



# Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

June 2025

## Westerly Historical Society Executive Board 2024-2025

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## Program Notes

### THANK YOU

The Westerly Historical Society would like to extend our appreciation to all of our members who attended the Annual Meeting. Please see the full summary on page 11.

### CONGRATULATIONS

The Westerly Historical Society would like to congratulate the annual award winners. Please see the full details on page 10.

### FASHIONABLE SEASIDE HOTELS

Please join us next month for our joint summer program with the Watch Hill Conservancy. The topic will be "The Fashionable Seaside Resort Hotels from Watch Hill to New London, Part 1, 1800 to 1885". The program will be presented by Jack Spratt. Please join us on Wednesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 6:00 PM at the Watch Hill Livery at One Bay Street Center.

### SEEKING SPEAKERS AND WRITERS

We are always seeking speakers and writers to present programs for the society and to write articles for our newsletters. If you are familiar with a local history topic and enjoy talking or writing about your passion, please let us know.

### TRIVIA QUESTION

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

Which former member of the Westerly High School baseball team participated in the 1962 Major League Baseball All-Star Game?

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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## President's Corner

*Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.*

Hello all,

If you were lucky enough to have joined us last  
Wednesday at The Haversham for our annual meeting  
and dinner you know what an exceptional time it was.

It's always a great pleasure to see our dedicated  
members turn out to support your society and to help  
us celebrate our achievements and plan for our future!

Many thanks to Alan Angelo, this year's recipient of  
the history award, co-sponsored by the Westerly  
Historical Society and the Babcock-Smith House  
Museum. Alan was a great sport and graciously  
accepted the award and the invitation to share his  
experiences with our guests.

We also filled the audience in with the progress of our  
oral history project "Reflections" and we treated all  
with a teaser of the most recent episode of John Hall.

I would like to thank my esteemed board members  
who thought enough of my efforts and contributions to  
award me with the Julia award. I am humbled that you  
selected me. I am sincerely honored to serve in this  
noble mission with each and everyone of you!

Enjoy your well-deserved summer break and I'll see  
you in September....well, maybe I'll see some of you  
at our July 2nd program before the summer break.

Have a Happy and Safe Summer!

Take Care!

Tom

## EDITOR'S NOTES

*Robert Peacock*

***Thank you to Zack Garceau and Mary Jo  
Girard for contributing articles this month.***

***As always, we welcome guest authors to  
contribute articles, and we enjoy including  
them in the monthly newsletter!***

**TRIVIA ANSWER – Westerly High School  
student Dave Stenhouse played in the 1962  
Major League Baseball All-Star Game.**

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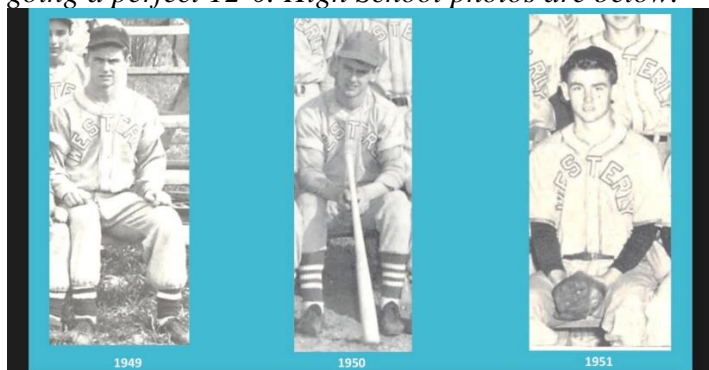
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# David Rotchford Stenhouse

