

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DC's Newest Museum Celebrates the Jewish Experience in the National Capital Region
The Capital Jewish Museum inspires visitors to connect, reflect, and act

Washington, D.C. – The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is the first museum in DC dedicated to the story of Jewish life in the nation's capital region. The Museum will open on June 9, 2023 at the corner of 3rd and F Streets NW, welcoming visitors of all ages and backgrounds to explore and connect with local Jewish history and the intersections between cultural identity and social activism. Featuring interactive tables, film, historic photographs, and artifacts, the Museum dives deep into history while also creating space for current policy discussion with cutting-edge new technology and exhibit design.



Artistic rendering, 575 3rd St NW, Washington, DC, SmithGroup.

The 32,500 square foot, four-floor, LEED silver-certified Museum features a terrace with views of the Capitol, lobby atrium, flexible education space, three floors of exhibition galleries, and the largest and best-known artifact – Washington's oldest purpose-built synagogue, which has been moved to its new location and restored. Most of the Museum's collections and archives will be stored on site near the 4th floor staff offices. The Gewirtz Gift Shop in the main lobby will offer books and items inspired by the collection and exhibitions. The new Museum's design serves as a transition to the neighborhood's large-scale mixed-use development, while cradling the landmark building in a light-filled envelope.

SmithGroup, one of the largest architecture, engineering, and planning firms in the country, designed the Museum. Their portfolio includes the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the White House Visitor Center. Exhibition designers Design Minds, interactive designers Potion Design, and film producers Northern Light Productions and Video

Art Productions worked closely with Museum staff to develop state of the art exhibitions and experiences.

“The design of the Museum aligns seamlessly with our mission and values of fostering connection, reflection, and action,” says Esther Safran Foer, Board President of the Capital Jewish Museum. “We are overjoyed to extend an invitation to visitors from Washington and beyond, to join us in experiencing and cherishing this remarkable space for many generations to come.”

The Museum's collection includes more than 24,000 digital and print photographs, 1,050 objects, and 800 linear feet of archival materials from the 1850s to the present day, including oral histories, personal papers, and business and organizational records. These collections provide a multifaceted portrait of local Jewish life and form the base of the inaugural exhibitions and also provide research materials for scholars, genealogists, students, and the general public.

Collection highlights include: a matchbox signed by President Jimmy Carter, used to light the first National Menorah in 1977; nearly 80 years of archival material from the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (formerly the Jewish Community Council); a scrapbook featuring photos and clippings from Drug Fair stores in the 1950s and 1960s; photographs of Giant Food employees; the “Bagelman” sign from the recently closed Bethesda Bagels in Dupont Circle; a traffic cone directing carpools for a Jewish day school during the COVID-19 pandemic; and photographs from Nice Jewish Boys, a group for gay, bisexual and queer Jewish young men in DC.

Featured in the inaugural exhibitions will be a wide range of personal and political items: a broadside encouraging people to enter themselves in the 1920 Census—in Yiddish; restrictive covenants for suburban neighborhoods in the 1930s; a notebook with handwritten comments the Supreme Court’s first Jewish justice Louis D. Brandeis, a fabric pennant carried at the 1963 March on Washington, political buttons representing all sorts of political views, and a guitar used for song leading at the 2-decade long vigil for Soviet Jewry at the Soviet embassy in DC.

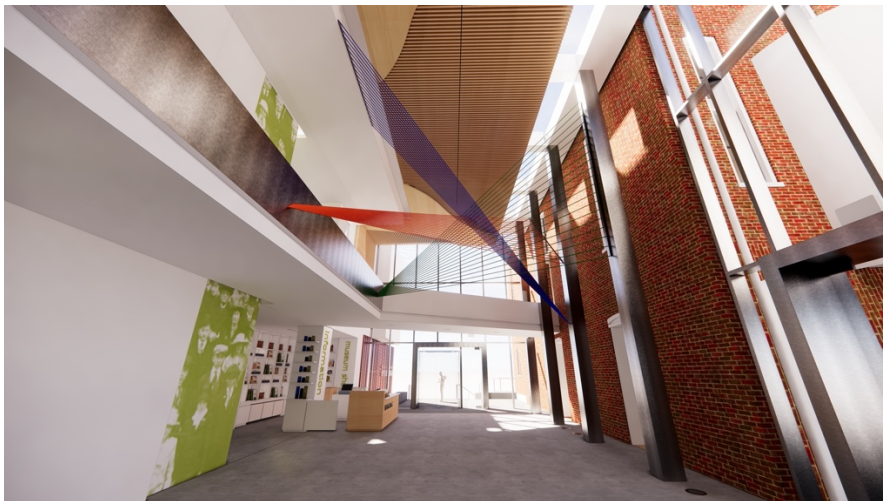
The orientation exhibit *What is Jewish Washington?* serves as an introduction to the diverse Jewish communities of DC and the suburbs. The chronological history gallery features photographs, objects, maps, oral history quotations and more to introduce the stories of Jewish Washington and how the communities have changed over time. A large interactive model in the center of the exhibit introduces visitors to the history of the historic synagogue, with doors that open, windows to peek through, and more.

Upstairs in the historic sanctuary is a transformational film scape bringing visitors back to the late-19th century. Exploring the founding of the city’s first congregations—Washington Hebrew and Adas Israel, the latter being the first occupant of the Museum’s brick building—the film transports visitors with evocative sound, silhouetted images, and historical maps and documents. Also in the gallery will be a mid-19th century Torah used by the congregation in this building.

