

November
2017

ROVING

Message from the President

Hi, All:

My rain gauge reads two and a half inches already on this unredeemably wet, chilly, miserable day. Looks as if we've finally rounded the bend from the golden, shimmering half of fall to the gray and dismal part. The preparations for Roc Day are in full swing at this point but the need for ideas and volunteers goes on, and the November meeting will be our last real chance to iron out the details as a group since the December meeting will be given over to our holiday party. Please come, and bring your energy and ideas. The guidelines for the spinning competition appear in this issue. I hope you're all busily working on your hat, and/ or your contribution to the Chinese Auction.

Besides planning for Roc Day, we'll have a chance to hear from our guest speaker, Alena Hutchinson, who will be telling us about picking 65 pounds of fleece in two days and turning it into a mattress, as they are traditionally made in Azerbaijan. It sounds like an amazing project, involving a way of using wool that will be new to many of us, but an important craft in other parts of the world. (A few years back, I attended a baby shower where all the guests participated in a similar Polish community tradition, gathering for food and music and picking/carding our way through a huge stack of fleece intended as stuffing for a mattress for the baby. It was great fun. Why don't WE have carding parties?) I do hope you all will be able to attend this exceptionally interesting (and important) meeting.

—Wayne

November 2017

Next meeting is on November 11th
from 11am-3pm, and we'll listen to

Alena Hutchinson Talking about Fleece-Stuffed Mattresses.

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The Black Sheep meet from 11am - 3pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month at All Saints Church Parish Hall, Route 34B, in Lansing, NY. Exceptions are possible-see location changes in the latest newsletter!

Guild News:

Minutes from October 14th 2017

Roc Day:

Chakra Workshop: A chakra workshop was suggested for Roc Day. We need enough chakras to make this work. Lois suggested a possible teacher, a lady she knows from the reenactment-scene, who spins famously thin yarn on her chakra.

Hat-Competition: We discussed the competition for Roc Day and came to the following decision:

An entry is a hat made from yarn hand-spun by the person submitting the hat. The hat can be made by any fiber art technique, with the exception of felting. Fulling a knitted/woven/crocheted fabric is permitted. By allowing every kind of fiber art for hat construction, we hope to showcase the wide variety of techniques that can be done with hand-spun yarn. All hats submitted to the competition will be donations to the Chinese Auction. For the rules check next page.

Fiber-Tasting Table: The idea of a fiber tasting table at Roc Day was accepted. It was suggested to add a fiber-guessing quiz to this. All members, who have some left-over exotic fiber at home, of which they could spare a sample are welcome to pass this along to the fiber tasting table.

A sign up sheet for Roc Day tasks was passed around and returned well filled.

Other Business:

Majorie Inana pointed out that while she is organizing workshops for the guild, she is not responsible for activities during the monthly gatherings.

Alena Hutchinson, whose boyfriend comes from Azerbaijan, recently learned how to stuff a mattress with fleeces the Azerbaijani way. It was agreed it would be interesting to invite her to present what she has learned. Shelly Marino volunteered to arrange with her to come to one of our meetings. Alena has since agreed to come to our November meeting.

Angelika St.Laurent

Wool Samples Wanted

For our fiber tasting table/fiber quiz we need samples. If you happen to have some unusual fiber sitting around in your stash, please consider donating a sample to our fiber tasting table. Angelika will be happy to collect the fiber samples during the next two meetings.

Fiber News

Upcoming BSHG Meetings:

November 11th, 11am-3pm

Topic: Azerbaijani style fleece stuffed mattresses.

December 9th, 11am-3pm

Holiday Party

January 13th, Roc Day 10am-4pm

Fiber Events:

Fiber Festival of New England

Saturday, November 4th, 9am-5pm and

Sunday, November 5th, 9am-3pm

1305 Memorial Ave

West Springfield, Massachusetts

<https://www.facebook.com/fiberfestival/>

Roc Day Competition:

Show What Hand Spun Yarn Can Do in a Hat

Use any technique for a hand made hat that uses 100% of your own hand spun yarn and of your own making. That means the hat can be knit, naalbinding, woven, crocheted, knit/fulled, etc. The hand spun can be any fiber(s), plies, or colors. Only hand spun yarn, no beads, no ribbons, no feathers, no shells, sticks or stones, etc.

If you want to enter more than one hat in the competition, they must be different techniques or patterns. For example with 2 knit hats, 1 Fair Isle/1 cabled. Or 3 hats, 1 knit/1 crocheted/1 woven. Or 3 hats, 1 intarsia knit/ 1 rib knit/ 1 woven. Or 4 hats, 1 knit/fulled/ 1 brioche knit,/1 lace knit/ 1 crocheted.

