



# Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

May 2025

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## Program Notes

### REMINDER

The Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting and Dinner will be held on Wednesday evening, May 28<sup>th</sup>, starting at 5:30 PM at the Haversham Banquet Hall. Cocktails will be at 5:30. Dinner will be served at 6:00. Meeting will be starting at 6:30. Please email your request to Bob Boucher at [treasurerwesterlyhistorical@gmail.com](mailto:treasurerwesterlyhistorical@gmail.com) prior to May 20<sup>th</sup> to reserve your tickets. The ticket price is \$40 and the Westerly Historical Society will be subsidizing the remaining portion of the costs.

### GRAND WATCH HILL HOTELS

Please join us in July for our annual joint summer program with the Watch Hill Conservancy. The program topic will be the Grand Watch Hill Hotels and will be presented by Jack Spratt. Please join us on Wednesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 5:30 PM at the Watch Hill Livery at One Bay Street Center.

### SEEKING SPEAKERS AND WRITERS

We are still seeking speakers to present programs for the society as well as to write articles for our newsletters. If you know anyone who is familiar with a local history topic and enjoys talking or writing about their passion, please let us know.

### TRIVIA QUESTION

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

There are two military veterans that are buried in the Riverbend Cemetery who were recipients of the Medal of Honor for their actions during the Civil War.

Who were they? The answer is on the next page!

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## WESTERLY'S WITNESS

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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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Find us on Facebook

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

## President's Corner

*Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.*

Hello friends!

Welcome to the May issue of our Westerly's  
Witness. I sincerely hope many of you are  
planning on joining us for our Annual Meeting  
and Dinner on May 28th at the Haversham.

This event continues to be a highlight for me  
every year as it allows me to visit with each of  
you, our valued members, and get to see how  
you think we are doing as your society.

I also cherish the opportunity to show off your  
exceptional board of directors and the amazing  
work that they do to ensure that the Westerly  
Historical Society maintains its high standards  
in fulfilling our mission.

Dinner tickets are available on our website or  
via email through Bob Boucher, our treasurer.

Be sure to get your tickets soon and plan on a  
great evening with friends learning about what  
we have been up to and what we have planned  
for the immediate future!

Be well,

Tom 😊

## EDITOR'S NOTES

*Robert Peacock*

*Thank you to Judith Crandall Harbold for  
providing information on the Crandall Family  
for the Lighthouse Keepers article.*

*Thank you to Jane Perkins for contributing an  
article on the Bradford Military Plane Crash.*

*As always, we welcome guest authors to contribute  
articles for inclusion in the monthly newsletter!*

**TRIVIA ANSWER** – James Barber and David Naylor  
served in the Army during the Civil War and both received  
the Medal of Honor for their actions during battle.

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## Husband and Wife Lighthouse Keepers in Watch Hill

Excerpts Based on the December 2023 “*Rhode Island Roots*” Article by Judith Crandall Harbold

*Published with permission of the Rhode Island Genealogical Society.*

### Lighthouse Keeper Jared Crandall

1868 through 1879

Jared Crandall was born in Charlestown in 1822. At the age of 22, he joined the crew of the whaling ship *America II* and sailed to the North Pacific in December of 1844. The whaling ship was very successful and returned almost three years later in June of 1847.

A year later, he sailed off again on the whaling ship *Prudent*. When he returned home two years later in 1850. He married Sally Gavitt of Westerly when he was 28 and she was 23. His wife then accompanied him on his third voyage of three years starting in 1853 on the ship *Newburyport* and serving as First Mate.

While near the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), Jared was promoted by the ship owner to the position of Captain after the original Captain died while the ship was at sea.

Jared and Sally’s first son was born on the ship in 1854 while it was at sea. After three years at sea, they returned to Westerly in early 1856.

His fourth voyage, as the Captain of the *Newburyport*, and with Sally and son onboard, lasted from August of 1856 to April of 1859. His first daughter was born on this trip in Hawaii during a port call.

Upon returning home, they remained in Westerly for four years and had three more daughters before he left his family for his fifth and final voyage on the ship *Coral* in November of 1863. He returned to Westerly in May of 1867 and retired from whaling.

Captain Crandall was appointed as the Watch Hill Lighthouse Keeper in 1868. He moved into the Keeper’s Residence with his wife, his son, and his now six daughters as well as his 81year old mother. He was the Lighthouse Keeper for eleven years before dying of pneumonia on April 2 of 1879 at the age of 57.

