



Loom and Spindle

THE MILL MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT /
WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM

COMING EVENTS:

- **Treasures From the Collection Exhibit Opens.** Sat., Sep. 26.
- **From Bustles to Bootleg: Vintage Clothing Fashion Show and Roaring Twenties Speakeasy ... and Opening Reception for Treasures From the Collection Exhibit.** Sat., Oct. 3, 7:00-9:30 PM. \$25 in advance; \$30 at the door. Limited to first 125.
- **Downtown Willimantic Country Fair.** Sun., Oct. 4, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- **Annual Membership Meeting.** Thurs., Oct. 8, 5:30 PM, at the Museum.
- **Walktober: "Run of the Mill."** Sun., Oct. 18, 3:00 PM. Bev York will conduct a free walking tour of the historic former American Thread Company mills. Meet at the Museum.
- **Tea and Talk: Cemeteries of Eastern Connecticut.** Sun., Oct. 18, 4:30-5:30 PM. Cheryl Lebeau. \$10 per person.
- **Sock Hop.** Sat., Oct 24. 7:00-11:00 PM. Kramer Gym on Prospect Street in Willimantic. \$15.
- **Hallowe'en Hauntings: A Paranormal Experience.** Fri., Oct. 30. 6:00 PM to midnight. \$30.
- **Tea & Talk: Treasures From the Collection.** Sun., Nov. 1, 4:00-5:30 PM. Bev York. \$10.
- **Children's Treasure Hunt.** Sun., Nov. 15, 4:00-5:30 PM. Bev York. \$10.

NEW "TREASURES FROM THE COLLECTIONS" EXHIBIT KICKS OFF WITH ROARING TWENTIES SPEAKEASY AND VINTAGE CLOTHING FASHION SHOW

A cloth fragment from the first cotton mill in America, a Civil War era quilt once buried to protect it from marauding soldiers, an 1876 bedcovering with the faces of the presidents crocheted into it – these extraordinary objects are part of the Windham Textile and History Museum's new exhibit: "Treasures from the Permanent Collection."

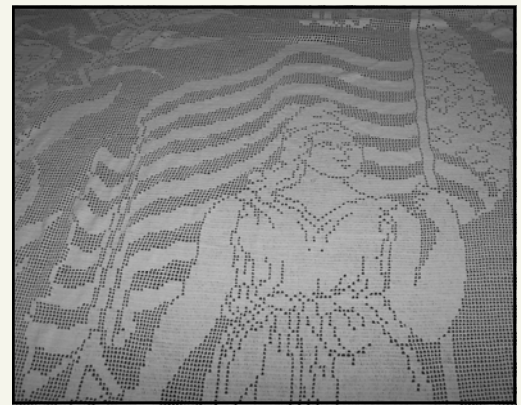
The exhibit focuses on approximately 50 rarely seen textiles, paintings, photos, furniture, machinery, and other artifacts from the museum's collection of over 30,000 items, which date from the colonial period through the 20th century.

"Treasures" is the culminating exhibit of the museum's year-long 20th anniversary celebration, and runs from Sept. 26 to December 27, 2009. A grand opening reception with a fashion show and 1920s speakeasy party will be Oct. 3 from 7-9:30 p.m.

Co-sponsored by the Savings Institute Bank and Trust and the Gates Group, the speakeasy and fashion show will be called "From

Bustles to Bootleg." Organized by volunteers Linda Riquier and Pam Horrocks of Willimantic, the fashion show will feature clothes from the Victorian Era to the Roaring Twenties – with the promise of a few surprises along the way. And for the evening, the Museum will be converted into a speakeasy, with beer, wine, and Prohibition punch. Visitors will need to know the "secret password" (printed on their tickets) to gain admittance. And for that night only, Cheryl Hines, a private collector, will display her priceless collection of Victorian-era purses.

Tickets to the speakeasy and fashion show are \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door, and are limited to the first 125 people.



Mary Bowman's prize-winning 1876 bedspread was handed down by four generations of a Willimantic family before being donated to the museum this year.

