



Loom and Spindle

THE MILL MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT /
WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM

COMING EVENTS:

Exhibit: "Blue Collar, White Collar, Pink Collar: Work Clothes from Colonial Times to the 1980s." Through Nov., 2015.

Trip: *Mill of the Month:* Collinsville, CT. Sat., March 28. Leave Museum 1 PM, arrive Collinsville 2 PM. With Bev York. \$10 general admission, \$7 Museum members and seniors, \$5 students.

Program: *Museum Lyceum:* Sun., March 29, 1 PM, Dugan Hall at the Museum. Dagmar Noll will present a ppt slide show, "Exploring Danish History and Culture by Bicycle." \$10, \$5 students (members free).

Program: *Kids Club:* Sat., April 11, 2 PM. For kids 5-12. "What Your Great Great Grandparents Wore," a fashion show for kids, with Bev York. Free for Kids Club members, \$5 others.

Program: *Hospitality and Docent Training:* Tues., April 14, 1-4 PM, and Fri., April 17, 6-9 PM. Free for Mill Museum staff and volunteers. \$20 for all others. See p. 2 for details.

Program: *Special Museum Lyceum:* Sat., April 18, 4 PM, Dugan Hall at the Museum. Lincoln Gettysburg Address Challenge. Advanced registration, \$5. Walk-in registration, \$10. Watch the presentations, \$3.

Trip: *Mill of the Month:* Sat., April 25, 4 PM. Talcottville in Vernon. Meet at the site. With Bev York. \$10 general admission, \$7 Museum members and seniors, \$5 students.

Program: *Museum Lyceum:* Sun., April 26, 3 PM, Dugan Hall at the Museum. Talk and book signing by former State Senator Donald E. Williams, "Prudence Crandall." \$10, \$5 students (members free).

Program: *Kids Club:* Sat., May 9, 2 PM. "Just Plein Fun!" Plein air drawing, with Bev York. Free for Kids Club members, \$5 others.

Program: *Tea:* Sat., May 16, 4 PM, Dugan Hall at the Museum. "Apron Strings: Tied to History," Mothers Day tea and illustrated talk on aprons, by the team of Bev York and Rita Tunador. By reservation.

Program: *Museum Lyceum:* Sun., May 17, 3 PM, Dugan Hall of the Museum. Illustrated talk by Roger Benham on American soldiers in Italy in World War I. \$10, \$5 students (members free).

Program: *Wagon Rides:* Thurs., May 21. Horse and wagon rides at the Third Thursday Street Fest in Willimantic.

Trip: *Mill of the Month:* Sat., May 23, 4 PM. Tour the Old Willimantic Cemetery in Willimantic with Bev York. \$10 general admission, \$7 Museum members and seniors, \$5 students.

Event: *Victorian Days in Willimantic:* June 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Event: *Museum Flea Market Book and Tag Sale:* June 20 and 21.

Trip: Aug. 14, 15, and 16. Gettysburg, PA.

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: AMY HOOKER, FORGOTTEN LABOR LEADER

Amy Hooker was born (probably) in New Britain, CT, where she was baptized at St. Mark's on Sept. 9, 1887. Her father, Dwight Freeman Hooker, had worked as a joiner. Amy became a textile worker at an early age. The 1910 United States Census found her, 23 years old, living with her parents Dwight and Alice in Newark, NJ, and working in a factory making straw hats. She never went to school beyond the 6th grade, although she learned enough to be a union leader and later a private art teacher. In 1920 the Census recorded her living as a lodger in Scotland, CT, only a few miles from Willimantic, and unemployed. She subsequently showed up in several Willimantic street directories, living in the Thread City in the late 1910s, 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. She moved around a lot, residing in a series of low-rent, working-class apartments, almost all of them in older buildings later demolished in Willimantic's 1970s urban renewal. She seems a bit shadowy – the 1920 Census showed her as unemployed; the 1930 Census recorded her living in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ (a suburb of Passaic, the scene of another bitter 1926-27 textile strike – one wonders if she went there to participate), with her older married sister Carrie and working at her old occupation as a straw hatter; and 1920s, 30s, and 40s Willimantic street directories failed to list any occupation for her (although such information was recorded for almost everyone else who was employed). One suspects that she was blacklisted in Willimantic after the 1925 strike failed, and had trouble finding work. Why had she come to Willimantic from New Jersey in the first place? Probably because, like many working class Americans, she followed friends and relatives – her sister Mattie and brother Dwight also lived in Willimantic, although she never lived with them. Why did she return to New Jersey? Was it simply to reconnect with her other sister, or was she somehow involved in the Passaic strike? Why did she come back to Willimantic in the 1930s? Did she perhaps live with a lover? No – all the people who lived at the same addresses as she did changed with each move, and the majority were working class couples. Possibly her friends in the union took care of her after the strike.



