



THE LARGEST AND TINIEST LEGO SUPREME COURT BUILDINGS

Adam Hanson

THROUGHOUT THE PAST YEAR, LEGO put on a traveling exhibit at shopping malls across the country called *The Lego Americana Roadshow*.¹ The exhibit featured ten of our country's most recognizable landmarks in brick form, built by LEGO's very own master builders. As a self-described Adult Fan of LEGO,² I was elated to learn LEGO's exhibit would be coming to a shopping mall near me,³ and that one of the featured landmarks would be the U.S. Supreme Court Building.

I did what any AFOL who just so happens to be a *Green Bag* subscriber would do: loaded up the family car like the Griswolds⁴ and set out for *The*

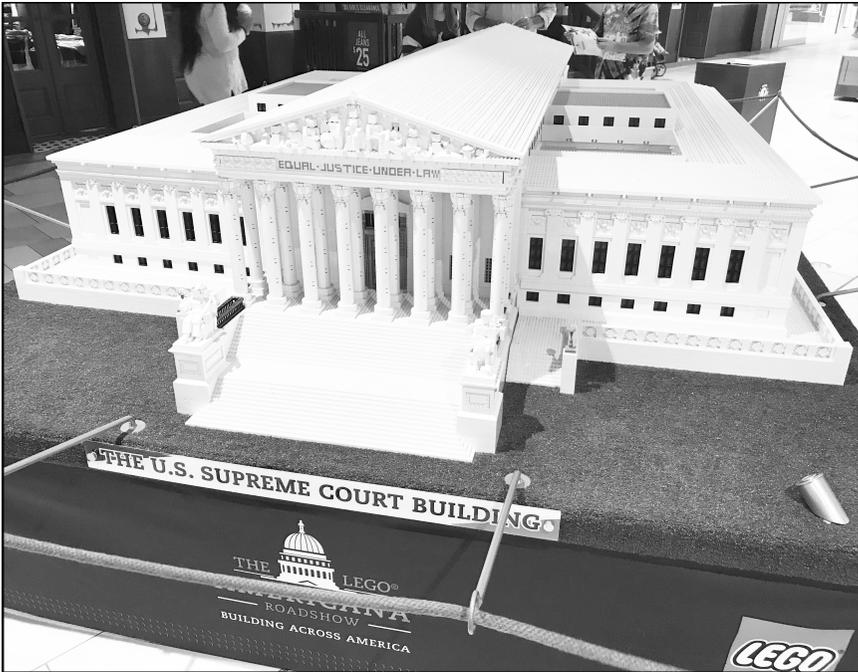
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¹ www.lego.com/en-us/stores/events/americana-roadshow.

² The abbreviation AFOL is commonly used by adult fans of LEGO worldwide. The hobby has even been the subject of short films. See *Love of the Brick: A Documentary on Adult Fans of Lego* (2009) and *A Lego Brickumentary* (2014).

³ Ridgedale Center, Minnetonka, Minnesota, July 29 to August 13, 2017.

⁴ *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983). Unlike the Griswold family, we made sure the attraction we were about to visit was, in fact, open and not closed for two weeks for cleaning and repairs.



The largest (so far) LEGO version of the U.S. Supreme Court Building, on display at the Ridgedale Center shopping mall in Minnetonka, Minnesota.

Lego Americana Roadshow. At the mall, my daughter, grandma, and I grabbed an exhibit map and set out to find the LEGO Court. We found the 1:54 scale model just outside the Hollister Co. clothing store. The LEGO Court was almost 10 feet long and, according to the model’s placard (see facing page), three LEGO Master Builders worked for 450 hours to complete it. Features such as the “Equal Justice Under Law” inscription, the large bronze doors, the Corinthian columns, and the statues adjacent to the front steps were present, carefully crafted with many fine details. It looked incredible. Cass Gilbert would surely have been impressed.⁵

⁵ Gilbert was the architect for a number of state and federal buildings including the U.S. Supreme Court Building; the Arkansas, Minnesota, and West Virginia State Capitol Buildings; and numerous schools, libraries, churches, bank buildings, railroad buildings, and residences throughout the country. www.cassgilbertsociety.org/works/.

The Largest and Tiniest LEGO Supreme Court Buildings

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT
★ ★ ★

The Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. is home to the Judicial Branch of the US Government. It was completed in 1935 and is the final, permanent meeting spot for the Supreme Court of the United States. Prior to this, the Supreme Court Justices were housed in a section of the US Capitol.

It is built in the neoclassical style of architecture mainly with marble coming from Vermont, Georgia and Alabama. The courtroom itself is lined with Spanish veined marble. The Courtroom's 24 columns are built with special marble from quarries near Sienna, Italy. The grandeur of the building was at first not appreciated by all of the justices as some felt the building was too pretentious for the image of the Supreme Court.

The west facing side of the building, which is considered the front, bears the inscription "Equal Justice Under Law". The opposite side has "Justice, the Guardian of Liberty". Two statues flank the entrance to the building. The one on the left is called "The contemplation of Justice" and is a statue of a female supported by the book of justice under her left hand with a figure of blindfolded justice in her right. The statue on the right is "The Authority of Law" and is a male figure supporting a law tablet backed by a sheathed sword.

