



A Thread in Time



Winter 2022

President's Message



I hope this newsletter finds everyone happy and healthy. Please seriously consider joining our annual meeting next year. It is so nice to get to meet our members in person. It was about 20 years ago that this society was a thought in three people's minds. Unfortunately, only two of us are left here to carry on the mission. I did notice when we were talking about our ancestors, that the way many of us spoke of them, we knew and loved them. It is so different when you know the person you are honoring than if you were honoring someone who passed hundreds of years ago. Yes, history is important, but it is also nice to see peoples faces as they light up talking about someone who was beloved. I sincerely hope to see you at our next meeting!

Sincerely,

Dawn Darche
President

Treasurer's Information

Dues can be paid to Nancy Merwin at 284 Chesterfield Rd Oakdale, CT 06370 and are \$10 per year. There are life member options, please contact Nancy at nancyamerwin284@gmail.com.

Officers

President: Dawn Darche
Vice President: Ed Strickland
Secretary: Marg Studley
Treasurer: Nancy Merwin
Genealogist: Mary Brown

Career Advancement Grant

The NSDTWA is proud to offer a Career Advancement Grant to any member, child or grandchild of a member, who is graduating from a Vocational High School. This grant may be used for advanced education, tools, or licensing fees. For the 2022 grant we are able to award \$1,000. Application may be made through the website, textileworkers.com. If you would like to make a donation to this fund, checks made out to NSDTWA should be sent to Nancy Merwin, 284 Chesterfield Rd., Oakdale, CT 06370. Questions or comments should be directed to mbrown06239@gmail.com.

Welcome!

We have many new members. It is so nice to see us growing so well. Thank you so much for joining us and making our organization strong.

#140 Mrs. Sharon Wyatt-Norman, Odessa, FL
#142 Mrs. Brenda Brady, Pateros, WA
#144 Mrs. Dawn Brasfield, Lizella, GA
\$146 Mrs. Nancy West, Shrewsbury, VT

#141L Mrs. Brenda King, Alpharetta, GA
#143L Mrs. Cheryl Aultman, Macon, GA
#145 Miss Amy Jackson, Palmetto, GA

Scouting Continues to Teach the Importance and Presence of Textiles in Daily Life

By Christopher M. Foley #122



Scouting provides opportunities for youth to explore more than 130 fields of skill and knowledge, and awards merit badges to Scouts who complete the prescribed requirements. Since 1927, Scouting has offered a Textile merit badge to expand a scout's knowledge of the history and technical aspects of textiles, and to demonstrate proficiency in the various aspects of the subject. Textile educators, trade associations, and industry professionals contribute to keeping the requirements current and relevant. Their challenge continues to be maintaining sufficient interest in the Textile merit badge to avoid the same fate that has befallen the likes of blacksmithing, taxidermy, and other discontinued badges.

In order to earn the Textile merit badge, scouts are required to familiarize themselves with various types, qualities, and uses of natural and synthetic fibers, fabric, and other textiles. Scouts are given opportunities to experiment with practical applications involving textiles including weaving with a simple loom, felting, and naturally dyeing fabrics. The curriculum finishes with an investigation of career possibilities in the textile industry including the education, cost of training, and specific duties those positions require.

As textile manufacturing advanced since the introduction of the first merit badges, the merit badges themselves have evolved. From 1911 to 1933, merit badges were individually embroidered on rolls of cloth ribbon and cut into squares before being sewed onto the scout sash or uniform. After 1933 the edges were folded and sewn under by the manufacturer to effect a round appearance. Badges made from a lighter weight cloth with a much finer weave

were necessitated by the demand for the heavier cloth during World War II, but construction reverted to a heavier material after the War. Over the ensuing years merit badges were designed to be stiffer and more substantial, reinforcing badges with materials such as plastic backing. In the last few decades the use of computer-aided manufacturing and even including a logo on the back of badges to reduce counterfeiting have ensured that these textiles keep up with the times.

Unfortunately, in 2020 the Textile merit badge ranked among the least popular Scouting merit badges (115 out of 137), with only 1,929 scouts earning the badge. This represents a roughly 25% drop from the preceding four years, in a year where one would expect “socially distant” badges to see a significant increase due to quarantine conditions. Scouts earning the Genealogy merit badge, by comparison, rose 47% in 2020. Since the inception of merit badges in 1911, Textile ranks 101st in all merit badges earned. Perhaps shifting the focus of the Textile merit badge curriculum to include more of an emphasis on sustainability in, and the global value proposition of, a new textile economy will invigorate the program and maintain its relevance to today’s Scouting youth.

Sources: “Henning’s Scouters’ Pages,” www.scouters.us (accessed July 11, 2021); Wendell, Bryan, “2020 Merit Badge Rankings: A List Rewritten by the Pandemic,” Scouting Magazine (February 24, 2021).

Insignia



This insignia medal is available to all members of the National Society of Descendants of Textile Workers of America. You can wear this proudly, knowing that you are honoring your textile worker ancestor. All proceeds (including handling and postage) from the sale of this medal are placed in the dedicated scholarship fund. You may order this medal for \$45 including shipping and handling. There is also a charm, a miniature medal and life member pin shown on the website. www.textileworker.com. Send a check made out to NSDTWA to Nancy Merwin, 284 Chesterfield Rd., Oakdale, CT '06370.

Silkworms

By Dawn Darche # 003CL

At our annual Meeting on August 7, 2021, we had a quick discussion about Silk City in New Jersey. This got me thinking about the silk industry. I did some basic quick research and learned that silk production began in Neolithic China. It has since moved to many different parts of the world.

