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# *Loom and Spindle*

## *The Mill Museum Newsletter*

September 2025

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### **Sisters In Stitches Joined By The Cloth Quilt Exhibition Opens October 4!**

The Mill Museum's major new exhibition, *Contradictions of Freedom Part II*, opens soon! This exhibit inaugurates the newly renovated Bev York Room, and comprises some 20 quilts made by [Sisters In Stitches Joined By The Cloth](#). They are the only New England quilting guild dedicated to preserving the art, culture, history, and traditions of African American quilting. The exhibit coincides with the 250th anniversary of the start of the American Revolution, and some quilts depict African American involvement in the Revolution. The late



## Contradictions of Freedom Pt. II

An Exhibition by African American Quilting Guild, Sisters in Stitches Joined by the Cloth

Runs Saturday, Oct 4 through Saturday, Dec 6  
Opening Reception Oct 4 at 1pm

**The Windham Textile and History Museum**

411 Main Street, Willimantic CT, 06226  
(860)-456-2178

Museum hours: Saturday-Sunday  
10am-4pm  
Regular admission: **\$10.00**  
Seniors (60+) / Kids (5-17) / Students: **\$7.00**  
Members and Kids under 5: **Free**



Co-sponsored by Windham NAACP

millmuseum.org



Ed Silverstein conceptualized the exhibit, which is mounted in appreciation of this devoted member of the museum board and his community.

The exhibition hall now features fresh paint, flooring, and lighting, allowing for greater visibility; and new movable wall panels that facilitate ease of access and movement through the exhibits.

The museum team and volunteers have worked together to reimagine an environment with multiple possibilities, encompassing both a new permanent exhibition space and a

dedicated space for temporary exhibits.

Learning about and honoring their ancestors is an integral focus of Sisters In Stitches. Guild cofounder Susi Ryan is a descendant of [Venture Smith](#). He was formerly enslaved, kidnapped as a child from West Africa, who later freed himself then his family, settling first in Stonington and later in Haddam, Connecticut. Smith wrote the earliest published narrative of slavery in the Americas. Read more about Ryan and Smith at [Connecticut Public](#). Its series Unforgotten documents Connecticut's history of slavery, with an episode on Smith featuring Ryan.

***Contradictions of Freedom Part II* opens Saturday, October 4 at noon, remarks at 1pm. Hours: Saturday-Sunday, 10am-4pm. Runs through Saturday, December 6.**

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## Strategic Planning Meeting Recap

On September 19, members of the public, the museum board, and curatorial and exhibits committee met for the second strategic planning meeting. Important topics were discussed such as museum finance and funding; how the

and refine goals to keep the museum reliably supported and able to meet community interests and needs into the future!

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## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering helps you connect with your community, learn new skills, and meet different people. The museum welcomes volunteers for several positions. Visit <https://millmuseum.org/support-us/support> for more information. If interested, please reach out to Kate, Museum volunteer coordinator, at [volunteering@millmuseum.org](mailto:volunteering@millmuseum.org) or stop by the museum to learn more!

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## Bobbin' About

Events at the Museum and the Community

**Spinning Bee, 4th Saturday of every month (September 27, 2025).** 10am-1pm; Mill Museum Dugan Hall, 157-B Union St., Willimantic. Park on Union St. or Main St. 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 other crafts projects, whether picking up a long-abandoned knitting project or starting a new weaving one. At a recent bee, Peggy shared various textile samples she's collected over the years, including soy silk, tussah silk, and color-grown cotton.





**Stitching Circle, 1st Sunday of every month (October 5, 2025).** 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 Museum visitors with regular admission; 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!



**Elanah Sherman** contributed the following suggestion for exploring American textile use and history: **CT Museum of Culture and History**, One Elizabeth St., Hartford. The museum also has an excellent permanent collection, including the exhibit, [\*Making Connecticut:\*](#)



American Folk Art Museum, 2 Lincoln Square (Columbus Avenue at West 66th Street), New York City. Farther afield, but well worth a visit (to NYC!), the museum's new exhibit, [\*An Ecology of Quilts: The Natural History of American Textiles\*](#), opens September 26 (admission free). Featuring about 30 examples from the 18th-20th centuries from the museum's rich collection of over 600 quilts, the exhibit presents them from an ecological perspective, examining patterns of relationship between the environment and traditional quilting practices.



The [\*Freedom Trail Quilt Project\*](#) at the the Connecticut State Museum was conceived in the late 1990s, to bring attention to Connecticut's historic [Freedom Trail](#), for which the state General Assembly designated a network of some forty public and private historic properties to tell the important story of Connecticut's African-American experience, including sites relevant to the Underground Railroad and the *Amistad*. The Museum is inside the CT State Library, across from the State Capitol Building in Hartford. Long-time Mill Museum member

quilting handiwork to a square (scroll down webpage to see Tora's "[Eastern 17](#)" section). The project also has a connection to Sisters In Stitches cofounder Susi Ryan's ancestor, Venture Smith, whose gravestone is depicted in the "[Eastern 5](#)" quilt square.



The recently-formed **Willimantic Latino Lions Club** (a local

branch of Lions Club

International), which puts on

charity events such as handing

out school supplies for the new school year, is collaborating on a **Breast Cancer and Diabetes Walk**, Saturday, October 18, 9am-3pm starting and ending in Jillson Square, Willimantic. Food trucks and music also scheduled, see the [club's Facebook page](#) to sign up.



The [Prudence Crandall Museum](#) will recognize **National Cat Day**, Monday, Oct. 27. Bring new/unopened cat food and supplies to receive free admission to the museum, starting at 10am. One South Canterbury Rd., Canterbury. In 1832, Sarah Harris, a young Black woman, asked Prudence Crandall, the white principal at the Canterbury Female Boarding School, if she could attend the school. Crandall, a Quaker and eventual abolitionist, agreed to admit Harris. After backlash from the community, Crandall closed the school, reopening in 1833 for Black and Brown students. What followed were Crandall's arrest and multiple court trials, and a horrific nighttime mob attack that closed the school. *Crandall v. Connecticut* impacted two significant Supreme Court decisions that later laid the framework for the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution. The museum is a National Historic Landmark, and an [International Site of Conscience](#).



The Last Green Valley, a National Heritage Corridor in the last swath of "green by day, dark by night" between DC and Boston, is a charitable stewardship



diverse natural, historical, and cultural resources in eastern Connecticut and south-central Massachusetts. Their annual [Walktober](#) series runs from September 20 through November 9, and encompasses guided hikes, historic city strolls and tours, spooky fall-themed events, stargazing, and more. This includes the historic **Atwood Farm**, (administered by local conservation organization [Joshua's Trust](#)), whose annual fall harvest celebration features cider-



making in an antique apple press, and demonstrations in the farm's Weaver's Cottage. Saturday, October 4, 1:30-4pm.



## 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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