

Capital Jewish Museum Marks 150th Anniversary of Historic Synagogue with New Installations, Displays, and Public Programs

Washington, DC: April 22, 2026 – The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is pleased to announce a series of special installations and public programs commemorating the 150th anniversary of its Historic Synagogue. Coinciding with the nation’s upcoming 250th anniversary, this milestone highlights Jewish engagement in the American experiment since the nation’s founding.

“The timing of America’s 250th anniversary and the synagogue’s 150th is no coincidence,” said Director Bea Gurwitz. “The founders deliberately dedicated the synagogue in 1876 during the nation’s centennial summer, making a powerful statement about Jewish belonging and patriotism in the nation’s capital—one that continues to resonate today.”

The lobby displays are an opportunity to dig into previous moments of commemoration of America’s founding. Using items from the Museum collection, staff curated a series of cases that ask how Jewish Washingtonians marked the moment of the Centennial (1876), the Sesquicentennial (1926) and the Bicentennial (1976). From a Centennial plate awarded as a prize to the original artwork created by Avram Ashery and used around the country in 1976, these cases represent the Jewish community finding their places in the American story.

As part of the commemoration, the museum will unveil a range of installations and programs:

- A new permanent lobby display exploring the many lives of the Historic Synagogue and the founding of the Museum
- Lobby cases highlighting snapshots of Jewish life in Washington across three pivotal years: 1876, 1926, and 1976
- Temporary display of the giant 1976 Bicentennial Tapestry, commissioned by the Jewish Bicentennial Commission of Greater Washington
- Display of the Mordecai Bible, in use during the American Revolution era, which records the first Jewish baby born in D.C. in 1839
- Guided walking tours of downtown D.C. to be held in May
- The creation of a time capsule to be opened in 2076

- A series of public programs celebrating Jewish life, history, and community in the region today

Through these exhibitions and programs, the Capital Jewish Museum continues its mission to illuminate how local stories can have national impact. By preserving and sharing the rich tapestry of Jewish life in Washington, the Museum invites visitors to reflect on the past while contributing to a more inclusive future.

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The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum collects, preserves, and shares the diverse stories of Jewish history and culture in the National Capital Region. Through exhibitions and programs, we build connections across generations and communities, encourage reflection on the relevance of the past to today, and inspire civic and community engagement.

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