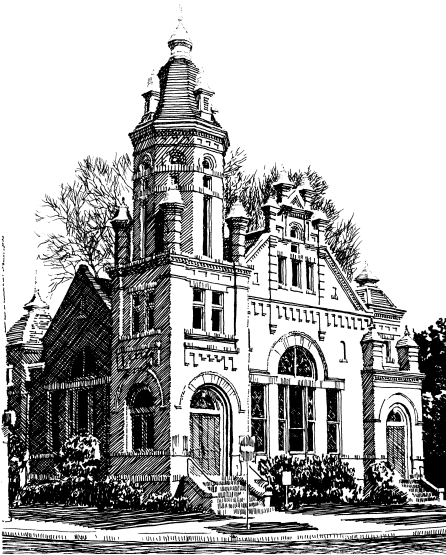


# ARCHITECTURE

EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

THIRD QUARTER 1997



## TEMPLE B'NAI SHOLOM

This issue's limited edition signed print by Ladd P. Ehlinger is of the Temple B'nai Sholom in Huntsville, Alabama. The view shown is that of the southwestern facade, a composition of symmetrical elements in an asymmetrical

pattern that both intrigues and puzzles one. It begins to make sense when the temple is entered and one sees that the true axis of the central octagonal space is on the 45° diagonal from the dominant corner tower main entrance to the Bimah (platform) and Ark on the east -- the focal point of the temple. The building is symmetrical about this diagonal axis.

The central space is lighted by daylight through the large Palladian style windows on either side which thus light the space slightly from the rear of the congregants visual focus. The plan has fan shaped seating about a radius centered upon the Ark, with the floor sloped for greater visual access.

The arrangement of the elements of the interior of Temple B'nai Sholom declare its Reform Jewish heritage. The Bimah and the Ark are both at the focal point of the central space with the Choir off slightly to the side. A 19th century Orthodox synagogue would not have had a Choir, nor would it have had the Bimah immediately in front of the Ark with all of the seating focused in one direction toward it. The Bimah would have been in the center with the seating arranged in the round focused upon the Bimah. The advent of social and civil rights reform in 19th century Europe affected the religious expression and the architectural expression of Reform Judaism.

The roots of the architectural expression of Temple B'nai Sholom are concurrent with the roots of its founders. In Germany in the 19th century, Reform Jews took the lead in trying to develop architectural styles that would be expressive of Judaism. Prior to the religious freedom of 19th century Germany, Jews were suppressed by the political

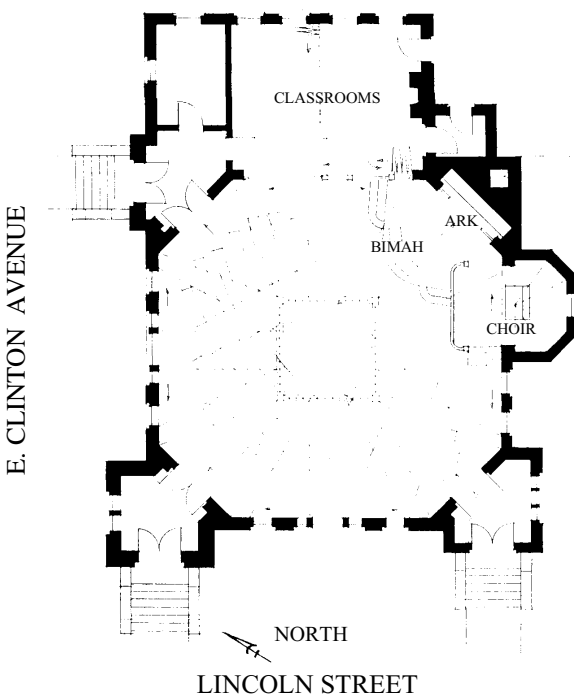
systems in all European countries and their synagogues were usually designed and built off the major thoroughfares in such a way as to be anonymous and unrecognizable as an expression of religion. These dynamic Reform Jews developed a style beginning in 1830 called *Rundbogenstil* (round arched style) that mixed elements of Romanesque, classical and Renaissance architecture.

The founders of Temple B'nai Sholom came mostly from Germany. Isaac Schiffman was born in 1856 in Hoppstaedten, Germany and came to Huntsville in 1875. He served as President of the Congregation and Chairman of the Building Committee during the design and construction of the current Temple in 1899. The Congregation was started in 1876, with many of the members from a German background. The writer believes that the Congregation was well aware of architectural developments taking place contemporaneously in Germany and the remainder of western Europe, and that they conveyed this aesthetic to the architect of the Temple, R. H. Hunt of Chattanooga.

The Romanesque style was believed to be suitable for experimentation, and this is exactly what Hunt did in this example with the diagonal floor plan axis and the folded planes of the wooden ceiling of the main worship space. This experimentation was a necessity because of the lack of design paradigms due to the aforementioned cultural history. There were few "model" synagogues to draw from.

