

The Family Store
Asheville's Jewish Heritage Walking Tour
Self Guided Teachers Version

Purpose: To promote place-based learning using downtown Asheville to highlight Asheville's unique Jewish history. That is, to show students the power, joy and importance of understanding that their community also created the history of the place we all call home. Sharing this history with people who are not Jewish is equally as valuable to emphasize our interconnection. Diverse people of many backgrounds and cultures contributed to the success of Asheville, the Jewish community was just one of them. This walking tour is a history reveal: history visible if you just know where to look.

Audience: middle schoolers

NOTES TO LEADERS: Frame locations in terms of how they look today and think back to their grandparents' time and what they might have been like.

Time: 60-90 minutes

Questions:

Students can access a map with locations identified at <https://www.history-at-hand.com/self-guided-tour/>. They can ID the locations they have found and take pictures. The following is a list of the order of information that is listed for each stop..

- Format
- Location
- Question
- Answer
- Teaching point: Each stop has a teaching point.

At the end of each location, students can consider an attribute or adjective that this point of history articulated about Jewish people and history. They may include...

- creative
- determined
- compassionate
- innovative
- committed, etc.

So at the end they have a list of empowering words that tie the stories together and identify the roots of this culture.

[This video](#) is a version of the tour if you would like to familiarize yourself with some of the sites and stories.

INTRODUCTION

You may have seen these places before, but did you know their connection to Asheville's Jewish history?

1. Thomas Wolfe Memorial house (facing the hotel).

Location: 52 North Market Street

History Background: Before the railroad came in 1880 there were just a handful of Jewish residents here. After the train arrived Asheville started to grow. People came:

- A. For economic opportunities like jobs or opening businesses.
- B. To recover their health from tuberculosis or malaria or yellow fever
- C. Because they had friends or family here



Question: What might you find in this neighborhood in the early 1900s?

Answer: There were single family homes and boarding houses, churches, two synagogues, and grocery stores. This was before most people had cars and they walked places so they might live near activities they needed and/or near where they worked.

Teaching Point: By 1891 there were enough Jews in Asheville to form a congregation. The first synagogue building (1903) was located across the street from the Old Kentucky home, Julia Wolfe's boarding house, in the front parking lot of the Renaissance Hotel. It belonged to Congregation Beth HaTephila (CBHT). The Wolfe family lived around the corner on Woodfin Street now the parking lot of the YMCA. Thomas Wolfe includes many anti-Semitic descriptions of Jewish residents in his book "*Look Homeward Angel*": for instance he describes Harry Finkelstein as having "Golden nuggens of teeth" (he was a pawnbroker). Wolfe also talks about harassing a young boy when he was a kid with anti-Semitic remarks. Have you experienced anti-Semitism or been bullied?

2. Urban trail marker: Thomas Wolfe's neighborhood (1900-1924)

Location: Woodfin St. between N. Market and Spruce

Questions: Which congregation is represented on this Urban Trail marker? What is it named today?



Answer: Bikur Cholim, which translated means “visiting the sick” was founded in 1899 as an Orthodox congregation. Bikur Cholim was later renamed Congregation Beth Israel (CBI). The building represented here served the congregation from 1916-1960.

Teaching point: Older Asheville neighborhoods were centered around downtown. The two synagogues were close together so that people could walk to worship. Bikur Cholim (1899-1950) was originally an Orthodox congregation. Its name changed when it joined the Conservative movement in 1950. CBHT started as a conservative congregation to try and be inclusive for different worship traditions, but became reform after Bikur Cholim was founded. Congregations sometimes change their styles of worship as new members join. Eastern European immigrants lived in this neighborhood to be near their synagogues. Thomas Wolfe described this as “a neighborhood where Yiddish was heard and garlic perfumed the air “

3. Chicken Alley (1930-1950)



Location: Off Woodfin St. between Broadway and North Lexington

Question: Where can you find a chicken you can never eat?

Answer: This mural! In fact, across from the mural is where Jake Rosen butchered chickens following religious rituals that made them kosher.

Teaching point: Jake Rosen was a schochet, a person trained in ritual slaughter that made meat kosher. He specialized in chickens. It was difficult to keep kosher in Asheville. Though kosher chicken was locally available, other types of meat had to be brought in from Cincinnati or Atlanta. This was costly and refrigeration did not always keep the meat fresh, so some people discontinued following the tradition.



4. Asheville Showcase (1960s)

Location: 57 Broadway St.

