



Loom and Spindle

THE MILL MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT /
WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM

SNOW BALL GALA TO RAISE MONEY
FOR MUSEUM: TO BE HELD FEB. 9

COMING EVENTS:

- **Windham Players.** Jan. 23, 24, 25, 26, Feb. 1, 2. The Windham Players, the Windham High School Drama Club, will perform one-act plays at the Museum. For several years, director Vincent Iovine has brought his students into the Museum to perform their one-act plays for the community. We are pleased to welcome these student actors.
- **Snow Ball Patron Preview Party.** Feb. 9. 7:00 to 8:00 PM. Mill No. 2, 322 Main Street, Willimantic. \$75 admission for the Preview Party and the Snow Ball.
- **Snow Ball.** Feb. 9. 8:00 PM to midnight. Mill No. 2, 322 Main St., Willimantic. \$50 admission.

Once again, the Snow Ball Committee, Stratilis Realty, and the Mill Museum are joining forces to organize the annual Snow Ball. The gala event will raise funds to support the Museum.

"The Snow Ball is our biggest fundraiser of the year," said Museum President Kit Eves. "We really appreciate everything that Andrew Gibson and the Snow Ball Committee has done help us raise money for the Museum. They work hard and do a fantastic job. Last year they raised \$10,000. I don't know where the Museum would be without them."

The Snow Ball will be held on Saturday, Feb. 9, from 8:00 PM to midnight, at the old American Thread Company Mill No. 2 in Willimantic, CT. Tickets are \$50 per person. In addition, there will be a special Snow Ball Patrons Preview Party between 7:00 and 8:00 for an additional \$25.

The Snow Ball will feature live dance music by the Flamingos, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, terrific martinis, wine and a cocktail bar, and the opportunity to bid on



As it was last year, this year's Snow Ball will be held in the old American Thread Company Mill No. 2 on Lower Main Street in Willimantic, CT.

"must have" silent auction items. Patrons who attend the Preview Party will enter a wonderland of strolling mimes, jugglers, magicians, and stilt walkers. It's not to be missed!

"The old Mill No. 2 is a great place to have the Snow Ball," said Brooke Shannon, the Museum's Executive Director. "The rooms are

big, with plenty of floor space. This year, the Ball will be in a room that has been renovated, with a polished wood floor."

Proceeds from the Snow Ball will support numerous Museum projects, including educational programs, preservation efforts, electronic archives, and exterior and interior maintenance.



Tickets to the 2008 Snow Ball are already on sale. For more information, contact Dr. Andrew Gibson at 456-4221 or agibson@snet.net.

MUSEUM ACQUIRES VINTAGE THREAD, YARN

In November, the Canton, CT, Historical Society donated 31.5 linear feet of textile-related artifacts and other materials to the Mill Museum.

"The gift consists mostly of dozens of spools and bobbins of wool, cotton, silk, and linen yarn, thread, spool warp, floss, and twine," said Jamie Eves, the Museum's volunteer archivist. There are also some wooden bobbin racks.

Some of the yarn is new and can be used in the Museum's various educational craft projects with school groups. But most of it is several decades old, and will be stored in the Museum's archives. "Many of the spools and bobbins are still packed in their original boxes," said Eves.

None of the thread appears to have been manufactured in Connecticut. "Some is from the January and Wood Co. in Maysville, KY; some is from the Lily Co. in Shelby, NC; and some is from the

Hampton Co. in Easthampton, MA," Eves said. "We hope to be able to date it."

Because Canton was a tool-manufacturing center and not a textile town, the Canton Historical Society decided it didn't need the artifacts. "They have a terrific museum in Canton," commented Brooke Shannon, the Mill Museum's Executive Director, "but the thread really didn't fit into their story. But we really appreciate having it."

NEW EXHIBIT ON MILL ECOSYSTEM

"The Mill Museum owns an amazing print," says Dr. Jamie Eves, the Museum's volunteer librarian and archivist and a professor of environmental history at the University of Connecticut. "It's an original panoramic, or bird's-eye-view engraving, of Willimantic, CT, in 1882."

The print is a superb illustration of the 19th-century industrial ecosystem, according to Eves. "Unlike most panoramics, it shows not just the city, but also the surrounding countryside. Viewers see the river valley, mill village, mills, deforestation, farmland, dams, raceways, smokestacks belching coal smoke from steam boilers, an organic city,

a rural-urban organic conveyor belt — all key elements of the early industrial environment."



