

Building Restoration

Building a Foundation

The Temple Israel Foundation was established in 1987 for the purpose of acquiring the building which had once been the synagogue and to raise funds to acquire the Hebrew Cemetery. The foundation purchased the building in 1992 and continued to run it as an apartment until restoration became feasible. Soon after, the Colorado State Historic Fund approved a planning grant to document the existing structure and to develop plans for its restoration.

Front Facade Restoration

The foundation received a second grant from the State Historic Fund for the restoration of the front facade in 2001. Restoration of the facade took approximately three months, plans for which were guided by exterior photographs from when the building was still in its original configuration. The spires are made from solid copper plates which have since developed a patina

Electrical Fire

On May 4, 2006, the building suffered a fire caused by an electrical short in a light switch on the back porch. Much of the damage was caused by water from firefighting efforts whereas the fire and smoke damage was largely confined to the wall and rafters in the southwest corner of the building. The push towards full restoration was prompted by the necessity of repairing the building after the fire.

Exterior Restoration

The interior was gutted to prepare for the restoration soon after the fire, being completed by summer 2006. While waiting to receive permission to commence full restoration, the curator's unit at the rear of the building was added. The State Historic Fund granted permission to begin full restoration in March 2007 and the exterior was completed by fall 2007. Nearly all of the structure's original shell was preserved despite the fire. The roof had to be fully replaced, however.

Interior Restoration

Interior restoration began in winter 2007 and finished by May 2008, guided by an interior photograph taken in 1894 and by newspaper primary sources. The exact pattern and color of the paint on the walls came from remnants of the original paint discovered prior to the fire and during the restoration. The building did originally have a carpet which can just be made out in the 1894 photograph shown below; however, the design and color are not known. The existing carpet features a pattern which is historically appropriate for the period in which the building was constructed. The pews were reconstructed using the 1894 photograph and with measurements from the Episcopal church's pews across the street.

The restoration was completed on-budget and on-time with most of the work performed by Leadville locals for a total cost of \$600,000. Funding came from State Historic Fund grants, the insurance settlement from the fire, and private donations.



Temple Israel building before restoration efforts began



Placement of the copper spires on the front facade



Restored front facade in 2001 with patinated spires



Damage from the fire was largely limited to the southern end of the building



Workers replacing the roof and beginning work on the siding



This black and white photograph of the synagogue's interior published in 1895 along with remnants of the original wall décor, discovered in 2007, were instrumental to Temple Israel's authentic restoration



The building's interior in the midst of its restoration: On the left, Leadville local Lisa Dowdney and her sister, Debra Seaman (not pictured), painted the symbols on the walls with stencils created from the original lath and plaster remnants



[*For more information on the building's history click here*](#)

[*For more information on the building's restoration click here*](#)