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Loom and Spindle

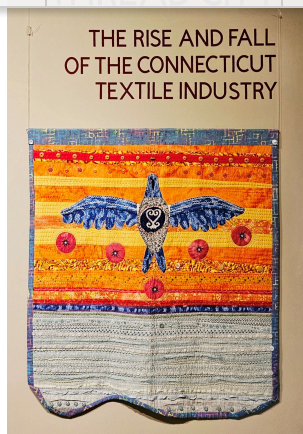
The Mill Museum Newsletter

October 2025

**New Permanent Exhibit Opens at Mill Museum:
*Thread City: The Rise and Fall of the
Connecticut Textile Industry*
By Jamie Eves**

For the past year, the Mill Museum has been renovating and revamping its main exhibit room, the Bev York Room. We laid new carpeting, repainted the walls and ceiling, built partitions, and installed track lighting.

“The new space will accommodate several activities at once,” said Senior Curator Jamie Eves. “There is a space for changing exhibits, a small theater for watching videos, an Educator’s Corner with hands-on activities for children and adults, and a new permanent exhibit.”



Thread
City: The
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the

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Connecticut Textile Industry, takes up about half the room, about 740 square feet.

“This is an exhibit that we have wanted to create for a long time,” said Eves. “It serves as an introduction to the Museum, summarizing our story and providing context for all of our other exhibits.”

Thread City is divided into five charettes. The first, “Age of Homespun,” introduces visitors to how people in Connecticut made textiles—thread and cloth—before 1793, when the American Industrial Revolution began. “It features a lot of interesting preindustrial technology,” said Eves, “but the central piece is a working eighteenth-century barn loom.” Volunteer weavers and carpenters, led by weaver Peggy Church, reassembled the loom, replacing some of the parts. Then, Church and other weavers dressed the loom 1700s-style and have been weaving on it.



Other charettes examine the advent of industrialization; the role of labor; the building of industrial communities; and, finally, the decline of industry in the twentieth century. The entire exhibit is built out of artifacts owned by the Museum, which have mostly been in storage.



“It’s what I call a ‘discovery’ exhibit,” said Eves. “Visitors walk through the exhibit in chronological order, taking a trip through time, encountering artifacts that tell stories about how people used to live, what they accomplished, and why it all went away. It’s not just random stuff in glass cases. Each artifact tells a story, and the stories are all connected.”

Notable artifacts include an elegant, handmade desk that may have been brought to Connecticut by a Habsburg duke who, after

early 1800s cotton mill; a baseball uniform worn by a turn-of-the-century major leaguer who later played and coached in Connecticut's industrial leagues; a union charter; a machine fixer's tool chest; an elegant thread case; several vintage industrial products (clocks, sewing machines, thread, etc.), solid "sad irons," and more. "The artifacts on display are just a representative sample of objects in the Museum's collection," Eves said.



The exhibit focuses on Willimantic, as an example of the rise and fall of industrial Connecticut, linking one community to the rest of the state.

In the near future, QR codes will be added to take visitors to online activities, the Museum's online catalog, objects elsewhere in the Museum, and the websites of other museums that tell similar stories.

"The exhibit has been years in the making," added Eves. "I got the idea two decades ago from Bev York, who wanted to do something similar. But in the last few years, everything came together. The Museum received a \$20,000 ARPA grant, other monies became available, and a core of dedicated, energetic, and talented people came together. This is truly a group effort. We intend Thread City to be the cornerstone of a new, more interactive and interconnected approach to storytelling. We have even brought the surrounding environment into the Museum. Come see the 'secret' tunnels."



Thread City is open to the public, included with regular admission to the Mill Museum.

Annual Meeting
Windham Textile and History Museum Annual Meeting (Postponed from October)
Thursday November 13, 2025
5:30 PM
Dugan Hall, 157 Union Street, Willimantic

Museum members present may vote on expiring or vacant officers. The only vacant board officer position is that of Secretary. Nominations will be accepted. Formal election of new members to the board.

