



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

May 2024

Westerly Historical Society Executive Board 2023-2024

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Program Notes

THANK YOU

The Westerly Historical Society would like to extend our appreciation to the Ocean Chamber of Commerce for allowing us to co-host the monthly Business After Hours event with our friends at the Babcock Smith House Museum.

Our appreciation is also extended to The Wine Store, Grey Sail Brewing, and Joyce's Everyday Gourmet for generously donating refreshments and libations for the event.

CEMETERY CLEANUPS

The Westerly Historical Society has received a grant from Litter Free Rhode Island to fund litter and trash cleanups at several of our smaller local historical cemeteries located throughout Westerly.

We will host a formal group cemetery cleanup on Monday, May 6th from 5 PM to 7 PM, but we are also encouraging our members to participate individually with friends and families by simply choosing one of the historic cemeteries near you and spending a few minutes picking up the litter in and around the cemetery while discovering and exploring these sacred sites.

The Westerly Historical Society will use the grant funds to provide guidance and support in the form of directions, gloves, bags, sunscreen, bug spray, cleaning supplies, and trash disposal fees. We will also use the funds to provide water, soda, and refreshments during and after the cleanups.

We will meet at the Carriage House at 5 PM on May 6th and fan out from there. All are welcome!

We encourage you to sign the litter free pledge at www.litterfree.ri.gov/take-pledge

To confirm participation or obtain additional information, please send an email to our President at WHSpresident@gmail.com.

In this Issue

Program Notes	Page 1
Presidents Corner	Page 2
Editors Notes	Page 2
Westerly Library Special Collections.....	Page 3
Special Announcements	Page 4
Additions To Our Archives	Page 5
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 6
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 7
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 8
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 9
History Podcast.....	Page 10
History Podcast.....	Page 11
Sponsor Recognition.....	Page 12



WESTERLY'S WITNESS

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year in January, February, March, April, May, June,
September, October and November

The mission of the Westerly Historical Society is to
research, study, and preserve the local history in
our community. We are a dedicated, all-volunteer,
non-profit organization that owns numerous
historical artifacts and an extensive photographic
collection.

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<https://www.facebook.com/WesterlyHistoricalSociety/>

President's Corner

Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.

Hello WHS friends,

Well here we are, May, the last business month for
your historical society before our Summer break. We
do have a few things on our schedule before we slip
into total relaxation mode. The first event up is our
annual dinner meeting on May 22nd at Haversham.
Tickets are on sale now either online with our web site
or with the mail in form provided in this newsletter.

We have selected the winner of the annual history
award. Our committee received several nominations,
and the most obvious selection was David Smith.
David is a past editor of the Westerly Sun and still
creates wonderfully researched educational historical
articles for the Sun. We are proud to announce David
as our selection. Please join us on May 22nd and help
us acknowledge our award recipients this year.

I wish to thank all the members of our business
community who joined us at our April 10th Ocean
Chamber after hours event. We were thrilled to add ten
new members to our rolls from that evening's event.
Special thanks go out to our cosponsors from the
Babcock-Smith House Museum, Grey Sail Brewery,
The Wine Store and Joyce's Everyday Gourmet for
their support!

Please don't be a stranger, join us at the May dinner
and have some fun while supporting everything we do
to continue to preserve Westerly's storied past.

See you soon.

Tom

EDITOR'S NOTES

Robert Peacock

Please Patronize Our Sponsors

SERVPRO OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

MICHELLE'S SCHOOL OF DANCE

GREY SAIL BREWING

THE WINE STORE

*We encourage our readers to support these fine
Westerly businesses who generously contribute
to the community and who support us in our
efforts to bring you this newsletter.*

We sincerely appreciate their support!!!

Thank You For Your Comments!

The Newsletter takes many hours to produce
each month and we sincerely appreciate the
continued accolades we have received for our
efforts. If you have a thought or opinion that
you would like to share with us regarding the
Newsletter, please feel free to send them in an
email to our President, Tom Gulluscio, at
WHSPresident@gmail.com

We sincerely appreciate your comments!

Westerly Library and Wilcox Park's Special Collections

By Robert Peacock

The Special Collections of the Westerly Library and Wilcox Park are maintained in the Local History room which is open weekdays from 10:00 AM to 4 PM (Thursdays from Noon to 4:00 PM), with occasional exceptions for meetings and capacity restrictions.