THE LEGO® U.S. SUPREME COURT

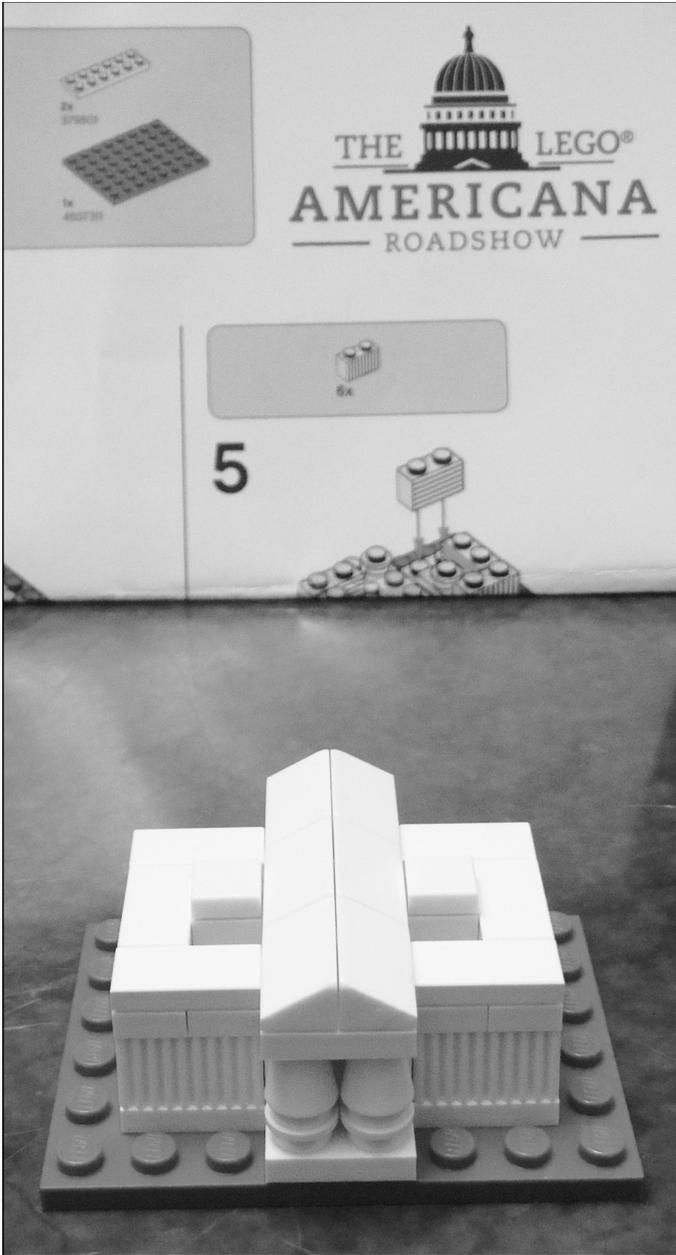
 THE LEGO® SUPREME COURT IS BUILT AT 1:54 SCALE AND IS ALMOST 10 FEET LONG.

 IT WAS BUILT IN 450 HOURS BY THREE LEGO® MASTER BUILDERS.


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THE LEGO®
AMERICANA
ROADSHOW
#LEGOAmericana

This AFOL – and probably any other – would have loved to take home the world’s largest LEGO Supreme Court Building. But there was no chance; it was a one-of-kind work of architecture and art. Fortunately, the good folks at LEGO made sure no exhibit attendee, young or old, left



The tiniest (so far) LEGO version of the U.S. Supreme Court Building, at Green Bag World Headquarters in Washington, DC.

The Largest and Tiniest LEGO Supreme Court Buildings

empty-handed. Every attendee had the opportunity to get his or her own tiny LEGO Supreme Court Building set. But the set did not come pre-packaged in a colorful box with pictures like the LEGO sets we are used to buying and giving and getting. Instead, attendees could make their way to a nearby empty store in the mall, where they were given a small plastic bag with the set's building instructions and a green 6x8 plate inside. Next, attendees were led to a table with twelve plastic bins, each filled with a different white LEGO brick, plate, or tile. Next to each bin was a sign listing how many of that particular piece you would need to build the tiny Court. My daughter, grandma, and I each carefully filled a bag with the necessary 43 white LEGO pieces and zipped it shut for safe storage in grandma's purse for the ride home. I took one last lap around the magnificent LEGO Supreme Court Building to marvel at its sheer size and detail. I could hardly wait to build and add the tiny Supreme Court Building to my LEGO Supreme Court collection.⁶

LEGO has yet to release an official Lego Architecture Supreme Court Building set, as it did for the buildings that house our other two coequal branches of government: The White House⁷ and U.S. Capitol Building.⁸ Until then, I will happily settle for the tiny LEGO Court and my own LEGO Supreme Court bench and Justices.

If any *Green Bag* readers want to build their own tiny LEGO U.S. Supreme Court Building and are curious about pieces or the instructions, email me at adamjhanson@mac.com for more details.⁹ Happy building and play well!¹⁰



⁶ Adam Hanson, *The Supreme Court* (2015) (*en block*), in 2016 GREEN BAG ALM., 264.

⁷ *Article II is Number 1 at LEGO*, 15 GREEN BAG 2D 1 (2011). This set is no longer in production so those looking to secure an official LEGO White House will have to find one on the secondary market.

⁸ www.lego.com/en-us/architecture/products/united-states-capitol-building-21030.

⁹ I will provide a parts list and a copy of the set's instructions, as well as tips for purchasing the necessary pieces in case you don't have exactly the right pieces on hand. For those up for a challenge, I would be happy to send additional pictures of the tiny Court so you can try to make the Court on your own.

¹⁰ The name "LEGO" is an abbreviation of the two Danish words "leg godt," meaning "play well." www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/lego-group/the_lego_history.