuts the earlier Viets Addition, it resulted in truncated lots and irregular street alignment.[7] Within a few short years, the tracks of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Manitoba Railroad further divided the mercantile district from this primarily residential neighborhood, as the railroad tracks were laid along the northern border of the Addition. The original plat included sixteen blocks laid out along three east-west Avenues – Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh (later First, Second, and Third) between the west side of Belmont Road (old Federal Highway 81) and the west side of Cottonwood, which includes both Chestnut and Walnut Streets. Three additional blocks extended to the adjoining Fifth and Fourth Streets between Kittson and Division Avenues.

[6] Traill's involvement in the Louis Riel Rebellion is documented in his memoir, a series of letters published by Mae Atwood, *In Rupert's Land*.

[7] The original deed states its location as SW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Sec. 3., Township 151, North of Range 50.

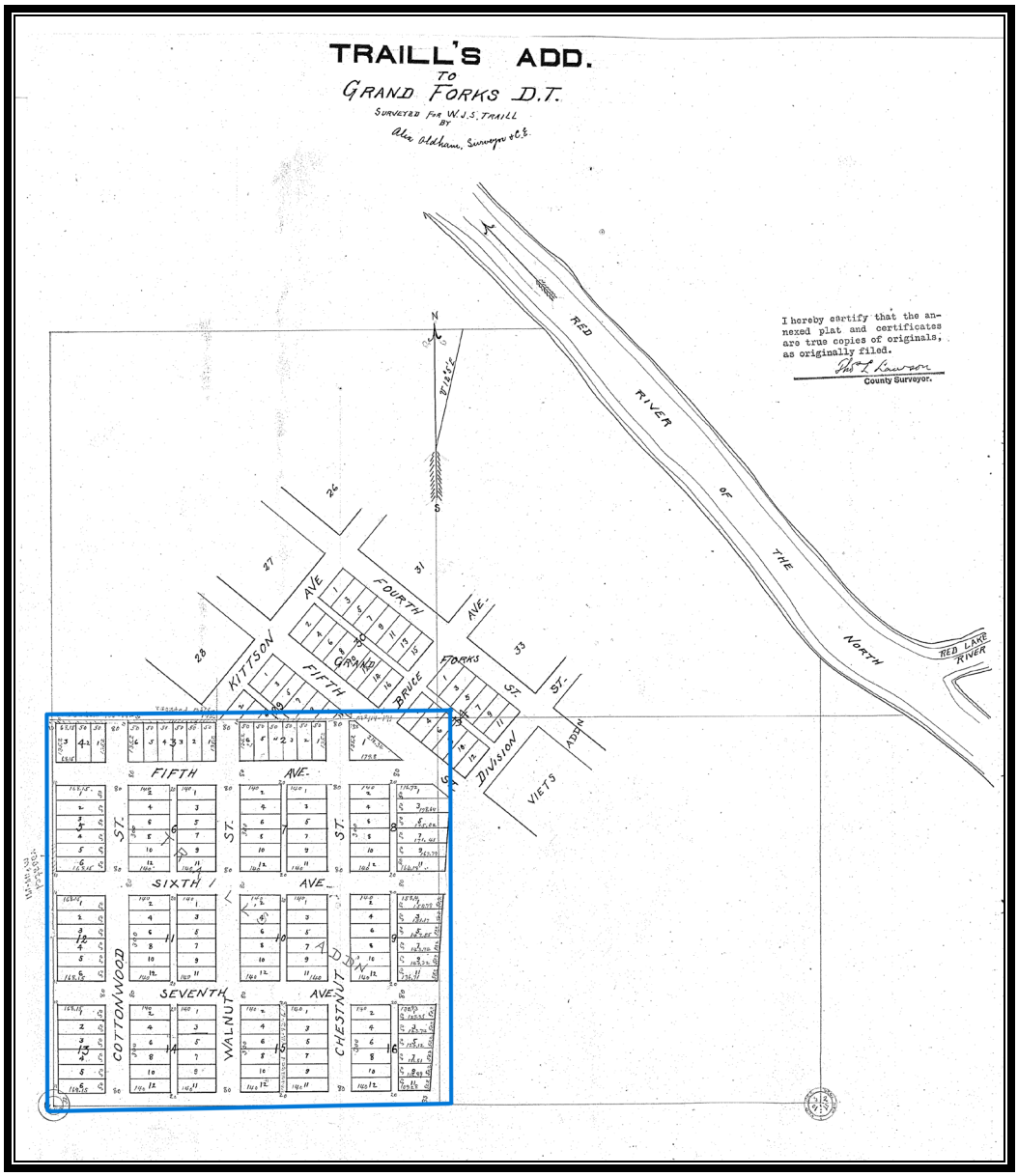

Fig. 2: The 1878 irregular plat of Traill's Addition before the arrival of the railroad. Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Avenues became First, Second and Third Avenues around 1903. The area outlined in blue is within the neighborhood.

Although most of Traill's Addition was residential, with single-family homes, apartments and boarding houses, several businesses and churches were scattered throughout the Addition. The Arlington Park Hotel was conveniently located on Belmont Road, a main vehicular thoroughfare, and a short walk from the Great Northern Railroad station. It was no doubt a popular place for new arrivals or for those spending the night in town before moving on. Across the street were the Scandinavian Methodist Church and a veterinary clinic. By 1918, a gas station was opened a

block away on Belmont (it is in operation once again).[8] St. Mary's Catholic Church and School are still located at the corner of Belmont Road and Third Avenue South. Along the south boundary of Traill's Addition, the Zion Lutheran Church was replaced in 1931 with the Art Deco-style United Lutheran Church, designed by renowned local architect, Joseph Bell DeRemer. Around the corner, on Walnut Street, the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church also served the neighborhood and surrounding area. The most dominant building, however, located adjacent to the railroad was the Russell-Miller Milling Company elevator, later the Peavey Company Flour Mill. The elevator burned down in December 1972 and the Grand Forks Police Station was relocated to this site during urban renewal in the mid-1970s.[9] Most of the homes in the Addition were constructed after the arrival of the railroad, and some remain along Chestnut, Walnut, and Cottonwood Streets, just outside the demolition zone.

History of Budge and Eshelman's Addition

William Budge arrived in Canada from the Orkney Islands at age sixteen to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. Before long, he left that service to move south across the border into Dakota Territory, finding work at a new fort in Pembina where he met George Winship. Budge and Winship saw an opportunity to establish a stage station at Turtle River (now Manvel) along a new stagecoach route between St. Paul and Winnipeg.[10] In 1873, Jacob Eshelman took over Winship's interest in the station, and before long, Budge and Eshelman sold the business and moved to Grand Forks, where they opened a saloon.

