

MILL MUSEUM VIRTUAL EXHIBITS

The Mill Museum has preserved some of its previous temporary exhibits as virtual exhibits, so that they will remain accessible to the public. Click the links below to see some of them.

LIBERTY'S DAUGHTERS: WOMEN, TEXTILES, AND THE NONIMPORTATION MOVEMENT IN REVOLUTIONARY NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

Curated by Peggy Church and Jamie Eves, 2024

Sponsored by the Mill Museum and Windham Preservation, Inc. Funded in Part by a Grant from Connecticut Humanities.

Historians debate about whether or not the American Revolution empowered women. In the eighteenth century, even free women did not have the same rights as men. Although a few property-owning colonial women could vote, most free women were considered dependents of their fathers or their husbands, and so could neither vote, hold office, or even control their own property. While it was true that married men could not legally dispose of family property without first obtaining the permission of their wives (who were required to sign off on their right of dower), wives rarely withheld their signatures. Husbands had rights to women's wages, the right to use corporal punishment to control their wives' behavior, and rights to guardianship of children. Moreover, it would be many, many years before any of that changed. Women in Connecticut did not achieve the full voting rights until 1920, more than a century and a half after their foremothers first produced homespun in protest of the Stamp Act. And the United States has yet to pass an Equal Rights Amendment. Clearly, the Revolution did not result in equality. Nevertheless, some historians have argued that it did move the needle — that it nudged America a little closer to equality. And, conversely, other historians argue that it didn't. Let's look at these arguments.

Windham Textile and History Museum presents

Liberty's Daughters in Northeastern CT:

Women, Textiles, and the Nonimportation Movement
in the Revolutionary Era

June 29 - Oct. 20. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 411 Main St, Willimantic, CT

Live Demonstrations!

Flax Spinning 7/6, 1pm

Local Silk Industry 7/13, 1pm

Great Spinning Wheel 7/20, 1pm

Rug Hooking 7/27, 10am

Wool Spinning 8/3, 10am

Bobbin Lace 8/10, 9/14, 10/19 10am



Free Event! Windham Spinning Bee
at Windham Center Green 8/17 10am to 12pm

millmuseum.org

HERE ALL ALONG: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN NORTHEASTERN
CONNECTICUT BEFORE THE GREAT MIGRATION, 1688-1910

Curated by Jamie Eves and Joanne Sailor, 2023

Funded in Part by a Grant from Connecticut Humanities.

This exhibit traces the presence of African Americans in Windham, Willimantic, and surrounding communities in northeastern Connecticut from the arrival of the first Black person in 1688 until 1910, just before the Great Migration of African Americans from the U.S. South and the West Indies to the northern United States. It is the latest in a series of exhibits at the Mill Museum that have traced the experiences of different groups of people in the Windham-Willimantic area. Previous exhibits explored the experiences of Polish Americans, Irish Americans, and Latino Americans. The Museum allows its guest curators to design exhibits in ways that make sense to them. The curator of this exhibit, Windham Town Historian Jamie Eves, Ph.D., wanted to focus on narratives and stories, and he chose stories that he believed were representative of the African American experience in this part of Connecticut. He invited visitors who knew other stories not included in the exhibit to share them with him and us, so that we can continue to add them to this virtual exhibit. As part of the exhibit, the Museum created a second exhibit inside the first. Joanne Sailor, a member of the Museum's Board of Directors, worked with noted Hartford African American artist Michelle "Justice" Thomas to select pieces that built upon and expanded the themes present in the history exhibit, intermixed with it in the same room. The Museum thanks Connecticut Humanities for helping to fund this exhibit.



Pers. Negro	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	4	"
Elph. Knowlton	1	"	"	"	1	"	"	1	"	1	"	"
Nathan Simons	1	"	"	"	1	"	1	2	"	1	"	"
Nath ^l Hubbard	"	"	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	1	"	"
Leffe Leason	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	6	"
Sabor Rouse	"	"	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	1	"	"

five Hacks of 126 pounds of sheep and	43-13-4
260 pounds of flax of 8-28-184: one Negro man Named Lando	15-0-0
one Negro Woman Named Cate Lando wife	50-0-0
one Negro Man Named Simon	32-0-0
one Negro Woman Named Lucy Hager Simon wife	32-0-0
one Negro Girl Named Solah	50-0-0
one Negro Girl Named Dinah	50-0-0
one Negro Boy Name Jim	40-0-0
one Negro Girl Named Lilpha	32-0-0
one Negro Girl Named Milcha	

MURALS OF A MILL TOWN: THE PUBLIC ART MURALS OF WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT

Curated by Jamie Eves, 2020

Many Connecticut towns boast impressive outdoor public art murals. New London, Norwalk, Middletown, and other communities have all undertaken projects to decorate older structures with murals depicting the history of their communities. Willimantic, CT, a former textile mill community located within the larger town of Windham, boasts a particularly diverse array of several dozen public art murals, painted from the 1990s through to the present. Willimantic has been lucky to have several talented muralists as residents: Gordon MacDonald, Ben Keller, Mellica Bloom (Keller's former partner in MBK), Nicholas Khan, and the late Arnold Prince — all of whom have created murals decorating both private and public structures in the Thread City. Because the muralists lived in Willimantic, their work reflects the specific history and culture of their community: a former textile mill town, blue collar, and ethnic. The Mill Museum created this exhibit in 2020 during the Coronavirus pandemic, when the Museum was closed to the public, and when visiting outdoor locations seemed safer. We photographed many of Willimantic's historic murals and placed the images on our website. We will continue to update this virtual exhibit as new murals are created.



