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# Loom and Spindle

## The Mill Museum Newsletter

August 2024

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## Community Turns Out to Honor Jamie Eves

It was standing room only on a recent Sunday afternoon for an event in the Mill Museum's Dugan Building to honor Jamie Eves. He is the museum's Interim Executive Director and Senior Curator

**State Rep. Susan Johnson presents Jamie Eves with an official state proclamation.**
*(Photo by Amy Marwood)*

Willimantic Mayor Tom DeVivo and State Rep. Susan Johnson jointly presented Jamie with a proclamation from the Connecticut legislature.



The mayor recalled how on many occasions Jamie was relied upon for precise historical information needed for current-day challenges.

Former Mill Museum Executive Director Kira Holmes recounted how Jamie was a professional mentor for her own career.

Jamie's wife, Kit, shared how the couple first met and fell in love, while living in Maine.

Among those giving warm wishes was local historian Michael Westerfield.

Organizing the event was museum long-time volunteer Amy Marwood, a former board member. Museum volunteer, Jean de Smet, a former Windham first selectman, was MC for the event.

In addition to being the museum's interim director, Jamie is Windham's official town historian. He has played a key role as a leader of the Connecticut League of Museums.

In addition, he is a popular history professor. He has taught American history to generations of students at the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University. His classes are known for his gift of story-telling, as well as engaging and passionate lectures, according to online reviews. Former students also praise his friendliness.




**Kit, Jamie Eves' wife, recounts how the couple first met and fell in love in Maine.**
*(Photo by Anna Jaroszynska-Kirchmann)*

Among his fields of interest are American environmental and industrial history; early American history; public and local history; and the history of New England. His academic writings have appeared in such publications as Technology and Culture, Connecticut History, and Maine History.

He received a doctorate in history at UConn and a master's degree from the University of Maine.

His doctoral dissertation was a study of the interrelationship of nature and culture in the Piscataquis River Valley in northern Maine, 1760-1870. His master's thesis traced a migration of farm families from Cape Cod in Massachusetts to the lower Penobscot River Valley in Maine, 1760-1820.

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## Authentic Spinning Bee Scheduled for Windham Green

Local residents will have the chance to experience first-hand an authentic New England spinning bee this summer.

A spinning bee is planned for between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. on Saturday, August 17 on the historic Windham Green located in Windham Center.

> *" Spinning bees on town greens made a political statement. "*

Some of those attending the Mill Museum-sponsored event likely will be dressed in colonial-era clothing.

All spinners and the general public are invited. The event is free of charge.

It is part of a continuing series of live demonstrations held in conjunction with the current special exhibit, Liberty's Daughters in Northeastern Connecticut: Women, Textiles, and the Nonimportation Movement in the Revolutionary Era.

The museum is presenting live demonstrations of preindustrial textile technology and other women's homekeeping skills, as well as sponsor related programs and exhibits in the museum's main exhibition room.

The presentations show the critical role played by women in the birth of the United States. Women, as makers of textiles, contributed to the success of American boycotts against English manufactured goods in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War.

"The spinning of flax fibers into yarn and weaving the yarn into linen cloth was an important element of the nonimportation movement leading to the Revolutionary War," explains Peggy Church, an experienced weaver who teaches at the Mill Museum.

"Women stepped up the production of homespun textiles so that colonists did not need to buy British textiles. They had spinning bees on town greens to make a political statement."

"Women came together for spinning bees to make a public statement supporting nonimportation of textiles from Britain," she added. "There were contests to see who could spin the longest thread."

> *" Competition among spinners could be intense. "*

The spinning events were reported on in local newspapers of the day. They often were organized by the town minister.

Competition among spinners could be intense. In 1769, in Lebanon, two women had a day-long spinning competition.

The wife of John Vaughan won the event after she spun seven skeins and two knots of linen yarn, according to modern-day historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. It was only slightly more than what was produced by her neighbor.

Also, in Windham, a woman raised an impressive 6,000 "silk balls" from a single mulberry tree, Ulrich recounted.

Modern historians have noted that spinning bees were particularly popular between 1766 and 1771.

Many of these events were jointly sponsored by local Daughters of Liberty members and local members of the Sons of Liberty.

In addition, the Mill Museum, over three sessions, August 10, September 14, and October 19, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., will have programs on bobbin lacemaking. It will be explained by Jill Hawkins and others from the New England Lace Group.

Jill Hawkins explained she learned to make bobbin lace in Glastonbury, England in 1985. She's twice been President of the New England Lace Group.

"Bobbin lace is a lace textile made by weaving lengths of thread, which are wound on bobbins to manage them," Jill Hawkins said.