The Westerly Library and Wilcox Park's Special Collections encompass a wide selection of local history, genealogy materials, rare books, manuscripts, and artifacts. These materials reflect the rich history of Westerly and Pawcatuck.

In addition to a wide variety of books relating to the history of Westerly and the surrounding area, these collections include; Historic photographs, Historic documents, Vintage postcards, Maps, Westerly and Stonington yearbooks, City directories for Westerly and Pawcatuck, and Vertical files containing clippings from local papers on various topics of local interest.

The Special Collections material does not circulate but can be viewed in person at the library. Since many of the materials are not cataloged, it is preferred, when possible, to contact the library in advance of your visit, to determine if the desired information is available. It may take time for the staff to locate certain items or information in preparation for your visit and research.

The staff can also provide basic assistance with long distance research. In lieu of a research fee, a suggested donation of ten dollars to the Special Collections is encouraged and appreciated.

All long distance search requests must be submitted in writing and include pertinent names, dates, and subjects. Please email or call the Local History Librarian, Nina Wright, for further information. She can be reached by email, nwright@westerlylibrary.org or by calling 401-596-2877 ext. 310.

There are many questions coming in every day so they ask for your patience! Questions go into a queue and are answered in the order they are received.

The Special Collections welcomes donations of any appropriate materials meeting the criteria of their Library Collection Policy. They will ensure that the treasures found in your attic will be properly cared for and shared with future generations.

The Westerly Library and Wilcox Park also offers a wide variety of research and history materials via remote access. These collections are available via the internet and include the following searchable digitized collections that can be viewed from the comfort of your home!

Westerly Library and Wilcox Park's Photo Collection on [Flickr](#)

Westerly High School Yearbooks on [Flickr](#)

Westerly Digitized Newspapers in searchable form including:

[The Literary Echo, 1851](#)

[The Literary Echo and Pawcatuck Advertiser, 1851-1854](#)

[The Literary Echo and Pawcatuck Advertiser, 1854-1858](#)

[The Westerly Sun 1893-1950](#)

***For more information, please visit
www.westerlylibrary.org***

The Special Collections are maintained by our good friend and supporter, Nina Wright. Her research expertise and her wealth of knowledge are second to none. She is an absolute delight to work with!

Nina was the recipient of the 2022 Julia Award which is selected by the members of the Westerly Historical Society Executive Board and presented at the Annual Meeting. The award is bestowed on an individual who has made a major contribution to the preservation of Westerly's history.

In her role as Local History Librarian, Nina has shown a remarkable dedication to preserving and sharing the many kinds of local history materials available at the library. We sincerely appreciate her dedication and assistance!

***Please Patronize Our Newest
Newsletter Sponsors***



Announcements

**Westerly Historical Society
Annual Meeting and Dinner
Ticket Order Form**

**The Haversham Inn
336 Post Road, Westerly RI 02891**

This year's dinner will consist of a buffet featuring beef sirloin tips, chicken francese, pasta marinara and seasonal vegetables. Assorted pastry, coffee, and tea are included.

**Please send me ____ tickets for the
Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting
and Reception on May 22, 2024 @ \$40 each.**