1925 American Thread Strike.

The 1925 ATCO strike lasted nine months – or more, depending on how you measure these things – and involved thousands of workers. 2,500 workers – the entire factory workforce – went out on strike – and about 1,700 'scabs' were brought in to replace them. The strike was about wage cuts. ATCO had cut its piece rates several times in the early 1920s, and workers were frustrated. The union was fairly new at the ATCO

AMY HOOKER, CONT'D

mill, and most of its members were women and immigrants. The strike wore on through the long hot summer. Several of the women strikers were arrested for verbally abusing strikebreakers; in June Celia St. George, Jeanette St. George, and Caroline Kozek found themselves in court and fined \$10 for name calling. To protest the eviction of strikers from their tenements – and to dramatize that the evictions would leave families homeless – the union conducted a parade of baby carriages. In June, the UTWA also erected tents on the outskirts of Willimantic, to house evicted strikers. In July the UTWA ominously threatened a general strike against ATCO's other plants – and perhaps even other textile factories – if no further progress occurred, although the general strike never materialized. Evictions began in earnest that month, with deputy sheriffs removing furniture from the homes of strikers Joseph Aubin, Moise Morrisette, Nelson Chamberland, Marie Theroux, and William Chalifoux. None of the evicted families opted to move into any of the twenty tents the UTWA had erected, which as of July 16 were occupied by only "two or three caretakers." Tempers frayed. When a state police officer claimed to have been "manhandled" by strikers, Willimantic Police Chief Allan MacArthur ordered that all parades and marches cease. Amy Hooker organized a committee of herself, two women strikers, and three men to beg MacArthur to rescind his decision. He did, but only after Hooker promised that pickets would stay on the sidewalks, and confine all parades to the morning hours. In September, the UTWA opened a commissary store at 166 Jackson St. in Willimantic to provide food and clothing for strikers and their families.

ATCO's strategy of hiring replacement workers proved successful. The plant reopened on May 11, 1925, after having been closed for two months, and production continued throughout the rest of the strike. As the months dragged on, the union's position grew increasingly weak. By the end of September, it was clear that the strikers had lost and that management had won. A few of the strikers returned to work. Others remained in the area, but took new jobs with other companies. But most simply moved away and never came back. In July the next year, plant manager Don Curtis announced the strike over. Hooker and Mary Kelleher, a representative from the union's national offices sent to assist her, insisted that it was still on, but if it was, it was in name only. In August, 1933, the UTWA officially declared the strike over. The 1700 to 1800 workers then at ATCO – some strikebreakers, some former strikers like who asked for their old jobs back – did not belong to a union. The union was broken. When in 1934 a general textile strike occurred on the east coast of the United States from Maine to Georgia – and involved several smaller mills in Willimantic – ATCO was not involved. "In Willimantic," declared the Hartford Courant, "the large American Thread Company mills with 1800 employees have not been unionized." The 1934 strikes, too, failed. The UTWA would not return to ATCO's Willimantic plant until the 1950s, and by then Connecticut's textile industry was already in sharp decline.

There is only one known photo of Amy Hooker, taken probably sometime around 1950, when she was 63 and living with her sister Carrie Hooker Varley in Hebron, CT. At the time Amy was unmarried (in fact, she never married), taught art to private pupils, was active in the Grange organizing musicals and first aid training, and was otherwise leading a quiet life. Who would know that, a quarter of a century earlier as a young woman of 38, as President of the Willimantic Textile Council – an affiliate of the United Textile Workers of America – she stood on picket lines in Thread Mill Square and the stage of the Strand Theater and – in words of one-time Connecticut State Troubador Hugh Blumenfeld – "dress[ed] down American Thread." She paid a great price for her temerity, never again finding employment in the Thread City. A quiet life. Except for 1925, when she led a union, organized pickets, headed marches down Willimantic's Main Street, bargained with plant managers, police chiefs, and mayor, and stood on a stage in Willimantic's Gem Theater rallying thousands of angry workers.

HOSPITALITY & DOCENT TRAINING

Would you like to be a docent at the Mill Museum? Are you a docent or volunteer at another museum who would like to learn more about how to lead tours, interact with the public, and offer quality experiences to visitors at your own site?

Then come to one of our hospitality and docent training sessions. The first session meets on Tuesday, April 14, from 1 to 4 PM at the Museum. It will be repeated on Friday, April 17, from 6 to 9 PM, also at the Museum.

The sessions are free to Mill Museum staff and volunteers (including prospective new volunteers), and \$20 for folks from other museums or the general public.

Please join us for a three-hour session for Museum staff and volunteers and others serving the public in the tourism industry. Discover innovative and tried-and-true ways of greeting visitors, meeting their needs, offering quality experiences, and helping them navigate what your site and region has to offer. Docent training provides a "tool kit" for promoting your interesting stories and engaging visitors. Making meaningful connections with your visitors insure valuable outings that will circle back to your organization's continued success!

