

Westerly's Witness

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January 2025

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In this Issue

Program Notes	Page I
Presidents Corner	Page 2
Editors Notes	Page 2
Reports of the US Lifesaving Service	Page 3
Special Announcements	Page 4
From Our Archives	Page 5
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 6
Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries	Page 7
Cemetery Clean Up Project	Page 8
Cemetery Clean Up Project	Page 9
Potter Hill Post Office Money Orders	Page 10
Potter Hill Post Office Money Orders	Page 11
Sponsor Recognition	Page 12

Program Notes

On behalf of the
Executive Board
of the
Westerly Historical Society

Happy New Year! WELCOME TO 2025!!!

REFLECTIONS VIDEOS

The Westerly Historical Society continues to work on our new oral history program "Reflections" which is a series of 24 videotaped oral histories featuring Westerly residents that are 80 years of age or older. You can support this exciting new program by mailing a donation labeled as support for the "Reflections Program" to

Westerly Historical Society
PO Box 91 Westerly, RI 02891

Please check the Westerly Historical Society Website or Facebook page to view the latest episodes!

TRIVIA QUESTION

Welcome to a new monthly feature recommended by the Westerly Historical Society Executive Board

True or False? Rhode Island Governor Samuel Ward signed the Declaration of Independence just before he died? The answer is on the next page!



Published by the Westerly Historical Society P. O. Box 91, Westerly, RI 02891, nine times per 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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Social Media *Jane C. Perkins*Find us on Facebook

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

President's Corner

Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.

Happy New Year My Friends!

Welcome to 2025! Your society turns 112 this year and the thought of this has me thinking about all the local businesses that are over 100 years old and have succeeded through time.

The Westerly Historical Society truly appreciates the support of many local businesses, and we continually seek to find a way to showcase these businesses.

A sincere thank you to our very generous commercial sponsors including Servpro of Washington County, Michelle's School of Dance, Grey Sail Brewery, The Wine Store, Thorp & Trainer Insurance, and Westerly Dental Group.

We continue to attempt to grow our membership roll and we count on you to help by giving a gift membership to a friend, family member or colleague.

January will see a new round of videoing interviews for Reflections. our oral history video program. You can expect more of our finest citizens, born and raised in Westerly, to help us finish this amazing project by the end of this year!

I am looking forward to seeing you this year at our programs and at our annual meeting!

Best.

Tom

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Robert Peacock

Thank you to Dave Smith, Zack Garceau, and Jane Perkins for contributing articles for this month's newsletter.

As always, we welcome and encourage guest authors to contribute articles!

TRIVIA ANSWER – **FALSE** - Westerly resident and Rhode Island Governor Samuel Ward participated in the Continental Congress which drafted the Declaration of Independence but he died of smallpox on March 26th of 1776, more than three months before the actual signing.

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We encourage you support these fine businesses!

ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES LIFESAVING SERVICE

By Jane Perkins

Our readers enjoyed the first two segments of this story in the October and November newsletters and asked for more details on the local wrecks from the 1880's. We appreciate your feedback and we are happy to oblige!

Four books published by the Government more than a century ago, in 1881, 1884, 1887, and 1889, and now owned by the Watch Hill Lighthouse Keepers Association, provide a unique historical perspective relative to the operations of the Watch Hill Life Saving Station. The following are a few more excerpts from the books that provide actual examples of the dangerous work performed by these brave Surfmen.

Please keep in mind as you read the accounts, the long distances that they were required to row their small boat in heavy seas and adverse weather.

Also note that the Life Saving Stations were only staffed by the Sation Keeper during the summer and the keeper had to rely on calling in part time paid surfmen or volunteers as needed during summer emergencies.

July 12, 1888 - The schooner Nellie D. Vaughn, of Provincetown, Massachusetts, bound thither from Elizabethport, New Jersey, with a cargo of coal and crew of four men, at half past 6 in the morning struck a rock off Watch Hill Point, coast of Rhode Island, and commenced to fill. The captain was obliged to run her ashore on Narragansett Beach, three quarters of a mile northeast of the Watch Hill Station, (Third District.) A strong west breeze as blowing at the time, with a rough sea. The crew took to their yawl and succeeded in making a safe landing and were conducted to the station by the keeper, who gave them a warm breakfast. As soon as the surf sufficiently moderated to admit of working on the vessel, the keeper, who at this season was the only member of the life-saving crew on duty, assisted the sailors to save the sails and rigging. This was not accomplished until the 13th. On the 14th work was resumed and the starboard anchor and nearly all the cable were recovered. The vessel became a complete wreck, only about five hundred dollars being realized from her sale. Three of her crew were sheltered and cared for at the station five days.

