BEIT OLAM: A HOME EVERLASTING—

THE JEWISH CEMETERIES OF EAST LOS ANGELES

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis explores the history and conservation issues of the four oldest extant Jewish cemeteries in the Los Angeles area: Home of Peace Memorial Park (1902), Beth Israel Cemetery (1907), Mount Zion Cemetery (1916), and Agudath Achim Cemetery (1919). These cemeteries neighbor one other in an unincorporated section of Los Angeles County called East Los Angeles, which borders the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Boyle Heights once was a multicultural neighborhood containing a substantial Jewish population, but in the latter half of the twentieth century, the Jewish population relocated to the Westside and San Fernando Valley, and Boyle Heights became almost entirely Latino. The cemeteries discussed in this thesis range in the level of care and attention they receive. Home of Peace, the oldest extant Jewish cemetery in Los Angeles, still actively serves the Jewish community, though its popularity diminished with the establishment of more modern Jewish cemeteries closer to postwar Jewish neighborhoods; Beth Israel and Agudath Achim are small Orthodox cemeteries filled with traditional upright headstones and concrete ledgers; and Mount Zion, established by a charitable society, has sat in near-abandonment for almost fifty years, proving especially vulnerable to damage from earthquakes and trespassers. This thesis aims to tell the history of these cemeteries in the context of the early Los Angeles Jewish community, exploring how Jewish mourning and burial traditions, lack of endowment funding, and the movement of the Jewish community away from the Eastside contributed to the cemeteries' vulnerability in the face of neglect and vandalism. The thesis evaluates options for connecting the cemeteries with the contemporary Jewish community and considers how these cemeteries might be able to be revitalized without ostracizing a Latino community that already feels threatened by encroaching gentrification in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles is the metropolitan region with the second largest Jewish population in the United States and the fifth largest Jewish population in the world. Only New York City surpasses its number of Jewish inhabitants in the United States, and, besides New York City, only the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa surpass its Jewish population in the world.[1] These statistics come as a surprise to those who have trouble connecting the American Jewish identity to the laid-back beach culture associated with Southern California. Los Angeles covers an expansive area and is divided into many neighborhoods and distinct nodes of activity. Because of this, it can be difficult to delineate Jewish Los Angeles, despite the fact that more than 500,000 Jewish Angelenos live in the city.[2] When considering areas that are most identified with Jewish culture, Jews in Los Angeles would likely point to neighborhoods like Pico-Robertson or Encino, located on the Westside and in the San Fernando Valley to the north of the city. However, some of the oldest and most significant physical reminders of Jewish history in Los Angeles can be found in the city's Eastside—an area east of downtown and the Los Angeles River. The Eastside includes the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Boyle Heights, El Sereno, and Lincoln Heights, as well as the region of East Los Angeles, which is an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County just beyond the Los Angeles border [Figure 0.1].[3]

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[1] "Vital Statistics: Largest Jewish Populated Metropolitan Areas, United States," *Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise)*, Last Updated January 2012, Accessed May 21, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/largest-jewish-populated-metropolitan-areas-united-states; "Vital Statistics: Largest Jewish Populated Metropolitan Areas, Worldwide," *Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise)*, Last Updated January 2015, Accessed May 21, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/largest-jewish-populated-metropolitan-areas-worldwide.
[2] "Vital Statistics: Largest Jewish Populated Metropolitan Areas, United States."
[3] "Mapping L.A.: The Eastside," *Los Angeles Times*, Accessed May 22, 2018, http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/region/eastside/.
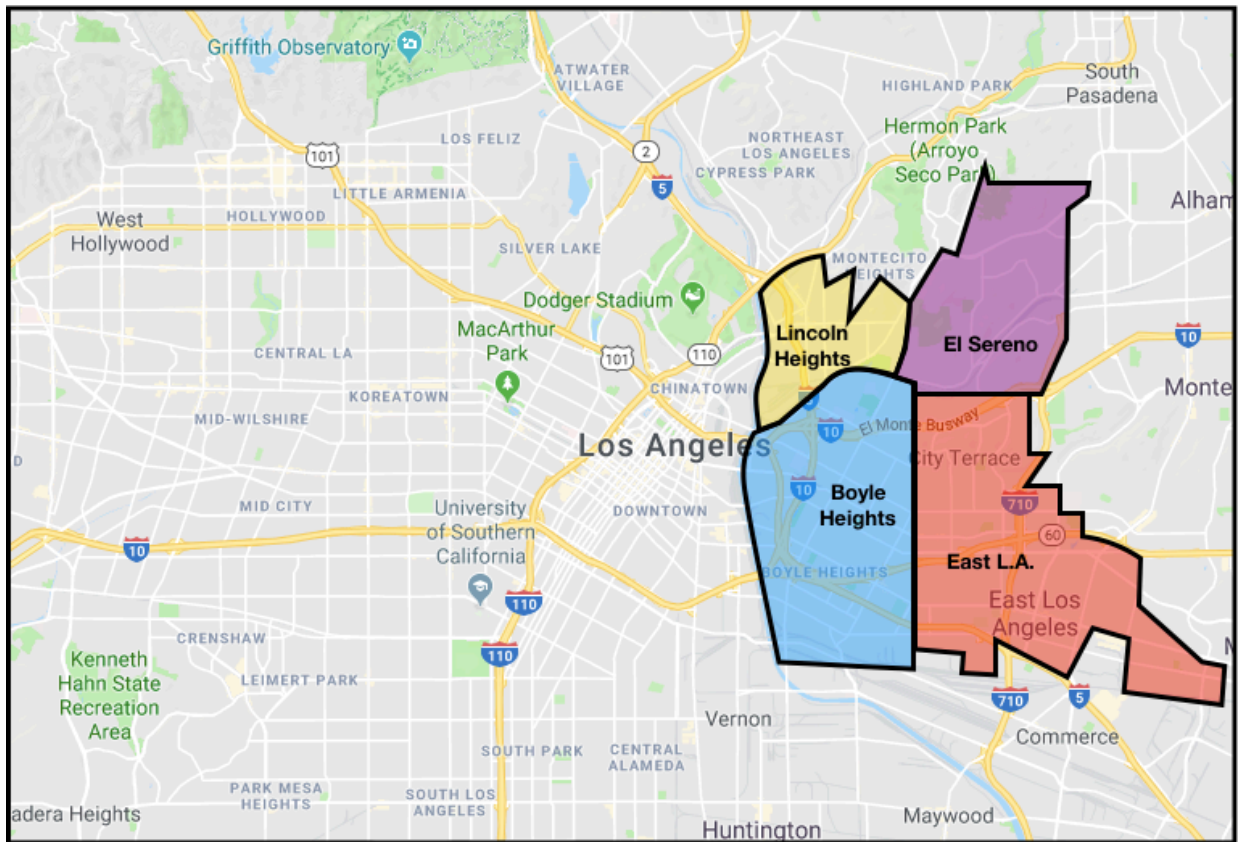
Figure 0.1: The Eastside of Los Angeles. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

Boyle Heights is the Eastside neighborhood that is most associated with the city's Jewish community. Before World War II, Boyle Heights was known as a multicultural enclave, housing a variety of low-income immigrant populations and serving as the center of Jewish residential and commercial life in Los Angeles. Today, Boyle Heights is a majority Latino neighborhood that is waging a fierce public battle against creeping gentrification in an attempt to keep "colonialist businesses" from displacing the neighborhood's low-income Latino residents.[4]

Although Boyle Heights was the heart of the Jewish community from the 1910s to World War II, and was once filled with landmark Jewish institutions such as the original Canter's Deli, few recognizably Jewish historic resources remain in the area. The last Jewish business in the

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[4] Jason McGahan, "Who's Winning and Losing in the Boyle Heights Gentrification War," *LA Weekly*, July 18, 2017, Accessed January 4, 2018, http://www.laweekly.com/news/boyle-heights-gentrification-war-shows-no-signs-of-stopping-8438794.

neighborhood closed almost twenty years ago.[5] Architectural resources, like the Raphael
Soriano-designed Soto-Michigan Jewish Community Center, have been demolished.[6] Signs of
the former Jewish community are present, but can be easily missed if one fails to keep their eyes
peeled: a sign at the corner of Cesar Chavez Avenue and Soto Street memorializing the historic
Brooklyn Avenue Neighborhood Corridor and a couple of small Spanish-speaking churches with
Magen David (Stars of David) above their doors, which denote their former lives as Jewish
synagogues. The most visible Jewish resource in the area is the Breed Street Shul, an Orthodox
synagogue that was the focus of much community discussion and frustration for years as it
increasingly fell into dereliction. The Shul underwent a well-publicized rehabilitation in the
2000s that aimed to "transform the campus into a center of arts, culture, education and service,"
and "bring together the Jewish, Latino and other communities of Los Angeles," but post-
rehabilitation programming appeared to hit a snag, and to this day, the building remains
underutilized and a shell of its former self.[7] Besides the Breed Street Shul, the most visibly
Jewish historic resources existing in the Eastside are four cemeteries located approximately one
mile away in East Los Angeles.

Los Angeles' four oldest extant Jewish cemeteries, hidden behind bougainvillea and vine-
covered walls, sit within a two square mile section of Los Angeles County that contains eleven
cemeteries—ten of which were established by the 1920s. The Jewish cemeteries—Home of
Peace Memorial Park, Beth Israel Cemetery, Mount Zion Cemetery, and Agudath Achim
Cemetery—form a small cemetery district surrounded by residential houses, freeways, and the
neighboring Catholic Calvary Cemetery [Figure 0.2].

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[5] Wendy Elliott-Scheinberg, "Boyle Heights: Jewish Ambiance in a Multicultural Neighborhood," (PhD diss.,
Claremont Graduate University; 2001), ProQuest UMI No. 3015947.

[6] "Jewish, Architectural Landmark Destroyed in L.A. for Federal Project," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, March 23,
2006, Accessed May 15, 2018, https://www.jta.org/2006/03/23/archive/jewish-architectural-landmark-destroyed-in-
l-a-for-federal-project.

[7] "Our Mission," *Breed Street Shul Project*, Accessed May 15, 2018, http://breedstreetshul.org/our-mission/.

Figure 0.2: The four Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles, across the street from Calvary Cemetery. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

These cemeteries are unique and historic, but mostly forgotten by today's Jewish community. In the past approximately seventy years since Jews began moving away from Boyle Heights and the Eastside, the Jewish congregations that owned these cemeteries sold them to private companies, their caretaking organizations dissolved, and the cemeteries experienced varying degrees of vandalism and neglect—a common occurrence with older cemeteries, and increasingly, older Jewish cemeteries. At least three of the four cemeteries, are, at this time, approaching imminent abandonment if they do not receive more attention and funding soon.

Researching these cemeteries, it became evident to me that there are clear contradictions between the manner in which the Jewish community would like to treat their dead, and the way that they ultimately sometimes do. Cemeteries and burial traditions are incredibly important in Jewish culture. Throughout history, when Jews established communities in a new town, their first order of business would be to establish a burial ground, symbolically and physically cementing their decision to settle there, since it is against Jewish law to relocate bodies or to use

cemetery grounds for any other purpose once the land is dedicated.[8] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, American Jewish congregations and burial associations established their own cemeteries and burial societies to properly execute burials and care for the graves according to Jewish law. For Jews, the proper burial of deceased loved ones is an important community obligation and good deed that shows kindness to the dead.[9] However, throughout the United States, as time passed and Jews moved out of their neighborhoods, congregation numbers dwindled, and traditional volunteer burial associations dissolved in favor of more modern for-profit mortuaries, those who owned these cemeteries found themselves unable to maintain the responsibility of caring for their dead. Strapped for funds, they sold their cemeteries to other agencies or were forced to ultimately abandon them. Many of the older cemeteries were established in years before the funerary industry made endowment funds—reserved funds that care for cemeteries once they are full—a standard practice. These cemeteries' futures became unstable and unclear. Since many Jewish communities have, over the years, moved away from where their communities were once centered and where these cemeteries are still located, many Jews are often not even aware that these cemeteries are in danger, if they are even aware that they exist at all. Although many Jewish cemeteries were established with the best of intents, time and money have made it difficult for even those with good intentions to maintain them.

Cemeteries can be difficult to preserve because they occupy a unique place in the conservation realm. Unlike many historic buildings, the majority of cemeteries cannot be adaptively reused and given a new purpose while retaining their historic character and significance. Once a cemetery is full and cannot accept more burials, what becomes of it? The phrase, *beit olam*, used in the title of my thesis, gives a clue to the answer. *Beit olam* means "house of eternity," or "forever home" in Hebrew, and it is often used as a name for Jewish cemeteries. Cemeteries, especially Jewish cemeteries, are cemeteries forever, even when they no longer have room for new burials. As three of the four Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles

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[8] Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, (San Marino: Henry E. Huntington Library & Art Gallery, 1970, 21; Matea Gold, "Lawsuit Charges Cemetery with Unauthorized Reburial of Man," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1997, Accessed March 4, 2018, http://articles.latimes.com/1997/sep/03/local/me-28368; Marilyn Henry, "All of Europe: A Graveyard," *Jerusalem Post (1950-1988),* June 30, 2000, http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/docview/1443848101?accountid=14749.

[9] Rabbi Joe Black, "What to Expect at a Jewish Funeral," *Reform Judaism.org: Jewish Life in Your Life,* Accessed May 21, 2018, https://reformjudaism.org/what-expect-jewish-funeral.

teeter on the precipice of abandonment, the Jewish community, the Eastside community, and the conservation community are all faced with some basic questions: why should these cemeteries be saved, and whose obligation is it to save them?

Cemeteries can hold powerful meaning for the public. Often one of the oldest resources, if not the oldest resource in a city, a cemetery can provide connections to a sense of history not felt elsewhere in the area. Wandering a cemetery, one can learn about the people who are buried there, their culture, their community, their burial traditions, and their spiritual beliefs. The accompanying burial records can also provide important historical health information—confirming the devastation of an early flu outbreak or highlighting common causes of death at the time. Cemeteries certainly provide personal connections and comfort to relatives of the deceased, but they also can serve as a source of spiritual meaning and cultural connection. Ultimately, to let a cemetery fall into abandonment would mean to ignore its capacity for valuable architectural, historical, personal, spiritual, and archaeological significance.

As they sit in East Los Angeles, these cemeteries are a physical manifestation of both early Jewish Los Angeles history and various stakeholders' level of care and respect for these cemeteries and the local neighborhood. A quote attributed to William Ewart Gladstone, a late nineteenth century British prime minister, states, "Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals."[10] I do not believe that it is an overstatement to suggest that when cemeteries go neglected, it reflects back onto the community at large. It expresses an idea about how the cemetery owners' community regards its dead, how the local neighborhood regards the cemeteries, and how the cemetery owners' community regards the local neighborhood.

I believe, and have confirmed through research, that, as a rule, the Jewish community has a very strong sense of respect, admiration, and obligation towards its dead. However, over the years, the Jewish community has become distanced from its East L.A. cemeteries due, in large part, to the community's movement away from the Eastside. As the Jewish community moved west and to the San Fernando Valley, the congregations that managed these cemeteries shrank and dissolved and the community became literally and symbolically removed from the

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[10] John F. Llewellyn, *A Cemetery Should Be Forever: The Challenge to Managers and Directors,* (Glendale, CA: Tropico Press, 1998), 36.

Eastside—the newer generations growing up unaware that these cemeteries ever existed, and thus, unaware of continuing neglect. The cemeteries became the object of vandalism from local trespassers, exacerbated by lack of cemetery security, and possibly also a local lack of understanding and awareness of the community represented in the cemeteries. The cemeteries, approaching possible abandonment, also begin to reflect an idea about how the Jewish community perceives the neighborhood surrounding their Eastside cemeteries. Abandoned cemeteries do not just indicate a lack of care for those buried in the cemeteries, but also indicate a lack of care for those who live around the cemeteries as well, who are forced to coexist with something that becomes evidence of blight and a location for criminal activity. If the Jewish community does not take action to actively care for these cemeteries, it suggests that they do not care about the wellbeing of the inhabitants of residential East Los Angeles, who can see these cemeteries from their front windows during the day, and must walk by them at night on their way home. It is important that the Jewish community does what it can to counter this suggestion—to show that they do care. But it is especially important now, at a time when neighboring Boyle Heights residents are clashing with encroaching developers and high-income white residents, who they feel do not care about the current and future quality of life of local Latino residents.

I focus on the Jewish community as the primary obligant not out of a sense of blame, but because I know that the Jewish community does care deeply about its cemeteries, and the Jewish community has the most to lose if these cemeteries become abandoned. When walking through these cemeteries, looking at the unique style of the graves, the Hebrew epitaphs, and the beautiful and evocative expressions of the faces in the ceramic portraits on the headstones, one can see decades of Los Angeles' early Jewish history—its people, its culture, its footprint, and its unique burial traditions. When it is difficult to visualize the city's Jewish culture, these cemeteries provide valuable physical and visual evidence of early Jewish Los Angeles. As neighboring Boyle Heights is facing the threat of change, these cemeteries contribute evidence of the Eastside's early history as a center of Jewish life and a multicultural enclave. This thesis looks at the history of these cemeteries, and explores the issues and best practices to mitigate their neglect and conserve them as the important historic resources that they are.

The first chapter of the thesis gives a brief history of Jewish Los Angeles, focusing on the movement of Jewish Angelenos across the city. During the nineteenth century, Jews primarily lived in downtown Los Angeles, but beginning in the 1910s, working-class Jews began moving

east across the river to the neighborhood of Boyle Heights, which became a vibrant center for Jewish residential and commercial life for the next approximately thirty years, as well as an enclave for other ethnic minorities. After World War II, Jews increasingly moved to the Westside and the San Fernando Valley, Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles became progressively more Latino, and memories of Jewish Boyle Heights began to fade.

The second chapter explores Orthodox Jewish mourning and burial traditions. It explains the strictly regimented mourning rituals followed by American Orthodox Jews. It also highlights the distinct qualities of Orthodox cemeteries and provides background behind common planning and design decisions in these cemeteries. This chapter introduces the reader to the unique character of these cemeteries and the way that traditional interactions between American Orthodox Jews and their cemeteries can affect their perspectives and attention toward them.

The third chapter describes the history of Los Angeles' first Jewish cemetery and the establishment of the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles. The city's first Jewish cemetery was established in 1855 in the Chavez Ravine, but by 1900, many of the city's cemeteries, including the Jewish cemetery, were considered derelict and inadequate, and the city established legislation forcing most new cemeteries to relocate outside the city boundaries. From 1902 to 1919, the Jewish community established four cemeteries in East Los Angeles. Home of Peace was the city's main Jewish cemetery for many years, and the three smaller cemeteries—Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim—offered burials that adhered to Orthodox traditions.

The fourth chapter explores the history of these cemeteries after their establishment, describing how in the 1940s, new and modern Jewish cemeteries began to emerge near the new Jewish neighborhoods, and Home of Peace began to suffer financially. The Jewish congregations that owned Home of Peace, Beth Israel, and Agudath Achim eventually sold their cemeteries to private entities, and Mount Zion, a cemetery established by the Jewish Free Burial Society for indigent Jews, was effectively abandoned by its owners and caretakers. In the ensuing years, the three small cemeteries, especially Mount Zion, suffered from neglect and vandalism.

The fifth and final chapter discusses the problems facing the Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles and Jewish cemeteries in general, and suggests best practices to mitigate them. One of the greatest issues facing East L.A.'s Jewish cemeteries is the Los Angeles Jewish community's lack of awareness and connection with these cemeteries, which leaves them without an engaged

support system. Methods to enhance the relationship between Los Angeles Jews and these cemeteries range from historic designation to educational programs.

This thesis itself is the first step in creating more awareness of the important Jewish resources that still exist in the Eastside. These cemeteries give testament to the early history of the Jewish community in this city, and also provide evidence of the layers of multicultural history in Los Angeles' Eastside. By reading about the history of these cemeteries and the threats facing them, I hope this thesis can help to spark interest and appreciation in these historic burial grounds.

CHAPTER ONE: A Brief History of the Jewish Community in Los Angeles[11]

The Beginning of Jewish Los Angeles: Downtown

At the time of its incorporation as a city in 1850, Los Angeles counted eight Jews among its approximately two thousand residents. The Jewish population at first increased slowly and steadily, rising to one hundred by 1860, as immigrants from Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland joined the community. Most of these Jews lived in what is now considered downtown Los Angeles: largely on Grand Avenue, Broadway, Main Street, and Los Angeles Street. In 1851, at least eight German Jewish men lived in the Bell's Row building, which was at the corner of Aliso and Los Angeles streets. Jews worked downtown as well—primarily as merchants, bankers, wholesalers, and retailers. They were active in civic affairs—serving on the Los Angeles City Council—and were heavily involved in social clubs and charity associations.

In 1862, the Jewish community built the city's first synagogue at 218 S. Broadway in downtown Los Angeles to house the B'nai B'rith Congregation, which stayed at the site until 1894, when the congregation built a new synagogue a few blocks south at the corner of Hope and Ninth streets [Figure 1.1]. By 1900, a sizable Jewish population existed in the downtown area (about one-third of the 2,500 Jews in Los Angeles), and so most fixtures of Jewish community life could be found downtown as well.[12] The Orthodox alternative to B'nai B'rith's Reform style of worship, Beth Israel, established itself in a synagogue in 1902, "on Olive Street, near most of the members' homes" [Figure 1.2].[13] The congregants at Beth Israel were mostly Eastern European immigrants from Russia and Poland who, at the turn of the century, settled along Temple Street and in nearby Bunker Hill. Other Jewish institutions such as the Kaspare Cohn

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[11] The majority of the information in this chapter is derived from the following sources, unless otherwise cited: James P. Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California*, (Northridge: The Center for Geographical Studies, Department of Geography, California State University, Northridge; 1997), Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), George J. Sánchez, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews:' Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside during the 1950s," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 2004), http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/docview/223302593?accountid=14749, Neil C. Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles: A Window to Tomorrow*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), Stephen J. Sass, ed. *Jewish Los Angeles—A Guide: Everything Jewish Under the Sun*, 2nd ed., (Los Angeles: Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1982); and Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, (San Marino: Henry E. Huntington Library & Art Gallery, 1970).

[12] Harris Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California: 1853-1913,* 4th ed., Maurice H. and Marco R. Newmark, (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1984), 608.

[13] Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, (San Marino: Henry E. Huntington Library & Art Gallery, 1970), 160.

Hospital (which would eventually evolve into the Cedars half of Cedars-Sinai Hospital) and the offices for the Federation of Jewish Charities located themselves in the Bunker Hill and Temple Street areas to be accessible to the community.[14]

Figure 1.1: B'nai B'rith Congregation's second synagogue at the corner of Ninth and Hope streets, 1926. Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00081601.

Figure 1.2: Beth Israel Congregation at the "Olive Street Shul," 1937. Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00081596.

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[14] Wendy Elliott-Scheinberg, "Boyle Heights: Jewish Ambiance in a Multicultural Neighborhood," (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University; 2001), 181, UMI No. 3015947.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Jews began migrating to Los Angeles in large numbers. Most were originally from Eastern Europe, but spent time in cities such as New York or Chicago before heading to the west coast.[15] Los Angeles attracted Jews from other American cities because of its open space and clean, dry air. After living in crowded tenements and working in the sweatshops of eastern port cities, many Jewish immigrants developed lung ailments and sought relief in Los Angeles' temperate climate.[16] The New York-based Industrial Removal Office amplified this migration by facilitating the westward transportation of nearly eighty thousand immigrants from overcrowded eastern cities between the years 1900 and 1917.

Rising Jewish Life in Boyle Heights

In 1908, the city implemented a zoning ordinance reserving the west side of Los Angeles for strictly residential use. Simultaneously, the real estate industry effected restrictive racial covenants in the neighborhoods west of downtown Los Angeles, preventing the selling or renting of houses to non-whites, a category that sometimes included Jews. Since industry was now limited to the downtown, eastern, and southern parts of the city, working-class immigrants and ethnic minorities stayed close to these areas to be near the factories that employed them, while upper and middle-class whites fled these increasingly multicultural communities for the segregated neighborhoods west of downtown.[17]

Downtown Los Angeles became so flooded with factories that in the 1910s, Jews began to relocate from the area, seeking single-family residences and relief from the overcrowded density of downtown. Affluent members of the Jewish elite, often German Jews who wished to assimilate into white Los Angeles, moved to the West Adams, Hollywood, and Wilshire neighborhoods. Working-class Jews, often recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, moved to the Temple Street area and the Central Avenue area (at the northwestern and southern edges of downtown), or across the river to Boyle Heights.

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[15] A small population of Sephardic Jews from Turkey and the island of Rhodes also immigrated to Los Angeles at this time; Catherine Luce, "Reexamining Los Angeles' "Lower East Side": Jewish Bakers Union Local 453 and Yiddish Food Culture in 1920s Boyle Heights," in *Jews in the Los Angeles Mosaic*, ed. Karen S. Wilson, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 29.

[16] Danny Weizmann, "In Search of the Last Jews of Boyle Heights: A Cultural Odyssey," *Los Angeles Reader* (Los Angeles), September 1, 1995, Chicano Resource Center, County of Los Angeles Public Library: East Los Angeles Branch, 10.

[17] Caroline Luce, "Visions of a Jewish Future: the Jewish Bakers Union and Yiddish Culture in East Los Angeles, 1908-1942," (PhD diss.; University of California, Los Angeles; 2013), 67, ProQuest Doc. ID: 1399596926.

Boyle Heights, named for Andrew Boyle, an Irish immigrant and early developer in the area, was originally home to agricultural land and the large estates of the Los Angeles elite.[18] At the turn of the twentieth century, the city constructed bridges and streetcar lines that connected the neighborhood to downtown and enabled its transition into a streetcar suburb. Boyle Heights attracted Jews with its range of affordable housing, proximity to downtown (where many of them worked in offices, garment factories, and millinery shops), and healthy climate.[19] Word spread that Boyle Heights, which was further inland and at a higher elevation, had more sun and less moisture in the air than the rest of the city. In 1910, Kaspare Cohn established a new hospital for tuberculosis sufferers near Boyle Heights on what is now Whittier Boulevard. "Lungers" or "tuberculars," as those suffering from tuberculosis were nicknamed, came out to Boyle Heights from tuberculosis sanitaria elsewhere, and soon their friends and families followed.[20]

The recently formed Congregation Talmud Torah moved to Boyle Heights from downtown in 1912. The Orthodox synagogue, called the Breed Street Shul, became the spiritual heart of the neighborhood and encouraged many observant Jews to move to Boyle Heights.[21] European Jews often formed congregations with their *landslayt*, compatriots from their hometown in Europe, but many of Los Angeles' Jews had spent time in multiple American cities before arriving in Southern California. Because of this, and the resulting disconnect between these Jews and their *landslayt*, they instead established new synagogues based on the neighborhood in which they lived. With the increasing Jewish population in Boyle Heights, religious leaders established dozens of synagogues, primarily Orthodox, in the neighborhood.[22]

Between the mid-1910s and 1923, before the federal government made immigration quota laws more stringent, Los Angeles' Jewish population quadrupled, increasing from 10,000 to 43,000.[23] The Jewish population in Boyle Heights swelled to approximately 10,000

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[18] Elliott-Scheinberg, "Jewish Ambiance," 36-42; Luce, "Visions," 65.

[19] Luce, "Visions," 65-66.

[20] David Weissman, "Boyle Heights—A Study in Ghettos," *The Reflex*, July 1935, 31, Chicano Resource Center, County of Los Angeles Public Library: East Los Angeles Branch; Weizmann, "In Search," 10.

[21] Luce, "Visions," 66.

[22] Luce, "Reexamining," 30.

[23] In 1921, the United States government established laws restricting immigration from countries to three percent of the population of foreign-born immigrants from each country that existed at the time of the 1910 census. In 1924, the government changed the law to restrict immigration to two percent of the ethnic background of the American population at the time of the 1890 census. This opened up immigration opportunities for British and Western Europeans—the background of many American families—and limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe ("The Immigration Act of 1924: The Johnson-Reed Act," *Office of the Historian*, Accessed March 28, 2018, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act).

households in the 1920s, compared to just three Jewish families in 1908. A large portion of Boyle Heights' Jewish population was made up of immigrants from Eastern Europe. By 1920, Russian-born Jews made up fourteen percent of the area's residents.[24] Eastern European Jews often spoke Yiddish and were generally more religiously conservative than their German Jewish counterparts, which meant that some of them wore traditional clothing out of an adherence to ritual and modesty. This caused them to appear more visibly foreign, intensifying their status as outsiders and ostracizing them from the more affluent, assimilated Jews.

