



# Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

November-December 2014

## Westerly Historical Society Officers 2014-2015

<b>President</b> Edward A. Fazio	<b>Membership Chair</b> Lise B. Mayers
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<b>Archivist</b> Janice B. Tunney	<b>Members At Large</b> Dwight C. Brown, Jr. John Leach Brenda Linton Thomas A. O'Connell Thomas E. Wright
<b>Babcock-Smith House Museum Liaison</b> Edward A. Fazio	

The Babcock-Smith House Museum  
will present a  
“Members Only” Event

### *Carved from Stone*

A Rhode Island PBS Documentary

Sunday, November 30, 2014, 2:00 P.M.

At the Carriage House

To become a museum member visit

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

(Click on “Contact Us “→ “Join.”)

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Babcock-Smith House Holiday Weekend

December 5, 6, and 7

See page 7 for schedule of events

## Calendar of Events

January 11, 2015

*“The Quest for Peace Negotiations to End the  
Civil War Almost Derails President Lincoln’s  
Re-election in 1864”*

Former Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme  
Court Frank Williams will speak about the effect of  
peace negotiations on Lincoln's re-election  
campaign in 1864.

Sponsored by the Babcock-Smith House Museum

At the Carriage House  
Non-Members \$2.00; Museum Members Free

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January 18, 2015

*Dwight C. Brown, Jr.  
The Bradford Story*

Westerly Historical Society board member and  
archivist emeritus will present a history of the  
textile industry in Bradford, including some  
artifacts associated with the enterprise.

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Westerly Historical Society Programs are held  
in the Carriage House of the  
Babcock-Smith House Museum  
124 Granite Street  
Westerly, RI

Sundays at 2:00 P.M.

This program is free & open to the public.

## Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

November was a busy month at the Westerly Historical Society, and our focus has turned now to helping our partners at the Babcock-Smith House Museum get ready for their spectacular "Holiday Weekend." The traditional "Celebration of Trees" will be incorporated into a three-day weekend celebration full of music, shopping, food and fun. Visit <http://www.babcock-smithhouse.com/BabcockSmithHouse/events.htm> or see page seven of this issue of *Westerly's Witness* for details.

We started the month with a visit from Sarina Rodrigues from the University of Rhode Island Special Collections Library. For those who missed this informative presentation, see our story on page three of this issue of *Westerly's Witness*. We would like to thank Sarina for spending time with us on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and hope she gets the help and funding she needs to continue her valuable work.

On November 12<sup>th</sup> we entertained our *Fair Westerly* author and editor, Tom O'Connell, and all the contributing authors for wine and cheese. (The new room in the renovated Carriage House was ready in the nick of time!) Gloria Russell came with copies of her new book, *Reminiscing*, and fans enjoyed readings by Tom, Gloria, and *Fair Westerly* contributor Bill Sullivan. Andrea Silvestri of *The Westerly Sun* snapped photos all evening and her pictures can be seen by visiting <http://thewesterlysun.mycapture.com/mycapture/folder.asp?event=1869333&CategoryID=30379&ListSubAlbums=0>. (You can also just go to [www.thewesterlysun.com](http://www.thewesterlysun.com) and click "Photos/Videos." Select "Spotted Photos" and scroll down for "Westerly Historical Society Dual Book Signing.") We would like to thank Pamela Scott, our programs director, and Janice Tunney, the event hostess, for a sparkling evening!

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> Julie Nathanson from the Pawtuxet Valley Preservation and Historical Society Cemetery Group spoke about her work on the RI Cemeteries database and the related transcription project. A recap of her presentation appears on page four of this issue of *Westerly's Witness*. Thanks, Julie, for coming out and sharing your important work with us.

By now all members should have received their membership renewal letters. If you haven't done so already, please send your membership renewal check to:

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

Individual membership is still \$20.00 per year; Family, \$30.00; Sustaining, \$50.00; Patron, \$100; and Benefactor, \$250.00 and over.

I want to apologize to anyone who took the day off on November 10 for Veterans Day. Unlike Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, and President's Day, Veterans Day is **not** a moveable holiday. Readers may recall that I opened the piece on *Veterans War Stories* with the statement. "November 11 is Veterans Day (celebrated this year on November 10)..." If I had the notion that Veterans Day was a moveable holiday, that's because at one time, it was. Here is the scoop (thanks to Wright State University Library).

"For a brief period of time in the 1970s, Veterans Day was observed as a moveable holiday, celebrated on the closest Monday, but in 1978, Veterans Day celebrations were returned to November 11, in order to preserve the legacy and historical importance of that date. Since then, November 11 serves to help focus attention on the important purpose of Veterans Day: A celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good."