Silkworms need mulberry leaves in order to grow and develop. The Queen of England sent mulberry seeds and silkworm cocoons over with the Jamestown settlement. (We know what happened to that settlement.) In 1762, Nathaniel Aspinwall brought the first silkworm eggs to Mansfield, CT. There he planted an orchard of mulberry trees which is the food source for silkworms. Silkworms were raised in other areas of the state, but ended up only being a cottage industry for home growing. Many, many people grew the worms in spare rooms, attics, or barn lofts. Children and women were the main caretakers of such cocooneries. I don't know how much money they made but, I'm sure it was needed to supplement the family's income.

I then got to thinking - How do they get silk from silkworms? Do they just let them grow into butterflies or do they use the actual worm? Well, I learned that the silk is made when the worm (larvae) make their chrysalis. It is a continuous thread that forms at the end of the larvae period of life. The chrysalis are harvested and put into boiling water in order to remove a gummy substance around the fiber. The fiber is then unrolled and used. When they put the chrysalis (pupa) in the water it kills what is forming on the inside. While sad, it is a necessary phase of harvesting.

Here are the stages of production:

1. The female silk moth lays 300 to 500 eggs.
2. The silkworm eggs hatch to form larvae or caterpillars, known as silkworms.
3. The larvae feed on mulberry leaves.
4. Having grown and molted several times, the silkworm extrudes a silk fiber and forms a net to hold itself.
5. It swings itself from side to side in a figure '8', distributing the saliva that will form silk.
6. The silk solidifies when it contacts the air.
7. The silkworm spins approximately one mile of filament and completely encloses itself in a cocoon in about two or three days. The amount of usable quality silk in each cocoon is small. As a result, about 2,500 silkworms are required to produce a pound of raw silk.
8. The intact cocoons are boiled, killing the silkworm pupa.

9. The silk is obtained by brushing the undamaged cocoon to find the outside end of the filament.
10. The silk filaments are then wound on a reel. One cocoon contains approximately 1,000 yards of silk filament. The silk at this stage is known as raw silk. One thread comprises up to 48 individual silk filaments.

I don't know how profitable this type of farming is, but I am grateful that I am not a silkworm farmer.

Sources: <https://mansfieldct-history.org/history-of-silk-production/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_silk
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sericulture>

Annual Meeting

Please consider joining us for our 2022 annual meeting. It is a fun time for about an hour. We love to 'see' you and talk briefly. This past year we all shared about our ancestor. If you would like any pics or stories posted about your ancestor in our honor roll please send to textileworkersofamerica@gmail.com. One of the big discussions we will have is whether to resume in face meetings or leave it to the online format. Your input is essential!

Annual Textile workers meeting
Saturday, July 16, 2022 · 10:00 – 11:00am
Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/dnq-xmsh-one>

It was good to see: Sandy Esty, Janet Downing, Sherrie Raleigh, Barbara Ricozzi, Nancy Martin, Trisha Everts, Ann Bridges, Debbie Hasen, Nancy Merwin, Marg Studly, Ed Strickland, and Mary Brown.

A big thank you to Muriel Young for the updates about the Slater Museum in Webster!

An even bigger thank you to Chris Foley for his article.

If you'd like to write up something you find interesting please pass it on or if you just have an idea for an article. Sometimes my creativity goes on hiatus and needs a jumpstart.

Minutes from the August 7, 2021 Annual Meeting

National Society Descendants of Textile Workers of America, Inc. Minutes

August 7, 2021

The 2021 annual meeting was called to order by President Dawn Darche at 10:00 AM with 10 members in attendance. The meeting was conducted virtually. President Darche welcomed the members in attendance. Each member introduced themselves and related something about their textile ancestor. Dawn noted that one great aspect of the NSDWTA is that many members knew their textile ancestor.

Minutes

The Secretary presented a summary of the 2020 annual meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the July 18, 2020, annual meeting. The minutes were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer presented a report for the year ending June 30, 2021.

Available funds \$ 3,070.81

Restricted funds:

 Scholarship 3,219.85

 Life member 6,142.00

 \$12,432.74

The treasurer noted that the IRS form 990-N was filed in January 2021.

The treasurer's report was filed for audit.

Membership Report

Mary Brown reported that currently there are 142 members with 6 applications pending. She noted that the organization is growing by leaps and bounds. She thanked JaniSue Regal for initiating the Sharing Our Societies event. Mary asked members to send pictures or vignettes of their ancestor to add to our website Honor Roll.

Old Business

Discussion ensued concerning reorganizing the scholarship application process and the need to establish a committee to read applications and establish a scoring rubric. Ed Strickland, Barbara Ricoszi and Dawn Darche have volunteered to serve on this committee.

It was decided to characterize the scholarship as a "Career Advancement Grant" since non college – bound applicants may be hesitant to apply. It was noted that the grant can be used for tools and other expenses related to an applicant's career.

A motion was made to increase the 2022 Career Advancement Grant to \$1,000 with the amount to be reviewed annually. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

It was generally decided that future meetings should be held virtually to allow more distant members to attend. The option of having a hybrid meeting was also discussed as it allows for better socialization and having a program.

New Business

President Darche thanked all for the work they do for the society. She also requested ideas for future newsletter articles. She suggested that articles regarding those other than mill workers such as cotton farmers, cotton pickers, mill mechanics, and seamstresses and tailors would be of interest.

It was noted that there will be a Massing of the Colors at the Meeting House in Old Weathersfield in October and it was suggested that the NSDTWA participate as they have in the past.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55am.

Respectfully Submitted

Marg Studley, Secretary