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# *Loom and Spindle*

## *The Mill Museum Newsletter*

June 2025

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### **Sports Uniforms Exhibition Opening Soon**

The Mill Museum is proud to announce the opening of a new exhibition commemorating the rich history of contributions through the years of our local sports heroes. Lifetime fans, alumni, and first-time visitors alike are sure to enjoy this rare opportunity to see jerseys and other memorabilia.

*“A Final Four jersey;  
an autographed  
basketball.”*

This exhibition was the idea of Mill Museum colleague and friend, the late Ed Silverstein. A seasoned journalist with a distinguished career, Ed conceptualized it and helped see it to fruition. It is mounted in honor and

The exhibit will include a vintage Willimantic baseball uniform from the Mill Museum's own collection. In addition, it will feature items generously loaned from UConn's J. Robert Donnelly Husky Heritage Sports Museum. These include a Final Four jersey; a basketball autographed by winningest UConn Huskies Women's Basketball coach Geno Auriemma (among others); a rare 2002 UConn Women's Basketball national championship limited edition 6-pack of Coca-Cola; and of course no collection would be complete without the costume head of Jonathan, the legendary mascot of all Huskies teams!

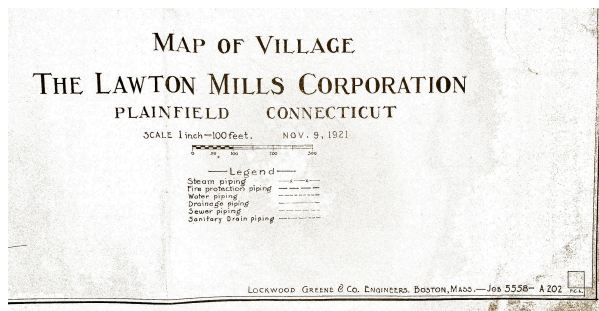


Opening is slated for early July. The Mill Museum Sports Uniforms exhibit comes at an especially auspicious time to celebrate our local UConn champions.

*“A vintage  
Willimantic baseball*

## New Artifact at the Mill Museum: 1921 Map of Lawton Mills in Plainfield

The Mill Museum recently received a donation of a cool artifact: a large (36" x 46") engineer's map of the Lawton Mills factory in Plainfield, CT, including the company-owned worker housing and adjacent private commercial and residential structures. The map was made by Lockwood, Greene, & Co., Engineers, Boston, MA, in 1921. The scale of the map is 1 inch = 100 feet. The map is printed in black ink on yellowed white paper, backed with cloth. It shows the locations of steam pipes, fire protection pipes, water pipes, drainage pipes, sewer pipes, and sanitary drainpipes. The map was donated by Robinson and Cole, a Hartford law firm, where it was found when cleaning out some old files.



Lawton Mills was a cotton mill begun in 1905 by Harold Lawton, previously the Superintendent of the Baltic Mills in nearby Sprague, CT. Originally a colonial farm town, Plainfield experienced industrial growth in the 19th and early 20th centuries, centered on textile mills powered by the fast-flowing Quinebaug

and Moosup rivers. Lawton Mills was a late arrival and was powered by steam rather than water. An adjacent railroad delivered coal. Lawton Mills doubled its size in 1911. Besides a large brick factory, the complex included 125 duplexes used as company-owned worker housing, constructed between 1906 and 1911. At its height, Lawton Mills operated 130,000 spindles and employed 1,200 workers. The growth of the complex spurred urban development in the surrounding neighborhood, including the emergence of a lively commercial district. Lawton Mills closed in 1936. Most of the company housing and part of the factory still stand, although part of the factory has been



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## **Connecticut at Bunker Hill and the Siege of Boston**

**Join local author Michael Westerfield in marking the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill with a presentation and Q+A at the Mill Museum!**

The Battle of Bunker Hill is among the most important events in the history of the United States. It is also one of the least understood. The actual fighting lasted only about two hours, and historians have been trying to figure out what happened ever since. Very little about the battle was planned, and what little was, very quickly went away. No one is even certain how they managed to fight it on the wrong hill. In his presentation, Michael Westerfield will attempt to unravel some of the tangled threads of history, and also cast light on the vital role Connecticut forces played in preserving a defeated mob of militiamen who, within days, would form the nucleus of the Continental Army.