And speaking of holidays, our next issue of *Westerly's Witness* will be published in late January, 2015. On behalf of the entire board of the Westerly Historical Society, have a safe and happy December and know that you have our very best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year!



# Finding Your “A-Ha!” Moment

## What’s in Store at the URI Library Special Collections Department

by Ann L. Smith

Anyone who has done some historical sleuthing, whether it was for an article, school project, or their own genealogical history knows the importance of good primary sources. Libraries are anything but boring if there is a mystery you are trying to solve. As with many research projects, facts, people, and dates come into play that were not on your original list of topics to research.

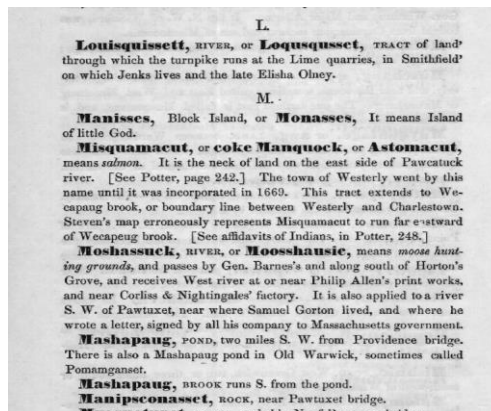
Many researchers begin their quests with a simple Internet search. Even without leaving home there is much to be found on the World Wide Web. The next stop may be your local library, but one sometimes leaves empty-handed – frustrated that what they need to know is just out of reach.

Our readers may recall from the September 2013 issue of *Westerly’s Witness* how Joseph Pendleton, having lost his brigantine and all its cargo at sea, divided up his farm and sold off lots via a lottery. The new community became known as “Lotteryville.” The story has been often repeated around Westerly and was even the subject of a paper presented before the Westerly Historical Society by Mrs. James O. Babcock in 1915. What was never mentioned, however, was how Pendleton arrived safely home after losing his ship at sea.

Further research uncovered the truth: it was Joseph Pendleton’s son by the same name who never returned home with the brigantine full of cargo. Only by researching the Colonial Records of Rhode Island did we discover exactly what brought about the Lotteryville settlement (and some other interesting facts as well).

There is nothing more exhilarating than the experience of such an “A-ha!” moment when in the midst of researching a topic. Sarina Rodrigues, Special Collections Librarian at URI agrees. During her presentation given to the Westerly Historical Society on November 2, Ms. Rodrigues mentioned that researchers often become excited at finding the one key fact that solves their mysteries. It is difficult not to be drawn in to each visitor’s topic as he or she uncovers little-known facts that suddenly explain why events occurred as they did.

The good news is that the Special Collections Department of the URI Library is open to the public and some of its holdings have been digitized for Internet access. For those items not available electronically, the drive is probably well worth the trip. The holdings in the Special Collections Department are as much a museum as they are a resource for research.



**An example of digitally available content from the URI Library Special Collections Department. This page is taken from *Indian Names of Places in Rhode Island* by Usher Parsons, M.D., published by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1861.**

A sampling of the holdings in the URI Special Collections Department includes letters from Sarah Harris to Prudence Crandall, the printed works of George Utter, certain church records, and oral histories which are now being converted to MP3 file format. If rare books are your passion, how about a few first edition copies of works by literary greats such as Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*), Edna St. Vincent Millay, or Ezra Pound? The oldest book at URI is currently on loan from Peter Cornelius. It is a fourteenth-century, leather-bound hymnal which he reportedly rescued from a shoemaker in Italy.

Political researchers will find papers from many of Rhode Island’s governors including those of Henry White Diamond and former Governor William H. Vanderbilt. Other items of historical importance can be found in the “Rhode Island Political Papers” section.

Whether you are interested in personal papers, rare books, church records, or manuscripts and personal papers, the URI Library is a good place to start. The Special Collections Department is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. To make a research inquiry, obtain more information, or driving directions visit:

<http://www.uri.edu/library/special/collections/>.

To browse materials available electronically go to <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/>

Sarina Rodrigues and her staff are waiting to serve you!