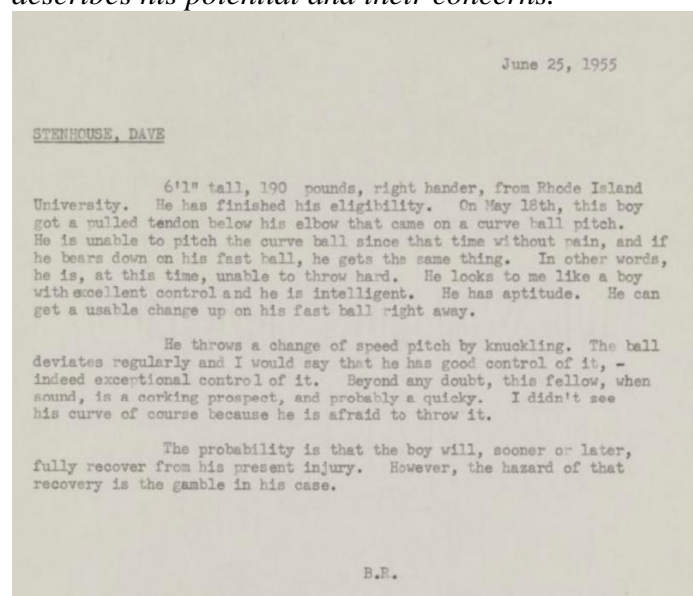
By Zachary Garceau

David Rotchford Stenhouse was born on September 12th of 1933 to Clarence and Mary Stenhouse. Dave attended Westerly High School from 1947 to 1951 and played three seasons of baseball, three seasons of basketball, and one season of football. During his baseball career at WHS, the team went 32-12. Dave was Captain of the Baseball team in the 1950-1951 season and the team won the state championship, going a perfect 12-0. High School photos are below.



After high school, Dave attended the University of Rhode Island where he played sports for four years. While at URI, Dave played semi-professional baseball in Canada in the summers of 1952, 1953, and 1954.

In 1955, baseball scouts were interested in Dave and on June 30 of 1955, Dave signed with the Chicago Cubs. He had also received offers from the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Milwaukee Braves but ultimately chose the Cubs citing better opportunities with the team. The June 25th, 1955 scouting report below describes his potential and their concerns.



Dave played for several minor league teams including the Burlington Iowa Bees, the Lafayette Louisiana Oilers, Des Moines Iowa Demons, Pueblo Colorado Bruins, Fort Worth Texas Cats, Seattle Washington Rainiers, Dominican Republic Estrella Orientales, and Jersey City Jerseys. In 1961, he was traded to the major league Washington Senators and in his first start as a pitcher he pitched against the Yankees including Roger Maris who hit two doubles and Mickey Mantle who hit a home run.

While with the Pueblo Bruins, Dave took the mound in Topeka Kansas and pitched a no hitter and near perfect game. He struck out eleven batters, walked only one, and a single batter got on base but was immediately removed by a double play.

In 1961, he was traded to the Washington Senators and pitched against the Yankees including Roger Maris who hit two doubles and Mickey Mantle who hit a home run.

On August 6th of 1962, The Senators visited Fenway Park where it was declared "Dave Stenhouse Day". More than one thousand Westerly residents attended to celebrate their hometown hero. He received several gifts including a chair from URI, honorary membership in the Westerly Fire Department, a silver cup from the Governor of Rhode Island, and a proclamation from the Westerly Town Council.

In 1962, Dave was named the starting pitcher for the American League All-Star Game.

After a few seasons with the Senators, injuries forced him back to the minor leagues where he played for the York White Roses and the Hawaii Islanders.

Dave retired from pitching and baseball in 1967. He took a position as a supervisor and special agent of the Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company.

In 1968 he was named the Varsity Baseball Coach at Rhode Island College. In 1979, he led the team to the American College World Series, making them the first team in Rhode Island to play in the tournament. In 1981, he became the Coach of the Brown University Baseball team and remained there for over a decade.

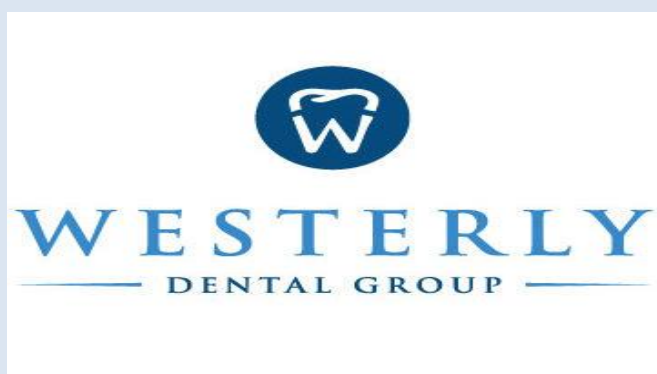
Dave died on November 11th of 2023 at the age of 90.