Local author Michael Westerfield has always been fascinated with “forgotten” history involving men and women from the Northeast corner of Connecticut. His first book, *The Road to the Poorhouse*, was an in-depth study of the Windham Town Farm and the Connecticut poorhouse system. His most recent work concerns the Quiet Corner’s once–most famous son, Israel Putnam, America’s first folk hero. He is currently researching and writing a history of the interrelationships between the men depicted in John Trumbull’s famous painting, “The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker’s Hill, June 17, 1775.”



*Detail from John Trumbull's "The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775."*

The central figure defending the fallen General Warren is Colonel Thomas Knowlton from Ashford, Connecticut.

**Tuesday, June 17, 2025**  
**6:00–8:00pm**  
**Dugan Hall,**  
**157-B Union St.,**  
**Willimantic, CT 06226**  
**(Park along Union Street or at the Mill Museum lot at 411 Main**  
**Street, Willimantic)**  
**Free and open to the public**

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## Archival Volunteers Needed!

Enjoy quiet, restful spaces? Like cool, old things? Good with computers? The Mill Museum is looking for volunteer archival assistants to help record objects from our historical collection into our online CatalogIt catalog. No special experience needed—we will teach you how to do it. The work can be done either in the Museum or at home. Set your own hours. If you are interested, contact Jamie Eves, Senior Curator, at [archives@millmuseum.org](mailto:archives@millmuseum.org).



## Current and Upcoming Exhibits and Events:



**Stitched through Stages and Sad Irons, through June 29:** There's still time to see these current Mill Museum exhibits, in the Bev York Room: *Stitched through Stages* examines how play and domestic life intersect, and how from an early age they shape perceptions of labor, femininity and gender roles, family, and societal expectations of women. Artifacts displayed include dolls, a doll cradle, a toy iron, a Barbie bride dress, a lace first communion gown,

and a toy sewing machine. *Sad Irons*, the companion exhibit, showcases

irons used before modern nonstick electric irons. Homemakers pressed clothing and other textiles with cast-iron sad irons, also called sadirons or flat irons ("sad" is a 17th-century English term for "solid"). Hollow sad irons could be filled with hot coals (and were sometimes lined with asbestos). To prevent rust and sticking, they could be seasoned like cast-iron skillets, with thin coats of linseed oil. Visitors may touch many



of the sad irons on display. Museum curatorial staff have been restoring and polishing many of the irons (most donated during the 2020 Covid pandemic).

**[Connecticut Open House Day, Saturday, June 14, 10am-4pm:](#)** Celebrating Connecticut's variety of cultural and tourist attractions, the Mill Museum will

**Worldwide Knit in Public Day, Saturday, June 14:** Take your knitting project out in public, where it deserves to be seen and shared! Knitting is a popular craft fun for all ages and skill levels. Don't know how? Find tutorials on [YouTube](#) and other websites. Local shops can also be found by searching online, have great selections of natural (even some grown by regional fiber farmers!) or synthetic yarn, and also offer groups and classes.

**Bunker Hill Presentation at the Mill Museum, Tuesday, June 17, 6-8pm:**

Local author Michael Westerfield will commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill with a presentation and Q+A on one of the most important – and least understood – events in US history. **(See article.)**



**Third Thursday, June 19, 6-9pm:** A most excellent community celebration and street fair on Main Street in Willimantic. Over 140 vendors provide music, arts & crafts, food, and drink. Free parking! The Mill Museum will have a table. At the May 15 event, Sam Chace set up an

appealing display of frog-themed gift shop items. Emma Welty brought a yarn craft to share: "We made small braiding looms out of cardboard circles. Quite a few people stopped by to see us and a handful stuck around to make the craft." Come see us at Third Thursday, then visit the Museum on the weekend!

