

DOING THE WORK OF THE NATION INITIATIVE AT THE CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM

A new initiative to collect and display artifacts related to Jewish federal workers across time.

For Immediate Release

Washington, DC (March 11, 2025)—As the nation considers the future of government service, the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is kicking off a special initiative to explore and collect the stories of Jewish federal workers in agencies and offices across the government.

The Jewish population in DC grew alongside the federal workforce in the 20th century. Jews from around the country came to serve the expanding federal government and the mobilization for World War I. And the growth continued as the federal government grew by leaps and bounds during the New Deal and WWII. Who were these federal workers? What stories do they have to tell? What are the Jewish stories embedded within the halls of the federal government?



Naomi Biron and co-workers in offices of legal section of Federal Register, 1947. Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum. Gift of Naomi Biron Cohen.

“Exploring these stories moves beyond the headlines and allows us to explore the deep and longstanding connection between the federal workforce and the diversity of cultural life in DC,” stated **Bea Gurwitz, Executive Director of the Capital Jewish Museum.**

A project several months in the making, the launch of the first presentation—a display case in the Museum’s lobby atrium—highlights stories from the 1890s through early 2000s with new quarterly displays to follow. Artifacts featured include a recommendation letter from President Benjamin Harrison, a job description from the former Biographical Branch, photographs of staff working at their desks, and more. Agencies and institutions represented in these stories touch on work at the Federal Trade Commission, the Government Printing Office, and the Internal Revenue Service. Additionally, each presentation will be detailed in a post on the Museum’s blog, *The Whole Spiel*, allowing visitors from beyond the Museum to explore these stories.

The presentation kicks off a broader initiative to collect artifacts, photographs, and papers from Jewish federal workers, both in the past and the present. For those persons interested in contributing to the Collection, please see instructions for donations at <https://capitaljewishmuseum.org/donatetocollection>.

The Capital Jewish Museum's collection is composed of historic artifacts, personal and family papers, as well as archival documents and photographs that provide 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.

WHERE

575 3rd Street, NW

WHEN

On view with rotating presentations quarterly through 2025

Museum Hours (*through May 2025*):

Wednesday–Sunday, 11am–6pm

Evenings: First Wednesday of the Month, 6-8pm

ADMISSION

General Admission and Core Exhibitions: Free

Tickets: <https://capitaljewishmuseum.org/>

SUPPORT

This initiative is supported by Sue Ducat in memory of Stanley Cohen, z”l.

ABOUT THE CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM

The new Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum opened to the public in June 2023. The Museum explores the Jewish experience in the national capital region and inspires visitors to connect personally and collectively, reflect on the relevance of the past to today, and act on behalf of their communities and values. With its experimental spirit, the Museum connects the past to the present through thought-provoking exhibitions, dynamic programming, and creative public experiences.

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

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Contact

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