So Eastern Connecticut State University student intern Amanda Featherston and Eves created a wall-mounted exhibit at the Museum featuring the print. Photos from the Museum's collection, charts, maps, and sign panels explain how 19th-century mill ecosystems functioned, using Willimantic and northeastern Connecticut as examples.

"The exhibit establishes a solid environmental context for the Museum's other exhibits," Eves said.

"Our biggest fundraiser will be the Snow Ball on Feb. 9, organized by ... acclaimed impresario Dr. Andrew Gibson and the Snow Ball Committee."

Fundraising is a never-ending activity at the Mill Museum. Although I wish it were otherwise, almost no museum can support itself by individual admissions, group tours, and gift shop sales alone. For that reason, the Mill Museum is always working on some sort of fundraiser.

Willimantic resident, attorney, and community activist Susan Johnson hosted a Garden Party at her home in August that raised

about \$3,000. In October Windham resident, university professor, and dance enthusiast Maureen Mulroy organized a Sock Hop that raised about another \$3,000. In November we mailed out membership renewals and annual appeal letters; the responses are still coming in, but if you haven't mailed yours in yet, please do. In December we wrapped gifts at the East Brook Mall in Mansfield, CT, for five days and raised \$2,500. We have

other events and fundraisers planned, as well.

But our biggest fundraiser will be the Snow Ball on Feb. 9, organized by Windham Center resident and acclaimed impresario Dr. Andrew Gibson and the Snow Ball Committee. It will be a great time and a real chance to help the Museum. I look forward to seeing you there!!

Kit

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MIGRATION EXHIBIT GOING UP

After several unavoidable delays, the Mill Museum's new "Mills and Migrations" timeline is about to go up.

"The migration of workers to mill cities like Willimantic, CT, is a vital part of the story of the Industrial Revolution," commented Bev York, the Museum's Educator and Senior Curator.

"At least 26 different nationalities lived in Willimantic in 1910, according to the U. S. Census," added Dr. Anna Kirchmann, a

professor of history at Eastern Connecticut State University and an expert on Polish migration to the United States, who is an advisor to the exhibit. "Besides native-born Americans, there were French Canadians, Irish, Poles, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Lebanese, Russians, Eastern European Jews, Ukrainians, Latvians, and many others."

The timeline will be mounted on the walls of the staircase leading to the Museum's Dunham Hall Library. "Generations of mill

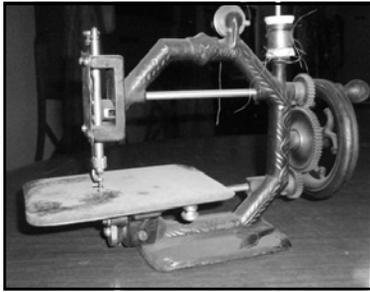
workers — native-born and immigrant — climbed those stairs seeking knowledge," said York. "It's a logical place to put a timeline."

The timeline will provide a context for future exhibits about each migrant group. It will include both foreign-born and native-born migrants like Puerto Ricans and Yankees. It will feature both explanatory text and, as illustrations, photos of many of Willimantic's distinctive ethnic churches.



St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Willimantic, long associated with the city's French-Canadian population.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: THE WILLIAM E. WRIGHT SEWING MACHINE COLLECTION



Two vintage sewing machines from the Museum's Wright Collection: a 1865-68 Goodspeed hand-operated machine (above) and a 1867 Weed treadle-powered cabinet model manufactured in Hartford, CT (below).



The Wright Textile Mills of Ware, MA, manufactured 80% of the parachutes used by the American armed forces during World War II and almost all of the parachutes used by UN troops in the Korean War. In peacetime, the Company manufactured rickrack and trims for clothing.

The owner of the Company, William E. Wright, was an avid collector of historic sewing machines and owned 47 rare models. Some of his earliest designs were manufactured by such well-known inventors as Elias Howe and Isaac Singer in the 1850s. In 1994 Wright donated his entire collection to the Mill Museum.

