



Honoring the Heritage of the JCRS Isaac Solomon Historic Synagogue

A stone's throw from one of the longest commercial streets in America, in the northern section of Lakewood, Colorado, sits a small, dusty synagogue, long unused. It can be found, tucked unobtrusively into a quiet corner of a tree-shaded college campus. To hear the story of the Isaac Solomon Synagogue is to learn an oft-overlooked chapter in the history of Colorado. This modest structure tells a tale of hope, altruism, generosity and medical miracles on the grounds of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society (JCRS).

The Foundation

In 2000, Lakewood residents Bernie and Susan Goldman established the JCRS Isaac Solomon Historic Synagogue Foundation. It is the mission of the 501(c) (3) corporation to raise funds to restore the synagogue to its original condition and to provide an endowment to operate and maintain it as a living history museum and lifecycle events center. Alby Segall, Interim Executive Director is expanding the Board of Directors and guiding the mission now focused on the establishment of a story center open to people of all faiths, cultures and nationalities to allow them to gain insight into the lives of the men and women who passed through its doors. Once revitalized, the building will host lectures, lifecycle events, and educational programs.

Overview

At the turn of the last century, tuberculosis was rampant among dwellers of congested city districts and workers in unsanitary factories and shops. The nation was ravaged by the "white plague," and tuberculosis was the cause of death for 154,000 annually. By 1903, the number of consumptives flocking to Denver for its fresh air and sunshine seeking a cure for tuberculosis had outstripped all medical and social service capabilities.

A concerned and idealistic group of Jewish immigrants in Denver met to draft a solution to care for indigent patients suffering from all stages of tuberculosis. At that first meeting on October 31, 1903, when the founders of JCRS pooled their meager funds into the sum of \$1.10, they created a non-sectarian refuge for tuberculosis patients from across the country.

In 1904, twenty acres of land were purchased one mile west of Denver, and that September six men and one woman were admitted to a fledgling place of hope consisting of six canvas tents and a one-story building that served as a parlor, library, and music and recreation hall. The first brick building was constructed in 1905, offering wards for bed-ridden patients. JCRS Ladies' Auxiliaries across the country raised money to build more buildings for the rapidly growing institution.

During its first fifty years, the JCRS—also known by its address as Spivak, Colorado, treated 10,000 patients. Along with medical buildings, an on-site farm and dairy, and research facilities, JCRS provided a social services department, library with 9000 volumes, dental office, pharmacy, technical school, monthly magazine, cooperative store, post office, solarium and barber shop. The heart of the campus was the synagogue where religious services were held daily.



History of Synagogue

Because the majority of patients were observant Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe, there was a need for a synagogue to serve their traditional religious needs. The first services were held in a canvas tent. Subsequently, the Beth Jacob Synagogue was built in 1911 on the JCRS grounds, funded by Isaac Solomon in memory of his son, Jacob, who died of tuberculosis. Following a fire in 1920, noted architects William and Arthur A. Fisher designed a replacement structure—a one-story brick and stucco building of Moorish architectural design that was completed in 1926. The pews held 70 worshippers. The building featured a marble ark, a trussed dome, and a pyramidal roof. Along with daily worship, High Holy Day services and festival observances were held at the facility, which was the first Jewish house of worship in Jefferson County. In 1980, the synagogue was placed on the United States National Register of Historic Places. Regular services continued to be held in the synagogue until the mid-1950s when it was shuttered.

Restoration Progress and the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design Community

For more than a decade grants including, the State Historic Fund, National Trust for Historic Preservation and donations from hundreds of private patrons have raised in excess of \$200,000 to drive the ongoing restoration efforts. The iconic dome has been restored and waterproofed, repairs to brickwork, stucco, concrete, floors and windows have been undertaken. Only recently has the electricity been restored. Through the tireless efforts of Susan Goldman, one of the only surviving tuberculosis tents in Colorado sits fully restored adjacent the synagogue. RMCAD faculty and students have taken a proactive role in fund-raising and promotional efforts, graphic design, interior restoration studies, and in the development of new course content within the college and in partnership with the Ira M. Beck Memorial Archives, University of Denver. These labors of the heart have fueled the pathway for a vital Historic Synagogue & Story Center. The next phase is critically important for the perpetuation of the legacy of the JCRS Isaac Solomon Historic Synagogue.

Contact Us

The Foundation continues to collect historic and archival information regarding the JCRS and the synagogue for future educational use. Tours of the JCRS Isaac Solomon Synagogue can be arranged by calling 303.520.4962.

Tax-deductible donations to the JCRS Isaac Solomon Historic Synagogue Foundation are accepted through the mail:

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