



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

January-February 2020

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Calendar of Events

Sunday, February 23, 2020 2:00 P.M.
Russ DeSimone

**"The Woman's Suffrage Movement
in Rhode Island –
The Quest for Equality"**

This talk looks at women's struggle for equality and access to the ballot box beginning in the mid-nineteenth century up to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

Sunday, March 15, 2020 2:00 P.M.
Russell Soder

"Vintage Base Ball in Westerly"

A chat about the Westerly Quarrymen, the game they play and how they play it. Discover our beloved pastime in its original form, circa 1864.

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**Lecture 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/>

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**Don't forget
to renew your membership!
Visit:**

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

Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

The calendar year may have just ended, but the Westerly Historical Society is smack in the middle of another exciting season. Our program and meeting activities generally follow the typical school year, but our fiscal year closes on December 31. Our dues are payable each fall and payment entitles members to all benefits through October 31 of the following year. Our system, although perhaps unconventional, has worked for us so far. Our readers may have already noticed that our annual financial reports, distributed each May, cover the previous calendar year.

As we say goodbye to the festivities of Westerly's 350th anniversary, we turn our attention to the centennial celebration of the 19th Amendment in 2020. In this issue we have included a page-worth of event listings concerning the Women's Suffrage movement which led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote. See Page 6 for the listing of events. On February 23rd we will present our own talk on the Women's Suffrage movement in Rhode Island when we welcome Russ DeSimone to the Carriage House. See Page 1 of this issue for details.

The 18th Amendment (Prohibition) incidentally, became law on January 17, 1920; one year after the amendment was ratified. So here we have another centennial, but the 18th Amendment is never celebrated. It was repealed in 1933. Rhode Island was the only state that did not ratify the 18th Amendment, and it was enacted nevertheless. (Constitutional amendments require only that three fourths of the states assent in order for an amendment to become law.) By 1920, Rhode Island had already endured three failed state-wide prohibitions and was not about to endorse another one at any level of government. For more information on Rhode Island's temperance movement see "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes- A Short History of the Temperance Movement in Rhode Island," *Westerly's Witness*, October 2015. The story is available online at <https://westerlyhistoricalsociety.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/whsnewsletter-2015-10.pdf>

So here we are on the doorstep of another "Roaring Twenties." Whether or not the world will roar is yet to be seen. And for those fuss-pots, nit-pickers, and purists among us, we concede that 2020

is not the beginning of the next decade; 2021 is. However, if you are a perfectionist, you will find that taking up this argument is a losing battle. When Y2K was a "thing" we sometimes heard, "There is no year zero!" But no one cared. Everyone welcomed a new millennium by what some said was a year early. So here's to a new decade. We'll go with the flow.

In this issue of *Westerly's Witness* we bring you an update from our archivist, Zachary J. Garceau. See his latest installment of "From the Archives" beginning on Page 4. On Page 3 we have provided a recap of the recent pot-luck event for those who were unable to attend.

An enormous thank-you is in order for the generous contributions of our members during 2019. We are happy to report that membership increased by some ten percent last year over the 2018 level, and our benefactors, patrons, and sustaining members have continued their faithful support by sticking with us from year to year. Our list of supporters who contributed fifty dollars or more during 2019 appears on Page 7.

Roberta Mudge Humble, president of Westerly Armory Restoration, Inc. (the "Armory"), wrote us to announce the Armory's musical event on February 15th. "Sweets and Swinging" will take place at the Armory from 7-10 P.M. and features songs from the 1940s to the 1990s performed by the Mondellos. Dancing is optional so if you haven't got a sweetheart, grab some friends and head on over. Desserts are included and beer and wine will be available at an added cost. See Page 5 for ticket information.

For those who enjoyed Russell Soder's article on vintage "Base Ball" in our October, 2019 issue, our March program will feature Russ in person where he will introduce you to the Westerly Quarrymen and their activities. We hope you will turn out to learn more about how baseball was played in its original form going back to 1864. Details of this event appear on Page 1 of this issue.

Lastly, the Westerly Historical Society and Babcock-Smith House will once again sponsor the annual History Award. Information on applications and nominations appears on Page 8. Web links are displayed within the announcement so that interested parties can access the proper form. The award is a cash prize of up to \$500 and will be presented at our annual meeting in May of this year.

Program Review: Members Only Pot-Luck Dinner

By Ann L. Smith

Our annual members-only potluck dinner took place on January 12, 2020 in the Carriage House of the Babcock-Smith House Museum. The weather cooperated by delivering a sunny and unseasonably warm, fifty-nine-degree afternoon. The food selections were delicious as usual and we were happy to welcome a few “non-regulars” to the event.