### Lighthouse Keeper Sally Crandall

1879 through 1888

When Watch Hill Lighthouse Keeper Jared Crandall died of pneumonia in April of 1879 at the age of 57 after eleven years of service, his wife, Sally Crandall, who was 51 years old, assumed the duties of the Lighthouse Keeper. She was then formally appointed as the Watch Hill Lighthouse Keeper in late 1879.

Sally was known as a tough and resourceful woman. She had travelled the high seas on years long whaling voyages with her husband, she had endured the hardships of life at sea while pregnant with her first son and with her first daughter, and she had even given birth to her son while sailing on the high seas.

Surprisingly, it was not very uncommon for a female to serve as a lighthouse keeper. There were reportedly 15 female Lighthouse Keepers in the Third District in 1880.

In 1881, Sally was being paid \$500 annually plus the use of the Keepers Residence. She was also provided with a sufficient supply of oil for the lamps and coal for the stoves. She lived there with her six daughters and mother-in-law. In addition, her son Jared would also visit and stay there from time to time.

A newspaper article noted that Sally, known to many as “Aunt Sally”, was one of the most popular Lighthouse Keepers on the coast.

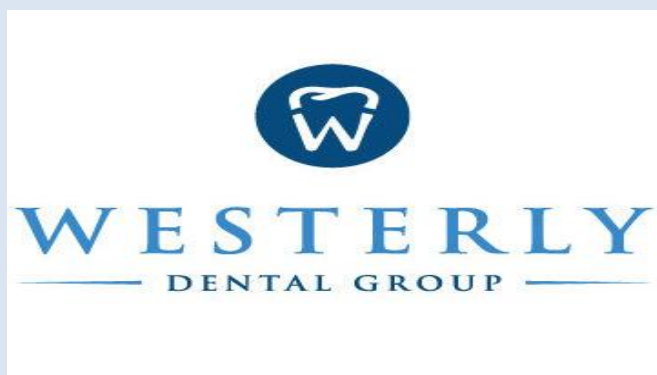
Sally resigned in 1888, at the age of 60, citing health issues after 20 years living and working at the Watch Hill Lighthouse including eleven years with her husband serving the Lighthouse Keeper and nine years of her own service as the Lighthouse Keeper.

She moved back to the family home on Elm Street and later moved to a rented home on Beach Street. She passed away 16 years later in 1904 at the age of 76.

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**Announcements**

**New Executive Board Members**

As we announced last month, please welcome our two most recent additions to the Executive Board of the Westerly Historical Society.

Paul Gingerella and Mary Jo Girard both have very deep family ties to our community, and both exhibit a strong passion for protecting and preserving history.

They have volunteered to join us and assist in our mission to research, study, and preserve the local history in our community

We are honored to have them both joining us and we look forward to working with them!

***Welcome Mary Jo and Paul!***

**Mary Jo (Azzinaro) Girard** is a third-generation Westerly resident, having experienced all that makes Westerly a cherished place. Her childhood was seeped in southern Italian traditions and the beaches provided her with a lifetime of memories. Countless hours were spent at the Westerly Library and the Wilcox Park or by simply riding around on a Ray Willis bicycle.

It was historical postcards of the area that inspired her at an early age to learn more about Westerly's people and buildings. Mary Jo and her husband Nelson are happy to have passed along similar Westerly related experiences to their children.

**Paul Gingerella** was born and raised in Westerly, where he has spent much of his life serving the community. With over 20 years as a police officer at the Westerly Police Department, Paul has risen to the rank of Police Chief.

Paul's roots in Westerly run deep, with a rich family history that has shaped his connection to the town. His maternal grandparents, John Liguori and Nancy (Azzinaro), along with his great uncles, owned and operated the beloved local establishment, Paddy's Wigwam (Paddy's), until the mid-1980s. On his paternal side, his grandparents owned The Crossroads restaurant in Dunn's Corners. Many in his extended family continue to call Westerly their home.