Other exhibit-related events are a Tea and Talk entitled "Tales from the Treasures" by historian Bev York, on Sunday, Nov. 1, from 4:00 to 5:30 (admission \$10), and a children's treasure hunt and treasure box activity, on Sunday, Nov. 15, from 4:00 to 5:30.

For more information, contact the Museum at 860-377-7755.

THE MUSEUM GARDENS

Old photos in the Museum's collection show that its buildings once were surrounded by gardens and trees. Shady elms lined Willimantic's Main Street throughout the mill district, and a garden once existed where the Museum's parking lot is today. Alas, trees and garden all disappeared decades ago.

Thanks to the donation of plants and time by Museum members

Faith Kenton, Charles Krich, Marty Lavoy, Michele Nahas, Susan Koppisch, Pam Horrocks, and Thomas Thibodeau – and the Windham, CT, Department of Public Works, the Windham Garden Club, and the Alternate Incarceration Center – gardens and trees have returned to the Museum grounds. Last issue, we promised pictures. Here they are (and on the back page, too).



HALLOWE'EN GHOST HUNT

On October 30 the Windham Textile and History Museum will host Hallowe'en Hauntings: A Paranormal Experience, conducted by P.R.O.O.F. The event includes a dinner at the Willimantic Elks Club, a presentation of evidence of Willimantic-area paranormal activity, and ghost hunting at the Elks Club, the Windham Textile and History Museum, a former church, and the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum. The event will end at the Old Willimantic Cemetery. Admission is \$30 per person. For reservations, call 860-377-7755.

As part of the event, P.R.O.O.F. will draw the names of five lucky participants who will win VIP spots on P.R.O.O.F. to investigate an infamous haunt in Massachusetts. Three of the five winners will also receive free professional ghost-hunting equipment baskets. Each basket will include a digital camera, an E.M.F. detector, a Gauss Meter, an IR thermometer, and a 302-hour voice-activated digital recorder. Each basket has a \$350 value.

*"The software
will allow
volunteers to
transfer paper
catalog records
to electronic
format."*

The Museum gratefully thanks the Willimantic, CT, Rotary for a grant of \$725 to purchase Past Perfect software for its Dunham Hall Library and archives. The software will allow volunteers to transfer paper catalog records to electronic format, making it easier for visitors, patrons, and staff to locate items. Paper records will still be kept, as back-up.

The Museum also thanks the following volunteers.

George Buch of Willimantic and Duane Sharp of East Hartford for the many hours they spent getting the Museum's computers up and running after recent problems.

Mike Haggerty of Windham, CT, for all his help in setting up for events and keeping the Museum grounds clean.

Sue Humes of Willimantic for her help in cleaning up after events, staffing events, and even painting. As folks in Willimantic know, Sue is one of the community's great treasures.

Cheryl Lebeau of Windham Center for scanning and cataloging the Museum's collection of postcards, stereographs, and trade cards.

Kit Eves of Willimantic for sewing hundreds of potholders, dozens of cloth bags, and acquiring other items for the Museum's Linen Company Store gift shop. Sometimes Kit sets up her sewing machine in a corner of the Museum, a living sweatshop display!

Pam Horrocks of Willimantic for providing and maintaining the flowers and plants in front

of the Museum, and for her help with Museum events.

Carol Buch of Willimantic for taking on the role of Volunteer Coordinator.

Fiona Leek and Steve Dolan of Mansfield Center. Fiona is preserving and cataloging the Museum's textile collection, and Steve is helping to restore old mill machinery.

Jacqueline Platt and Claire Compton for helping with events.

The Museum also thanks the Alternate Incarceration Center for helping with the Museum's gardens, and for moving heavy items.