## *“Here Lyeth the Body of...”*

*by Ann L. Smith*

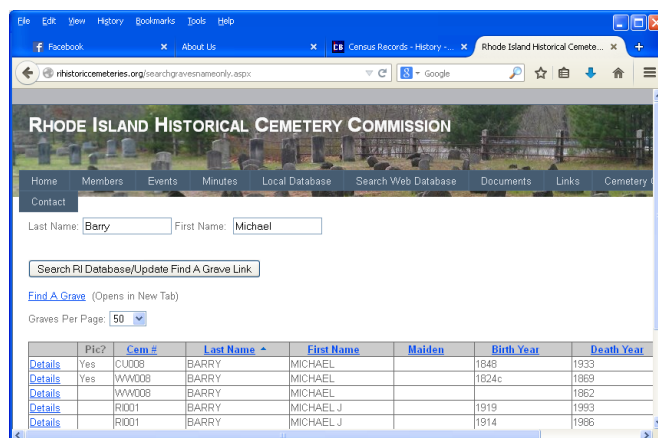
For genealogists, there is nothing more exciting than finding a missing piece of information, especially when it involves one's own ancestors. There is a myriad of resources available to researchers such as Ancestry.com, Census.com, Libertyellisfoundation.org, and the like, but how often do we consider searching for historical gravesites? Many readers are already familiar with findagrave.com or perhaps have visited rootsweb.com, but the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission database is one that often under-utilized.

Rhode Island is unique when it comes to cemeteries because, rather than making use of large centrally-located burial places, settlers customarily maintained small family cemeteries, or burial grounds near local meeting houses. The practice of burying people in places not affiliated with churches or other houses of worship traces back to our roots as a colony founded on religious freedom. As a result, Rhode Island has over 3,200 registered historical cemeteries, and 95 of them are located within Westerly alone.

To gain designation as a historical cemetery, a burying place must contain at least one marker that is over 100 years old. Obviously, many cemeteries owned or run by churches are on the list, but there are thousands of small (and often un-cared for) historical cemeteries within our state that contain only a handful of individuals. As time passes, grave markers deteriorate and eventually become illegible.

Preservationists like Julie Nathanson of the Pawtuxet Valley Preservation and Historical Society Cemetery Group are faced with the challenge of capturing as much data as possible and getting it transcribed before time takes its toll. Ms. Nathanson visited with members of the Westerly Historical Society on November 23 to talk about her work on the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries database and the related transcription project. Through the use of an informative slide presentation, meeting attendees learned of the painstaking work involved in finding and authenticating historic grave markers. Often after climbing through briars and carefully removing lichens and debris, researchers must discern information from what is often worn away or otherwise illegible.

By using a large mirror as a light source to enhance the inscriptions, photo images are then captured for later storage in the historical cemeteries database. Not all of the nearly 500,000 entries in the database have photographs, but many do. (An example shown during the presentation turned out to be an ancestor of this author!) Here is a sample of a what can be found at [www.rihistoriccemeteries.org](http://www.rihistoriccemeteries.org)



Searching is as simple as entering a name. If a gravestone listing has an accompanying photograph, the word “Yes” appears under the column heading, “Pic?”

The Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries database was the brainchild of John E. Sterling. Although he now lives in Illinois, he is still actively involved in this project. Our speaker, Julie Nathanson, continues to send new data to Mr. Sterling on a regular basis. He, in turn, sends patches back so that the database stays current. Readers should note that a slightly different version of the historic cemeteries database is available in libraries, and that version contains certain search features that are not available via the Internet.

To read John Sterling's story on the creation and maintenance of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Database, or to learn more about cemetery history in Rhode Island, visit <http://rihistoriccemeteries.org/documents.aspx> and click on “Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Database History (by John Sterling)”. We enjoyed having Julie Nathanson with us this month and look forward to a return visit from her soon.



## *Westerly Historical Society Photo Gallery*



Westerly Historical Society President Ed Fazio with Sarina Rodrigues of the URI Library Special Collections Department



Tom O'Connell signs a copy of *Fair Westerly* for John Coduri



Gloria Russell with her daughter, Leah Rockwell at the book signing.



Antonio Muniz, on stilts, is working on one of the ceilings during renovations at the Carriage House.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIE NATHANSON

Historic grave markers of George and Mary Munroe, Bristol, RI, dated 1744 and 1736.

## ***"Westerly Bachelors" (Circa 1873)***

*Editor's note: We do not know the name of the publication in which this piece first ran, nor the date. It appears that it was published around 1873 judging by the age of Samuel Cross who is mentioned here. He is described as "about 38 years of age" and the records show that he was born on May 1, 1835. Our thanks to Dwight C. Brown for forwarding it.*

### **WESTERLY BACHELORS.**

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#### **WHAT ARE THESE YOUNG MEN ABOUT.**

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That They Refuse to Marry!

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#### **WHERE ARE THOSE "TWO SOULS WITH BUT," ETC.**

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Westerly is noted for lots of things. Some are good and some are not so good. Its beautiful wide streets and stately mansions with generous grounds, its granite which as become so justly popular, and its handsome women who are domiciled within its limits, all come under the head of that which is classed as good. But on the other hand, we have a former respected elder attending a cigar store, and several other happenings which might be classed under the head of not so good. But we are not going to find fault with any of these. It is only our purpose on behalf of the ladies of Westerly to give them a few points in regard to the delinquent young men of this almost incorporated city. It is hoped the result will be as anticipated, and 'ere the gentle breezes of spring are heard to rustle the budding leaves, that an officiating clergyman may pronounce to some confiding couples the words which form the mystic tie.