America experienced an increase in anti-Semitism in the 1920s due to a revival of the Ku Klux Klan, which in part influenced the increasingly strict immigration legislation at the time. The Klan blamed Jewish bankers for American financial problems, Jewish movie studio executives in Hollywood for attacking American morals, and Jewish intellectuals for attempting to influence American values with their own foreign allegiances.[25] Los Angeles was not immune to the influence of the Ku Klux Klan, and some white Angelenos began to feel resentful against Jews, whom they felt had too much political influence in the city. As Jews began to be excluded from civic affairs and membership organizations, they refocused their attentions on the affairs of the Jewish community, establishing and expanding community centers and social welfare institutions for Jewish orphans, elderly, and the infirm.

During the 1920s and the 1930s, as Boyle Heights grew in Jewish population and as a center of Jewish culture, distinct districts began to appear within Boyle Heights. Brooklyn Avenue became the commercial center of the neighborhood where Jewish residents purchased kosher groceries and patronized Jewish-owned movie theaters [Figure 1.3]. The area around it also became a gathering place for political leftists and labor union headquarters. A Zionist community emerged south of Brooklyn Avenue, while more religious Jews tended to live on the north side. A community of Yiddish secularists lived in the neighborhood of City Terrace, which was located in the hills northeast of Boyle Heights. This period before World War II was the peak of Jewish life in Boyle Heights, and by 1930, approximately 24,000 Jews—one-third of Los

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[24] Luce, "Reexamining," 29.
[25] Adam Hochschild, "Ku Klux Klambakes," *New York Review of Books*, Published December 7, 2017, Accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/12/07/ku-klux-klambakes/.

Angeles Jews—lived in the area.[26] Boyle Heights gained a reputation as Los Angeles' "Lower East Side," a reference to the working-class immigrant neighborhood in New York City.

Figure 1.3: Intersection of Brooklyn Avenue and St. Louis Street in Boyle Heights, 1936. Storefronts include a delicatessen, Warsaw Bakery, and a dentist's office. Note the streetcar lines. Courtesy of the Shades of LA; Jewish Community Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00107880.

A "Hopelessly Heterogeneous" Neighborhood

Despite some contemporary nostalgia for Boyle Heights as a primarily Jewish neighborhood, this mischaracterization ignores that it was, in fact, home to many other immigrant and minority populations, and that Jews were never actually a majority of the population. Black, Mexican, Armenian, Polish, Russian Molokan, Greek, Italian, and Japanese communities settled in Boyle Heights, seeking the same affordable housing and accessibility to downtown that appealed to Jews [Figure 1.4].[27]

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[26] Bruce A. Phillips, "Not Quite White: The Emergence of Jewish 'Ethnoburbs' in Los Angeles, 1920-2010," *American Jewish History* 100, no. 1 (January 2016): 80, http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/docview/1759326215?accountid=14749.

[27] Ibid.; Home Owners Loan Corp, "Boyle Heights: Area Description," *Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces*, Accessed January 2, 2018, http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/.

Figure 1.4: Second Street Elementary School band with students of Japanese, Mexican, Armenian, and Russian background, Boyle Heights, 1930. Courtesy of the Shades of LA: Mexican American Community Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00107880.

Boyle Heights also became a multicultural haven due to its greater acceptance of diversity and lack of discriminatory housing covenants.[28] In the late 1930s, real estate appraisers from the Home Owners Loan Corporation created detailed area descriptions and maps for cities throughout the United States, including Los Angeles, that rated neighborhoods based on whether they were desirable for mortgage lending purposes.[29] The Home Owners Loan Corporation classified presence of blacks, Mexicans, Asians, Jews, and other ethnic minorities as derogatory and subversive racial elements, which made the neighborhood less desirable for lenders. Neighborhoods with increasing populations of non-whites received a lower rating, and neighborhoods with already-established multiethnic populations received the lowest ratings.[30] The Home Owners Loan Corporation's description of Boyle Heights in 1939 indicates that real estate appraisers gave Boyle Heights a red grade (the lowest rating), and states:

> This is a "melting pot" area and is literally honeycombed with diverse and subversive
> racial elements. It is seriously doubted whether there is a single block in the area which

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[28] Luce, "Visions," 67.

[29] Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, Accessed March 30, 2018, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=10/34.0050/-118.1565&opacity=0.8&text=intro&city=los-angeles-ca.

[30] "Color Codes," *Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces*, Accessed March 28, 2018, http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/; Home Owners Loan Corp., "Beverly to Melrose, Gardner to Edinburgh: Area Description," *Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces*, Accessed January 2, 2018, http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/.

does not contain detrimental racial elements, and there are very few districts which are not hopelessly heterogeneous in type of improvement and quality of maintenance.[31]

James P. Allen and Eugene Turner state in *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* that, "Discrimination in housing was a minor and short-lived factor in the evolution of the Jewish distribution [in Los Angeles]."[32] It is possible that, although Jews did experience discrimination in housing, especially in neighborhoods where there was a Ku Klux Klan presence such as Glendale and Inglewood, the ability of Jews to assimilate and minimize evidence of their Jewish heritage (sometimes even going to such lengths as to change their name, as seen in many Hollywood stars of the day), may have enabled them to bypass racist housing policies to a certain extent. In the 1940s, society began to embrace the idea of minimizing differences between white ethnicities in favor of the overarching category of the "Caucasian," enabling Jews to take advantage of what historian, Matthew Jacobson, termed, "the invisible mask of *Jewish* privilege."[33] As for within the multicultural neighborhood of Boyle Heights, when Jewish residents later reflected on the relationship between Jews and other neighborhood minorities, they reported that, except for some incidents between Jews and Mexicans surrounding World War II, they felt mostly free from anti-Semitism in Boyle Heights.[34]

The Mexican Community Grows in Boyle Heights

As the Jewish community was establishing itself in Boyle Heights, the Mexican community was doing the same. Like the Jews, Mexicans began moving into Boyle Heights in the 1910s, when increasing industrial and commercial development began surrounding their Sonoratown neighborhood near the old Mexican plaza in downtown. Since racial discrimination prevented Mexicans from moving to the northern or western parts of the city, and since they also needed to stay close to the downtown factories that employed them, many moved east of the Los Angeles River into Boyle Heights and adjacent East Los Angeles, a part of unincorporated Los Angeles County that was previously farmland and vacant lots. By 1930, the same number of Mexicans lived in Boyle Heights as Jews [Figure 1.5].[35]

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[31] Home Owners Loan Corp., "Boyle Heights."
[32] Allen, *Ethnic Quilt*, 50.
[33] Sánchez, "What's Good for Boyle Heights," 636.
[34] Wendy Elliott, "The Jews of Boyle Heights, 1900-1950: The Melting Pot of Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 78, No. 1 (1996): 6.
[35] Phillips, "Not Quite White," 80.

Figure 1.5: Mexican-American friends posing with a car in Boyle Heights, ca. 1920. Courtesy of the Shades of LA: Mexican American Community Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00005991.

Jewish Movement West and to the San Fernando Valley

Even as Boyle Heights maintained a strong working-class Jewish community, other neighborhoods began to attract Jewish families. Jews increasingly began to move west of downtown to areas previously settled by more affluent Jews at the turn of the century. The Fairfax District contained approximately 7,800 Jews (8.6 percent of the Jewish community) in 1930, when the area was considered the far western end of the city of Los Angeles.[36] By 1935, the neighborhood had four synagogues. By 1945, there were ten synagogues and the Fairfax District was on its way to becoming known as the new Los Angeles Jewish quarter.[37] The neighborhood became a popular destination for middle-class families due to its reasonable housing rates and public transportation lines, which allowed easy commutes to downtown or Hollywood, where many worked in the entertainment industry. Wilshire Boulevard also provided a Jewish-friendly business climate due to the efforts of a real estate development company owned by a young Jewish man named Walter Marks.

When World War II ended, Boyle Heights' position as the center of Jewish Los Angeles was already diminishing as the neighborhood underwent a period of overcrowding. Veterans returned from war and Japanese-American Boyle Heights residents were returning from forced internment. At the same time, Mexican agricultural workers from the *bracero program* migrated

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[36] The Fairfax District and nearby neighborhoods like Hollywood, while considered fairly far west in the mid-twentieth century, are now considered to be part of Central Los Angeles. The term, "the Westside" is now used to describe the collection of neighborhoods west of Central and South Los Angeles ("Mapping L.A.: Neighborhoods," *Los Angeles Times*, Accessed May 29, 2018, http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/; Ibid. 81,102).
[37] Phillips, "Not Quite White," Ibid. 81,102.

to Los Angeles from California's Central Valley, seeking housing with the familiar Mexican community in Boyle Heights.[38] The neighborhood strained to accommodate the influx of residents, and since Boyle Heights' status as a "red grade" neighborhood eliminated the possibility of mortgage loans in the area, potential home-buyers struggled to afford the limited housing. According to historian George Sánchez, "If you're a returning serviceman trying to start a family, it is likely to cost you more to purchase a house in Boyle Heights, even the same house, as the San Fernando Valley, [which] is given the best rate to get a new mortgage."[39] In the 1920s, the San Fernando Valley contained nothing but agriculture, but after World War II, numerous brand new communities of single-family housing tracts in the area drew thousands of residents and investors. A booming postwar economy, returning veterans with G.I. loans, the rise of Los Angeles' automobile culture, and a desire to live in what were deemed "safe," homogeneous neighborhoods contributed to "white flight"—white families moving away from the center of the city in search of newer, suburban, single-family homes. The racial composition of potential homeowners in the Valley was highly regulated, but by the 1940s, Jews were largely accepted as white, and actively participated in "white flight." By 1950, approximately 22,000 Jewish families lived in the San Fernando Valley.[40]

Some of the Jewish residents of Central Los Angeles, the Westside, and the San Fernando Valley were Jews relocating from Boyle Heights, but a much larger number of them were Jews who had moved to Los Angeles after the war. The Jewish population of Los Angeles increased dramatically during the post-War period, with approximately 500 Jews moving to Southern California per week in 1946. The city's Jewish population more than doubled in size, from an estimated 130,000 before the war to approximately 300,000 by 1951. Boyle Heights' position as the center of Jewish Los Angeles ultimately diminished not just because its Jewish population moved elsewhere, but because a new Jewish population moved directly to the other Jewish communities with no knowledge of or nostalgia for Boyle Heights' Jewish history.[41] In 1948, the

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[38] The *bracero program* was the result of a series of agreements between the U.S. and Mexico. It imported workers from Mexico into the United States due to wartime labor shortages ("About," *Bracero History Archive*, Accessed March 30, 2018, http://braceroarchive.org/about).

[39] Gilbert Estrada, Ph.D., "The Historical Roots of Gentrification in Boyle Heights," *KCET*, September 13, 2017, Accessed March 30, 2018, https://www.kcet.org/shows/city-rising/the-historical-roots-of-gentrification-in-boyle-heights.

[40] Phillips, "Not Quite White," 82.

[41] Weizmann, "In Search," 10.

state of California outlawed racial housing covenants, opening up even the most segregated neighborhoods to Jews, and enabling them to look further outside of Boyle Heights.

As Jewish families established their lives outside of Boyle Heights, Jewish businesses from Brooklyn Avenue picked up and followed west, creating new Jewish commercial centers in Beverly Fairfax, Pico-Robertson, and Venice-Ocean Park.[42] Jewish synagogues and social institutions moved as well, with the Jewish Federation offices, formerly in downtown, splitting into two locations—one at the eastern edge of Beverly Hills and one in Woodland Hills.[43] By the late 1950s, the residential neighborhood of West Adams had lost much of its Jewish population, declining forty percent, from 36,000 in 1951 to 22,000 in 1959.[44] At this point in history, one would likely point to Fairfax Avenue rather than Brooklyn Avenue as the primary Jewish commercial strip in Los Angeles.

Boyle Heights Becomes a Mexican Enclave

As Jews began leaving Boyle Heights and real estate became more available, Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants readily rented and purchased these homes. Even though racial housing covenants were outlawed, Mexicans still faced discrimination in mostly-white neighborhoods, and settled instead in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. Immigration from Mexico greatly increased in the 1950s and 1960s as Mexicans sought work in California's agriculture industry, and new Mexican immigrants chose to live in the Eastside, where they found supportive communities with Spanish-speaking businesses and restaurants to patronize. After the construction of several freeways cutting through Boyle Heights, property values lowered even further, European ethnics continued to move away, and the neighborhood became an increasingly Mexican enclave.[45]

The few Jews who remained in Boyle Heights strongly identified with the neighborhood's history as a gathering place for leftist and politically radical ideas, and when the neighborhood became majority Mexican, it remained a place for liberal ideas and an embrace of multiculturalism. In the 1960s, the Eastside became the backdrop for the developing Chicano

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[42] Josie Carscaden, "Boyle Heights: The Transitioning of a Community From the Thirties to the Fifties," (CHS 445 Term Paper; California State University, Los Angeles; 1993), 3-4, Chicano Resource Center, County of Los Angeles Public Library: East Los Angeles Branch.

[43] Ibid., 69; "Contact the Federation," *Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles*, Accessed January 3, 2018, https://www.jewishla.org/who-we-are/contact/.

[44] Phillips, "Not Quite White," 96.

[45] McGahan, "Boyle Heights Gentrification War."

movement, which used rallies, walkouts, music, murals, and literature to instill pride in Mexican heritage and fight for political justice for Mexican-Americans [Figure 1.6]. By the 1970s, due to relocation and the aging population, Jewish life in Boyle Heights was almost completely gone—with a couple of Jewish businesses and the almost-abandoned Breed Street Shul marking some of the only obvious physical reminders of Boyle Heights' era as the epicenter of the Los Angeles Jewish community [Figure 1.7].

Figure 1.6: Chicano Movement March, East Los Angeles, 1970. Courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00048207.

Figure 1.7: Zellman's men's clothing, Boyle Heights, ca. 1935 (left); Manny Zellman in his store, ca. 1983 (right). Zellman's was the last Jewish-owned store on Brooklyn Ave (later, Cesar Chavez Ave) and closed in 2000 (Elliott-Scheinberg, "Jewish Ambiance," 230). Photos courtesy of Shades of L.A.: Jewish Community, Shades of L.A.: Russian American Community Collection, Shades of L.A.: Canadian American Community/Los Angeles Public Library; images 00093890, 00107760.

Jewish Los Angeles and Boyle Heights Today

Since the 1970s, Jewish life has expanded throughout Los Angeles County, with substantial Jewish populations located in South Bay in addition to Fairfax, Pico-Robertson, the San Fernando Valley, Hollywood, and the broad region known as the Westside [Table 1.1, Figure 1.8]. Fairfax Avenue remained the most notable Jewish commercial and cultural center for a time, and provided support for the many Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union that arrived in adjacent West Hollywood in the 1970s. Recently, though, the Fairfax District has been replaced by the Pico-Robertson area further west, which holds the current title as the epicenter of Jewish Los Angeles.[46]

Los Angeles Jewish Population Timeline			
Year	Jewish Population	City Population	County Population
1850	8	1,610	3,530
1860	100	4,385	11,333
1880	-	11,183	33,381
1881	136	-	-
1900	2,500	102,479	170,298
1910	-	319,198	507,131
1912	10,000	-	-
1920	28,268	576,673	936,455
1923	43,000	-	-
1930	91,337	1,238,048	2,208,492
1940	-	1,504,277	2,285,643
1941	130,000	-	-
1950	319,627	1,970,358	4,151,687
1958	323,000	-	-
1960	-	2,479,015	6,039,834
1979	503,000	-	-
1980	-	2,950,010	7,477,657
1997	519,000	-	-
2000	-	3,694,820	9,519,338
Note: These numbers are rough estimates taken from different sources. The sources providing Jewish population statistics did not identify whether the numbers were in the city or county. Sources: Phillips, "Not Quite White," 87; Romo, *East Los Angeles*, 65; Sandberg, *Window to Tomorrow*, 26-27; Vorspan, *History*, 287; "Historical General Population: City and County of Los Angeles, 1850-2010," *Los Angeles Almanac*, Accessed March 31, 2018, http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po02.php.			

Table 1.1: Los Angeles Jewish Population Statistics.

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[46] Scott Garner, "Neighborhood Spotlight: Pico-Robertson an Evolving Hub of Jewish Culture," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2017, Accessed March 31, 2018, http://www.latimes.com/business/realestate/hot-property/la-fi-hp-neighborhood-spotlight-pico-robertson-20170204-story.html.
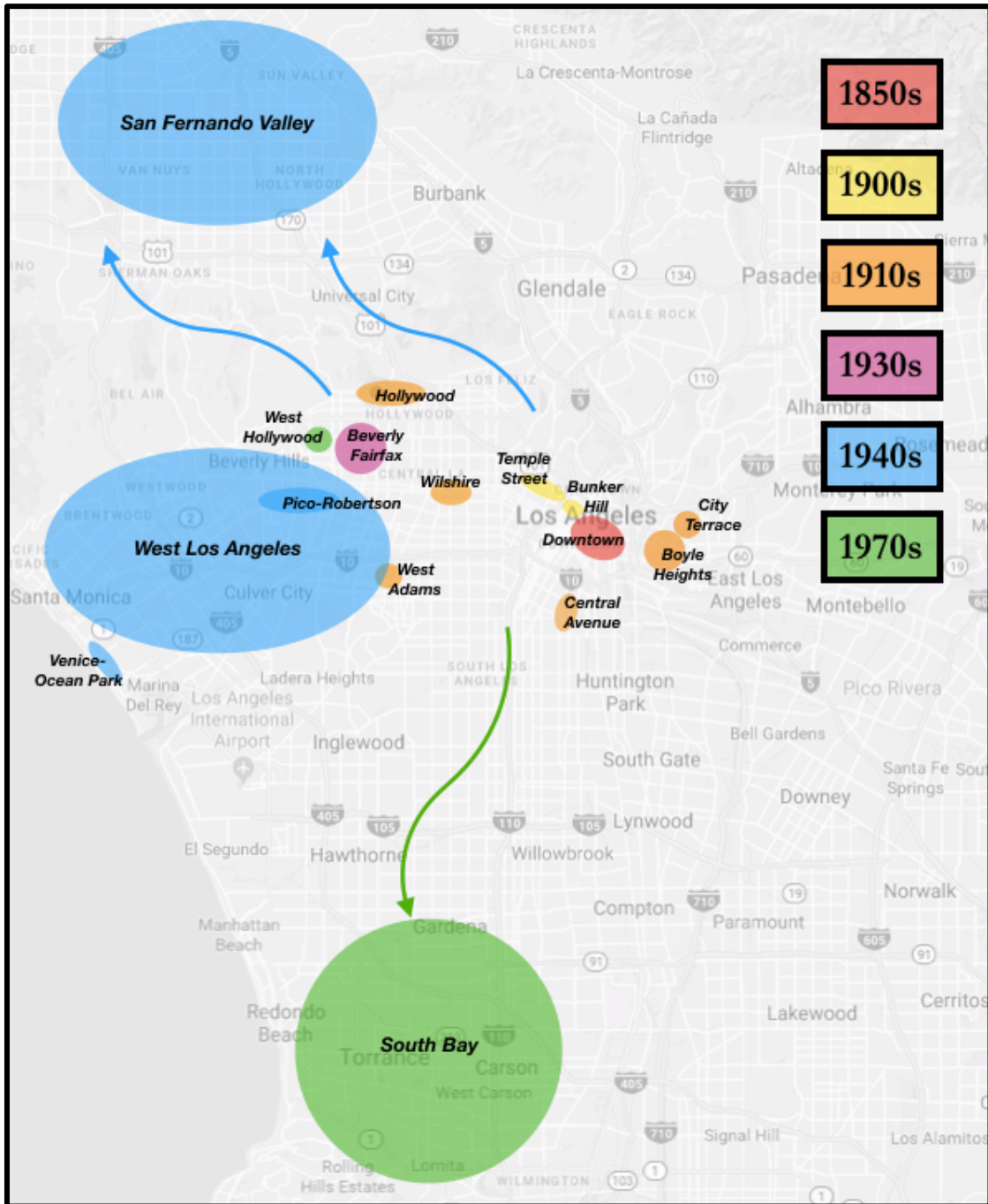
Figure 1.8: Jewish population movement from the 1850s to the 1970s. Map courtesy of Google Maps, notations by author.

Boyle Heights no longer has any semblance of a Jewish community. In 1993, the last elderly attendee stopped worshipping at the Breed Street Shul, and the synagogue became devastated over the years by earthquakes and gang activity [Figure 1.9]. In 1994, the city made the decision to officially change the name of Boyle Heights' thoroughfare, Brooklyn Avenue, to Cesar Chavez Avenue, in honor of the Chicano civil rights activist and the neighborhood's Chicano history. The decision was unpopular with some of the city's Jewish community, who

felt their history was being erased. In concession, a six-block stretch of the street was labeled with signs naming it the Brooklyn Avenue Neighborhood Corridor.[47] Today, Boyle Heights' population is 94% Latino and 81% Mexican (East Los Angeles's population is 96.7% Latino).[48] However, some of the members of Boyle Heights's Latino population are now feeling threatened as well.

Figure 1.9: Congregation Talmud Torah, the "Breed Street Shul," exterior, 1976, (left), interior with graffiti, undated, photographed by Gary Leonard (right). Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection (left) and Gary Leonard Collection (right)/Los Angeles Public Library; images 00050673, 00029232.

With the Los Angeles real estate market continuing to inflate, developers recently began focusing their sights on Boyle Heights' quality architecture and proximity to downtown Los Angeles. Noting the arrival of coffee shops and art galleries as some of the first signs of gentrification, local activists are taking an aggressive hard line against these incoming "urban colonizers" who will inevitably push out the current inhabitants residing in this neighborhood.[49] Whether this activism will do anything to deter, or will simply slow the transition of Boyle Heights from a low-income Latino neighborhood to a higher-income, increasingly white neighborhood, remains to be seen. However, the transitional nature of the neighborhood warrants sensitivity and awareness of the histories of the different peoples who have made the Eastside their home.

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[47] Harriet Elliott, "City Preserves Jewish Heritage of Los Angeles," *East Los Angeles / Commerce Tribune*, Published March 23, 1994, 1, Chicano Resource Center, County of Los Angeles Public Library: East Los Angeles Branch; Danny Feingold, "A Stitch in Time," *ReveLAtions*, Accessed Online November 24, 1999, Chicano Resource Center, County of Los Angeles Public Library: East Los Angeles Branch.
[48] Boyle Heights' current Latin population consists of primarily Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, and Central Americans (Hector Tobar, "A Look at the Boyle Heights Melting Pot, *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 2011, Accessed March 31, 2018, http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/09/local/la-me-tobar-20111209); McGahan, "Boyle Heights Gentrification War;" "East Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, Accessed March 31, 2018, http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/east-los-angeles/.
[49] McGahan, "Boyle Heights Gentrification War."

CHAPTER TWO: American Orthodox Jewish Burial and Cemetery Traditions

Burial

American Jewish burial traditions and attitudes towards mourning vary based on the denomination and ethnic origin of the community.[50] Generally, the more assimilated a Jewish community is into American Anglo-Saxon society, the more their choices for how to bury, where to bury, and how to mourn their dead reflect that influence. Jews with Northern European backgrounds, whose families have been living in the United States for more than a generation, who belong to a Reform congregation, or who are secular tend to fall into this category.

All of the cemeteries that will be discussed in this thesis offer or once offered options for the Orthodox Jewish community—Beth Israel and Agudath Achim catered specifically to Orthodox congregations, Mount Zion offered Orthodox-style burials, and Home of Peace contains sections within the cemetery for Orthodox congregations. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I will be focusing on the burial and mourning traditions of Orthodox Judaism— the branch that most strictly adheres to the laws and ethics outlined in the Talmud.

The Jewish community believes that it is a community obligation and a *mitzvah*, or commandment, to see to the proper burial of its members. According to the Talmud, when someone dies, no one in the city is allowed to work until that person is buried, but an exception is made if the city forms a burial society, known as a *Chevra Kadisha*, to carry out the burial according to proper traditions. Customarily, *Chevra Kadisha* members are volunteers, and each member pays annual dues to cover burial costs.[51] Jews also consider it one of the highest *mitzvot* to provide burials for poor Jews because it is a kindness that can never be repaid. As a result,

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[50] There are three major denominations in American Judaism. Ranging from most religiously strict to least, they are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Other smaller, though still substantial, denominations include Reconstructionist and Humanistic Judaism, and other more specific sects of these denominations exist (for example, Hassidic Jews are a subgroup of Haredi, or Ultra-Orthodox, Judaism). For the purposes of my thesis, when I speak of Orthodox Judaism I am speaking of the larger umbrella branch of Orthodox Judaism, and not distinguishing between the subgroups. For more information, please see: "The Jewish Denominations," *My Jewish Learning,* Accessed March 17, 2018, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/.

[51] Rochel U. Berman, *Dignity Beyond Death: The Jewish Preparation for Burial*, (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2005), 34; Francis, Doris, Leonie Kellaher, and Georgina Neophytou, *The Secret Cemetery,* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 63.

many Jewish communities also create an association called a *Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth* to provide burials for indigent Jews.[52]

When a Jew dies, he or she must be buried within twenty-four hours. Members of the *Chevra Kadisha* carry out *tahara*—rites of purification—on the deceased before dressing the body in a white linen shroud that "protects the soul against evil and decomposes easily, allowing the soul to soar."[53] *Chevra Kadisha* members place the body in a plain pine box held together with wooden dowels, and when ready, a funeral procession brings the deceased to the cemetery. Friends and family members lower the coffin into the earth and place the dirt in a mound on top of the coffin to allow the dirt to settle properly and ensure that no one steps on the grave [Figure 2.1]. Everyone then washes their hands, the rabbi recites a prayer, and several mourners recite the *Kaddish*, which is a traditional "mourner's prayer."[54]

Figure 2.1: Recent burials with mounded earth at Agudath Achim Cemetery. Photo by author.

Very specific rules and timing must be adhered to during burial for the deceased to have a peaceful and honorable departure from this life. Orthodox Jews do not allow their deceased to be embalmed or buried with any metal fastenings or non-biodegradable materials—the body and everything it is buried with must be able to return back to the soil unimpeded. European Orthodox Judaism also requires that graves be marked with an upright headstone rather than a

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[52] Mareleyn Schneider, *History of a Jewish Burial Society: An Examination of Secularization,* Vol. 9 of *Jewish Studies*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 92.

[53] The phrase *Chevra Kadisha* will be in italics for the remainder of this thesis to distinguish it from the for-profit mortuary, Chevra Kadisha Mortuary, which takes its name from the traditional burial society, and now owns Agudath Achim and Beth Israel cemeteries; Frances, *Secret Cemetery,* 63.

[54] Ibid. 63-64; Jill Glasband (former funeral director at Glasband Mortuary) in discussion with the author, December 2017.

flat marker. Although it is not explicitly documented why this is required, considerations influencing this tradition include the biblical story of Jacob erecting a *matzeva*, or pillar, on Rachel's grave, and the need to explicitly mark the location of graves to warn *Cohanim*, a line of priests who are forbidden from entering cemeteries, not to enter the grounds. Another influence for having an upright headstone is the Kabbalistic idea that the *nefesh*, the deceased's soul, hovers over its grave for the first twelve months after death. As a result, an obvious marker will honor the *nefesh* and help it more easily find its body.

Orthodox Jews often choose to place concrete ledgers [Figure 2.2] over their graves as well—a convention that likely originated out of need in Europe and Israel when the water table was too high or the terrain too rocky for normal burials. A stone slab covering the length of the grave would prevent the deceased from being disturbed by the elements or wild animals.[55] Although in American Orthodox cemeteries there is usually no longer a need for this protection, the tradition took on a symbolism of its own. It also helps to make graves more visible, as previously mentioned, and prevents visitors from disrespecting the graves by stepping or standing on them.[56] The origin of placing a concrete ledger over a grave also relates to the origin of the Jewish practice of placing a pebble on a headstone upon visitation [Figure 2.2]. Traditionally, when one visits the grave of a loved one, one places a small stone rather than flowers on the grave. Originally, in the days when Jews were laid to rest in a simple shroud without a casket, those who buried the body would cover it with dirt and a pile of large stones, to once again prevent disruption from wild animals. When visitors returned to pay their respects to the deceased, they would place a small stone upon the pile each time to make sure the grave had enough stones to secure it. This practice, no longer necessary for protection, evolved into a symbolic gesture still practiced today, where the stone is an expression of love and remembrance.[57]

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[55] Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017; Rabbi Joshua L. Segal, *A Field Guide to Visiting a Jewish Cemetery: A Spiritual Journey to the Past, Present and Future*, (Nashua, NH: Jewish Cemetery Publishing, LLC, 2005), 4-5.
[56] Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017; Gonzales, "Downey Road;" Frances, *Secret Cemetery*, 25.
[57] "Origins of Leaving a Visitation Stone," *Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts*, Accessed March 10, 2018, https://www.jcam.org/Pages/Foundation/visitationstones.htm.