In September 1880, these business partners employed the services of Grand Forks' surveyor, Alexander Oldham, to survey the plat that would become Budge and Eshelman's First Addition. The Addition was registered on October 1, 1880. It was recorded as "situated in the south east corner of the south west corner of Section Three" and the deed included all of the land of the subdivision except for that given as Right of Way to the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad Company.[11] The Addition extended north of the railroad tracks, but the "lost neighborhood" was that part located immediately to the south of the tracks. Budge and Eshelman's First Addition continued the names of the avenues in neighboring Traill's Addition across three new streets: Girard, Winship, and Garfield. The orientation of the Addition is rotated away from Traill's north-south grid, likely to maximize the available lots after the railroad tracks were laid. This resulted in irregular lots at the intersection of the two plats. Similar to Traill's Addition, several street names were later changed, with Girard, Winship, and Garfield Streets eventually becoming Cherry, Oak, and Ninth Streets respectively.

[8] *Grand Forks Herald*, April 3, 1918, p. 6.
[9] *Grand Forks Herald*, December 20, 1972, p. 1.
[10] 1906 *Dacotah*, pp.163-164
[11] Deed for "Budge and Eshelman's Addition", Grand Forks County Register of Deeds, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

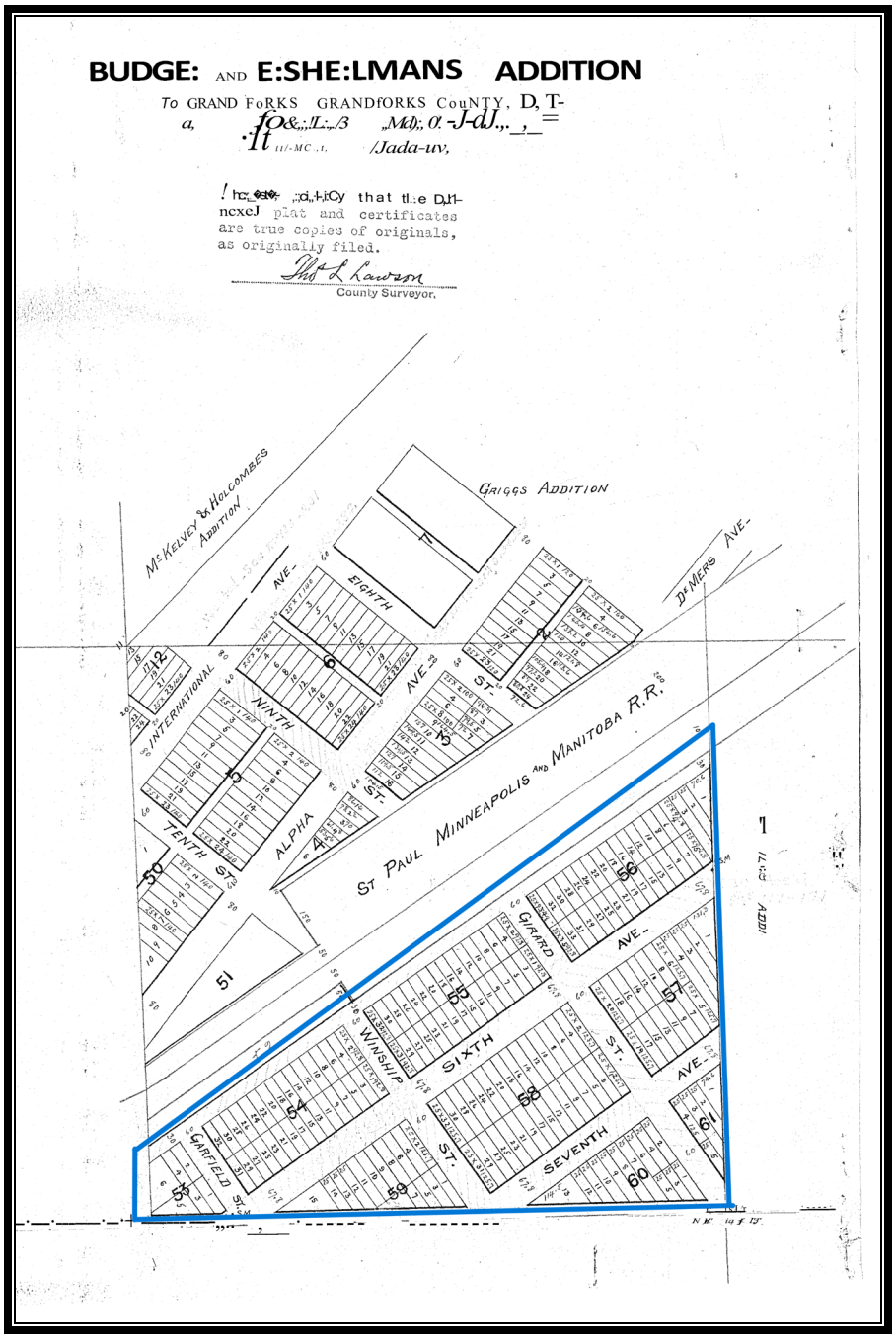

Fig. 3: Portion of the original 1880 deed, showing the Right of Way for the St. Paul Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad that separated the plat into two sections. The lost neighborhood is the south of the railroad.

A full-page real estate advertisement in the 1882 City Directory stated that the owners of Budge and Eshelman's (now three) Additions were offering "the most desirable Residence and

Business Property" lots in the area and professed the partners' faith in the city's future by offering to sell to people "intending to build or go into business."[12] Budge and Eshelman's First Addition, deeded in 1880, became home to most of the city's Jewish families, the first two Synagogues, and the Hebrew school.

In addition to their successful real estate ventures, both men served leadership roles. William Budge was elected Chair of the County Commission in 1875, when he was only twenty-three years old, and he also served as an Alderman, the Postmaster, and briefly, as the County Sheriff. But Budge's main focus was his booming real estate business. Together, Budge and Eshelman purchased hundreds of acres of land in Grand Forks, and they also entered into a partnership with Alexander Griggs to build The Syndicate Block on Third Street and the Dakota Gas and Light Company. Budge also donated twenty acres of land on which to locate the University of North Dakota campus and he later became a University Trustee. Jacob Eshelman served a one-year term as Mayor in 1885 and he was president of Citizens National Bank (later First National). Suffering from poor health, he passed away in 1889. Budge took over Eshelman's business interests and his position at Citizens National Bank.