SOCK HOP

You can dance the night away to tunes from the 1950s and 60s and help the Museum at the same time. On Saturday, Oct. 24, from 7-11 PM, the Museum will hold its third annual Sock Hop fundraiser in the Kramer gym on Prospect Street in Willimantic. Spinning platters will be that popular DJ, the P'om. Admission is \$15 per person. Because a new floor has been installed in the gym, only rubber soled shoes or socks are permitted. Come dressed in your best 50s or 60s attire, or come as you are.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Museum will hold its annual membership meeting on Thursday, October 8, at 5:30 PM in the Museum. All members are welcome to attend, and all members have voting rights. There are several vacancies in the Museum's Board of Directors. Candidates may be nominated and elected at the meeting.

THANKS!

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Carol Buch — herself a longtime volunteer at the Mill Museum — has taken over the task of being the Museum's Volunteer Coordinator, itself a volunteer position. Carol is a retired schoolteacher and has recently taught women's studies at the University of Connecticut. She knows that, without volunteers, the Museum would not function.

According to Carol, the Museum's most pressing volunteer needs are docents, counter help, and event staff.

Docents — the word means "wise

ones" — conduct tours. Counter help work behind the counter in the Museum's Linen Company Store gift shop and Visitor's Center, greeting visitors to the Museum and helping tourists find area accommodations. Events staff assist with events, serving teas, setting up chairs, and cleaning up afterwards.

But Carol says there are lots of other volunteer opportunities, as well, such as working with the Museum's collections of documents, textiles, photos, furniture, and machinery; helping with exhibits; working in the Dunham Hall Library; computer

work; marketing; and even facilities maintenance.

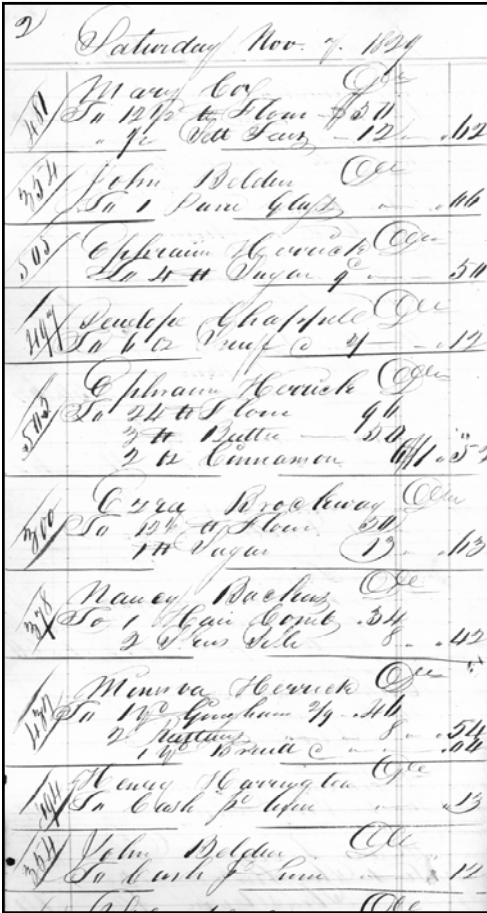
There will be formal training for volunteers, including workshops on Connecticut's textile history, field trips to area museums, and specialized training for specific tasks. Volunteers also receive benefits, including free membership.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Carol or Brooke Shannon at the Museum at 456-2178.



Volunteer docent leading a tour of the former American Thread Company mills in Willimantic, CT. The Museum is seeking more docents, and will provide all the necessary training.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES:
THE WINDHAM COTTON MANUFACTURING
COMPANY'S 1829-30 COMPANY STORE LEDGER
BY JAMIE H. EVES, VOLUNTEER COLLECTIONS CURATOR**



A page from the Windham Cotton Manufacturing Company's 1829-30 company store ledger. We see that Mary Cox purchased 12 1/2 pounds of flour for 50 cents, John Bolden purchased a pane of glass for 66 cents, Ephraim Herrick purchased 4 pounds of sugar for 50 cents, and Penelope Chappell purchased 6 ounces of snuff for 12 cents.

One of the treasures in the Windham Textile and History Museum's archives is the 1829-30 ledger from the Windham Cotton Manufacturing Company's company store. Measuring 16" x 6 3/4", bound in brown leather, and containing 269 ruled pages, the ledger provides a fascinating window into the early history of the textile industry in Connecticut.