Figure 2.2: Upright headstones and concrete ledgers at Home of Peace (left). Pebbles left by visitor at Beth Israel (right). Photos by author.

Mourning

When a family member passes away, Jews adhere to a period of mourning that is as strictly regimented as their burial traditions. The first period of mourning, called *aninut*, lasts from the time that the bereaved learns about the death until the burial. During this time, the mourner is exempt from their normal duties to attend to the burial arrangements, and the focus is on caring for the deceased rather than comforting the mourner. After the burial, the family stays at home for seven days of mourning called the *shiva*, when the family recites the *Kaddish* daily and confronts head-on the reality of death and the sadness that they feel. After sitting *shiva* for a week, mourners will return to work, but continue the mourning process for a period called *shloshim*, which lasts until thirty days after the burial. During this time, the mourner avoids entertainment and performs *mitzvot*, good commandments, in the name of the deceased. If the deceased is a parent, the mourning period continues for another eleven months, where the mourner, often the son, is expected to recite the *Kaddish* at synagogue daily. The mourning period ends with the placement and unveiling of the headstone on the *yarzeit*, the anniversary of the death [Figure 2.3].[58]

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[58] Frances, *Secret Cemetery*, 63-67; "Timeline of Jewish Mourning, *My Jewish Learning*, Accessed March 17, 2018, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/timeline-of-jewish-mourning/.

Figure 2.3: Headstone unveiling on the *yarzeit* of the deceased at Beth Israel. Photo by author.

This ritual period of mourning is intended to guide the grieving process, so that the bereaved are able to acknowledge and accept the death of their loved one. Not only does the mourning period force the bereaved to sit with their sadness, fixate on remembrance of the deceased, and give them tasks to focus on during this time, but it also gives an end date to this sadness. The expectation is that once the first *yarzeit* passes, the headstone is set, and the official mourning period is over, the bereaved return back to the celebrations of life.

Mourning rituals also help the soul to make its journey from this life without distractions by restricting the family's cemetery visits to once at the end of each period of mourning.[59] After the formal mourning period is complete, Orthodox tradition continues to discourage cemetery visits with the exception of the anniversary of the death and certain solemn holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Tisha B'av. Orthodox Jewish doctrine teaches that Judaism is a religion of life, not death, and one must limit the amount of death that they bring back into their life. Those who lose loved ones often choose to memorialize them at home instead of frequently visiting them at the cemetery. Visitors also wash their hands when leaving a cemetery, ritually washing off the association of death, and Orthodox Jews are forbidden to eat anything that grows in or near a cemetery.[60]

Cemetery Design

Jewish mourning and burial rituals combined with the history and traditions of Eastern European Orthodox Jewish communities to greatly influence cemetery design in these

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[59] Frances, *Secret Cemetery,* 65-67.
[60] Ibid., 102-103, 203.

communities. As previously stated, individual graves each have an upright headstone and a concrete ledger over the length of the grave in order to call attention to the burial sites and ensure that no visitors walk or stand on them. Unlike in many other cultures, where it is common to stand on the grave while visiting and reading the headstone or even to picnic atop the grave with one's family, Orthodox Judaism teaches that it is an affront to the dignity of the deceased to do so. Instead, cemetery workers lay out pathways within the grounds so that visitors can travel throughout the cemetery without treading on any graves.[61]

Historian Kenneth T. Jackson states that, "…for immigrants, cemeteries fostered a sense of identity and stability in a new country characterized by change."[62] Orthodox Jews looked to their history for cemetery design. They did not follow the idea of a cemetery as a green, open space that was embraced by Anglo-American cemeteries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, instead choosing to organize their cemeteries in tight, orderly rows reminiscent of graveyards back in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. The communities that established these cemeteries were often recent immigrants of lower income who were used to living on restricted amounts of land in their home countries. Because of this, these cemeteries tend to maximize space and convey a sense of equality over aesthetics, with plots of regulated size and shape located as close to each other as possible in tight rows.[63]

Trees and grassy areas are scarce—flowers are especially rare. The cemetery is simple and austere, though there is some opportunity for creativity and individual memorialization in the images and writing on headstones. For Orthodox Jews, cemeteries provide a place to occasionally visit their loved ones to say a prayer for them and ensure that the grave is clean and well maintained. However, these cemeteries are not designed as places that one would wish to stay a while, because Orthodox doctrine encourages Jews to minimize their time in cemeteries—to focus on life rather than dwelling on death, and to focus one's prayers on G-d rather than on deceased loved ones.[64] An Orthodox Jewish participant in a study on modern memorial practice at British cemeteries reiterated the Orthodox cemetery's functionality and austerity by stating,

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[61] Schneider, *History*, 87-88.

[62] Richard E. Meyer, "Ethnic Cemeteries in America" in *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery*, ed. Richard E. Meyer, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 4-5.

[63] Roberta Halporn, "American Jewish Cemeteries: A Mirror of History" in *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery*, ed. Richard E. Meyer, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 143, 147; Frances, *Secret Cemetery,* 50-51.

[64] "Visiting the Cemetery," *Shiva.com*, Accessed March 17, 2018, https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/death-and-mourning/visiting-the-cemetery/.

"The cemetery is not a place to stay and sit, and it is not what I want to do. It does not pull me back, it does not say 'come and see me I'm so lovely.'"[65] Since these cemeteries' spare and unassuming visual characteristics do not encourage visitation beyond immediate family members saying prayers for loved ones, as time passes and family members move away or pass away themselves, these cemeteries become more and more at-risk for neglect and eventual abandonment.

Ceramic Portraits

Orthodox Jewish cemeteries are often designed to be functional rather than aesthetically pleasing, and cemeteries regulate much of individual grave design to maximize space and promote a sense of equality in death. Excess decorations are discouraged, though they are not prohibited. Headstones, however, do provide an opportunity to recognize the individual. Jewish headstones often have a symbolic image etched into the stone—common images used are the menorah, *Magen David* (recognized in English as the Star of David), hands (usually to indicate a *Cohanim*) or pitcher—and also feature insignia from fraternal organizations to which the deceased belonged [Figure 2.4].[66] Names, dates, and, sometimes, short epitaphs are engraved on the stone in English and Hebrew. In this way, the headstones allow individualization, though they do not differ too strongly from standard Anglo-American headstones.

Figure 2.4: Graves depicting *Magen David*, hands, and menorah. Photo by author.

The most striking and unique feature found on many of these headstones are the ceramic portraits—a memorial custom mostly seen in early twentieth century cemeteries for immigrants

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[65] Frances, *Secret Cemetery,* 103.
[66] Segal, *Field Guide*, 4-5.

from Eastern Europe, Italy, Asia, and Latin America. The invention of the photograph enabled those of lower income to acquire images of their loved ones—a luxury once limited only to those who could afford to commission paintings or sculptures from an artist. The availability of photographs also enabled poor families to preserve their deceased loved ones' likenesses as a form of memorialization. Memorial portraiture in the cemetery emerged in the nineteenth century, with daguerreotypes installed on headstones as early as 1851. By the turn of the twentieth century, photo-ceramics became a popular medium, where a craftsperson fired a copy of the photo onto an enamel or porcelain surface and then coated it with resin. Families often sent the photo back to Europe for an artisan to complete this process, though by the 1910s, the Sears-Roebuck catalog advertised the service as well.[67]

Memorial portraits strengthened immigrants' connections with their heritage and reflected the importance that their cultures placed on honoring the dead. Many of the communities that featured memorial portraits in their cemeteries had strong traditions of honoring and communicating with the dead. Jewish memorial portraits display an interesting conflict. While it is of high importance to properly honor the dead and comfort the mourner in Jewish tradition, some might also argue that memorial portraiture is in violation of the second of the Ten Commandments, which prohibits "graven images" of humans as a means of discouraging idolatry. However, over the years, the Second Commandment's meaning has shifted, loosened, and been reinterpreted in countless ways. In addition, "graven images" is also sometimes described as only applying to engraved or sculpted images. Either way, it appears Jews, especially Orthodox Jews, largely accepted and embraced memorial portraiture in their cemeteries [Figure 2.5].[68]

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[67] Lisa Montanarelli, "A History of Photographic Tombstones" in *Forgotten Faces: A Window into Our Immigrant Past,* ed. Geoffrey Link, (San Francisco: Personal Genesis Publishing, 2004), 22, 26, 63*;* John Matturri, "Windows in the Garden: Italian-American Memorialization and the American Cemetery," in *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery*, ed. Richard E. Meyer, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 23.
[68] Lisa Montanarelli, "Memorial Portraiture Across Cultures," in *Forgotten Faces: A Window into Our Immigrant Past,* ed. Geoffrey Link, (San Francisco: Personal Genesis Publishing, 2004), 85, 88*;* Segal, *Field Guide,* 56-57.

Figure 2.5: Ceramic memorial portraits. Photos by author.

Fired in kilns at extremely high temperatures and covered with a hard resin, these memorial portraits could theoretically withstand the elements for hundreds of years. Artisans would sometimes outline and sharpen the features of a person's face when firing the image in anticipation of future fading from the sun, but one hundred or so years later, many of the photos look like they could have been taken just a few years ago. Unfortunately, ceramic memorial portraits tend to be prime targets for vandalism and they are easily cracked, shattered, or scraped from the headstone. This vandalism, combined with an increasing desire for assimilation and uniformity in the cemetery, led to many cemeteries establishing regulations prohibiting photographic memorialization starting in the 1940s.[69] After this, ceramic memorial photographs became an uncommon practice. However, starting in the late 1980s, the more recent generation of Russian Jewish immigrants began embracing a new technique for memorial portraiture—laser photoengraving of large, extremely lifelike portraits directly onto their headstones, which are usually made of ultra-shiny black granite. Home of Peace Memorial Park and other cemeteries favored by the Russian Jewish community in the later twentieth century and early twenty-first century, like Hollywood Forever Cemetery, contain an abundance of these portraits [Figure 2.6].[70]

[69] Matturri, "Windows in the Garden," 27; Montanarelli, "History of Photographic Tombstones," 27, 63.

[70] Halporn, "American Jewish Cemeteries," 147; Alexis C. Madrigal, "Lasers for the Dead: A Story About Gravestone Technology," *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2011, Accessed March 18, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com /technology/archive/2011/07/lasers-for-the-dead-a-story-about-gravestone-technology/242601/.

Figure 2.6: Photoengraving on Russian grave at Home of Peace. Photo by author.

Ronald William Horne estimates in his book, *Forgotten Faces: A Window Into Our Immigrant Past*, that approximately forty to fifty percent of memorial portraits from the early twentieth century have disappeared or been vandalized beyond recognition.[71] Yet in the Beth Israel, Mount Zion, or Agudath Achim cemeteries where memorial portraits once graced many headstones, it is possible that a far larger number of portraits have been destroyed. Trespassers scraped off and smashed many portraits, and bullet marks indicate where gang members shot portraits out when using them for target practice [Figure 2.7].[72] Although a sign posted at the gates of Agudath Achim Cemetery states that one may call a displayed phone number to replace a ceramic portrait, many of the family contacts that the cemetery has on file and many of the family members who had access to the original photos have passed on or moved away. Descendants might not even know that they have family members buried in these cemeteries, let alone visit to see that the portrait is missing.

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[71] Ronald William Horne, "The Significance of the Holy Cross Memorial Portrait Collection." *Forgotten Faces: A Window into Our Immigrant Past,* ed. Geoffrey Link, (San Francisco: Personal Genesis Publishing, 2004), 60.
[72] Shmuel Gonzales, in discussion with the author, November 2017.

Figure 2.7: Damaged ceramic memorial portraits. Photos by author.

These ceramic portraits are a very unique and beautiful memorial tradition, reflecting the first few generations of immigrants from a specific set of countries between approximately 1900 and 1940. Unfortunately, due to their fragile nature, many of these portraits have been lost to vandalism. In the Orthodox Jewish cemeteries of Los Angeles, these portraits add a sense of evocative beauty to what are otherwise austere and uninviting burial grounds, and they maintain a record of the faces of the thriving Jewish community that once existed in nearby Boyle Heights. In an 1843 letter from poet, Elizabeth Barrett (later, Elizabeth Barrett Browning) to author Mary Russell Mitford, Barrett remarked, after seeing an early daguerreotype, "It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases—but the association, and the sense of nearness involved in the thing…the fact of the *very* shadow of the person lying there fixed forever!"[73] Nowhere is this quote more appropriate than in the context of memorial portraits, which not only bring a face to the name, but also convey a sense of familiarity, allowing cemetery visitors to feel a more personal connection with the deceased, and providing the deceased, in a small way, with a more profound legacy.

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[73] Elizabeth Barrett, *Elizabeth Barrett (Browning) to Mary Russell Mitford, December 7, 1843*, Letter, *The Daguerreotype: an Archive of Source Texts, Graphics, and Ephemera*, Gary W. Ewer, ed., Ewer Archive # S8430001, http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/S8430001_BARRETT_LETTER_1843-12-07.pdf; Matturri, "Windows in the Garden," 20.

CHAPTER THREE: The Establishment of the Jewish Cemeteries in East Los Angeles[74]

The Earliest Cemeteries in Los Angeles—Before 1900

In the first years of the city's existence, Los Angeles residents drove their deceased via horse and cart to be buried at Mission San Gabriel or Mission San Fernando, both located miles away from the city. To avoid this cumbersome process, the first burials within Los Angeles occurred in 1823 next to the Catholic church, La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Ángeles, which was located in the pueblo plaza in downtown Los Angeles. In the following decades, any new cemeteries were located in and around the city center in downtown. In 1844, the Catholic community established Calvary Cemetery just north of downtown at what is now the site of Cathedral High School and the 110 Freeway. In 1853, the Protestant community formally established the Fort Moore Hill Cemetery (also known as the City Cemetery) on Fort Moore Hill in downtown, which on either side had private sections for fraternal orders including the Odd Fellows and Masons. [75] Two years later, the Jewish community dedicated their own cemetery.

As a Jewish population began to take shape in Los Angeles, one of the community's first priorities was to establish a Jewish burial ground, since for the Jews, "the purchase of a burial ground symbolically indicates that a person has decided on his home town."[76] The first charitable institution in American-era Los Angeles, the *Gemilat Chesed*, or Hebrew Benevolent Society, formed in 1854 to sponsor charitable and religious services and procure land for a burial ground. A year later, in 1855, the Hebrew Benevolent Society paid one dollar for approximately three acres of land near what is now Lilac Terrace in the Chavez Ravine north of downtown, approximately one mile west of the Catholic cemetery [Figure 3.1]. Storekeeper, Harris Casper,

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[74] The majority of the information in this chapter is derived from the following sources, unless otherwise cited: Phil Blazer, and Shelley Portnoy, *Wrestling with the Angels: A History of Jewish Los Angeles*, (Sherman Oaks, CA: Blazer Communications, 2006); Shmuel Gonzales, "Downey Road Cemeteries," PowerPoint, 2017; Paul Pitkoff, "History of Mount Zion Cemetery and the Jews of Los Angeles" from Facebook Post, *Mount Zion Cemetery East Los Angeles* Facebook Page, Posted January 20, 2016, Accessed May 10, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/ historicLA/; Stephen J. Sass, ed. *Jewish Los Angeles—A Guide: Everything Jewish Under the Sun*, 2nd ed., Los Angeles: Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1982; and Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, San Marino: Henry E. Huntington Library & Art Gallery, 1970.

[75] During the earliest years of their existence, the Odd Fellows and Masonic burial grounds were alternately described as their own separate cemeteries and private sections of the City Cemetery; Hadley Meares, "What Lies Beneath: LA's first graveyards were abandoned, defiled, dug up, and bulldozed in the name of progress," *CurbedLA*, October 6, 2016, Accessed January 13, 2017, https://la.curbed.com/2016/10/6/13177830/los-angeles-cemetery-history.

[76] Vorspan, *History*, 21.

became the first to be buried in the Jewish cemetery according to reports at the time, following his February 1855 murder.[77] In 1870, the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society formed to assist in caring for this land, which was intended to be "a burying ground for the Israelites forever."[78] A petition from the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1873 describes the cemetery as picturesque—laid out in rows, planted with trees, surrounded by a picket fence, and filled with white marble, wood, and granite grave markers.
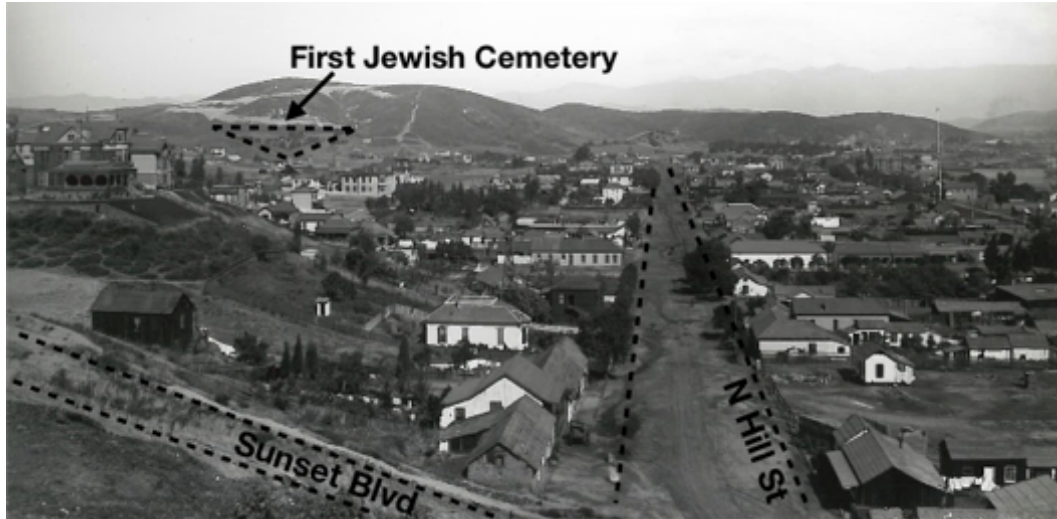
Figure 3.1: The first Jewish Cemetery in Los Angeles. Original photo courtesy of the Seaver Center for Western History Research, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Original photo has been edited by author with street and cemetery identifiers courtesy of "Site of First Jewish Cemetery 1855," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 20, 1968, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University.

Despite its initially picturesque appearance, the cemetery exhibited serious problems. Although City Council granted an additional three acres to the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1868, by the end of the century, the cemetery was already running out of space for burials. In addition, the cemetery's location began to prove treacherous for those visiting or engaging in funeral processions. The cemetery was previously the site of a reservoir, and, after rain, the hill leading up to the burial ground became so saturated that visitors would become stuck attempting

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[77] Norton B. Stern and William M. Kramer, "Harris Caspar & Tan Rotchild: Two Murder Victims Buried in the New Jewish Cemetery, 1855 & 1863," *Pioneer Jews of Los Angeles in the Nineteenth Century – An Anthology of Articles Presented Over the Past 38 Years in the Western States Jewish History Journal*, ed. David W. Epstein and Gladys Sturman, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3/4 (Spring/Summer 2006/5766), 209.

[78] Sass, *Guide*, 9.

to wade through the muddy earth.[79] Although the city proposed developing a street leading to the cemetery in 1869, the steep topography of the land prevented the plan from moving forward.

At the same time, many of the other early cemeteries were being declared overcrowded, derelict, or a health hazard for the downtown community. By 1869, the city assumed responsibility for the crowded and poorly managed Fort Moore Hill Cemetery, which until then had simply been public land, which people occupied with burials via squatters' rights.[80] A year later, the city granted the southeast corner of the cemetery to the local chapter of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows to allow them to officially continue use of the grounds as a private cemetery.[81] However, as Los Angeles realized its downtown burial grounds had rapidly approaching expiration dates due to overcrowding and complaints of negligence, new cemeteries emerged further east and west of the city center. In 1877, in an attempt to block another cemetery from opening within the city, City Council passed an ordinance preventing burials within the city limits except for in the already established Fort Moore Hill Cemetery, Catholic Cemetery, and Jewish Cemetery. Yet once the Council realized this required that they open a new public cemetery, they granted an 1877 burial permit to allow Evergreen Cemetery to establish itself on a large parcel in the spacious, and quite agricultural at the time, neighborhood of Boyle Heights. The city also established a small potter's field at the eastern edge of the new Evergreen Cemetery.[82]

Within the next couple of decades, regulations on burials were decidedly murky. An 1874 California State Law indicated that the authority to establish burial permits and organize cemeteries was under the purview of the County Board of Supervisors, which made allowances for new cemeteries at its own discretion. However, the city seemed to often have its own hand in these decisions, and so the subject of cemeteries continued to be a contested subject in city newspapers and among the public.[83] In 1879, Los Angeles City Council banned the purchase of any additional burial plots at the Fort Moore Hill Cemetery.[84] In 1884, Rosedale Cemetery, later

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[79] Newmark, *Sixty Years*, 104; Meares, "What Lies Beneath."
[80] Meares, "What Lies Beneath;" Edwin H. Carpenter, *Early Cemeteries of the City of Los Angeles*, (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1973), 22.
[81] "Odd Fellows' Petition: Quit Claim Deed to Cemetery," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 32.
[82] Carpenter, *Early Cemeteries*, 38-39.
[83] "At the City Hall: It Takes Another Turn," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1895, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 9.
[84] Carpenter, *Early Cemeteries*, 29.

known as Angelus-Rosedale, opened southwest of downtown, and the city took advantage of its opening by selling several parcels as residential lots in the Fort Moore Hill Cemetery, excavating and transporting the bodies in these lots to Rosedale and Evergreen. Fort Moore Hill Cemetery soon became the site of an upscale residential neighborhood and public high school, with occasional and haphazard attempts for years to relocate the bodies underneath. The Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, taking its cue from Evergreen, established a new Odd Fellows Cemetery in Boyle Heights in 1889.[85]

In 1891, Jewish women established the Home of Peace Society, taking over the care of the Jewish cemetery with the goal of beautifying its grounds. Yet as the rapidly industrializing downtown crept closer, the cemetery became "almost inaccessible, completely surrounded by oil wells, derricks and tanks, and brickyards and kilns, the smoke from which…so discolored the shrubbery and monuments that they [became] black and unsightly."[86] By the end of the century, the Hebrew Benevolent Society was actively seeking a new location for its cemetery.

Calvary Cemetery had been deemed overcrowded as early as 1860, fewer than twenty years after it opened, when an article in the Los Angeles *Star* stated that the cemetery was "unsuited to the necessities of the community…small, and of course sadly over crowded—a fact which made itself painfully apparent on a recent melancholy occasion—the reeking odor causing many to leave the grounds ere the conclusion of the sad ceremonies."[87] It was not until 1895 that the Catholic Church announced that it would abandon the burial ground and open a New Calvary Cemetery on fifty-two acres recently purchased in Boyle Heights. The City Health Officer approved the purchase of the acreage for a new cemetery, following an ordinance adopted by City Council the previous year that appointed the Health Officer to be the sole person with the ability to grant burial permits and allow the establishment of new cemeteries. Outraged residents filed a petition, protesting that Boyle Heights could not handle any more cemeteries, which they claimed depreciated their real estate. A judge, who appeared before City Council to hear the petition, accused the Church of foul play, on the basis that the Church had previously submitted and then withdrawn an application for the new cemetery in Boyle Heights. The Judge declared that after withdrawing the application, the Church had influenced City Council to insert into last year's city ordinance a provision granting the responsibility of approving new cemeteries to the

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[85] Ibid., 32.
[86] Blazer, *Wrestling*, 62.
[87] Ibid., 17.

Health Officer, who may have been more willing than others to do the Church's bidding.[88] After the statement by the judge, City Council then introduced a motion that,

> No cemeteries other than those now established, be allowed inside the corporate limits of Los Angeles, and that the City Attorney be instructed to present the necessary ordinance to prevent any more cemeteries in the city and to prevent any more burials in the Boyle Heights territory, except in Evergreen and Odd Fellows' cemeteries.[89]

The Catholic Church conceded and moved the new cemetery slightly to the east, outside of the city limits into unincorporated East Los Angeles.[90]

Throughout the nineteenth century, many cities across the United States established similar ordinances requiring cemeteries to be relocated outside of the city limits due to fears of the spread of disease by miasma—a deadly gas, which, according to beliefs at the time, emerged from decay.[91] An 1895 article in the *Los Angeles Times* discussing how San Francisco citizens were attempting to also have burials prohibited within city limits, stated, "The idea of having several thousand corpses slowly turning to corruption within a stone's throw of one's residence is certainly not a very pleasant one…That in some cases cemeteries have been the cause of much sickness is an undoubted fact."[92] San Francisco would ultimately ban all burials within city limits in 1900 due to the fact that cemeteries were filling up, regarded to be a medical hazard, and taking up valuable real estate. In 1912, the city began a process of relocating more than 150,000 bodies just south to the city of Colma, clearing San Francisco of most of its cemeteries.[93] The 1895 *Los Angeles Times* article noted that growth in the area around Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery had slowed due to the presence of the cemetery, which echoed the Boyle Heights residents' concern that a new cemetery would depreciate their real estate.[94]

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[88] "At the City Hall, City Council: Boyle Heights People Up in Arms Against the New Cemetery," *Los Angeles Times,* December 5, 1895, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 8.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Jay Berman, "The Former Downtown Dead Zone," *DT News*, May 4, 2009, Accessed January 27, 2018, http://www.ladowntownnews.com/news/the-former-downtown-dead-zone/article_4b0bb876-8ab5-5fa0-98fd-c42f0ed1c0d3.html.

[91] David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 35.

[92] "City Cemeteries," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1985, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 22.

[93] John Branch, "The Town of Colma, Where San Francisco's Dead Live," *New York Times*, February 5, 2016, Accessed April 8, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/06/sports/football/the-town-of-colma-where-san-franciscos-dead-live.html.

[94] "City Cemeteries."

The placement of the New Calvary Cemetery in East Los Angeles set off a chain reaction. Since cemeteries could officially no longer be located within city limits, East Los Angeles provided open space, mostly agricultural at the time, for cemeteries outside of the city limits.[95] Several more cemeteries emerged within a mile radius from the Catholic cemetery over the next half-century—ethnic and religious cemeteries that reflected the growing immigrant population east of downtown. Five separate Jewish cemeteries, a Serbian cemetery, and a Russian Molokan cemetery were established to serve immigrant populations that largely resided in East Los Angeles and neighboring Boyle Heights.[96] The Chinese community also founded a new cemetery as an alternative to the potter's field adjacent to Evergreen Cemetery, which, due to overt racism, was one of the few places the Chinese could be buried at the time [see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.6 at the end of this chapter].[97] Many of these cemeteries were small, containing five or fewer acres, and shared the practice of displaying ceramic memorial portraits of the deceased on their headstones.[98]

The New Jewish Cemetery, Home of Peace—Creation and Establishment

In 1902, B'nai B'rith, the city's first Jewish congregation and one of its most prominent, declared its intention "to establish a new Jewish cemetery in which Jews belonging to any congregation in Los Angeles [could] be buried at uniform prices."[99] The congregation that managed this cemetery had its origins in a downtown synagogue, established in 1862 on Fort Street. At the time of the cemetery's establishment, Congregation B'nai B'rith had recently constructed and moved into a new synagogue at the corner of Hope and Ninth streets in downtown.[100] Worshippers at the temple included many prominent Jewish families (such as the

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[95] "East Los Angeles Community History," *County of Los Angeles Public Library*, Accessed April 8, 2018, http://www.colapublib.org/history/eastla/.

[96] Molokans, an alternative sect of the Russian Orthodox Church, fled religious persecution in Russia starting in approximately 1905. Many came to Los Angeles and established a community in Russian-town near Boyle Heights. A Serbian colony also emerged in downtown, and then in East Los Angeles at the turn of the century (Romo, *East Los Angeles*, 65-67; Hugo Martin, "Laid to Rest Among Their Ancestors," *Los Angeles Times,* Sep 14, 1998, 1; Hadley Meares, "The Faces of a People: The Serbian Cemetery of East L.A.," *KCET*, September 16, 2015, Accessed February 3, 2018, https://www.kcet.org/history-society/the-faces-of-a-people-the-serbian-cemetery-of-east-la).

[97] Sherri Gust, ed., "The Historic Los Angeles Cemetery (CA-LAN-3553) Summary Report, Los Angeles Metro Gold Line Project, East Portal Area, Los Angeles, CA," Written by Sherri Gust, Amy Diaz, and Kelly Houck with contributions by Armando Abeyta, Marina Adame, Ileana Bradford, and Michael Mirro. (Los Angeles: Cogstone Resource Management, August 2006), 24.

[98] Sloane, *Necessity*, 125.