EARLY NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY – 1880s to 1930s

The arrival of the St. Paul-Minneapolis and Manitoba railroad in 1881 brought an influx of visitors and settlers to Grand Forks. The railroad station was in the middle of Budge and Eshelman's First Addition. The railroad's storage sheds for fuel, ice, and goods lined the tracks and faced a diverse residential area with wood-framed homes, neighborhood grocery stores, and businesses, and which included residents with different ethnic backgrounds, languages, and traditions. Several immigrant groups could be identified in the neighborhood during its approximately eighty years of existence prior to urban renewal. The Jewish community was perhaps the most visible, concentrated around the Synagogue and Hebrew school.

Jewish Immigration to Dakota Territory

Two distinct groups of Jews arrived in the United States in the nineteenth century. Those who came from Germany were escaping suppression of ideas and progressive attitudes that resulted in restrictions on their businesses, education, travel, beliefs, and personal liberties. Following the tenets of Reform Judaism, this group embraced their new freedom and independence, settling in cities and towns across the country. German Jews readily embraced their new culture and they sought to assimilate with American life.[13]

[12] 1882-83 City Directory, p. 13.
[13] Lois F. Schwartz, "Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota", *North Dakota History* 32:4 (1965): 218-219.

Jews from Russia began to flee from the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe in the early 1880s, early in Czar Alexander III's reign. In the Pale, their travel was restricted, they were excluded from civic leadership, and they were subjected to anti-Semitic laws and years of mandatory military service. Between 1880 and 1920, Russian Jews suffered massacres (pogroms) at the hands of Czarist authorities.[14]

This combination of oppression and violence led to the development of philanthropic organizations that helped Jews flee Eastern Europe and find refuge in other countries. One such organization, the Jewish Colonization Association, financed by wealthy Austrian banker Baron Moritz von Hirsch, provided much-needed emergency assistance to Jewish refugees by helping to establish agricultural colonies in a number of countries. [15] In America, his financial support helped families acquire government land by taking advantage of the Homestead Act. [16] Dakota Territory was home to a handful of Jewish colonies, including Painted Woods (north of Bismarck); Ashley in McIntosh County; and the Iola and Garske Colonies near Devil's Lake.[17] With little experience in farming, however, and with the harsh elements of the Dakotas such as blizzards, droughts, and pests, many of these Jews eventually left their farms and moved to towns and cities, including to Grand Forks.

Jewish Community in Grand Forks

As Jewish emigration to America increased, faith leaders were recruited from the old country to serve these communities, preserving religious beliefs and traditions as immigrants established their new lives and neighborhoods. One of the best sources for the early history of the now-lost neighborhood in Grand Forks is the detailed memoir of Isadore Papermaster, the son of Rabbi Binyamin Papermeister (later Americanized to Benjamin Papermaster) who was a central and enduring figure in the Grand Forks' Jewish community. Isadore Papermaster's account provides valuable understanding of the formation of the Grand Forks Jewish Community, and other communities around the region.

Born in Lithuania in 1860 during the period of the Russian Empire, Benjamin Papermaster studied to become a Rabbi at the Yeshiva in Kovno. In 1880, he married Ethel Sudarsky and together they had four sons. The Rabbi evaded mandatory military service and vowed that none of his sons would ever serve the Czar. In 1890, the Yeshiva's Chief Rabbi selected Rabbi

[14] Ibid p. 219.
[15] Baron Von Hirsch helped to finance the Painted Woods colony north of Bismarck in 1881, ibid p. 222.
[16] The Homestead Act of 1862, enacted during the Civil War, allowed citizens to claim up to 160 acres of government-surveyed land, provided they had not taken up arms against the government. They had to commit to improving the land, and live on it for at least five years after which time they could acquire a deed to the land.
[17] Isadore Papermaster noted that approximately eighty families had been settled at the Devil's Lake colony in 1883 with the support of the Jewish Colonization Association, p. 23.

Papermaster to accompany a Jewish family on their journey from Ukraine to America. Realizing that this was an opportunity to make a better life for his family, the Rabbi promised to accompany the family on their journey to Fargo, North Dakota where he might be able to establish a new home for his wife and sons to join him. Several of the Rabbi's own family had previously settled in New York City. When he visited them upon his arrival to the United States they attempted to persuade him to stay in New York. Nevertheless, he kept the promise he had made to the Chief Rabbi, and accompanied the family to Fargo. Fargo was a disappointment as there was no Jewish community except for only handful of mostly German-Jewish families, a group too small to support a rabbi. Papermaster briefly considered returning to New York but he vowed to honor his commitment to serve the Jewish communities in the newly admitted State. Rabbi Papermaster filed his Declaration of Intention to become a United States citizen in Cass County on March 23, 1891, just five days before Ethel passed away in Lithuania. She had remained behind with their sons, but, unfortunately, she succumbed to an illness before the family could join him. The Rabbi remained committed to bringing his sons out of Czarist Russia and he was determined to find a Jewish community in need of his services. He learned from a contact in Fargo that such an opportunity existed in Grand Forks where a thriving Jewish community needed a faith leader.

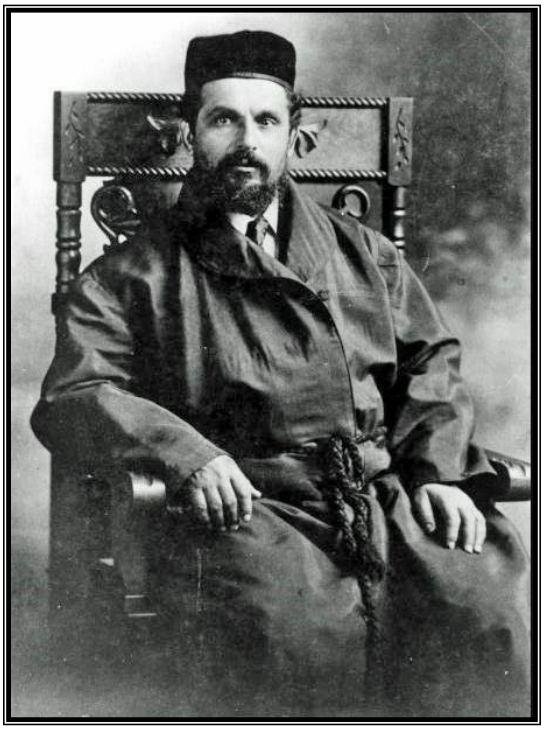

Fig. 4: Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster, c. 1907.

