

TOUR OF HISTORIC JEWISH COMMERCIAL SITES ON CHESTNUT STREET

Jews were among the first settlers on Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range, arriving shortly after iron ore was discovered in the early 1890s. Most arrived with their families and became shopkeepers, catering to the needs of mine officials as well as those who labored in the mines. By 1895, when it was incorporated as a city, Virginia had a population of over 5,000 and was described by one mining authority as "the metropolis of the range." Soon known as the "Queen City," Virginia became the Range's financial and commercial center. Virginia was destroyed twice by fire, in 1893 and again in 1900 when its entire commercial district burned down. The city quickly recovered from the 1900 fire and following the passage of an ordinance that ordered that all buildings on Chestnut Street, the city's main commercial thoroughfare, be built of brick or faced with brick veneer, the downtown soon became one of the most impressive business streets on the entire Range. Ten years after the fire, Virginia's population was 10,473, of that number 121 were Jewish. Considering their small number, what is most impressive is how many of the buildings constructed on Chestnut Street following the fire were occupied by Jewish merchants. Although Chestnut Street is on the National Register of Historic Places, the majority of the buildings have undergone various forms of disfiguring attempts at modernization. However, if one looks above the first level, the original appearance of the building is often visible. Of the 103 surviving buildings on Chestnut Street, sixty were built prior to 1910 and twenty-one between 1910 and 1920. These are the structures this tour will have as its focus for they coincide with the period when the B'nai Abraham Congregation was organized in 1905, the synagogue dedicated in 1910, and its original members comprised many of Chestnut Street's shopkeepers.

Chestnut Street developed east to west. At one time it had a depot at each end: The Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Depot (built in 1913 and on the NR) on the west, and the Duluth, Missabe and Northern Station (now demolished) on the east. Our tour will begin on the east end of Chestnut that in the early years was occupied primarily by saloons.

THE PHOENIX, 127 CHESTNUT (Flaimer's Pub) Built in 1900, the Phoenix Block originally housed a saloon, billiards and pool hall. Until 1921 it was operated by Lewis Cohen who lived at 202 5th Ave

THE ROMAN BLOCK, 204-206 CHESTNUT (Range Auto Parts and C&S Pawn Shop) Built in 1914 by Joseph Roman, it initially housed the Rex Theater, which was operated by his wife, Katherine Roman, and the Roman Clothing Store. Note: Roman name on block below the cornice.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 205 CHESTNUT Built in 1900, the building housed Lippman and Lewis Dry Goods Store. By 1914, it was a café.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 208 CHESTNUT (Grande Ace Hardware) Built in 1902, the building is now joined together with 212 and 214 Chestnut. The building originally housed H. J. Nathanson Clothing.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 210 CHESTNUT (Grande Ace Hardware) Built in 1900, the building housed an unidentified store. It was a bank and meat market before taken over by Kaner's Grocery store that stayed there until about 1951.

CALDERWOOD BLOCK, 212-214 CHESTNUT (Grande Ace Hardware) Built in 1900 housed the Shanedling Brothers (Julius, Morris, Henry) Clothing and Dry Goods Company.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 215 CHESTNUT (Off Sale Liquors) Built in 1900 housed Sam Milavetz's Jewelry Store until 1915 when it became Ralph Masinter's confectionary.

SHANEDLING BUILDING, 226 CHESTNUT (Salvation Army) Built in 1904 by the Shanedling Brothers, the building housed a meat market and jewelry store until 1910. After that it became the Shanedling Dry Goods Company Store.

NEW FILL IN BUILDING, 232 CHESTNUT (North Star Pawn Shop) This was the location of Milavetz Clothing. No other information available.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 233 CHESTNUT (empty) Built in 1900, the building was occupied by Isadore Milavetz Clothing store. In 1919, the Arrowhead News Company was established in the rear of the building by Milavetz's son, David.

ROMAN BUILDING, 234 CHESTNUT (Shoes and Things) Built in 1900 immediately following the fire by Joseph Roman, the building housed a saloon until about 1915. The Minnesota Store, a women's clothing store, moved into the building in 1919. It was operated by Ben and Julius Bankman.

SHANEDLING CLOTHING COMPANY, 301 CHESTNUT (Law Center Building) Constructed in 1913, the building housed the Shanedling Clothing Company.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 303-305 CHESTNUT (Plesha Chiropractic, Silver Lake Florist) The original building on this site was erected in about 1900. By 1908 the double storefront housed a clothing store owned by Frank Lippman. In 1911, Dave Schibel and Gus Simon bought out Lippman and Palace Clothing occupied both addresses until 1931 when the building was destroyed by fire.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 306 CHESTNUT (White Drug) Erected in 1900, the building housed a saloon for ten years and possibly a women's clothing store. The latter business was purchased by Julius and Monroe Shanedling in 1924 and the name was changed to the Quality Shop.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 308-310 CHESTNUT (White Drug) Built in 1900 and originally known as Hawkinson Hall, it housed a variety of businesses until damaged by fire in 1919. By 1927, the building was occupied by the Shanedling Clothing Company.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 311 CHESTNUT (Ben Franklin) Built in around 1905, it is described as having been "constructed by Mr. Shanedling, one of Virginia's prominent retailers." It was initially used as a saloon and restaurant. Benjamin Walt is listed as having a clothing store in the building in 1915.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 312 CHESTNUT (Jue's Restaurant and Lounge) Built in 1912 and initially known as the Backus Building, it first housed a restaurant and later the Central Hotel. In 1915 Morris L. Wilk is listed as the owner of a clothing store in the building.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 321 CHESTNUT (Buttercup Boutique) Erected in 1904, the building housed the J. H. Garon's The Golden Rule Store for about thirty-five years. In 1915 the store was known as Garon and Soloski Clothing.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 322-324 CHESTNUT (New China Buffet) Constructed in 1905, the building was initially known as the Minnesota Block and the Masonic Hall. In 1908, it is listed as Minnesota Dry Goods and Masonic Hall. Samuel Lippman is listed as the store's secretary and treasurer.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 326-328 CHESTNUT (Orv's Appliance) The original building on this site known as the Mesberg Block, was erected immediately following the 1900 fire. It was the site of the Mesberg and Lavick Furniture Store and Mortuary until 1913 when it was damaged by fire.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 335 CHESTNUT Built in 1900, the building housed a variety of shops; Walt's Clothing was a tenant from about 1939 until its move to 329 Chestnut in about 1951.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 408-410-412 CHESTNUT (Laurential Divide Salon and Spa) Built in 1907, the building was known as the Karon Block from 1909 to 1917. Bernard Karon had a iron and metal business in 1900 initially at 106 3rd St. S. It was later moved to 203 3rd Ave. N. where it remained until 1914, when it moved again to 406 3rd Ave. S. until 1929. It is possible Karon Block was built by Bernard Karon. The building initially housed a clothing store owned by David Krazenstein

MACO THEATER, 415 CHESTNUT (Church) Built in 1921, the theater was redesigned in the 1930s by the famous Jewish architect, Jack Liebenberg. At first the building housed the Garrick Theater, but by 1939 it was known as the MACO Theater. It was purchased by David Deutsch in 1964.