Questions: Where can you find a chef who can't cook?
What kind of business would this have been?

Answer: Mr. Equipit. It was a restaurant supply business.

Teaching point: Broadway Street had mostly wholesale businesses. Asheville Showcase was owned by the Rocamora family for two generations. Mr. Rocamora died suddenly in



1935 and his wife, Fann, had to take over the business. Few. If any, women ran wholesale restaurant equipment supply businesses. Mrs. Rocomora was very business savvy. She would offer her customers swigs of moonshine from a jug in the back of the store. Family businesses were common among Jewish retailers and they often incorporated local traditions.

5. Moogseum



Location: 56 Broadway Street

Questions: Where can you find a museum for electronic musical instruments? Who invented the Moog synthesizer?

Answers: The Moogseum; Robert Moog (1934-2005) invented an electronic musical instrument used by rock groups such as The Beatles, Prince, and The Doors. The Moog synthesizer generates sounds by combining audio signals of different frequencies, timbres and harmonics.

Teaching point: Robert Moog was able to follow his dream. go to college, and work with musical instruments. Parents wanted their children to have opportunities that were not available to them so they encouraged their children to further their education. Robert Moog was a third generation American: an example of how Jews used education to rise in the world. He was a professional, not a merchant as first generation immigrants often were. He also follows a pattern of how northerners, particularly New Yorkers, came South in search of opportunity.

6. Mellow Mushroom



Location: 50 Broadway Street

Question: If you are mellow and like pizza where would you go?

Answer: Mellow Mushroom was once a Pure Oil gas station. In the 1960s it became Shandler's Pickle Barrel. Enter through the door on the right and look to your left you will find the original Shandler's Pickle Barrel sign hanging above the door.

Teaching point: Schandler's was a kosher style deli. The Jewish community supported food familiar to their culture. They brought their culture and particularly their foodways, down South with them. Where can't you find a bagel? What types of food do you think Schandlers might have had on their menu?

7. Blomberg Annex to Asheville Community Theatre (ACT) (1923)

Location: Corner of Walnut and North Market Sts.



Questions: Harry Blomberg's father told him he had "wheels in his head" because he loved automobiles. What business would this have been in 1923?

Answer: A gas station. Harry Blomberg loved cars. He also had a motor inn where the Thomas Wolfe Visitors Center is today. It was for car repairs and detailing. The Blomberg family still owns a car dealership in West Asheville: Harry's on the Hill.

Teaching point: Harry's motto was: "Work hard, treat your customers and employees fairly, and always give back to your community." A better community benefits everyone. Harry was the first to hire a Black mechanic to work in his garage.

8. Asheville Community Theatre (ACT) (1940-PRESENT)

Location: Urban Trail marker in front of ACT 35 East Walnut St.

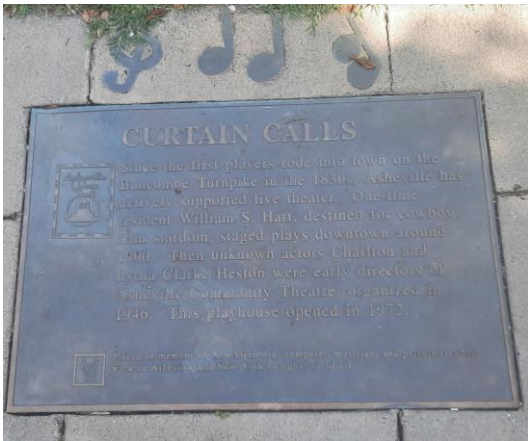
Question: Where can you act out and get a curtain call?

Answer: Asheville Community Theatre (ACT)

Find the Urban Trail marker in front of ACT. Who is it dedicated to?

Teaching point: Ann Sternberg (1933-1975) was very musically talented and was involved in Broadway shows in New York City. She was one of four generations of women in her family to have the BRCA gene type of breast cancer: a genetic disorder common in Askenazi Jews.

Take a picture of your class in front of the murals you will pass.



9. Finklesteins Pawn Shop (1903-PRESENT)



Location: 21 Broadway St.

Questions: What business claims to be the oldest pawn shop in North Carolina and was known as “the poor man’s bank”? What would you do to get cash before ATMs?”

Answer: Finkelstein’s Pawn Shop

Teaching point: A pawn shop was a way for people without bank accounts to borrow money by exchanging their possessions for money. They often hoped to buy back their possessions when they had the money. The Finkelsteins were an example of family chains. You could find brothers who had Finkelstein’s Pawn Shops in Wilmington and Jacksonville for example.

