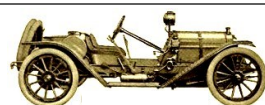


CURRENT RESIDENT OR

### Upcoming Events



#### 13th Annual Roebling Museum Car Show

Saturday, April 29, 2023 (Rain Date: April 30) • 9 am - 3 pm  
 Spectator Admission \$5 (Under 12 FREE) - Includes Museum Admission  
 Join us for a fun day of food, ice cream, music, and CARS!

#### Roebling Bike Ride

Saturday, May 6, 2023 • 11 am - 1 pm • \$10/person  
 Join us for a bike tour on the new Delaware River Heritage Trail in a historic company town!



#### Garden Tour

Saturday, June 10, 2023 • 10 am - 3 pm • \$15/person  
 Join us to see beautiful gardens, meet great people, and learn about the history of Roebling, NJ.



#### HOURS & ADMISSION

Check out our website or follow us on Facebook for the most up to date information about hours and upcoming events.

##### March through December:

Thursday through Saturday 11:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

##### January and February:

Open by appointment for groups and researchers

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas, New Year's Day & Easter

**\$7.00**—Adults; **\$6.00**—Seniors and Children 6-12

**Free** for Members and Children under 6

Join us for a walking tour of historic Roebling on Saturdays at 1 pm!  
 (included with price of admission)



facebook.com/roebblingmuseum  
 www.roebblingmuseum.org

# The Roebling Wire

No. 38

News From  **ROEBLING MUSEUM**

Spring 2023

## The Future History of 101 Second Avenue

Imagine stepping into the home of an immigrant family living in Roebling nearly a century ago. How many people live in these four rooms? What's cooking on the coal stove? Where do the kids play, and with what? Whose photos are on the walls? Where did the family arrive from and what treasures—from the old country or this one—are displayed with pride?

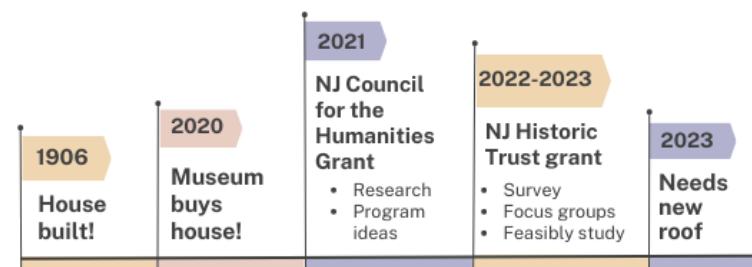
By inviting visitors into a recreated worker house in this historic company town, Roebling Museum could open a door to the struggles and hopes of families who made new lives while working at the Roebling steel and wire mill at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has been the Museum's ambition since it purchased the brick rowhouse at 101 Second Avenue in 2020. Based on enthusiastic feedback from the Museum's members and friends, the Roebling community clearly believes this little brick house could be a memorable way for all of us to understand and appreciate the history of the company town and the people who worked and lived here.

Thanks to a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust, we are working with preservation consultant Donna Ann Harris of Philadelphia-based Heritage Consulting to create a feasibility study for future uses of the house. As a first step, the Museum conducted a survey of the community to hear its views about possible uses for the property. This feedback helped provide discussion questions for focus group sessions, led by Donna. In these sessions, held in February, members of the community talked in person to fill in more detail on ideas for the house—and to troubleshoot potential challenges.

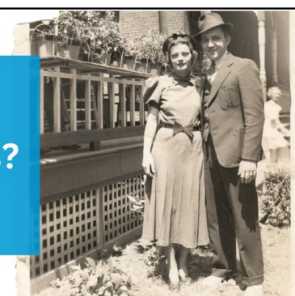
The final report of the feasibility study will outline the nuts and bolts for achieving the two most popular

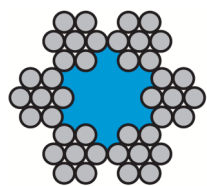
scenarios for the house as generated by our feedback sessions. Those include required preservation work, zoning and accessibility issues, staffing needs, and of course cost. These recommendations will help the Museum make informed decisions about how to move forward: what the goal will be and how to get there.

Roebling Museum's board and staff are committed to incorporating a wide range of ideas into our plans and over the last year, museum supporters have given valuable input. This is an exciting project for a relatively young museum, and we look forward to working with our neighbors, volunteers, donors, and members to make 101 Second Avenue all it can be.



Did you live on 2nd Ave?  
 Do you have photos, objects, or stories?  
 We want to hear from you!





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**A Letter from the President**

As the Roebling Museum opens for the season, we are excited to continue to show off our newest exhibit, *Roebling Works*. This exhibit is a milestone for the museum not only because it marks an exciting collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, but because it showcases many objects and photographs from the Roebling Museum’s collection. The volunteer curators of the exhibit, led by Executive Director Lynne Calamia, spent hours going through the museum’s collection to choose objects to include, from the logbooks of the company police to a worker’s jumpsuit to bottles from a local dairy.

