

= Anshei Israel Synagogue =

Anshei Israel Synagogue is a historic synagogue located in Lisbon , Connecticut , United States . The Orthodox congregation was founded with 15 families and constructed the synagogue in 1936 . It was built by George Allen & Sons . The interior is a single room that is lined with five benches before an altar which held the sacred ark . The congregation 's membership dwindled throughout the 1940s and 1950s , limiting the services to holidays before finally closing in the early 1980s . Rules in the congregation were not as strictly enforced as in the Old World , as there was no curtain to separate the sexes and distant members were allowed to drive part of the way to its services . The Town of Lisbon took ownership of the property in the 1980s . The synagogue is currently maintained by the Lisbon Historical Society . The synagogue was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995 .

= = Construction = =

In the early 1800s of Connecticut , people of the Jewish faith were few , with just twelve persons in the whole of Connecticut . In 1843 , Jewish public worship was first permitted after a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly . Early Jewish services were held in private homes or in rented halls and later in the first synagogues , which were usually adapted from churches . Rural synagogues like the Anshei Israel Synagogue were modest structures and " reflect the need of Jewish farming and summer congregations for buildings suitable for worship that were within their limited financial and geographic boundaries . "

The land upon which the synagogue was built was donated by Harry Rothenberg around 1936 . The congregation , pooled their money to construct the synagogue . Constructed by George Allen & Sons in 1836 , the Anshei Israel Synagogue is a 20 feet (6 @. @ 1 m) by 30 feet (9 @. @ 1 m) gable @-@ roofed clapboarded building with a 5 feet (1 @. @ 5 m) by 9 feet (2 @. @ 7 m) central projecting tower with a Magen David at its top . Flanking the tower on each side is a pair of 2 @-@ over @-@ 2 windows . Paint remnants show that the sash was previously painted a bright blue .

After passing through the tower , the single room has a platform with an ark at the front . The original altar and sacred ark remains , with the interior concealed by a gold curtain ; and a menorah rests on the podium . Chairs and five wooden , backless benches were provided for seating , which was described as " an unusual arrangement in historic Connecticut synagogues " . Though the building had electricity , it had no heat or plumbing ; though a wood stove was used to provide heat and an outhouse was previously behind the synagogue .

= = Use = =

The founding congregation of 15 families came from Poland and Russia and lived in the surrounding towns of Plainfield , Lisbon , Griswold , and Jewett City . Rothenberg became the first cantor of the Anshei Israel Synagogue and the service would continue to serve the Orthodox congregation for decades . The congregation 's membership dwindled throughout the 1940s and 1950s , which limited services to holidays . The synagogue finally closed when it could no longer steadily gather a minyan , ten men , in 1987 . The town of Lisbon acquired the synagogue in the 1980s from the synagogue 's last six members . In 2004 , the synagogue was open during " Walking Weekend " events .

Caroline Read @-@ Burns , president of the Lisbon Historical Society and Jerome Zuckerbraun , a member of the synagogue , discussed the Orthodox congregation 's rules and noted that some rules were not as strictly enforced as in the Old World . As an Orthodox congregation , members were to walk to the synagogue , but some distant members would drive and " walk the last mile or so . " The synagogue did not use curtains to separate men and women , as was the norm for Orthodox services in Poland and Russia . The women 's seating was at a table on the right side of the sanctuary , near the door . The structure is well @-@ preserved , but not currently in use .

= = Importance = =

The Anshei Israel Synagogue was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995 . It is recognized as an architecturally significant example of " a small country Jewish house of worship " . Its architecture is the " epitome of simplicity " and it remains an important pre 1945 Jewish house of worship that is in a rural setting and possessing integrity in its design . The Day reflected Read 's comments that the synagogue may " only one of its kind in the country " . In 2001 , the building was featuring on Connecticut Journal , a program of Connecticut Public Television .

In 2005 , the building was in need of some repairs due to neglect and damage from squirrels . The Lisbon Historical Society received a \$ 50,000 grant from the Quinebaug Shetucket National Heritage Corridor to make repairs on the synagogue . Repairs would be done to repair the structure and the electrical wiring would be replaced for free by the students at the Norwich Regional Vocational Technical School .