Therefore it gives us pleasure to introduce to the notice of the marriageable ladies the following well-known opposers of the fair sex:

#### **OSCAR VOSE.**

Twenty-three years have passed and yet this young man remains in a state of single blessedness. He has about sixty thousand dollars at his command, and as he is economically inclined there is no danger of the future Mrs. V. wanting for any of life's luxuries. He owns his own horse and carriage, has a fine house and only lacks a wife to share his joys and sorrows.

#### **EUGENE B. PENDLETON.**

This is the efficient postmaster of Westerly. He is a fine-looking bachelor of 28, of good form, with black hair, flashing black eyes and black moustache. He likes all the ladies, but has no one in particular to whom he shows preference. He dresses well, makes a good appearance, is pleasant and affable in manner, and has a host of friends. Ladies angle sharp for him as he is a shy fish and not easily caught.

#### **SAMUEL H. CROSS.**

This gentleman occupies a fine position socially and politically. He is the affable town clerk and State Senator. He is abundantly well off to support a wife if so inclined. About 38 years of age, of dark complexion, quick and active, and counts his friends by scores. Next month it is rumored that he may be numbered with the Benedicts, but that is not definite, so there is yet hope for the anxious feminines [*sic.*] of Westerly.

#### **ARTHUR S. BURDETT.**

Is 22 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches in height. He is a most excellent salesman, and is employed in Dodge and Wells Clothing House. He has a rather spare face and is light complexioned. He dresses well, always ready for a good time, has quick wit, can listen to a joke properly and tell another so much better that he has become known as "The Jester." If he has any particular preference for the fair sex, it is an inclination toward those of the brunette order. Hurry up "Art" and name the happy day, the boys are waiting.

#### **ARTHUR L. BARBOUR.**

Here ladies, is a gentleman that makes an excellent gallant, and it is of course presumed he would make a good husband. He is employed in a drug store on High street, is about 28 years old, and acknowledged by all to be the handsomest man in town. He dresses very nobly, and the only fault to find with him is that he is rather bashful. Too much so, the ladies think, as many are having a designing look toward the drug store.

*To be continued in the  
next issue...*

*The Babcock-Smith House Museum Presents*

# Holiday Weekend December 5, 6 & 7

With the luxury of additional space in the Carriage House, museum volunteers are revamping our holiday approach. Although the date remains the same and those fabulous cookie trays will still be available, the winter weekend will contain a combination of free and paid holiday events spanning the entire weekend.

**Friday, December 5, 2014, 7 - 9 pm** \$10/person; children under 12 free

Tour the Celebration of trees at the museum.

Shop early at the bazaar and Joshua's store.

Enjoy refreshments in the Carriage House.

**Saturday, December 6, 9 am - 1 pm**

The Bazaar: PBS DVD, Granite Book, Baked Goods and Cookies, Muffins and Coffee, Handcrafted Tree Ornaments, Gently-Used Christmas Items, Basket Raffle, Joshua's Store

Add a tour of the Celebration of Trees in the museum for \$5/person; children under 12 free.

**Sunday, December 7, 2 pm** \$10/person; children under 12 free

Holiday Concert in the Carriage House at 2 pm will feature Community Church Ringers, Soloist Michael Grillo and the Westerly High School Vocal Ensemble.

Refreshments will be served following the concert.

The Celebration of Trees will be open from 2:45 to 5:00 pm.

Holiday shopping available at Joshua's Store.

**Weekend Pass \$15** includes admission to all activities for the three days. Bazaar free.

*Still searching for the perfect gift? Why not consider one of our publications?*

WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM	Price	Quantity	Extended Price
<b><i>Fair Westerly</i></b> Written, compiled and edited by Thomas A. O'Connell	\$19.95		
<b><i>Veterans War Stories 1933-1993</i></b> George H. Utter, II editor	\$20.00		
<b><i>A Collection of Postcard Memories on CD</i></b>	\$19.95		
<b><i>In and About Westerly</i></b> by Thomas A. O'Connell	\$22.00		
<b><i>Westerly's Gold...Her People</i></b> by Thomas A. O'Connell	\$12.95		
<b><i>Westerly Memories</i></b> by Thomas A. O'Connell	\$10.00		
<b><i>Along the Shore</i></b> (1992) by Howard Burdick	\$10.00		
Rhode Island Residents Add 7% Sales Tax			
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*Happy Holidays From All Of Us!*



THE WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD