



Loom and Spindle

The Mill Museum Newsletter

May 2023

Bobbin' About

Events at the Museum and the Community

Current Exhibit through August 13: **The “Here All Along” exhibit.** Explore the African American experience in northeastern Connecticut (with an emphasis on Windham and Willimantic) from the 1600s to 1910, with an additional section relating to the 20th century. Learn the stories of Jo, Eliza, Job and Jesse Leason, Lyman and Clarissa Jackson, Ceasar and Julia Hall, and others who experienced Connecticut, its rural communities and mill towns, and the meaning of freedom in different ways than their white neighbors.

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Sat., May 6: Eastern Connecticut Railroad Museum reopens for the 2023 season Saturdays 10am -4pm. **[Learn More!](#)**

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Sun., May 7: **Mother’s Day or Mother’s Figure Day Craft.** Dan Thomacos will have some vacuum formed flower portraits for children to paint and give out the next weekend. This event will take place in the Dugan building at 157B Union Street at 2 p.m. \$12 for members and \$15 for the public. The ticket price includes paint, paint brushes, and smiles. Please purchase your ticket in advance through our website, by PayPal, or at the Museum Gift Shop, cash or credit card. Please purchase or reserve your spot for this craft by May 2.

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Thurs., May 18: **Third Thursday**, 6 p.m. - 9 p. m. on Main St., Willimantic, CT. The Mill Museum and the CT Eastern Railroad Museum will be sharing a booth. Enter a drawing to win free tickets to the Mill Museum. Stop at our booth and make an Irish Flag.



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Sat., May 20: **The Drop-in Spinning Bee with Peggy Church**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., at Dugan Hall, 157B Union St., Willimantic. Bring a spindle or spinning wheel and join us at this free event. Beginners are welcome. We are requesting that you be COVID vaccinated. Please let us know that you plan to come, and if you have questions, contact Peggy Church at peggychurch2@gmail.com.

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Sun., May 21: **Presentation, 2 p.m. Willimantic's American Thread Merger: A Model of Incorporating Connecticut?** Donald Rogers, PhD. will explore the legacy of the American Tread Company, at the Dugan building at 157B Union Street. \$12 for members and \$15 for the public. Please purchase your ticket in advance through our website, by PayPal, or at the Museum Gift Shop, cash or credit card.

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Sun., May 21: **Thread City Hop Fest:** *"The Thread City Hop Fest is a craft beer tasting, good food eating event slated for Sunday, May 21st, 2023 in Willimantic, CT. From great food, to great beer and live music (with a lot of fun things in-between) the Hop Fest is on its way to becoming a signature event in the City of Festivals. Tickets are \$40/per person in advance or \$55 at the gate. (Proper ID will be required.) Attendees will enjoy samples from over 55+ breweries from throughout New England. Food and entertainment will be available beginning at 2 pm. This event is rain or shine. The Thread City Hop Fest is organized by the Willimantic Brewing Company on behalf of Willimantic Renaissance, Inc. Proceeds from the Hop Fest benefit The No Freeze Project, Willimantic Renaissance, Inc. and Vulturetown Arts."* Tickets available at: <https://beerfests.com/events/>

Still on the Spools

Upcoming Events



Fri., June 2: **Justice - Michelle Thomas Art Opening.** On June 2 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. The Mill Museum will present a free opening. The artist will present with her work along side with *"Here All Along,"* the ongoing exhibit that explores the African American experience in northeastern Connecticut from the 1600s to 1910. She creates artwork in her Artpeace studio. She is a professor

at Pratt, Brooklyn, NY

WELCOME NEW SENIOR EDUCATOR/ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

The Windham Textile Museum is thrilled to welcome McKenzie H. Korte, known as Mac, as our new Senior Educator / Associate Director. With his BA in History from Eastern Connecticut State University and extensive experience at institutions such as *Mystic Seaport Museum*, *Mashantucket Pequot Museum*, and *Coos Bay School District*, Mac brings a wealth of knowledge to the role. His track record of success includes increasing visitor engagement and implementing innovative educational programs in his previous positions.

Kira notes that Mac's dedication to the museum field, expertise in developing innovative educational programs, and understanding of American and Native American history make him an invaluable asset to the museum. Also, he brings grant writing, tech-savvy nature, and creative ideas for the education department.

As Mac embarks on his new role at the Windham Textile Museum, he is eager to reach a wider audience, stating, "In my new role at Windham Textile Museum, I'm passionate about modernizing our online presence, expanding educational programs, and enhancing visitor experiences, while highlighting the textile industry's history and its impact on workers, women's rights, and minority communities." Mac is also excited to become more involved in the local community and foster strong connections between the museum and its visitors.



