



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

October 2013

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Edward A. Fazio

Whether or not you were able to attend Brian Cooper's informative and entertaining program last month, I'm sure you will enjoy "From Cooper to Conley" published in this edition of the newsletter! We certainly appreciate Mr. Cooper taking the time to share his experiences with this local restoration project with us. I especially want to thank him for delving into the attic and cellar of the Babcock-Smith House with me and pointing out and explaining features I had never understood before.

In other news, I am very pleased to report that the Babcock-Smith Museum Trustees have committed to building the expansion of the Carriage House that will, along with its other functions, provide a home for your Society. If all goes as planned we will occupy the new facility by next summer! Fund raising for this project continues, and I urge you to consider a tax exempt contribution toward our new home.

Ed

Calendar of Events



The Westerly Historical Society Sunday Lecture Series Presents

Dr. Patrick Conley
The Rhode Island Historian Laureate

Dr. Conley will discuss his latest two books,
People, Places, Laws, and Lore of the Ocean State
and
The Makers of Modern Rhode Island

Sunday, November 3, 2013

2:00 PM.

This presentation will take place at
The Carriage House
of the Babcock Smith House Museum,
124 Granite Street, Westerly, RI

See

<http://www.babcock-smithhouse.com/>

<http://westerlyhistoricalsociety.org/calendar/>

From Cooper to Conley

Continuing the Journey From 1790

Ann L. Smith

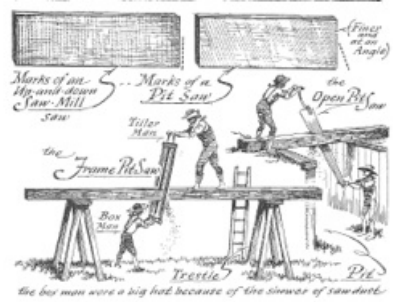
Dozens of attendees gathered on a rainy Sunday recently to hear a fascinating talk by Brian Cooper of Early New England Restorations LLC. Aside from his company's extensive work at the Pendleton-Chapman farm (see Westerly's Witness, September 2013), Cooper has several more projects in the works from Martha's Vineyard to central Connecticut.

Founded in 1977, his company has completed thousands of projects, restored over 150 early houses, buildings, and barns; and dismantled and moved over 50 structures in the six New England states, and elsewhere.

Mr. Cooper's work history has given him a unique expertise that merges the knowledge of New England architecture, early engineering techniques, and New England history. For the uninitiated, building terms such as treenail (pronounced "trennel"



Brian Cooper at the site of one of his many restorations around New England.



and "clabbord" (clapboard) were tossed around freely during his presentation almost as if another language were being spoken.

Mr. Cooper's video included many scenes of the ongoing project at the Pendleton-Chapman farm as well as a visual on how wood was "pit-sawn" in previous times (see drawing above). It is probably during the process of pit-sawing wood, according to Cooper, that the expression "in the pits" came into being!

When Avondale's Pendleton-Chapman house is completely restored, it will be entirely livable while retaining its authentic style. The original owner, Joseph Pendleton, died in 1794 and he would be proud to see that his old homestead is still in the best of hands.

~ ~ ~

A few years before Joseph Pendleton died; Rhode Island found itself in a widespread recession. Rhode Island (the last of the colonies to do so) had ratified the Constitution in 1789 and George Washington was President of the United States. The copper panic of 1789 as well as the overall economic collapse found our new country strapped with debts from financing the

Revolutionary War. As Brian Cooper mentioned in his presentation, 80% of the shipbuilders in New England were out of work. This was because the British closed their ports in the West Indies to U.S. ships, and the "golden triangle" of trade was then disrupted. Many shipbuilders were forced into the home construction business (but the result was that their houses were extremely well made.)

In little "Pawcatuck Bridge," as downtown Westerly was known at the time, a handful of families made their living in the absence of any large industries. There were teachers, preachers, shop-keepers, ship captains and farmers. Potter's Mill was in operation since 1762 but the mill was primarily engaged in grist-milling and sawmilling.

England meanwhile was enjoying a thriving textile industry with modern milling equipment in use in many British locations. Late in 1789, young Samuel Slater trained in cotton milling, arrived in Rhode Island from England. Disguised as a farmer, legend has it, he secreted away among his belongings copies of plans for cotton-milling machinery whose patents were owned by the Englishman Richard Arkwright. The details of Slater's success in America are lengthy but the story is an interesting one. And even though the British gave Samuel Slater the notorious nickname of *(continued on page 3)*

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What is the Rhode Island Historian Laureate?