Upon arriving in Grand Forks, Rabbi Papermaster found approximately sixty Jewish families. The community's members had diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds including Ukraine, Romania, Poland, and Germany. Although some had fled pogroms in the Pale of Settlement, others were drawn to the town for the opportunities now made possible with the expansion of the railroads. Some families had resettled in Grand Forks after struggling to make a living from farming. In such a nascent and relatively remote community, it became evident to the Rabbi, who was considered to have reasonably liberal views, he would need to learn how to bring together a variety of traditions if he was to serve the congregation effectively.

The Rabbi had reached Grand Forks just a few days before the Feast of Passover and he had agreed to stay on a trial basis while getting to know the congregants. [18] Isadore Papermaster recalled the story of his father being invited to join that first Passover observance at the home of the Greenberg family, only to realize after an awkward delay that he had been invited there, not only as a guest, but also to conduct the Passover observance. It was clear to the Rabbi that if he was to make Grand Forks his new home, there would be some necessary cultural orientation.

When Rabbi Papermaster decided to remain in Grand Forks, the congregation, incorporated on August 26, 1891, took the name "Children of Israel" by Anglicizing its Hebrew name, "B'Nai Israel", and thereby expressing their desire to assimilate. With a similar intent, Rabbi Papermaster preferred to be addressed as Reverend and he quickly established trusted relationships with other faith leaders, city officials, and with members of the neighborhood.

Having committed to leading the congregation in Grand Forks, Papermaster, by Jewish custom, was required to marry. Papermaster's brother and sister-in-law helped to arrange a marriage and the Rabbi made plans to bring Chaya Levanton, his bride-to-be, and his four young sons from Lithuania to Grand Forks. The couple married in Grand Forks on February 11, 1892. Eventually, they increased the size of the family with two more sons and two daughters.

A home for the Rabbi and his family was constructed at 105 Girard Street, half a block from the synagogue. Their residence included a slaughterhouse in the backyard for the kosher slaughtering of animals.[19] According to Kenneth Dawes, whose family purchased the home in later years, there was also a two-roomed structure that resembled a small store, likely used to collect and store goods that the Rabbi distributed to his congregants, to new arrivals, and to

[18] Isadore Papermaster's memoir records that approximately sixty Jewish families were settled in Grand Forks in 1891, at the time of his father's arrival, p. 15.

[19] The Rabbi was instrumental in the establishment of a City abattoir in 1914, ensuring a sanitary environment and appropriate slaughter practices ultimately leading to City code changes prohibiting backyard slaughtering.

those he visited on his travels throughout the State.[20] Dawes also described an unusual feature at the rear of the house. He surmised that the structure was a shelter for the annual Succoth Festival held in September or October. A semi-detached roof over the small addition could be raised during the week's-long festival, allowing participants to sleep under the stars while still being protected from North Dakota's cold fall winds.[21] This more permanent structure likely replaced what Isadore Papermaster recalled in his memoir as a portable Succah with three walls that could be joined together and then attached to the house and topped with a lattice roof.[22]

The Rabbi's home became the center of community Holy Days celebrations such as the Simchas Torah. Men also gathered at the Rabbi's house on Saturday evenings for fellowship and to sing and dance. Congregants also began their Purim observances in the Papermaster home before continuing the festivities at the homes of others.[23]

After the Rabbi's arrival in Grand Forks, the congregation met for services in the rooms of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks on 4th Street. In 1892, William Budge donated a lot for Grand Forks' first synagogue to be built at the corner of Girard Street and Second Avenue.[24] Community members began raising funds for the synagogue's construction although many of the congregants were of modest means. Isadore Papermaster recounts that many in the community were peddlers, having started their businesses with goods secured through the Rabbi. Some mortgaged their peddler wagons or their homes in order to obtain funds so that they could contribute to the construction of the synagogue. Although not Jewish, Budge also donated land for the first Jewish cemetery on what is now the intersection of Gateway Drive and Columbia Avenue. The cemetery was later named Montefiore and its oldest monument, marked with the date of 1888, is that of Sarah Rosenzweig.

The first services in the new synagogue were held in 1892 for the observance of Rosh Hashana. The synagogue's design faithfully followed that of the first Kneseth Israel Synagogue in Minneapolis. The Children of Israel synagogue had 300 seats which, on High Holy Days, was filled beyond its capacity when Jewish families traveled to Grand Forks to attend the region's only synagogue for services led by a Rabbi.[25] It included a balcony for women, and the original

[20] Kenneth Dawes, personal communication (February 2024), and Mr. Dawes' forthcoming manuscript, *Little Jerusalem*.
[21] The Succoth festival called for Jews to sleep under the stars in remembrance of their ancestors who spent forty years in the desert.
[22] Papermaster p. 28.
[23] Lieberman, https://bnaiisraelnd.org/history/ (accessed June 12, 2024).
[24] Today, this is in the proximity of Cherry Heights Apartments.
[25] Papermaster notes that this was the only synagogue in the territory until 1906.

lighting consisted of kerosene lamps raised and lowered on chains which were later converted to gas and finally to electricity.

Fig. 5: Children of Israel Synagogue, date unknown.

Fig. 6: Children at the Hebrew School, c. 1919.

The community's Jewish children received their public schooling at Belmont Elementary School, but in 1894, a Hebrew school, or Talmud Torah, was built one block west of the synagogue on Second Ave. The school provided Jewish children an education in Hebrew, the fundamentals of Judaism, the Torah (scriptures), and the Talmud which included Jewish religious law and theology. The small schoolhouse was furnished with a blackboard and modern desks and chairs, and it also served as a community venue. Harry Ziskin, an advocate for the school, recognized the importance of both religious and physical education, which included the sport of boxing for the boys. Isadore Papermaster noted that the site of the school originally had been used by the neighborhood children for baseball games. Ziskin and the children planted the entire block with trees.[26]

In addition to his religious responsibilities, Rabbi Papermaster believed it was his duty to provide services to his community beyond religious services. He assisted new arrivals with setting up businesses, helping them acquire goods to sell from their peddler wagons or secondhand stores. He also traveled throughout the region, even as far as Montana, to serve Jewish families, performing weddings and services, and conducting other celebrations. Before leaving Grand Forks, Papermaster loaded his wagon with supplies to aid families in maintaining their customs, as well as with vegetables that grew in abundance in the Red River Valley.