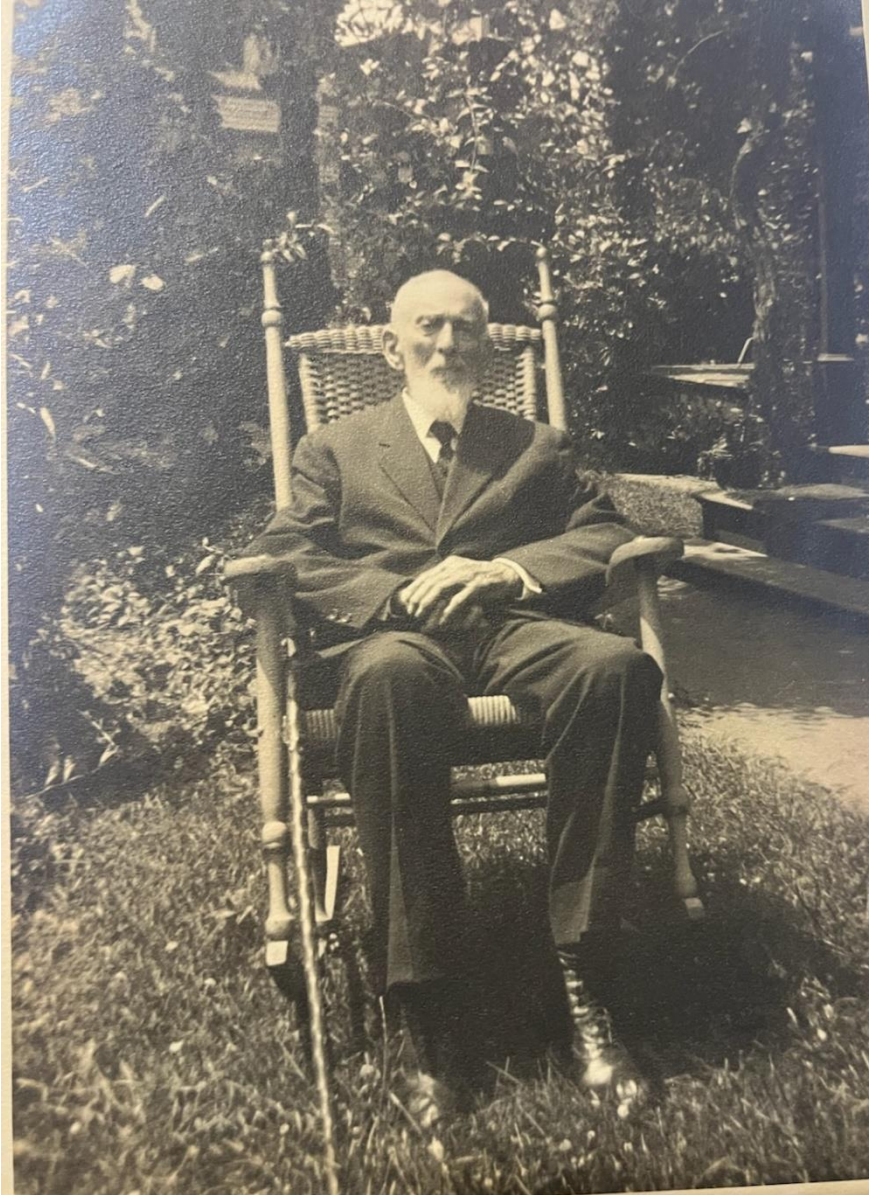
Paul resides in Westerly with his wife and children. His parents, Ann Liguori and George and Jane Gingerella, are also proud members of the community.



## 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!

### Photo of Horace Swan



This photograph was a small item in a large collection of relatively random family history that was recently donated by the Kitchen family.

The photograph was taken at some point after 1930 and shows Horace Swan in the yard of his Westerly home.

At the time of the photograph, Mr. Swan was over 90 years old.

He was a Civil War Veteran having served in 1861 at the age of 24 and was married to Sarah Greene. They had three sons and three daughters. His wife passed away in 1912.

Born on June 27<sup>th</sup> of 1837, Horace passed on July 1st of 1935 at the age of 98. He is buried in Riverbend Cemetery in Lot 242 of Section 4.

*Imagine the things he must have seen and experienced in his 98 years!!!*

**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.**

**Remember - Your Trash Could Be Our Treasure!**

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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](mailto:whspresident@gmail.com) or our Archivist, Zachary Garceau, at [whsarchivist@gmail.com](mailto:whsarchivist@gmail.com)

# **Discovering Westerly Cemeteries**

## **Westerly Cemetery # 044 - The Thomas Ray Ground**

*By Robert Peacock*

There were at least 3 known burials in this cemetery. These are all marked by fieldstones markers in the form of both headstones and footstones. In addition, several other individuals are believed to have been buried here as well. The most recent burial was prior to 1860 and the oldest burial is unknown.

