

DECEMBER
2025

ROVINGS



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The first real snow of the season in Ithaca

Fiber-y Events and Opportunities

Our December 13th meeting will be 11-3pm at 347 Ridge Rd in Lansing.

The Local Fiber Popup Store is open now through December 18th at 115 S. Cayuga Street in Ithaca for shopping, and has a range of workshops on Thursdays 6-8pm. See their website, LocalFiber.org, for more details.

Roc Day 2026 will be held on January 10th. See this newsletter for announcements regarding Roc Day planning and participation.

The BSHS Retreat will be February 26th-March 1st. Email Anna Murray-Bartels at janedoe727@aol.com to sign up.

Message from the President

Dear Fellow Spinners,

It feels like winter now. I'm working on my Roc-Day scarf. I'm kind of wishing it was already done, because I could do with a nice warm scarf while working my dog. In any case, I'm looking forward to our next meeting, on December 13, 11am-3pm, in the Parish Hall of the All Saints' Catholic Church in Lansing (347 Ridge Road). This meeting will be our annual holiday celebration.

On our December meeting, we will have our annual gift exchange. Members who wish to participate in the gift exchange, please bring one wrapped fiber related gift. Members who do not want to participate in the gift exchange are very welcome to attend the meeting and spin and socialize as always. Members who enjoy baking are highly encouraged to bring some home baked holiday treats to share.

I hope to see you then,
Angelika



Guild News

Guild Meeting

The next Guild meeting will be on **Saturday, November 8th, 11-3 PM**, in the Parish Hall of the All Saint's Church

Address: 347 Ridge Rd, Lansing

New Members

If you know of folks who would like to join, please have them contact Louise Henrie and pay dues at: henrielm6@aol.com.

Address List

We put together a list of names, email addresses, and telephone numbers for guild members. This list is available in printed form at guild meetings or by request to Secretary, Roberta Sibley at robertainez@yahoo.com.

Guild Dues

For all members who have not yet paid dues, they are \$25 for the year of 2025. Please pay at a meeting, send your check for \$25 to: Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850, or now you may send money via Venmo to Black-Sheep-NY

To Place an Ad

The cost for ads is \$5.00 per month for non-members. Current members may submit one business-card sized classified ad per month for free. Send a check made out to BSHG to our treasurer, Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Send the ad in digital form to the newsletter editor: rschnir@gmail.com

Guild Officers

President	Angelika St. Laurent	Newsletter	Ruby Schnirman
Vice President	Rose Helmbright	Workshops	Marianne Pelletier
Secretary	Roberta Sibley	Webmaster	Rosane Mordt
Treasurer	Louise Henrie	Roc Day Coordinator	Marianne Pelletier and Anna Bartels