Enclosed please find my check for \$_____

Name(s)_____

Address_____

City_____

State and Postal Code_____

**The ticket price has been partially subsidized this
year following a vote by the WHS Executive Board.*

**Cocktails at 5:30 PM (Cash Bar)
Dinner will be served at 6:00 PM**

**Please send this form with your check or
money order before **May 8th** to:**

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

**Internet orders may be placed on our
website at**

westerlyhistoricalsociety.org/annual-meeting

**Or click on the words "Annual Meeting" from
our website home page.**

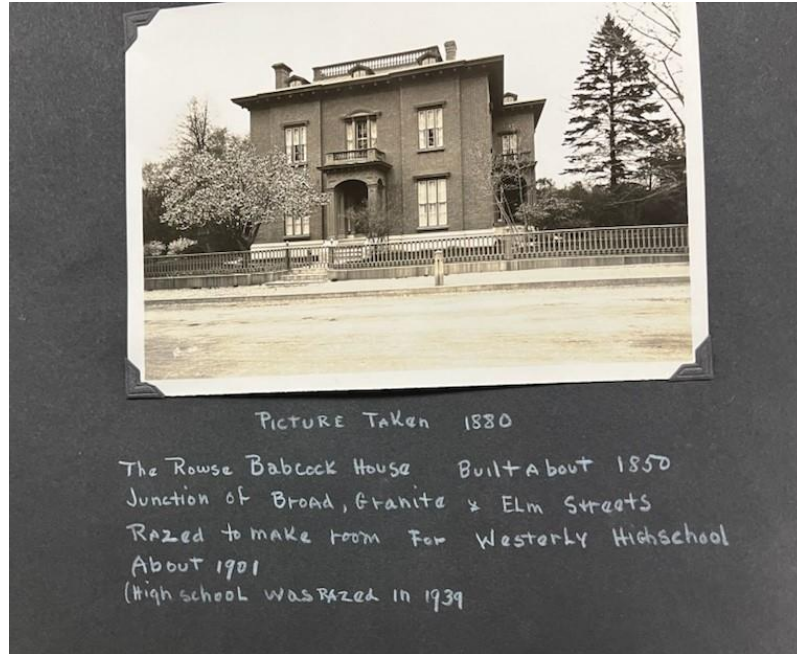
Major credit cards and PayPal® accepted.

New Additions to Our Archives

The following historical artifacts have been donated recently to further expand the historical collections of the Westerly Historical Society.

As always, we sincerely appreciate any and all Westerly related donations!

An old scrap book donated to our archives contains several photos of the Rowse Babcock House with the handwritten description "The Rowse Babcock House Built about 1850 Junction of Broad, Granite, & Elm Streets Razed to make room for Westerly High School About 1901 (High School was razed in 1939)"



This home would have been located diagonally across from the Town Hall to the right towards the intersection corner of Granite Street, Elm Street, and Broad Street. The backyard of the home on the left side would be where the Christopher Columbus Statue stands today.

If you are interested in obtaining additional information or arranging for a donation of a locally related item to our collection, please email our President, Thomas Gulluscio, at whspresident@gmail.com or our Archivist, Zachary Garceau, at whsarchivist@gmail.com

Discovering Westerly Cemeteries

Westerly Cemetery # 031 - The Jonathan Foster Ground

By Lawrence Hunter

There were initially 9 reported burials in this cemetery by Frederick Denison, with all but one having a headstone. However, the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery database shows 11.

The oldest known burial is that of Captain Israel Cudworth who died Dec 26th 1740. Captain Cudworth supposedly died in Scituate, MA where he was born, and his wife is buried in Scituate. Captain Cudworth was a Ship Captain. It is likely, that he was part of the Westerly shipping industry and wanted to be buried here.

There were 7 Fosters buried in this cemetery. The oldest was Jonathan and his wife Anna Jenckes, Jonathan Jr and his wife Sarah and George and his wife Catherine and Thankful Foster.

Frederic Dennison collected cemetery data for his book "Westerly and it's Witnesses" in 1867 thru 1868, the book was released 1878. At some point, the bodies and headstones of the Fosters were removed and reinterred in Riverbend Cemetery (Section 17 Lot 760). The records at Riverbend indicate the Lot was purchased by an Amos Barnes for \$40.50 on Nov 14, 1873. It is unknown exactly when the move was made. All seven of the Foster's headstones are intact at Riverbend Cemetery.

Jonathan Foster fought in the French Indian wars, in 1757 and 1762. He mustered into the Continental Army as a Sergeant on March 16, 1778 for one year as part of Topham's Regiment.

Jonathan Foster Jr is also listed in the RI Historical database as a Revolutionary Patriot, but no data was found to positively confirm that at this time.

Frederick Denison recorded in his book, "that the cemetery was in the southwestern portion of the town, on the farm belonging to Mr. Edward F. Vost, west of the Watch Hill Road, about thirty rods west of the farmhouse, in a pasture, enclosed by a poor wall." He also recorded: "In this ground lies the body of Joseph Hall, who was drowned in 1821, in the winter, not far from Burying Place Point, just below Lottery Village. Mr. Hall was near 30 years of age."

The modern location of the cemetery is located on the right-hand side of Wauwinnet Avenue just before going down the hill into Watch Hill. (Watch Hill Road becomes Westerly Road which becomes Wauwinnet Avenue starting at the stop sign). The cemetery is approximately 75 feet in from the road. Two access paths have been cut through the thicket to allow easy access.

The cemetery has recently been cleared exposing many additional graves marked by plain field stones, which Frederic Denison did not count.

The shist headstone of Israel Cudworth is still standing and readable, despite being almost 300 years old. An additional headstone, believed to have belonged to Thomas Wilcox who died as a child around 1801, is present but was covered with brush and prickles. The stone is severely deteriorated, and the name is not readable. In his book, Dennison clearly states he did not record persons under the age of 20.

