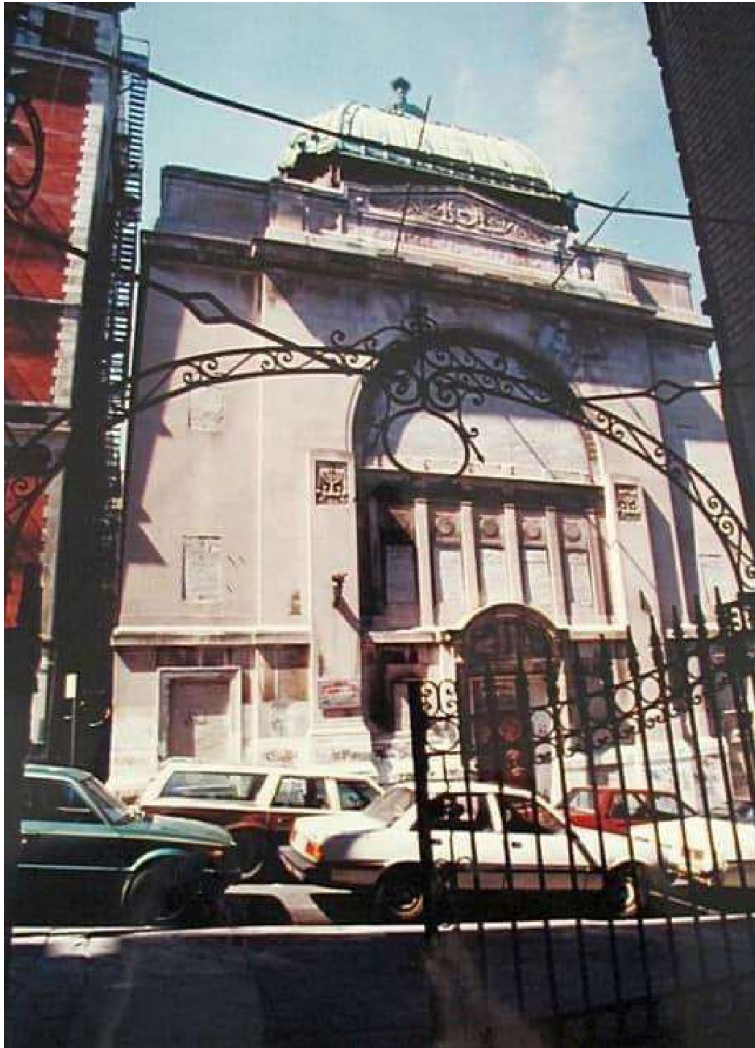


Temple B'nai Israel

Demolished 2005

610 West 149th Street



Exterior of the Temple B'nai Israel while it still stood

Temple B'nai Israel was built between 1919 and 1923. Architect Emery Roth, who also designed several of Manhattan's early luxury apartment buildings and hotels, including the Ritz Tower (with architect Thomas Hastings), the Beresford, the El Dorado and the Warwick Hotel, designed the synagogue. The building included a pool, a gymnasium, a community center, and classrooms. In his September 17, 1995, column "Streetscapes" for the *New York Times*, Christopher Gray describes the building as "the grandest synagogue in upper Manhattan until its congregation finally left in 1979."

Investor Ernest Milchman bought the building in 1979. Between 1980 and 1992, Mr. Milchman resold the building twice, with each sale resulting in foreclosure. Gospel Missionary Baptist Church bought the building from Mr. Milchman in 1994 for \$454,900, payable in monthly installments of \$4,504.87 until the year 2023. At the time of the purchase, the building had severely deteriorated: there was a large hole in the ceiling, thieves had plundered parts of

the copper, and the interior plaster and gilded marble had fallen off the walls and ceilings, becoming nothing more than piles of rubble on the floors.

Gospel Missionary Baptist Church's pastor, Rev. Henry L Smalls, said he wanted to restore the church. However, with no concrete plans he stated, "We have faith. We know that God will make a way. I really want to restore that dome, maybe with a steeple on it, so you can see Gospel Missionaries from all over."

Gospel Missionary Baptist Church sold the building as a tear down to developer Hirsch Group LLC. The developer demolished the building in 2005, replacing it with the 11-story River Bridge Court Condominiums. The most recent condominium sale was a two-bedroom, two-bath for \$925,000.