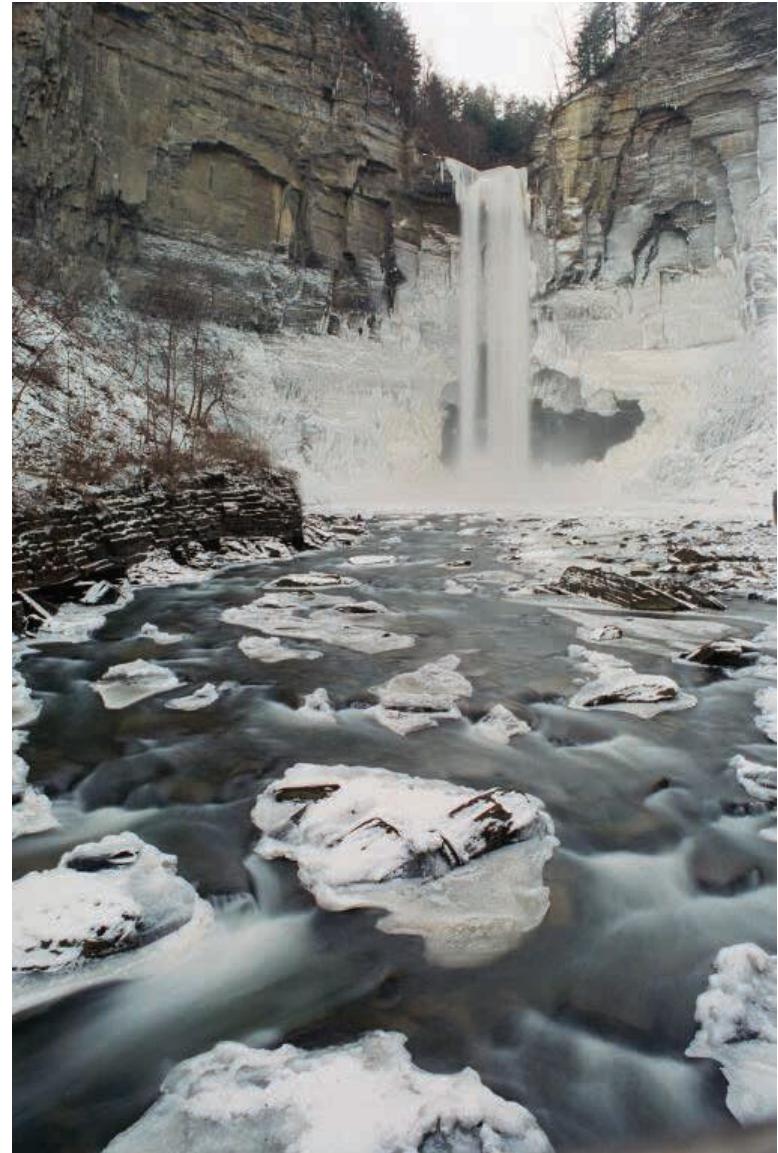
Roc Day 2026 Competition

Angelika St. Laurent

Objective: Create a scarf inspired by the photo of Taughannock Fall in Winter*.

Rules: All yarn and thread used in the project has to be handspun by the person submitting the project, this includes warp yarn, sewing thread etc. The scarf may be constructed with any fiber art technique known to humankind. Any fiber or blend may be used. If you want color, you may either dye your own fiber at any state of the process or resort to commercially dyed fiber. The finished object has to be submitted latest at Roc Day 2026, January 10th, by 10:30am. With the submission add a note about which fibers and techniques you used in the creation of the scarf and how they relate to the photo-inspiration.

All submitted scarfs will be judged in three categories: Most Beautiful, Best Interpretation of the Photo (both by public vote), and Best Technique (by a team of judges).



The guild has a limited number of 8-ounce bags of white Finn 2 wool available for members, who do not feel they have suitable fiber in their stash for the project.

With any questions contact Angelika St.Laurent, angelika@simonstl.com, 607-277-8105 or 607-793-4215.

*Photo credit: Susan Verberg

**Sheep raised by Elizabeth Kinne Gossner.



Roc Day Announcements

Roc Day this year will be January 10th, 2026. Please see below for important announcements regarding planning to ensure that we have another successful Roc Day.

Volunteering at Roc Day

Roc Day planning is happening now! How can you help? Sign up to volunteer during the event. We still need people to sign up for many obs. Can you sign up for an hour to host the spinning circle or assist with the raffle? Email Anna at janedoe727@aol.com.

Elle May Roc Day Paper Bag Auction

Last chance to donate to Roc Day Ellie May Raffle! Any items related to fiber arts, equipment (knitting/crocheting, spinning, weaving, any equipment used to craft fiber), books-magazines with patterns or techniques, kits, completed items, any fiber in any form, or art/item that depicts fiber arts or sheep.

If you have larger fiber related items you would like to donate for the silent auction (looms, spinning wheels or yarn winders) they need to be checked by **Lois Swales**. Please call her at **607-220-8973** to discuss repair, reverberation, and transportation of items several weeks before auction. Contributions should be delivered at the next guild meeting. We're hoping to get all donations by the December meeting! Deliver donations to my house (Debbie Benzer) centrally located in Ithaca-- **714 N. Cayuga St.** I've put a covered bin on my porch where you can drop off items for the raffle anytime! Any questions about donations call me **607-279-7174**.

The raffle is a major source of revenue for the Spinning guild, it allows us to have low cost workshops for the guild members and pay the monthly rent for meetings. Thanks for contributing!