The footstone of Jonathan Foster was found and is in excellent condition. A portion of Sarah Foster's footstone was found as well.

For those using GPS, the Cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 18 Minutes and 47.2 seconds North by -71 degrees, 51 minutes and 13.9 seconds west.

In addition to a personal visit to the cemetery, information for this article was obtained from and sincere appreciation is extended to the research of Reverend Denison in the 1860's, the files of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission, and the personal knowledge of Cemeteries Commissioner Larry Hunter.



These beautiful stones were uncovered during a recent cemetery cleanup. The bottom left photo is the headstone of Israel Cudworth and the bottom right photo is the headstone of Thomas Wilcox.

Israel Cudworth died on December 26th of 1740 at the age of 35 which means that this gravestone has been standing there as a silent witness and gentle reminder for almost 300 years!



On April 13th, on a cold, windy, and rainy morning, an intrepid group of dedicated volunteers joined together to clear the cemetery of years of trash, leaves, debris, and fallen trees. They worked for several hours and the results were amazing. They uncovered many lost and forgotten grave markers that had been buried for decades.

The clean up event was held in conjunction with the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission Annual Historical Cemeteries Awareness Weeks.

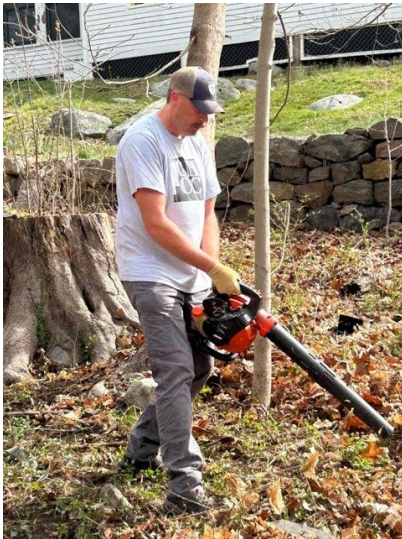
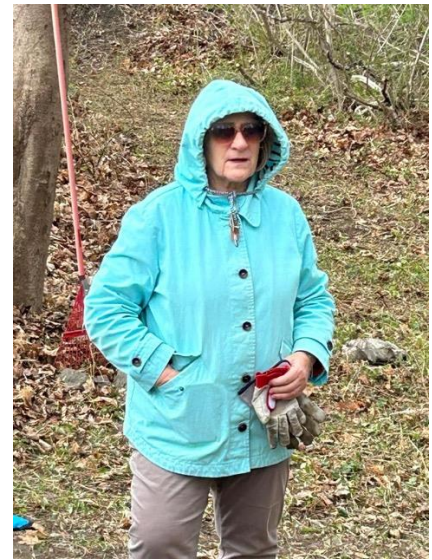


Just a portion of the many fallen limbs and debris that was removed to clear the cemetery and expose the hidden grave stone markers.

Our appreciation is extended to the Town of Westerly for assisting in removing the pile of debris.

Town Manager Shawn Lacey, Assistant Town Manager Melissa Davy, and the entire staff of the Public Works Department have been very supportive of these cemetery cleanups.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation is extended to this incredible group of dedicated volunteers including Larry Hunter, Michael Carroll, Lisa Bargmann, Sara Demick Ewen, Anthony Smith, and Barbara Watrous. We appreciate their hard work and dedicated efforts to remove the debris and to open up access to the cemetery providing visibility to the long hidden grave stones.



Our sincere thanks and appreciation is extended to this incredible group of dedicated volunteers. We appreciate their hard work and dedicated efforts to remove the debris and to open up access to the cemetery providing visibility to the long hidden and long forgotten grave stones.

Thank You to Larry Hunter, Michael Carroll, Lisa Bargmann, Sara Demick Ewen, Anthony Smith, and Barbara Watrous. We Sincerely Appreciate Your Efforts!

“That’s One For The History Books”
A Podcast Co-Hosted By Hugh Ryan And Marty Cohn
By Robert Peacock

The Executive Board met in April and enjoyed a short chat before the meeting with a very special guest. Despite the heavy rain and wind that evening, one of our newer Westerly residents, Hugh Ryan, stopped by seeking information on local residents for future podcasts. We enjoyed his visit and we learned about his dedicated efforts to research, describe, recognize, and publicize a variety of interesting but relatively unknown historical figures via a weekly internet based podcast.