Early in his tenure, Rabbi Papermaster stipulated that he would not accept a salary, only fees, so that no one could direct him how to conduct his services. Around 1910, however, a rupture occurred between two factions of the Jewish community: those who followed progressive Reform Judaism and those who followed more Orthodox traditions. The rift occurred over a disagreement about burial practices. As Isadore Papermaster recalled, a German Jewish member of the congregation passed away, and his family requested that he be buried in a suit rather than in traditional shrouds. Rabbi Papermaster agreed to respect the family's wishes, upsetting those with more Orthodox views who prevented Rabbi Papermaster from conducting the funeral. Eventually, a Reform Rabbi was summoned from St. Paul to perform the service. This dispute resulted in a breakaway congregation and the establishment of a second synagogue on the next block, as well as a separate cemetery adjacent to the original one.[27] In 1914, the new Independent Congregation of the Children of Israel brought in Rabbi Jacob Stroud from New York to serve as their faith leader.[28]

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[26] Ibid, p. 30-31

[27] The building is not identified as a synagogue on the Sanborn Map and was, perhaps, a former store or other type of building adapted for use as a synagogue. The two cemeteries were joined together in 1927 and given the name of Montefiore.

[28] *Grand Forks Herald*, Feb 12, 1914, p. 3.

A city-wide survey of Church affiliation, conducted by the *Grand Forks Herald* in 1892, shows that of 12,500 respondents, 387 identified as Jewish. [29] The city's B'nai Israel congregation maintains a list of early congregants which, when cross-referenced with Papermaster's memoir, census data, and early city directories, helps to determine where many Jewish residents lived in the neighborhood and what their occupations were. The Jewish community's numbers increased with those relocating from agricultural colonies and with those emigrating from Eastern Europe. Many of the individuals arrived in Grand Forks without much in the way of financial means. Rabbi Papermaster was critical in helping these new arrivals become established. Many of the families lived in the neighborhood just south of the railroad tracks along First, Second, and Third Avenues, between Belmont to the east and Garfield to the west.[30] Second Avenue was referred to as the "Jewish Street," and Isadore Papermaster described it as a vibrant community with the sounds of children singing in the Hebrew school on summer days and of the smell of bread baking on Fridays. [31] Several Jewish-owned businesses were also located in the neighborhood, including grocery stores, a confectionery shop, a junkyard, and a hide-tanning business.

Fig. 7: Photo taken from the corner of Girard Street and Second Avenue, c. 1912. The synagogue is behind the photographer. The building second from the left is one of several Jewish-owned grocery stores. Sanborn Maps show that the building to the rear was a confectionery store.

[29] Pietsch, 1929, Fig. 8, p. 13.
[30] Garfield was later named S. 9th Street and the area was ultimately redeveloped during the urban renewal program to construct low income apartment buildings.
[31] Papermaster, p. 30.

Members of the Grand Forks Jewish community contributed in many ways to the growth and leadership of the city. Several of the German-Jewish families owned and operated businesses in the downtown commercial district, including Max Stern's popular Vienna Bakery, Wittelshofer's jewelry store, and clothing stores owned by the Ephraim Brothers and the Appel family.[32] George Platzky operated the busiest department store in the region, which stocked everything a new resident would need, from dry goods to furs and furnishings.[33] Jacob Wineman served as State's Attorney for Grand Forks County and he was a founding member of B'Nai Israel.

Some of those of Russian Jewish heritage who found city life preferable to that in agricultural colonies, include Nathan Greenberg, who was an early leader of the Jewish community. Max Rabinovich owned two jewelry stores, and he served as a Director of the First National Bank and as a member of the State Parole Board. Rabinovich also organized North Dakota's project to raise funds for the Jewish Relief Fund after World War I. Michael Fishman was an entrepreneur who tried his hand at several businesses, including clothing, dry goods, scrap metal, and real estate. The Panovitz Furniture Store was the second business owned and operated by Samuel Panovitz, who had emigrated with his family from Russia in 1890. His building still stands at the corner of South Third Street and Kittson Avenue. Panovitz and his sons were also active in the city's civic life.

World War I required of all Americans to contribute to the war effort in whatever way they could. Members of the Jewish community purchased Liberty Bonds and raised funds for United War Work campaigns. Additionally, several young men in the neighborhood were drafted to fight in the War, including, George Papermaster, one of the Rabbi's sons.[34] Many of these immigrant families faced the prospect of sending their sons to fight in Europe, where other members of their families still lived, awaiting the opportunity to come to America. Efforts to provide emergency relief through financial and humanitarian aid were coordinated and administered through an organization in New York and later through a statewide effort called the American-Jewish Relief Committee, which remained active throughout the war and until the mid-1920s.

Members of the Jewish community formed several organizations that provided fellowship and support for the preservation of traditions. The Ladies Aid Society was a fundraising and social group, and the Chevra Kadisha, or Holy Society, was a group that conducted the appropriate

[32] The Wittelshofer Building still stands at 6 South Third Street and continues to operate as commercial and residential space.
[33] W. L. Dudley, *Grand Forks Illustrated* 1897, pp. 90 - 94.
[34] Papermaster notes that all those who served returned home safely, p. 55.

rites of a Jewish funeral service and burial. Influenced by the teachings of Rabbi Papermaster, some of the young men created a club to study the Talmud, further deepening their connection with tradition and belief, as well as an Ahavath Zion Society that supported settlements in Israel. B'Nai B'rith was a fraternal organization which provided aid and philanthropy; however, the two world wars hampered both their work and their membership. They also established a Chevra Chey Ahdam Society for former Yeshiva students who wanted to continue study of the Talmud.

Rabbi Papermaster passed away on September 24, 1934, after a long illness. He had served North Dakota's Jewish community for more than forty years and was still performing marriages and funerals until a few months prior to his death. His funeral was held at the synagogue he had helped to build and was attended by city and religious leaders, as well as many others from the Jewish community and beyond. Rabbi Papermaster was appropriately described as a pioneer for his work in establishing a congregation and a place for worship, for his tireless service to families arriving from Europe, as well as those who needed his faith leadership around the state. He remains the longest-serving Rabbi in Grand Forks and is buried in Montefiore Cemetery.