A small sample (12 inches or so) of the hand spun yarn used should accompany the hat. The hats need to be turned in at the competition table by 11 AM in order to be up in time for them to be numbered and displayed and time for people to vote on them. Hats will be judged by the public as each person entering will receive a voting ballot to be deposited in a large container labeled Vote for Your Favorite Hat . The prizes will be announced at 1:30 PM just before the auction. There will be first, second and third prizes. All hat entries will be part of the auction

We can discuss prizes at next guild meeting.

Felting Workshop at Ithaca Soap in Enfield

Wendy of Ithaca Soap in Enfieldd invited guest instructor Theresa May O'Brien for two workshops! Theresa is a renowned feltmaker, textile artist and painter. She has recently been residing and working in Turkey, where she partnered with felting master Mehmet Girgic at Ikonium Studio. Theresa's skills in felting are equaled by her talent with watercolors. The result is a unique approach to surface design.

Design, construction, felting and fulling techniques will be the focus during two 1 day workshops. We are hosting Sketcherly Hat and a Sketcherly Booties workshop. Space is limited.

Nov. 11th: Hat Workshop \$150.00 10am-5pm

Nov. 12th: Bootie Workshop \$150.00 10am-5pm

Location: The Enfield Valley Grange

178 Enfield Main Road

Ithaca, NY 14850 (really in Enfield, but this is the mailing address for GPS)

All materials and supplies available for purchase at workshop.

Bring bag lunch

For more information see: <https://17thcenturysuds.com/collections/felt-art/products/wet-felt-workshops>

Homestead Heritage Day

A few of our members spent October 7th at the Homestead Heritage Day at the Southworth Homestead in Dryden demonstrating spinning, at a venue that we shared with a brass band and the Cornell Raptors



Jean Tyler spinning on the museum's very elegant Townley great wheel .



Sue Quick spinning flax.

A barred owl from Cornell's raptor rehabilitation program, who showed up in the company of red tailed hawks, kestrels, goshawks and merlins.



Ellis Hollow Sheep

By Angelika St.Laurent and Nancy Munckenbeck

Nancy Munckenbeck has been raising sheep for 55 years. She started out raising Shropshires when she was thirteen. Her mother, accompanying her children through many shows and fairs, fell in love with Tunis sheep that were touted to be great mothers. As a present to her mother, Nancy's family started raising Tunis sheep.

American Tunis sheep were originally fat-tailed sheep descended from Tunisian Barbary sheep that arrived in the United States in 1799.¹ Tunis sheep are well-adapted to hot and humid climates, which made them very popular in the South East and Mid-Atlantic states. The breed is renown for its tender meat and its docile character. Unfortunately, the Civil War took a large toll on the Tunis sheep population, which never fully recovered.

Tunis wool grows in dense fleeces of warm cream color. The locks do not have a very obvious crimp structure. The wool diameter is the medium range, between 24 and 29 micron¹. During the last decades many Tunis breeders have illicitly crossed other breeds into their flocks, which changed the breed characteristics. However, Nancy and a few like-minded breeders are still raising old-fashioned Tunis. Compared to the modern version, old fashioned Tunis are smaller. They have sloping backs, which ease lambing. In the old fashioned Tunis, the body fat distribution is uneven. They also retained the nice temperament.



Cream colored, red faced Tunis ewe surrounded by darker Ellis Hollow ewes. These ewes were so eager to greet me, I had a hard time getting far enough away to snap a photo.



Tunis fleece. Notice the lock doesn't show much of the lock crimp.

The breed standard for Tunis sheep is creamy white fleeces. Since 1988 Nancy's flock has had a few black lambs. Fifteen years ago, an unusual ewe lamb with an apparently reverse mutation to a primitive color pattern was born. She reminded Nancy of a fawn, so she called the lamb Jane Doe. In the following years all of Jane Doe's lambs had the same coloring as their dam: The faces are dark brown with reddish markings at the eyes, along the tear ducts, and along the outer edge of the ear. The chin is also reddish. The wool on the back is brown, in various shades of darkness, while the wool on the chest and belly all the way up to the tail is cream colored. Reproducing true to type is the first step to developing a breed, a project in which Nancy (and currently two other shepherds) is now engaged. Meanwhile, Jane Doe is in retirement, doing quite well for her age.

