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443-4471

Brunswick Family Medicine
33 Bath Road, Brunswick
721-9323

Brunswick Primary Care
329 Maine Street, Suite H, Brunswick
729-6162

Lisbon Family Practice
2 Bisbee Street, Lisbon
353-6721

Topsham Family Medicine
4 Horton Place, Suite 101, Topsham
798-6200

Topsham Specialty Services
Topsham Medical Building, 4 Horton Place, Suite 201, Topsham

Coastal Plastic Surgery
798-6262
www.coastalplasticsurgerymaine.org

Obstetrics-Gynecology
795-5770

Endocrinology & Diabetes Care, including Nutritional Counseling
795-7520

Pediatric Cardiology
795-5730

Infectious Diseases
795-2729

Pulmonary and Sleep
795-5544

Neurology
795-2927 or 800-308-0460

Urology
795-5767

Pulmonary and Sleep
795-8260

Brunswick Specialty Services
329 Maine Street, Brunswick

Central Maine Heart Associates
729-5720

Hematology-Oncology
319-1847
In The Artist Way, Julia Cameron writes about Synchronicity and Spirituality:

Once you accept that it is natural to create, you can begin to accept a second idea: that the Creator will hand you whatever you need for the project. Be alert: there is a second voice, a higher harmonic, adding to and augmenting your inner creative voice. This voice frequently shows itself in synchronicity.

And, there is a Chinese saying: No Coincidence, No Story.

I am a storyteller. I tell stories through my art.

THE PAST IS PROLOGUE

I did not learn the history of Munjoy Hill (“The Hill”), Maine immigration, or the Casco Bay islands until I came home to care for my mom, Caroline Borofsky Israelson.
Maine Woolens was founded in 2009. Our flagship store in Freeport offers finely woven blankets and throws in cotton and wools that are made in our Brunswick, Maine mill. We weave with the best American fibers available including combed cotton, Supima cotton and Merino wools. We feel the quality of our Maine made products are second to none.

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Over the course of a week of packing and moving her to an assisted-living facility, I encountered little-known facts about my neighborhood, my hometown, my heritage.

Sitting in the middle of the room were the boxes of unsorted and unlabeled photographs. My mom picked one up:

“This is a photo of the synagogue your great-grandfather started.”

Etz Chaim? My great-grandfather, Philip Levinsky. Why don’t I know I this?

A week later, while kayaking in Casco Bay, my guide remarks:

“House Island was known as the ‘Ellis Island of the North.’ In November of 1923, 218 immigrants were diverted to Casco Bay, Maine.”

House Island—immigrants detained and quarantined. Why don’t I know about this?

I stumble across this paragraph researching House Island.

“When immigrant ships landed in Portland in 1923 and 1924, and the passengers were maintained on House Island, the Portland Council of Jewish Women set up kosher kitchens there… They also assisted immigrants in entering this country...”

Kosher kitchens? Immigrant assistance? Why don’t I know about this?!
of creating a piece for the museum. (When my mom was in high school, she spent summers as an *au pair*. One of her charges was the Maine Jewish Museum curator: Now, why didn’t I know about that?)

I am not sure if the “Coincidence Coordinator” is at work here. But there is a Yiddish word to describe what I am experiencing: *Beshart*—loosely translated as “meant to be.”

**WELCOMING THE STRANGER**

In the Bible, the Quran, and Torah, there are mandates to welcome those who come in need—of food, of shelter, of protection.

My previous artwork has examined family relations, untold secrets, little-known histories. I make connections between seemingly disparate pieces of information.

The stories in my show *Welcoming the Stranger: Building Understanding Through Community Based Art*, presented at the Jewish Museum through October 26, are told in a site-specific art installation.

*Abraham’s Tent* greets visitors at the entrance to the Museum. It is an installa-
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tion of textiles, sound recordings, and floor coverings. Weave the Tent events occurred throughout Portland to create the concurrent community exhibit and accompanying public events.

Sarah’s Generosity presents the history of the Jewish women who created a kosher kitchen on House Island. Each woman’s story is told in images transferred onto aprons.

Habeas Corpus presents the modern-day stories of immigrant cab drivers in Portland. Their voices will tell the story of all immigrants—current and past—and told from a taxi cab.

On my way to my studio, I walk along the same streets where the Irish, Italian, Greek, and Jewish immigrants lived when they first arrived in Portland. They were asylum seekers and refugees—escaping a life of persecution and poverty to provide their families a better life.

Today, new Mainers live on those same streets. They too are asylum seekers and refugees—who follow in the footsteps of those early immigrants.

I am a storyteller. I tell stories through my art.

I create artworks about small moments in history that reflect larger issues within a contemporary context. The role of the House Island quarantine station and those who welcomed the stranger may serve us as we find our own ways to welcome the stranger today.

Visit the “Welcoming The Stranger” exhibit at the Maine Jewish Museum at 267 Congress Street in Portland (773-2339, mainejewishmuseum.org) through October 26. Portland native Jo Israelson is a multimedia installation artist and stone sculptor with a degree from the University of Maryland.