



The Windham Textile & History Museum, newest exhibit, 'Sidonia's Thread: Crafting a Life from Holocaust to High Fashion,' is on display until April 28. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

# Seamstress' life-saving talent

## Exhibit tells the story of Holocaust survivor

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WILLIMANTIC—The Windham Textile & History Museum has a new exhibit that tells the story of a Jewish seamstress who actually survived the Holocaust because of her sewing talents.

That story has winded its way from Hungary through Springfield, Mass., and, finally, to Willimantic.

The "Sidonia's Thread: Crafting a Life from Holocaust to High Fashion" exhibit opened at the museum Feb. 8 and will remain through April 28.

Dozens of outfits created by dressmaker and Holocaust survivor Sidonia Perlstein are now on display at the museum.

Born in Hungary in 1913, Perlstein spent time in three concentration camps before she was liberated and moved to Springfield, Mass.

According to her daughter, Hanna Marcus, Perlstein survived the Holocaust because of her talents as a seamstress as the Nazis forced her to sew in the labor camps.

"If my mother did not know how to sew, she would have died in the



The exhibit features a photograph of Sidonia Perlstein after liberation from a concentration camp in 1945, as well as her visa photo from 1949. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

Holocaust," Marcus said. "It was that talent that saved her."

Marcus spoke at Eastern Connecticut State University Feb. 13 about her mother's life and the new exhibit.

Marcus wrote "Sidonia's Thread: The Secrets of a Mother and

Daughter Sewing a New Life in America" about her mother and their experiences.

The exhibit features some of the dresses and suits that Perlstein made, many of which were for herself and Marcus.

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**The Windham Textile & History Museum, newest exhibit, 'Sidonia's Thread: Crafting a Life from Holocaust to High Fashion,' includes outfits Sidonia Perlstein made in 2003.** Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

# Exhibit explores a seamstress' life-saving talent

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Marcus said the oldest outfit on display is from 1969. Most of the other outfits are from the last 30 or so years.

Perlstein sewed throughout nearly her entire life. She stopped sewing when she was 90 years old, according to Marcus. She died in 2006 at the age of 93.

Museum director Jamie Eves said, since the exhibit's opening, more people than usual have come through to see it.

"I think the history of the exhibit is the most interesting part," Eves said. "The story of someone coming to America is a story that gets told over and over, but every story is so unique."

Eves said other visitors think the clothes are the coolest part of the exhibit, so the exhibit is attracting different folks with different interests.

The curator of the exhibit, Eastern assistant professor of theater and costume design Anya Sokolovskaya, said clothes can really tell the

story of a person.

"What can these garments tell about the person that made them or wore them?" Sokolovskaya wondered. "It's an extraordinary look into people's lives."

The exhibit is sponsored by Eastern.

Marcus will make several appearances in Willimantic and give talks on the exhibition and her mother's life in the upcoming months.

Marcus will be at the museum Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m., March 10 from 1 to 4 p.m., March 23 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., April 7 from 1 to 4 p.m. and April 28 from 2 to 4 p.m.

*More information about the exhibit and the museum is available at [millmuseum.org](http://millmuseum.org). The museum, located at 411 Main St., Willimantic, can also be reached by phone at 860-456-2178. The museum is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

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