Kitchen and food reminders

Jean Currie says, "As usual for our Roc day I hope you wil bring a wonderful dish to pass. Just a few reminders about the logistics:

- Bring the dish as early as possible
- Have a label of some kind that has ingredients-- this is for those with allergies
- If it needs either cooking or heating, let me know when you arrive
- You don't need a serving utensil-- the church has plenty of them
- Please take any leftovers home with you and remember to take your dish. We hope that everything was eaten and that we have washed it for you!
- Bon appetit!

Any questions, let me know at ejeancurrie@gmail.com." Thanks, Jean!



Member Ads and Announcements

Baynes Spinning Wheel and Accessories for sale, excellent condition

Carol LaBorie is selling a Baynes spinning wheel and accessories. Single drive, built in lazy Kate. Details: Standard flyer and flyer with sliding hook.; jumbo flyer and jumbo flyer with sliding hook; lazy kate for jumbo bobbins, 8 regular size bobbins, 4 jumbo bobbins, accessories (extra parts, extra drive bands, etc.). \$450 for all. Email Carol at tusweca_winan@yahoo.com.



Studio sale and downsizing spinning/knitting items

Carol will also be having a special open studio sale with handspun and commercially made yarn, hand dyed/painted/screen printed fabric, artwork, knitting tools, spindles, fiber, and more. Her address is Curiosity Works - Artist Alley Studio 34-D in the South Hill Business Campus at 950 Danby Road in Ithaca. Her studio weekend holiday hours are 12-4pm on December 13th-14th and 20th-21st.

Retreat News

The Black Sheep winter retreat will be at Watson Woods starting Thursday February 26th through Sunday March 1st. Just like last year we have a two or three day options available. In addition, this year we will have a two or “come for the day” option.

Two days in a shared room is \$204.55

Three days in a shared room is \$280.70

Sign up at a guild meeting or email Anna Murray-Bartels at janedoe727@aol.com. Feel free to email for other rooming options or with any questions.



Column: Zoe Goes to Grad School

Zoe Gras is on an exciting journey in an MFA program in textiles. Zoe will be sharing dispatches from her experience here!

Hello all, I am in my last two weeks of the semester and am absolutely swamped with finals! I am finishing up my last big art piece and will include a final photo in next month's newsletter. This month, I went to the American Folk Art Museum with my class to see "An Ecology of Quilts: The Natural History of American Textiles." It was a wonderful exhibition showing the history of American quilts and how they have changed through the centuries. It will be showing until March 1, 2026, if you happen to be in NYC before then.

We then took a trip to Stafford Springs, Connecticut, to visit American Woolen Company, one of the last wool mills in the US, and the last to produce both woolen and worsted cloth. Jacob Long bought the mill in 2014 and is on a mission to bring more mills back to the US. He only uses American wool at the mill and works tirelessly promoting the cloth to US buyers. I will include some photos of the mill down below.

Other than those two exciting field trips, I have been working day and night on creating art, as well as writing a paper titled "Subtle Defiance: Embroidery as Resistance in the National Period of the United States." If anyone wants to read it, let me know, and I'll send it over! I'll be coming home for the holidays, but I have endless plans for more fiber adventures, including trying out an inkle loom that I acquired at the beginning of the semester. As always, if you'd like to follow my journey, my Instagram is @acreatorliveshere.



Article of Interest

Thanks to Marilee Williams for sending in this article about woven turkey feather blankets

WEAVING THE STORY OF TURKEY FEATHER BLANKETS

By Don Bixby

Turkeys were one of the few domesticated animals in North America before Europeans arrived in the 1500s and 1600s. More easily domesticated than many other bird species, turkeys are social and non-migratory. They can be lured into captivity by food baiting. Turkeys had, and continue to have, a culturally significant role in the lives of Pueblo and other indigenous people.

Feather robes are believed to have originated during the Pithouse Period, around 700 C.E. when hunter-gatherers began to explore agriculture. This is also when people started to keep turkeys as livestock, raising them specifically for their feathers. Blankets or robes made with turkey feathers as the insulating medium were widely used by Ancestral Pueblo people in what is now the Upland Southwest. There are several types of feathers on birds, but semi-plume and down feathers are the primary insulators. The people who made such blankets were ancestors of present-day Pueblo Native Americans such as the Hopi, Zuni and Rio Grande Pueblos.