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**Announcements**

**BABCOCK SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM  
HOSTS SPECIAL SPORTS DISPLAY**

The Babcock-Smith House Museum, established in 1972, is a volunteer-run organization featuring a 1734 Georgian mansion, granite exhibit, store, extensive granite records, and local history books for researchers.

Their June hours are Saturdays from 2 to 5 PM with a guided tour at 3 PM. The museum is well equipped with informational placards and visitors are encouraged to enjoy self-guided tours at any point between 2 and 5 PM.

Their July, August, and September hours are Thursday through Sundays from 2 to 5 PM with guided tours at 10 AM on Thursdays and 3 PM on Saturdays. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy self-guided tours at any point between 2 and 5 PM. Please note they are closed on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

As noted above, self-paced and self-guided tours are available at any time when the museum is open and guided tours are available on Thursdays at 10 AM and Saturdays at 3 PM. Other guided tour times may be available by special request and are based on volunteer staff availability.

Within the museum, the Issac G. Smith Memorial Room hosts a rotating display each summer. This summer, the Westerly Historical Society has been given the honor of displaying an exhibit on “The History of Sports in Westerly”.

Our exhibit includes a wide variety of artifacts including vintage sports trading cards, uniforms and equipment from the early 1900’s, and various sports memorabilia.

We encourage our members to visit and learn more about the Babcock Smith House Museum and the Sports Collections of the Westerly Historical Society.

*For more information, please visit their website at [www.babcocksmithhousemuseum.org](http://www.babcocksmithhousemuseum.org) or call them at 401-596-5704.*

## From Our Archives

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

### David Rotchford Stenhouse Baseball Cards

*David Rotchford Stenhouse was born on September 12th of 1933 to Clarence and Mary Stenhouse in Westerly. He attended Westerly High School from 1947 to 1951 and played three seasons of baseball. During his baseball career at Westerly, the team went 32-12. He played for several minor league teams and affiliates before being traded to the major league team, the Washington Senators. After retirement from baseball, Dave coached at Rhode Island College and Brown University. Dave died on November 11th of 2023 at the age of 90.*

*The baseball cards pictured below are in the collections of the Westerly Historical Society.*



These baseball cards depict Dave Stenhouse while playing for the Washington Senators.

Please remember to consider us when disposing of old documents, photos, and artifacts.

We would love to add it to our expanding collection to be preserved for future generations.

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

# **Discovering Westerly Cemeteries**

## **Westerly Cemetery # 040 – Andrew Freebody Ground**

*By Robert Peacock*

There were reportedly at least twenty ancient burials in this cemetery which is approximately fifty feet by fifty feet and contains only a few fieldstone grave markers and only one inscribed headstone marker. The most recent burial was prior to 1860 and the oldest burial is unknown.

Although records do not indicate the burial dates for any of the people interred here, the information documented by Frederic Denison in the 1860's, indicates that the remains of the following individuals are buried here: Andrew Freebody and Nathan Babcock. Andrew, along with his sister Sally, previously owned the farm where the burial site is located. The property was later sold to Oliver Davis. Nathan was the son of Captain Nathan Babcock. Local resident Sharon Perkins reports that local lore indicates that James Babcock is the third person buried under the third set of the marker stones.

The cemetery is located approximately twenty feet off the road on the left side of the driveway leading to 13 Gershwin Road in Shelter Harbor. It is unenclosed and is on a hill below a large rocky outcropping. The cemetery is very well tended by the property owners. There are three sets of visible grave markers including both headstones and footstones. One headstone is inscribed but it is very difficult to decipher. The set of headstones and footstones appears to be that of a young child due to the very short distance between the headstone and the footstone.

The remaining fieldstone markers are not visible. They may have sunken completely into the ground or they may have been removed over the past few hundred years. However, many of the marker stones may be hiding just a few inches below the surface.