August 13, 1888 – At half past 7 o'clock in the morning two men started with the sloop-yacht Guenn, of New York, to sail from Watch Hill, Rhode Island, to Stonington, Connecticut, but when a short distance from the Watch Hill Station, (Third District,) strong winds caused them to discontinue their journey. Not having an anchor, they tried to improvise one by tying together three iron rods. These failed to hold on being thrown overboard, and the craft dragged ashore on Napatree Beach, half a mile northwest of the station. The latter was closed for the summer, but the keeper, who was on duty, proceeded immediately to the sloop's assistance and found that the two men had abandoned her. Half an hour later a steamer arrived on the scene and the keeper by means of the vacht's boat ran a hawser, being aided by two surfmen belonging to his regular crew in the active season, who had reached the spot. The steamer pulled the sloop afloat undamaged and towed her to Stonington. It was there learned that she had been stolen a couple of nights before.

November 18, 1888 — The lumber-laden schooner Nellie Eaton, of and from Calais, Maine, bound to Stonington, Connecticut, with a crew of six men, stranded at half past 12 o'clock in the afternoon, on Sturgeon bar, near Napatree Point, to the westward of the Watch Hill Station, (Third District,) coast of Rhode Island. The weather was hazy at the time and those on board were not familiar with the locality. The lookout at once reported the casualty, and the life-saving crew launched the surf-boat and put off to the vessel's assistance. They ran out a kedge, and by utilizing the sails, succeeded after five hours of hard work in heaving her clear, apparently uninjured.

May 29, 1881. – The schooner Julia Elizabeth, of Blue Hill, Maine, with a crew of four men and a cargo of lumber, the night being very dark and a light wind blowing, stranded on Watch Hill Reef at 11:30 P. M. She was discovered the following morning at 5 o'clock by one of the men of Station No. 3, Third District, (Watch Hill, Rhode Island.) The surfman boarded the schooner and found that no immediate assistance was practicable. He then reported to the keeper, who at a later hour boarded her and assisted in removing sails, etc. He also offered shelter to the crew at the station.

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A Message From Our Archivist

What is History? When is History?

Most people have a false tendency to view history as events that happened very long ago. However, is a document from 1890 historic? What about a Westerly related poster from 1977? Or a local photo from 1981? Or a postcard from 1987? Or a logbook from 1994? Or an organization award from 1999? The answer is yes to all of the above.

We at the Westerly Historical Society believe that history does not begin and end on any particular date, and we ask that you join us in viewing your potential donations through the same lens.

Even if an item is "not that old" today, it is critical to bear in mind that it will be one day. For example, a simple receipt from a business that operated in Westerly from 1884 to 1924 and is dated October 27, 1903 may not have seemed historic in, say, the year 1924, but in the year 2024, it may be the only remaining record of a Westerly area business that existed for four decades.

We challenge you, our readers, to reframe how you view the historical value of everyday artifacts. If you have any items that you are unsure have value as a piece of Westerly's history, we ask you to contemplate how important that piece might be to someone fifty or one hundred years from now.

We are happy to discuss any items you might be considering donating to the Society. Remember: history does not have a beginning or an end, and even everyday items can have monumental value in preserving memories of the past.

To inquire about donations of historical artifacts, please contact our archivist, Zachary Garceau at whsarchivist@gmail.com.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US TO PRESERVE WESTERLY HISTORY!

From Our Archives

The following historical artifact was donated to further expand the historical collections of the Westerly Historical Society. As always, we sincerely appreciate all donations!