The first to take the floor was Westerly Historical Society archivist, Zachary Garceau. Zack updated us on the processing of some of our major contributions of 2019, such as the Utter scrapbook and the various sports memorabilia related to Westerly High School. We learned that certain twentieth century items have been donated following our appeal for things from the more recent past. We also received five photo albums containing 891 images, all of which arrived with accompanying electronic scans and all duly labeled. This collection contains many beach photos.

Our second talk was given by Kathy Nano Bolanowski and her husband Lawrence Bolanowski. Kathy has been researching her Italian ancestry with a particular focus on the Monte and Gandola families. While vacationing in Italy, the Bolanowskis discovered the tombstone of Kathy’s great-grandmother, quite by accident. Having gotten nowhere with the local town clerk, and struggling to communicate in Italian, Kathy and Larry decided to take a stroll in a nearby cemetery. Kathy was drawn to a certain spot for no explainable reason. It contained the tombstone of the ancestor they had been looking for!

The icing on the cake was that a relationship to a distant relative in Cleveland, Ohio, (whose DNA supposedly matched Kathy’s) could now be validated. With a little added research Kathy was able to document that her third cousin, Paul Gandola of Cleveland, had a great grandmother who was the sister of Kathy’s great grandfather. The two eventually met face to face and celebrated their discovery by sharing a meal in Cleveland’s Little Italy. Kathy has written an article about her adventures which was published in *La Gazetta Italiana* of Cleveland.

Next up was Donald Oat Jr. who spoke about his genealogical connections to the Lewis family and his search for information on the Lewis family cemetery. The plot of interest is on the property of the Moore

Company on Beach Street. The “John Lewis Ground #1,” also known as Cemetery WY050 by the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, was first catalogued by the Rev. Fredric Denison in *Westerly and Its Witnesses* in 1877-78. Research produced by Don Oat and corroborated by the Cemetery Commission (at their website) reveals that the John Lewis Ground #1 was leveled off and paved over in the 1920s to make way for a tennis court. It is believed that up to sixty individuals were buried there and that the majority of the remains were never moved. The loss is significant for Don in light of the fact that John Lewis, along with twenty three others (such as Tobias Saunders and John Babcock) is listed as one of the first free inhabitants of the “Town of Westerly” in an official town document dated May 18, 1669.

The John Lewis Burial Ground #1 is not the only focus of Don Oat’s ongoing research, however. His research shows the Lewis family’s recurring connections to several other first families of Westerly, especially the Babcocks. In fact, three of John Lewis Sr.’s sons married Babcock women in the latter part of the 1600s. Don is continuing to make connections with other Lewis family members across the United States.

William Mitchell was next to speak and told of his genealogical discoveries concerning both the Mitchells of Aberdeen, Scotland and the people of Aciri, Italy, from whom his wife is descended. We learned a few curious details about the Mitchells in particular, and received some research tips on searching for ancestors whose trail seems lost. A little-known website called “Scotland’s People” (www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) was extremely useful to Bill Mitchell and helped him fill in the blanks concerning his great-great grandfather.

Last up was Donna Brandelli who owns and operates Brandelli Genealogy Services in North Stonington, CT. Donna’s extensive background makes her a valuable resource for those wanting to hire a professional genealogist. Donna offered a couple of tips for do-it-yourselfers and stressed the importance of keeping a research log to avoid re-doing research one has already done. Donna’s website is full of fascinating information, photos and helpful advice. Interested parties can log on to <https://brandelligenealogy.com/> for more tips and to obtain contact information.

Our thanks to all who attended this worthwhile event. We look forward to next year!

From the Archives

by Zachary J. Garceau

The United Builders Supply Co. Collection

In October 2019, the Westerly Historical Society received its largest single donation of the year, both in terms of the number of items as well as the overall significance of the collection's contents. The items were donated by Michael J. Slosberg and nearly every item within this collection was related to United Builders Supply, the business that Mr. Slosberg's family operated in Westerly for over 70 years. The Westerly Historical Society would like to thank Mr. Slosberg and his family for the generous donation that will surely be quite useful to researchers in the future.

The United Builders Supply Co. Collection, which was assigned accession numbers 2019.0103a-eee (representing the 103rd addition to the collection in 2019 and 57 items within this collection cataloged thus far), contains a plethora of historically significant artifacts including stock certificates, financial documents, promotional materials, and more. Due to space restrictions, we simply cannot provide a detailed description of all of the more than 60 items within this collection, we can however, offer a glimpse at some of the most fascinating and significant pieces.