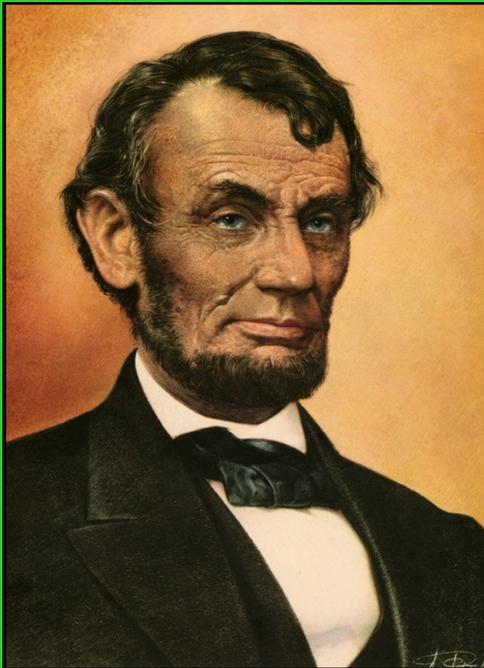


Bev York (above) "directing" activities at a museum event, ably assisted by her "cameraman," Duke York.

The class will be taught by Museum Educator Bev York, who has over 25 years in the museum and education industries. The training will be held at the Mill Museum. For more information, call the Museum at 860-456-2178 or Bev at 860-423-1878.

WINDOWS BEING REPAIRED

The Mill Museum's Window Campaign has raised enough money to repair all 19 windows in the Museum's Dugan Mill building, the 1877 brick structure located adjacent to the Museum's main building. Last Fall, the Museum commenced a capital campaign to raise the funds necessary. "The windows in the Dugan building were in desperate need of repair," commented Executive Director Jamie Eves. "The woodwork was cracked, the exterior paint was peeling, much of the glazing had fallen out, and some of the window panes were broken." The work has already commenced. "All of the windows on the second floor have been repaired," said Eves, "and the carpenter has started in on the first floor." Donors to the Museum's window fund will be recorded on plaques.



GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

2015 SNOW BALL



The Mill Museum held its annual Snow Ball fundraiser in January. The event was a success, raising enough money to pay the Museum's annual fuel expenses. We sincerely thank everyone who came, the volunteers on the Snow Ball Committee, the many Windham-area artists who displayed their works at the ball, and our generous sponsors.

His Honor, Windham Mayor Ernest Eldridge, greeting guests at the Snow Ball at the entrance to the Bellingham Room at Windham Town Hall. The theme of the ball was Windham and the Arts. The Mayor is dressed as a French impressionist painter.

GETTYSBURG ADDRESS CHALLENGE

How good is your memory? Can you memorize ten sentences? Lincoln's Gettysburg Address — one of the most important speeches ever given by an American President — is only ten sentences. On April 18 at 4 PM, the Mill Museum will join in the nationwide Gettysburg Address Challenge. We challenge folks of all ages — children, youth, groups, and adults — to recite the Gettysburg Address. Ribbons will be awarded in all age categories for memorization, as well as creative expression, costumes, props, etc. The public is invited to watch. Registration forms are available at the Museum. Advanced registration is \$5, walk-in registration is \$10, and members of the audience are requested to give a \$3 donation.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL SPRING 2015

If you have already renewed your membership, thank you!

Kids Club, \$10 _____ Wool (Family/Household), \$50 _____

Cotton (Individual), \$25 _____ Silk (Patron), \$100 _____

Institutional, \$1,000+ _____ Additional Donation _____

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

NAME: _____ E-Mail: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Checks payable to: W. T. H. M. (Or use PayPal on the Museum's web site, <http://www.millmuseum.org/>)

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

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**THE MILL
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WINDHAM TEXTILE AND
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TALKS AND TRIPS

This year's Museum Lyceum series — history programs for adults — will be jam-packed. "The Museum is doing a lot of history programming this year," enthused Executive Director Jamie Eves. "We will have a whole bunch of terrific speakers." Museum Lyceums are free for Museum members, \$10 for nonmembers, and \$5 for students.

In addition to the Museum Lyceum series of history talks, the Museum is continuing its Mill-of-the-Month series of field trips, expanding the format to include cemeteries and even a bus trip to Gettysburg, led by Museum Educational Director Bev York. Most Mill-of-the-Month trips are \$10 for the general public, and \$7 for Museum members and seniors, and \$5 for students. Some trips — such as the one to Gettysburg — will cost more.

On Sunday, March 29, at 1 PM, Dagmar Noll will speak and show slides about Danish history and culture as viewed from the seat of her bicycle. It is rumored that malevolent cows may make an appearance.

On Sunday, April 28, at 3 PM, former State



Senator Donald E. Williams will speak on Connecticut State Heroine Prudence Crandall, and autograph copies of his new biography of Crandall.

On Sunday, May 17, at 3 PM, Roger Benham will speak and show slides about American doughboys on the Italian front during World War I.

For more information on Museum Lyceums, Mill-of-the-Month trips, and other Mill Museum programs, see the "Coming Events" column on page 1 of this newsletter.

**MOTHER'S DAY
TEA (AND
APRONS)**

On Saturday, May 16, at 4 PM, in Dugan Hall at the Museum, we will present "Apron Strings: Tied to History: A Mothers Day Tea." Join us for tea, chocolate, and baked desserts, and an illustrated talk on aprons, by the team of Bev York and Rita Tunador. Reservations are requested. This program is designed for mothers and children, grandmothers and grandchildren of all ages. Tea, chocolate, and desserts will be served on fine china by Museum volunteers. Dress up in Victorian gowns, or come as you are. All are welcome.

