

# ILLUMINATING THE INVISIBILITY OF THE OTHER: FARGO JEWISH CEMETERY CHAPEL

"WE DEPEND ON MEMORY FOR OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SENSE OF IDENTITY, MEANING, AND PURPOSE" (BRADFORD VIVIAN 2010, 10).

"THE BASIC FUNCTION OF ALL PUBLIC ART: TO CREATE SHARED SPACES THAT LEND A COMMON SPATIAL FRAME TO OTHERWISE DISPARATE EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDING [AROUND] WHICH EVEN 'COMPETING' MEMORIES MAY BE FIGURED" (JAMES E. YOUNG, 1993).

When we unravel the stories of Jewish people in North Dakota, we see that they intersect with layers of Jewish experience across history. This community is both one of the most obscure and exemplary examples of the Jewish American story throughout the world and time - a scattered people, continually the "other" of society, whose future rests in the sacred rituals of remembrance that have sustained the culture for thousands of years.

In the late 1880s, Jews were a notable minority among the waves of ethnic immigrant groups flocking to North Dakota. In the 1950s, the population of Fargo, alone, was around 500 people. In 2022, it is estimated there are no more than 400 Jewish residents in the state of North Dakota.

JEWISH AMERICAN IDENTITY IS NO LONGER INHERITED, BUT DELIBERATELY CREATED THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH COMMUNAL MEMORY.

This number suggests the reality that the Jewish community in North Dakota is nearly invisible, dwindling and in need of a reinvigoration of communal memory. A cemetery chapel here holds the potential to become a destination of remembrance and an opportunity to participate in Jewish life. The fundamentally spiritual and communally mnemonic nature of cemeteries holds the potential to illuminate the invisibility of Jewish stories in North Dakota while uniting them with Jewish experiences throughout history.

"WHEREVER YOU ARE, WHATEVER YOU ARE DOING THERE, MAKE THAT A JERUSALEM."

איפה שלא תהיה, מה שלא תעשה שם, הפוך את זה לירושלים.

- Rabbi Tzvi Freeman



SHADOW HALLWAY

NORTH ELEVATION

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CHapel  
32<sup>ND</sup> AVE  
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MAIN AVE  
AIRPORT  
FHC SYNAGOGUE  
TEMPLE BETH EL