



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

March 2016

Westerly Historical Society Officers 2015-2016

President Edward A. Fazio	Membership Chair Joanne Pendola
Vice President Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.	Newsletter Ann L. Smith
Secretary Maria L. Bernier	Programs Pamela J. Scott
Treasurer Ann L. Smith	Web Master Maria L. Bernier
Archivist Janice B. Tunney	Members At Large Dwight C. Brown, Jr. John Leach Brenda Linton Thomas A. O'Connell Thomas E. Wright
Babcock-Smith House Museum Liaison Edward A. Fazio	

Calendar of Events-Continued

April 10, 2016 2:00 PM
Jane Maxson and Cheryl Bamberg
 present
**"A View of Watch Hill in the Early
 Twentieth Century."**



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**Sunday Programs are held in the
 carriage house of the
 Babcock-Smith House Museum
 124 Granite Street
 Westerly, RI**

Free Admission

to Westerly Historical Society Members and
 Members of the Babcock-Smith House Museum
 Admission for Non-Members: \$5.00

Memberships Available at:

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

Calendar of Events

March 13, 2016 2:00 PM

**Robert Webb of
 Charter Oak Scanning**



presents "Save Your Memories Day."
**Mr. Webb will discuss the importance of
 saving your treasured memories and
 how to best organize them!**

**Bring 20 of your own photographs to be
 scanned for free during his presentation
 on preserving your memories.**

SAVE THE DATE!

**Westerly Historical Society
 Annual Meeting and Dinner
 Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 5:30 PM**

Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

My mother was culling through a collection of her old jewelry during a recent visit of mine and turned up a lapel pin with a strange kind of "American" flag for a motif. Instantly I thought it must be an antique version of the Rhode Island state flag, since it bears an anchor with thirteen stars. It had been a while since the sleuth in me has been tested with a good challenge, so I jumped at the chance to keep that little pin and begin the hunt.

My mother is a Barry by birth and even though she has never lived in our neck of the woods, her roots trace back to the Providence Barrys, many of whom emigrated from County Cork, Ireland in the late 1800s. A great uncle of mine was Leo Barry, a quasi-famous swimming coach at Brown University in the 1920s and 30s. Uncle Leo was said to jump into the pool fully clothed when his team would gain an important win. (He was a colorful character, no doubt.) And so I thought it was not a stretch to assume that this little flag with the blue and white stripes was part of Rhode Island's history. It turns out I was wrong, but you'll have to read the story entitled "The Anchor and Thirteen Stars" to find out what this flag represents.

We had a wonderful presentation on February 21 on Westerly's United Theater and the efforts underway to make this *grande dame* into a cultural center once again. The full program review will appear in next month's newsletter.

Jan Tunney, our archivist has been working with a small group of volunteers to re-archive all of our holdings. The work involves long hours but it is often entertaining. Here is a photo taken at a recent work session. Pictured are Brenda Linton (left) and Jan Tunney (right).



Some of the archival supplies were purchased with a grant from the Joseph O'Neill Ott Fund at the RI Foundation. In a bequest to the Rhode Island Foundation in 1994, Joseph O'Neill Ott, a leader in the preservation and antiquities community in the state, established a permanent endowment dedicated to document preservation. He requested that the income generated be used to preserve historical manuscripts, documents, and municipal records dating from the 19th century and earlier for the smaller cities and towns in Rhode Island. These grants support direct conservation efforts for paper-based documents, photographs, and other two-dimensional historical evidence (excluding artwork). These can include restoration, preservation (including the purchase of containers or housing for documents), or to defray the costs associated with the acquisition of documents. For more information visit

<http://www.rifoundation.org/WorkingTogether/ForNonprofits/GrantOpportunities/JosephONeillOttFund.aspx>

We are happy to report that the position of membership chairperson has been filled. We are excited to welcome Westerly native Joanne "Jo" Pendola to the post. In her mail at press time Jo writes,

I am a graduate of RISD; just moved back from 30 years in NYC and I work in mixed media. Westerly is the current focus for my art work. One of my projects is a Facebook page called *All About Westerly*. I am also documenting our many (over 70) local historical cemeteries. I am working toward more awareness of the rich and interesting history of Westerly. I am also working on launching a Facebook page for The Westerly Historical Society which will link with the WHS website and announce events, etc.