The Regular meeting of the Board of Directors will begin immediately following the Annual Meeting.

Contradictions Of Freedom Part II Quilt Exhibition now open!

by Robert Asher and Irene Barnard

On October 4 the Museum opened its exciting new exhibition, *Contradictions Of Freedom Part II*.

Co-sponsored by the Windham NAACP, the show features over 20 quilts made by [Sisters in Stitches Joined by the Cloth](#).

Based in Massachusetts since 1997 (members also have Connecticut ties), their New England guild is unique in preserving the centuries-old art, history, culture, and traditions of



African American quilting for future generations. Their widely-exhibited work celebrates and connects the artists to their personal stories and to each other. The exhibit addresses the complexities of freedom in Colonial America, and recognizes and honors guild members' Ancestors and their collective histories in America. Coinciding with the 250th anniversary of the

likely to lead to his own freedom).



The well-attended opening reception featured remarks by Executive Director Aaron Skarzenski. Then, quilters Susi Ryan, Christle Rawlins-Jackson, Donna Clark, and Sheila Lutz answered questions and enlightened enthusiastic visitors about their creative process and some of the history embodied in these stunning, vibrantly-colored works of art. They also presented their [Sisters In Stitches cookbook](#) with family recipes, photos and stories, and Quilt Codes that may have played a role in the Underground Railroad.

The quilt show inaugurates the Museum's renovated and repainted Bev York Room, with new track lighting for greater visibility, and new movable wall panels facilitating ease of access and movement throughout.

Museum Lead Educator Emma

Welty created an interactive craft for visitors (of all ages) to make colorful paper quilt squares that can be taken home or joined in a collaborative Museum paper quilt. *Contradictions Of Freedom Part II* runs through Saturday, December 6. Don't miss it!

African American quilters in the news

childhood. Fifty years later, she learned from a magazine article about the role quilts may have played in the Underground Railroad. According to the 1999 book, *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad*, which relied on oral history relayed by descendants of enslaved people in South Carolina, there are 10 patterns comprising the Underground Railroad Quilt Codes.

Walktober Atwood Farm cider pressing and Weaver's Cottage demonstration

Also on October 4, a busy day in the Quiet Corner, autumnal splendor was on full display at [The Last Green Valley Walktober cider pressing event](#) at the [Atwood Farm](#). The 68-acre farm was bequeathed to [Joshua's Trust](#) in 2012 by JT member and lifetime Mansfield resident Isabelle Atwood. The property includes an apple orchard, barn, and other farm outbuildings including the Weaver's Cottage, where Peggy Church also discussed and masterfully demonstrated spinning.



**Day of Caring,
another event with wide participation across
the community, was held October 4.**



United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, members of Eastern Connecticut State University's men's lacrosse teams and other volunteers participated in various hands-on demonstrations in our education corner. In addition to helping the Museum with some thorough annual cleaning, they learned about different fiber crafts. Some can also be seen here participating in our new community art project tied to our most recent exhibition:

Contradictions of Freedom, Part II.

ECSU students did fantastic work with our Garden Club liaison Amy Marwood. Two of them are seen here after helping with pruning and organizing our green spaces around the Museum campus.



Bobbin' Around the Museum and Community...

Spinning Bee

4th Saturday of every month (October 25, 2025), 10am-1pm; Mill Museum Dugan Hall, 157-B Union St., Willimantic. Park on Union St. or Main St. museum parking lot: Master spinner and weaver Peggy Church leads this free monthly drop-in event for spinners of all levels, beginners are especially welcome.

Attendees are also welcome to bring long-abandoned weaving, a new piece of knitting or crochet, or other crafts projects.



