

# The Roebling Wire

Special Edition!

No. 37

News From  ROEBLING MUSEUM

Fall 2022

## A special behind the scenes preview of our new exhibit!

We are so excited to share our exhibit, *Roebbling Works*, with you on October 1. In the meantime, here's a little bit about who made it and how we got it done.

### Making History By Hand

In creating *Roebbling Works* in collaboration with the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program, the exhibit team has been hard at work. We have learned from the Smithsonian staff, learned from each other—as well as from our neighbors. Here are two stories of people who have contributed never-before-seen objects to the exhibit.



#### Women's Work

Cindy Lippincott, a Roebbling resident, donated a treasure trove of everyday household items from three generations of her family.

The Sovaks came from Hungary and settled on Second Avenue in Roebbling in the 1910s. First, they were boarders in a house with another

family. Picture a two-bedroom house with a father, mother, and teen daughter living there. Now add a father, mother and two toddlers! That's seven Hungarians living under one small roof.

In 1920 James and Mary Sovak lived with their two young children in their own two-bedroom home on Second Avenue. They must have really liked a full house (or the money it brought in to pay the rent) because they took in six Hungarian boarders—men between ages of 22 and 50 who all worked at the mill.

Learn more about Mary Sovak and her work in our exhibit. A special thanks to Cindy Lippincott for donating objects and sharing the stories of her grandparents and aunt.

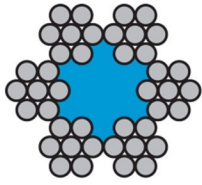
#### Putting a Face to a Name

Day-to-day documents about the lives of working-class immigrants rarely survive. But, thankfully, these were saved by historian Lou Borbi, and they are featured prominently in the new exhibit. Nearly 15,000 employment cards from 1919-1945 sat safely on a shelf in a garage in Roebbling until 2021 when they made their way back to the building where they were made.

Among the employment cards we found doctor's notes, letters, and memos. Almost all were addressed to a man named Thomas Callery. Who was Thomas Callery?

We found out when Grant Callery, a member of our exhibit fundraising team, sent along his grandfather's employment record. In 1919, he was head of the employment office and that's a big job. He hired the workers on the employment cards. Learn more about his work while sitting behind his desk in our new exhibit.





ROEBLING MUSEUM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARTHA MOORE  
PRESIDENT

DANA SHERER  
VICE PRESIDENT

TONY PASTORE  
TREASURER

TRISH STRYJEWSKI  
SECRETARY

PIERRE LACOMBE

PETER LINDSAY

GEORGE OTT

JIM PARKER

ARTHUR SHETTLE

LYNNE CALAMIA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**A Letter from the President**

One of the many appealing things about the Roebing Museum, to me, is where it came from – its origin story, as they say in Hollywood. This museum was not built to showcase a millionaire’s personal art collection (hello Barnes Foundation), to memorialize a war (ahoy Museum of the American Revolution), or to tell a life story (we see you, Alice Paul Institute.)

The Roebing Museum came from the community it celebrates: people who grew up in the company town of Roebing, who worked in the mill, and who wanted to see their own history, and their contributions to the nation’s history, preserved. It is that rare thing, a true grassroots organization. A group of local residents—not much more than a handful of people—got together to save the Roebing mill’s 100-year-old gatehouse and, in 2007, turn it into a history museum.

That’s why it’s extra exciting, and very appropriate, that the next exhibit to open at the Roebing Museum will also be a grassroots, community-led effort. “Roebing Works” is the museum’s collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, which selected us as a partner for its “Museum On Main Street” program. All summer, a group of local volunteers—not much more than a handful—have been working to research, write and design the story of the many kinds of work in Roebing and all the different kinds of workers who made their home in the village. The volunteers are doing everything from reading century-old newspapers to tracking down vintage telephones to hammering two-by-fours into exhibit panels. It has been a labor of love, with pizza. I can’t wait to see the finished product – and more important, to see how museum visitors interact with the new galleries.