Roebling families also donated objects and photos from their own histories in the company town. The generosity of the community, and the determination of Roebling folks to preserve their own history, has been the foundation of the Museum’s collection. We’ve received original Brooklyn Bridge cable bands and suspender rods from engineers who worked on rehabilitating the bridge, and trophies from Roebling company sports leagues. We’ve got Washington A. Roebling’s Civil War ammunition pouch, given by a Roebling family descendant, and we’ve got a 1950s jacket from the Slovak Club on Alden Avenue, donated by a community member. Our paper materials include everything from rent books from the company-owned houses in Roebling, to sales catalogs, many photographs of employee retirement dinners, and promotional matchbooks (remember matchbooks?) with the JAR logo.

Of course, the beginning of the Museum’s collection came when Roebling workers saved files and objects from the Roebling mill when it closed in 1974. History-minded residents like Lou Borbi preserved objects such as 13,000 worker records (now being digitized), and Roebling Historical Society members like Don Jones and Kathie Lengel and her husband, the much-missed George Lengel, made sure that huge pieces of steelmaking equipment were preserved.

All these items, of all sizes and ages, are important sources of historical information. Now the museum’s responsibility is to preserve, catalog, interpret and display this wealth of material that tells the Roebling story. It’s a big mission for a small museum with a small staff and a small building – but it’s one we’re happy to undertake—with the help, as always, of the Museum’s friends.

See you at the museum –

*Martha T. Moore*  
Martha Moore

President, Board of Directors  
Roebling Museum

**OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Roebling Museum is to document, preserve, and exhibit the history of the John A. Roebling’s Sons Company, the Roebling family and the village of Roebling. The focus of the museum is both the industrial and technological achievements of the company and the unique social history of its workforce and the town it created. The museum connects a storied past to the present while also serving as a valuable resource for school curriculum enhancement and academic research. It is the only museum in the world dedicated solely to the accomplishments of the Roebling family, its businesses and workers and the engineering innovations of the company in Trenton and Roebling, New Jersey.



*Membership at Roebling Museum has its privileges! Become a member and enjoy free general admission for a year while supporting all that we do, from education programs for local schoolchildren to conservation of nationally important art and artifacts.*

*Join or renew your membership at [roeblingmuseum.org](http://roeblingmuseum.org) today, and help keep history alive and enlightening in this unique village!*

**Roebling Works: A New Exhibit Makes Family Histories Vivid**

By John and Judy Devoti



The new “Roebling Works” exhibit lives up to its promise of bringing a company town to life. Created as part of the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street program, the exhibit in the Ambulance Garage gallery explores the many kinds of work that went on in Roebling.

Photographs and objects illustrating the work of homemakers, pharmacists, shopkeepers, and other residents ring the gallery. Central to it all, literally and figuratively, are the steelworkers.

It’s fun to sit at the employment manager’s desk in the middle of the room and experience the hiring process as new mill workers might have—in this same building. Reading through some of the actual employment record cards provides an intimate connection with past lives: the workers who once walked through the factory gates.

Learning about the families whose work created the town of Roebling, we couldn’t help but think about our own family histories during the age of American industrialization:

“Grandpop could have been one of these employees,” John says. “His name was Michael Barna, the third son of Slovak immigrants who escaped the Austro-Hungarian Empire in search of a better life. Born in 1898, he was the first American citizen in the family. The Barnas settled in a town in central New Jersey. Around 1915, Grandpop could have been one of many young men

nervously interviewing for a job. He got hired at American Cyanamid, a chemical company which opened just two years after the Roebling steel plant, and as with many Roebling employees, Grandpop worked his entire life at the company. He raised his family in Bound Brook. If his family had moved just a few more miles south, it might have been him interviewing at the desk in the exhibit.”

Judy’s family arrived in the United States in 1957, after the Roebling mill had been sold to Colorado Fuel and Iron. “But my parent’s story is not that different from those whose lives appear in this exhibit. Like many of the Roebling workers, my parents immigrated from eastern Europe, in search of work and a new life. They worked hard at various jobs to achieve their dream of owning a home, raising a family, and becoming citizens of their new country.”

We all have ancestors who could have worked these machines or walked these streets. Their experiences allowed them to survive and thrive in America, and their work had profound effects on our own lives. Though they lived a century ago, they remind us that we are not far removed from earlier industrial times.



Nicholas Matray



Michael Barna

**Recent Events at Roebling Museum**



Museum volunteer, John Devoti, leads a group of visitors on the Historic House Tour held on October 8, 2022.



Donors and supporters gathered at the exhibit opening party. Photo: Catherine Stroud Photography



Avery Farmer reads *The Nutcracker* during Roebling Museum’s Christmas in Roebling. Photo: Theresa Farmer

*At Roebling Museum, we couldn’t do what we do without the support and enthusiasm of our volunteers. They give tours, greet people at the front desk, work with the historical objects in our collections, and help our events run smoothly. We are always looking for more folks to come and join us! If you or someone you know is interested in supporting the work of Roebling Museum through volunteer work, please be in touch—we’d love to hear from you!*