Railroad Spike From The Sullivan Granite Company Quarry Rail Spur



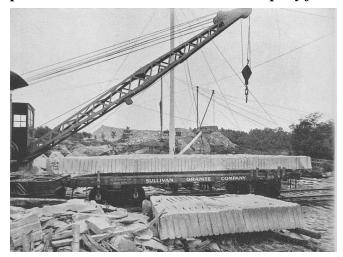
Among our collection is an old and rusted railroad spike that was found buried on property between Woody Hill Road and North Woody Hill Road in Bradford. This property formerly belonged to the Sullivan Granite Company and was part of a railroad spur that led approximately two miles from the main tracks up to the quarry.

According to information on the Babcock Smith House Museum website, the Sullivan Granite Company was founded in 1845 by John B. Sullivan. In

1907, John B. Sullivan & Son purchased the fifty acres of Crumb Quarry in the Bradford section of Westerly. John's son, Frank A. Sullivan moved to Westerly and became general manager of the quarry operation. Future purchases included the Newall and Klondike (formally Gourlay Granite Works) Quarries. By 1919, the company owned about 700 acres and some of the most valuable granite in the nation. Frank was president of Sullivan Granite Company from 1911 to February 1952 when he retired and his son, John F. Sullivan, became president. Sadly, the granite industry was in decline and the company was sold at public auction in 1956.

Rough cut granite was normally transported to the closest railroad or shipping port by large wooden carts pulled by oxen. To save time and ship much larger pieces, the Sullivan Granite Company built a rail spur line directly into the quarry from the main railroad line. The majority of the tracks were removed at some point before the land was sold in 1973. The lone railroad spike remained buried in the ground to mark the spot and tell the story.

The photos below are Sullivan Granite Company flatbed railcars loaded with huge rough cut granite blocks.





What you may see as trash could possibly be a valuable addition to our collections. Please contact us before you toss anything remotely related to Westerly History.

Your Trash Could Be Our Treasure!

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 whspresident@gmail.com

Discovering Westerly Cemeteries

Westerly Cemetery # 026 - The Governor Samuel Ward Lot

By Robert Peacock

There were reportedly 2 burials in this cemetery marked by ornate carved slate headstones and footstones. In addition, there may possibly be unmarked burials in this lot as well. The most recent known burial was in 1774 and the oldest known burial was in 1770.

Included here are the remains of Anna Ward, who was born on September 27th of 1728 and passed away on December 5th of 1770 at the age of 43. She was the wife of Rhode Island Governor Samuel Ward and the daughter of prominent Block Island farmer Simon Ray. Also included here are the remains of Hannah Ward who was born in 1751 and passed on September 8th of 1774 at the age of 24. She was the daughter of Samuel and Anna Ward.

According to the 1878 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", the cemetery was recorded in the late 1860's as "This is north of the shore road on the ancient Ward farm now owned by Albert B Langworthy, Esq, a few rods northwest of the mansion, enclosed by a wall. It contains but a few bodies, and only two inscribed stones,"

The carved and inscribed markers of Anna and Hannah are both made of slate. They both have curved tops and are inscribed with various flower designs along the edges. Anna's appears to also have the face of a female angel with curly hair and wings. Both markers were carved by a local carver, John Stevens III. The two slate markers are inscribed with the following epitaphs. Interestingly, the month on Anna's marker is spelled incorrectly and appears to be a carver error.

In Memory of Mrs. ANNA WARD the Wife of the Hon. SAMUEL WARD Esq. & Daughter of SIMON RAY Esq. She departed this Life Decemr 5 1770 in the 43d Year of her Age.

In Memory of Miss HANNAH WARD Daughter of the Hon. SAMUEL WARD Esq. and ANNA his Wife, died Sept. 8, 1774 in her 24th year.

Governor Samuel Ward, their husband and father, passed shortly after the deaths of Anna and Hannah but is not buried with them in this cemetery. He was stricken with smallpox at the age of 50 while attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and died on March 26th of 1776 just three months before he was planning to participate in the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He was originally buried in a Baptist Cemetery in Pennsylvania, but his remains were later excavated and re-interred in a cemetery in Newport, RI.

The Westerly cemetery is located approximately 400 feet North of Shore Road and 400 feet East of Langworthy Road. It is best accessed from the end of Tranquility Trail. The owner of 6 Tranquility Trail, the Pelletier family, is very welcoming and generously allows parking in their driveway and passage through their side yard. The cemetery is approximately fifteen feet by fifteen feet and is surrounded by a stone wall with a small partial opening in the wall on one side. It lies beneath a canopy of trees in the corner of a heavily wooded lot.

