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CapitalJewishMuseum.org

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

The Lillian and Albert Capital Jewish Museum's collection is composed of historic artifacts, personal and family papers, as well as archival documents and photographs that provides a rich, multifaceted glimpse into Jewish life in Washington DC, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia from the 1850s to the present day. It is a collection which reflects a history that is at once local, national, and international. The collection—a valuable tool for researchers and a strong foundation for the Museum's exhibitions—includes more than 24,000 digital and print photographs, 1,050 objects, and 800 linear feet of archival materials, including personal papers and business and organizational records.

A highlight of the collection, the Museum has more than 90 scrapbooks from individuals, families, clubs, organizations, institutions, and Jewish-owned businesses, spanning nearly a century of Jewish history in the greater Washington area. One such example, the collection of Drug Fair scrapbooks span the 1950s and 1960, and includes clippings and photographs from most opening events for the Virginia-based retail chain. Similarly, the Museum has a strong collection of signs and ephemera representing Jewish-owned and operated business, included the vast and detailed collection of local grocery retailer, Giant Food, from the company's founding in the Depression through the 1980s, all while managed by the Cohen family. Another strength are objects related to lawmakers and lobbyists, from photographs and personal documents of disability rights activist and federal employee, Judith Heumann; to a mezuzah in Congressman Jamie Raskin's Capitol Hill office; and a corkscrew, distributed by the National Council of Jewish Women to elected officials, that reads "Screw the patriarchy." Also of note are the collection of materials from protests, rallies, and vigils, including the sign (and corresponding photograph) "This is the Moment I Trained for in Hebrew School" from a rally against a Muslim travel ban; tribute messages and drawings on post-it notes from mourners attending a vigil for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Supreme Court (September 2020); and political buttons advocating for AIDS research and support for the LGBTQ community.

Recent acquisitions include 19th-century hand-carved bimah chairs from the sanctuary of one of DC's first synagogues; the seder plate and *haggadah* used by the Obama family and staff in the White House (2008-16); nearly 80 years of institutional archival material from the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (formerly the Jewish Community Council); the iconic "Bagelman" business sign from Bethesda Bagel's former location in Dupont Circle; and several family collections.

Conservation of key items for the Museum's core exhibitions include a notebook with handwritten comments by former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis; a 1968 model of the historic Adas Israel synagogue; a neon sign from a local business reading "If it's Jewish We have it!;" a large window from the Hebrew Home for the Aged depicting the Star of David (ca. 1951); a fabric pennant carried by Hyman Bookbinder at the 1963 March on Washington; and the *ner tamid* (eternal light) from Washington Hebrew Congregation's original synagogue and now installed in the Museum's historic sanctuary.

The collection is accessible by appointment to scholars, genealogists, and other researchers. To date, the Museum has digitized nearly 1,000 unique items from our collection, and more than 1,800 additional catalog records are now viewable in our online collections search. With the addition of advanced scanners, dozens of unscanned film negatives were recently processed and seen for the first time in nearly half a century. Ongoing efforts to digitize the collection and add image descriptions to catalog records will continue, with a significant effort taking place in 2023 as the Museum works to put expanded catalog records online.

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