

Arts & Life

Life: Heather Rayhorn, (503) 589-6930, life@statesmanjournal.com

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The Forward building used to be the home of a famous Yiddish newspaper in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Now it houses upscale condos. PHIL DECKER Special to the Statesman Journal



Statue of Liberty



Streit's Matzoh Factory, since 1925



Registry room at Ellis Island



Alexandra, Antonia and Rabi Decker in front of New York City skyline

TRACING JEWISH ROOTS

Your Travels Series Local photographer Phil Decker recently took his daughters back to Manhattan's Lower East Side, where his grandparents immigrated and pieces of his culture still remain

By PHIL DECKER
Special to the Statesman Journal

I grew up on stories of the vibrant, colorful and yet impoverished Jewish Lower East Side of Manhattan, the place where my mom was born and raised as a little girl, with her sisters, Ida and Goldie, in a small one-room apartment.

I heard stories of how my mom's parents, Grandpa Alex and Grandma Lena, fled the pogroms in Romania in the early 1900s and made their way to America, passing by the Statue of Liberty, being processed through Ellis Island and settling on the Lower East Side.

Online

See this story online for a photo gallery of Decker's photos online at StatesmanJournal.com

My grandparents must have lived and worked there for at least 20 years, until they moved the family to the Washington, D.C., suburbs after Aunt Ida landed a job as a secretary with the growing federal government during World War II.

The D.C. suburbs are where I grew up, but recently it was Manhattan's Lower East Side that drew me back, camera in hand.

Mom recounts how on New York's Lower East Side, Yiddish was the dominant language and how she had to share the bathroom in the hallway with other families on the same floor; about how her playground was the sidewalk in front of the tenement and how it wasn't safe to venture into other "dangerous" neighborhoods of different ethnic groups, just a few blocks away.

I sensed that life on the Lower East Side was bittersweet. It



Decker

If you go

- Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island Tours
 - www.ellisland.org
 - www.statelibrary.com
- Big Onion Walking Tours
 - www.bigonion.com
- Tenement Museum
 - www.tenement.org
- Eldridge Street Synagogue Museum
 - www.eldridgestreet.org

Photo exhibit

WHAT: "Traces of the Jewish Lower East Side"
OPENING: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 31
CONTINUES: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fridays, through March 6
COST: Free
WHERE: Temple Beth Shalom, 1274 Cunningham Lane S, Salem
CALL: (503) 362-5004

See Jewish roots, 8D

Tickets on sale for February's Clay Ball art auction

The event is a fundraiser for Salem Art Association

By BARBARA CURTIN
Statesman Journal

Tickets now are on sale for the 11th annual Clay Ball, one of the chief fundraisers for the Salem Art Association.

The gala event will be Feb. 27 at the Salem Conference Center. Its theme is "Starlight."

All 600 seats are expected to sell out, so guests should buy tickets early, said Debbie Leahy, fundraising director for

the art association.

The nonprofit organization's goal is to raise \$60,000 or more, she said. Last year's event drew about 580 people and cleared more than \$62,000 in profit.

About 120 artists will donate work to be auctioned. Non-art prizes, such as travel packages, also will be auctioned off.

In addition, 10 clay balls have been commissioned from artists Julie Huisman, Diane Lathrop, Kathy Lord, Marslynn Maltz, Cindy Nielsen, Martha Paulus, Andrea Peyton, Susan Boden, Kate Speck

man and Betsy Wolfson. They will be raffled off to those who buy tickets at \$100 each. Only 100 tickets will be sold. The holder of the first ticket drawn can choose from any of the pieces offered at auction. The next 10 ticket holders will win the clay balls.

Proceeds from the hall will support the Salem Art Association's programs, including exhibits at Bush Barn Art Center and Bush House Museum and in-school art programs that reach more than 11,000 local students annually.