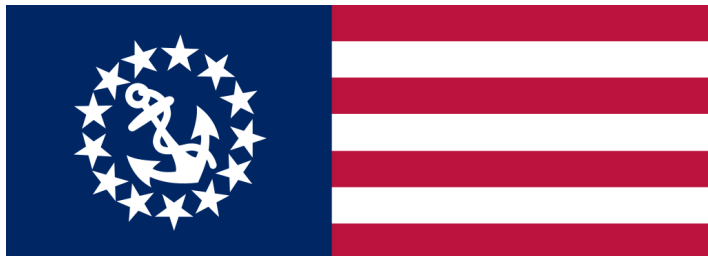
Lastly, we are gearing up for our annual meeting which has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 11, 2016. Our by-laws have been reviewed by the executive board and adoption of this year's proposed revisions will be on the agenda for approval by the membership. This is also an election year for the board officer seats, so we hope you will make every effort to join us. The annual meeting and dinner will be held at the Venice Restaurant on Shore Road in Westerly. See page six for complete details. An informative guest presentation is also planned.

The Anchor and Thirteen Stars

By Ann L. Smith

The U.S. Yacht Ensign

Most boat owners recognize the banner that bears the United States Yacht Ensign, but how many know the history behind this oft-used maritime flag? This ensign (insignia) bears thirteen red and white stripes with a blue canton. In the canton is a circle of thirteen white stars around a white fouled anchor. The U. S. Yacht Ensign was established by Congress in 1848 as a signal to be used by yachts of American registry. It was authorized so that these boats would not have to clear customs when pleasure-sailing from port to port. At the time, a special registration was necessary to fly the flag (legally). It is a variant of what was the U.S. Navy "small boat flag" (also known as the United States Ensign) which used thirteen stars because of the relatively small size of the flag. The Navy used the thirteen-star flag until 1916, but the Yacht Ensign with the anchor continues in use today. As of 1980 there is no such special registration required to display the U.S. Yacht Ensign, and consequently there are no rules about flying it.



UNITED STATES YACHT ENSIGN

Although the flying of an official yacht ensign was authorized in 1848, the official design was not adopted until 1849. Information provided by the New York Yacht Club reads as follows, "At the Secretary of the Navy's request, the New York Yacht Club recommended in January 1849, 'The American Ensign with the addition of a foul anchor in the union be adopted....' Thus, the American Yacht Ensign was created."

The U.S. Power Squadrons Ensign

A similar but perhaps less well-known flag is that of the U.S. Power Squadrons. Established in 1914,



UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS ENSIGN

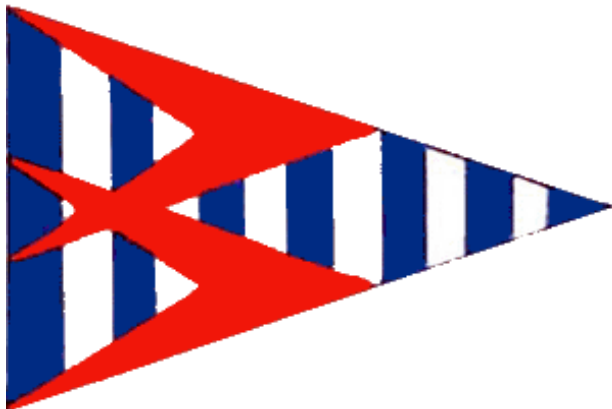
the Power Squadrons was formed to improve maritime safety and enjoyability through classes in seamanship, navigation, and other related subjects. The USPS comprises approximately 45,000 members organized into 450 squadrons across the United States and in some US territories. It is America's largest non-profit boating organization and has been honored by three US presidents for its civil contributions. In 1914, it adopted its own flag, which was then patented in 1916. This flag may be worn as a signal flag on the signal hoist, typically in the starboard rigging. Despite its name and the original intent of its designers, it was never recognized by the U.S. government or Navy as a national ensign; however, some smaller boats display this flag in place of a national ensign, usually because they lack a mast and do not operate outside home waters. The U.S. Power Squadrons manual of flag etiquette states, "The preferred location for flying the USPS ensign is the starboard yardarm or spreader halyard. It may be worn there day and night."

Westerly has its own chapter of Power Squadrons and is based out the Westerly Yacht Club. Although the flag of the local chapter does not bear any stars or anchors, it does pay tribute to the national organization by incorporating the blue stripes (see image on next page).

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The Anchor and Thirteen Stars

(continued from page 3)



ENSIGN OF THE WESTERLY CHAPTER,
U.S. POWER SQUADRONS

The Rhode Island State Flag

Of course, the most well-known anchor and stars for Rhode Islanders is our state flag, which is proudly displayed in stores, on boats, and in government places. Our flag contains not only stars and an anchor, but the word “Hope” as well.