Archaeological evidence indicates turkeys were generally not used as a food source from the time of their domestication in the early centuries C.E. until the 1100s and 1200s C.E., when wild game had become scarce. Prior to this period, most turkey bones reported from archaeological sites are whole skeletons from mature birds that were intentionally buried. This suggests that the feathers were harvested from the living birds during molting and were given a ritual or cultural significance. Such burials continued to occur even after more turkeys began to be raised for food. Turkey feather robes were found in burials, especially those that seemed to be high-status burials, as well as some child burials.

In 2018, Mary Weahkee, an archeologist and anthropologist with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, was asked to try her hand at a reconstruction of a blanket made of turkey feathers.

Using ancient blankets housed at museum collections across the



Mary Weahkee, a descendant of the Comanche and Santa Clara peoples, poses with a shawl she wove from turkey feathers. Weahkee is an archaeologist and anthropologist with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. (Martin Perea for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. www.martinperea.com)

Southwest as guides, Weahkee taught herself the process of winding each feather around yucca cord. Yucca cord is made by extracting fibers from yucca leaves and then spinning the fibers into cordage. Weahkee says it took her about a day to grasp the basic technology of weaving with feathers and yucca cord. But the large, two- by three-foot blanket she produced took 18 months using 17,000 feathers from 68 turkeys to complete. "I looked at how the ancestors were creative and patient," says Weahkee,

who is of Comanche and Santa Clara descent. "It's a labor of love."

While there are a handful of other small samples in western museums, Weahkee's is the largest known blanket made in modern times. She has since been commissioned to produce smaller exhibit feather blankets for several museums in the Southwest.

Gathering that number of plumed body feathers required some help. She notes that modern turkeys have been selected for fewer downy body

feathers, which are no longer needed for insulation. She needed wild turkey body feathers, so she reached out to Storm Usrey, conservation education manager with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Usrey, a turkey hunter, gave Weahkee the pelts from turkeys he harvested. His friends and family members, who also harvested birds, offered feathers to Weahkee. Jack Young, archeologist and tribal liaison with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, says the Department has an ongoing request from several pueblos for wild turkey feathers.

Weahkee says her weaving work has not yet included feathers from heritage breed turkeys, but she is interested in using plumes from White Holland and Royal Palm for decorative features in a recreation of a turkey feather blanket found in a Colorado cave structure.

Creating replicas of ancient artifacts is one of Weahkee's specialties. As a lithic analyst – someone who studies ancient stone tools – she often makes replicas of tools such as scrapers, drills, projectile points, arrows and bows.

Weahkee is replicating another item out of turkey feathers. She is weaving a feather raincoat for the New Mexico History Museum in Santa Fe to replace the one that has been on display for ten years. Rather than using turkey body feathers, however, she will be using wing fletch feathers. "Fletch feathers are better for being outdoors," she said, noting turkey fletch feathers have also been used for making mukluks, a type of footwear, as well as weaponry. "The fletch feathers repel water and don't hold it, unlike the body down feathers."

In 2020, a team led by Washington State University archaeologists analyzed an approximately 800-year-old turkey feather blanket from southeastern Utah, measuring about 39 inches by 42.5 inches, to understand how it was made. Thousands of downy body feathers were wrapped around nearly 200 yards of

Watch the process of creating a turkey feather blanket on a video created by the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture online at bit.ly/featherweaving.



Yucca fiber cord, body feathers from turkeys and tools necessary for the ancient art of turkey feather weaving.

yucca fiber cord to make the blanket, which is currently on display at the Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum in Blanding, Utah.

The reverence for turkeys is still evident today in Pueblo dances and rituals. Turkey and eagle feathers are used in traditional regalia – symbolically and culturally important for ceremonial use and in prayers. Even though the feathers used in the first blankets were from wild and early domesticated turkeys, these birds are the predecessors of the heritage breeds we have today.