10. Black Mountain College Tribute Wall (1933-1957)

Location: Alley off Walnut St. between Broadway St. and North Lexington. Look at the basement windows.

Questions: Where was Black Mountain College (BMC)? What festival is held on the former campus two times a year? Who is the man in the geodesic dome?



Answers: Camp Rockmont in Black Mountain. LEAF is held on the former campus. Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome is in the window to the right. He built his first dome at BMC.

Teaching point: Black Mountain College was started in 1933 as a school of working artists including painters, writers, potters, and dancers. Its founders felt you could learn everything you needed to know from the arts. The same year Hitler closed the Bauhaus, a famous school of design in Germany. Having a job abroad was a way to escape from Germany. Some of the Bauhaus faculty came to Black Mountain College to find sanctuary. Several were Jews escaping Hitler, like Anni Albers who was a textile designer. She founded the weaving program at Black Mountain College.

11. Vanderbilt Shirt Factory (1950s)



Location: 65 Walnut Street

Question: What is the name over the door to an antique shop on Walnut Street under the pink banner?

Answer: The Vanderbilt Shirt Company. Three men who came back after WWII (late 1940s) decided to make shirts even though they didn't know how. They had previously been in the tire retread business, which was hot and smelly.

Teaching point: Jewish business people often took risks moving to small towns or cities where there were few other Jewish families. If they could not make a living they moved on. They also realized that taking care of workers was important to the success of a company. The owners of this shirt company noticed many of their workers did not have front teeth due to poor nutrition. Being forward thinking they had a health department nurse teach their employees about better nutrition.

12. Tops for Shoes (1950s-PRESENT)

Location: 27 North Lexington Ave.

Question: Where can you buy nice shoes?

Answer: Tops for Shoes



Teaching Point: Tops was one of the few businesses that stayed downtown when most wanted to move to the mall in the 1970s. It was started by Mr. Reznikoff, who handed it down to his daughter and son-in-law, and today it is run by his grandson. "Family chains" were common in Jewish businesses before big chain department stores and big box stores. A staple of downtown, Tops is one of the few downtown businesses still owned by and operated by the same family for three generations.



13. Coleman Zageir and the Man's Store (1922-1962)

Location: across from the Kress building.

Questions: What business did Coleman Zageir own? What local college campus has a building named after him?

Answers: The Man Store; UNC Asheville

Teaching point: Colman Zageir was very philanthropic and involved in civic affairs to improve Asheville. He believed in giving back to his community and making it a better place. Even today many in the Jewish community are involved in nonprofit organizations that help others. Look at the back side of the panel and you will see the original interior of the S and W cafeteria. On the lower right you will see a picture of Lou Pollock (1887-1956) at his annual shoe give away on Christmas.

14. S and W Cafeteria (1929-1974)

Location: 56 Patton Avenue

Questions: Where was the Birthplace of the JCC? Can you find the letters S and W above the door?.

Answer: Jewish organizations would hold meetings on the upper floors of the S and W. In the 1930s, they did not feel safe without someone guarding the door. In 1938 a group of people got together and purchased a location for a Jewish Community Center, which today is the Asheville JCC. Here they could have their own space, which provided more opportunity to socialize and interact with the entire Asheville community.



15. Flatiron building

Location: 20 Battery Park Ave.

Questions: Where can you find an iron you cannot press your clothing with? What do the radio station call letters WWNC (1927-PRESENT) stand for?

Answers: The Flatiron building once had a radio station in it - WWNC which stood for Wonderful Western North Carolina.

Teaching Point: Rabbi Unger of CBHT had an interfaith radio show (1940s-1960s) called "Hear O Israel" broadcast from that station. The program was created to promote better understanding and cooperation between different faiths.



16. Pollock Crest



Location: 29 Haywood Street

Question: If you look above the blue awning on Haywood Street you will see what name is on the crest?

Answer: Pollock; This was the location of Lou Pollock's Cinderella shoe store. One of the two Jewish cemeteries in Asheville (CBI cemetery) is also named for this man-Lou Pollock Memorial Park. Lou had a special connection to the cemetery, since his 5 year old granddaughter was buried here after a tragic bus accident.

Teaching point: It is a great honor to have a place named for a person especially while they are still alive.

