

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Debby Schoctor - Beth Shalom Synagogue

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The Beth Shalom Synagogue on Jasper Avenue is a very interesting building. David Murray always talks about that building, its international style, but it's not on the register of historic places, whereas the old Beth Israel is the first one. It's a really good example of that, the mid-century international style of architecture, with the yellow brick and just the lines of the building. They've kept it up very well. There was a fire bombing, a couple of them, there actually, but the one in the 80s destroyed some of the stained glass windows and they've restored those. They were originally done by McCausland, a big stained glass manufacturer in Toronto. When they were restored, some of the windows were slightly different in what they depict and how they are. Theirs, it's unusual because that's the only sort of Jewish stained glass in the city. You know there's stained glass on the Cathedral and some of the Ukrainian churches, but this is particularly "Old Testament" stained glass. There's, I think, a window of Moses and a lot of the prophets, and then there's stained glass of all the tribes of Israel on the *bima*.

The Reform synagogue now is in the *Chevra Kadisha* building, which is on 120th Street. I believe they used to be in the old JCC at Hillcrest, which was torn down. Vivian Manasc, who's an architect in town, her father made the stained glass windows for that which you know were just basically frames and they've moved them and they're in the *Chevra Kadisha* chapel now. That chapel is also interesting -- it's very 1950s. It's not so interesting from the outside, but the inside's quite interesting. They share that with the *Chevra Kadisha*, that's where they have big funerals before they take that to the cemetery.

The other interesting place, for me at least, is the Jewish cemetery because there's so many people from our community buried out there. That has been there, like I think it was even earlier than the synagogue, if i'm not mistaken. That land is in Forest Heights and they're almost almost full now, so they've bought some land in St. Albert that they're going to use. They're just raising the money now to build the infrastructure to use as a new cemetery, because this cemetery is over a century old and it's almost full. There's interesting things in there -- Dave Marcus did a tour for us once, for the Archive Society, and one of the biggest monuments in Alberta is there. There's a lot of interesting people buried there, there's a little chapel there. When they originally built it, Mr. Aronoff, who was a blacksmith to the Czar, actually designed and made the gates of the cemetery with little sculptures with birds and, I think they're pomegranates, and flowers so, that's a very interesting place as well.