[99] Blazer, *Wrestling*, 61.

[100] Newmark, *Sixty Years*, 608.

Newmarks, Hellmans, and Cohns), and members of the congregation were often involved in fraternal organizations such as the International Order of the B'nai B'rith and the Free and Accepted Masons Lodge #42. The leader of Congregation B'nai B'rith, Rabbi Abraham Wolf Edelman, was the Grand Master of the Masonic lodge, and the first synagogue on Fort Street even bore a Masonic "eastern star" on its façade [Figure 3.2, Figure 3.3].

Figure 3.2: Members of the Fraternal Order of Masons, ca. 1900. Rabbi Abraham Wolf Edelman is seated second from left. Courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00001032.

Figure 3.3: B'nai B'rith Congregation's first synagogue at 218 S. Broadway, ca. 1898. Note the Eastern Star on the façade. Munsey Photo, courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00081599.

The congregation, with financial assistance from its president, Kaspare Cohn, purchased thirty acres off of Stephenson Avenue (now Whittier Boulevard) in East Los Angeles, directly

across the street from the new Catholic cemetery. B'nai B'rith dedicated the cemetery, which became known as Home of Peace, on May 18, 1902. The new cemetery was a large, grassy rectangle with gravestones organized in rows. Although no pictures or records could be found describing the cemetery's earliest layout, it appears that, from the start, the cemetery exhibited a more geometric design than the Catholic cemetery across the street. While the slightly older New Calvary Cemetery exhibited a combination of rolling hills, mausoleums, and curving walkways reminiscent of earlier rural cemeteries, Home of Peace exhibited a more streamlined and linear approach that anticipated the formal style of more modern cemeteries.[101] Though Congregation B'nai B'rith owned and operated the burial grounds, it enabled other Jewish congregations, fraternal organizations, and private societies to purchase their own sections, and donated a portion of the cemetery to the Hebrew Benevolent Society for the burial of indigent Jews. The cemetery also allowed a small community of Boyle Heights Subbotniks—ethnic Russians of a Christian background that adhered to the laws of Judaism—to bury their dead in sections of Home of Peace, since Subbotniks followed Jewish burial traditions.[102]

Over the next eight years, between 1902 and 1910, the community used horse-drawn wagons to transfer those buried in the Chavez Ravine cemetery to the newly established Home of Peace Cemetery, where they were placed in the "Benevolent" section on the east side of the property.[103] The Hebrew Benevolent Society sold back portions of the old burial ground in the Chavez Ravine to the city, and in 1943 the federal government purchased the remaining land, which eventually became the site of the Naval and Marine Corps Training Center and is now the Frank Hotchkin Memorial Training Center for the Los Angeles Fire Department. In 1968, the California State Office of Historic Preservation installed a plaque on the site, declaring it a California Historical Landmark for its history as the first Jewish Site in Los Angeles.[104]

The Masonic Cemetery Association

As the Fort Moore Hill cemeteries were rapidly becoming developed for other purposes, the Masonic community decided to remove the original Free and Accepted Masons Cemetery

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[101] Sloane, *Necessity*, 121-127.

[102] "The Subbotniki in Los Angeles," *Spiritual Christians Around the World*, Accessed April 11, 2018, http://www.molokane.org/subbotniki/Aldacushion/HTML/6_Los_Angeles.html.

[103] "About Us," *Home of Peace Memorial Park Mortuary*, Accessed January 27, 2018, http://www.homeofpeacememorialpark.com/About_Us.html.

[104] "First Jewish Site in Los Angeles," *California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation*, Accessed January 27, 2018, http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/822; Meares, "What Lies Beneath."

from Fort Moore Hill to a new location outside of the city limits.[105] The Free and Accepted

Masons Lodge #42 purchased thirty acres of land adjacent to the new Home of Peace Cemetery,

and in 1905, they incorporated the Masonic Cemetery Association, a for-profit stock company.[106]

That year, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that crews were hard at work, struggling to disinter

170 deceased Masons from the old cemetery.[107]

     After 1905, there do not seem to be any other written records of the Masonic Cemetery

Association utilizing their purchased land in East Los Angeles as a burial ground for Masons, nor

records of them transferring the burials to an alternative cemetery elsewhere. Within a year of

purchasing the land, the Masonic Cemetery Association began transferring large sections of the

parcel to Jewish congregations and organizations, perhaps because of the strong overlap between

the Masonic and Jewish communities. The only evidence of this new burial ground actually

being used for Masons is a 1924 aerial image that shows a very small portion of the original

parcel along Stephenson Avenue being used for what appears to be the Masonic Cemetery

[Figure 3.4]. By 1937, the section of the property that briefly served as a Masonic cemetery

became the location of a residential development and the Sephardic Beth David Cemetery.

While it is unclear where the Masons were reburied, it is likely that Jewish Masons could have

been reburied in the Masonic section of Home of Peace.

Figure 3.4: Aerial view of what might have briefly been the New Masonic Cemetery in 1924. This
photo is a cropped version of the photo in Figure 4.1 on page 53. Courtesy of the Security Pacific
National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00073989.

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[105] Carpenter, *Early Cemeteries,* 19.

[106] Meares, "What Lies Beneath;" Curry, C.F., *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of California for the Fifty-Second and Fifty-Third Fiscal Years Beginning July 1, 1900, and Ending June 30, 1902*, (Sacramento, 1902), 80, from the collection of Paul Pitkoff.

[107] The process of disinterring bodies at the Masonic cemetery was apparently so gruesome that men were quitting daily, and even a "gang of Slavonians" that the Masons employed found the work too distressing to continue; "Men Faint at Their Jobs," *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1905, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 3.

Extension of the Stephenson Avenue Yellow Cars and the Funeral Streetcar

Much of what made Boyle Heights such an attractive neighborhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was its access to streetcar lines, which enabled residents to travel over the river into downtown. As streetcar lines expanded throughout the Eastside, they enabled residents to reach the cemeteries in East Los Angeles with relative ease. The first horse-car railway reached Boyle Heights via Aliso Street in 1877. In the 1880s, a cable car line began to run along East First Street, reaching the southwest corner of Evergreen Cemetery and enabling people to visit the cemetery via public transportation. At the turn of the century, companies like the Pacific Electric Railway Company, with its signature Red Cars and the Los Angeles Railway Company (LARy) with its signature Yellow Cars began to buy up cable car lines and turn them into electric streetcar lines. LARy created multiple additional lines that ran through Boyle Heights including one on Stephenson Avenue.[108] In 1908, LARy announced an extension of the Stephenson Avenue line. The extension, which was partially funded by the Catholic, Masonic, and Jewish cemeteries, would send its signature Yellow Cars past the city limits to service the East Los Angeles cemeteries.[109] The next year, the company constructed a special Yellow Funeral Car named the *Paraiso* (Spanish for Paradise, sometimes used to indicate Heaven), later known as the *Descanso* (Spanish for Rest, sometimes used in the Spanish equivalent of the phrase, Eternal Rest), which funeral parties could charter for approximately twenty five dollars to transport their deceased loved ones via public transportation to the cemeteries. Although the *Descanso* ceased use as a funeral streetcar in 1924 when automobiles became more popular for this purpose, the Yellow Cars on Stephenson Avenue provided an accessible means of transport for individuals to visit these cemeteries until LARy dismantled it in 1963.[110]

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[108] Elliott-Scheinberg, "Jewish Ambiance," 61-66.

[109] "Yellow Cars Speed into the Suburbs: Startling Extensions of Five-Cent Fares by the Aggressive Huntington," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1908, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1886-1922), 1.

[110] The *Descanso* funeral car can be seen on display at the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, California (Sarah Goodyear, "A Funeral Car Named 'Descanso,' or, When Death Rode the Rails in America," *City Lab,* May 3, 2013, Accessed January 27, 2018, https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2013/05/funeral-car-named-descanso-or-when-death-rode-rails-america/5478/).

Figure 3.5: The *Descanso* Funeral Car. Courtesy of the Pacific Railroad Society Collection.

Beth Israel Cemetery—Creation and Establishment

In 1906, Congregation Beth Israel purchased approximately five acres of the Masonic Cemetery Association's land.[111] Beth Israel is the oldest Orthodox congregation in Los Angeles, originally founded in 1900 after a merger of the Kahal Israel and Beth El congregations. Its first synagogue, located on Bunker Hill, was dedicated in 1902 and popularly known as the Olive Street Shul.[112] Although Home of Peace allowed non-members of B'nai B'rith to purchase plots in their cemetery, Beth Israel stated that its members took "the same view as Father Abraham— they came here to reside permanently and desire[d] their own last resting place."[113] The congregants also likely wanted to ensure that they would receive an appropriate Orthodox burial, and Beth Israel established its own *Chevra Kadisha* to provide proper burials for indigent Jews, complete with ten men who would perform the mourning rituals, the *Kaddish*, for the dead according to Orthodox Jewish custom.[114] Beth Israel Cemetery officially opened in 1907—a narrow strip of land at the southern end of the Masonic Cemetery Association property and adjacent to the southwest corner of Home of Peace. The cemetery's plan was simple, with

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[111] "Local News," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, January 28, 1907, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 3.

[112] Ibid.; Abraham Bensky, "History of the Congregation Beth Israel, Los Angeles, California," 1966, Box 63, Folder 7, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 3.

[113] "Beth Israel Cemetery," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, November 30, 1906, Box 63, Folder 7, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

[114] A *Chevra Kadisha* is a traditional group of Jewish volunteers who prepare a body for burial (Rabbi Joseph L. Segal, *A Field Guide to Visiting a Jewish Cemetery: A Spiritual Journey to the Past, Present and Future*, (Nashua, NH: Jewish Cemetery Publishing, LLC, 2005), 2); "Local News."

"handsome entrance pillars of white marble" opening onto one long walkway down the center of the property.[115]

***Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth*—The Jewish Free Burial Society**

In 1908, the same year as the Stephenson Avenue railway extension, some members of the Jewish community created the *Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth,* translated from Hebrew to English as the "Jewish Free Burial Society." Two of the principal founders of the society were funeral directors who would later be associated with the city's most prominent Jewish mortuaries. Louis Glasband, from Russia, served for many years as the society's superintendent, and Charles Groman, from Bessarabia (a historical region that is now Moldova and the Ukraine), was the society's treasurer.[116] Organized "to visit its sick members, in serious cases to nurse them, in case of death to perform the orthodox rites," the Jewish Free Burial Society would also cover the cost of funerals for those who could not afford them—using donations to cover basic burial and funeral fees.[117] In 1910, the society had a membership of about 130 people with dues of 25 cents per month. The society originally handled non-Jewish burials as well, but eventually only served the Jewish community.[118]

It is possible that the society emerged to help relieve the pressure felt by the Hebrew Benevolent Society at the time. In a 1909 letter published in the city's Jewish newspaper, the *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, by Isaac Norton, president of the Hebrew Benevolent Society, Norton stated that because donations to the society were not rising to match the rapidly increasing Jewish population in the city, they were having difficulty providing burials for Jewish indigents. It was especially difficult for the society since so many poor Jews with ill health, often suffering from tuberculosis or influenza, came to Los Angeles hoping that the healthy climate would

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Joseph L. Malamut, ed., *Southwest Jewry: An Account of Jewish Progress and Achievement in the Southland*, Vol. 1, (Los Angeles: The Sunland Publishing Co., Inc., 1926), 72-73, 81, 157.

[117] "Hevra Hesed Shel Emeth," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, October 30, 1908, Box 35, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles; Louis Glasband Burial Records April 1912 - October 10, 1913, Courtesy of Jill Glasband private collection.

[118] "A Report by Supt. Philip Stein of Chevra Chessed Shell Emeth (Jewish Free Burial Association)," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, December 30, 1910, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 6; "Funeral Practices Seminar," April 22, 2010, Courtesy of Jill Glasband personal collection.

relieve their symptoms, only to die a few months after arriving.[119] In 1910, the Hebrew

Benevolent Society stated in an update in the *B'nai B'rith Messenger:* "We are not a free burial

society, and we want to get out of the burial business, as there is a society organized for that

purpose."[120] The Jewish Free Burial Society may have originated to assist the Hebrew

Benevolent Society with this task, but, ultimately, it would take over as the major provider of

burials for indigent Jews in Los Angeles.

Mount Zion Cemetery—Creation and Establishment

During the Jewish Free Burial Society's early years, Louis Glasband conducted funeral

preparations for society-funded burials out of Draper & Co., a secular mortuary.[121] Burial records

kept by Louis Glasband indicate that from 1908 to 1916, whenever the Jewish Free Burial

Society paid for a burial, the body would be interred in one of the cemeteries already existing in

East Los Angeles. Many society-funded funerals occurred in Home of Peace and some in the

Beth Israel Cemetery (most likely for congregants of Beth Israel).

Eight years after the society's founding, however, it made the decision to establish a

cemetery of its own in East Los Angeles. In 1916, The Jewish Free Burial Society invited the

city's entire Jewish community to attend the dedication of Mount Zion Cemetery.[122] Title records

show that although the burial society managed Mount Zion and Charles Groman was the

president of the cemetery, the Masonic Cemetery Association still owned the six-acre parcel,

which was just north of Beth Israel Cemetery and organized similarly, with the exception of a

curving walkway that ended in a circle near the back of the property.[123] According to an article in

the *B'nai B'rith Messenger*,

> The Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth has been a potent factor in the line of practical charity in
> this city the past eight years, and the acquisition of this burial tract will facilitate its aims

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[119] "An Appeal to the Jewish Community of Los Angeles, From the Hebrew Benevolent Society," *B'nai B'rith Messenger,* September 10, 1909, Los Angeles Public Library: Central Library, 3-4.

[120] "Hebrew Benevolent Society and Kaspare Cohn Hospital Association," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, January 14, 1910, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

[121] "The Glasband Family: A Story of Community Service," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 17, 1976, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 13.

[122] Philip Stein, "Announcement," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 2, 1916, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 4.

[123] Malamut, *Southwest Jewry*, 81; "Preliminary Report," First American Title Insurance Company, June 5, 2013, 2, from the collection of Paul Pitkoff.

and objects. The Society has undertaken a tremendous financial obligation, which our brethren will doubtless assist the discharge of.[124]

Although there is no concrete documentation, it appears that the initial intention of the cemetery may have been to provide a burial place for indigent Jews, especially those of the Orthodox Jewish faith. However, as years went by, those interred at the cemetery came from a much wider economic background, as one can see in the range of gravestones in the cemetery—from unmarked graves to handmade concrete markers to large and extravagant granite headstones. Although those buried at Mount Zion were all of Jewish background, they ranged in religious practice from Orthodox Judaism to atheism.

After preparing burials at Draper & Co. for several years, in 1929, Louis Glasband partnered with his brother, Samuel Glasband, and Charles Groman to start the Jewish mortuary, Glasband-Groman-Glasband (which became Glasband-Groman when Samuel left the business soon after). Over the next few years, this became one of the premier Jewish mortuaries in the city, and the primary mortuary for burials funded by the Jewish Free Burial Society.[125]

Agudath Achim Cemetery—Creation and Establishment

Agudath Achim, sometimes referred to as Agudas Achim, or Agudas Achim Anshe Sfard, was another Orthodox congregation. It began organizing in approximately 1903 and established itself in 1909 in a synagogue at Central Avenue and Twenty-First Street in the Central Avenue district south of downtown.[126] The congregation purchased its cemetery from the Masonic Cemetery Association in 1919—a narrow piece of land north of Mount Zion that matched Beth Israel in organization, but was about half the size. Agudath Achim also established a *Chevra Kadisha* to ensure proper Orthodox burials for deceased members and to observe the annual *yarzeit*.[127]

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[124] Philip Stein, "Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth," *B'nai B'rith Messenger,* May 19, 1916, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 5.

[125] "The Glasband Family: A Story of Community Service," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 17, 1976, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 13.

[126] The congregation is also sometimes identified as Agudas Achim Anshe Sfard due to the fact that Anshe Sfard, a Romanian congregation, merged with Agudath Achim at some point (Clifton L. Holland, "The Jewish Community in Los Angeles," Prolades / Holland International Consultants, http://www.prolades.com/glama/la5co07/jewish_community.htm).

[127] Jacob J. Eltz, ed., *Mount Sinai Yearbook – 1946*, Los Angeles: Associated Organizations of Los Angeles, 1946), 21.

Beth David Cemetery

The final cemetery established among the cluster of Home of Peace, Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim, is one that I will only mention briefly due to the lack of information I was able to find about its history. Beth David Cemetery, a small parcel on the northwest corner of Home of Peace, was a Sephardic Jewish cemetery established by the Beth David congregation in approximately 1937, according to earliest burials. Based on the 1924 aerial photo, the land that Beth David Cemetery occupied was previously the location of the New Masonic Cemetery. Congregation Beth David, founded in 1918, moved into a synagogue on Cornwell Street in Boyle Heights in the early 1920s, and became popularly known as the Cornwell Street Shul. The congregation eventually became known as Beth David Nusach Sfard. Home of Peace absorbed the Beth David Cemetery shortly after it opened, likely in the 1950s, and the Beth David Nusach Sfard congregation dissolved in 1970.[128] The Sephardic graves share the style seen in Orthodox sections—with upright headstones and concrete ledgers.

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[128] Ted Gostin (Specialist in Southern California Jewish Genealogy), in discussion with the author, November 2017; Holland, "Jewish Community;" "Boyle Heights Nusach Sfard Era Ends," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, May 29, 1970, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 18.

Cemeteries **No Longer Extant	Type	Location	Date Est.	Description
Evergreen Memorial Park & Crematorium	Non-Denominational	Boyle Heights	1877	Formerly Evergreen Cemetery.
Los Angeles County Crematorium Cemetery	Potter's Field	Boyle Heights	1877	Formerly Los Angeles County Cemetery. Established as a separate parcel adjacent to Evergreen Cemetery in order to bury indigents. Due to segregation, many Chinese deceased were buried here as well. Evergreen purchased much of the potter's field in 1964, leaving a small section still used today for indigent cremations.
Odd Fellows Cemetery	Originally for members of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows; now open to the public.	Boyle Heights	1889	Officially established on Fort Moore Hill in downtown in 1863, but existed unofficially in that location before then.
Calvary Cemetery	Catholic	East Los Angeles	1896	"Old Calvary" originally established in what is now Chinatown in 1844.
Home of Peace Memorial Park & Mausoleum	Jewish	East Los Angeles	1902	Formerly Home of Peace Cemetery. Moved from Chavez Ravine in 1902.
Masonic Cemetery**	Established for members of the Masonic order.	East Los Angeles	1905	First established on Fort Moore Hill in downtown. There is no record of the establishment date, but the first burial was in 1857.
Beth Israel Cemetery	Orthodox Jewish	East Los Angeles	1907	Established on Masonic land.
Serbian Cemetery	Serbian	East Los Angeles	1908	Operated by the Serbian United Benevolent Society.
Mount Zion Cemetery	Established by Jewish Free Burial Society.	East Los Angeles	1916	Established on Masonic land; Jewish Federation became owner in 1960s.
Agudath Achim Cemetery	Orthodox Jewish	East Los Angeles	1919	Established on Masonic land.
Chinese Cemetery of Los Angeles	Chinese	East Los Angeles	1922	Operated by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Los Angeles.
Beth David Cemetery**	Sephardic Jewish	East Los Angeles	1937	Likely absorbed by Home of Peace in the 1950s.
Old Russian Molokan Cemetery	Russian Molokan	East Los Angeles	Before 1941	Now defunct / New Russian Molokan Cemetery established in the City of Commerce in 1941.

Sources: "Gonzales, "Downey Road;" "Odd Fellows;" Berman, "Former Downtown Dead Zone;" Carpenter, *Early Cemeteries*, 13- 39; Meares, "Serbian Cemetery; Gust, "The Historic Los Angeles Cemetery," 24-30; Holland, "Jewish Community;" Martin, "Laid to Rest."

Table 3.1: Cemeteries in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles.
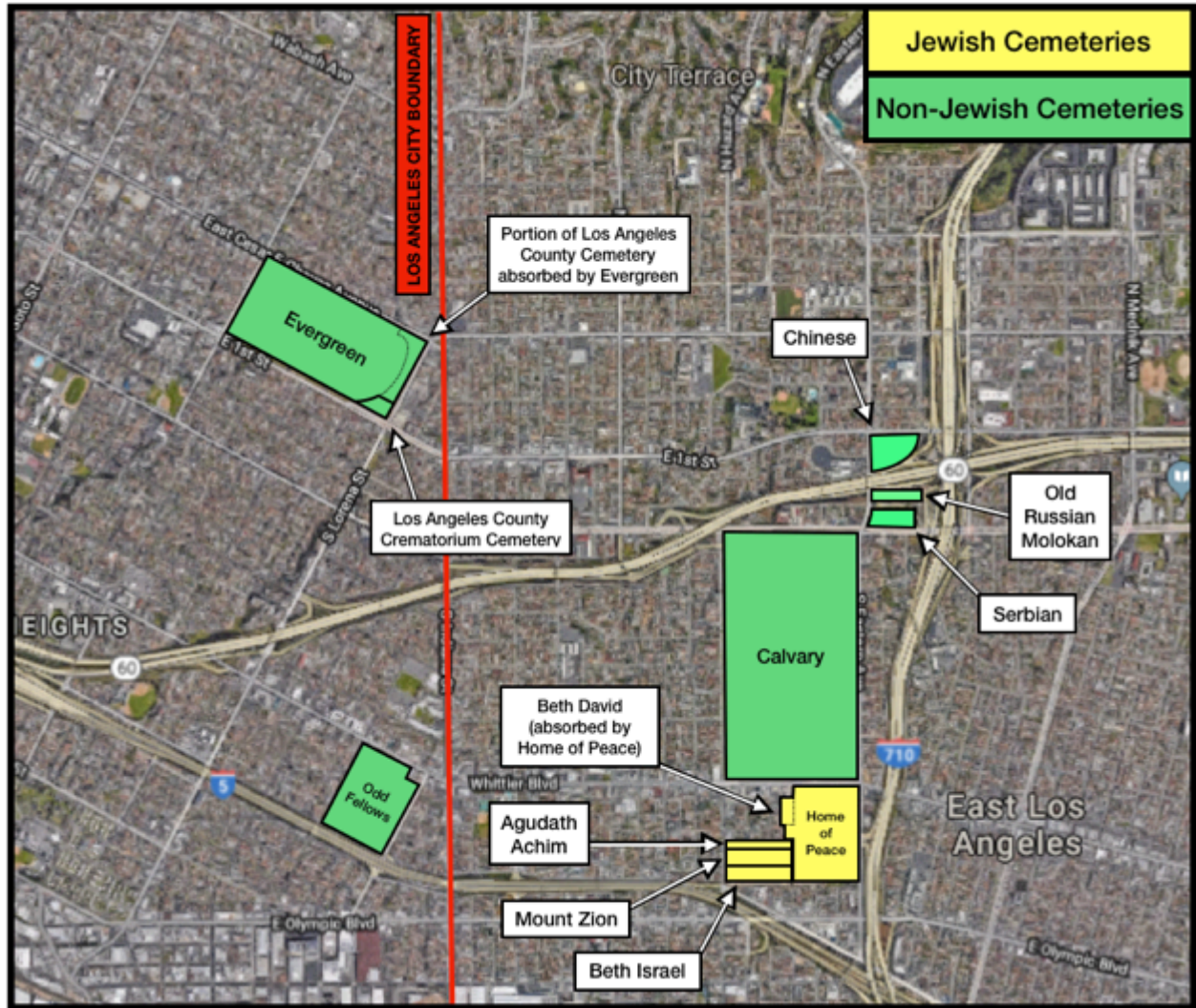
Figure 3.6: Cemeteries in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. Map courtesy of Google Maps, notations by author.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Continuing History of the Jewish Cemeteries in East Los Angeles

Home of Peace—The Later Years

An aerial photo of Home of Peace from 1924 displays the cemetery's geometric layout, which starkly contrasts with the sloping and meandering walkways of the Catholic cemetery across the street [Figure 4.1]. Home of Peace divided rectangular burial sections with walkways extending from the main drive. The drive split the cemetery down the middle, ending in a roundabout in the center. Despite its rejection of the older, more picturesque and park-like style, the cemetery was green and lush, with numerous trees planted among the graves. Most early graves appear to be only headstones, without the accompanying concrete ledgers seen in Orthodox burials.

Figure 4.1: Home of Peace Cemetery aerial view in 1924. Also visible are Calvary Cemetery, Agudath Achim Cemetery, Mount Zion Cemetery, Beth Israel Cemetery, and the former Masonic Cemetery. Original photo edited with identifiers by author. Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00073989.

In 1926, Congregation B'nai B'rith proposed building a mausoleum and columbarium on the cemetery property to keep up with modern demand for aboveground burial and cremation [Figure 4.2].[129] The proposed building would be:

> Of classic design, of reinforced concrete, and when fully completed, it will cover a hollow square two hundred feet long on each of its sides surrounding a beautiful court yard of shrubs and flowers. The interior of the building will be of white marble, with stained art glass skylight lighting effects. There will be private family vaults, arranged to suit individual requirements, also family sections, individual crypts and Columbaruims [*sic]* for urns containing the ashes of those who have been cremated.[130]
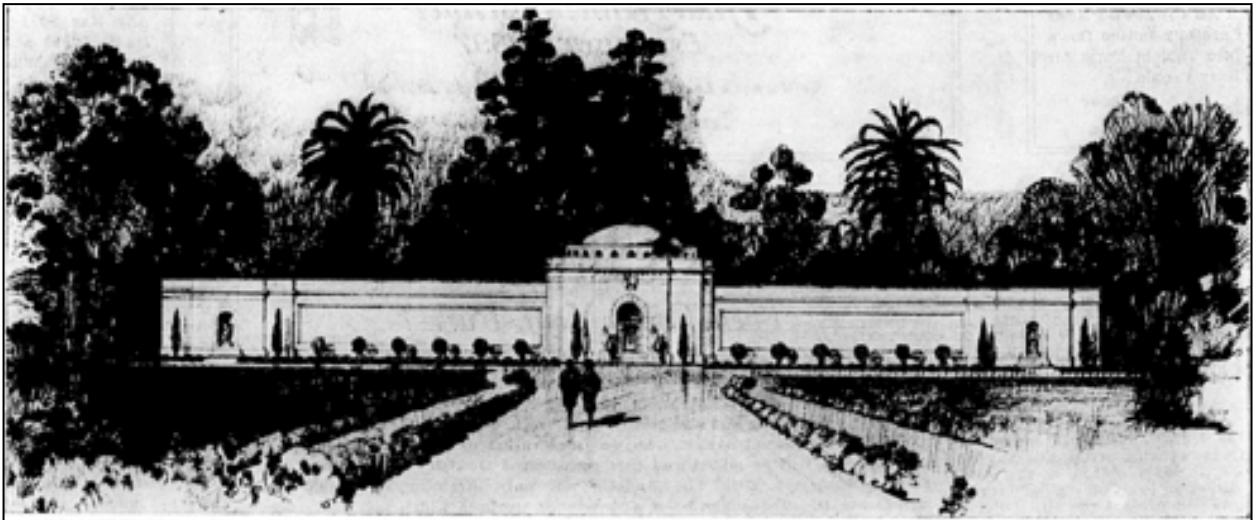
Figure 4.2: Illustration of Proposed Home of Peace mausoleum, *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, 1926; cropped by author. Courtesy of New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University.

Though B'nai B'rith expressed interest in constructing the mausoleum as soon as possible, the groundbreaking for the mausoleum did not occur until seven years later, following an agreement between Congregation B'nai B'rith and Nathan Malinow.

Nathan Malinow was one of the first managers of the cemetery. Nathan and his father, Herman, were very active in Congregation B'nai B'rith. Herman Malinow was the *shamas*, or caretaker, of the congregation in the late 1800s, and as a result of this position, helped with Jewish burials in the years before Jewish mortuaries were officially established in the city. When a member of the Jewish community died, Herman and his wife would supervise and ensure

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[129] "Proposed New Mausoleum at Home of Peace," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, June 11, 1926, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 4.
[130] Ibid.

completion of Jewish burial rituals at non-Jewish mortuaries.[131] When Nathan became old enough, he followed in his father's footsteps, taking on the role of *shamas* at B'nai B'rith and then becoming the manager of Home of Peace Cemetery.[132]

In 1927, Nathan Malinow and Nathan Simons established the first Jewish mortuary in Los Angeles, Malinow & Simons. Although the mortuary operated separately from Home of Peace, Malinow & Simons and Home of Peace would have a close business relationship throughout the years.[133] Malinow & Simons and other mortuaries run by the Glasband and Groman families performed services for the majority of the burials in the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles, as well as many of the Jewish burials in cemeteries that opened throughout the city in later years.[134]

In 1933, Nathan Malinow formed an agreement with Congregation B'nai B'rith to build a mausoleum with an interior chapel in the center of the cemetery grounds [Figure 4.3]. The agreement between Malinow and B'nai B'rith dictated that the Home of Peace Mausoleum, containing more than six hundred crypts, would function as a separate entity from the cemetery, and be owned and operated by Nathan Malinow and his family.[135]

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[131] At the time, there were only five mortuaries in Los Angeles: Alvarez (mostly used by the local Hispanic population), Brasee Bros., Samson Dexter, and Draper & Co. (Will Tagress, "The New Malinow & Silverman: 3 Generations of Service to Southland Jewry - A Saga of Growth," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, January 23, 1959, courtesy of the personal collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary); "4 Generations of Service to Southland Jewry: A Saga of Stability and Reliability," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, December 17, 1976, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 17.

