



# Loom and Spindle

THE MILL MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT / WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM

**COMING EVENTS:**

- **Exhibit: World War II: The Connecticut Home Front.**  
Aug. 24 to Nov. 11.
- **Grand Opening of World War II Exhibit: U. S. O. Theme.**  
Sep. 8, 8:00-11:00 at the Museum. \$10.
- **Knitting Workshop.** Sep. 29 & 30, 12:00-6:00 p.m..  
Finished products go to current soldiers and veterans. Yarn available.
- **Veterans Oral History.** Sep. 29 & 30, 12:00-6:00 p.m..  
The Library of Congress through CPTV will interview Connecticut World War II veterans.
- **Walking Weekend: World War II Willimantic.** Oct. 6, 3:00. Reservations requested.
- **Witchcraft in Connecticut.** Oct. 19. A presentation by State Historian Water Woodward.
- **Sock Hop.** Oct. 27. Kramer School gym.
- **World War II Letters from the Connecticut Home Front.** Nov. 11.

**WORLD WAR II: THE CONNECTICUT HOME FRONT**

Starting August 24, the Mill Museum will feature a new temporary exhibit, "World War II: On the Home Front." The exhibit will be up until November 11. It will be cosponsored by Connecticut Public Television, and funded in part by a grant from the Community Foundation of the Tri-County Area's Cultural Heritage Program supported by the Connecticut Humanities Council.

The exhibit — along with a number of related events — will run in conjunction with the new PBS miniseries, *The War*, a 7-part series by Ken Burns set to premier on Sunday, Sept. 23, at 8 p.m.

"This will be a really big event," said Bev York, the Museum's Educator and Curator of Exhibits. "In addition to the exhibit, we will have a USO Dance, a

reenactment of knitting relief efforts, oral history interviews with veterans, a walking tour of 'World War II' Willimantic, and a program on World War II letters home."

Burns's latest documentary focuses on the experiences of four representative American

communities during the war, including Waterbury, CT.

Oral history interviews with veterans will be conducted at the Museum, with copies sent to the Library of Congress as part of the national Veterans History Project.

**Connecticut's mills and workers were vital to victory on the home front. Photo from the Museum's archives.**



**I M M I G R A T I O N E X H I B I T P L A N N E D**

The Mill Museum recently received a \$1400 grant from the Cultural Heritage Fund, a collaboration between the Community Foundation of the Tri-County Area and the Connecticut Humanities Council, to construct a permanent exhibit on immigration into eastern Connecticut during the Industrial Age.

The exhibit will be on the stairs leading to the Dunham Hall Library on the third floor of the Museum's main building. It will feature a timeline of immigration into the region's mill towns, beginning with the Yankees of the early 1800s and ending with the Latinos of the mid-1900s.

The exhibit will be the first step

in a planned larger project to chronicle the lives and experiences of the tens of thousands of immigrants whose labor was so vital to the Industrial Age.

Anyone interested in contributing to the project is encouraged to contact the project coordinator, Dr. Jamie Eves, at the Museum.

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## E . C . S . U . E C O N O M I C S C L A S S R E S E A R C H E S P O D C A S T S A T D U N H A M H A L L L I B R A R Y

In May, Dr. Rhona Free of Eastern Connecticut State University brought her students to the Museum's Dunham Hall Library for some heavy-duty research.

A specialist in labor economics, Dr. Free wanted her students to get a sense of what working conditions were like in the American textile industry in the early and middle years of the 20th century.

But rather than produce typical student research papers,

Dr. Free had her students put together podcasts, which can be downloaded from the internet onto a computer or an I-pod.

To acquire visuals for their podcasts, the students scanned images from the Museum's archives. Over a three-day period, they scanned hundreds of images, including pay envelopes from the 1920s, official 1940s-1950s American Thread Company (ATCO) photos of employees at work (see

photo at right), pictures of the 1925 ATCO strike, the 1902 charter of the Willimantic local (no. 307) of the United Textile Workers of America, and contracts with replacement workers from the strike.

As part of their research, the students met with Dale Plummer, the Norwich town historian, a long-time volunteer at the Museum, and an expert on mill machinery. Plummer ran several textile machines for the students.



**American Thread Company worker testing the strength of thread. This photo, from the Museum's archives, was scanned by students in Dr. Free's class for podcast.**

## P R E S I D E N T ' S R E P O R T

*"The Museum has been designated the official Welcome Center for Windham/Willimantic."*

A lot has been going on at the Mill Museum.

Executive Director Mary Brown has left to pursue other challenges. Friends can contact her at the Jonathan Trumbull House in Lebanon. We appreciate the good work Mary did in her nine months with the Museum, and we wish her well in her future endeavors.

One of Mary's accomplishments was securing a \$1400

grant for the Museum from the Cultural Heritage Fund, a collaboration of the Community Foundation of the Tri-County Area and the Connecticut Humanities Council. The grant will create a permanent exhibit on immigration into eastern Connecticut during the Industrial Revolution.

We will begin a search for Mary's replacement as soon as possible.

In other news, the Museum has been designated the offi-

cial Welcome Center for Windham/Willimantic.

Finally, thanks to the Access Agency, we will have two new temporary part-time workers at the Museum, to help with clerical and maintenance tasks.

Best Wishes,

*Kit*

Katherine "Kit" Eves, President of the Board of Directors

## N E W S L E T T E R G E T S N E W N A M E , L O O K

Starting with this issue, the Mill Museum's newsletter gets a new name and look.