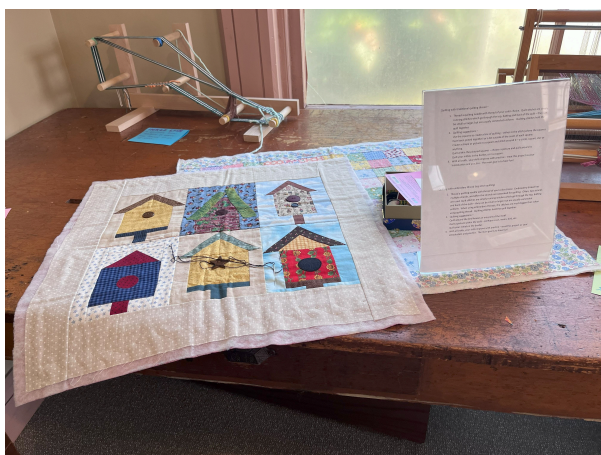
Textile equipment sale

During the October 25 Spinning Bee, certain items of textile equipment will be available for purchase. Generous friends in the museum community sometimes donate equipment specifically to be sold to support museum expenses. Pieces for sale include:

- restored clock reel (\$100; negotiable)
- Country Craftsman spinning wheel (\$175)
- Ashford Traveller spinning wheel (\$350)
- Schacht 4 Now-4 Later standard floor loom with bench (\$1800)
- restored large 2-shaft floor loom perfect for rug weaving (\$175)



Quilting demonstration

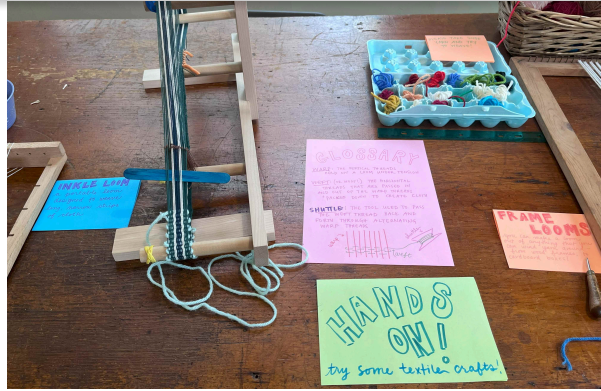


also on October 25, 1pm, Bev York Room, 411 Main St. entrance: Donna McLaughlin will demonstrate her skilled artistry after the Spinning Bee. A perfect accompaniment to the quilt exhibit and permanent exhibit!

Stitching Circle

1st Sunday of every month (November 2, 2025), 2-4pm; 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 Museum visitors with regular admission; members are

work on? We have a variety of materials, tools, and kits available in the Museum gift shop!



The Prudence Crandall Museum, sponsors National Cat Day

The Prudence Crandall Museum, 1 South Canterbury Road, Canterbury,
Monday, October 27:

Another Walktober event, this annual drive collects donations of unopened cat food (any), brand-new cat toys and supplies, or paper towels and garbage bags (no litter items, please). All items will be donated to the no-kill Paws Cat Shelter in Putnam. In recognition of violence perpetuated against women, children, and animals, the museum honors National Cat Day by collecting food and supplies to keep our feline friends safe. Donations entitle visitors to a free guided tour (10am, 11:30am, 1:30pm or 3pm) of the Museum!

NATIONAL CAT DAY
OCTOBER 27 (observed)

Free admission to the Prudence Crandall Museum with donation of unopened cat food (wet preferred, any brand/any flavor), brand-new cat toys and supplies (not accepting litter-related items at this time), or paper towels and garbage bags.

All items will be donated to the **Paws Cat Shelter**, a no-kill shelter in Putnam, CT.

In recognition of violence perpetuated against women, children, and animals, the museum honors National Cat Day by collecting food and supplies to keep our feline friends safe.

Prudence Crandall Museum
1 S. Canterbury Rd.
Canterbury, CT

crandall.museum@ct.gov
860-546-7800

SITES of CONSCIENCE

CONNECTICUT

History was made here in 1832, when Sarah Harris, a young Black woman, approached Crandall, the white principal of an all-girls' school, requesting admittance to the school. Despite violent opposition and attacks against the school, the bravery of Harris, Crandall, and others involved with the school ultimately led to cases such as the US Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education*, and

the later legal removal of barriers to, and expansion of, education.

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.

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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