According to the *Encyclopedia Brtiannica*,

The Rhode Island legislature adopted an anchor for its colonial seal in 1647, and in 1664 it added the motto “Hope.” Those symbols were used on military flags by the time of the American Revolutionary War (1775–83), and Rhode Island ships may have used a simplified anchor flag by the early 19th century.

Some say that the word “hope” accompanied by an anchor was likely inspired by a biblical passage, “Hope we have as an anchor of the soul,” a verse found in Hebrews, 6:18-19. Recall that Rhode Island's earliest colonists were fleeing religious persecution in Massachusetts due to their Christian beliefs. How often have we wondered why the word “hope” appears on our flag? How many of us actually knew that the representation of an anchor was related to the word beneath it?

Rhode Island's first nonmilitary state flag was adopted on March 30, 1877. Its white background corresponded to the facings on state militia uniforms worn during the Revolution. The flag's anchor and



RHODE ISLAND STATE FLAG FROM 1877 TO 1882

motto were encircled by 38 blue stars corresponding to the number of states in the Union.

On February 1, 1882, that flag was replaced by a simpler design—a blue field with a yellow anchor surrounded by a ring of thirteen yellow stars, corresponding to the rank of the state among those ratifying the U.S. Constitution. On May 19, 1897, the current flag was substituted. Note that the word “hope” was absent from the second state flag, but restored in the current version.



RHODE ISLAND STATE FLAG FROM 1882 TO 1897

It seems that the use of anchors and stars on the U.S. Yacht and Power Squadrons ensigns arose independently of their use on the Rhode Island state flag, even though these banners all bear some resemblance. Though the anchor is used on the Rhode Island flag as a symbol of hope, the appropriateness of its inclusion also as a maritime symbol cannot be denied. Our forefathers, no doubt, were satisfied with the dual symbolism of the anchor on our flag, and so it has endured.

(continued on page 5)

The Anchor and Thirteen Stars

(continued from page 4)



CURRENT RHODE ISLAND STATE FLAG

The Rhode Island Regiment

One other commonly flown flag is the Flag of the Second Rhode Island Regiment. Many houses throughout the state display the flag alongside the current flag, or in lieu of the state flag. The flag is often seen flying at home football games of the University of Rhode Island Rams.



FLAG OF THE 2ND RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT

The Rhode Island regiments were formed in 1781. They served at Yorktown and remained active until the end of the Revolution. The starry canton in the flag of the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment symbolized national unity, but the white field corresponded to the uniforms of the Rhode Island troops. Recall that the anchor symbol and motto which completed the design had been used as a government symbol since 1647. This flag is preserved today in the State House at Providence, Rhode Island.

Goodbye Winter (On Elm Street)!

Our archivist, Jan Tunney came across this image when going through the archives recently. The caption reads "Carl Burdick & party on horse drawn sled on Elm Street" and is dated February 1914. Upon further inquiry we are told that the house in the background is situated at 50 Elm Street.



CARL BURDICK AND PARTY ON ELM STREET, 1914

The Westerly Historical Society recently received an inquiry from the new owner 50 Elm, Robert Ritacco, so this small discovery in our archives was a timely find. Folks who are in the habit of driving up and down Elm Street have noticed a flurry of activity at this location as the house has been undergoing renovations of late.

Our newsletter editor emeritus Tom O'Connell, contributed the following information: "The house at 50 Elm Street was built by and for R. A. Sherman, owner of R. A. Sherman and Sons Co. builders and contractors. The Westerly and Pawcatuck directory, 1939-1940, p. 129, lists Charles E. Sherman as president of R. A. Sherman and Sons (most likely a son of R. A.) as living at 50 Elm Street."

In a follow-up post script we are told that the R.A. Sherman and Sons Company also constructed the Washington Trust Company building at 23 Broad Street. R.A. Sherman and Sons maintained a lumberyard along the banks of the Pawcatuck River on the Westerly side, just across the water from the Oscar Vose coal yard.

We wish Mr. Ritacco every success in his new location!

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



Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting and Dinner Ticket Order Form

Location: Venice Restaurant
165 Shore Road, Westerly RI 02891

Please send me ____ tickets for the
Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting
and Reception on May 11, 2016 @ \$26.00
each.

Enclosed please find my check for \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State and Postal Code _____

Please indicate your entrée preference(s):

Chicken Piccata _____

Baked Cod _____

Cocktails at 5:30 PM
Dinner will be served at 6:00 PM

Send this form with your check or money
order before April 28th to:

Westerly Historical Society
PO Box 91
Westerly, RI 02891

**Internet orders may be placed on our
website at**
<http://westerlyhistoricalsociety.org/annual-meeting>

**or click on the words “Annual Meeting”
from our home page.**