"The preservation of the history of the blankets is another great example of the cultural significance inherent in the livestock and poultry breeds we work to protect," explains Alison Martin, program director with The Livestock Conservancy. "The goal is to do more than preserve the animals themselves, to also conserve their history and the impact they have had for generations." ■

Don Bixby of Albuquerque, New Mexico, served as executive director of The



Completed blankets from woven turkey feathers. Each weaving uses thousands of feathers from more than 50 turkeys.

Livestock Conservancy from 1988 to 2002. He remains passionate about rare breed conservation. Les O'Dell also contributed to this article.

From the Archives

Here are some excerpts from the December 1977 newsletter that may get some ideas going for holiday gifts. I'm particularly envious of the Weick's Barn Christmas sale. --Ruby

BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD
Ithaca, New York

NEWSLETTER #13 - December, 1977

Edited by Jean Umholtz

CHRISTMAS EXHIBITS, SHOWS, SALES are beginning... Even though the lights weren't up on the Ithaca Commons when this writer wandered about, it wasn't hard to get into the spirit of things with all the items that the merchants have out. A few items I noticed in particular (not trying to be complete or unbiased!): Homespun Boutique has nice wooden crochet hooks, pewter buttons, etc. (they will be moving into the defunct Speidy King spot next to Gulliver's as of Dec. 1 - stop in!). Isle of You has nice knitted/woven things, incl. Marion Wikoff's shawls, coverlets, pillows. The bookstores, as usual, have a marvelous selection of books relating to various crafts and interests -- McBooks, incidentally, does have in a number of Hochberg's *Handspinner's Handbook* if you've been looking for it (and that Paula Simmon's book, *Spinning and Weaving with Wool*, would be a treasure for a fiberfriend). Handworks is worth a stop, as are the other small crafts shops on the Commons. I noticed that Fantasy Craft Fair has handsome big woolly lambs for children (Suffolks and Corriedales, I would guess!). And do call Meredith Wood (539-7436 - *Merrywood* needlework supplies and MORE) and Mildred Scudder (*The Tabby Shop* - 273-3308 - weaving supplies) to see what they might have for a favorite spinner! Or weaver, or ?? ... Bosworth's is always worth a stop, too, and Bobbi's Needleworks has had some interesting things on display. Ask around, too, for there are other crafts shops not too distant from Ithaca...

This editor did not have time to put together a tantalizing list of upcoming shows and crafts events/sales this month, but news of a few events did trickle in... Take note and, in some cases, get going, because they may well be in progress by the time you get this newsletter...

Dec. 3-4 Weick's barn on Rt. 89 (3.8 miles above Taughannock Falls?), the Trumansburg area craftsmen have their annual Christmas sale - always a delight! (No Meg Swansen's hats this year, I guess, but well worth the drive.) Hot food, as well as many other good things!

Dec. 16-17 Seven Valley Weavers' Guild sale, Pyramid Mall, Cortland, 11 a.m. - ? . Woven items, knitted/crocheted, etc., Christmas ornaments; baked goods. Details: Laurie Hahn (257-7059).

Three books you might want to check out at the Tompkins Co. Public Library the next time you have a chance... *The Sheep Dog: It's Work and Training* by T. Longton and E. Hart (1976 - in new books section to left of front door), 636.73L. *Handbook of Textile Fibres* by J. Gordon Book (1964), 677.02C. *Two Thousand Years of Textiles* by Adèle Coulin Weibel (1952), Oversize 746W. Good books to be snowed in with!

Come to think of it, here's another good item for a spinner/weaver friend for Christmas: *International Handspinning Directory and Handbook* by Doloria Chapin. Order from her (\$7.50) at 2178 Pompey-Fabius Road, RD #1, Fabius, N.Y. 13063. Good reference, too, if you are going to be doing some traveling -- in the States and elsewhere -- and want to locate spinners in the area where you will be visiting...



Guild Vendors



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New Member's Form

Name _____

Address _____

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, Angelika St. Laurent know.

Roc Day Programming	Newsletter
Membership	Website
Outreach	Treasurer

Our newsletter is distributed electronically. If this is a problem, please contact Ruby Schnirman (401)-486-7237. Please fill this out and either bring it to a meeting, mail it with your check for \$25 to: Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850, or send via Venmo to Black-Sheep-NY.