"In Europe as well as colonial America, lace had important economic implications for the wearers," she said. "It was a signifier of wealth and fashion as we can often see from period portraits; owning and using lace represented status -- for both women and men."

In coming months, group and individual tours of the Mill Museum exhibits and attendance at demonstrations are strongly encouraged. The museum's exhibit is scheduled to run through Sunday Oct. 20. It's partially funded from a grant provided by Connecticut Humanities.

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## Mill Museum Seeks Executive Director, Museum Educator

The Mill Museum is currently recruiting for two part-time, salaried positions: executive director and museum educator. Resumes and letters of interest should be sent soon to search@millmuseum.org. Here are the details.

**Executive Director**

The executive director is the chief executive officer of the Windham Textile and History Museum (the Mill Museum).

**General Responsibilities:**

- The onsite, part-time executive director will manage day-to-day operations of the museum, which is open Saturday to Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm. Additional hours as required.
- Supervise and train staff (paid and volunteer), and delegate duties as needed.
- Manage receipt and payment of museum funds in coordination with the treasurer and bookkeeper.
- Research and write grant applications appropriate to museum programs and operations.
- Establish and maintain museum calendar, including exhibitions, activities, rentals, and special uses.

- Provide administrative support to Board of Directors' committees, including Fundraising; Finance; Curatorial, Exhibits and Education; and Membership committees.
- Promote and market the museum in social media and local publications.
- Represent the museum in public settings.
- Maintain partnerships with donors, governmental agencies, nonprofits, and local businesses.
- Report monthly to the museum Board of Directors. Establish goals for the museum and its operations, with the Board of Directors, that will be evaluated annually.

**Qualifications/Skills:**

- Bachelor's degree or higher in a relevant field applicable to museum operations. Transferable skills from experience will be considered.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and work as part of a team.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Strong organizational and planning skills.
- Proficiency in computer skills, social media, online educational programs, and video conferencing.

**Preferred Attributes:**

- Master's degree preferred in a relevant field, such as history, art history, museum studies, public history, or a business-related field.
- Proven leadership ability and experience in a business or professional position.
- Successful fundraising experience.
- Experience developing educational programs.

**Museum Educator**

The Museum Educator is responsible for promoting, arranging, leading, and supervising tours/events for children and adults at the Windham Textile and

History Museum (Mill Museum).

**General Responsibilities:**

- The onsite, part-time museum educator will work with volunteer docents, other volunteers, and members of the staff to provide engaging and creative tours and programs for visitors of all ages.
- Museum tours can be scheduled on weekdays or weekends. Additional work hours as required.
- Meet with school educators and youth group professionals to promote and plan tours/events.
- Undertake other museum responsibilities as needed.

**Qualifications/Skills:**

- Experience teaching high school and elementary age students in academic or museum settings highly recommended.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Excellent writing and public speaking skills.
- Strong organizational and planning skills.
- Comfort with computers and social media.
- Bachelor's degree or higher in a relevant field applicable to museum operations. Transferable skills from experience will be considered.

The museum strongly welcomes applications from those with diverse backgrounds. Salary is negotiable based on responsibilities and hours worked.

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# News Briefs

## Fundraiser for Lebanon Historical Society

The Lebanon Historical Society will hold a fundraising event on August 17 at Independence Vineyard, 129 West Town Street, Lebanon.

Called "An Italian Evening at the Vineyard" it will take place between 4 and 7 p.m.

Tickets are $60 per person. Advanced ticket sales only.

## Anita Sebestyen Passes

Local historian Anita Sebestyen of Windham Center passed away on July 21st, following a brief illness.

Anita was the sitting President of the Willimantic Rotary and Windham Historical Society. She was also a serving member of the Board of Finance for the town. She had worked with Windham CARES.

She is survived by her life partner of 49 years, Ernie Eldridge, and their dog, Portia, as well two brothers. A celebration of life will be scheduled at a later date.

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Please Note: We did not send a July Newsletter.

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## 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.

At the $25 COTTON (Individual) level, members receive the newsletter; email notice of the Museum's programs and events; free admission to the Museum, its library and exhibits (special events and fundraisers my be extra); and 1-hour access to staff time for personal research.

At the $50 WOOL (Family) level, membership extends these same benefits to members of a household consisting of up to two adults and any number of children.

At the $100 SILK (Patron) level, membership includes all the above benefits, plus

invitations to a private, advance showing of exhibits; free personal tours; and 3-hour access to staff time for personal research.

## Membership Levels:

Cotton (individual) membership, $25
Wool (family) membership, $50
Silk (patron) membership, $100

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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**Our mailing address is:**
860-456-2178 * 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226
Open Sat - Sun, 10-4
themillmuseum@gmail.com

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