



Loom and Spindle

THE MILL MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT / WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM

COMING EVENTS:

Kids Club Activity: "Life During the Civil War." Sat., July 9. 1-2:30 PM. With Bev York. At the Museum.

Exhibit Grand Opening & Fashion Show: "The Civil War: Connecticut's Cotton Connection." Fri., July 22. 6-8 PM. \$10. At the Museum.

Walking Tour: "Gravesites of Civil War Soldiers." Sat., Aug. 27. 4 PM. Donation \$10/members \$5. Meet at the Old Willimantic Cemetery on Main St., Willimantic, CT, across from the Stop & Shop.

Visit General Lyon's Gravesite and House Site. Mon., Sep. 5. 5 PM. Free. Meet Walter Woodward, CT State Historian, at the site, 35 General Lyon Road, Eastford, CT.

Kids Club Activity: "Doll Tea." Sat., Sep. 10. 1-2:30 PM. With Bev York. At the Museum.

Concert: "Greatest Hits of the Civil War." Sun., Sep. 18. 4 PM. Donations welcome. Music by Rick Spencer. At the Museum.

Tea & Talk: "How to Research the History of Your House." Sun., Sep. 25, 4 PM. \$15 / members \$10. With Jamie Eves, former title abstractor and Windham Co-Town Historian. At the Museum.

Kids Club Activity: "Willimantic Water Power." Sat., Oct. 8. 1-2:30 PM. With Bev York. At the Museum.

Tea & Talk: "The Methodist Melee on Main Street and Other Episodes of Antislavery Activity in Antebellum Willimantic." Sun., Oct. 16, 4 PM. \$15 / members \$10. With Jamie Eves, Windham Co-Town Historian. At the Museum.

Walking Tour: "Civil War Willimantic: A Glimpse of the Town in the 1860s." Sat., Oct. 22. 10 AM. Free.

Event: "Hallowe'en Party at the Mill Museum." Sat., Oct. 29. 7-11 PM. Music and fun hosted by Perilous Cheryl and friends. Costumes encouraged. Donations to the Museum's education fund. At the Museum.

Tea & Talk: "Children of the Civil War." Sun., Nov. 6. 4 PM. \$15 / members \$10. Talk by Meg DeAngelis.

WILLIAM SMITH: IRISH IMMIGRANT, CIVIL WAR SOLDIER, & COTTON MILL WORKER

Serendipity. When something good and unexpected occurs. It was serendipity when, a few months ago, a man walked into the Windham Textile and History Museum with two large, battered brown cardboard boxes full of old papers. The papers were trash, unwanted items tossed away by their former owners. The man acquired them and noticed that several of them mentioned Willimantic, CT. Did the Museum want them?

The Museum accepted the two boxes and their contents. With the help of volunteers from the

University of Connecticut History Club, the Museum's collections staff quickly set about organizing and preserving the documents.

And what treasures they turned out to be! The majority were personal papers that had belonged to the Smith family of Willimantic, including many that related to William Smith

(1843-99), an Irish immigrant who lived in Willimantic, worked in the city's textile mills, and served in the Civil War.

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NEW EXHIBIT: THE CIVIL WAR: CONNECTICUT'S COTTON CONNECTION

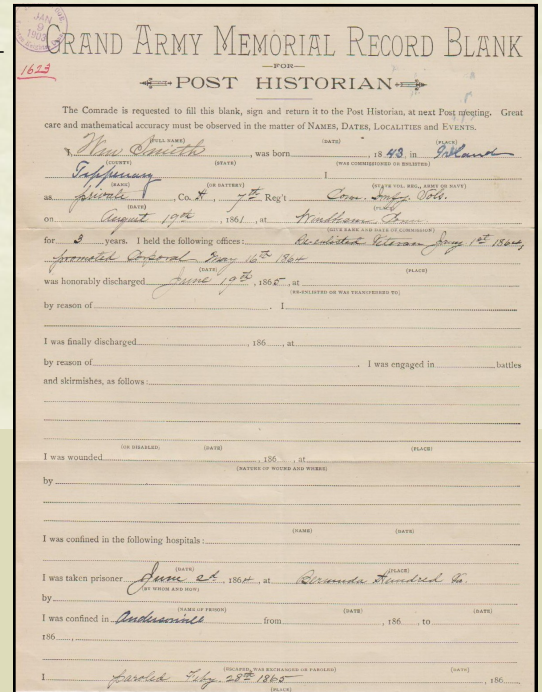
The Windham Textile and History Museum is participating in Connecticut's statewide observance of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War by designing and mounting a large, new exhibit: "The Civil War: Connecticut's Cotton Connection."