See statesmanjournal.com or (503) 399-0369



KORBI R. HEAIR | Statesman Journal File

Artist Kristen Lassen Hunt (left) talks with Kurt and Jane Leonhardt about her piece "Wachtel Pica-Faith Fulness" at the silent auction at a previous Clay Ball. This year's event will be Feb. 27.

Annual Clay Ball

WHEN: Feb. 27, 5:30 to 7 p.m. wine reception and silent auction and 7:30 p.m. dinner and live auction
WHERE: Salem Conference Center
MENU: three-course seated dinner featuring marinated beef tenderloin or a vegetarian tomato papardelle pasta with shallot saffron cream, with local wines
SPONSOR: LCG Fence Construction LLC
TICKETS: \$75 (\$25 of which is tax-deductible). Call Salem Art Association, (503) 581-2228, visit the Bush Barn Art Center, 600 Mission St. SE, or visit www.SalemArt.org.

Artist's sense of 'Place' on exhibit at OSU gallery

CORVALLIS — "Place," an exhibit of oil paintings by Stephen Hayes, opens Monday in Fairbanks Hall on the Oregon State University campus.

Hayes received his master of fine arts degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wis., in 1980, having focused on drawing, specifically drawings of the human form. He then moved to the Middle East, where he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Cypriot landscape, before eventually making his home in Portland.

In the roughly 30 years that Hayes has spent working and teaching in Portland, he has participated in scores of exhibitions.

Fairbanks Gallery is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays. There will be a reception with a brief artist talk at noon Wednesday. The exhibit concludes Feb. 5.

—Barbara Curtin



Stephen Hayes' "Caldera" is part of a January show at Oregon State University.

Willamette faculty to perform free concert

The next free concert in the Camerata Musica Chamber Music Series will be at 2:30 p.m. Jan. 17 at the Salem Public Library, 585 Liberty St. SE.

The concert features soprano Amy Hansen, Datt Roush on violin, Anita King on piano, Natalie Lehr on clarinet and Mike

Hettwer on horn. They all are on the Willamette University music department faculty.

The program includes Schubert's "Shepherd on the Rock," Brahms' Fantasies, Op. 116, "Metamorphosis" by Phil Taylor and the "Trio" for violin, horn and piano by Brahms.

This will be the premiere of "Metamorphosis" by Taylor, a Willamette Uni-

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For up-to-date arts news throughout the week, check out the new Mid-Valley Arts Notes blog at StatesmanJournal.com/midvalleyarts

versity composition student who was one of 11 international recipients of the prestigious BMI composition award last year.

Willamette Heritage Center becomes reality

It's official — Mission Mill Museum and the Marion County Historical Society have become one: the Willamette Heritage Center. As of Jan. 1, the two

nonprofits now are merged. Right now, officials say, the major concern of the new organization is developing goals and strategies; to that end, they were awarded a \$26,000 Oregon Community Foundation grant.

The celebration and community events are scheduled for February; the ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place Feb. 16.

For more information, call (503) 585-7012 or visit www.missionmill.org.

—K. Williams Brown

Orchestra announces kids art competition

Salem Chamber Orchestra announced an art contest for kindergarten and elementary students in Marion and Polk counties.

The winner's artwork will be featured on the orchestra's concert posters and postcards for this year's "Gift of Music"

Family Concert.

The first 75 entrants also will get to sit in a reserved section at the concert, and all artwork entered will be projected on a large screen before and after the concert.

Students are invited to create works that celebrate both cooking and music. Mail entries to 100 High St. SE, Suite 207, Salem, OR 97301, postmarked no later than Jan. 29. The winner will be announced by Feb. 5.

For full contest rules, visit www.salemchamberorchestra.org. For more information, e-mail Noreen Murdock at noreen@salemchamberorchestra.org or call the office at (503) 480-1128.

The annual "Gift of Music" Family Concert will be held at 2 and 4 p.m. March 14. The concert is free, but tickets are required; call Travel Salem at (503) 581-4325.