According to the records of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission, the cemetery includes the remains of Thomas Ray, his wife Sarah Ray, and their son Gideon Ray, as well as several other unknown people. Thomas served in the Revolutionary War.

According to the 1878 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", the cemetery was recorded in the 1860's as being "located between the Post Road and the Shore Road, near three fourths of a mile south of the residence of Mr. Nathan Chase, on the old Ray estate, near thirty rods southwest of the Ray House." (Authors Note – A rod is sixteen and a half feet. A distance of thirty rods is approximately 495 feet).

Denison noted that the cemetery "contains the remains of Thomas Ray and his wife Sarah, and their son Gideon and others". Denison also noted that "This belongs to a colored family of excellent repute" and noted that the "name of the locality of the Ray family, in this town, was commonly referred to as Guinea Hollow, in honor of the ancestral home country of the mother of the family."

In the book, Denison documented that "Thomas lived to be very aged and saw four generations of his descendants." Included in these four generations was his grandson, Reverend Charles Ray, who Denison reported "has been an able Methodist minister in New York." He further documented that "Gideon Ray was drowned at the beach at Worden's Pond".

Denison also noted "that the mother of Thomas Ray came from Guinea and was landed on Block Island from the famous ship Palatine. Falling into the hands of Col. Ray Sands, of BI, she obtained the name Ray which was accepted by her children."

The cemetery is located on the West side of Rock Ridge Road, close to the Shore Road end, near the Doctor Lewis Pond, in a small wooded triangular parcel, just to the left of the packed gravel road leading to Numbers 2, 4, 8, 10, and 12 Rock Ridge Road.

The cemetery is untended, covered by a deep layer of leaves and brush, and barely visible from the road. It appears to have at least three sets of unmarked fieldstones serving as headstones and footstones as well as at least four additional unmarked fieldstones. Access to the cemetery is just to the left of the green multiple number address sign.

For those using GPS, the cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 20 minutes, and 27.0 seconds North by 71 degrees, 47 minutes, and 11.5 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 information from the current owners of the neighboring property.*





*The cemetery is located on the West side of Rock Ridge Road, in a small wooded triangular parcel, just to the left of the packed gravel road leading to Numbers 2, 4, 8, 10, and 12 Rock Ridge Road. Access to the cemetery is just to the left of the green address sign.*

### ***The Legend of the Palatine***

According to a book by Jill Farinelli, the story or the myth or the legend of the Palatine, reveals that just after Christmas in 1738, a British merchant ship grounded in a blizzard on the northern tip of Block Island. The ship was carrying immigrants from the Palatinate and neighboring territories in what is now part of Germany. The 105 passengers and crew on board, all freezing, sick, starving, and dying, were all that remained of the 340 men, women, and children who had left their homeland for the New World the previous spring. They were now castaways, literally on the verge of death, and at the mercy of strangers whose language they did not understand.

Over the years, many of the facts were forgotten and two versions of the event emerged. In one account, the crew murdered the captain, extorted money from the passengers by prolonging the voyage and withholding food, then abandoned ship causing the grounding. In the other version, the islanders lured the ship ashore with a false signal light, then killed and robbed many of the passengers. These tales became known as the legend of the Palatine, the name given to the ship in later years, when its original name (either the Princess Augustus or the Countess Augustus) had been long ignored or forgotten.





*The cemetery is covered with a dense layer of leaves and duff but the fieldstones are easily visible. On the right in the matching photos above and below are two headstones and on the left in the matching photos above and below is a headstone and a footstone. The below photos have the stones circled to allow for easier visualization.*







*Above are two sets of unmarked fieldstones used as headstones and footstones. The set on the right side of the photo are lined up vertically and the set on the left side of the photo are slightly angled to the left. The same photo is below with the unmarked fieldstones circled to better visualize the location and layout of the gravestones.*





# Military Plane Crash in Bradford During World War II

By Jane Perkins

The following information is excerpted from an article on [www.newenglandaviationhistory.com](http://www.newenglandaviationhistory.com)

Far removed from the world war activity overseas, Westerly still witnessed a wide variety of military aircraft accidents and incidents during World War II. Most of these were the result of training exercises originating at the Charlestown Navy Auxiliary Airfield. A notable example occurred in March of 1945.