For those using GPS, the cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 20 minutes, and 35.5 seconds North by 71 degrees, 46 minutes, and 11.9 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, the personal knowledge of Cemeteries Commissioner Larry Hunter, and the personal knowledge of the neighboring property owners, the Pelletier's.



One of the two slate markers is inscribed with the following epitaph.

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Daughter of SIMON RAY
Esq. She departed this Life
December 5 1770 in the 43d
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Clearing and Maintaining the Governor Samuel Ward Lot

By Robert Peacock

The Westerly Historical Society has cleared and cleaned Westerly Historical Cemetery #26 at the request of the Pelletier Family who had previously maintained it for many years. Unfortunately, it became too much for them to handle as they reached their golden years. As a result, the relatively small but very important historic cemetery had overgrown significantly and had not been cleared or maintained for several years.

A small group of Westerly Historical Society members, following guidance from Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commissioner Larry Hunter, partnered with a small group of firefighters from the Dunns Corners Fire Department to clear and clean the cemetery.

Using equipment and tools generously provided by the Fire Department including chain saws, hedge trimmers, brush cutters, rakes, axes, and shovels, the group visited the cemetery and was able to quickly cut, clear, and remove the dense briars, thick brush, and fallen tree limbs.

We sincerely appreciate the time and efforts of Tom Gulluscio, Bob Peacock, Cory Jacobsen, Jane Perkins, Becky Jacoinski, Liam Jacobsen, Dylan Harrington, and Larry Hunter.

Below are initial photos of the overgrown cemetery when the group arrived.





The volunteers went to work and made excellent progress!







Within just an hour the results were amazing!

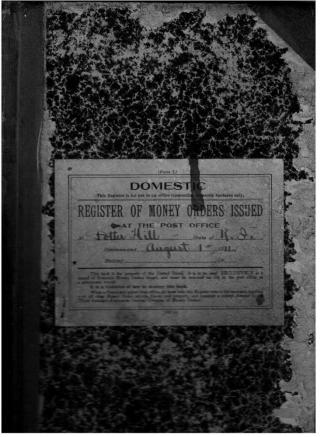




The two women buried here were the wife and the daughter of Governor Samuel Ward, who passed away shortly after their deaths. Governor Ward was stricken with smallpox while attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and died on March 26th of 1776. If not for his unexpected death, this Westerly resident would have been one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The History of Money Orders

By David Smith



Years ago, money orders were the rule when you wanted to buy something from companies such as Sears & Roebucks, the Larkin Company, or to pay for insurance or a magazine subscription. Checks were a bit risky and companies would often request only money orders.

Sending money today might be taken care of with a quick Venmo transaction, but 100 years ago, things were different. Owe a friend in a neighboring town some money, send a money order. It was the same for a variety of transactions that people today simply do electronically.

The United States Postal Service began selling money orders in 1864. "Coins can cut through envelopes, paper currency is subject to theft in the mail, and personal checks offer no guarantees to the payee," according to the National Postal Museum.

"Purchased for the full amount plus a nominal fee from post offices, banks or grocery stores, money orders assure the recipient of payment because the order has been prepaid," according to the museum.

The museum notes that "The purchaser is protected with the receipts and the requirement that the designated payee must show identification when cashing the order." The museum also notes that domestic money orders were popular among Civil War soldiers away from home and they quickly boomed with the immigrant population when the service was extended to foreign money orders in 1869.

So, when a local artifact came to light, I was intrigued by what story it could tell. The item in question is a Register of Money Orders (*Pictured Above*) Issued at the Post Office at Potter Hill, R.I., commencing August 1, 1911. It is signed on the inside cover "C.T. Barber, P.M.".



The post office was located near the defunct Pawcatuck Woolen Mill. The Postmaster, Clifford T. Barber, also sold groceries and meat at his store, which probably catered to a lot of the mill workers. The post office at Potter Hill was established on June 5, 1848 by Oliver Babcock. It had a long run of nearly 106 years, closing on Feb. 28, 1954.

The post office building (*Pictured on Left*) still stands near the Pawcatuck River just past the Potter Hill Bridge on the Westerly side.