The podcast is titled “That’s One For The History Books” and is co-hosted by Hugh Ryan and his good friend Marty Cohn. There are currently 48 episodes available and their intent is to continue to create and release a new episode every Wednesday. The podcasts are dedicated to “profiling Americans who made important contributions to our country but have been largely overlooked by our history books.” Most podcasts are less than ten minutes and are packed with interesting facts and observations.

A few episode excerpts and examples are below. We encourage our members to listen to the podcasts and learn more about these and many other Americans who made important contributions to our country.

Episode 29 is approximately seven minutes and discusses the delicious invention of Frank Epperson who accidentally invented the popsicle. Born in 1894, Frank was eleven when he was stirring a sweetened soda and snow solution outside in the winter. He was soon distracted and forgot the cup of slushy mixture with the stirring stick in it. In the morning, he discovered the result was a delicious frozen treat. Originally named the “Eppsicle”, based on a combination of his last name and icicle, the frozen treat on a stick was later patented as the “Popsicle”, based on a combination of the main ingredient, soda pop, and icicle.

Continued On Next Page

“That’s Another One For The History Books”
A Podcast Cohosted By Hugh Ryan And Marty Cohn
By Robert Peacock

Episode 32 is approximately eight minutes and discusses the contributions of Samuel W. Alderson who is credited with creating the original crash test dummies. Originally called Anthromorphic Test Devices, these ATD’s were developed to evaluate potential stresses and reactions during prototype plane testing and spacecraft testing. They were later adapted to be used in vehicle crash testing following the public outburst after the release of Ralph Nader’s book in 1965 titled “Unsafe At Any Speed” which accused the automakers of valuing style over safety.

Episode 37 is approximately eight minutes and discusses the contributions of Vesta Stoudt who is credited with developing the idea for Duct Tape. Vesta was working in 1940 at the Green River Ordinance Plant while her two sons served in the Navy. She learned that the soldiers were struggling with the tape, paper, and wax mixture that was used to keep ammunition dry until it was ready to be used. The paper often ripped leaving the soldier to frantically tear away at the seal and then pick out the wax while under fire. Vesta designed a cloth based packaging tape that was strong and waterproof, yet very easy to tear. The military used her idea to create the now familiar “Duck Tape” which we now know as “Duct Tape”.

Episode 40 is approximately eight minutes and discusses the contributions of Stephanie Louise Kwolek who was the inventor of Kevlar. Originally working as a chemist and research scientist for Dupont, she was attempting to develop an alternative to steel in radial tires. She discovered a way to make strong fibers which led to Kevlar. Stephanie is credited with saving thousands of lives. A year before her death in 2014 at the age of 90, a children’s book based on her invention was released by Edwin Wyckoff. It was titled “The Woman Who Invented The Thread That Stops Bullets: The Genius of Stephanie Kwolek”.

Episode 43 is approximately seven minutes and discusses the contributions of Revolutionary War hero Mordechai Sheffall, an Orthodox Jew who immigrated to the United States from England in 1733 and was raised in Georgia. He started as a leather tanner, built a cattle business, and developed a trading enterprise. During the revolutionary war, he was named Commissary General and was charged with supplying the revolutionary troops with food, uniforms, horses, weapons, and ammunition. When money became short, he used his own money to fund the war and went deeply into debt.

Other available episodes present the stories of interesting Americans including Dr. Charles Drew, a pioneer in blood banking, Dr. William Camac, the founder of the first American zoo, Roy Allen, the founder of A&W Root Beer, John Roebling, the designer of the Brooklyn Bridge, Agnes Meyer Driscoll, considered to be the first lady of naval cryptology, and many more!

The podcast is co-hosted by Hugh and Marty who research, write, produce, and narrate each episode. A new episode drops every Wednesday. Future historical figures with local connections that are being considered include Westerly residents such as Lifeguard Henry Morris, Admiral Herbert Dunn, and Captain Joseph Pendleton.

Hugh Ryan is now semi-retired from a long and distinguished career in Sales, Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations. He moved to Westerly several years ago and is still active as a consultant, author and writer. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in English from Georgetown University.

Marty Cohn is President of Cohn Public Relations. He lives in Vermont and is active in many community activities including producing community access television shows, assisting in political campaigns, and producing the weekly podcasts. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from Boston University and a Master’s Degree in Public Relations from Boston University.

The podcast “That’s One For The History Books” is available on many platforms including Spotify.

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