

The very beginning ...
(From the Dedication Book of the Oak Park Building)

In the summer of 1911, a handful of men, recent arrivals from Hungary, met in a restaurant on Hastings Street, the hub of Jewish life in Detroit. These men decided to organize a congregation that would enable them to worship in accordance with the traditions and customs they brought with them from Hungary.

These men were unusual because they came from a land where Jews for a half century had been free to enjoy the benefits of religious and secular education without the limitations imposed on Jews living in other European countries.

Original Articles of Association were drawn up on September 2, 1911. At that time, the Hungarian Jewish community consisted of 25 - 30 families. The Articles of Association were signed by:

Aaron Hollander	Emil Schulman
Sam Edelheit	Herman Goldberg
Ignatz Lebowitz	Sam Greenbaum
Joseph Berger	A Weisberger
S. Samuel	

The congregation was named: Beth Elihu. Aaron Hollander was elected the first president. The other signers formed the Board of Trustees.

During the first year of its existence, the congregation worshipped in a hall at Hastings and Winder Streets. The second year, High Holiday services were held in the Hannah Schloss building. The third year the congregation rented a hall on Hastings near Brewster Street. In 1915 the congregation was strong enough to purchase a modest facility on Eliot Street near Hastings. This facility satisfied the congregation's purpose until the early part of 1917.

Under the leadership of Herman Eichner, the congregation, consisting of about 70 families, felt strong enough to undertake the construction of a larger synagogue. They envisioned a building with a sanctuary that would seat 600, a social hall that would accommodate an audience of 300 and Talmud Torah and Sunday School rooms that would accommodate an enrollment of 100 neighborhood children.