—Submitted reports



PHIL DECKER | Special to the Statesman Journal

People walk by outside the newly restored Eldridge Street Synagogue in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Jewish roots

Continued from 1D

was a great place to be steeped in rich Jewish culture and traditions, while at the same time being battered by crowded living conditions, meager wages and the realization that the streets were not paved with gold.

My family's story is similar to the stories of thousands and thousands of Jewish families from Eastern Europe who came to America in the late 1800s and early 1900s, who cried at the sight of Lady Liberty, who were petrified that inspections at Ellis Island would send them back to the Old Country and who landed on the Lower East Side either as a pit stop or as a place to settle, before spreading to communities all throughout the United States. New York City's Lower East Side has become a place of origin for Jewish Americans, a place to connect with cultural roots and our journey into America.

During 1984, while studying at the International Center of Photography, a museum by New York's Central Park, I decided to document the Jewish community still left on the Lower East Side. I wandered upon a senior center, on the ground floor of a tall apartment complex, called the Adult Luncheon Club, filled every day with Jewish elders who still lived in the area. It was a haven for the last of the Jews from the heyday of immigration from Eastern Europe who still

remained on the Lower East Side.

Last summer, 25 years later, I flew back to the Lower East Side with my daughters. It was their first trip to New York City. Although they may have preferred to go shopping and spend more time at Times Square, we embarked on an exploration of our Jewish roots.

We visited the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. This helped us to imagine what Grandpa Alex and Grandma Lena saw as we stepped through the portal. We enjoyed a Big Onion "Multi-Ethnic Eating Tour" as we walked throughout the Lower East Side to get a taste of several of the neighborhood's ethnic groups, past and present: Jewish, Italian, Dominican and Chinese.

Along the walking tour, I was struck with how the signage rarely was in Yiddish or Spanish but now mostly in Chinese. It was evident that the Chinese community was now the dominant immigrant group, expanding throughout the Lower East Side. The Chinese are the latest occupants of the old tenement apartments, inhabited over the decades by a parade of ethnic groups.

Along the tour, there was faint evidence of the Jewish community that I heard stories about. You had to look closely for traces. The famous street names are the same, such as Delancy, Orchard,



Manhattan's Lower East Side shows pieces of its Jewish past.

Your Travels

Would you like to share your latest vacation or are you planning a trip you'd like to tell others about? Call Heather Rayhorn, (503) 588-6920, or e-mail her at hayhorn@statesmanjournal.com to be part of Your Travels.

Essex, Hester, but signs of Jewish life are scattered. There's Hebrew text on the top of the building that used to house the famous Yiddish newspaper "The Forward." (Now it's a building of upscale condos.) There are a few synagogues tucked on side streets, and a few famous Jewish businesses have survived, such as Katz' Deli and Streits's Matzah Factory.

After the Big Onion tour, we enjoyed dinner in Chinatown, got back on the subway and arrived late and exhausted at the rowhouse we rented in Brooklyn. By now, my daughters were done with the roots tour. However, the hints of the Jewish

past on the Lower East Side intrigued me. I wanted to photograph all the traces I could find, tucked into the current life and cultures of the Lower East Side.

So, I carved out a day in our travel schedule to just hang out with my little camera on the streets of the Lower East Side. I visited the Tenement Museum and the Eldridge Street Synagogue Museum, which gave me more clues and insights. But for most of the day, I just staked out Jewish traces on the streets and tried to capture the life surrounding those traces.

There is no longer a "Jewish Lower East Side"; nonetheless, you still can re-create, in bits and pieces, an idea of what used to be there, and you definitely can appreciate the amazing diversity and complexity of the Lower East Side, as waves of cultural groups continue to call this dense urban landscape home.

Contact Phil Decker at phildecker@peoplepc.com

WUNDERLAND VIDEO GAMES SALEM 503/399-9410

HILARIOUS! Youth in Revolt THE FIRST GREAT COMEDY OF THE NEW YEAR IS NOW PLAYING!

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