Continued on Next Page

The History of Money Orders

By David Smith

(Form			NAME OF REMITTER OF THE ORDER.	(See Instructions, affixe
OF ORDER NUMBO		CONSECUTIVE NUMBER OF THE ORDER	NAME OF REMITTER OF THE ORDER. Give name and surname in full. (Write here the name of the purchaser of the order) 3	NAME OF PAVIE OF THE ORDI Give name and surname in fall. (Writchere the name of person to whom the money is 4
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	1	13	Clarence Church	Salurday Alobe
	1	04	Wow. Ternon Turner	Pritate dife Ins
	2	05	Mrs. Katie O'Look	Billind Doe
	2	06		Mrs. Olive Rice
	3	078	Mary E. andrews	Contest Editor Box.
	5		Chaffer T. Whitely	Frank W. Crandell
	J-	09	John white	Mrs. Jas. Bryns
	٠	11	mrs. S. C. godgrey.	Very Mason Co.
	6	12	W.G. Burdickt	Jan & Northun
	8	/3	mrs. Geo Weller	Lartin les.
	8	14	Clarence & Grandall	Nauto Cempania
	8	15	Mrs. Hersen H Crandell	The Christian As
	8	16	Mrs. 8 & naylor	The Januhold En
	9	17_	ger a. Arlman	Westerly anto Tel Co.
	10	18	Edward Sould	Geo. Cameron
	10	20	Lyman Hamm	Hazel Hamm
	10		D. D. Peckham	Standard mail and
	10	21	Wan Doguen	John Lewis Chila
	12	23	Mr. althous Thompson	Gerry Hame + Cu.
	14	24	Mrs. 1 Pichering	John & Mitchell
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	19	28	mn. Frank & Martin	Fartin 60.
	15	29	Mary Briman	Walter & Bakergo
•	120	34	Mayerice Church	Berti Put Co.
	20	31	Mrs. Frank & Budletone	& Fynn & Cu.
	20	32	Anastana Walsh	agritin Es.
	21	33	Mr. Wing Hair	The Mc Colf Co.
	21	34	Mrs. Thos. Drope	Gimbel Oras.
		36	John White	John Gennes
	24	06	Desetor Freets	Dean Rangel &

A few of the recurring payments went to Sears & Roebuck; National Cloak & Suit Co.; Larkin Company; Clement Company; Advent Christian Publishing; Saturday Globe Company; Boston American; Puritan Life Insurance; G.H. Baker & Company; The Call Publishing Company; Peerless Watch; Grit Publishing; Farm & Fireside; Montgomery Ward, and McCall Publishing Company.

Nearly half of the entries are money orders sent to individuals. And not all of them are long distance. On. Aug. 4, 1911, Mrs. James E. Pendleton sent a \$3 money order to Henry L. Burdick of Westerly. The fee for the order was 8 cents. On Oct. 31, 1911, John White sent a \$5.10 money order to Alex Marr of Westerly at the same cost of 8 cents.

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And not all of the money orders were from individuals. On Aug. 31, 1911, the Pawcatuck Woolen Mill sent H. J. Gardiner of Kenyon a money order for \$6.40.

The book records that the total amount of money orders per month averaged about \$200, with the exception of December when it creeped up to around \$300. One exception is the month of May in 1912. That month a total of \$347 in money orders was sold, garnering the post office a whopping \$3.92 income from fees.

Avis Beckwith sent \$32.75 to E. H. Christman of Norwich, paying a fee of 15 cents. A. R. Harrington sent \$35.42 to the Puritan Life Insurance Co., in Providence for a fee of 15 cents. George Holman on July 4, 1911, sent \$35.62 to the Essex Fertilizer Company in Boston.

Nearly 95 percent of the money orders are below \$10. The largest money orders were for \$50 and \$40. They were both sent to insurance companies.

To anyone who grew up in the area, the surnames are familiar and the places they were sending their hardearned money are also familiar to people of a certain age Some of the common surnames include; Kenney, Thompson, Hines, Ainsworth, Crandall, Church, Saunders, Thorp, Austin, Murray, O'Toole, Perrin, Lowe, Daley, Pendleton and Bernard.

All Photos Provided by the Author

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

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