Stay tuned for upcoming events and initiatives at the Windham Textile Museum, as Mac brings his experience and vision to our team. You can follow the museum's progress on social media on [Facebook](#) or visit our [website](#) for the latest updates. Please contact Mac by [email](#) and welcome him to our unique learning place for local and industrial history. Good luck, Mac!

Have You Been Missing Out

Recent Happenings

Book Signing, Doe Hentschel, Ph.D. *Look, Ma! No Hands! Life's Lessons Learned the Hard Way.* On Sat., April 15, Doe started her book tour at The Mill Museum. She read several parts of her book and led a discussion that ended with dessert and books signed for several people who attended.

The Art of Vacuum Forming. Sun., April 16, Dan Thomacos shared the art and craft of vacuum forming in the Dugan building. Participants learned all of the elements of the process. After the demonstration, each attendee took home a piece of art. He will be presenting the Mother's Day Craft on Sun., May 7.

Volunteer Gathering. Sat., April 15. Past and present Mill Museum volunteers gathered for fellowship, fun, and food. At the Museum we toured the "Here All Along" exhibit. Then, we gathered at the Willimantic Brewing Company for a fun evening. It was a great evening of food, history, and memories to cherish!

Earth Day Plant Sale

Where were you in 1970? Earth Day was first proclaimed by citizens throughout the country and across the globe. Since then, in April, the month when nature reemerges from the lethargy of winter (at least in New England) we celebrate imagining a healthy beautiful world.



For three days, April 21- April 23, the Dugan building was filled with dirt, pots, plants, pearls, and smiles! The opening event on Friday included pizza, chips, mini-Bundts, cookies, and punch. Beautiful re-potted creations were made this evening and the next two days. Thanks to the efforts especially of Christy and Crystal for organizing and proposing this event. This was a fun and successful fundraiser for The Mill Museum

A big thank you to Amy, Lou, Ron, Gwen, Grace, Ann-Marie, Joanne, Wally, Nancy, and Pieter for working the event, donating plants, and buying plants.

Thank you, as well, to our local business sponsors : Logee's Garden Center, Nash, Mackey's, Ladd's Garden Center, Sprucedale Gardens, Hart's

Greenhouse, and Pleasant Pizza in making this event a success!

The plants included vegetables, pansies, jade, succulents, spider, other variety of plants so each person walked out with the perfect plant to grow into their life. The sale raised over \$700. Gale Olsen won the Logee's Gift Card

Partnerships

A Message from Kira Holmes

As Executive Director I have been working with local and state agencies, businesses and individuals to build partnerships. These partnerships go beyond staging an event or accepting a gift. While those are important, collaborating with others strengthens both our museum and the community as a whole.

I regularly sit with local cultural social and business representatives. We learn about local changes and share strategies for working together to invigorate Willimantic and all of Windham.

I will be using this column to share the partnership activities in which we are engaging. If you have ideas to share, do so [here](#).

Thanks.

Partnerships

Recent Collaborations

Eastern Connecticut State University Volunteers

Student volunteers from Eastern Connecticut State University, through the Center for Community Engagement have been helping out at the Museum. On April 15th, a group of students worked with Jim Smart to repair the stone wall on Union Street to prevent water from getting into the building. Other students helped Amy Marwood with spring



landscaping. Another group came to the museum the following week, part of Town Wide Town Pride day, on April 22. Working with Jamie Eves and Michael Mahony, they sealed the Dugan ramp, raked several flower beds and mulched around the rose bushes.

As a thank you, the students toured the museum. Our partnership with ECSU has proved mutually beneficial and we hope to continue.

Students from ACT Visit

Ninth grade Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT) students visited The Mill Museum for broad learning experience on April 20.

The Mill Museum had much to offer them. Our current exhibit, Here All Along, helped bring new insight to the history of our town. A scavenger hunt [attribution] led them through the museum looking to spot artifacts and exhibit elements. The contrast in living conditions between the Mill managers and the laborers became real. Machinery on display in Dugan, hinted at the variety of jobs to be done and the danger faced in a textile mill.

The neighborhood walking tour was conducted, spending about an hour seeing the mills, the housing and the recreation facilities that remain today in the town built on spinning thread.