Ten years ago, Nancy brought in a Merino ram, named Rinaldo. She called the resulting mixed-breed sheep retaining the primitive color pattern Ellis Hollow sheep. Rinaldo has since died. But there is now a group of Ellis Hollow rams to keep the fledgling breed going. Ellis Hollow sheep have the same lovely temperament as the Tunis sheep. They have marched in the Dryden Dairy Day parade and are beloved petting animals at local fairs. Their meat is just as tasty. Like the old-fashioned Tunis they are small, ideal for homesteaders.



Top: Nancy and her Ellis Hollow Rams. These are not very big sheep.

Left: Nancy showing the facial markings on an Ellis Hollow sheep.



Top: Banu, proud winner of best fleece at the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival 2015.

Left: Young sheep being curious.

Their wool combines traits of both parentages: The fleeces come in a range of browns, from light gray brown to deep chocolate brown. From the Tunis side, the wool, especially the darker fleeces, retained a lovely warm glow. In many cases the lock consists of a mix of darker and lighter fibers, resulting in a lively colored, somewhat heathered yarn. The wool is finer than Tunis, but coarser than Merino. It's comfortable enough for projects that touch a bit of skin, like socks, sweaters or hats, but definitely not the material to create your own lingerie. There is no kemp. The wool is bouncy and very elastic, a great candidate for cables. The locks have a more pronounced lock crimp than Tunis. The fleeces are not very greasy and are easy to scour. Skirted fleeces weigh about four to five pounds. Conveniently, the wool is not much given to felting either. Finished items are even machine washable (though try with a swatch first.)

A future breeding goal is more consistency in the fleeces. Nancy is also considering bringing in another Merino ram for increased genetic diversity.



Different colors of Ellis Hollow wool. Notice there is a little bit more lock crimp than in the Tunis fleece. Index finger for size comparison is three inches long.



Nancy skirting a lovely brown fleece.



Close-up of the locks. Notice the mix of colors in the lock.

2017 was a tough year for Nancy and her sheep. Spring's constant rain caused trouble shearing: a fleece has to be dry to be stored in a plastic bag after shearing without rotting. For a fleece to dry after a rain storm takes about two dry days. A third dry day is required for shearing. The wet spring meant many of her sheep could not be shorn in time. The wet spring also meant that hay harvest was delayed, until the burdocks already had started to flower, leaving sticky bits and pieces in the hay that eventually ended up in the wool. Coating the fleeces is not an option, since small trees and bushes on the pasture would pose entanglement hazards. To make things worse, local coyotes found their way into Nancy's pastures and killed several of Nancy's sheep. Nancy is now keeping her sheep from some of her pastures and feeds hay instead of grazing. Despite of all the trouble, Nancy still won a first at the NY State Fair for one of Ellis Hollow Fleeces and a second for her Tunis fleeces this year.

¹Deborah Robson, Carol Ekarius (2011) *The Fleece and Fiber Source Book*. Storey Publishing, North Adams MA pp226-228

Photos: Angelika St.Laurent



Membership Form

Please type or print

Date: _____

DUES Record:

2017	2020
2018	2021
2019	2022

Name _____

Address: _____

Preferred email: PRINT NEATLY _____

Phone # _____

This information will be shared with registered guild members. If you wish to remain anonymous, please let Louise Henrie know.

Please list your wheel(s) _____

Do you spindle spin? Yes or No (circle)

Do you Knit? Weave? Crochet? Dye? (Natural or Chemical?):

Would you be willing to share your skills with other members (ie: teach beginners, present a meeting topic, demo to the public, etc?)

If you raise fiber animals, please list them here _____

We need your help on committee(s). If you would like to volunteer, let our president, Wayne Harbert, know!!!

Roc Day

Programming

Newsletter

Membership

Website

Outreach

Treasurer

Our newsletter is distributed electronically. If this is a problem, please contact Angelika St.Laurent. Please fill this out and either bring it to a meeting or mail it with your check for \$20 to: Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850

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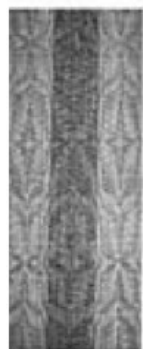
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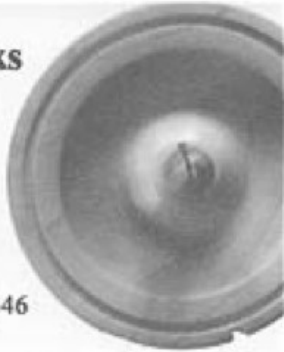
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