Opened in 1828 along the north bank of upper falls of the Willimantic River, the Windham Company was one of the earliest cotton mills in Connecticut, dating back to Willimantic's first decade as an industrial center. Founded by Matthew Watson and brothers Nathan and Arunah Tingley, it was Willimantic's fourth textile mill, following Perez Richmond's mill near today's Recreation Park in 1822, "Deacon" Charles Lee's mill on today's Bridge Street in 1823, and the Jillson brothers' mill near today's Jillson Square in 1824-25.

The remnants of the Windham Company's mill can be seen on the west side of Bridge Street, a restaurant and small shopping plaza. Four distinct villages grew up around each of the mills: Richmond Town,

Leesburg, Jillson Mills, and Tingleyville. In time, the four villages merged to form Willimantic.

Like many of the early mills, the Windham Company needed to construct not only manufacturing buildings, but also company housing for its workers and a company store to supply them with food, clothing, and other items. According to Lloyd E. Baldwin, an apprentice carpenter who worked on the Windham Company mill, the Company "built six two-tenement houses, known as the yellow row, and a store on the street corner" — where the Greater Windham Chamber of Commerce is located today. Later, the Company added a second row of tenements — the "white row" — on the north side of Main Street. (For more information, see *A Builder's Tale: Lloyd E. Baldwin's Willimantic Before 1850* for sale in the Museum's Linen Company Store gift shop.)

The ledger is written in faded ink. Contrary to popular belief, not everyone in the 19th century had elegant handwriting, and the ledger proves it. Some of the entries are very difficult to make out. In addition, the bookkeeper did not separate debits from credits: purchases at the company store are intermingled with payments made to suppliers. Furthermore, the Company seems to have run its mill profits through the store as well, as there are entries of several hundred dollars each made out to Watson and the Tingleys — most likely profits on their way to deposit in a Providence, RI, bank. The eclectic nature of the ledger makes it even more valuable as a source of history.

Every person who did business in the store was assigned a number. The numbers run through the 500s, which

indicates a lot of customers. Many of the names listed in the ledger were employees of the mill, but some — Daniel Sessions is an example — were local people who worked or farmed elsewhere. Clearly, the store was the economic hub of the upper falls region, serving a diverse population.

What did people buy at the store? Pretty much everything that people bought in general stores in those days: school books, flour, molasses, spices, silk cloth, yarn, breeches, glass, sugar, snuff, tobacco, butter, hair combs, gingham, bed ticks, buttons, fuel wood, crackers, ribbons, paper, tea, cheese, gloves, sheeting, calico, beef, rope, squashes, salt, cornmeal, soap, caps, oil, turnips, candles, shoes, potatoes, diapers, cedar pails, pork, coffee, mutton, rye, stockings, and brooms are all listed. The store purchased potatoes, onions, apples, wood, and pelts from local farmers, and sowed its own oats — probably mostly as feed for the Company's draft animals.

The ledger reveals that rent in one of the Company's tenements was \$1.00 a week, or about \$20 in today's money. A schoolbook cost 38 cents, 25 pounds of flour cost \$1, a gallon of molasses 38 cents, 1/4 pound of soap 16 cents, 3 pounds of butter 50 cents, a pound of sugar 13 cents, 7 pounds of cheese 21 cents, 10 1/2 pounds of beef 65 cents, and 1/4 pound of tobacco 6 cents.

Wages, however, were even lower than prices. Although the ledger does not reveal the hourly or piece rates paid by the Company, payments in cash to workers (probably reflecting weekly take-home pay after rent was deducted) were generally \$2.00 or less.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL SUMMER 2009

If you have already renewed your membership, thank you!

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.

NAME: _____ E-Mail: _____

ADDRESS: _____

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
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

Non-Profit Org
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 8
Willimantic, CT 06226

MUSEUM GARDENS: PHOTOS

