

# Historic Synagogue Model (1968)

## About

This is a model of one of Washington DC's earliest synagogues. The synagogue itself was built in 1876 by Adas Israel Congregation. However, in 1908, the growing synagogue moved to a larger building and sold this small, simple structure. For 60 years the 2-story brick building housed different businesses and churches. But in 1968, new construction was changing the neighborhood, and WMATA (metro & bus service) planned to build its new headquarters right where the old synagogue stood. Desperate to save this remnant of downtown DC's Jewish history, many Jewish leaders stepped forward to save the historic structure. The team had to think creatively about how to convince Congress—who had to be involved because they held DC's purse strings—to rescue this building that had meant so much to earlier generations of Washington Jews. Advocates built this model and carried it from office to office on Capitol Hill, sharing their love of the building with members of Congress. And indeed, in 1969, the historic synagogue moved out of danger's way, becoming the home of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington. Years later, new construction again threatened the structure, which moved to its final location in 2019, and became part of the Capital Jewish Museum.

## Item



## Questions

1. Why would the advocates want to create a model like this one?
2. What kinds of skills were necessary for creating this model? Can you think of other uses for those skills?
3. Why would the creators of this model include the mention of President Grant?
4. What value does this object have for a modern viewer? For a researcher? For a student?

## Learn More

- "Small Scale Restoration," The Whole Spiel Blog, Capital Jewish Museum. [Link to article here.](#)

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### Item Description

Model: Model of historic 1876 synagogue in plexiglas case on wood base. Metal plaque inside reads "MODEL OF ORIGINAL ADAS ISRAEL CONGREGATION SYNAGOGUE/DEDICATED JUNE 9, 1876 BY PRESIDENT U.S. GRANT". Photograph: 6.5 x 8.5 black and white photograph of Henry Brylawski (left) shows model of restored synagogue to Fred Schwengel (middle), President of the U.S. Capital Historical Society, and Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz (right) of Adas Israel Congregation. ca. 1969 Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Object ID: FIC.89