Of course, this community-led history would not be possible without the support—that means donations— from the larger community of Roebing Museum members and friends. Thank you, as always, for continuing to help the Museum explore the many facets of Roebing history. There is always something new to share.

See you at the Museum –

Martha Moore  
President, Board of Directors  
Roebing Museum

**OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Roebing Museum is to document, preserve, and exhibit the history of the John A. Roebing’s Sons Company, the Roebing family and the village of Roebing. 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 Roebing family, its businesses and workers and the engineering innovations of the company in Trenton and Roebing, New Jersey.



***Membership at Roebing 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 [roebingmuseum.org](http://roebingmuseum.org) today, and help keep history alive and enlightening in this unique village!***

## Who worked on *Roebing Works*?

The exhibit team, the fundraising committee, historical advisors, staff, exhibit sponsors, volunteers—we would need a 10-page newsletter to thank everyone who put time and effort into this project! Read along to meet our exhibit work crew.



### Nuts and bolts

Board member Pierre Lacombe built infrastructure for the exhibit. These sawtooth style walls are the entryway into the exhibit and will really catch your eye.



### Planning and Scanning

Our newest staff member Katarina Ramos scanned documents and photos, researched newspaper articles, and prepared artifacts for display. She said, “while working on this project, I’ve learned so much about my own town’s history!”



### Ideas and Objects

Exhibit team member Drew Baldorossi, chose artifacts and decided how to lay out the exhibit. Besides family photos, he is also contributing one of his Roebing history collections for display. You’ll have to visit to find out what it is!

## A special thanks to:



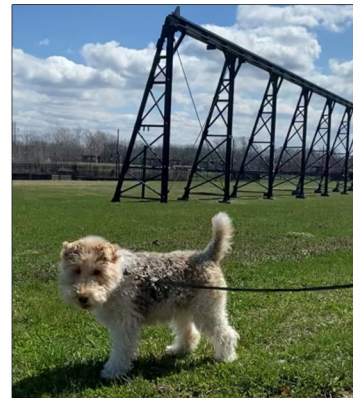
The unofficial pizza sponsor of the *Roebing Works* exhibit.



Everyone who spackled, picked paint colors, primed, and painted.



Everyone who got their hands dirty hoisting historic objects out of basements.



Everyone who brought their dogs to visit for moral support.

## *John A. Roebing and the rest of us at Roebing Museum want your help!*

At Roebing 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 Roebing Museum through volunteer work, please be in touch—we’d love to hear from you!

Find more information at [roebingmuseum.org](http://roebingmuseum.org) or by calling us at (609) 499-7200.





**ROEBLING MUSEUM**

100 Second Ave.  
PO Box 9  
Roebling, NJ 08554  
(609) 499-7200

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 301  
TRENTON NJ

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

**Upcoming Events**



**Roebling Bike Ride**

Saturday, September 10, 2022 • 11 am - 1 pm • \$10/person  
Join us for an 18-mile bike tour on the new Delaware River Heritage Trail!

**Virtual Program - Roebling Roadtrip: Roebling Bridges of Bucks County**

Wednesday, September 21, 2022 • 6 pm - 7 pm • FREE (Registration is required)

**Exhibit Opening**

Saturday October 1, 2022 • 11 am - 4 pm

Be the first in line on opening day to see our new exhibit, *Roebling Works!* Gripping stories and never-before-seen objects reveal what it meant to work in Roebling—both in the mill and in the community.

**Historic House Tour**

Saturday, October 8, 2022 • 11 am - 4 pm • \$15/person

On a guided walking tour of the company town, join us to explore five historic worker houses. You're invited inside to discover the stories of workers who lived in the houses— from immigrant laborers to wealthy superintendents.

Check our website for information on upcoming **Ghost Tours!**



**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)*

Roebling Museum is supported by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the federal CARES Act.

Roebling Museum received an operating support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.



**facebook.com/roeblingmuseum**  
**www.roeblingmuseum.org**