The inaugural main exhibition, *Connect. Reflect. Act.* takes over the 2nd floor of the new building with dramatic color, interactive features, and a plethora of historical and contemporary photography. In this gallery, one highlight is a giant interactive map table. Visitors can visualize the growth and movement of the Jewish community over the decades, and also look up Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and organizations to locate them on the oversized map. Sitting in community at a multi-media Seder table creates a space for responding to and discussing challenging questions about immigration and justice while watching film presentations of stories of Jewish Washingtonians engaging in the practice of liberation in their own time.



The historic synagogue building (1876), adapted to its changing neighborhood by serving as home to several churches and retail businesses. Local community members saved the synagogue from demolition in the late 1960s, necessitating its first move, shown here. In 2016, the building was moved another 50 feet as part of the Capitol Crossing development project and finally to the corner of 3rd & F Streets, NW, in 2019, where it now serves as the cornerstone of the new Museum.



Artistic rendering by Zachary Oxman, ca. 2020. Copyright of the artist. The installation by contemporary artist Zachary Oxman greets visitors in the Museum's main atrium and Morse Lobby. The sculpture's

*dynamic, intersecting tubes embody the spirit of the Museum's mission to "Connect, Reflect, and Act."
Made possible by a gift from the Polinger Foundation.*

Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, opens the rotating exhibition gallery. This traveling show originated at the Skirball in LA and the Capital Jewish Museum is proud to be the exhibition's final stop of its national tour. *Notorious RBG* is open through November 30, 2023. The exhibition explores the American legal system and civil rights movements through the lens of the Justice's personal experiences and public service. Like its namesake book, the exhibition tells the parallel stories of her remarkable life and the efforts she joined to expand "We the People" to include those long left out of the Constitution's promises.

The Museum experience is not finished in the galleries. Rotating workshop experiences in the Community Action Lab will provide families and school groups with facilitated and free-form tinkering activities that enable a closer examination of primary sources related to Washington's Jewish history, Jewish holiday-related arts and activities, and themes explored in the Museum's exhibitions and projects. And for all visitors, the Community Action Lab is where inspiration can become action.

"Through many years, CJM staffers, colleagues from the former Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, scholars, community members, philanthropists, and architects and designers have worked to create a space that is worthy of the stories we have to tell and will engage and welcome visitors of all ages and backgrounds," says CJM Executive Director Ivy Barsky. "We are immensely proud to celebrate the region's Jewish history and culture, as well as to look history squarely in the eye. We all need to be part of repairing the world and we hope the Museum does its part to spark that reflection and action."

The Museum's public opening coincides with the historic synagogue's dedication on June 9, 1876, an event attended by President Ulysses S. Grant.

Admission to the Museum and core exhibitions is always free. The cost for special exhibitions, including *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, and programs varies. Members enjoy free admission to all exhibitions and discounts on programs.

For more information about the Capital Jewish Museum, please visit:
<https://capitaljewishmuseum.org/>.

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Mission: The Capital Jewish Museum explores the Jewish experience in the national capital region and inspires visitors to connect, reflect, and act: connect personally and collectively, reflect on the relevance of the past to today, and act on behalf of their communities and values. Learn more: <https://capitaljewishmuseum.org/>

Capital Jewish Museum
Collection Images, April 2023



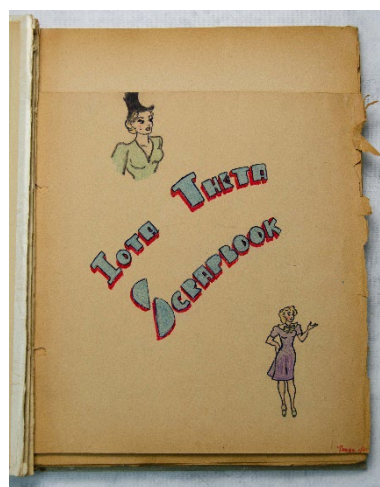
Exterior of Giant store #7 located at 3412 Connecticut Ave, NW, which opened on January 25, 1945. Capital Jewish Museum collection. Gift of the Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation.



Press badge for Judith Martin during her time as a journalist at the *Washington Post*, 1968. Badges range from 1966-1982. Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Judith Martin.



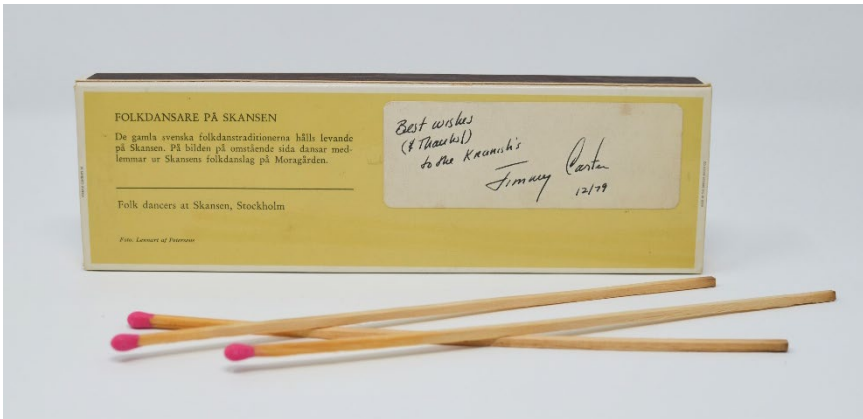
2019 Mr. Nice Jewish Boys Pageant. Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Ben Rosenbaum.



Iota Theta Scrapbook. Capital Jewish Museum Collection.



The historic 1876 Adas Israel synagogues travels along G St. NW from 6th to 3rd St. NW, December 1969. Gift of Henry Brylawski.



Matchbox, signed by President Jimmy Carter and used by the president at the White House Hanukkah event, December 17, 1979. Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Michael Kranish and family.