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*Threshing, ca. 1910*

THERE'S MORE THAN BRUTE FORCE AT WORK HERE; there's artistry.

Start with that long belt. Imagine the ingenuity behind this idea. Threshing machines require such tremendous force to operate that only an extremely heavy, wide belt will give the necessary traction without slipping. And like so many great ideas, this one had other benefits: it kept those cumbersome steam-powered tractors away from the machine and provided interesting photo opportunities besides!

Now look at the bundles stacked on those two wagons. Loads made by unskilled bundle-stackers look like blocks piled by a two-year-old and usually topple before the load makes it to the threshing machine. These two are perfectly balanced and symmetrical. To get them this perfect is at least as hard as getting strips of flowered wallpaper to align exactly.

What about that guy standing on top of the thresher looking as if he thinks he's King of the Hill? He probably is. Those arms akimbo are not a sign of arrogance; they're

a sign of confidence. This is the guy who could take the machine apart and put it back together in the dark. He's the one who has the eyes, ears, and nose for trouble and will detect a problem well before it graduates into disaster.

The person half hidden behind our King of the Hill is the blower-tender. A good blower-tender learns how to direct that spray of straw exactly where the stackers need it. And the stackers, almost concealed by the cloud of dust? They are at once the architects and the carpenters of a straw stack you could be proud of. They will be stacking with practical concerns of rain run-off as well as aesthetic concerns of making a form you can stand to look at for most of the year—and, of course, one that your neighbors won't laugh at.

If all you were seeing in this picture is *work*, keep looking.

—JIM HEYNE

*Jim Heynen lives in St. Paul and teaches writing at St. Olaf College in Northfield. Among his publications are The Boys' House (2001) and The One-Room Schoolhouse (1993).*

A STATELY BROWN, BEIGE, AND RED brick house of worship has anchored its north Minneapolis corner for more than 75 years, plainly visible from busy Penn Avenue a block away. Yet the old building simultaneously exists in another place, accessible through memory: the eastern European Jewish community that grew, thrived, and abruptly disappeared from Minneapolis between the 1880s and 1960s.

The Moorish/Byzantine-style building, home to the congregation Mikro Kodesh (Holy Assembly), is one of the few physical remnants of the now-dispersed North Side Jewish community. This was a place where

grandparents, aunts, and cousins lived on the next block, and numerous delis, kosher butcher shops, and groceries were around the corner. There were so many synagogues that groups of teenagers could walk from one to another on high holidays, socializing with friends.

The Minneapolis Jewish community first organized itself socially and religiously by country of origin; Mikro Kodesh, when founded in 1890, was named Anshei Russia (Men of Russia). Like the other 11 ethnically based Orthodox synagogues established on the North Side between 1884 and 1905, it stood near the intersection of Sixth Avenue North

(today Olson Highway) and Lyndale Avenue. In 1926 its Americanizing congregants built this synagogue in a newer neighborhood on Oliver Avenue.

In 1949 Mikro Kodesh was the largest Orthodox congregation in the Upper Midwest, with some 500 dues-paying families. But by the late 1960s North Side Jews were joining the millions of Americans moving to the suburbs. The synagogue's membership dropped by half between 1967 and 1969. When the commercial district on Plymouth Avenue was substantially destroyed in the volatile summer of 1969, the die was cast. That year Mikro Kodesh merged with a Conservative congregation, and the merged congregation soon joined with yet another. Unified under the new name B'nai Emet, the congregation is today located in St. Louis Park. The old building remained vacant for a decade until its current owner, the African American Disciples Ministry Church, began a new chapter in its history.

—LAURA WEBER

*Mikro Kodesh Synagogue (today, Disciples Ministry Church),  
1004 Oliver Avenue North, Minneapolis*



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*Laura Weber, an independent historian and writer living in Minneapolis, is a board member and newsletter coeditor for the Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians.*

Sources: *North Side Memories*, full issue of *Upper Midwest Jewish History* 2 (Fall 2000); Hyman Berman and Linda Mack Schloff, *Jews in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002); City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Registration Form, 97-4073, Mikro Kodesh Synagogue, and Garneth O. Peterson, "Jewish Settlement in Minneapolis, 1860s–1972," Historic Context for Minneapolis Preservation Plan, 1997, in State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society.



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