"Before the Civil War, Connecticutters had mixed feelings about slavery," says Bev York, the Museum's Educa-

tional Consultant and the lead curator of the exhibit. "On the one hand, like most New Englanders, they disliked slavery in the South and considered it a threat to their own liberty, should it ever be reinstated in the North," York says. "But on the other hand, slavery was intrinsically tied to the

cotton industry, and in antebellum Connecticut, slave-picked cotton in the South meant jobs in the state's burgeoning cotton mills."

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Corporal William Smith's service history, as it appears on paperwork he filled out for the Grand Army of the Republic.

NEW EXHIBIT: THE CIVIL WAR: CONNECTICUT'S COTTON CONNECTION, CONT'D

"The exhibit will trace the connection between the Connecticut cotton industry and slavery," added Jamie Eves, the Museum's interim Executive Director, who is assisting York with the exhibit. "We've done a lot of research on cotton mill towns, anti-slavery sentiment, and voting patterns in Connecticut in the decade before the Civil War. A good part of that research will appear in the exhibit."

According to Eves, the connection between the cotton industry and attitudes about slavery in Connecticut were mixed. "On the one hand, as the Civil War loomed ever closer, Connecticut manufacturers who were elected to state offices tended more and more to be Democrats rather than Whigs or Republicans — and the Democratic party was the party most identified with tolerance of

slavery. But on the other hand, the real hotbed of anti-slavery politics in Connecticut — the stronghold of the Free Soil and Republican parties — was in eastern Connecticut, where most of the cotton mills were located. Seemingly, while many of the manufacturers were still seeking a compromise on the issue of slavery, many of their employees were increasingly coming to oppose it."

In addition to exploring the connection between cotton and slavery, the exhibit will also examine the history of slavery in Connecticut.

"Connecticut was one of the last states in New England to completely outlaw slavery," said York. "Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont all eliminated it earlier."

The exhibit will also chronicle the impact of the Civil War on the Windham/Willimantic area. "Several regiments were raised in eastern Connecticut, and dozens of men from Willimantic and surrounding towns joined them," said Eves. "In particular, the Connecticut 7th, 18th, and 21st infantry regiments had a lot of men from the area." In addition to those regiments, the exhibit will also explore the experiences of the Connecticut 29th infantry, an African American regiment. "At least two men who served in the 29th are buried in Windham cemeteries," added Eves.

The exhibit will also look at the experiences of women and children, especially on the home front. And there will be information on Civil War exhibits and activities elsewhere in the state, as well.

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CIVIL WAR ERA FASHION SHOW TO OPEN EXHIBIT

The Museum will kick off its upcoming Civil War exhibit with a grand opening and fashion show on Friday, July 22, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Museum.

The fashion show will feature volunteers dressed in Civil War era costumes. After being introduced, the volunteers will mingle with the audience.

"We will have everything from soldiers in reproduction uni-

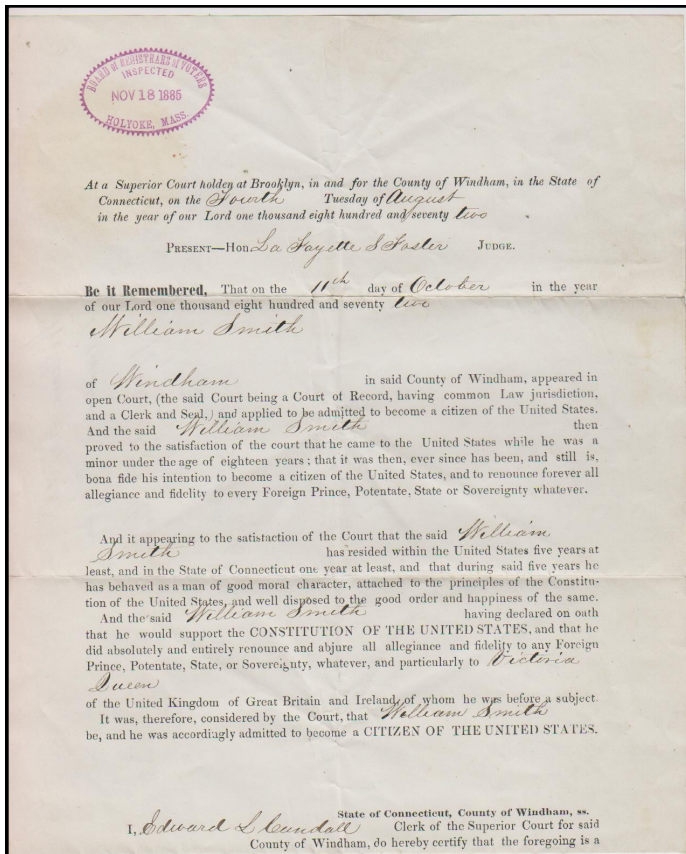
forms, to women on the home front in 1860s gowns, to mill workers in their work clothes," said Bev York, the Museum's Educational Consultant.