17. Earth Guild

Location: 33 Haywood Street

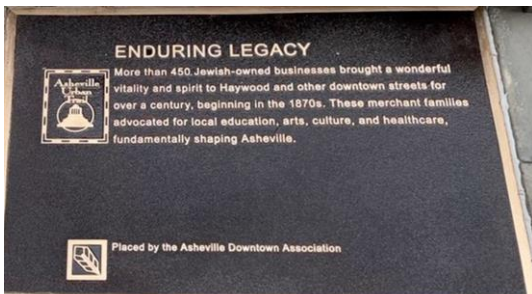
Question: What was the name of the department store with the initials BM?

Answer: Bon Marche (1890-1970) This was the Lipinsky family department store. It had been where the Haywood Park Hotel is today before it moved across the street to this location(1930s).

Teaching point: Many Jews were retail shop owners. Because Jews were not allowed to work in many occupations in Europe when they came to America they were in retail. They built successful businesses from very little and with no formal education; e.g. peddlers became department store owners.



BEFORE 1911
ONE OF BON MARCHÉ'S EARLY SOUTH MAIN STREET LOCATIONS



18. Urban Trail Marker to shoppers (1880-1990)

Location: Across from Malaprops on Haywood Street below the Urban Trail marker to shoppers.

Question: How many Jewish businesses are mentioned in the plaque and what contributions are they credited with enabling?

Answer: 450 Jewish businesses. They contributed to the vibrancy and culture of Asheville which we still enjoy today.

Teaching point: Some of these shopkeepers' religious values inspired them to make their communities better places. Today, we refer to this commitment to social justice as tikkun olam, or repairing the world. They contributed to many institutions including St. Joseph's hospital (now Mission) and UNC Asheville, where 6 buildings and a track are named to recognize their service.

19. Fine Arts theater (optional) (1947-1960s)

Location: 36 Biltmore Ave.

Question: Where is an unused ticket window? What do you think happened at the window behind the current ticket window?

Answer: Look behind the main ticket window and you will see another ticket window. This is where Black people would buy movie tickets and proceed through the door and up the stairs.



Teaching point: if you had a Black nanny you would go upstairs also. If you were with your family you would sit downstairs. During segregation this was typical. The Jewish business owners and the Black community had a connection that might be different from other shop owners. They welcomed Black people as customers offering credit and the ability to try on clothing and return it. Jewish business people had stores on the Block, (Eagle and Market Streets),

Additional questions:

What other signs of Jewish history have you seen downtown?

How many Jewish mayors has Asheville had? Name them.

Answers: Ken Michalove, Leni Sitnick, Esther Manheimer

Teaching point: These Mayors were elected by the greater Asheville community, not just the Jewish community, and they served for the good of all.

Have you noticed any of these places before?

What is important about these places?

What did you learn from these locations about Asheville's Jewish history?

Key Terms

Anti-Semetic - "Anti-Semitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions)" *The Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism*. This can be done using words, visual images, or deeds.

Bauhaus - The Staatliches Bauhaus, commonly known as the Bauhaus, was a German art school operational from 1919 to 1933 that combined crafts and the fine arts. The school became famous for its approach to design, which attempted to unify individual artistic vision with the principles of mass production and emphasis on function. [Wikipedia](#)

Beth HaTephila - House of Worship

Beth Israel - House of Israel

Bikur Cholim - Visiting the sick which refers to helping people recover from illness. At the time people from all over came to Asheville for better health.

Kosher - Kosher foods conform to Jewish dietary rules that cover which foods should not be eaten, how to prepare them, and how to combine them (e.g. milk and meat are not mixed in the same meal).

Moog synthesizer - The Moog synthesizer generates sounds by combining audio signals of different frequencies, timbres and harmonics.

Nuggens - stumps of gold metal teeth (He was a pawnbroker)

Religious traditions - Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform are the major streams of Judaism. They have different interpretations of worship styles and how to apply them to modern life. The Orthodox are the most literal to the Bible and their services are primarily in Hebrew. The Conservative movement seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual while taking a more flexible approach to the interpretation of Jewish worship and laws than Orthodox Judaism. Reform Judaism adapts worship to modern changes in social, political, and cultural life while still following the laws of Judaism. These are the main styles of worship, but there are many others.

Yiddish - a language used by Jewish people in central and eastern Europe before the Holocaust. It was originally a German dialect with words from Hebrew and several modern languages. Today it is spoken mainly in the US, Israel, and Russia.