A few years after Rabbi Papermaster's death, the congregation undertook a fundraising effort to build a new synagogue, which in effect, brought together the two factions that had separated almost three decades before.[35] The Art Deco building on Cottonwood Street was designed by Joseph Bell DeRemer and his son, Samuel Teel DeRemer. Built in 1938, the synagogue continues to serve Grand Forks Jewish community.[36] Members of the congregation named their synagogue, B'Nai Israel, the Hebrew name for Children of Israel. Although their forebears had chosen an Anglicized name for the first synagogue, the choice of a Hebrew name for the new building paid homage to ancestral roots. The number of congregants has declined and a resident rabbi no longer serves the congregation. Those who remain are active in their community and proud of their history and building. The former Children of Israel Synagogue was demolished around 1938.[37] The site was cleared, and it was used as a Victory garden during World War II.[38]

[35] *Grand Forks Herald*, "Permit Issued for New Synagogue", May 14, 1937.
[36] It is suggested that the design was mostly the work of the younger DeRemer, whose career was flourishing, while his father was close to retirement.
[37] In his 1934 Masters dissertation, "The Activity and Pattern and Major Activities of Grand Forks, North Dakota," Pietsch notes that two synagogues still existed, p. 230.
[38] Kenneth Dawes' forthcoming publication, *Little Jerusalem*.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS – 1920s to 1950s

Census Data: Other Ethnic Groups in the Neighborhood

United States census data reveal the shifting ethnic composition of the "lost neighborhood" over several decades, highlighting the evolving demographics of the area.

In his thesis on the early history of Grand Forks, Aas noted that the 1880 federal census records the total population of the town at 1,706, with 56.5% of the residents identified as foreign-born and 43.5% born in the United States. Canada and Norway were the countries that sent the most immigrants, with Ireland, Germany, Sweden, England, and "others" representing smaller percentages. Settlers also came from more than twenty-five states, including from other parts of North Dakota. Just five years later, the State census showed an almost four-fold increase, totaling 6,656 residents, with 59% born in the United States and 41% born in other countries. Aas compared the two census data sets, looking for continuity of residents, and concluded that 90% of the population had arrived after 1880 because "Grand Forks was, at this time, a typical frontier town with a rapidly fluctuating population."[39]

By 1920, the city's total population had grown to 14,335, with 23% of the residents claiming to be foreign-born and 45% of them having at least one foreign-born parent. An examination of the 1920 federal census data for the "lost neighborhood" shows a total of 1,354 residents. Two generations removed from the earliest settlers, a predictably larger percentage of residents identified as being born in the United States, representing 973 individuals, or 71.8%. In many cases, this number reflects the first generation having at least one immigrant parent. An analysis of the data shows that the head of household often listed a foreign ethnicity, but their children were now natural-born citizens. The remaining 381 residents represented nineteen countries and one person had been born "at sea". Data show that 225 of these foreign-born residents identified as naturalized citizens, 38 had submitted paperwork for naturalization, and 83 people claimed Alien status. The total percentage of foreign-born residents in this neighborhood was 28.13%, slightly higher than the city-wide average.

The largest group of residents, 9.7%, identified Russia as their birthplace, and most of them lived on Second Avenue, with the remaining households nearby on First and Third Avenues, Walnut, and Cottonwood Streets. Together with a small number of Romanian immigrants, 137 individuals gave their native tongue as Yiddish, Jewish, or Russian.[40] A little more than one-half

[39] Aas, pp. 69-70.

[40] As part of his duties as Recording Secretary and Campaign Director for the American-Jewish Relief Fund, Isadore Papermaster traveled throughout the State. He noted that the Jewish population reached its highest number in North Dakota between 1925 and 1930.

of the Jewish men with listed occupations indicated that they were merchants, salesmen, dealers, or peddlers. Others listed librarian, tailor, shoemaker, baker, fireman, and occupations associated with the railroad or with construction. Forty-eight adult Jewish women resided in this neighborhood, of which forty-five were married, one was widowed, and two were single. The only three occupations listed for women were dressmaker and laundry worker (single women), and the widow, Bertha Seliger, owned and operated a local grocery store. Both single women rented rooms, and Mrs. Seliger lived at the rear of her store. [41] Norway (6.9%) and Canada (5.3%) both represented measurable immigrant populations. Many of the men worked in construction jobs such as laborers, carpenters, painters, masons, and railroad workers, and others worked as merchants and jewelers. Some were business owners. As with their Jewish neighbors, women represented only a small number of occupations, including housekeeper, servant, and secretary. A couple of women rented out rooms as a means of income and they were also listed as homeowners. The remaining eighty-two residents represented smaller numbers from seventeen countries.

The 1930 census shows a modest city-wide population growth to 17,112, or approximately a 16% increase over ten years. The overall population in the Jewish neighborhood increased only a fraction to 1,390 individuals. The breakdown of immigrants shifted, however. Almost 80% now identified as having been born in the United States, with the second-largest group (8.2%), being born in Norway surpassing those born in Russia (4.4%) and in Canada (3.23%). There continued to be representation from nineteen other countries, with only minor changes in the makeup of the list. Evidence of geopolitical shifts is also found, with four individuals identifying as either Irish Free State or Northern Ireland, following the split in 1922. There was a slight increase in home ownership, but the rental numbers stayed the same. According to B'Nai Israel Synagogue's history, Grand Forks' Jewish population began to decline during the 1930s as a result of the Great Depression.[42] The census data show seventy-six individuals claiming their birthplace as Russia, Romania, or Lithuania, and fifty-nine of those people were over the age of forty. Many of their listed occupations remained unchanged, with the majority being merchants, peddlers, and railroad employees. There was an increase in the number of individuals listed as widowed and only five unmarried people over the age of twenty were listed.

By 1950, a post-World War II population boom was beginning to reshape the city with an increase in housing and an expansion of residential neighborhoods to the south and west. The population in the "lost neighborhood" had increased to 1,666, and the census data show a

[41] Mrs. Seliger was tragically murdered in her bedroom at the rear of the store, the likely victim of a robbery. It was widely known that she kept cash on the premises. Despite an investigation and a public plea for help, the perpetrator was not found. The *Grand Forks Herald* published the story of the murder on Sept. 20, 1921, and noted that Rabbi Papermaster conducted her funeral service.

[42] Lieberman, "The Early History", https://bnaiisraelnd.org/history/ (accessed June 12, 2024)

marked change in the demographic makeup. Now seventy years removed from the first census, 88.8% of the residents had been born in the United States, with an average age of twenty-nine years. One hundred and eighty-six individuals identified as having been born elsewhere, and, of these, at least one hundred and twenty-two had become naturalized citizens.[43] Those from Norway (2.9%) and Russia (1.26%) had an average age of sixty-three years, and all of these individuals were born between 1851 and 1912, indicating a continued decline in European immigration. According to Isadore Papermaster, there was a significant decline in the number of Jews throughout North Dakota by the 1950s, with the largest population living in Fargo.[44] The number of Canadian immigrants in the neighborhood had also waned, representing 1.92%, or thirty-two individuals. The remaining thirty-nine immigrants represented twelve countries, and, of these, thirty-two were over the age of forty years.