On March 9, 1945, a navy SNJ-5, "Texan" trainer plane took off from the Charlestown Navy Auxiliary Airfield for a training flight over southern Rhode Island with two men aboard. The pilot was Lieutenant Junior Grade William Edward Stakely.

More important to this story... flying with him was **Lieutenant Junior Grade Howard Gilmore Boren, Jr.**



Photo of a Navy SNJ-5 "Texan" Trainer Plane from [www.newenglandaviationhistory.com](http://www.newenglandaviationhistory.com)

While most pilots at the airfield were young and inexperienced, Boren had already served overseas and had received the Navy Cross for his heroic actions. He had flown and survived multiple combat missions and he had even flown missions with a young, but now very well known pilot, Lieutenant Junior Grade George H.W. Bush.

But back to the local connection. According to the official navy accident report, the purpose of the flight was to instruct in pilot recoveries on instruments from stalls, spins, and unusual positions.

As the aircraft was going through a series of aerial maneuvers over the Bradford section of Westerly, ground observers looked up to see the aircraft spinning violently towards the ground as a "detached portion" of the aircraft could be seen "fluttering" after it. The aircraft dove into the ground and exploded. Unfortunately, neither man was able to bail out and both were killed in the crash.

The "detached portion" that fell away was found to be the left wing of the aircraft which was recovered in a wooded area about three-quarters of a mile from the crash site. An excerpt from the official U. S. Navy report reads: "A close examination of the left wing showed it to be completely crumpled. It was curled up and twisted from the leading edge of the wing tip diagonally aft and inboard toward the wing root."

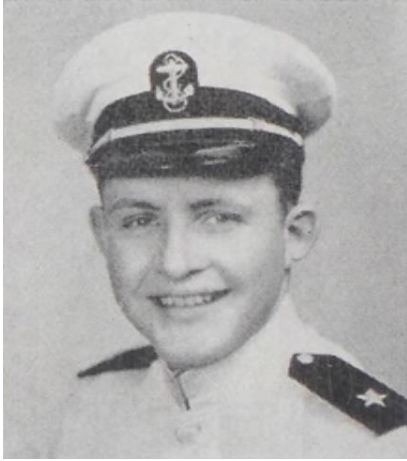
It was believed the wing structure failed due to stresses placed upon it during the routine aerial maneuvers and the report indicated that the accident was not the fault of the pilot.

**Continued on Next Page**



# Military Plane Crashes in Westerly During World War II

*By Jane Perkins*



**The photo on the left is from the United States Naval Air Training Center in Pensacola taken in 1943, the photo in the middle is presumed to have been taken overseas in 1944, and the photo on the right is from the Naval Cross Citation and was taken in 1945. The young man certainly seemed to have aged during his two years of Military Service during the war. Photos from [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)**

Lieutenant Boren was a young but highly experienced combat veteran and had been the recipient of the Navy Cross for his heroic actions in battle. As a pilot in the United States Naval Air Service, serving as a Torpedo Bomber Pilot assigned to Task Force 58, Boren was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions in October of 1944 during a battle against Japanese forces.

The citation reads “The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Lieutenant, Junior Grade Howard Gilmore Boren, Jr. (NSN: 0-278525), United States Naval Reserve, for extraordinary heroism in operations against the enemy while serving as Pilot of a carrier-based Navy Torpedo Plane of Torpedo Squadron FIFTY-ONE (VT-51), attached to the U.S.S. SAN JACINTO (CVL-30), during the attacks by United States Naval Forces against a large Japanese Task Force of surface ships in the vicinity of the Philippine Islands on 25 October 1944.”

The citation further notes that “During his final approach to launch his torpedo on an enemy carrier, Lieutenant, Junior Grade Boren received a direct hit from intense enemy anti-aircraft fire which entirely removed his plane's port stabilizer and elevator and riddled its rudder and fin. This hit momentarily caused the loss of control of his plane, but by unusual calmness and skill he regained control of his plane, made a 360 degree turn within the enemy screen, and launched his attack on an enemy destroyer, obtaining a hit and severely damaging and probably sinking it. By continued good judgment, determination and great skill he successfully brought his plane back safely to base. His courage and skill were at all times in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”



**Howard Gilmore Boren, Jr. was born on May 17th of 1921 in Youngstown, Ohio.**

**Attaining the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade as a Naval Aviator, he survived multiple combat missions in 1944.**

**Safely returning stateside from the war, he then died on a training mission on March 9th of 1945 in Bradford at the young age of only 23.**

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