



Héritage Winooski
Box 181, Saint Michael's College
Colchester VT 05439

Mill Run

The Newsletter of Héritage Winooski Mill Museum ~ Spring 2010

Latest Exhibit: The Woolen Mill & Waterpower

The Woolen Mill at Winooski Falls

After Burlington entrepreneurs established the Burlington Woolen Company and secured water privileges in 1835, the company built Mill No.1, the first complete textile mill in Vermont; and in 1837 added a canal, flumes, a timber dam, and later two wheel houses. Mill No.2, an 1861 addition, expanded in 1895. Mill No.3, (Colchester Merino Mill) was built in 1880 to make hosiery.



Woolen Mill Apartments, 2010 (North Elevation)

After market fluctuations and various ownership changes, American Woolen Company bought the buildings in 1901 and expanded Mill No. 3 in 1902. Mill No.2 and Mill No.3 comprise the space presently occupied by Woolen Mill Apartments, managed by the Shoreland Corporation of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Renovations began in 1979. The first tenant moved into the building in 1981.

Another View



The Woolen Mill 1958 (East Elevation)

Winooski had a discount store long before the big boxes came to Williston. Forest Hills Factory Outlet and Grossman's Lumber took over the Woolen Mill in 1958 at which time the building was run-down. Shoppers took advantage of low prices, despite a rickety entrance ramp and the disrepair.

The exhibit includes a bird's-eye view of the entire T-shaped Woolen Mill, highlighting the canal and several waterpower components that fed power to the Woolen Mill itself and beyond to Mill #1 which burned in 1957.

Other photographs show construction details of the mill, and penstocks and turbines in the remaining wheelhouse. A chronology of waterpower features and Woolen Mill expansions completes the exhibit.

What Does a Doffer Do?

Doffing was a task for children working in textile mills. During a recent school tour at the Mill Museum, Saint Francis-Xavier students tried their hands at "doffing" bobbins, i.e. replacing empty bobbins on spindles. It was a short exercise for these students compared to a tedious day-long task for mill children.

History teachers Jeff Billado and Catherine Richards brought students James Wells, Max Mcdowell, Michelle Bolger, Chris Jansen, Jena Flint, Kayla St. Marie, Elise Prehoda, Karry Fereday, Fleur Diambou, Madison Myers and Sean Remillard who came prepared with clip boards and activity sheets from *Clickity-Clack: Wool and Waterpower*, the Mill Museum curriculum guide. They examined Lewis Hine photographs, c.1910, of children in Winooski Falls mills, James Detore photographs c.1944, of men and women at work at tasks involved in the manufacture of cloth, and waterpower systems.

Billado found the museum a valuable resource for the community; the various topics helped the students become aware of the life of the mill and its place in Winooski's heritage.

A Syrian Immigrant Family

French Canadians and Irish followed the first wave of local Yankee farm girls as mill operatives in the Winooski mills. In lesser numbers, more immigrants followed: Italians, Polish, Armenians, Lebanese, Syrians and others.

Nicholas Morwood's account of his family tells of experiences not unlike other immigrants in early 20th century Winooski. With nothing to look forward to in Syria except being poor dirt farmers, his parents came to America to find a better life; they were willing to work hard. They met and married in Winooski. They worked for American Woolen Company; his mother as a winder, his father in the dye house. His father had to turn down a job as foreman because he could neither read nor write, nor could his mother. They raised three children, a lawyer (Nick), an engineer and a merchant; each served in the military during World War II. Nick told his children "they've got to do better than I have, because they've got every advantage".

As Nick noted, people today are immigrating to this country to find a better life. One might ask what Winooski offers to Vietnamese, Somalis or Haitians today. What will their stories be? The Mill Museum is grateful for Nick's support, his interest and his wonderful recollections: "A Syrian Immigrant Family" in *The Mills at Winooski Falls*. Nick died in March

Mill Museum Hours

Mon – -Fri 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Sat 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Closed Sundays & Holidays

What's New? Come Visit!

Since the reinstallation of the Mill Museum on the 3rd level of the Champlain Mill, new additions to the exhibits have been added. Contact: millmuseum@yahoo.com
Free Parking: Parking Garage Visitors' Section