URBAN RENEWAL

A Neighborhood Transformed

By the 1960s, many of the homes in the "lost neighborhood" were in a state of disrepair. The neighborhood had always been of modest construction and appearance, but its undesirable proximity to the noisy and polluted railyards kept property and rental prices low. By this time, most of the Jewish families had moved to other parts of the city or had left Grand Forks.

In 1962, the City of Grand Forks sponsored a Central Business District Plan to study ways to revitalize the downtown area. The scope of the study was to consider ways to improve access to the downtown district from residential areas, provide better parking options and traffic flow, and to plan for future growth. The railroad tracks that separated the commercial area from the residential area limited safe and easy access between the two zones, and, subsequently, the “lost neighborhood” was an important part of the urban renewal program. Together with the state of disrepair, the combination of residential and non-residential buildings brought the neighborhood into focus, and the city included it in the larger revitalization project that removed substandard housing and replaced it with low- to moderate-income apartment housing.

Grand Forks had created a City Planning Commission as early as 1935, at a time when the federal government was establishing the Federal Works Programs with initiatives to help people move out of unfit housing into better, safer dwellings. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson created the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency, significantly expanding the federal government’s involvement in urban housing, beautification, and infrastructure. To address the

[43] This question was left blank in some records, however. Only four individuals marked their citizenship as “No.”
[44] Papermaster, p. 55.

problem of urban sprawl, the Act of 1968 opened up federal housing programs to public-private partnerships, encouraging construction of affordable housing units and sustainable planned communities. The Act's stated goal was to replace slum dwellings with six million new homes for low- and moderate-income families within ten years. These grant programs sparked urban renewal projects in towns and cities nationwide, including in Grand Forks.

Fig. 8: 116 Cottonwood Street, c. 1970.

Fig. 9: 629 First Avenue, c. 1970.

Fig. 10: 647 First Avenue, c. 1970.

Fig. 11: View of homes on First Avenue, c. 1970.

Through the Workable Program for Community Involvement, Grand Forks received an initial grant to survey the renewal district. The city established the Urban Renewal Agency to spearhead the efforts and also it engaged a consultant to study land utilization and housing that would guide urban renewal efforts. Initial work included inspections by the City Engineering Department and Fire Department of one hundred and eighty-seven residential and non-residential buildings that would potentially be affected. One hundred and seventy-eight of them were determined to be substandard, and, of those, one hundred and five were residences in the

neighborhood. Results of the inspections and the housing report focused on the clearance of blight, improved housing for the elderly, and enforcement of city code.

After the development of the Jewish community, as a mostly immigrant neighborhood, many of the homes were converted to boarding houses or to apartments, to accommodate multiple residents.[45] The city's inspections found that many residences had inadequate accommodations for separate living arrangements and they provided little-to-no space. They also suffered the adverse effects of from noise, fumes, and odors from the railroad and other industrial and commercial properties such as the Hide and Fur Company and the junkyard. At a public hearing in August 1968, Royce LaGrave, Urban Renewal Agency Executive Director, provided an update on the project. He noted that the survey of the proposed project area, found that 71.1% of the buildings were substandard and that the current status of mixed land use was detrimental for neighborhoods, noting that homeowners were not encouraged to improve their homes in an area that was becoming increasingly dilapidated.

The city developed a comprehensive plan to support an application for the federal loan and grant program. Almost all of the buildings in the proposed zone north of the tracks were to be purchased and demolished.[46] South of the tracks, the plan called for the purchase and clearance of almost all properties and the redevelopment of the land east of South 9th Street.[47] Removing the substandard properties in the residential area would improve the project site, and a provision was made to construct low- and moderate-income housing in the neighborhood. Additionally, the construction of a sound and sight barrier between the railroad tracks and the residential area would be beneficial to the revitalization efforts. This effort reflected Grand Forks' broader strategy to modernize infrastructure, improve living conditions, and leverage federal urban renewal funding through HUD's Workable Program.

There was a relocation plan for families, individuals, and business owners affected by the redevelopment, with the Urban Renewal Agency assisting them to secure "decent, safe and sanitary housing at prices they can afford."[48] Federal funds provided for the construction of rent-supplemented units and privately owned units (leased to the Local Housing Authority), and also funds for other displacement costs affecting residents and small business owners. The buy-out and relocation efforts impacted one hundred and twenty-nine families and seventy-seven single people. Some chose to purchase housing elsewhere in the city or to take a rental option.

[45] Census data, especially from 1910, identifies many residents as boarders.
[46] Exceptions to the demolition plan north of the tracks included the Grand Forks Armory (later Civic Center), Vealer Insurance, First National Bank drive-in, Armour and Co., and the Great Northern Railway Depot and Dispatcher's Office Building.
[47] Exceptions to the demolition south of the tracks included the Lampert Lumber Company and the Bill Larson Company warehouse.
[48] Unpublished "Transcript of Public Hearing – Urban Renewal, August 6, 1968."

Several households were attached to the Air Force and they moved back to the Grand Forks Air Force Base. A small number reported that they planned to move out of town.[49]

Fig. 12: The section overlaid in blue shows the area of demolition and redevelopment with the reconfiguration of the streets. These homes were replaced mostly with multi-family buildings and the Grand Forks Seniors Center.

The construction of the overpass that extended DeMers Avenue over the railroad track was among the most significant developments of the Urban Renewal Project. The overpass allowed traffic to flow without interruption on DeMers Avenue to South Washington Street, an emerging commercial district, and Interstate 29.

Streets in the "lost neighborhood" were also reconfigured in order to accommodate new housing options. This further erased the footprint of homes, businesses, and gathering spaces that had once been familiar to the immigrant community.

Early redevelopment plans also included a pedestrian overpass from the north end of Cottonwood Street across the railroad into the downtown district. This overpass, however, has not been built and there remains no way to cross the tracks between the redeveloped neighborhood and downtown without having to wait for trains.

[49] See "Relocation Report", Section R-223 of the First Renewal Project, Final Project Report, Part 1 of Application for Loan and Grant Project No. N.D. R-4, issued by the Urban Renewal Agency of Grand Forks, November 1967.