[132] "Nathan Malinow," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, June 7, 1929, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, A24.

[133] "Our History," *Malinow and Silverman Mortuary*, Accessed October 10, 2017, http://malinowandsilverman.com/91/Our-History.html.

[134] Hadley Meares, "Hillside Memorial Park: A Jewish Modernist Masterpiece in the Midst of the City," *KCET*, March 14, 2014, Accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.kcet.org/history-society/hillside-memorial-park-a-jewish-modernist-masterpiece-in-the-midst-of-the-city.

[135] For clarification, until the 1980s, two entities were involved in Home of Peace's operations. B'nai B'rith Congregation, later known as Wilshire Boulevard Temple, owned and operated Home of Peace Cemetery, while the owners of the Malinow & Simons Mortuary, later the Malinow & Silverman Mortuary—Nathan Malinow, Alvin Malinow, and Morton Silverman—owned and operated the Home of Peace Mausoleum within the cemetery (Eric Rothman (Owner of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017; "Our History," *Malinow & Silverman Mortuary*; "The Home of Peace Mausoleum," Pamphlet, Pre-1940s, from the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary).

Figure 4.3: Groundbreaking for Home of Peace mausoleum. Left to Right: Harry Friedman, William Allen, Nathan Malinow, Alvin Malinow (Nathan's son), S. Tilden Norton, Rabbi Maxwell Dubin from Congregation B'nai B'rith, George Mosbacher, Rabbi Edgar Magnin from Congregation B'nai B'rith, Joseph Dubin, and Alfred Kingsbaker. Courtesy of the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.

William Allen designed the mausoleum and Harry Friedman was in charge of construction. Local newspapers and Home of Peace, itself, celebrated it as the first Jewish mausoleum in the country, and the only Jewish mausoleum in an exclusively Jewish cemetery.[136] Allen designed the mausoleum and its interior chapel in a Moorish Revival style [Figure 4.4], meant to "carry one back to the land of the East where the Jewish people and religion had their beginning."[137] The Home of Peace Mausoleum expanded several times over the years [Figure 4.5]. Nathan Malinow added an additional one thousand crypts in 1937—the same year that Congregation B'nai B'rith officially changed its name to Wilshire Boulevard Temple. This name change reflected the congregation's move ten years prior to a new Byzantine-style temple at the corner of Wilshire and Hobart boulevards in the upper class Mid-Wilshire area [Figure 4.6].[138] At the time, Wilshire Boulevard, sometimes referred to as the "Fifth Avenue of the West," had a

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[136] "Ground Broken for Home of Peace Mausoleum," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, August 25, 1933, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 16; "The Home of Peace Mausoleum" Pamphlet, Pre-1940s.

[137] "Congregation B'nai B'rith Plans Home of Peace Mausoleum," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, July 21, 1933, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 9.

[138] "Construct New Unit: Home of Peace Mausoleum Enlarges Building," *Jewish Community Press*, Published June 18, 1937, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles; "Our History," *Wilshire Boulevard Temple*, Accessed February 20, 2018, https://www.wbtla.org/pages/the-temple-pages/our-history.

reputation as a promising commercial strip, and the congregation's westward move and name change reflected its desire to be associated with modern Los Angeles, and with successful, more assimilated Hollywood Jews. Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin, the "Rabbi to the Stars," even requested that the new temple be built with features resembling a movie theater.[139] As Wilshire Boulevard Temple moved even further away from Home of Peace, it signaled the beginning of the disintegrating relationship between Los Angeles' oldest Jewish congregation and its oldest extant Jewish cemetery.

Figure 4.4: Mausoleum drawing from 1930s-era Home of Peace pamphlet; cropped by author. Courtesy of the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.
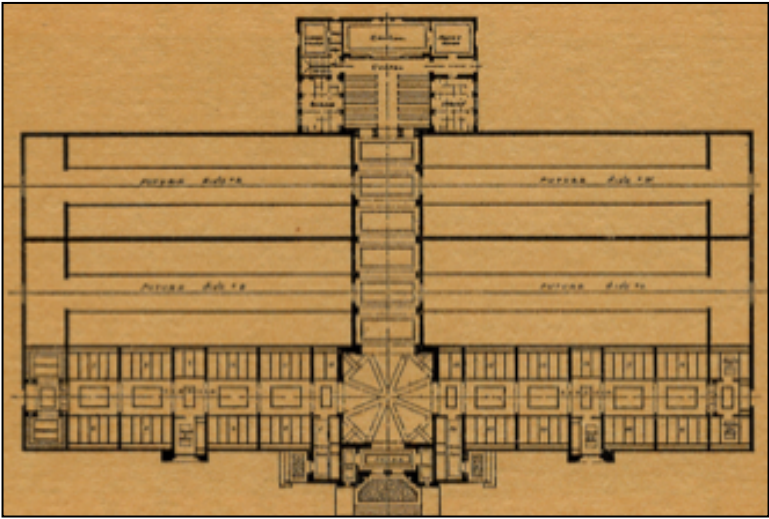
Figure 4.5: Mausoleum floor plan depicting "future wings" from 1930s-era Home of Peace pamphlet; cropped by author. Courtesy of the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.

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[139] Los Angeles Conservancy, "Restoring Wilshire Boulevard Temple," (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Conservancy, 2014), 2.

Figure 4.6: Wilshire Boulevard Temple, 1940. Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00081623.

Home of Peace operated as one of the only large and non-Orthodox Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles until the 1940s. Because of this fact and its association with the influential Wilshire Boulevard Temple, it had been the first choice for many of the city's Jews during the first half of the twentieth century. Many congregations and associations established their own sections in Home of Peace, and many of the city's most established and celebrated residents chose to be buried there. Celebrity burials at Home of Peace include the founders of Warner Bros. Pictures, Jack and Harry Warner; founder of Universal Pictures, Carl Laemmle; founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Studios, Louis B. Mayer; stage and screen performer, Fanny Brice; and members of The Three Stooges, Jerome Lester Horwitz (Curly Howard) and Samuel Horwitz (Shemp Howard).

By the 1940s, though, the Jewish community was moving further and further away from the Boyle Heights community and Home of Peace. As Jews moved west and to the San Fernando Valley, new cemeteries emerged to cater to these communities. Hillside Memorial Park (1941; Culver City), Mount Sinai Memorial Park (Hollywood Hills; 1953), and Eden Memorial Park (Mission Hills; 1954) became popular alternatives to Home of Peace, not only because they were closer to the new Jewish neighborhoods, but also because they appealed to those interested in a more modern cemetery experience [see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.7 for further information about

and locations of Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles].[140] In 1917, Hubert Eaton became the General Manager of Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California, and began modernizing the entire cemetery industry. Eaton hoped to change the cemetery landscape from one evoking mourning, sadness, and thoughts of death to one that would uplift visitors and inspire them. He put this into action by instilling strict rules on the appearance of his cemeteries, which he dubbed "memorial parks" to remove them of their association with death. Forest Lawn allowed no upright tombstones—instead, all individual monuments had to be bronze markers that were flush with the ground, to make them less noticeable and easier to mow over when maintaining the lawn. White marble statuary and artistic community memorials were allowed, but no individual monuments. As the cemetery industry began to be increasingly outsourced to mortuaries and funeral parlors, removing the death process from the home and from the responsibility of the grieving family, Forest Lawn reflected this disassociation with death. Beginning in the 1930s, many cemeteries, including Hillside, Mount Sinai, and Eden Memorial Park, followed the lead of Forest Lawn, building well-maintained landscapes of simple, flat markers.[141] Though Home of Peace maintained a stylistic mix of monuments—from Orthodox concrete ledgers and upright headstones to flush, bronze markers—it followed Forest Lawn as well by changing its name from Home of Peace Cemetery to Home of Peace Memorial Park.

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[140] Two of the founders of Hillside Memorial Park were Robert and Harry Groman of Groman Mortuary; Groman Mortuary also founded its own mortuary on the grounds of Eden Memorial Park; the Eden-Groman Mortuary still exists today, though it is now owned by the "death-care" corporation, SCI ("Our History," *Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary*, Accessed March 1, 2018, https://www.hillsidememorial.org/about-hillside/our-history/); Eric Rothman (President of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017; Florie Brizel, *Sinai Temple: A Centennial History, 1906-2006*, (Los Angeles: Sinai Temple, 2007), 93.
[141] Sloane, *Last Great Necessity*, 159-181.

Cemeteries	Location	Date Est.	Description
Beth Olam Cemetery	Hollywood	1920	Established approximately 1920; first burials date to 1927; located inside of Hollywood Forever Cemetery, and now operates as a Jewish section of Hollywood Forever.
Mount Carmel Cemetery	Commerce	1931	Established by Glasband & Groman Mortuary; primarily Orthodox-style burials; now owned by Chevra Kadisha Mortuary.
Young Israel Cemetery	Norwalk	1938	Congregation that owned cemetery formerly known as the Houston Street Shul; primarily Orthodox-style burials; now owned by Chevra Kadisha Mortuary.
Hillside Memorial Park	Culver City	1941	Established by Lazare F. Bernard and Robert and Harry Groman as B'nai B'rith Memorial Park; in 1942, they changed the name to Hillside; sold to Temple Israel of Hollywood in 1957.
Mount Olive Memorial Park	Commerce	1948	Possibly established by Glasband & Groman as well; primarily Orthodox-style burials.
Sholom Memorial Park	Sylmar	1951	Orthodox, though does not require concrete covers on graves; connected to Glen Haven Memorial Park.
Mount Sinai Memorial Park	Hollywood Hills	1953	Formerly the Jewish section of Forest Lawn Memorial Park – Hollywood Hills; purchased by Sinai Temple in 1963.
Eden Memorial Park	Mission Hills	1954	Groman Mortuary opened own mortuary on cemetery grounds in 1960s or 1970s; cemetery and mortuary are now operated by SCI.
Mount Sinai Memorial Park – Simi Valley	Simi Valley	1997	Owned by Sinai Temple.

Sources: Sonia Hoffman, "Jewish Cemeteries in Los Angeles," *The Early Jewish Presence in Los Angeles: A Special Project of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles*, David Hoffman and Nancy Holden, Project Coordinators, Copyright November 2002, Last Updated July 2003, http://home.earthlink.net/~nholdeneditor/ jewish_cemeteries_in_los_angeles.htm; "New Jewish Cemetery for LA to Be Finest in West: Glasband and Groman Acquire New Property to Be Called Mt. Carmel Cemetery," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, May 9, 1930, 3, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles; "About," *Mount Olive Memorial Cemetery*, accessed March 3, 2018, http://www.mountolivememorial.com/; Eric Rothman (President of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017; "Our History," *Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary*; Brizel, *Sinai Temple*, 93.

Table 4.1: Jewish Cemeteries in Other Neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

Figure 4.7: Jewish Cemeteries in Los Angeles. Note that other cemeteries exist in Los Angeles that have Jewish sections, which are also popular with the local Jewish community. This thesis is focusing on cemeteries that are singularly Jewish. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

In the 1940s, Nathan Malinow decided to transfer both the Malinow & Simons Mortuary and Home of Peace Mausoleum businesses to his son, Alvin Malinow, and son-in-law, Morton Silverman. In 1946, they renamed their mortuary, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.[142] Despite

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[142] Nathan Simons, the previous business partner of Nathan Malinow, had left Malinow & Simons Mortuary just a couple of years after it was established, and was no longer connected to the business ("Our History," *Malinow & Silverman Mortuary*; Eric Rothman (Owner of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017).

the emergence of rival cemeteries elsewhere in Los Angeles, the Home of Peace Mausoleum within Home of Peace Memorial Park continued to expand and advertised itself as "the largest Jewish mausoleum in the world." [143] By the 1960s, they had added several wings to the main mausoleum and sold over six thousand crypts. They also constructed a separate, mid-century modern style mausoleum called the Courts of King David in the northwest portion of the cemetery.[144] Alvin Malinow and Morton Silverman continued to own and operate the Home of Peace Mausoleum [Figure 4.8] until at least the 1980s, but it is unclear when they stopped managing the cemetery operations. Milton W. Castle, Max Lodge, Gil Thompson, and Carol Bova counted among the cemetery managers during the years that the cemetery was under ownership of Wilshire Boulevard Temple.[145]

Figure 4.8: Home of Peace Mausoleum, 2018. Photo by author.

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[143] "The Home of Peace Mausoleum," Pamphlet, Pre-1940s.

[144] "Home of Peace Memorial Park: New Courts of King David," Advertising Pamphlet, Box 58, Folder 3, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles; "The Magnificent Court of Reflection," Advertisement, from the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.

[145] "Our History," *Malinow & Silverman Mortuary*. "Affiliation Announced," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 14, 1973, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 40; "Home of Peace Memorial Names New Manager," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 22, 1967, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 8; Larry Gordon, "Re-Righting History: Landmark Cemetery Undergoes Quake Damage Repairs," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1994, Accessed March 3, 2018, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-07-04/local/me-11750_1_quake-damage*;* "Home of Peace Memorial Park and Mausoleum," Pamphlet, 1980s, from the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.

Although Home of Peace continued to market itself as convenient to the Jewish community [Figure 4.9], with a focus on the many freeways surrounding the cemetery, alternative cemeteries emerging elsewhere and the transition of the area surrounding Home of Peace from a hub of Jewish culture to a mostly Latino neighborhood, caused the cemetery to begin to fade away in the eyes of the Jewish community.

REMARKABLY ACCESSIBLE

Located adjacent to the intersecting Santa Monica, Long Beach and Santa Ana Freeways, Home Of Peace is only 10 minutes away from the Wilshire district, 20 minutes from the San Fernando Valley and correspondingly convenient to all other Southern California communities.
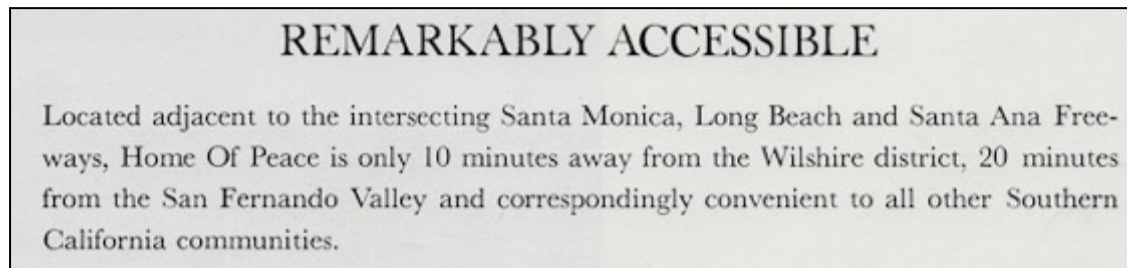
Figure 4.9: Location of Home of Peace among freeways of East L.A. in undated pamphlet; cropped by author. Courtesy of the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary.

In the early 1980s, Alvin Malinow and Morton Silverman sold the Malinow & Silverman Mortuary to a Texas-based company called Service Corporation International [SCI]. SCI was the largest of many growing "death-care" corporations, which, in the later part of the twentieth century, began buying up many independent funeral homes and cemeteries throughout the country.[146] As they exited the mortuary industry, Alvin Malinow and Morton Silverman transferred the Home of Peace Mausoleum to the care of Wilshire Boulevard Temple.[147]

One of the other well-known Jewish mortuaries, Glasband Mortuary, sold their business to the Loewen Group, a large Vancouver-based competitor to SCI that also purchased Rose Hills Memorial Park in nearby Whittier. Robert Malinow, a former employee of Malinow & Silverman, began working at the new mortuary, which Loewen then renamed R. Malinow-Glasband-Weinstein to maintain its familiarity with the local Jewish community.[148]

In 1998, Wilshire Boulevard Temple announced that it had received an inquiry about purchasing Home of Peace Memorial Park. Mark S. Siegel, then president of Wilshire Boulevard Temple, declared in a letter to the community, "We are pleased to announce the sale of Home of Peace to the R. Malinow-Glasband-Weinstein Mortuaries…an affiliate of the Rose Hills

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[146] "Our History," *Malinow & Silverman Mortuary*; "Our Business/History," *Service Corporation International*, Accessed February 28, 2018, http://www.sci-corp.com/en-us/about-sci/our-business-history.page.

[147] In 2004, SCI sold Malinow & Silverman to Randy Ziegler, a longtime mortuary manager. In 2016, Ziegler sold the mortuary to Eric and Susan Rothman, the current owners (Eric Rothman (Owner of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017).

[148] Ibid., Allen R. Myerson, "Hardball on Hallowed Grounds: Funeral Industry Leaders Square Off Over Takeover Bid," *New York Times*, September 27, 1996, C1, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.

Company, owners of the largest cemetery in North America."[149] He stated that Robert Malinow, who would become president of the Memorial Park, was thrilled to continue his family's "historic relationship with Home of Peace," though Siegel did not mention that the true owner of the cemetery would now be a non-Jewish conglomerate.[150]

Although there is no reason on record why Wilshire Boulevard Temple decided to discontinue its ownership of the cemetery, it is likely that it had, over the years, begun to consider the cemetery to be a financial burden on the temple. By the end of the twentieth century, Home of Peace was no longer the first choice for Jewish burials in Los Angeles, and, as a result, burial requests and resulting income slowed.[151] At the same time, Wilshire Boulevard Temple found itself embedded in an increasing number of scandals and financial emergencies surrounding the cemetery. Wilshire Boulevard Temple was itself facing financial challenges. By the 1990s, many of Wilshire Boulevard Temple's congregants had moved even further west, and the synagogue was deteriorating badly and in need of restoration.[152]

In 1987, the Whittier-Narrows earthquake struck near Home of Peace, loosening and knocking over gravestones, and likely cracking many of the concrete ledgers in the Orthodox sections.[153] In 1991, cemetery staff found more than two-dozen overturned gravestones and several walls and tombs graffitied with anti-Semitic symbols and language referencing the Ku Klux Klan and devil worship. Initially investigated as a hate crime, it turned out that a small team of security guards committed the vandalism in an attempt to discredit the security company working at Home of Peace. One of the Home of Peace security guards working the night of the vandalism was charged with cooperating with the trespassers—a source of embarrassment for the cemetery.[154] In 1994, the Northridge earthquake caused $300,000 worth of damage when it knocked over four hundred and thirty-eight headstones dating from the 1920s to the 1950s, damaged approximately three hundred monuments and gravestones dating back to the nineteenth

[149] Mark S. Siegel, *Mark S. Siegel to Wilshire Boulevard Temple Community, December 22, 1998*, Letter, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Douglas Keister, *Forever L.A.: A Field Guide to Los Angeles Area Cemeteries & Their Residents*, (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2010), 117.
[152] Los Angeles Conservancy, "Restoring Wilshire Boulevard Temple," 3.
[153] Jeff Kruger, "Grave Situation in L.A.," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, January 22, 1988, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
[154] George Ramos, "Security Firm Owner Arrested in Vandalism," *Metro News*, June 8, 1991, B3, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

century, and cracked many of the eighty stained-glass skylight panels in the mausoleum [Figure 4.10]. According to industry experts, Home of Peace suffered much more damage than other cemeteries in the region because of its greater number of upright headstones and its location on the lowlands of East Los Angeles. Home of Peace had to pay for repairs with its own operating budget, emergency funds, and donations from the temple and individuals.[155] Finally, in 1997, a year before R. Malinow-Glasband-Weinstein acquired the cemetery, a distraught family sued Home of Peace and Wilshire Boulevard Temple for $5.25 million after finding out that their recently buried father had been moved to another plot in the cemetery without their knowledge, violating both state and Orthodox Jewish law.[156]

Figure 4.10: Damaged gravestones in the Benevolent section of Home of Peace. Photo by author.

Interestingly, soon after Wilshire Boulevard Temple sold Home of Peace, it decided to embark on a costly temple restoration project to which the Jewish community donated generously. The majority of the restoration work occurred between 2011 and 2013, and cost $47.5 million. The Temple also fundraised to build new structures on the Wilshire Boulevard Temple campus, with the cost of the restoration and campus expansion totaling $150 million[157] At this time, the Temple proved its proclivity and talent for fundraising, but also illuminated where the priorities of Temple leadership resided.

After Wilshire Boulevard Temple sold Home of Peace, the cemetery did not remain in the same hands for long. During the late 1990s, SCI and the Loewen Group battled to dominate and consolidate the death-care industry, buying up independent funeral homes and cemeteries at

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[155] Gordon, "Re-Righting History."
[156] Gold, "Lawsuit Charges Cemetery."
[157] Los Angeles Conservancy, "Restoring Wilshire Boulevard Temple," 3.

a rapid pace across the country and then raising prices at these locations.[158] In 2002, the Loewen Group lost its fight against SCI and declared bankruptcy. Another death-care corporation, the Alderwoods Group, acquired the company and became the owner of Home of Peace Memorial Park. Two years later, in 2004, a former employee of Glasband Mortuary, Richard George, purchased the cemetery from Alderwoods, turning Home of Peace Memorial Park into an independent private cemetery.[159] Richard George remains the current owner of Home of Peace, overseeing it with a board of directors comprised of other funeral care professionals.

As of 2018, Richard George believes that, with its mausoleums, columbaria, and the open land it has left, Home of Peace still has at least 3,500 more burial spaces available, though he points out that the cemetery is always finding ways to add more and more burial options. George has steadily worked to increase the endowment fund at Home of Peace since his arrival in 2004, and his hope is to keep the cemetery maintained as long as possible.[160] Many of the available graves at Home of Peace were purchased beforehand through pre-need contracts, which plan and pay for burials and funerals in advance of death. According to Eric Rothman, current owner of Malinow & Silverman, the majority of the burials that they do at Home of Peace are for the Sephardic temple in Westwood, Tifereth Israel, which owns its own section at the cemetery. However, many burials are also for members of the Russian Jewish community, for those who have family already buried at Home of Peace, or for those who prefer traditional monuments to the flush markers seen in most other Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles.[161] The cemetery office provides maps of the different sections of the cemetery, which date to the period before Wilshire Boulevard Temple sold Home of Peace [Figure 4.11]. However, it does not appear that much has changed in the cemetery layout since the maps were produced, with the exception of an on-site

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[158] Erik Larson, "Fight to the Death," *Time*, June 24, 2001, Accessed March 1, 2018, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,135163,00.html.

[159] Two years after Richard George purchased Home of Peace, SCI absorbed the Alderwoods Group, so it is possible that their unstable financial situation contributed to the decision to sell the cemetery to Richard George so soon after acquiring it ("Archived — Amalgamation of Alderwoods Group, Inc. with a Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of Service Corporation International," *Government of Canada Competition Bureau,* November 10, 2006, Last modified November 5, 2015, Accessed February 10, 2018, http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02235.html).

[160] Richard George (Owner of Home of Peace) in discussion with the author, April 2018.

[161] Eric Rothman (Owner of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017; Richard George (Owner of Home of Peace) in discussion with the author, April 2018.

mortuary at the back of the property that Home of Peace established under Loewen ownership sometime between 1998 and 2002 [Figure 4.12].[162]
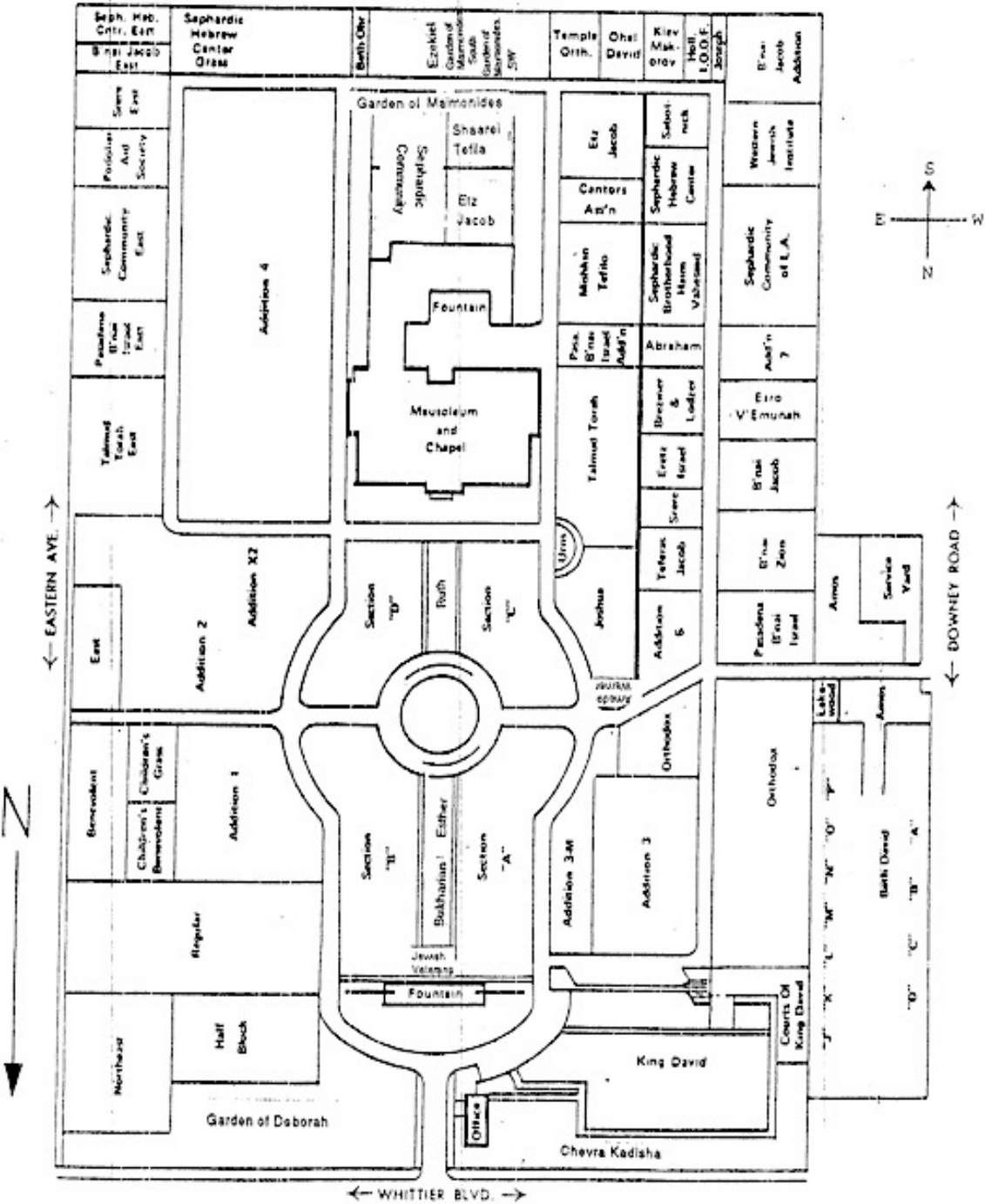
Figure 4.11: Map of Home of Peace Memorial Park indicating buildings, roadways, and burial sections. Courtesy of Home of Peace Memorial Park.