Bank Documents

Among the many financial records and documents within this collection are several statements, letters, and deposit slips from a variety of local banks, including a few that no longer exist. The bank records in this collection come from the New London City National Bank, the Uncas National Bank, the Industrial National Bank of Providence and The Washington Trust. These bank documents are important to researchers of local history as they provide a look into the business of banking in Westerly during the early to mid 20th century. They also offer context for understanding the cost of doing business during that period and how inflation can significantly alter our perceptions of monetary value.

Stock Certificates

On January 31, 1947, United Builders Supply began offering the option to purchase stock in the company. Among the artifacts that were donated to the Westerly Historical Society are stock ledgers, receipts for original purchases of stock and capital stock certificates (including certificate No. 1, which was for 329 shares purchased by Harold J. Slosberg). Not only are the stock certificates

beautifully designed and very well-preserved, but they are also important for understanding the history of UBS, particularly who held the most stake in the business and its growth over time. Most of the certificate receipts are adorned with multiple documentary stamps from the Internal Revenue Service, providing a unique look into the history and evolution of these stamps.



CANCELLED STOCK CERTIFICATE REPRESENTING TEN SHARES OF UNITED BUILDERS SUPPLY.
(PHOTO COURTESY OF ZACHARY J. GARCEAU.)

Popular Home Magazine

In the fall of 1962, United Builders Supply was featured on the cover of *Popular Home* magazine, a rather large honor for a local business. On the back cover of the magazine, readers saw a full page ad for UBS, providing important promotional support. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this particular magazine issue is the futuristic style it promoted. The hopeful nature is visible in several advertisements, some of which feature references to space travel, a concept just gaining traction with the populace. While the information provided about UBS is somewhat scant in this particular issue, the overall historical importance of a magazine such as this is quite apparent and is likely to be useful to any researcher interested in 1960's America.

Account Balance Book

Another item of note from this collection is a series of three account books dating from 1954 to 1956. These books are of interest because they provide information useful to historians and other researchers.

(Continued on Page 5)

From the Archives

(Continued from Page 4)

For instance, these books serve as an indication of who was conducting business with UBS, with many making major purchases. These books can also be rather useful as a reference point by showing the cost of various items in the mid-1950's as compared to modern prices. Once again, the items within this collection offer a window into the past.

50 lb. bag for Anthracite Coal from Butler Bros.

The last item we would like to highlight is one which is not exclusively related to United Builders Supply, but was donated as part of the same collection: an anthracite coal bag from a local coal dealer. This particular item is a bag intended to hold 50 pounds of coal and was provided by the Butler Brothers Coal Company which lists their address as 30 Oak Street, the same address as UBS, suggesting that they were located in the same building and perhaps worked as a unit. This item harkens back to a period when coal was a more common source of fuel in homes and is a rather unique promotional item which we are pleased to add to our collection.

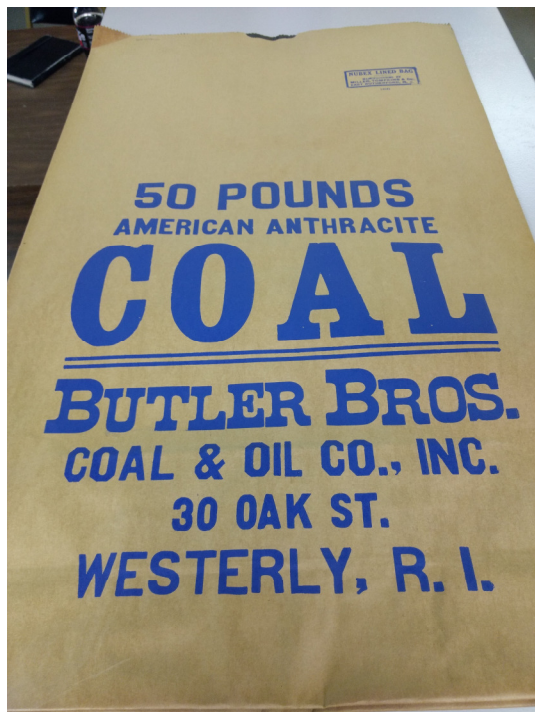


PHOTO OF COAL BAG IMPRINTED WITH "BUTLER BROTHERS COAL AND OIL. (PHOTO COURTESY OF ZACHARY J. GARCEAU)

If you have any questions about the United Builders Supply Collection or any other items held by the Society, please contact me at whsarchivist@gmail.com.