UNLACING THE CORSET, UNLEASHING THE VOTE: WOMAN SUFFRAGE & ITS IMPACT ON CULTURE & SOCIETY IN WINDHAM COUNTY, CT

Curated by Kira Holmes, Chelsey Knyff, and Beverly L. York, 2020-21

Funded in Part by a Grant from the Anne Wood Elderkin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution

The exhibit *Unlacing the Corset, Unleashing the Vote* ran from February 15, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The exhibit observed the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Sometimes called the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, the 19th Amendment extended suffrage — the right to vote — to most American women. Because the Museum closed to the public during the Coronavirus / COVID-19 Crisis in March 2020, only one month into the scheduled exhibit, we created a “virtual” version of this exhibit, which is presented below. It

was our first attempt to construct a “complete” virtual exhibit — one that included not only the exhibit display boards, but also images of all of the objects exhibited and the captions that accompanied them.



SIDONIA’S THREAD: CRAFTING A LIFE FROM HOLOCAUST TO HIGH FASHION

Curated by Hanna Perlstein Marcus and Anya Sokolovskaya, 2019

Funded in Part with Grants from the Eastern Connecticut State University Foundation, Connecticut Humanities, and the Hochberg Committee for Holocaust and Human Rights Education at Temple B’nai Israel in Willimantic, CT

The exhibit highlights the life and heritage of a truly remarkable New England woman, Sidonia Perlstein, a Holocaust survivor, a talented self-made businesswoman, independent and strong, a clothing designer and a master of needle work, who achieved wide popularity through her talent, hard work, and creativity. Not only does the exhibit profile this amazing woman, but also reminds visitors about the importance of immigration to the US. It connects the Holocaust and events of WWII with local history. Furthermore, the exhibit also highlights the significance, growth, and development of textiles in New England, well into the 20th century.



UNRAVELED THREADS: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION, POSTINDUSTRIALIZATION, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONNECTICUT'S TEXTILE MILL TOWNS

Curated by Jamie Eves, Beverly L. York, and Jared Leitzel, 2018

Funded in Part with a Grant from Connecticut Humanities

One of the most important parts of the story of industrialization in Connecticut, the rest of New England, and elsewhere is the story of how it ended. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Connecticut was a “maker state,” part of the “cockpit of the American Industrial Revolution.” Today, industry in Connecticut is in sharp decline, replaced by a postindustrial economy based on education, pharmaceuticals, government, recreation, and the service sector. “Unraveled Threads” focused on the concept of deindustrialization — why the Connecticut textile industry, once a dominant feature of the state’s economy, first declined, and then disappeared almost entirely. The exhibit also explores postindustrialization, what emerged to take the place of the vanished textile industry, what happened to the state’s scores of abandoned mills, and the fates of the people who lived in the former mill cities and towns. As we researched the story, we found that it was not what we had expected it to be. We found that deindustrialization had begun far earlier than we supposed, in the 1880s. And we discovered that the reasons for deindustrialization were more complicated and complex than we had thought.

Unraveled Threads:
*Deindustrialization,
Postindustrialization,
and the
Transformation of
Connecticut's Textile
Mill Towns*

