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Loom and Spindle

The Mill Museum Newsletter

October 2024

Mill Museum's Jamie Eves Honored By Connecticut Museum League

Mill Museum Senior Curator Jamie Eves is receiving a major honor this week from his colleagues at the Connecticut League of Museums.

A new award was named in his honor by the league. Eves is scheduled to be the award's first recipient in a ceremony on Tuesday at the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks.

In the years ahead, other museum professionals in the state will be given the Jamie Eves Award as part of the league's annual Awards of Merit ceremonies.



State Rep. Susan Johnson presents Jamie Eves with an official state proclamation during Mill Museum program. .
Photo by Amy Marwood

Likely, each year, the league will present the Jamie Eves Award to a museum practitioner who, like Eves, has shown excellence in research and teaching, elevated history and culture at the local level, and advocated for and expanded the capacity of smaller museums to serve their communities, according to a league statement.

For Nick Foster, director of the Wilton Historical Society and president of the Connecticut League of Museums board, naming the new award after Eves was obvious.

"No one has better encapsulated the spirit and passion of the small museum than Jamie," Foster said last week. "He represents a lifetime of sharing local stories while staying committed to the highest levels of professional standards, often with the little-to-no budget, time, and resources that small museums are frequently working with."

The idea for the award comes from the reality that the core of the league "has always been small, locally focused organizations that strive to have a big impact with few available resources," Foster added. "We hope this award named in his honor will serve as a lasting legacy of a lifetime elevating local history."

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For many years, Eves has been an active and devoted member of the league. He is also Windham Town Historian and frequently is called upon by public officials to answer questions on local history.

Eves has been both Executive Director and Interim Executive Director of the Mill Museum, formally known as the Windham Textile and History Museum. He has mentored generations of young people interested in museum careers and over the years curated numerous well-attended exhibits at the museum.

The museum recognized Eves this past summer in a standing-room-only program in the Dugan Building.

Eves graduated from the University of Maine and later received a doctorate in history from UConn. For decades, he has been a popular history professor at both Eastern Connecticut State University and UConn.

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.

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 at the University of Maine traced a migration of farm families from Cape Cod in Massachusetts to the lower Penobscot River Valley in Maine, 1760-1820.

The history of Connecticut remains important to him.

"Connecticut, as a whole, needs a sense of its own history, so that we know who we are, what we have in common with each other, and what makes us unique," Eves has written. "History belongs to the people, and everybody has a right to know their history. That history has to be accessible, readable, local, and affordable."

Aaron Skarzenski Is New Executive Director at Mill Museum

Starting this month, Aaron Skarzenski will be the new Executive Director at the Windham Textile and History Museum, better known as the Mill Museum.

He takes over from Interim Executive Director Jamie Eves who continues in his other role as the museum's Senior Curator.

Skarzenski is now the museum's permanent chief executive officer leading staff and the many volunteers to ensure visitors have an outstanding museum experience.

"I'm excited and honored to join this community and participate as the Executive Director of the Windham Textile and History Museum," he said during his first week on the job. "I look forward to my new role and connecting with my new home."

Much of Skarzenski's prior professional museum experience took place at Philadelphia's American Swedish Historical Museum.

The American Swedish Historical Museum is the nation's oldest Swedish-American museum having been founded in 1926. Located in Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park, it's situated on land given by Queen Christina of Sweden to settlers of the New Sweden Colony.

While at the museum, he was a curatorial assistant where he assisted the curator in such tasks as installing and de-installing exhibits, as well as the planning and research of exhibits.

He also was an interim curatorial liaison and a visitor services manager where he oversaw daily museum operations.



In addition, Skarzenski received a master's degree in curatorial studies at the University of Chicago. While a graduate student, he received a prestigious Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship from the U.S. Department of Education.

At Chicago, he additionally worked as a teaching assistant for a modern Japanese art and architecture course. He was also a preservation assistant for the university's library.

His advanced degree required him to complete an original and rigorous master's thesis. His was on Japanese painter Chikatoshi Enomoto. Skarzenski presented his research during the 2022 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs at the University of Kansas.

Previously, he was an honors graduate of Philadelphia's Temple University where he was selected for the university's Phi Beta Kappa honors society. Over three semesters, he completed a 1,400-artifact catalogue as part of his preparation for a museum career.

During time spent in Europe, he also worked as an intern for Sicily's Pernice Residency Program focusing on the artist Dennis Balk, the very first artist to reside in the prominent retreat located on a historic farm and winery.

Over the course of a year, Skarzenski also was an educator in Japan as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. He worked as an assistant language teacher at Aomori Nishi High School.

Skarzenski was selected as Executive Director following an extensive search and interview process by the Mill Museum Board of Directors.

News Briefs

Trick or Treat on Main Street

Bring kids to enjoy Willimantic's annual Trick or Treat on Main Street on October 31 taking place between 5 and 7 p.m.

Downtown merchants and local civic groups will distribute candy. Main Street will be closed to traffic for this event.

Festivities will take place on Main Street, from High Street to Church Street.

Toys at Florence Griswold Museum

Selected toys and amusements are on display at Old Lyme's Florence Griswold Museum. They are from the permanent collection, complementing the Wee Faerie Village installations outdoors on the museum's grounds.

The toys exhibited attest to the continuities between historic amusements and their modern versions, which visitors are free to touch.

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 may 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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