

Jewish Alexandria

The Alexandria Gazette
WEDNESDAY EVENING, SEPT. 23.
YOM KIPPUR.—The most sacred of the Hebrew feasts began yesterday evening, and will continue until this evening. It is known among the people of that faith, who strictly observe it, as a day of atonement for sin. No manual labor is permitted, and they faithfully abstain from all food and drink. In consequence of the fast, the stores of all the Jews in the city have been closed since yesterday evening at 6 o'clock, and will so remain until 6 o'clock this evening.

Courtesy Alexandria Public Library, Special Collections

- 1749** Alexandria founded.
- 1850s** First German Jewish immigrants settle in Alexandria.
- 1859** Around 50 families found two congregations: an unnamed Orthodox congregation and Beth El Hebrew Congregation, which follows Reform practices. The congregations merge the next year.
- 1861-1865** Civil War. Alexandria's Jewish community grows to between 300 and 400. Jewish-owned shops are so numerous along King Street that the *Alexandria Gazette* notes the street's emptiness during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- 1871** Beth El builds its first synagogue at 206 North Washington Street.
- Late 1800s** Jewish population declines as Jews leave to find opportunities elsewhere. Beth El Hebrew Congregation's membership drops to 12 families, barely enough to continue.
- 1891-1897** German Jewish immigrant Henry Strauss serves as mayor.
- 1914** Eastern European immigrants found the Orthodox congregation Agudas Achim. Congregation rents spaces for the next 14 years.
- 1928** Agudas Achim purchases house at 508 Wolfe Street, converts it to synagogue.
- 1930s** Alexandria and its Jewish community grow as New Deal government workers move to Washington area to work at federal agencies and military installations. Beth El's membership grows from 23 families in 1939 to over 100 by 1948.
- 1939** Beth El Hebrew Congregation hires and sponsors immigration of Rabbi Hugo Schiff from Germany, saving him from the Holocaust.
- 1947** Agudas Achim moves to new location on Russell Road, west of Old Town.
- 1957** Beth El builds current synagogue at 3830 Seminary Road, in the western part of Alexandria.
- 1958** Agudas Achim builds current synagogue at 2908 Valley Drive, in the western part of Alexandria.
- 1955-1961** Leroy Bendheim, from a longtime Alexandria Jewish family, serves as mayor.
- 1967** A Jewish lawyer from Alexandria, Bernard Cohen, wins the Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*, which strikes down Virginia's laws against interracial marriage.
- 2003** A study finds that roughly 67,000 Jews live in Northern Virginia—the fastest-growing Jewish population in the Washington region.

RABBI HUGO SCHIFF



Courtesy Beth El Hebrew Congregation

TOURS AVAILABLE!



Contact the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington at info@jhsgw.org, (202) 789-0900, or www.jhsgw.org to learn more about walking tours, exhibitions, and educational programs for adult and school groups.

The Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington and its Lillian & Albert Small Jewish Museum preserve, chronicle, and present the story of the local Jewish community through archival collections, exhibits, educational programs, publications, and the restoration and preservation of the oldest synagogue building in the nation's capital (now the Lillian & Albert Small Jewish Museum).

Learn more about Jewish life in Northern Virginia, and how you can get involved in the local Jewish community.

Visit The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington at www.shalomnova.org to find out more!

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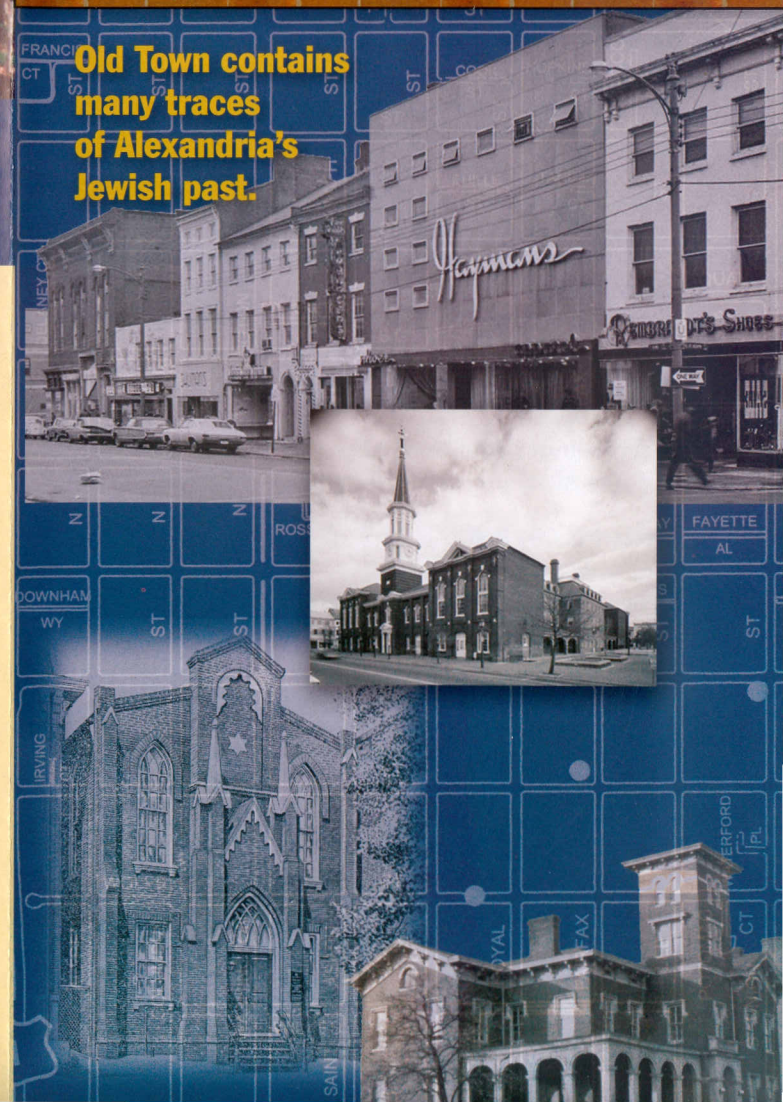


