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# *Loom and Spindle*

## *The Mill Museum Newsletter*

December 2024

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### **Mill Museum Volunteers To Wrap Gifts at East Brook Mall**

The Mill Museum is once again spreading holiday cheer as a team of volunteers will be wrapping gifts at the East Brook Mall this month in what has become a much-anticipated holiday tradition.

In an event which started on Saturday December 14, the wrappers will be stationed inside the mall near the entrance to the Kohl's store located in Mansfield.

Most days, the wrapping station basically is open between about 10 a.m. until about 8:00 p.m. or sometimes even later --depending on the volume. On Saturday December 21 and Sunday December 22, hours are scheduled for between 2 and 8 p.m.

around 10 a.m. and last until 9 or 10 p.m. Hours on Tuesday December 24 continue until 6 p.m. -- in time for late gifts.

Those seeking to get their gifts wrapped can choose from almost 50 different types of wrapping paper in many different colors and patterns.

Some papers highlight Christmas. Others are more seasonal. There are papers with Hanukkah themes, as well as more generic papers, too. There are even some that fit birthday or anniversary gifts.

Kit Eves, who leads the annual effort, said it's the museum's 26<sup>th</sup> year providing the holiday season gift wrapping service at the mall.

Items that get wrapped can be purchased at the mall's many stores, or they can be purchased elsewhere and just taken into the mall.

"We wrap [for] everybody," Eves said.

*" This year, the wrapping event will be held by the Mill Museum in conjunction with the Willimantic Lions Club. "*

*" Saturday December 21 and Sunday December 22, hours are scheduled for between 2 and 8 pm. "*

The East Brook Mall is located at 95 Storrs Road in Mansfield. Free parking is available.

As in the past, donations from the public in exchange for the gift wrapping are gratefully accepted.

This year, the wrapping event will be held by the Mill Museum in conjunction with the Willimantic Lions Club.

Contributions will be forwarded to the Mill Museum, as well as charities earmarked by the Lions Club.

For more information about volunteering at the wrapping operation or to donate, call 860 942 1637.

Eves added that new volunteers are welcome to sign up to either wrap or assist in other ways on different days. Some of the volunteer team have been

It's the same with those looking to get items wrapped. Some have been coming with gifts for many years. For others, this may be their first time using the wrapping team.

All are guaranteed an appropriate paper wrapped by skilled volunteers no matter the size or shape of the gift.

The public also is welcome to bring ribbon, boxes and bows to the wrapping station.

This year, it's expected that some of the money raised by the Lions Club during the gift-wrapping event will go toward the Covenant Soup Kitchen. The soup's kitchen's cooler recently broke and thousands of pounds of food had to be discarded.



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## Mill Museum to Celebrate Saint Distaff's Day in Joyful Community Event

A special holiday which is set aside to recognize spinning fibers into yarn will be marked at the Mill Museum's Dugan Hall next month.

The Saint Distaff's Day event will take place between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday January 4. In case of inclement weather, it will be held the same hours on Sunday January 5.

Spinners, weavers, fiber artists, and other textile enthusiasts are encouraged to bring their projects to the museum's multipurpose room as a way to honor the holiday.

*“Saint Distaff's Day traces its roots to centuries ago in Europe and England.”*

Mahony. Baked goods and seasonal hot drinks will be served.

Regular attendees at weaving classes and museum members will be able to attend without charges. Nonmembers are asked to donate \$5.

Saint Distaff's Day basically traces its roots to centuries ago in Europe and England. It's officially held on January 7 which is the day after the Epiphany.

The distaff is a spinning tool that has a rich history in Europe and in other regions. It's used to hold fiber.

Originally, the holiday marked the end of the Christmas season and was a time for spinners, who then were mostly women, to return to working on textiles following a break for the holiday.

Even though it has religious roots based on the Christian calendar, the holiday is not connected to a specific saint.

It's far less serious. One tradition was that men, who traditionally celebrated Plough Day, which occurs the Monday following the Epiphany, would sometimes set fire to the women's flax projects, as a way to keep them from working on Saint Distaff's Day.

The women in turn were known to dump water on the men's heads for revenge.

The historic mischief and frivolity are revealed to modern audiences from the poem, "Saint Distaff's Day, or the Morrow After Twelfth

Day," by Robert Herrick, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century British poet and clergyman.

The holiday is actually known by many names, such as Distaff Day, Roc Day, or Rock Day. "Roc" or "rok" are Northern European terms for distaffs.



*"The event will  
feature Peggy  
Church, who teaches*

In modern times, the holiday has become mostly secular and is an occasion for spinners to come together and enjoy their crafts.

*Spinning at the Mill Museum. Attendees will get to meet Emma Welty, our new museum educator. ”*

The museum celebration of the holiday will feature Peggy

Church, who teaches weaving at the Mill Museum and has been a co-curator on major exhibits. She will be on hand to explain various spinning techniques.

So too will be Emma Welty, the Mill Museum’s new museum

educator. Emma is an artist and educator with a textile-centered studio practice.

She received a BFA degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design with a focus on fibers and art history. She also received combined MFA/MA degrees in visual art and art history at New York’s highly respected Purchase College.

Welty’s work features traditions of Armenian carpet weaving and janyak, an ancient knotted needlelace technique. She makes woven and lace works that include text, still life, and landscape. Welty has taught fiber and sculpture techniques, with a focus on lacemaking and tapestry weaving, to a wide range

of age groups.



She has worked at both the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Nichols House Museum in Boston. She has been a teaching fellow, visiting artist, and artist in residence at several educational and cultural institutions.

Other experienced spinners will be present for the weekend Mill Museum event, too. But newcomers and even those with no knowledge of techniques are welcome to attend.

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## News Briefs

### Museum Temporarily Closes for Winter Break

As traditional, the Mill Museum will close on December 28 and remain closed until February 8 to reopen in time for the Willimantic Chocolate Festival.

During this period, the museum will continue its upgrade to its main exhibit room. That includes painting of key areas and installing a new carpet. New additions to the museum's permanent exhibit are currently being planned and should be in place next year.

## **Willimantic Library Celebrates Holidays**

The Willimantic Public Library on Monday December 30 will hold a ***Happy Noon Year Party*** between 11 am and 12 p.m. The library is located at 905 Main Street in Willimantic.

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## **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.

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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