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[162] Richard George (Owner of Home of Peace Memorial Park) in discussion with the author, April 2018.
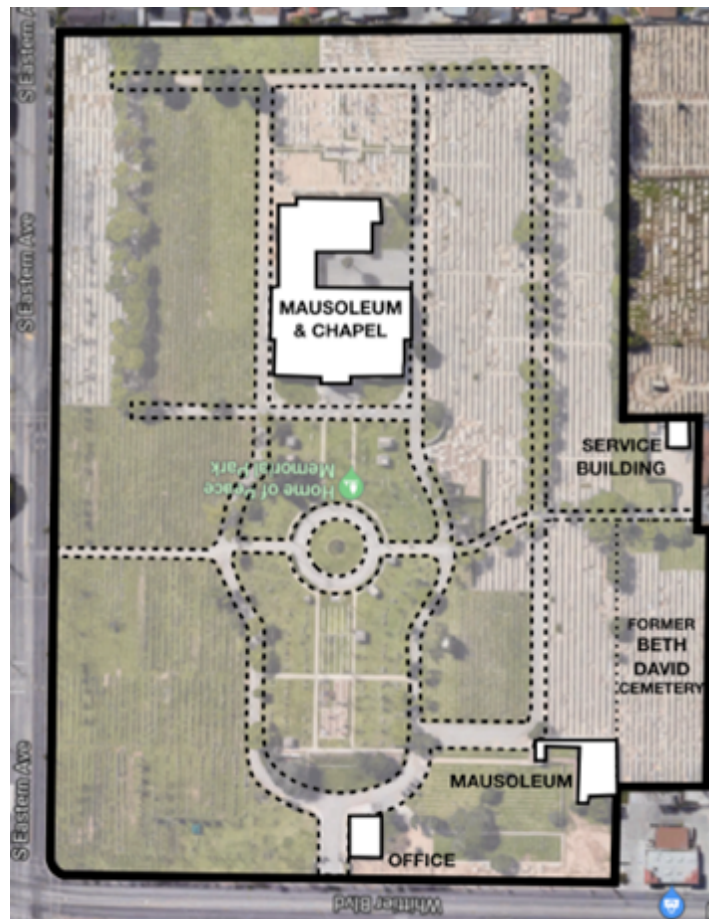
Figure 4.12: Home of Peace Memorial Park from 2018 Google Satellite Map; notations by author. Map indicates buildings and roadways. Map courtesy of Google Maps.

After all of the burial plots in Home of Peace are filled, the cemetery's endowment funds will be used to care for the cemetery as long as possible. The non-profit Cemetery and Mortuary Association of California [CMAC] sponsored the California Cemetery Act in 1931 with the intention of implementing regulations that would protect cemetery customers and help prevent cemetery damage and abandonment. As a result of this legislation, the state of California mandated that all newly established private and fraternal cemeteries were required to create an endowment fund or "perpetual care" fund, as they were sometimes referred to in the past.[163] Home of Peace, as a cemetery owned by a religious organization, did not have to follow this law, but it did eventually establish an endowment fund, likely in response to increased dialogue about

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[163] *Cemetery and Mortuary Association of California*, Accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.cmaccalifornia.org/; Llewellyn, *A Cemetery Should Be Forever: The Challenge to Managers and Directors,* 35; "FAQs" *Department of Consumer Affairs Cemetery and Funeral Bureau,* Accessed March 6, 2018, http://www.cfb.ca.gov/about_us/faqs.shtml; Lauren Osborne, "Licensed Cemetery Owners: 5 Reporting Facts the Cemetery & Funeral Bureau Wants You to Know," *Onisko & Scholz, LLP*, Accessed March 6, 2018, http://oniskoscholz.com/licensed-cemetery-owners/.

the importance of endowment funds to a cemetery's future. Though the exact date that the endowment fund was established could not be found, a Home of Peace pamphlet dated to sometime in the late 1960s identified the cemetery as having an "Endowment Care Trust Fund" at the time, and Richard George believes that he has seen mentions of individual endowment payments from families as far back as the 1910s and 1920s.[164] When the Wilshire Boulevard Temple sold the cemetery to the Loewen-owned mortuary in 1998, Home of Peace became a private cemetery, and therefore became subject to state regulations including annual audits of its endowment fund by the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau.[165] These audits confirm that Home of Peace manages and invests its endowment funds properly, ensuring that Home of Peace will be well-cared for as long as possible in the future [Figure 4.13, Figure 4.14].

Figure 4.13: Gravestones in Home of Peace. Photo by author.

Figure 4.14: Orthodox graves in Home of Peace. Photo by author.

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[164] "Home of Peace Memorial Park," Pamphlet, 1960s, from the collection of Eric Rothman, Malinow & Silverman Mortuary; Robert S. Diamond, "State Moves Ahead on Pomona Freeway," *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 1964, *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, Z1; Richard George (Owner of Home of Peace) in discussion with the author, April 2018.
[165] Osborne, "Licensed Cemetery Owners."

Beth Israel—The Later Years

During the next ten years after Beth Israel Cemetery opened in 1907, the Beth Israel congregation purchased its own hearse, constructed a small chapel in the southwest corner of the cemetery, and dedicated its cemetery gates [Figure 4.15, Figure 4.16].[166] Announcing the dedication of the chapel in 1913, a local newspaper stated, "The congregation has engaged a secton who will care for the chapel and the graves. The congregation will attend especialy [*sic.*] to charity cases and give them an orthodox Jewish funeral."[167]
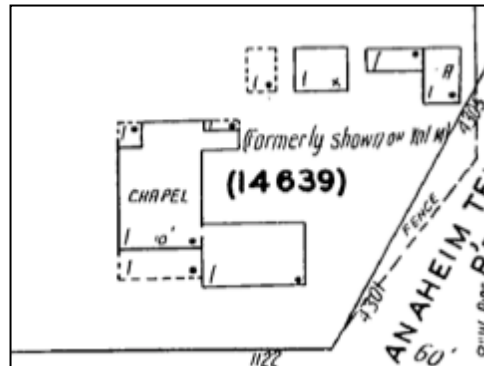
Figure 4.15: Chapel in Beth Israel Cemetery from 1928 Sanborn Map. Original map cropped by author to show detail. Use of Sanborn Map – Los Angeles 1928 & 1950: Volume 34, Sheet 3458 used with permission from The Sanborn Library, LLC.

Figure 4.16: Beth Israel Cemetery gates. Photo by author.

Following Orthodox traditions, the majority of the graves in Beth Israel (with the exception of a couple of small family mausoleums) adhere to the particular style preferred by Eastern European Orthodox Jews: grave markers are large, upright headstones, which sit atop a concrete ledger that covers the length of the grave.

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[166] Gonzales, "Downey Road;" "Beth Israel Announcement," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, April 16, 1909, 3, Box 63, Folder 7, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
[167] Gonzales, "Downey Road."

Congregation Beth Israel remained at the Olive Street Shul in downtown until the early 1940s, when it moved to another building on Temple Street. About ten years later, in 1953, the congregation moved once again to its current location on Beverly Boulevard in the Fairfax district.[168] A 1966 newspaper article indicated that expanding freeways and civic center developments were the reasons behind the move, though the general westward migration of the Jewish community certainly influenced the decision.[169]

At a certain point, later in the twentieth century, Beth Israel decided to sell their cemetery to Chevra Kadisha Mortuary, an Orthodox Jewish for-profit mortuary founded in 1977, which took its name from the traditional moniker for a Jewish volunteer burial society.[170] According to a 1979 letter from Robert A. Rub, the president of Congregation Beth Israel, Chevra Kadisha Mortuary purchased the cemetery on February 1, 1979.[171] Despite the language in this letter, a title search indicated that cemetery ownership is still technically in the name of Congregation Beth Israel, which indicates that the transfer of ownership may have occurred informally.[172] However, for all intents and purposes, Chevra Kadisha Mortuary controls the operations of the cemetery, and Beth Israel has ceased its involvement.

Beth Israel's decision to relinquish ownership of the cemetery was probably both influenced by distance and finances. After attending their synagogue in the Fairfax district for approximately thirty years, Beth Israel congregants were likely losing interest in burying their family members in a cemetery that was across town in a neighborhood that no longer had much connection to the Jewish community. Like Wilshire Boulevard Temple and Home of Peace, the cemetery also likely became a financial burden on the congregation. Beth Israel was a much smaller congregation than Wilshire Boulevard Temple, and over the years, it continued to significantly decrease in membership. In 1995, there were approximately three hundred families

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[168] Ibid.

[169] "Beth Israel Marks 75th Anniversary," *Heritage*, February 24, 1966, Box 63, Folder 7, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 13.

[170] Although the mortuary is called Chevra Kadisha, it is not a traditional *Chevra Kadisha* (a traditional volunteer burial society), but is rather a for-profit mortuary business; Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017.

[171] Robert A. Rub, *Robert A. Rub, President of Congregation Beth Israel to Whom It May Concern, July 19, 1979*, Letter, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.

[172] First American Title Insurance Company, *Preliminary Report – SCAL*, June 5, 2013, 3, from the personal collection of Paul Pitkoff.

in attendance at Beth Israel.[173] Currently, according to Yossi Manela, the son of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary's founder, Zalman Manela, only approximately ten to thirty members are still in attendance.

Beth Israel Cemetery now consists of approximately 4,500 burials. According to Manela, in the 1980s, the cemetery became very popular with the recently immigrated Russian Jewish community, who were of limited means and, therefore, appreciative of the low costs offered by Chevra Kadisha Mortuary. As the Russian community established itself, though, it began to prefer larger cemeteries like Mount Sinai or Forest Lawn. The mortuary now conducts burials in the cemetery approximately two or three times a month, and people who are buried there are usually descendants of those already buried in the cemetery or are of a very strict Orthodox faith. Today the cemetery is almost completely full and the chapel appears to have been replaced with a service building [Figure 4.17, Figure 4.18, Figure 4.19].[174]

Figure 4.17: Beth Israel Cemetery. Photo by author.

Figure 4.18: Beth Israel Cemetery from 2018 Google Satellite Map. Map indicates service building and roadway. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

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[173] Gonzales, "Downey Road."
[174] Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017.

Figure 4.19: Current Beth Israel Service Building. Photo by author.

Mount Zion—The Later Years

Although the Jewish Free Burial Society funded burials for poor Jews and promised to provide funeral services according to Orthodox custom, many of those interred at Mount Zion were not impoverished, nor were they all Orthodox. What most, if not all, of these people had in common was a lack of affiliation with those congregations that had their own cemeteries, like B'nai B'rith or Beth Israel. Some were members of the nearby Congregation Talmud Torah, some were members of Sephardic congregations like Avat Shalom, and some, like notable American Yiddish writer, Levi-Yehoyshue "Lamed" Shapiro, were not religious at all. Early prejudices within the Jewish community also potentially contributed to the creation of Mount Zion. The established Jews who attended B'nai B'rith Congregation at times expressed concern over the increasing population of Eastern European Jews immigrating to Los Angeles. They feared that this growing community would tax resources for the city's Jews, increase local anti-Semitism with their more ostensibly foreign way of dressing and communicating, or introduce Socialist and Bolshevik ideas into society. This prejudice may have contributed to the decision to create a separate cemetery not associated with B'nai B'rith.[175]

Home of Peace offered other congregations the opportunity to purchase sections in its cemetery, but it is possible that Jews from other congregations chose Mount Zion because they offered plots at a lower cost than Home of Peace, enabling families to either save money or spend more money on an elaborate headstone.[176] The majority of the burials without

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[175] Paul Pitkoff, "Notable Burials at Mount Zion East Los Angeles," from Facebook Post, *Mount Zion Cemetery East Los Angeles* Facebook Page, Posted October 30, 2013, Accessed March 16, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/historicLA/.

[176] Rob Adler Peckerar (Executive Director of Yiddishkayt) in discussion with the author, March 2017; Home of Peace does have sections for Talmud Torah and the Sephardic community, but Mount Zion may have preceded their establishment—I was unable to confirm the dates of establishment for individual sections in the cemetery.

headstones—the most extreme charitable cases that likely had no known family nearby—occurred from 1916 to 1922, and were performed for those who died in local institutions like hospitals, sanitaria, and prisons. After 1922, most of the graves, with the exception of graves for very young and stillborn children, have corresponding headstones, and some even have very elaborate headstones that, according to some estimates, would cost several thousands of dollars today.[177] Most of the graves were constructed according to the Orthodox style of the times, though a couple of later graves display modern flat markers with no concrete ledgers. It appears that Mount Zion at one time had a chapel on the property as well, though by 1950, it had been demolished and replaced with a small office [Figure 4.20]. In later years, this office was demolished as well, since there are now no buildings on the property [Figure 4.21].[178]
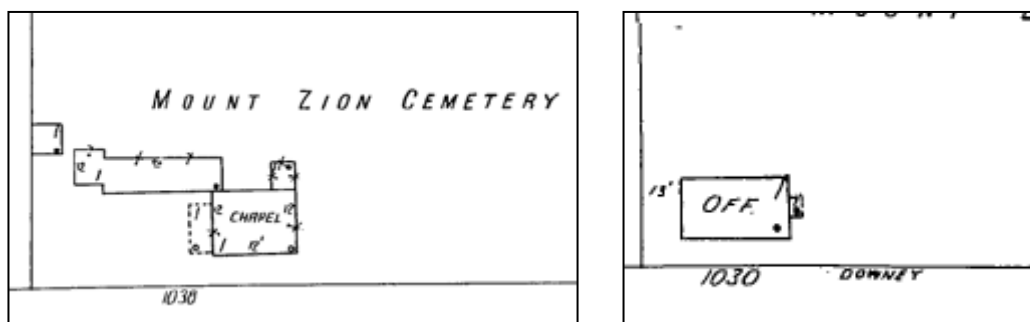
Figure 4.20: Chapel in Mount Zion from 1928 Sanborn Map (left). Replacement office in 1950 (right). Original map cropped by author to show detail. Use of Sanborn Map – Los Angeles 1928 & 1950: Volume 34, Sheet 3458 used with permission from The Sanborn Library, LLC.
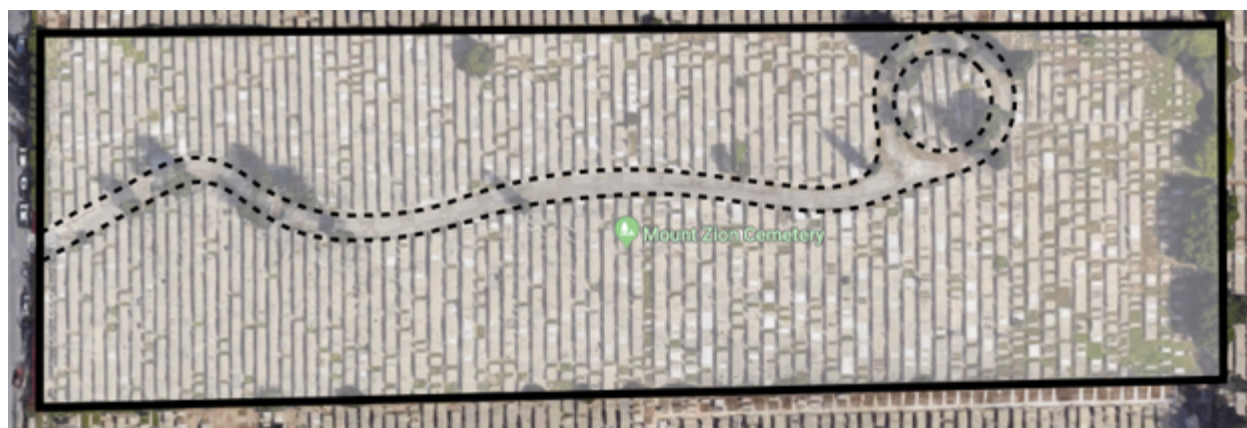
Figure 4.21: Mount Zion Cemetery from 2018 Google Satellite Map showing roadway. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

[177] Pitkoff, Paul, "History of Mount Zion Cemetery;" "The Recovery of Mount Zion Cemetery," *Cemetery Guide*, Accessed November 10, 2017, http://cemeteryguide.com/MtZion.html.
[178] Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Volume 34, Sheet 3458, 1928 and 1950, Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970, University of Southern California, ProQuest, LLC, Environmental Data Resources, Inc.

In addition to running their own mortuary, founding the Jewish Free Burial Society, and founding Mount Zion Cemetery, Glasband and Groman established Mount Carmel Cemetery in 1931 in the more inland city of Commerce. They stated that they intended to "provide Los Angeles Jewry with a spacious and dignified burial grounds," and established a fund to assure perpetual maintenance of the grounds.[179] Mount Carmel is an Orthodox cemetery and now owned by Chevra Kadisha Mortuary, the same Orthodox mortuary that purchased Beth Israel.[180] Charles Groman and Louis Glasband also helped to establish the Bikor Cholim Hospital for those suffering terminal illnesses. This was a precursor of Mount Sinai Hospital, which eventually merged into Cedars-Sinai Hospital.[181] After Charles Groman passed away in 1932, the Glasband-Groman Mortuary split into two separate mortuaries: Glasband Mortuary and Groman Mortuary, the former run by Irving Glasband, and the latter run by Charles' sons, Harry and Robert Groman.[182]

The Masonic Cemetery Association, which still owned the land occupied by Mount Zion, legally dissolved in 1959, in keeping with the terms of its original charter that it would dissolve approximately fifty years after incorporation. The Jewish Federation became the successor in interest to the Masonic Cemetery Association, and, therefore, became the new owner of the property that Mount Zion Cemetery occupied.[183] In 1969, the Jewish Free Burial Society informed the Jewish Family Service agency of the Jewish Federation that they had run out of funds and free burial plots, and would no longer be able to bury Los Angeles' indigent Jews.[184] The representative of the burial society, at the time, was Sol Feldstein, the brother-in-law of

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[179] "New Jewish Cemetery for L.A. to Be Finest in West: Glasband and Groman Acquire New Property to Be Called Mt. Carmel Cemetery," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, May 9, 1930, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 3.

[180] "Directions to Cemeteries (from Los Angeles)," *Chevra Kadisha Mortuary*, Accessed March 10, 2018, https://chevrakadisha.com/directions/.

[181] Caroline Luce, "Influenza and the Bikur Cholim Society, 1920-1929" *The White Plague in the City of Angels,* updated November 7, 2013, Accessed February 28, 2018, http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/tuberculosis-exhibit/influenza-and-the-bikur-cholim-society-1920-1929.

[182] As stated earlier, Glasband Mortuary eventually sold to the Loewen Group. Groman Mortuary still exists today under the ownership of Robert Groman, though it no longer does Jewish burials, and instead mostly services the local Hispanic community (Eric Rothman (President of Malinow & Silverman Mortuary) in discussion with the author, October 2017.); Meares, "Hillside Memorial Park;" "The Glasband Family," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*.

[183] Pitkoff, "History of Mount Zion Cemetery."

[184] David Rabinovitz, *David Rabinovitz, Associate Executive Director of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles to Mr. Theodore Isenstadt, Mrs. Jeanne Young, Mr. Ben Dwoskin, Mr. Irving Glasband, Mr. Harry Groman, Mr. Morton Silverman, May 22, 1969*, Memorandum, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband, 1.

Harry Groman.[185] In a May, 1969 letter, David Rabinovitz, the Associate Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, stated that, "The provision of free burials for needy Jews is one of the oldest and traditional community services…it is therefore unfortunate that in Los Angeles, the second largest Jewish community in America, the Free Burial Society should go out of existence."[186] Jewish mortuaries, including those run by Irving Glasband, Harry Groman, and Morton Silverman, all agreed to temporarily accept referrals for burials from families who could not afford to pay for services, and in 1971, Jewish Family Services established a Jewish Community Burial Program, funded by the Jewish Federation, to take over where the Jewish Free Burial Society left off. According to meeting minutes for the Jewish Community Burial Program in 1984, many of the clients applying for subsidized burial services at the time were recent Russian immigrants [Figure 4.22].[187]

Figure 4.22: Handmade gravestone from 1988; likely an indigent burial. Photo by author.

While the Jewish Community Burial Program continued in strength with the supervision of Jewish Family Services and continuous involvement of local mortuaries and cemeteries, it was no longer associated with Mount Zion. The Jewish Federation was now the de facto owner of Mount Zion, but it did not continue to operate Mount Zion as an active cemetery, instead limiting its involvement to paying property taxes and providing Home of Peace with a small allowance to maintain the property. By 1970, the Jewish community was already calling for the restoration of the "abandoned" Mount Zion. An article in the *B'nai B'rith Messenger* stated that a few years before the Jewish Free Burial Society officially dissolved and left care to the Jewish Federation,

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[185] "Evelyn Groman Memorial Page," *Palmer Funeral Homes*, March 22, 2013, Accessed March 15, 2018, http://www.palmerfuneralhomes.com/notices/Evelyn-Groman.

[186] Rabinovitz, Memorandum, 1.

[187] Ibid.; *Leaf, Karen W., Karen W. Leaf LCSW, Director Valley Storefront to All Units and Programs Working with the Jewish Community Burial Program Re: Explanation and Guidelines of the Jewish Community Burial Program April 30, 2001*, Memorandum, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband; "Funeral Practices Seminar, April 22, 2010."

it halted maintenance at the cemetery, likely in anticipation that it would soon cease its ownership of the property. The Jewish Federation began receiving complaints that the cemetery was now overgrown with weeds, covered in trash, and experiencing vandalism. A committee of volunteers, with the cooperation of the Jewish Federation, raised money to reset tombstones, clean the cemetery, and engage a regular caretaker, allowing the cemetery to open itself to the public on most days. The newspaper declared that Mount Zion was "once again a dignified last resting place," but in reality, this was only the beginning of decades of cyclical neglect and restoration.[188]

One year later, in 1971, Mount Zion was once again in danger of falling into disrepair. The chairman of the Mount Zion Cemetery Fund, Harry Abelson, who organized the initial restoration the year before, stated that their fund was rapidly depleting, and it could not cover the $300 a month required for basic property maintenance. He pleaded with the public for urgent help to ensure the cemetery did not once again become neglected.[189]

In 1985, the Jewish Federation's Bruce Hochman wrote a letter to Jill Glasband at Glasband-Willen Mortuary (which would soon sell to Loewen and become R. Malinow-Glasband-Weinstein), requesting that she attend a meeting to help develop a plan to take care of Mount Zion Cemetery, which had no perpetual care program and was being maintained by a small, shrinking group of aging contributors.[190] Unfortunately, in 1987, the nearby Whittier-Narrows earthquake set back whatever progress Mount Zion made after that meeting. The earthquake and its aftershocks caused tombstones to fall over, and the Jewish community expressed displeasure at the slow rate with which the Jewish Federation performed repairs. Despite the Jewish Federation declaring that repairs were complete, the *B'nai B'rith Messenger* noted that while Beth Israel, Agudath Achim, and Home of Peace had restored their damage, tombstones were still overturned and broken in almost every row of Mount Zion months after the earthquake. The newspaper also noted that swastika paintings and other signs of vandalism

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[188] "Abandoned Jewish Cemetery in East L.A. Now Restored," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 25, 1970, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 40.

[189] "Seek New Funds for Restoration of Mt. Zion," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 3, 1971, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 5.

[190] Bruce I. Hochman, *Bruce I. Hochman, President of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles to Ms. Jill Glasband of Glasband-Willen Mortuary, September 4, 1985,* Letter, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.

plagued the cemetery. This, in addition to earthquake damage and high cost of upkeep, caused the Jewish Federation to lock the cemetery gates except for the traditional visiting days—Mother's Day, Father's Day, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur.[191] The cemetery received few visitors, and Eileen Silverstrom, the Jewish Federation administrator for the cemetery, stated that the cemetery was in the wrong place: "The area is unfortunate and there's nothing you can do about that."[192]

In 1988, a Friends of Mt. Zion Cemetery group provided approximately $7,000 per year of the needed $20,000 for operation expenses, and the cost to repair cracked walkways and purchase ample amounts of weed killer consumed much of the donations. In 1991, the Jewish Federation sent a letter to relatives of those buried at Mount Zion, and found that many were deceased, and the rest were elderly with little income. In 1995, the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, and the Jewish Historical Society of Southern California joined together in another restoration attempt, organizing volunteers to clean the cemetery and record the epitaphs on the headstones. At this point, although most burials ceased in the 1980s, the cemetery still received up to one or two burials a year. The last burial occurred in 1998, with the final count of burials at Mount Zion hovering at approximately 6,700.[193]

The most recent Mount Zion restoration effort occurred in 2013, when the *Los Angeles Times* published an article lamenting the conditions of the cemetery, which appeared to be worse than ever. Earthquakes and trespassers toppled over many of the gravestones. Some of the stones, weighing as much as 2,000 pounds, broke into pieces upon impact. Some smashed into the concrete ledgers below, causing the concrete to cave in [Figure 4.23]. Graffiti, trash, and weeds covered the property [Figure 4.23]. Bullet holes in headstones' ceramic portraits showed where gang members used portraits of the deceased for target practice [Figure 4.24], and vandals

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[191] Kruger, "Grave Situation in L.A."

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid; "The Recovery of Mount Zion Cemetery;" David Margolick, "At Overgrown Cemetery, Some Jews Find Ancestors, Others Themselves," *New York Times*, February 26, 1995, Accessed January 13, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/26/us/at-overgrown-cemetery-some-jews-find-ancestors-others-themselves.html; "Volunteers Sought for Clean-up At Cemetery," *Heritage Southwest Jewish Press*, March 31, 1995, Box 58, Folder 2, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 13; Hector Becerra, "Jewish Dead Lie in Forgotten East L.A. Graves," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2013, Accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/la-me-jewish-cemetery-html-20130328-dto-htmlstory.html; Lori Samlin Miller, "Saving the Face of Mount Zion Cemetery," *Chabad.org*, August 5, 2013, Accessed January 13, 2018, http://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/2288423/jewish/Saving-the-Face-of-Mount-Zion-Cemetery.htm.

pried off many of the remaining portraits with screwdrivers or rocks.[194] There was also evidence of the cemetery's longtime use as a ritual location for local practitioners of Santería and Palo, religions that developed in Latin America as a mix of influences from Spanish Roman Catholicism, African beliefs from the Yoruba and Kongo people, and indigenous spiritual practices.[195] Practitioners of Santería and Palo sometimes perform religious rituals in cemeteries at night, occasionally sacrificing animals and leaving them on the graves, or sometimes, though rarely, breaking into the graves and removing human bones for spiritual purposes [Figure 4.24]. Mount Zion became popular for rituals like these because of its location just down the street from botanicas (shops that sell ritual paraphernalia and supplies for Santería) and live animal stores on Olympic Boulevard. In addition, the cemetery's hidden location between Beth Israel and Agudath Achim and its unsecured fence made the cemetery a prime choice for rituals of these sorts under the cover of darkness.[196] The *Los Angeles Times* article, and other articles in the *Jewish Journal* about the "abandonment of Mount Zion" caused some members of the Jewish community to question how the cemetery ended up in this condition, what level of care the Jewish Federation was providing, and how they could raise enough money and awareness to rectify years of neglect. Articles painted the cemetery as owner-less, since the articles claimed no one, not even the Jewish Federation, really knew who owned the property. However, a road deed dating back to 1982 indicated that the owner of the property was the "Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, a non-profit corporation successor in interest to Masonic Cemetery Association, a dissolved corporation."[197] A title search corroborated this finding. At the time, the Jewish Federation provided Home of Peace with $1,000 per month for their staff to accomplish basic maintenance, and then spent an additional approximately $13,000 each year on special repairs at the cemetery.[198] Rabbi Moshe Greenwald, director of the Chabad of Downtown Los Angeles, led restoration efforts and brought together members of the Jewish Federation, rabbis, local Jewish media, and other key community leaders to determine the next steps.

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[194] Becerra, "Jewish Dead."

[195] Gonzales, "Downey Road;" "The Growth of Santeria," *BBC: Religions*, Last Updated September 15, 2009, Accessed March 15, 2018, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/santeria/history/growth.shtml.

[196] Gonzales, "Downey Road."

[197] Los Angeles County Road Deed, Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, (1981), from the collection of Paul Pitkoff.

[198] "The Recovery of Mount Zion Cemetery."

Figures 4.23: Mount Zion conditions in early 2013. Courtesy of Paul Pitkoff and the Mount Zion Cemetery East Los Angeles Facebook Group.

Figure 4.24: Ceramic portrait with bullet hole (left) and what appears to be evidence of ritual animal sacrifice (right). Photos by author.

Jay Sanderson and Ivan Wolkind of the Jewish Federation expressed concern about jumping into restoration efforts before raising the entire sum needed. They attributed their hesitation to the failed restoration efforts in the 1990s, where contractors began the project before allocating all necessary funds, and, as a result, worked in a substandard manner and never completed the restoration. However, Rabbi Greenwald was anxious to get started as soon as possible, based on recommendations from contractors, and his and other community members' view that the continued state of neglect was a *shanda*, a deep shame that reflected poorly on the community, and that delaying the work could mean it would be delayed perpetually. Greenwald established a new Friends of Mount Zion Cemetery fund and received substantial donations from local Jewish businessmen and real estate developers. After visiting the cemetery and expressing

grief over its condition, Shlomo Rechnitz, a local businessman and philanthropist, donated $250,000 under the condition that the restoration efforts begin immediately. Rechnitz stated: "In Jewish law, honoring the dead precedes other commandments. It is the most important commandment. The thought of having to wait here just doesn't work."[199] Following this donation, the Jewish Federation and the Friends of Mount Zion Cemetery began work securing the perimeter of the cemetery, increasing the height of the fence, adding barbed wire, and repairing holes, at a cost of approximately $50,000. Before the work began, Greenwald estimated that the restoration of the cemetery would involve five different phases and require approximately $675,000. He also stated that yearly maintenance would likely cost approximately $30,000 to $40,000 per year, an increase from the Jewish Federation's current $25,000.[200]

As work progressed, the five-phase plan became a three-phase plan. The first phase involved addressing vandalism, removing invasive tree roots, restoring the most heavily damaged graves, and repairing the fence. The second phase involved repairing graves most vulnerable to future earthquake damage. The third phase involved setting up an endowment fund for the cemetery that would start at approximately $1.6 million.[201] Work continued into the next year. The Jewish Federation hired an engineering firm to create a schematic of the grounds and map out which individual graves required the most work [Figure 4.25]. By April of 2014, crews had reset four hundred headstones with the addition of rebar and a seismic-resistant sealant, with the goal of resetting approximately two hundred more. They also had redone many concrete ledgers with new concrete [Figure 4.26].[202] At that time, Jay Sanderson of the Jewish Federation stated, "There's still much more work to be done, and we need our community to step up in providing the additional funds required to continue the pace of the significant progress we have made to date."[203]

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[199] Ibid.