The urban renewal project on the south side of the railroad tracks resulted in new apartment complexes for elderly residents and for residents with low- to moderate-incomes. Some of these were the multistory apartments managed by the Housing Authority and others were the result of the public-private developments encouraged by federal government programs. A new Senior Center was constructed in the neighborhood, providing meals, life enrichment programs, and opportunities for elderly community members to meet. The flour mill and elevator that occupied a large lot at the north east corner of the neighborhood burned down in 1972. The lot is now the site of the Police Station.

CONCLUSION

The "lost neighborhood" of Grand Forks developed as a multicultural inner-city residential area, welcoming new settlers from European countries, Canada, and the United States. The neighborhood was formed by the joining of two plats, Traill's and Budge and Eshelman's Additions. Within a few short years, the railroad brought many settlers who were seeking employment and business opportunities, as well as those who wanted to explore the promise of westward migration. Although the neighborhood was home to newcomers from many European countries, numbers of Jewish people from Germany and the Pale of Settlement, then under Russian imperial rule, were drawn to the neighborhood.

Lithuanian-born Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster was requested to accompany a Ukrainian family moving to Fargo, North Dakota, and he seized the opportunity to secure a better and safer life for his family. Although Fargo ultimately proved disappointing because of the few Jewish people there, a larger community in Grand Forks attracted his attention. Diverse language and cultural traditions of the Jewish community required a pragmatic faith leader who could accommodate both the independent Reform Judaism members and those of orthodox faith. The Rabbi arrived in Grand Forks in 1891. When he agreed to remain, a congregation was officially formed.

William Budge, a real estate broker and entrepreneur, donated a plot of land on Second Avenue to the new Children of Israel congregation, and they undertook efforts to raise money to construct a wood-framed synagogue, modeled on the Kneseth Synagogue in Minneapolis. The concentration of Jewish residents, with a local rabbi, made Grand Forks an important religious center for a thriving local congregation and drew members of the Jewish faith from across the region. The neighborhood thrived for decades as a vibrant, close-knit community, a testament to immigrant resilience. Some of the early residents left their mark on the city as community leaders and business owners. Most of the residents were of modest means. Many worked as merchants, skilled laborers, and railroad workers or they owned small businesses and peddler wagons.

The wood-framed homes, many on small lots and lacking amenities and utilities, eventually could not meet city codes. The city pursued federal funding opportunities made possible through the Housing and Urban Development's community improvement programs. Among the requirements was to identify slums and blight for removal and redevelopment. The mix of dilapidated homes and some undesirable businesses south of the tracks, plus the needs for improved traffic flow, parking, and commercial development north of the tracks, determined the boundaries for the city's urban renewal program. The city's Urban Renewal Agency worked with residents to relocate them to safe and affordable alternative housing and new high-density housing was constructed in the neighborhood. Although the Urban Renewal project might not have achieved all of its objectives, it ultimately transformed the area's physical landscape, and it also provided a crucial historical narrative for Grand Forks.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECOGNITION

Historical research of this neighborhood is the first phase of its documentation. The Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission is undertaking a survey of the urban renewal zone to which this research will contribute valuable context. That survey will also provide an opportunity to highlight the neighborhood's history. Upon the completion of the written historic context, it will be made available on the Commission's website and announced on social media, shared with colleagues and with members of the City Council. The *Grand Forks Herald* has also expressed interest in publicizing the work of the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission.

As recognition, our Commission recommends the installation of two interpretive panels, one at either end of the redeveloped neighborhood. The interpretive panels will highlight the immigrant history of the neighborhood and the influence that the members of the Jewish congregation had both locally and regionally. The "lost neighborhood" and its history can be a point of pride for the City of Grand Forks, and it can also serve to remind visitors of the forever-changing nature of towns and cities.

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APPENDIX

1920 Neighborhood Census Data Percentages

Birthplace_Fixed	Number	AvgOfAge	Per
United States	973	21.317575	71.861152
Russia	132	37.106061	9.7488922
Norway	94	49.755319	6.9423929
Canada	73	41.739726	5.3914328
Romania	13	32.384615	0.9601182
Scotland	11	44.181818	0.8124077
Sweden	10	43.4	0.7385524
Denmark	10	35	0.7385524
Germany	8	46.5	0.5908419
Ireland	7	50.428571	0.5169867
Austria	6	47.166667	0.4431315
England	5	46.4	0.3692762
France	2	42.5	0.1477105
Greece	2	33.5	0.1477105
Poltava Russia	2	41	0.1477105
At Sea	1	56	0.0738552
Wales	1	57	0.0738552
Poland	1	47	0.0738552
Brazil	1	40	0.0738552
Belgium	1	51	0.0738552
Luxembourg	1	30	0.0738552

1930 Neighborhood Census Data Percentages

Birthplace_Fixed	Number	AvgOfAge	Per
United States	1103	23.710789	79.352518
Norway	114	54.798246	8.2014388
Russia	62	47.419355	4.4604317
Canada	45	44.866667	3.2374101
Sweden	12	57.666667	0.8633094
Lithuania	10	52.7	0.7194245
Germany	7	58.285714	0.5035971
Denmark	6	54	0.4316547
Romania	4	58	0.2877698
Poland	4	40.5	0.2877698
Unknown - left blank	4	52	0.2877698
Austria	3	51.666667	0.2158273
Scotland	3	64	0.2158273
Irish Free State	3	56	0.2158273
Iceland	2	50.5	0.1438849
England	2	53	0.1438849
Belgium	1	36	0.0719424
Czechoslovakia	1	76	0.0719424
Greece	1	28	0.0719424
Ireland	1	54	0.0719424
Northern Ireland	1	22	0.0719424
India	1	44	0.0719424

1950 Neighborhood Census Data Percentages

Birthplace_Fixed	Number	AvgOfAge	Per
United States	1482	29.103851	88.835534
Norway	49	63.244898	2.9411765
Unknown - left blank	44	27.658537	2.6410564
Russia	21	63.238095	1.2605042
Canada-Other	20	51.842105	1.2004802
Germany	12	70.75	0.7202881
Canada Other	9	42.333333	0.5402161
Sweden	8	62.875	0.4801921
England	6	32.833333	0.3601441
Canada	3	62	0.180072
Bessarabia (Germany)	2	59	0.120048
China	2	18	0.120048
Manchester	2	50.5	0.120048
Finland	1	50	0.060024
Denmark	1	76	0.060024
Mexico	1	42	0.060024
Poland	1	42	0.060024
Scotland	1	61	0.060024
Lithuania	1	50	0.060024