An Exhibit at the Mill Museum



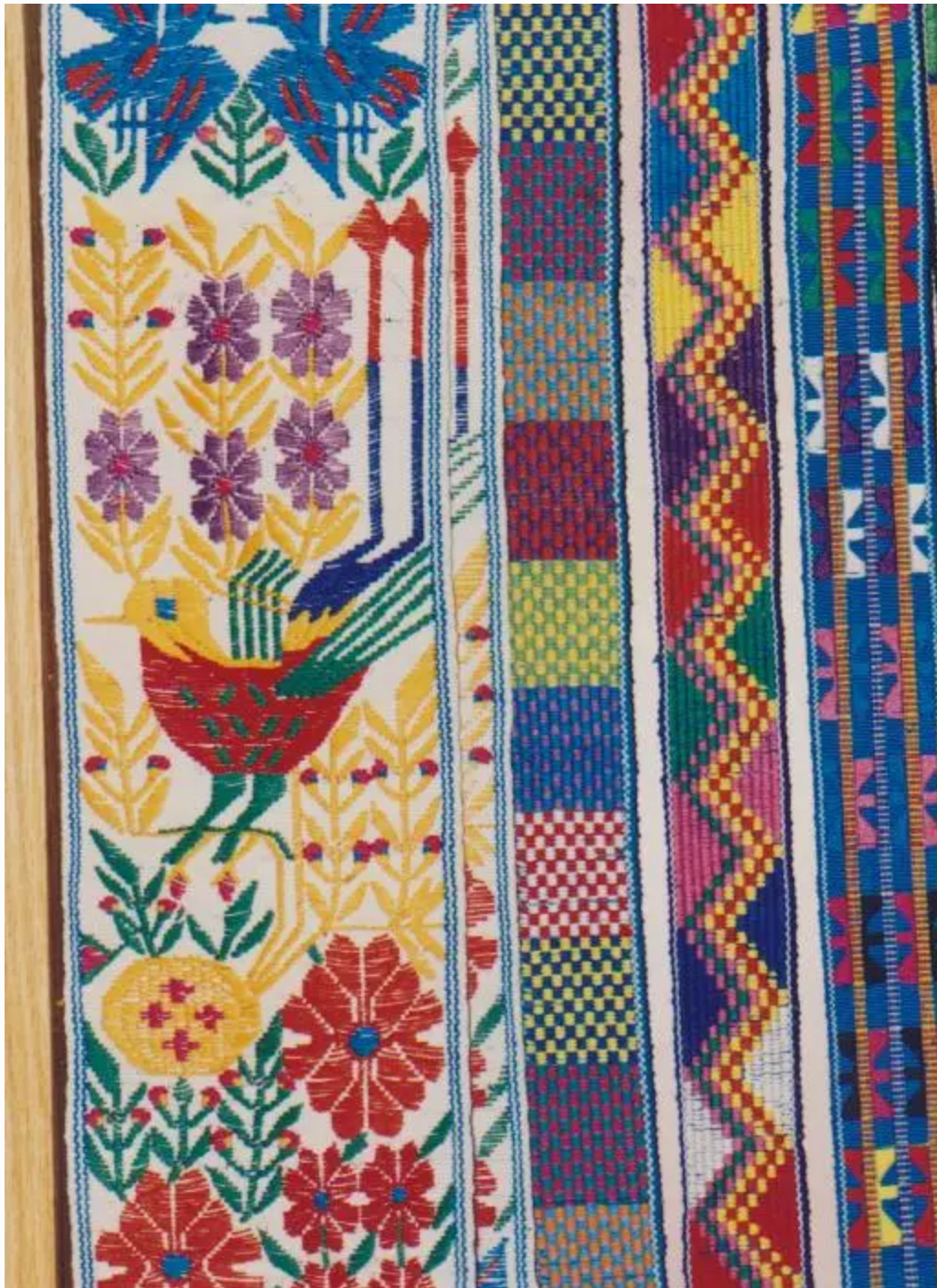
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THE LATINO EXPERIENCE IN WILLIMANTIC: FOUR VIDEOS

From an Exhibit Curated by Ricardo Perez, 2013

A Joint Project of Eastern Connecticut State University and the Mill Museum. Funded by the Eastern Connecticut State University Foundation.

Beginning in 1955, thousands of women, men, and children migrated from various Latin American countries to Willimantic, CT — a migration that continues even today. The largest group were American citizens from Puerto Rico, but they were joined by migrants from Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere. A diverse group, they brought with them a wide array of cultures, languages, and religious traditions. Today, Latinos comprise around a third of Willimantic's population and nearly half of its school children. They came for many reasons: jobs, education, family connections, and more. In 2013, the Mill Museum teamed with Eastern Connecticut State University to stage an exhibit at the Museum exploring the Latino experience in Willimantic. Local residents loaned most of the artifacts on display. The exhibit was curated by Dr. Ricardo Perez, Ph.D., a professor of anthropology and sociology at ECSU, with assistance from art professor Imna Arroyo and several other ECSU faculty. One product of the exhibit was the production of four videos, which can be viewed [here](#).



THE CIVIL WAR: CONNECTICUT'S COTTON CONNECTION

Curated by Beverly L. York & Jamie Eves, 2011-12

In the summer of 2011, as part of Connecticut's five-year observation of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War (1861-65), the Mill Museum mounted a major exhibit titled *The Civil War: Connecticut's Cotton Connection*. The exhibit remained open to the public until late 2012. The brainchild of Beverly L. York, the Museum's Educational Consultant and a History instructor at Quinebaug Valley Community College, the purpose of the exhibit was to illustrate the strong links between the manufacture of cotton thread and cloth in industrial Connecticut, the

production of raw cotton in the antebellum South, slavery (which had a long and complicated history in Connecticut), and the war. York became the exhibit's lead curator, and Jamie Eves, the Museum's Collections Manager and Executive Director and a History instructor at Eastern Connecticut State University, joined her as a research and curatorial assistant. At the close of the exhibit, Eves and York co-wrote a booklet that summarized their conclusions, the most surprising of which was their discovery that anti-slavery activity in Connecticut had been especially strong in the state's cotton mill towns, whose economies were dependent on slave-picked cotton. It is the illustrated booklet that is presented here.