While the costumes worn by volunteers in the fashion show will be reproductions, the exhibit will feature some authentic clothing from the period, from the Museum's collection.



**Actual Civil War era clothing from the Museum's collection.
(This will not be worn in the fashion show.)**

WILLIAM SMITH: IRISH IMMIGRANT, CIVIL WAR SOLDIER, & COTTON MILL WORKER, CONT'D



William Smith's citizenship papers from the Museum's Norton-Smith collection. Smith, an Irish immigrant, enlisted in the Union army and fought for the United States while still a British subject. The papers declare that Smith came to the United States "while still a minor," and that he "declared on oath that he would support the Constitution of the United States, and that he did absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any Foreign Prince, Potentate, State, or Sovereignty, whatever, and particularly to Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of whom he was before a subject." The papers make an important distinction — while in Ireland, Smith had been the "subject" of a monarch, in the United States he became a "citizen" of a republic.

Among the papers in the Smith collection is a questionnaire that William Smith filled out for the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of Union Civil War veterans that he joined after the war. The questionnaire discloses that Smith was born in 1843 in Tipperary, Ireland, meaning that he was about 18 when he joined the Union army on August 19, 1861, only a few weeks after the war began. Along with several other men from Windham/Willimantic, Smith joined Company H of the 7th infantry regiment. When his three-year hitch ended in 1864, he re-enlisted. He was promoted to corporal on May 16, 1864; taken prisoner on June 2 at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia; held as a POW in the infamous Andersonville prison; paroled on Feb. 28, 1865; and honorably discharged on June 19, 1865.

After the war, Smith returned to Willimantic. According to the federal census, in 1870 he was married (the wedding had been in 1865, the year he left the army) to Margaret Brad-

shaw, who had also been born in Ireland. William and "Maggie" had two children, Mary (born in 1866) and William C. (born in 1869). William Smith was literate and employed by the Willimantic Linen Company. The Smiths lived with Maggie's parents, George and Bridget, who also worked for the WLC.

Smith's citizenship papers are also in the collection. He became a U.S. citizen in 1872, more than a decade after he joined the Union army.

He probably suffered from injuries sustained during the war. His job at the WLC was as a night watchman, a job sometimes given to partially disabled veterans. He died young, in 1899. And the Smith papers contain numerous bills and correspondence with Dr. Mason's hospital in Willimantic; the disabled veterans' home in Danbury; and with the Department of the Interior, which was responsible for pensions for disabled vets. In 1897 the Dept. issued papers declaring him an invalid.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL SUMMER 2011

If you have already renewed your membership, thank you!

- Student/Senior, \$15 _____
- Individual, \$25 _____
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Windham Textile and History Museum, 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

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**THE MILL
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AFTERNOON TEA AT THE MILL MUSEUM

Travel back in time to the 1890s and enjoy a relaxing, stress-free light afternoon tea at the Museum's Thread Mill Square living history exhibit.

The Museum is now hosting regular afternoon teas on the third Saturday of each month. Tea is served at 3:00 PM.

The menu consists of loose-leaf teas, scones, jam, sweets, and Devon (or clotted) cream. Tea is served at tables for four, with ceramic tea pots and service.

Each tea is accompanied by a half-hour presentation on the history of tea and teas. Guests may also choose to tour the Museum as part of their visit at no additional charge.

There is a maximum seating of 25, and a minimum seating of 8. The price is \$15 per person. Checks and major credit cards are accepted. Reservations are required at least a week in advance.

Afternoon tea was very popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s with the American middle and leisure classes. Anxious to demonstrate that they were just as refined

as their British cousins, 19th-century Americans adopted a number of British practices, including taking tea in the afternoon.

In Britain, high tea was served in the late evening, along with dinner. It was called high tea because it was served on high tables. Low tea — or afternoon or light tea — was a snack served usually at 4:00 PM. It was called low tea because it was served on low tables.

In the 1890s, Thread Mill Square was the busy industrial and commercial center of Willimantic, Connecticut's famous Thread City. To the east sprawled the massive granite mill buildings of the Willimantic Linen Company, the largest thread mill in the United States. To the west stretched Main Street, with its rows of Victorian shops and stores. To the south lay Jillson Hill, with its ornate Victorian mansions, the homes of mill owners and managers. Although Thread Mill Square no longer exists, the Mill Museum has recreated it as a living history exhibit — and along with it

the afternoon teas that would have been found in the city's several commercial tea shops.

Come and join us for tea on the third Saturday of each month at 3:00. Call 860-456-2178 for reservations.



Dinner table in the Museum's mill manager's home exhibit set for high tea. Afternoon tea — also known as low tea or light tea — was less formal, and usually held in the late afternoon.