This brochure was made possible through a grant from the Outreach and Engagement Committee of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER WASHINGTON
LILLIAN & ALBERT SMALL JEWISH MUSEUM

WALKING TOUR of JEWISH ALEXANDRIA

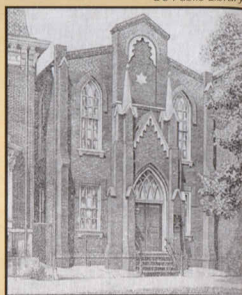
Old Town contains many traces of Alexandria's Jewish past.



1. Beth El Hebrew Congregation*

206 North Washington Street

- Founded in 1859, Beth El Hebrew Congregation worshipped on this site from 1871 to 1957.
- **Did you know?** Beth El was the third Jewish congregation in Virginia.



Courtesy Washingtonians Division, DC Public Library

2. Lewis Baar's Home*

King Street, between Pitt and St. Asaph

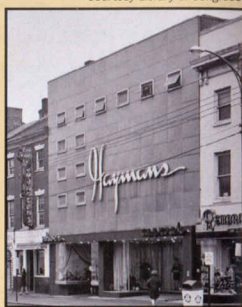
- Lewis Baar was a prominent Alexandria shopkeeper during the Civil War.
- **Did you know?** His home (in the middle of this block) hosted Beth El's Yom Kippur services in 1860.

Courtesy Library of Congress

3. Hayman's Shoes*

500 King Street

- Hayman's Shoes was on this spot during most of the 20th century.
- **Did you know?** Joseph Hayman, a Jewish immigrant from Russia, founded the store in 1902.



4. Henry Strauss's Shop*

King Street, between Royal and Fairfax

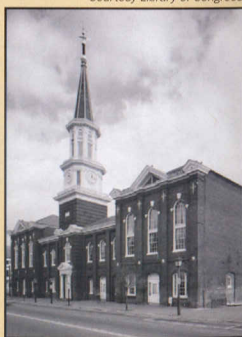
- German immigrant Henry Strauss ran a boot-and-shoe store here just after the Civil War.
- **Did you know?** Strauss served as mayor of Alexandria during the 1890s.

Courtesy Library of Congress

5. Alexandria City Hall

King & North Fairfax Streets

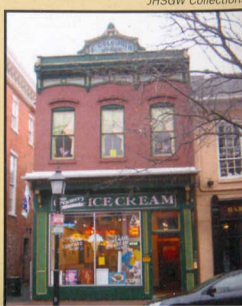
- Designed by the noted Washington architect Adolph Cluss, the city hall was constructed in 1871.
- **Did you know?** Alexandria has had two Jewish mayors: Henry Strauss (1891-1897) and Leroy Bendheim (1955-1961).