[200] Jared Sichel, "Philanthropist Donates $250,000 to Mount Zion Cemetery Repair," *Jewish Journal*, May 31, 2013, Accessed January 13, 2018, http://jewishjournal.com/news/los_angeles/117262/; Ivan Wolkind (Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Jewish Federation) in discussion with the author, May 2017.

[201] Funeral Practices Committee Minutes," Meeting Minutes, The Board of Rabbis of Southern California, October 15, 2013, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.

[202] Ivan Wolkind (Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Jewish Federation) in discussion with the author, May 2017; Alana Weiner, *The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles Takes Leading Role in Repairing 600 Gravesites*, Press Release, April 10, 2014, Accessed January 13, 2018, https://www.jewishla.org/press-releases/the-jewish-federation-of-greater-los-angeles-takes-leading-role-in/.

[203] Weiner, *Jewish Federation*.
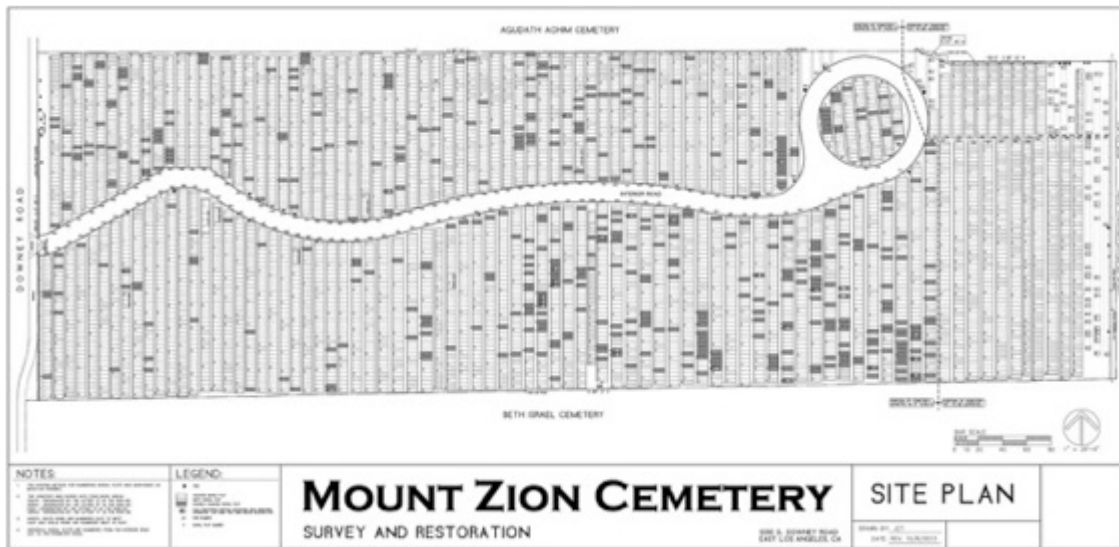
Figure 4.25: 2013 site plan. The legend on the site plan states the following: dark grey indicates an extremely damaged burial plot, light grey indicates an empty burial plot, white indicates an occupied burial plot, a tombstone-shaped symbol indicates a plot containing a toppled headstone with obscured information, and a dot indicates the location of a tree. Courtesy of Paul Pitkoff and the Mount Zion Cemetery East Los Angeles Facebook Group.

Figure 4.26: Mount Zion restoration in 2014. Courtesy of Paul Pitkoff and the Mount Zion Cemetery East Los Angeles Facebook Group.

The restoration successfully completed phases one and two, but it never accomplished phase three—the creation of a cemetery endowment. After the depletion of the initial $300,000 fund, the Friends of Mount Zion and the Jewish Federation were unable to gather the sustained interest and flow of donations necessary to even consider collecting towards an endowment. In April 2013, while local media attention and community concern was at its height, Jan Perry and Bernard C. Parks, Los Angeles City Council members for the eighth and ninth districts, respectively, drafted a resolution that recognized the historic significance of Mount Zion Cemetery and encouraged that it be designated a historic landmark by Los Angeles County, the governing authority in unincorporated East Los Angeles. By adopting the resolution, the City of

Los Angeles would include in the 2013-2014 State Legislative Program its support for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to designate the cemetery a historic resource. In June 2013, City Council approved the resolution and forwarded it to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa for concurrence, who returned it without signature. Although the Mayor agreed with the resolution, he did not approve it because technically the only one who has authority to make recommendations to other governments is the Mayor himself, which meant that City Council could not move forward to make this recommendation.[204] With this decision, the issue came to a standstill. At the time, Los Angeles County did not have its own Historic Preservation Program to designate historic landmarks. In 2015, however, the County established its own Historic Preservation Program within the Department of Regional Planning and adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance. Since the adoption of this program, it does not appear that anyone has applied for historic designation of Mount Zion Cemetery. Interestingly, one of the six chairmen on the Los Angeles County Historical Landmarks and Records Commission, which makes recommendations concerning designations to the Board of Supervisors, is an established Jewish historian who has advocated for the protection of Jewish heritage in the Los Angeles area.[205] It is clear, though, that after 2013, community concern and advocacy for Mount Zion dwindled significantly.

Today the gate to Mount Zion Cemetery remains locked (visitors must request that someone from Home of Peace unlocks it if they wish to go inside) [Figure 4.27], and although it is in better condition than before, the passage of time will return Mount Zion back to its previous condition. According to the Jewish Federation, this series of events echoed many previous restoration attempts, where community interest would fizzle as quickly as it emerged.[206] According to Ivan Wolkind, Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Jewish Federation, "There was an absolute consensus in the community that this [was] a really, really important thing for which someone else should be paying."[207]

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[204] Council File: 13-0002-S57, Historic Cultural Designation / Mount Zion Jewish Cemetery, Resolution and Memoranda, Los Angeles City Council, (2013).

[205] "Historic Preservation Ordinance," *Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning*, Accessed April 11, 2018, http://planning.lacounty.gov/preservation/ordinance; "Message from the Chair," *Historical Landmarks & Records Commission*, Accessed April 11, 2018, http://hlrc.lacounty.gov/About-Us.

[206] Sichel, "Philanthropist."

[207] Ivan Wolkind (Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Jewish Federation) in discussion with the author, May 2017.
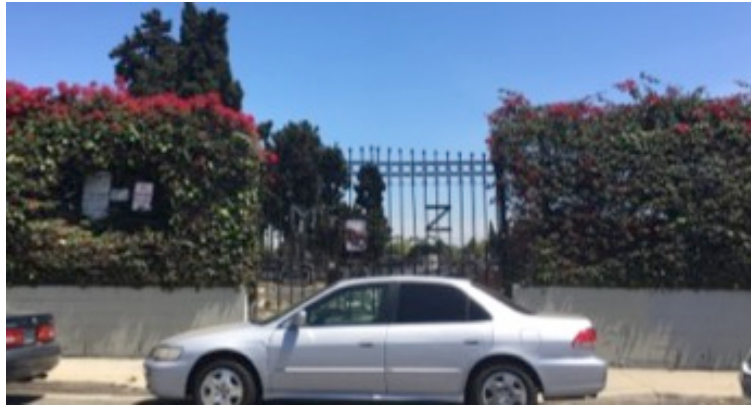
Figure 4.27: Mount Zion gates. Photo by author.

Agudath Achim—The Later Years

The Agudath Achim Congregation did not add much to the cemetery in the years following its establishment. According to a 1928 Sanborn Map, a small chapel existed in the southwest corner of the cemetery for a time, though it was since demolished [Figure 4.28]. The only visible addition to the cemetery is a *genizah* towards the back of the parcel [Figure 4.29, Figure 4.30]. This is a storage area that is meant to temporarily hold religious writings prior to being given a proper burial in the cemetery, since it is forbidden to throw away writings that contain references to G-d.[208]
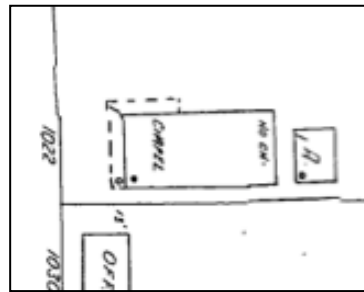
Figure 4.28: Chapel in Agudath Achim Cemetery from 1950 Sanborn Map. Original map cropped by author to show detail. Use of Sanborn Map – Los Angeles 1928 & 1950: Volume 34, Sheet 3458 used with permission from The Sanborn Library, LLC.

Figure 4.29: Agudath Achim Cemetery from 2018 Google Satellite Map showing roadway and genizah. Map courtesy of Google Maps; notations by author.

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[208] Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 34, Sheet 3458, 1928; Shmuel Gonzales in discussion with the author, November 2017.

Figure 4.30: *Genizah* in Agudath Achim. Photo by author.

While the cemetery stayed the same, the congregation itself went through many changes throughout the years. In 1936, the congregation moved from its location in the Central Avenue district to a new temple on West View Street in the neighborhood of West Adams.[209] The congregation then eventually moved to another temple nearby on West Adams Boulevard, before merging with another Orthodox congregation, Rodef Sholom-Etz Chaim, in 1957. The new congregation, with four hundred and thirty-five congregants, was temporarily named Agudath Achim-Rodef-Sholom-Etz Chayim Congregation. According to a *B'nai B'rith Messenger* article at the time, "One of the major reasons for the merger was the decrease of the Jewish population in the territory served by Agudath Achim, and while the membership of Agudath Achim will now use the Fairfax Ave. buildings, facilities will be maintained in the West Adams section to keep serving the remaining Jewish residents."[210] A year later, the congregation simplified its name and changed it to Judea Congregation.[211]

By 1968, eleven years after the merger, the Agudath Achim Cemetery was showing signs of blight. The Judea Congregation formed an association to attempt to restore the cemetery, which had been used as a refuse dump and "been the victim of various acts of vandalism, the shooting out of pictures, the toppling of headstones, not to mention children of the neighborhood

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[209] Gonzales, "Downey Road."

[210] "Rodef Sholom & Agudath Achim Congs. Merged," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, May 17, 1957, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 9.

[211] "Cong. Agudath Achim Now to Be Known as Judea Congregation," *B'nai B'rith Messenger,* June 13, 1958, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 18.

skating and jumping from grave to grave."[212] The association raised funds to build a new fence around the cemetery to secure it, and "pledged to keep a high standard of maintenance," imploring for those who had loved ones buried at the cemetery to assist them with donations.[213] Unfortunately, the group's location in Sherman Oaks meant that their supervision and care of the cemetery was headquartered up to an hour's commute across the city and, nine years later, the cemetery found itself in a similar position.

In 1976, the Judea Congregation merged with yet another congregation, B'nai David Congregation, creating the Modern Orthodox congregation, B'nai David-Judea, which still exists today in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood.[214] Whether prompted by of a lack of action from the newly merged congregation or due to increased interest from the more traditional Orthodox and Hassidic communities, rabbis from two other congregations established the Agudath Ner Chaim organization in 1977. Their goal was to "preserve the cemetery in the spirit of its founders, as a truly traditional Orthodox cemetery preserving the sacred tradition and ground which contains the earthly remains of Los Angeles' earliest Orthodox and its first Hassidic rabbis."[215] Agudath Achim retained the Orthodox style with upright headstones and concrete ledgers. This traditional style, combined with Agudath Ner Chaim's claim that it was the only local cemetery chosen by early Hassidic rabbis and their families, imbued the cemetery with great significance for the contemporary Orthodox community.[216]

Although various associations attempted to manage the cemetery with donations from the community, ultimately the Chevra Kadisha Mortuary took ownership of Agudath Achim Cemetery, likely in the late 1970s or early 1980s at approximately the same time that Chevra Kadisha purchased Beth Israel, and potentially also Mount Carmel Cemetery. Agudath Achim, which now contains approximately 2,500 burials, began serving the same community as Beth Israel—attracting the Russian community and later those of strict Orthodox faith. Like Beth

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[212] "Seek to Sanctify Cemetery, Victim of Time and Vandals," *B'nai B'rith Messenger,* June 14, 1968, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 11.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Ibid.; "David-Judea to Celebrate 'Double Chai,'" *B'nai B'rith Messenger,* June 1, 1984**,** Box 63, Folder 4, Western States Jewish History Archive 1800-2004, Library Special Collections - Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 21.

[215] "Agudath Achim, Pioneer Cemetery, To Be Renovated," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, July 15, 1977, B'nai B'rith Messenger 1898-1977, New York Public Library Collections, Historical Jewish Press of the National Library of Israel and Tel-Aviv University, 26.

[216] "Agudath Achim, Pioneer Cemetery."

Israel, Agudath Achim is now almost full.[217] However, unlike Beth Israel, which is usually still open to visit during the day, Agudath Achim's gates remain perpetually locked, opened only by calling Chevra Kadisha Mortuary and requesting the padlock code [Figure 4.31].

Figure 4.31: Agudath Achim Cemetery gates. Photo by author.

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[217] Gonzales, "Downey Road;" Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017.

CHAPTER FIVE: Issues of Cemetery Neglect and Suggestions for Programming Initiatives

An Uncertain Future

Cemeteries are filled with history and memory, yet they are incredibly difficult to restore since the main beneficiaries of any restoration work are deceased. Financial investments into an abandoned cemetery will very rarely provide economic return, and the financial investments needed are often substantial. If a cemetery does not have a well-developed and well-invested endowment fund to take care of its maintenance costs after all the burial plots have been sold and there is no more money to be made, then it is not a question of if, but when, the cemetery will become derelict. Even then, there is a question of how long these endowment funds will actually last, since a cemetery will, theoretically, be in existence forever. The cemetery industry once referred to endowment funds as "perpetual care" funds, but this practice largely ceased when the industry began to acknowledge that there is no way to guarantee care in perpetuity.[218] As John F. Llewellyn, CEO of Forest Lawn Memorial Parks and Mortuaries states, "A cemetery is the only business that sells something once and takes care of it forever."[219] Home of Peace Memorial Park, with its regular maintenance, secured grounds, and healthy endowment, is not currently a cause for concern, but the other three cemeteries discussed in this thesis—Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim—face an uncertain future.

Mount Zion Cemetery, five years out from a flurry of media attention and a substantial restoration effort, still receives insufficient maintenance funds from its owner, the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, and still has no endowment fund to care for it in the future. If the history of Mount Zion from the past fifty years teaches us anything, it is that the cemetery is destined to eventually return to dilapidation if its care remains the same.

Beth Israel and Agudath Achim are still technically active cemeteries with an involved owner—Chevra Kadisha Mortuary. Both cemeteries have cracks in the concrete, vandalized ceramic portraits, and occasional litter along the fence, but they still receive regular maintenance, and seem to be in fair condition now [Figure 5.1]. A conversation with Chevra Kadisha Mortuary, though, revealed that the mortuary has no discernible plan for the future of these cemeteries. According to Yossi Manela, the mortuary manager, the mortuary plans to continue

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[218] Llewellyn, *A Cemetery Should Be Forever*, 35.
[219] Ibid., 61.

ownership of the cemeteries once they are completely full, and take care of them for as long as it can. Manela stated that the mortuary is a religious organization, and as such they have an obligation to care for these cemeteries. He also added his opinion that these cemeteries are more manageable than other cemeteries because they lack grass, which keeps their water bills low. When asked if the mortuary had insurance, Manela answered that it did, but he was unsure if the insurance would cover earthquakes or vandalism.[220]

Figure 5.1: Cracked Concrete in Agudath Achim. Photo by author.

Chevra Kadisha Mortuary's sense of responsibility for these cemeteries is admirable, but without a plan or established funds for the future, the mortuary will not be able to follow through with whatever good intentions it has. Judaism considers care of the dead to be an extremely important act of kindness. The early congregations of Los Angeles believed this when establishing their own cemeteries, but one by one, Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Beth Israel, and B'nai David-Judea discontinued their relationships with their cemeteries, likely due to primarily financial considerations. Ultimately, these congregations concluded that their relationships to the deceased were too thin and the financial burden too great to hold onto the responsibility.

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[220] Yossi Manela (Operator of Chevra Kadisha Mortuary) in discussion with the author, November 2017.

Neglected Jewish Cemeteries: An International and Domestic Problem

Cemeteries are extremely delicate and vulnerable historic resources because although there are countless reasons why care might cease at a cemetery, there are not many incentives for people to take over that care. All cemeteries are susceptible to neglect and damage—not just Jewish cemeteries—and one can see this in the high number of abandoned cemeteries throughout the country. However, Jewish cemeteries can be more vulnerable to neglect and eventual abandonment because many of them were previously owned and supported by congregations that dissolved over the years due to lack of attendance, involvement, and funding. In addition, over the years, as many Jews further assimilated in Anglo-American culture, they began to transition away from traditional volunteer burial societies in favor of for-profit mortuaries, and as a result burial societies increasingly dissolved as well, leaving little funding or advocacy for their burial grounds.[221] The traditional Jewish methods of forming a cemetery in the past have unfortunately not translated well for the future, and this is true both in America and worldwide. In Europe, of course, there is the additional insurmountable damage resulting from the Holocaust.

The Holocaust devastated the European Jewish population, completely erasing communities and relocating much of what little population survived. In 2000, Samuel Gruber, the director of the Jewish Heritage Research Center at the time, stated that there were between 5,000 and 10,000 identified Jewish cemeteries and mass burial sites in Europe, not counting the many more that had likely been destroyed due to anti-Semitic acts, during war, or due to development over what were, at the time, unidentified burial sites.[222] Several European and American groups, like the Warsaw, Poland-based Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, which hosts an Adopt-a-Cemetery program, and the Brooklyn, New York-based Heritage Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries, have organized over the years to identify and restore cemeteries in Eastern Europe.[223]

The problem of neglected Jewish cemeteries has also become an American issue, especially within the past fifty years, since congregations and burial societies have dissolved, many Jewish communities have relocated to neighborhoods and cities far away from their

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[221] Vivian Wang, "Struggling to Survive, Congregations Look to Sell Houses of Worship," *New York Times*, August 6, 2017, Accessed April 10, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/06/nyregion/congregations-look-to-sell-houses-of-worship.html.

[222] Henry, "All of Europe: A Graveyard."

[223] "About Us," Heritage Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries, Accessed April 10, 2018, http://hfpjc.com/about-us/; "Projects: Adopt a Jewish Cemetery in Poland," *Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland*, Accessed April 10, 2018, http://fodz.pl/?d=5&id=101&l=en.

cemeteries, and Jews have begun to increasingly opt for cremation, a practice long-forbidden in Judaism. All too often, the younger generations are disinclined to pay for care of their ancestors' graves because they lack any sense of connection to the generations preceding their grandparents.[224] Meanwhile, businesses and politicians are reluctant to donate money or advocate for these cemeteries because as a woman associated with the Baron Hirsch cemetery in Staten Island stated, "Dead people don't vote."[225]

This lack of knowledge, connection, and respect also contributes to the Jewish community's ability to neglect these cemeteries for years. Anti-Semitic vandalism has, itself, caused substantial damage in American Jewish cemeteries over the years, but there is a striking difference between how the Jewish community reacts when faced with cemetery damage caused by anti-Semitic vandalism versus damage caused by years of neglect. In early 2017, reports emerged that headstones were knocked over in an anti-Semitic attack at Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn. The damage made the news as it occurred soon after a well-publicized incident of vandalism at a Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia, which spurred conversations about hate crimes in the wake of the inauguration of President Donald J. Trump. In the case of Washington Cemetery, it eventually turned out that it was neglect, not vandalism, which caused the damage.[226] In an opinion piece on the subject, Bethany Mandel, an author and commentator stated, "A funny thing happened when news broke that the damage in Washington Cemetery wasn't caused by vandalism: there was a collective sigh of relief, a shrug and the news cycle moved on."[227] The public often washes its hands of the problem of cemetery damage once vandalism is ruled out, despite both vandalism and neglect indicating a lack of respect for the deceased.

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[224] Wang, "Struggling to Survive;" Maura Grunlund, "Apathy, Neglect, and Vines Overtake Staten Island Cemetery," *Staten Island Advance*, Last Updated August 18, 2012, Accessed April 10, 2018, http://www.silive.com/news/2012/08/apathy_neglect_and_vines_overt.html.

[225] Grunlund, "Apathy, Neglect."

[226] Bethany Mandel, "The Jewish Community Must Tend to Its Neglected Graves –and Anti-Semitic Attacks Prove It," *Forward,* March 14, 2017, Accessed April 9, 2018, https://forward.com/opinion/365921/the-jewish-community-must-tend-its-neglected-graves-and-anti-semitic-attack/; Ralph Ellis, and Eric Levenson, "Jewish Cemetery in Philadelphia Vandalized; 2nd Incident in a Week," *CNN,* Last Updated February 27, 2017, Accessed April 12, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/26/us/jewish-cemetery-vandalism-philadelphia/index.html.

[227] Mandel, "Neglected Graves."

"The Area is Unfortunate"

One of the reasons that the Los Angeles Jewish community has found it easier to forget these cemeteries is their location in what was for a long time deemed a "bad area." In a case that is very similar to the Los Angeles cemeteries discussed in this thesis, the Detroit congregation Beth David (later, B'nai David) established its local cemetery in the late nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century, the synagogue had relocated to another county and Detroit Jews were moving to the suburbs. By the later twentieth century, burials were ceasing and the congregation had dissolved completely. One man stated that one of the reasons why the cemetery eventually became neglected was that it was located in what eventually became known as a "dangerous" area, which caused descendants of those buried in the cemetery to avoid visiting it.[228]

Concerns about the safety of the surrounding area are certainly a factor in the neglect of Los Angeles' Orthodox cemeteries as well. In the 1980s and 1990s, Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles became famous on the nightly news for being a center of Latino gang culture and having extremely high rates of homicide due to gang activity [Figure 5.2]. These and other adjacent neighborhoods became synonymous with violence, the drug trade, and drive-by shootings, and nonstop media coverage deepened Angelenos' fear of these areas.[229] Consequently, the cemeteries here would have received fewer and fewer visitors at this time, as Westside Jews stayed away from East Los Angeles. In the late 1980s, when Mount Zion received attention for being neglected after the Whittier-Narrows earthquake, Eileen Silverstrom, the Jewish Federation administrator for the cemetery, partially blamed its conditions on East Los Angeles, stating, "The area is unfortunate and there's nothing you can do about that."[230]

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[228] Sarah Hulett, "New Life for Neglected Jewish Cemetery in Detroit," *Michigan Radio*, September 30, 2016, Accessed April 8, 2018, http://michiganradio.org/post/new-life-neglected-jewish-cemetery-detroit.

[229] Hector Becerra, "When Childhood Innocence and Gang Violence Lived Side by Side in Boyle Heights," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2016, Accessed April 9, 2018, http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-gang-history-20160512-story.html.

[230] Kruger, "Grave Situation in L.A."
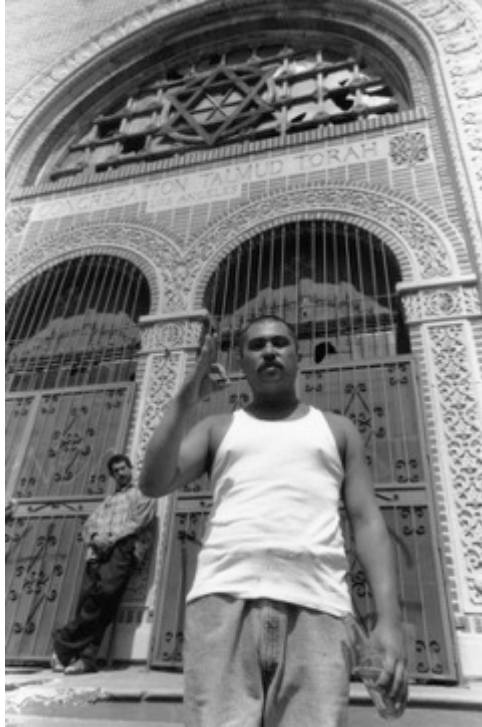
Figure 5.2: Man Flashing Gang Sign in front of Breed Street Shul. Photographed by Gary Leonard. Courtesy of Gary Leonard Collection/Los Angeles Public Library; image 00029746.

Since the late 1990s, gang violence in Los Angeles steadily decreased due to factors including different policing strategies, a gang injunction making it a misdemeanor for gang members to congregate in public, and intervention programs.[231] Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles are much safer places now, but some people still associate the neighborhoods with gang culture, due to stereotypical depictions in film and television and latent racism against the Latino residents of these neighborhoods.

Other Potential Reasons for Decreased Visitation

Other factors have contributed to a lack of visitation and attention at the East Los Angeles cemeteries. The Jewish community, now primarily centered in the Westside and the San Fernando Valley, has physically distanced itself from these cemeteries, but it has also mentally and emotionally disengaged from them. As years go by, there are fewer and fewer Jews who have memories of Boyle Heights as a Jewish neighborhood, and many are unaware that Jewish cemeteries even exist on the Eastside. If they have family buried in the smaller Orthodox

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[231] Ann Brenoff, "Behind LA's Dramatic Decline in Gang Violence," *Huffington Post*, February 24, 2015, Accessed April 9, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/24/gang-violence-decline_n_6656840.html.

cemeteries, many Jews are not old enough to have ever known these family members. They might not know they are buried there, or might feel little obligation to visit the grave of a family member who died before they were born. There are certainly Jews who do know that they have family members buried here and would wish to visit them, but concern about the safety of the neighborhood might stop them from driving to East Los Angeles.

These cemeteries may also experience much lower rates of visitation because many of those buried in them were Orthodox Jews, meaning that many of their descendants are Orthodox Jews who follow the prescribed mourning rituals discussed in Chapter Two. Descendants might feel that they should restrict their visits to only certain holidays, and should limit their time spent in the cemetery. Descendants of the priestly *Cohanim* line may still adhere to restrictions forbidding them to enter cemeteries. Some Jewish cemeteries will bury *Cohanim* as close as possible to the edge of the cemetery, so that their descendants are able to see and visit the graves without stepping inside.[232] Yet at Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim, the high fences covered with bougainvillea and the often-locked iron gates greatly limit the visibility into these cemeteries. Visitors are few and far between, though pebbles laid on some of the graves provide physical evidence that family members and friends do make the trip to these cemeteries at times.

Although there are specific factors that might affect the rate of visitation in these cemeteries, there are statistics that indicate that worldwide visitation of family graves tends to reduce after a certain number of years or generations, regardless of circumstances. In a study of cemetery visitation in London, the researchers found that visitation tended to continue for a span of four generations.[233] However, this statistic is certainly cut down when communities and individuals move away from their families and family burial sites. Living in Los Angeles, I almost never have the opportunity to visit my grandparents' graves on the East Coast, and I do not even know where most of the older generations are buried in the United States and in Europe. The itinerant nature of the most recent generations drastically reduces the rate of visitation to the graves of grandparents, great-grandparents, and earlier ancestors.

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[232] "Mourners – Cohanim," *Jewish Funeral Guide*, Accessed April 15, 2018, http://www.jewish-funeral-guide.com/tradition/mourners-cohanim.htm.
[233] Doris Francis, Leonie Kellaher, and Georgina Neophytou, "Sustaining Cemeteries: The User Perspective," *Mortality*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (March 2000), 37-38, http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/docview/208753111?accountid=14749.