## WELCOME ABOARD

R. Scott Crawford has joined E&A's New Orleans office this August. Scott graduated with a Bachelor of Design with High Honors from the University of Florida in Gainesville this June. Scott is from Florida, but moved to New Orleans to be near his fiancé who is attending school here. He had experience in teaching lower



division design classes and studied architecture in the Fall semester of 1996 in Vicenza, Italy, and traveled extensively throughout Italy and the neighboring countries of Europe. Scott brings skills to

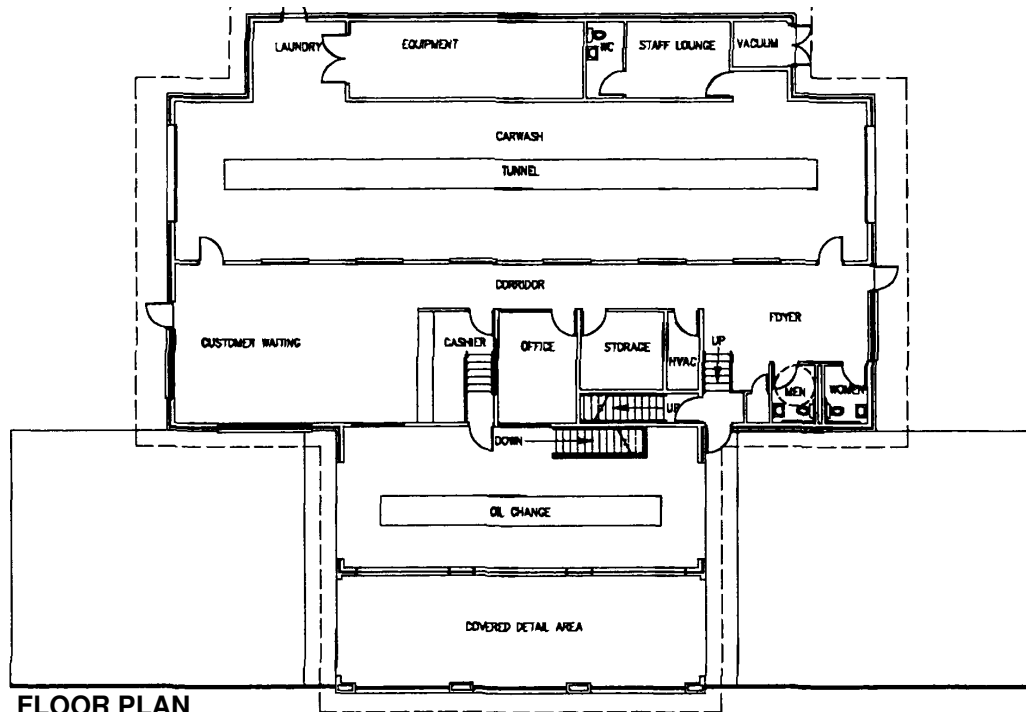
the job in AutoCad, FormZ, MS Works, MS Word and WordPerfect.

E&A is now in the Design Development phase for the BKH Car Wash on Tchoupitoulas Street in New Orleans.

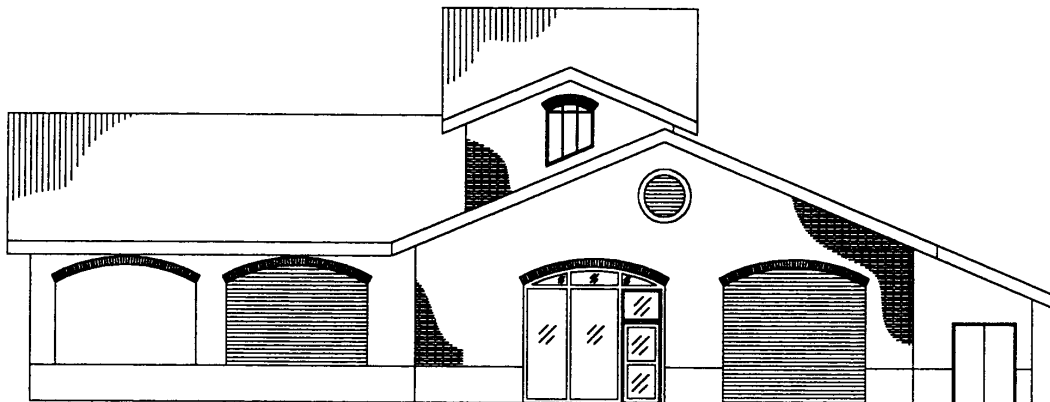
## BKH CAR WASH



**NORTH ELEVATION**



**FLOOR PLAN**



**WEST ELEVATION**