**Minnie Negoro: From Heart Mountain to UConn, Benton Art Museum at University of Connecticut, through July 27.** 245 Glenbrook Drive, Storrs. Tues-Fri, 10am-4pm, Sat-Sun, 1-4pm. Admission free. This major retrospective celebrates the 60th anniversary of UConn's Ceramics program. Minnie Negoro was incarcerated by the US government during World War II, along with over 125,000 other Japanese Americans, including many US citizens. Focused on her pottery craft with a singular artistic vision, she later founded and ran UConn's Ceramics department for nearly 25 years. The exhibition features Negoro's ceramics, and photos, textiles, and other



**[Boom Box Parade](#), Friday, July 4, 11am (formation begins 9am), Jillson Square, Willimantic:** Celebrate our nation's 249<sup>th</sup> birthday with the Mill Museum and join the largest parade of its kind in the world! This parade like no other began in 1986, when no marching band was found for Windham's Memorial Day Parade. Five weeks later, the parade was born as thousands marched and watched, radios (boom boxes) blasting WILI-AM's broadcast of marching band music. Anyone can participate; no registration needed. The only requirement is to wear red, white, and blue, and bring a radio/device tuned to WILI (1400-AM). Mill Museum Senior Curator & Co-Windham Town Historian Jamie Eves looks forward to participating, and welcomes anyone from the Mill Museum community to join in!

***Special Program: Stitching Circle, Sunday, July 6, 2-4pm; Mill Museum, Bev York Room:*** Looking for a community with which to stitch? Have an unfinished needlework project you've been meaning to pick up? Ready to start a new needlecraft project and looking for some inspiration? Beginners and all skill levels welcome. Join us! Open to all Mill Museum visitors with regular admission. Museum members are always free! Bring your own project! Don't have a project to work on? We have a variety of materials, tools, and kits available in the Museum gift shop!



Special Program: **Spinning Bee, 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of each month, 10am-1pm; Mill Museum, Dugan Hall, 157-B Union St., Willimantic. Park on Union St. or our Main Street parking lot:**

Experienced spinner and weaver Peggy Church leads this monthly drop-in event. Bring a spindle or wheel, or just hang out. Beginners welcome! Spinners, please let us know you plan to attend by contacting [Peggy Church](#). In colonial Connecticut, women held spinning bees for

camaraderie, friendship, and encouragement. Novices learned from experienced spinners sharing lessons learned over a lifetime of work. During the American Revolution, patriot women seized an opportunity for political expression and participation, organizing spinning bees to produce homespun, supporting non-importation of English manufactured cloth. The Mill Museum invites all spinners—women, men, and children; patriots and loyalists; novices and veterans. Free for spinners and Museum visitors, who are welcome to watch, ask questions, even try their hand at spinning.

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**Get Woven into the Fabric of Our Museum**

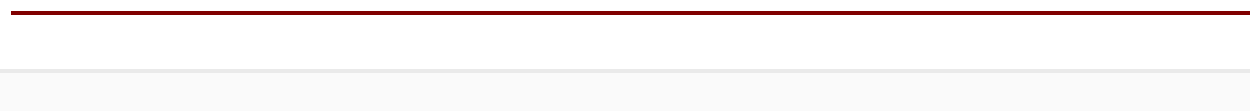
about the vital role the mills and the people who worked in them played in shaping the area's history. If you've already become a member, THANK YOU! If not, please consider joining our ranks.

### Annual Membership Levels:

Tier	Price	Benefits
Student	\$15	Membership newsletter access, Member pricing for events
Individual	\$30	2 guest passes, 10% discount at the gift shop, Membership newsletter access, Early event registration, Member pricing for events, 10% off rental space 1x per year
Family	\$60	Covers household of up to 4 people, 2 guest passes, 10% discount at the gift shop, Membership newsletter access, Early event registration, Member pricing for events, 10% off rental space 1x per year
Premium	\$100	4 guest passes, 20% discount at the gift shop, Membership newsletter access, Early event registration, Member pricing for events, 10% off rental space 2x per year

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

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themillmuseum@gmail.com

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