The invention of the sewing machine fundamentally altered the textile industry. For one thing, it

vastly increased the market for thread, by making sewing easier and faster, both in industry and in the home. It also changed the nature of the product — sewing machine thread had to be especially fine, strong, smooth-running, and uniform, which required re-tooling spinning frames and other thread manufacturing machinery.

In addition to the Wright sewing machines, the Museum has several other vintage home sewing machines that have been donated over the years. It also owns several vintage industrial sewing machines, the kind used in sweatshops.

The earliest sewing machines were nonelectric, meaning that they were powered either by hand wheels or foot treadles. Electric

sewing machines became available only in the 20th century.

Elias Howe of Massachusetts invented the first practical sewing machine in 1845 and licensed his patent to several manufacturing companies, the largest of which was the Singer Manufacturing Company in New York. In 1853 2,529 sewing machines were manufactured under the Howe patent. Production remained low throughout the 1850s and '60s, but took off in 1867, following the Civil War and a resurgence in cotton production in the South. 462,317 Howe-type machines were made in 1870.

One of the major 19th-century producers of sewing machines was the Weed Sewing-Machine Company of Hartford, CT.

FIREFIGHTER, MYSTERY PHOTOS EXHIBITS PLANNED

The Mill Museum is planning several new temporary exhibits for 2008.

First, Senior Curator Bev York is working on an exhibit that traces the history of fires and firefighters in Willimantic and Windham, CT, and mill fires in eastern Connecticut and beyond. She is choosing photographs of Willimantic firehouses and firefighters, the Jordan Hardware fire, the fire that destroyed the old American Thread Company Mill No. 4, the Baltic mill fire, the Plainfield mill fire, and others from the Museum's collection. She also plans to integrate material about the famous Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York. A 19th-century hand-pulled fire engine will be part of the exhibit. The exhibit is planned to open in February. For more information, check the Museum's website or call (860) 456-2178.

Another exhibit being planned will feature "mystery photographs" from the Museum's collection. "We have a lot of photos that were given to the Museum that we can't identify," said volunteer archivist Jamie Eves. "We have studio portraits from the early 1900s from eastern Connecticut photography studios, but there is no record of who the people were. We have one studio portrait with writing on the back, but it's in Arabic. We have a lot of photos of millworkers, but in most cases we don't know who all of the workers were. We also have photos of mill workers doing certain tasks, but are not always sure what those tasks were, what is was that they were doing. We're going to display some of those photos — and others that we *can* identify — and ask visitors to help us identify them."

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL WINTER 2008

If you have already renewed your membership, thank you!

Student/Senior, \$10 _____

Sustaining, \$50 _____

Individual, \$15 _____

Patron, \$100 _____

Family/Household, \$25 _____

Sponsor, \$250 _____

Benefactor, above \$250 _____

Additional Donation _____

We are a 501(c)3 organization. Your donations are tax deductible.

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Windham Textile and History Museum, 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

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**DONATIONS
WANTED**

The Mill Museum is doing its "winter cleaning" and is looking for the following items:

Open metal or wooden shelving

Copier paper

Paper towels / toilet paper

Cleaning supplies

Toner cartridges for:

a Canon image class D320 copier

a Sharp AR-161 copier

an hp colorjet 2600n printer (black cartridge)

a Ricoh Aficio BP20N copier

Shark portable electric vacuum

AAA batteries

**VOLUNTEERS
WANTED**

The Mill Museum is also looking for volunteer docents. Docents (from the Latin for "wise ones") give

tours and staff the Museum gift shop. The Museum's staff will provide all necessary training. The Museum asks its docent to work at least one 4-hour shift each month.

"Being a docent is a lot of fun," said Jamie Eves, who has been giving tours at the Museum for three years. "I really enjoy talking with visitors — relating their life experiences to the story the Museum tells."

"It was frightening at first," Eves continued. "Even though I'm a history teacher, I didn't know a lot about the history of the textile industry, and I was afraid I'd mess up. But the Museum staff supported me — especially Bev York. I learned each piece at my own pace, and it wasn't long before I was giving tours. It was a great way to learn about Connecticut and at

the same time give something back to the community."

Anyone interested in becoming a docent should contact Brooke Shannon at the Museum, at (860) 456-2178 or millmuseum@sbcglobal.net.



A volunteer docent leads a walking tour of the historic Willimantic Mills neighborhood .