The position of the Rhode Island historian Laureate was created by legislation that was signed into law by Governor Lincoln Chafee on April 27, 2012. The Secretary of State is charged with making the appointment.

Qualifications cited from the legislation: *The historian laureate must have earned recognition and distinction as the author of authoritative books or essays about the history of Rhode Island; or served in a leadership position in staging commemorative public observances pertaining to various aspects of the history of Rhode Island; or taught and lectured about the history of Rhode Island to the general public.*

The duties of historian laureate include delivering historical lectures about pertinent aspects of Rhode Island history at important state historical ceremonies and observances, furnishing historical information or advice, reading and editing state-sponsored historical publications for accuracy and disseminating information about Rhode Island history and heritage.

The first Rhode Island Historian Laureate is Dr. Pat Conley, our November 3rd speaker!

Do You Have a Knack for PR?

We are looking for someone to write a piece for publication (to be submitted to the *Westerly Sun*, the *SO RI Magazine*, and *Westerly Life*) on the 100th anniversary of our Society, and the programs we are having during this calendar year, ending with Dr. Pat Conley, the Rhode Island Historian Laureate.

A second article would be desired for January publication, outlining the Spring 2014 line-up of programs.

If you can write an occasional article for us, please contact: Pamela Scott, Program Director, Westerly Historical Society, (401) 741-8705

Continuing the Journey

(continued from page 2)

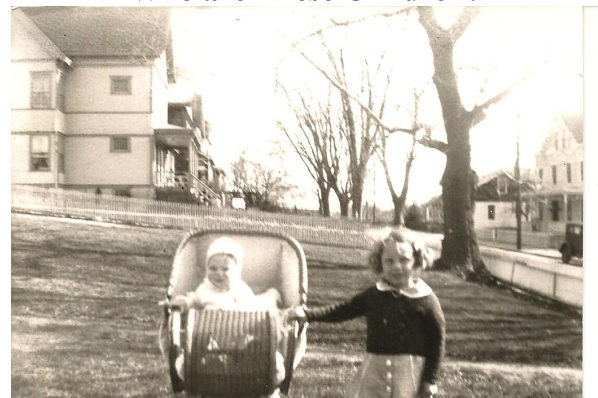
"Slater the Traitor," he became known as the "Father of the American Factory System" and the "Father of the Industrial Revolution."

Dr. Patrick Conley will be with us on November 3rd to discuss his two newest works, *The Makers of Modern Rhode Island, 1790-1860* and *People, Places, Laws and Lore of the Ocean State*. In *Makers of Modern Rhode Island*, fifty-six biographical profiles of famous Rhode-Islanders are presented, beginning with Samuel Slater himself. Each chapter offers an in-depth look at the people who shaped our small state, from Elizabeth Buffum Chace to Governor Thomas Wilson Dorr and many more in between.

Dr. Conley has enjoyed a rich and productive seventy-five years with many diverse professional and civic experiences, all of which have marked the journey to writing these and other books about the Rhode Island he loves. Conley regards Roger Williams and Thomas Dorr as the two most prominent and influential Rhode Islanders.

Patrick Conley, Rhode Island's first Historian Laureate, is a lawyer, professor, developer, Chair of the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame, president of the Heritage Harbor Museum, and chairman of the Rhode Island Senior Olympics.

Who are These Children?



This photo was submitted by Barbara La France of Spring Street, Westerly. The location is on Spring Street, but the subjects and the date are unknown. Contact whsarchivist@gmail.com



The Westerly Historical Society
P.O. Box 91
Westerly, RI 02891

BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM DOCENTS' UPDATE

The Babcock-Smith House Museum

presents

Local Post Cards from 1890 to 1950

Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:00 PM

Local views of the Westerly area will be used throughout the presentation which traces the historic and social development of the post card from the late 19th century into the mid-20th century.

Joseph E. Coduri, formerly of Westerly, has been collecting post cards and preparing post card checklists for more than 30 years with a specialty in Rhode Island villages and railroad stations. He is an active member of Rhode Island Post Card Club.

At the Carriage House – 124 Granite St.

Non-members \$2.00; members free.

Membership News

By now members should have received their annual membership renewal notices. Please return your payment with the envelope provided as soon as possible.

If you have questions about your membership, need to update your information or would like to join the Westerly Historical Society, please contact Lise Mayers, Membership Chairperson at whsmembership@gmail.com.

Westerly's Witness E-Paper

If you would like to receive an email and password to alert you each time a new issue of *Westerly's Witness* is available online, simply respond to whssecretary@gmail.com, and we will add your email address to our e-newsletter mailing list. Please let us know if you would also like to suspend your paper mailings of *Westerly's Witness* when you write. Remember, going paperless saves a tree!