At the Westerly Armory

41 Railroad Avenue
Westerly, Rhode Island 02891

"Sweets and Swinging"
Saturday, February 15, 2020
from 7:00 to 10:00 P.M.



For those who support history, museums, historical structures – and love music from the '40s to the 90s...

Come have dessert, listen, dance if you like, and enjoy an evening at the Westerly Armory on February 15 from 7-10 PM. Tickets are \$15.00 prepaid in advance (\$20.00 at the door) and that includes dessert. Beer and wine will be available at the Armory's bar. Advance tickets available by telephoning the Westerly Armory at (401) 596-8554, by mail at PO Box 614, Westerly, RI 02891 or online (an added fee applies) at <http://westerlyarmory.com/events-2/>

Women's Suffrage Anniversary Events

By Nina P. Rossomando, President, League of Women Voters South County



January 25, 2020

Movie - "One Woman, One Vote"

The League of Women Voters South County announces a series of programs in 2020 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment which granted women the right to vote. The first in this series is: a PBS movie, **"One Woman, One Vote"** narrated by Susan Sarandon. This film begins with Elizabeth Cady Stanton's call for women's rights at Seneca Falls in 1848 and continues to the final fight in the 1900s resulting in women winning the right to vote. Many women and a few men devoted their lives to making America a democracy

The film will be shown at 1:00 P.M. Saturday, January 25th in the Westerly Library auditorium, and will be followed by a discussion. This film is suitable for adults; and middle school and high school students.

March 11, 2020

Live Performance - "From Seneca Falls to the 19th Amendment: Songs of the American Women's Suffrage Movement"

Guitarist and historian Rick Spencer and vocalist/educator Dawn Indermuehle will perform period songs dealing with the American Women's Suffrage movement. Westerly Library auditorium, Wednesday, March 11th at 6:00 P.M. Presented in partnership with the Friends of the Westerly Library. Adults, teens, and children welcome.

May 14, 2020

U.S. Women's Suffrage Memorabilia

Professor Kenneth Florey, author of *Women's Suffrage Memorabilia* (2015) will talk on the types of memorabilia and ephemera related to the Women's Suffrage movement. Westerly Library auditorium, Thursday, May 14th at 6:00 P.M. Presented in partnership with the Westerly Historical Society.

June 4, 2020

13th Annual Wilson Award

The Wilson Award is a competitive award given to three RI teachers who incorporate civics in innovative ways into their teaching. Thursday, June 4, Rhode Island State Capitol, Governor's Reception Room, 3:00 – 5:00 P.M.



June 11, 2020

Living Literature Celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment

Dramatic artists from Living Literature bring to life famous Women's Suffrage figures. Westerly Library auditorium, Thursday, June 11th at 6:00 P.M.

August, 2020

Art Exhibit - Suffragist Busts by Victoria Gueriana and Other Works
Westerly Library media room. Month of August.

Many Thanks to Our 2019 Supporters

Benefactors - \$250 or More

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John B. Coduri
Joseph F. Fusaro
Malcolm Makin- Professional Planning Group
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The Westerly Historical Society executive board wishes to express our sincerest thanks to all our supporters of the last year. While only our major donors have been listed above, we continue to be grateful for the support of all our members, without regard to your chosen membership level. Thanks to all who have renewed their membership and continue to support us as we continue our efforts into the coming year!

Just for Fun

Antique postcard of Main Street, Westerly. The Silk and Solway Mill, or "Solway Mills" (in background at right) was established in 1901 at the site of the former Stillman Mills. The previous tenants, Campbell, Henault & Co. moved to Woonsocket in 1899. In 1901 three hundred looms were in operation at the site and over two hundred workers were employed there. More info at: *Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Business Men of Rhode Island at the Opening of the Twentieth Century* available at Google Books. (Image courtesy of Granite Photo.)



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



WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM HISTORY AWARD



Once again an award of up to \$500.00 will be given to a person or persons, Grade Five through adulthood, who furthers the mission of researching, studying, and/or preserving local history in our community. Secondary consideration will be given to someone who exhibits a passion for history unrelated to the local community.

Application forms and more info are available online at:

<https://westerlyhistoricalsociety.org/history-award/>

or at:

<http://babcocksmithhouse.org/>

Application or nomination must be submitted by April 1, 2020 to:

**Westerly Historical Society
PO Box 91
Westerly, RI 02891**

or by email to:

<mailto:whspresident@gmail.com>.