Randy Nokes, one of several ACT teachers who accompanied the students said, "Thank you for hosting our group yesterday. We appreciate the work you, Mac, Jamie, and any others behind the scenes, put into scheduling our visit and conducting the tours. It was a great experience for students to see history come alive through your exhibits and learn from experts in the field."

ACT will continue our partnership next fall. Our Museum and our knowledge of local history is a perfect fit for high school students: the locations are authentic and primary source material is the key to critical thinking. This tour is available in the future for students studying African American and immigrant experiences, local, civic, industrial, and social history.

When scheduling a school or group visit please contact a month prior to the visit, but no later than two weeks in advance. Let us help you reach your learning objectives. The Mill Museum can tailor groups tours to any grade school group from K-12. Please email education@millmuseum.org or call (860) 456-2178.

American Alliance of Museum

The American Alliance of Museums, a national organization of museum professionals, has partnered with us in their annual survey of museum goers. They will use data to construct national models. Locally, we will use data to better understand our visitors. We want to know how we can support and engage YOU in 2023 and beyond.

Our visitors come to us with different needs and values, and we want to understand them. This helps us best serve you. We hope to learn how museums (like ours!) can help expand learning while also addressing the challenges our society is facing. We need to hear your thoughts.

The Mill Museum is participating in the national survey of museum-goers, sponsored by the American Alliance of Museums. This survey will provide us with data from our visitors as well as nationwide results for context, helping us be more effective in the coming months and in the communities we serve.

The survey only takes about 9 minutes to complete, but in those 9 minutes you will help our team make better decisions for our future. And as a thank you there will be an opportunity for you to win one of ten \$100 Visa gift cards!

[Click Here for Survey](#)

Note: participation in this survey is voluntary and no questions are required. All responses to this survey will be kept confidential. Your response will not be used for any future solicitation. If you have any problems with the survey itself, please contact the survey administrator [Jessica Strube](#).

One More Thing

Listening to our members and our visitors

Our community has a rich history of struggle. Between wealthy and poor, between the burgeoning middle class of the Industrial Revolution and the influx of immigrants providing cheap labor, and the growth of organized labor protecting workers, advocating for healthy humane working and living conditions. The Mill Museum offers a wonderful resource for witnessing history and applying lessons to today.

Museums, not only history museums, connect us with others. History museums connect us through time. Art museums connect us to ideas and cultures. Science museums connect us to the planet and our stewardship responsibilities.

If you have ideas, recommended contacts, or even complaints, we do want to hear from you.

[Click Here](#)

Wish List

Things Wanted

Small Canister Style Vacuum Cleaner

Help Wanted

Gift Shop Agent - Saturdays: Mind the store, greet the guests, collect admission and purchases.

Newsletter Contributors: write an article, share historical knowledge.

Newsletter Editor/Proofreader for the Newsletter: more than a second set of eyes, prepare content for paste-up.

eBay Specialist - A very generous gift of valuable books covering a wide array of textiles, art and craft, has been received. The donor suggested that we could sell the ones we can't use in our research library on eBay to make extra money for the Museum. Do you have experience with eBay, as a seller?

Book Handler: Assist with the transporting and receiving of the book collection (above).

Sommelier and others to set up and host the Gala Opening, June 2, for the Justice - Michelle Thomas art exhibit that will accompany Jamie's "Here All Along".

[Contact Us](#)

Get Woven into the Fabric of Our Museum

You don't have to live in Willimantic or Windham to support the Mill Museum. We're a REGIONAL museum, so folks throughout eastern Connecticut and beyond can learn about the vital role the mills and the people who worked in them played in shaping the area's history. If you've already become a member, THANK YOU! If not, please consider joining our ranks.

At the \$25 COTTON (Individual) level, members receive the newsletter; email notice of the Museum's programs and events; free admission to the Museum, its library and exhibits (special events and fundraisers may be extra); and 1-hour access to staff time for personal research.

At the \$50 WOOL (Family) level, membership extends these same benefits to members of a household consisting of up to two adults and any number of children.

At the \$100 SILK (Patron) level, membership includes all the above benefits, plus invitations to a private, advance showing of exhibits; free personal tours; and 3-hour access to staff time for personal research.

Membership Levels:

Cotton (individual) membership, \$25

Wool (family) membership, \$50

Silk (patron) membership, \$100

Windham Textile & History Museum

411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

Make checks out to: WTHM

Go to <https://millmuseum.org/join-membership/> and join today or increase your level of membership. Your involvement may be one more thread in a growing tapestry of

history.



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Our mailing address is:

860-456-2178 * 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226
Open Fri-Sun, 10-4
themillmuseum@gmail.com

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