Technical Publications for Cemetery Conservation

These cemeteries are already showing the effect of years of diminishing attention from Los Angeles' Jewish community. They are currently in fair condition, but as discussed, all three cemeteries will certainly hit a crisis point in the not-too-distant future. There is a wealth of information available from trusted sources regarding the preservation and restoration (alternately termed, conservation) of cemeteries in need. *Preservation Brief 48: Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*, issued by the National Park Service, is dedicated to conservation treatments available for grave markers. The brief provides recommendations for condition assessments, maintenance, and repair that are acceptable within the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. It would be a valuable resource for the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles, providing best practices for cleaning markers, repairing hairline cracks in stone and concrete, resetting fallen headstones, and dealing with the effects of air pollution and acid rain.[234] The Natchitoches, Louisiana-based National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) provides numerous articles and research about cemetery conservation, and also provides webinars and hands-on training sessions to assist cemetery workers and interested members of the public in caring for historic cemeteries.[235] The Association for Gravestone Studies, based in Greenfield, Massachusetts and founded in 1977 to further the study and preservation of gravestones, also publishes a quarterly bulletin containing studies and articles on gravestone and cemetery research and conservation, as well as a yearly conference to share research and participate in workshops.[236]

Many State Historic Preservation Offices, non-profits, and planning commissions also publish their own guidelines and recommendations for cemetery conservation, and there is a wealth of information published online by specialist cemetery conservationists. The Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles, due to their location and age, are more susceptible to certain threats than others. Located in Southern California, there is no threat to the headstones and concrete covers from the freeze/thaw cycle that often plagues stone structures in colder climates. However, the primarily stone and concrete cemeteries are particularly vulnerable to damage from

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[234] Mary F. Striegel, Frances Gale, Jason Church, and Debbie Deitrich-Smith, *Preservation Brief 48: Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Technical Preservation Services, 2016).
[235] "Cemetery Conservation," *National Center for Preservation Technology and Training*, Accessed April 12, 2018, https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/articles/cemetery-conservation/.
[236] "About AGS," *Association for Gravestone Studies*, Accessed May 6, 2018, https://www.gravestonestudies.org/welcome/about.

seismic disturbances, which are not a threat for many cemeteries in the United States—to the extent that seismic activity is not even mentioned in the National Park Service preservation brief. The headstones in these cemeteries, though cracked from vandalism, seismic activity, and ground resettling, are not quite old enough to have substantial deterioration from weathering, and the granite material of the headstones has resisted pollution from the several freeways nearby.[237]

Currently, these cemeteries are in fair condition, and the technical conservation documents and sources mentioned should be referenced for maintenance, and in the future, for restoration. The prime concern now, though, should be preventing these cemeteries from getting to the point of crisis, and building an interested and invested community that will step up when the cemeteries are in need. At the time of writing this thesis, the support is not there, due to a physical and emotional disconnect between Angelenos and these cemeteries.

Small Solutions

There are some basic solutions that should be considered to prevent vandalism. Those consulted on this thesis agreed that they did not believe that most of the vandalism experienced by these cemeteries is explicitly anti-Semitic in nature. Rather, they believe that the high rate of trespassing and vandalism is instead due to the dark and hidden natures of these cemeteries, which are located on a side street off of Whittier Boulevard, just north of the 5 Freeway.[238] Increased lighting and security cameras would help to deter trespassing from vandals and practitioners of Santería and Palo. In 2013, when the *Los Angeles Times* article emerged about the poor conditions at Mount Zion Cemetery, Rabbi Moshe Greenwald stated that they were looking into the use of security cameras and motion detectors, though it is unclear if they were ever installed. He also mentioned that police on the ground and in helicopters were increasingly patrolling the area at night.[239] Although this is a fine temporary solution, it is best to not rely on police presence to watch the cemeteries, since it is unclear how long they would continue these patrols or when it would ultimately become necessary to divert their presence elsewhere. Even the sight of a security camera or a sign informing people that the cemeteries are monitored with cameras could prevent potential trespassers from entering. These immediate solutions will still not solve the neglect and damage that these cemeteries experience unless the community deals

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[237] David Charles Sloane Note to Author, May 6, 2018.
[238] Ted Gostin (Specialist in Southern California Jewish Genealogy) in discussion with the author, November 2017.
[239] Miller, "Saving the Face."

with the real root of the problem, which is a lack of funding and a disconnect that exists between the Jewish community, these cemeteries, and the Eastside community.

The Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles

Once Chevra Kadisha Mortuary runs out of funds and/or dissolves its company, Beth Israel and Agudath Achim will be completely reliant on the community for funding, maintenance, and repairs since they have no endowment funds. The future of Beth Israel and Agudath Achim can be seen in action at Mount Zion, which has been largely reliant on the community for its advocacy and for major restorations. However, this is not how it should be at Mount Zion, because Mount Zion does indeed have an owner that could afford to establish an endowment for the cemetery. The Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles has been the successor in interest to the Masonic Cemetery Association, and de facto owner of the Mount Zion Cemetery since the Masonic Cemetery Association dissolved in 1959.

As stated, neglected and abandoned Jewish cemeteries are a nationwide problem, but throughout the United States, local Jewish Federations have gotten involved in trying to create solutions and revitalize local neglected cemeteries. Some Federations created organizations to help with restorations and some partially or completely took on the responsibility as caretakers of their local Jewish cemeteries. The UJA-Federation of New York founded and provides many of the funds for the Community Association for Jewish-Affiliated Cemeteries, and the Jewish Federation in New Haven, Connecticut founded the Jewish Cemetery Association of Greater New Haven in 2004, which now cares for almost forty local Jewish cemeteries. In 2004, the Jewish Cemeteries of Greater Cincinnati formed, pooling together the endowments of many struggling cemeteries and raising $6 million to eventually take over most of the area's Jewish cemeteries.[240] The executive director of the organization, David Hoguet, stated at the time, "We were very fortunate to have the Jewish foundation willing to put up a lot of money…If money were available in other cities, you'd see more of this happening."[241]

Currently, the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles spends approximately $25,000

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[240] "Jewish Cemetery Association," Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://jewishnewhaven.org/jewish-cemetery-association; Julie Wiener, "Lacking Long-term Plans, Many U.S. Jewish Cemeteries in Neglect," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 19, 2013, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.jta.org/2013/12/19/news-opinion/united-states/lacking-long-term-plans-many-u-s-jewish-cemeteries-in-neglect.
[241] Wiener, "Many U.S. Jewish Cemeteries in Neglect."

per year on maintenance and repairs in Mount Zion Cemetery. In 2013, it was involved in the $300,000 restoration, but did not contribute substantial funds. When speaking of the problems at Mount Zion and the community's lack of interest, the Jewish Federation expressed frustration at the community's unwillingness to donate, and when pressed on the subject of spending more money on the cemetery, it responded that when forced to choose between spending money on the living and spending money on the dead, they must choose to spend it on the current and future generations.[242] But as David Zinner, executive director of the organization, Kavod v'Nichum, which supports American *Chevra Kadisha* groups, states, "People say that's not where the Jewish community should spend its money, we need to focus on young people. But focusing on young people should include helping them take care of their parents and grandparents."[243]

A bigger issue here is that it is unclear why the Jewish Federation feels forced to choose between the living and the dead, when in reality the Federation has enough funding to choose both. According to public financial statements, in the year 2016, the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles had total assets of over $147 million, net assets of over $87 million, and expensed over $50 million.[244] Considering that in 2013, the necessary funds for a proposed Mount Zion endowment were estimated to be a very comparatively small $1.6 million, it is unclear why the Jewish Federation Council was unwilling to donate anything to an endowment fund, since the nonprofit's mission is to: "Identify our community's most pressing challenges and greatest opportunities in order to help Jews in need and ensure the Jewish future."[245]

With the Jewish Federation, it is not a question of them having enough funding to take care of these cemeteries, especially since Los Angeles has the second-largest Jewish population in the United States and, therefore, a huge community to draw on for support and donations. Rather, the issue is getting the Jewish Federation to choose Mount Zion Cemetery and Jewish cemeteries in general as a worthy priority. It would be wonderful to see the Federation, in the future, take a stronger hand in caring for and creating community support for its endangered

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[242] Ivan Wolkind (Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Jewish Federation), in discussion with the author, May 2017.
[243] Sue Fishkoff, "Shouldering the Burden of Forgotten Cemeteries," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 20, 2010, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.jta.org/2010/09/20/life-religion/shouldering-the-burden-of-forgotten-cemeteries.
[244] "Financial Statements for the Year Ended December 31, 2016 with Summarized Financial Information for the Year Ended December 31, 2015" *Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles*, 2-4, Accessed April 15, 2018. https://www.jewishla.org/who-we-are/annual-financial-reports/.
[245] "Our Work," *The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles*, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.jewishla.org/what-we-do/.

cemeteries. The Federation could follow the lead of New Haven and Cincinnati and create a Los Angeles Jewish Cemetery Association to provide care for not just Mount Zion, but for Beth Israel and Agudath Achim as well. This association could help to raise funds for healthy endowments for the cemeteries, and could help these cemeteries become a point of pride for the Jewish community rather than a source of concern.

Historic Designation

For the Jewish Federation and the community at large to consider these cemeteries worthy of their attention and affection—worthy of preservation, and if necessary, restoration—it helps to find a way to recognize the important historic significance of these cemeteries and connect people to that history. Historic designation is one way to create recognition for endangered historic sites, though historic designation at the national level can be especially difficult for cemeteries. Cemeteries are included in a list of property types that are not usually considered eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places unless they meet additional considerations. The National Park Service's *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* details these additional considerations. Since most people have family members buried in cemeteries around the United States, the concern is that without additional requirements, a large number of cemeteries would be nominated due to personal sentiment from descendants. Due to this stipulation, in order to be considered eligible for designation, the cemetery must either: contain graves of a number of exceptionally significant people; have a relative great age in its particular geographic context; have exceptional achievement in planning, design, or engineering; be specifically associated with important events; or have the potential to yield important information.[246]

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[246] Elizabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places, 1992), 9-18.

The California State Register of Historic Places and Los Angeles County's Historic Landmark listings do not subject cemeteries to additional requirements, so it is a simpler affair to designate cemeteries at these levels.[247]

These cemeteries are certainly eligible for designation at the local level, and likely at the state level as well. Beth Israel, Mount Zion, Agudath Achim, and Home of Peace, as the oldest extant Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles, are all significant for their association with the early history of the local Jewish community, and since the four cemeteries adjoin each other it would be wise to nominate them as a historic cemetery district. One of the most unique and fascinating aspects of all four of these cemeteries, especially Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim, is the distinct style of the Orthodox graves. These tight, orderly lines of concrete-covered graves with upright headstones are not often seen throughout the United States.

Throughout my own research, I found very few online examples of American Jewish cemeteries with concrete or stone ledgers. Examples are scattered throughout New York, New Jersey, and Florida, though one example does exist of a Jewish cemetery with grave ledgers in the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery, active from 1913 to 1932 in rural North Dakota [Figure 5.3].[248] Some Jewish cemeteries in Charleston and New Orleans also feature graves with stone or concrete copings in addition to their upright headstones [Figure 5.4]. These are meant to adhere to Jewish law, which states that Jews must be buried in the ground and cannot be buried above ground in mausoleums, while also combating the high water table in these cities. In a coping grave, the coffin is buried in the ground and surrounded by four walls, which rise above the ground level. The area above the coffin within the four walls is filled with gravel or dirt, and sometimes planted with grass.[249] Most examples of Jewish cemeteries with ledgers or copings covering the graves were grassy and relatively spacious. Interestingly, the cemetery found to be

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[247] *California Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Series #7: How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historical Resources*, (Sacramento, CA: Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, 2001); County of Los Angeles, California, Code of Ordinances, "Historic Preservation Ordinance: Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts," Ord. 2015-0033 § 3, 2015, https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT22PLZO_DIV1PLZO_CH22.52GERE_PT28HIPROR_22.52.3060CRDELAHIDI.

[248] Rebecca Bender, "Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery: Ref No. 15000807" *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, Prepared June 17, 2015, Accessed April 12, 2018, 13, 19, https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/15000807.pdf.

[249] "Jewish Cemetery," *Jewish Funeral Guide,* Accessed April 15, 2018, http://www.jewish-funeral-guide.com/tradition/jewish-cemetery.htm; "New Orleans Cemeteries and Graves: Where the Past Sleeps (or Doesn't) in New Orleans," *Livery Tours*, October 16, 2014, Accessed April 15, 2018, http://liverytours.com/2014/10/new-orleans-cemeteries-and-graves/.

closest in style to the mostly concrete and dirt Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles is the Home of Peace Cemetery, located in the California city of Lake Elsinore, less than one hundred miles away from East Los Angeles. The Lake Elsinore Home of Peace Cemetery opened in 1954, and the Elsinore Valley Cemetery District absorbed it and made it a Jewish section of the Elsinore Valley Cemetery in 1995.[250] It is very possible that the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles and other cemeteries further inland like Mount Carmel Cemetery influenced the design of the Jewish cemetery in Lake Elsinore.

Figure 5.3: Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery, North Dakota, images cropped by author. Courtesy of Bender, Rebecca, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, Section 7, Page 13, 19, Reference Number 15000807, *National Register of Historic Places Program*, *National Park Service*, Accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/15000807.htm.

Figure 5.4: Coping Grave in New Orleans. Courtesy of Bonita L. Weddle.

Based on their unique and traditional grave markers and their association with the early Los Angeles Jewish community, the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles are eligible for

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[250] Michael Williams, "Once-Busy Jewish Cemetery in Lake Elsinore Rarely Used," *Press-Enterprise*, August 28, 2016, Accessed April 11, 2018, https://www.pe.com/2016/08/28/once-busy-jewish-cemetery-in-lake-elsinore-rarely-used/; "History of Elsinore Valley Cemetery," *Elsinore Valley Cemetery District*, Accessed April 12, 2018, http://www.elsinorevalleycemetery.com/history.asp.

historic designation at the local level, and likely at the state level as well. If designated, these cemeteries could become eligible for helpful grants, and designation would enable cemeteries to receive more recognition, support, and financial assistance from the local community and those interested in Jewish history and cemetery preservation nationwide.

Special Events and Activities at the Cemetery

Beyond the option of historic designation, educational materials, historic tours of the cemeteries, volunteer cleanup days, and special events are some of the other efforts that can facilitate this connection.[251] Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim are better suited for some of these activities than others due to their layout and organization. Many cemeteries that need help with funding consider using their cemeteries' open space and park-like settings for special events. Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Los Angeles partners with the organization, Cinespia, to present screenings of classic and popular films at the cemetery on summer nights. The event is hugely popular, draws hundreds of attendees each night that picnic on the grass before the film begins, and has helped to restore the cemetery after it fell into a neglectful condition at the end of the twentieth century.[252] In 1997, the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. on their Most Endangered Sites list. With dedicated volunteer work, private donations, grants, fundraisers, Congressional appropriations, and special events, the cemetery was able to bounce back from disrepair. One of the most successful programs at Congressional Cemetery is their K9 Corps, a dog-walking program that allows members to walk their dogs off-leash on the cemetery grounds in exchange for an annual membership fee [Figure 5.5]. The benefits of this program have been great: donations from dog-walking members cover approximately 25% of the cemetery's operating income, equivalent to the cost of the grounds maintenance contracts; many of the program members volunteer with activities like cleaning the grounds and archiving cemetery records; and the many members and dogs walking the grounds serve as a presence to discourage vandalism.[253]

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[251] Tammie Trippe-Dillon, *Grave Concerns: A Preservation Manual for Historic Cemeteries in Arkansas*, (Little Rock, AR: Department of Arkansas Heritage, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2000), 109-113.

[252] "Cinespia at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery," *Cinespia*, Accessed April 13, 2018, http://cinespia.org/how-to/cemetery/.

[253] "Brief History of Congressional Cemetery," *Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery*, Accessed April 12, 2018, http://www.congressionalcemetery.org/history.asp; "Dogwalking," *Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery*, Accessed April 12, 2018, http://www.congressionalcemetery.org/dogwalking.asp.

Figure 5.5: Cemetery Dogs Website Logo. Courtesy of Historic Congressional Cemetery.

Some cemetery professionals are apprehensive about introducing special events and activities into their cemeteries, since there is a concern about being disrespectful to the deceased and to the sacred and solemn nature of the cemetery. This is a valid concern, and it is ultimately up to each individual cemetery to determine if outside events can be orchestrated in a manner that is respectful, appropriate, and in the spirit of the cemetery. When asked if Home of Peace Memorial Park would ever consider opening up their grounds for events like movie screenings, Richard George replied that he views these ventures as positive, but currently considers them to be out of the cemetery's expertise. At Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim, it is unfortunately impossible to even consider special events such as these, since these cemeteries do not have the amenities of space and grass that attract people to other cemeteries. What these cemeteries do have, however, is a physical record of Los Angeles' early Jewish community, which can be used to educate and connect with Jewish youth.

Programming Suggestions to Create Youth and Community Engagement

One way to create awareness and interest in these cemeteries within the Los Angeles Jewish community would be to create a nonprofit organization on behalf of the cemeteries— "Friends of East L.A.'s Jewish Cemeteries"— and have this organization partner with local Jewish schools to create a curriculum that combines learning about the city's early Jewish history with visits to these cemeteries. This curriculum would focus on early Jewish pioneers and pre-World War II Jewish life in multicultural Boyle Heights. Students would then take an all-day field trip in the middle of the school term to Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, where they would meet with a member of the cemetery organization to take them on a tour of Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim. Students would see the graves of Rabbi Yitzchok Werne, Chief Orthodox Rabbi of Los Angeles (buried in Beth Israel); Rabbi Moshe Berman, Rabbi of Congregation Agudath Achim and Chief Justice of the Orthodox rabbinical court of Los Angeles (buried in Agudath Achim); Lamed Shapiro, Yiddish-language writer; Morris Soriano, a

founding member of the city's Sephardic community, and Max Babin and Lena Hauph, owners of the city's first Kosher restaurant (all buried in Mount Zion).[254] Teachers could also assign older students the name of a person buried in one of these cemeteries to research and then write a short paper or presentation. This would be an excellent way to teach students both about those buried in these cemeteries and how to do historical and genealogical primary research using census documents and newspaper archives. The field trip could then include additional visits with a member of the Boyle Heights Historical Society to nearby historic properties in Boyle Heights like the Breed Street Shul or Sakura Gardens, a Japanese assisted-living facility that was formerly the Keiro Retirement Home and the Jewish Home for the Aged, which shows the neighborhood's Jewish and Japanese roots. In order to have a fuller understanding of the history of the Eastside, students could also visit Roosevelt High School, a location of the 1968 East L.A. Chicano Student Walkouts, or the Ruben Salazar Park, which, located just a few blocks away from the Jewish cemeteries, was the location of civil unrest between protestors and law enforcement during the 1970 Chicano Moratorium March.[255] It is especially important now, at a time when Boyle Heights is experiencing anger and fear in the face of gentrification, that the curriculum, while focusing on Jewish history, includes a bigger picture of Boyle Heights' history, recognizing the significance of the many different cultures that called Boyle Heights home over the years.

Another potential partnership with Los Angeles' Jewish schools would help students learn about different Jewish burial traditions. In 2002, Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary in Culver City partnered with the Santa Monica Synagogue to create a program introducing Jewish fourth and fifth-graders to Jewish burial and mourning rituals, which involved having a full mock funeral for the children's television character, Barney the Dinosaur. The program saw students witness the "death" of Barney, born Bernard Dinotzuris or Barney Dinosaurski depending on the year, take him to the mortuary, and experience a full funeral service [Figure 5.6]. Children toured the casket selection room, carried the casket to the hearse, and flashed-forward to the *yarzeit*, where they witnessed the unveiling of Barney's grave marker. The

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[254] Gonzales, "Downey Road."
[255] "Keiro Retirement Home," *Los Angeles Conservancy*, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/keiro-retirement-home; "Roosevelt High School," *Los Angeles Conservancy*, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/roosevelt-high-school; "Ruben Salazar Park, *Los Angeles Conservancy*, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/ruben-salazar-park.

program may sound strange, but it was a great success, helping students to understand the different mourning periods and the reasoning behind certain traditions, and exposing the children to the experience of death and a funeral. Parents who later had a family member or friend pass away stated that their children, after attending the program at Hillside, found the experience to be a bit more manageable and less frightening.[256]
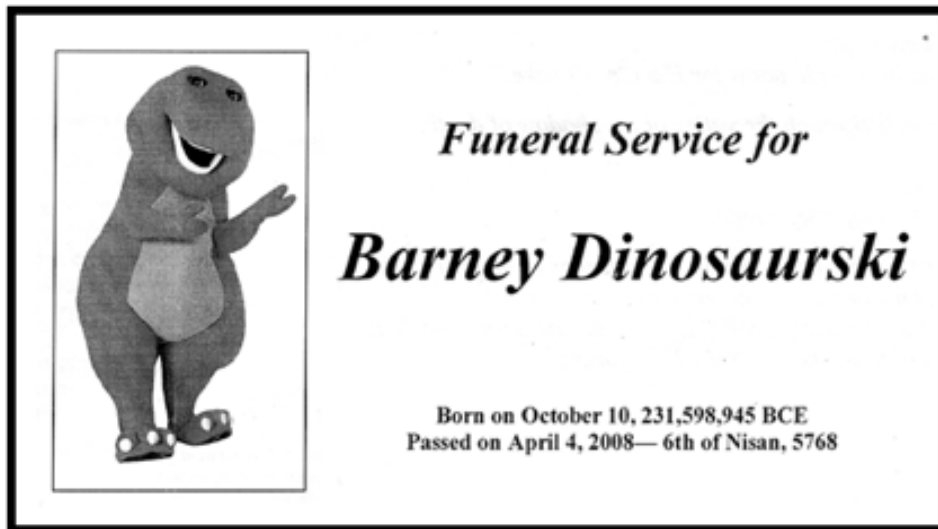

Figure 5.6: Funeral Program for Barney Dinosaurski, Courtesy of personal collection of Jill Glasband.

The Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles could host a similar educational experience, but instead of hosting a mock funeral, would utilize a cemetery tour to teach students about different Jewish burial traditions. Home of Peace Memorial Park would be an excellent choice for this educational experience, as it is perhaps the only Jewish cemetery in Los Angeles that has a wide array of traditional graves including upright headstones, mausoleums, cremation urns, flat markers, and Orthodox graves with ledgers. Students would learn about the traditional reasons behind the ledgers on Orthodox graves and upright headstones, current Jewish views on cremation, and interpret the symbols on headstones. They would also learn about Jewish mourning periods, including the traditional unveiling of the headstone one year after the burial. This program would provide insight into how different cultures and time periods influenced burial traditions, and it would also follow in the shoes of the no longer active Hillside/Santa Monica Synagogue program, familiarizing young people with death and mourning, and making it seem a little less foreign and unknown.

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[256] Naomi Glauberman, "Kids Learn Burial Rites from Barney," *Jewish Journal*, May 5, 2006, 23, from the personal collection of Jill Glasband.

The beautiful ceramic portraits that are especially prevalent in Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim provide an opportunity to engage youth interest in these cemeteries through art [Figure 5.7]. These portraits, showing the faces of early Jewish Angelenos, make those buried in these cemeteries seem more real—and make visitors feel more familiar with and endeared towards the deceased. However, as discussed, these portraits are vulnerable to vandalism and many have already been destroyed. An important volunteer project for Jewish youth and adults would be to research those buried in the cemeteries who have ceramic portraits on their headstones, attempt to track their living family members, and see if the families have originals or copies of the photos used to create the ceramic portraits. These photos could be copied and archived, and then be used to create new replacements for the broken portraits, or saved to create replacements in case any of the intact portraits break in the future. Replacing broken and vandalized portraits would help to bring these cemeteries back to what they once were, and help to make them appear as respected and cared for as possible.

Figure 5.7: Sign to Replace Broken Ceramic Pictures at Agudath Achim. Photo by author.

Another potential project would incorporate the talents of local artists to create works of art based on these ceramic portraits. Self Help Graphics & Art is a nonprofit based in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, which since 1970 has been dedicated to helping Chicano and Latino artists produce and distribute prints and other artistic media. Self Help Graphics & Arts hosts workshops, many of which are donation-based, and free youth and community outreach programs to train local artists to learn the arts of printmaking and digital media. [257] Advocates for the cemetery would coordinate with Self Help Graphics & Art to curate a collaborative project

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[257] "About Us," *Self Help Graphics & Art*, Accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.selfhelpgraphics.com/about-us/.

between the Jewish community and the local Latino community. During a special workshop or session, artists would create prints and digital media artistically interpreting these cemeteries and the faces seen in the ceramic portraits. The artists would learn new techniques and enhance their portfolios, and the cemeteries would then use those images in informational material for the cemeteries. This media would include interpretive signage in front of the cemeteries providing a brief description of the cemeteries' history surrounded by the art produced at Self Help Graphics & Art. It would also include a website designed using the prints and digital media, which would provide the history of the cemeteries, photos, and a burial registry.

All of these projects would bring community recognition to these cemeteries, helping to preserve them by creating a sense of familiarity, interest, and respect within both the Jewish community and the local Eastside community. It is incredibly important to consider all of the potential ways to include local Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles residents in these endeavors—including them in the narrative of the history of the area and giving them the opportunity to be a part of the preservation of the Jewish history in their neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

Why should we save the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles? For those who are unfamiliar with their history and significance, this is a difficult question. In today's urban communities, real estate is a highly coveted commodity—and cemeteries cover many acres of valuable real estate near downtown Los Angeles. Today, the cemetery industry is also in a state of flux. As people increasingly choose cremation over burial (from less than 5% in 1960 to approximately 48% in 2015) and debate the environmental impact of embalming, cremation, and care of the cemetery itself, the death-care industry has found itself staring at its future with less certainty. The American relationship with death and cemeteries is changing, but in truth, it has always fluctuated. Americans have gone from having funeral viewings in their homes to outsourcing burial preparations to mortuaries and funeral homes. Burial grounds have shifted from disheveled churchyards to parks filled with rolling hills, and then to pristine spaces with flat markers.[258] Now, *green burials* and *aquamations* are just some of the options being presented to those interested in a more environmentally conscious solution, and people are actively seeking alternatives to the common cemetery.[259]

While we do not know that Americans will always look to the cemetery as the eternal resting place for themselves and their loved ones, we know that already existing cemeteries offer valuable physical evidence of the history of our ancestors and our communities. Walking through the Jewish cemeteries in East Los Angeles, one sees traditional Jewish symbols etched on tombstones, plaintive epitaphs grieving the unexpected loss of a child, grave markers indicating religious and cultural beliefs and burial practices, a series of early death dates indicating a devastating flu outbreak, and the faces of generations of Los Angeles Jews staring out from ceramic memorial portraits. Today, these four cemeteries are arguably the most visible Jewish resources in Los Angeles' Eastside besides the Breed Street Shul. Surrounded by single-family residences and their Latino neighbors, they provide essential reminders of some of the cultural layers that helped to build the Eastside. If Angelenos allow these cemeteries to fall into neglect

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[258] Sloane, David Charles, *Is the Cemetery Dead?*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 19-27.
[259] *Green burial* is an umbrella term for the movement to develop environmentally friendly burial grounds—leaving little visible trace of human impact. Interestingly, traditional Orthodox Jewish burial is very similar to *green burial*. *Aquamation* is a newer form of cremation that attempts to be more environmentally friendly. The process employs a water-based chemical process inside of a hot and high-pressured system to reduce the body to ash and bone (Ibid., 56, 77).

and abandonment, what does that say about how we value our history, value our ancestors, and value the current residents of East Los Angeles?

In this thesis, I presented the history of the four oldest extant Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles, accompanied by explorations into Orthodox Jewish mourning and burial rituals and brief histories of Jewish Los Angeles, the neighborhood of Boyle Heights, and early cemeteries in Los Angeles to provide context. I then discussed the issues that threaten these cemeteries and Jewish cemeteries in general, and offered best practices to mitigate the neglect and abandonment that will be inevitable without further interest and funding. I believe that Beth Israel, Mount Zion, and Agudath Achim could all benefit by increased support from the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. I also believe that educational programming and coordination between local organizations like Self Help Graphics & Art could garner increased interest from Jewish youth and an increased sense of involvement with and consideration for the local Latino populations in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. As development and change approach Boyle Heights, it would be interesting to see if these cemeteries, and the other cemeteries in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles are affected by shifting and expanding populations and businesses.

Although these cemeteries will benefit from support from the Eastside community and conservation community as well, I am specifically directing my recommendations at this city's Jewish community because they are the biggest stakeholders here. These cemeteries contain the graves and memories of the Jewish community, but they are also in unstable conditions because of lack of involvement from this community in recent years. I wish to make it clear, though, that this is not an issue of blame. It is not one single person or community or organization's fault that these cemeteries are in a threatened condition. As stated earlier, cemeteries are especially delicate and vulnerable resources that can be difficult to maintain and difficult to restore even with an engaged community, since they also usually require substantial funding and expertise. However, I do believe that with an interested and supportive community, care and funding will follow. It is my hope that this thesis will not only provide valuable information to encourage engagement with these cemeteries, but will itself be the first step in supporting their care.

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