The Museum began publishing a newsletter for its members in 1987. The first issue was called the *Windham Textile and History Museum Newsletter*. In 1990 the name was changed to the *Textile Gazette*. A few years ago, it was changed

again, to *The Mill Museum Gazette*.

As the Museum has grown, its mission and audience has grown along with it.

The newsletter will still report on the Museum's activities. But now it will also carry articles and photos about the history of the textile industry in Connecticut.

The newsletter will continue to come out quarterly.

The newsletter's new name, *Loom and Spindle*, comes from a book by the same name written in the late 1800s by Harriet Hanson Robinson, a former "mill girl" at the Lowell mills in Massachusetts. One of only two book-length firsthand accounts about the early "mill girls," *Loom and Spindle* describes the work and lives of mill workers in New England in the 1830s.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:  
AMERICAN THREAD'S THE MONTHLY YARN

*“Many American Thread Company workers’ names appear in the Yarn, making it a good source for genealogical research.”*

From 1973 to 1982 the American Thread Company’s Willimantic Mills published an employee newsletter called *The Monthly Yarn*. Printed in two colors (black and red) in the Mills’ own print shop, the *Yarn* replaced an earlier newsletter known as the *ATCO Star*.

The *Yarn* was a typical corporate newsletter, full of exhortations to work harder, take fewer sick days, and appreciate the company, but containing precious little actual news.

The company held an annual Perfect Attendance Dinner. In 1973 the Dinner honored 163 employees who had accumu-

lated from one to nine years of perfect attendance. The six workers with nine years of perfect attendance were named in the *Yarn*.

The *Yarn* also reported on workers who won service pins for longevity. In 1973, two employees won 25 Year Pins.

The newsletter listed the departments that had had the fewest compensable accidents each month.

The *Yarn* carried photographs of workers enjoying the company’s annual summer outing at Ocean Beach in New London. In 1973 2,960 employees attended. The outing was co-

sponsored by ATCO and the Textile Workers Union of America.

Many American Thread Company workers’ names appear in the *Yarn*, making it a good source for genealogical research.

Over time, the *Yarn* appeared less and less frequently. The final issue appeared shortly before ATCO closed its Willimantic plant in the 1980s.

The Museum has an almost complete run of the *Yarn* in its archives at the Dunham Hall Library (on the top floor of the Museum), where it is available to the public.

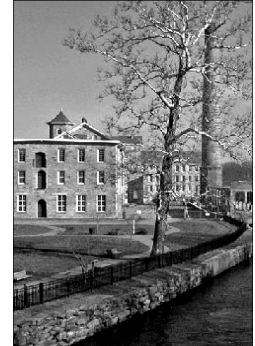
CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEB SITE

This year the Museum received a two-year grant from SBM to improve its educational programming.

As part of the grant, the Museum is revamping its Web site, [www.millmuseum.org](http://www.millmuseum.org), to make it more education friendly. The work is being supervised by the Museum’s Educator, Bev York, and Maureen Mulroy, a volunteer and a professor at the University of Connecticut.



**Images from our new Web site. Check it out at [www.millmuseum.org](http://www.millmuseum.org). Museum staff and volunteers are currently hard at work revamping the Web site. It’s still a work in progress, so continue to visit the site to see all the changes being made.**



MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

If you have already renewed your membership, thank you! (Check your mailing label to find out.)

Student/Senior, \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining, \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual, \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Patron, \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Family/Household, \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor, \$250 \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor, above \$250 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation \_\_\_\_\_

We are a 501(c)3 organization. Your donations are tax deductible.

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Checks payable to: W. T. H. M.

Windham Textile and History Museum, 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

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WWW.MILLMUSEUM.ORG

THE MILL  
MUSEUM OF  
CONNECTICUT  
WINDHAM TEXTILE AND  
HISTORY MUSEUM

411 Main Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226

Phone: (860) 456-2178

Email: millmuseum@sbcglobal.net

**Address Correction Requested**

THANK YOU!

- Bruce Bellingham restored and painted the Museum's front door, including cleaning and polishing the antique hardware.
- Bob Jacko loaned the Museum his scanner, so that we can scan our collection of old photographs.
- The 9th Annual Victorian Days, which the Museum co-sponsored with the Willimantic Victorian Neighborhood Association — and which featured the now-famous Victorian Home Tour — was a smashing success. According to WVNA President Bob Horrocks, "More than 150 community volunteers contributed to the success of ... Victorian Days ... in early June. There were the usual horse-drawn wagons...; beautiful gardens open for visitors; musicians greeting tourists on porches; and, of course, a variety of wonderful vintage homes open for viewing."
- Tony Clark is undertaking a study of Willimantic's Main Street through the decades. He is reading back issues of the *Willimantic Chronicle*. In doing so, he has discovered that the newspaper published lists of books purchased by what was then the Dunham Hall Library, founded and maintained by the Willimantic Linen Company for its employees, their families, and other townspeople. He has given the Museum copies of the lists for our collection.
- Ann Nasin gave the Museum two thread salesman's kits that belonged to her late husband, Steven. Steven Nasin worked for the American Thread Company in Willimantic for 50 years in a number of capacities, beginning as a teen and retiring in 1975 as a foreman.
- Sandy Bailey gave the Museum a copy of the brochure "How We Make Our Thread," printed for the use of employees of the Willimantic Linen Company.
- Susan Johnson is planning to sponsor a garden party at her home as a fundraiser for the Museum.
- Roy Fairfield gave the Museum a copy of *The Saco-Lowell Shops: Textile Machinery Building in New England, 1813-1949*, by George S. Gibb.
- Thanks to the dozens of volunteers who donated their time and energy to the Museum this past quarter. We could not have done it without them.