6. Brager-Goldsmith Store

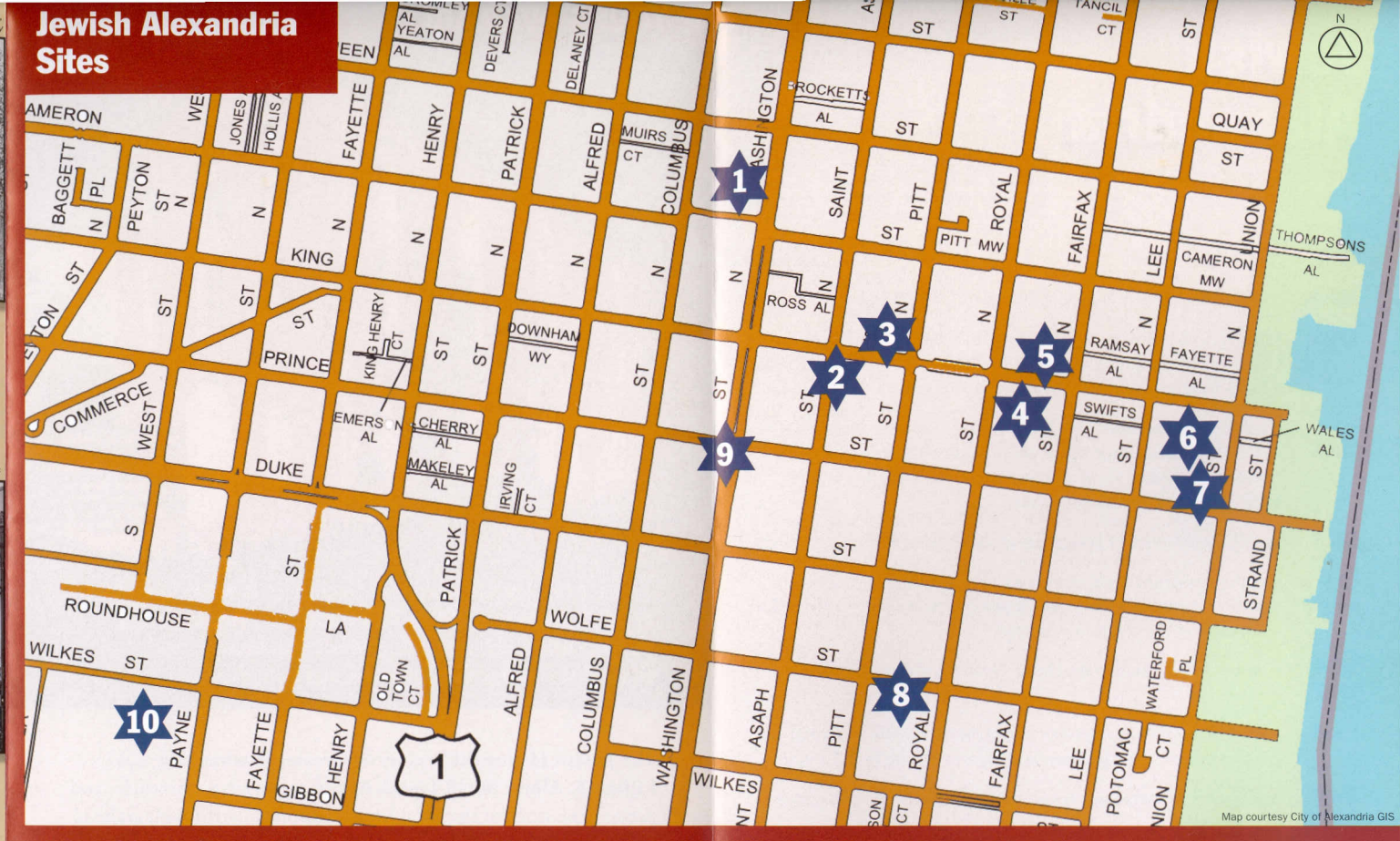
108 King Street

- Joseph Brager and his son-in-law, Emanuel Goldsmith, ran a clothing shop here in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- **Did you know?** You can still see the name "Goldsmith" on the top of the building's façade.



JHSGW Collections

Jewish Alexandria Sites



Map courtesy City of Alexandria GIS

7. Dreifus Family Business

South Union and Prince Streets

- The Dreifus family once ran a scrap business in this building.
- **Did you know?** You can still see the name "J. Dreifus and Sons" painted on the front of the building.

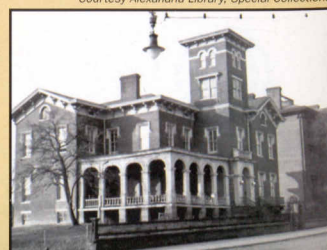


JHSGW Collections

8. Agudas Achim*

508 Wolfe Street

- Founded in 1914, the Orthodox Agudas Achim served Alexandria's Eastern European Jewish community in this former home on this site from 1928 to 1947.
- **Did you know?** The house into which Agudas Achim moved in 1928 had served as a Civil War hospital.

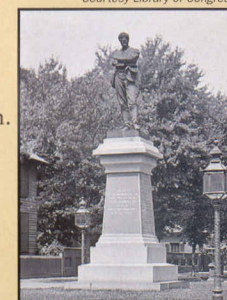


Courtesy Alexandria Library, Special Collections

9. Confederate Statue

Prince & South Washington Streets

- During the Civil War, Confederate soldiers left for battle from this location.
- **Did you know?** Several Jewish Alexandrians fought in the Civil War.



Courtesy Library of Congress

10. Home of Peace Cemetery and Agudas Achim Cemetery

Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex, near Wilkes & South Payne Streets

- The Hebrew Benevolent Society established Home of Peace in 1857.
- **Did you know?** The cemetery was started two years before the founding of Beth El Hebrew Congregation.



Courtesy Beth El Hebrew Congregation

*Now demolished