According to the 1878 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", the cemetery was recorded in 1860's with the notation: "This is a sadly neglected burying ground, on the farm of Oliver Davis, Esq. in the southeast corner of the town, some eighty rods southeast of Mr. D's residence, in a pasture, near a grove. It is without enclosure, and only one stone gives evidence of having been inscribed. On this the letters have been nearly obliterated by the erasions of time. We can only read, Nathan Babcock (son of Capt. Nathan Babcock)".

Located in Westerly along the Charlestown line, Shelter Harbor was later developed from farmland and became a 19th-century summer colony for musicians. The neighborhood now has many homes ranging from cozy cottages to grand mansions situated along narrow rustic lanes named for famous composers such as Hayden, Brahms, Grieg, Wagner, and Donizetti. Shelter Harbor is home to both year-round and summer residents. It is situated on the shores of Quonochontaug Pond and overlooks a pristine, undeveloped barrier beach along the Atlantic Ocean.

For those using GPS, the cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 20 minutes, and 40.7 seconds North by 71 degrees, 43 minutes, and 54.4 seconds West. This cemetery is not marked by a Historical Cemetery sign at the request of the property owner. Please note that this cemetery is on private property but is visible from the road.

*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 local resident Sharon Perkins.*





*The cemetery is very well tended by the property owners. There are three sets of visible grave markers including both headstones and footstones. One set of headstones and footstones may be that of a young child due to the short distance between the headstone and the footstone. The remaining fieldstone markers are no longer visible. They may have sunken below the surface.*





*According to the 1868 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", the cemetery was recorded in 1860's with the notation: "It is without enclosure, and only one stone gives evidence of having been inscribed. On this the letters have been nearly obliterated by the erasions of time. We can only read, Nathan Babcock (son of Capt. Nathan Babcock)"*

*The cemetery is located approximately twenty feet off the road on the left side of the driveway leading to 13 Gershwin Road in Shelter Harbor. It is unenclosed and is on a slight hill below a large rocky outcropping.*

*The cemetery location is outlined on the map above in blue.*

*Please note that this cemetery is on private property, but it is clearly visible from the road.*



# Cemetery Field Trip!

By Mary Jo Girard

Remember in school when it was announced that there was going to be a *Field Trip*? Excitement would build as the day of a new adventure arrived! That's how I feel when The Westerly Historical Society Newsletter arrives, particularly in reading Bob Peacock's "Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries". The recent article on Westerly Cemetery #028, the Daniel Peckham Lot, in the March 2025 Newsletter, piqued my interest. I asked the family, "*Anyone want to go on a field trip?*" My sister and my cousin enthusiastically signed on.

Off we went on a gloomy, raw day to Laudone Drive in Bradford. I was looking to my left for a cemetery, but I first spotted a small marker, on the right, which is the burial site of Captain Cornelius Stetson, a Revolutionary War Veteran, and the unmarked grave of his wife Rachel. (*Read more in the October 2023 Newsletter*). This was an amazing fact to my tripmates, that here, so close, were the remains of an actual Revolutionary War participant. History comes alive in moments like that!

It was then I glanced up through the pines on the hill across the street and spied what I was looking for: the monument for Daniel B. Peckham. It is very impressive in size (over 10 feet). I was particularly interested in the top pediment: an urn partially covered in a blanket. Bob had included a photo in his article, and I wanted to see if there was a clue as to why this was the decided-upon design. The carving is exquisite, and I wondered if it might be an indication of membership to an organization. Subsequent investigation revealed that this is actually a very common Victorian era burial theme, representing the veil between life and death. How have I not noticed this design before on other monuments? I will be on the lookout for more local examples! I commented that, in 1861, the Peckham family could not have fathomed, that in the year 2025, their loved one's memorial would be the topic of discussion by the "new" Town inhabitants. A clear indication of the important work that the Westerly Historical Society does. With that, we paid our respects and moved to the next stop.

In a previous Newsletter, Bob had recounted the story of the DeFanti marker located in Westerly Cemetery #21, the James Peckham Cemetery. Whereas the burials here date from the mid to late 1880's, the marker for Rose Margaret Defanti, Infant Daughter, is dated 1928. It is unique compared to all the other markers in its size, shape and condition, which really makes it stand out. Standing there, one can't help but sympathize with this little infant and her family's pain, and what precipitated the placement of the marker many years later. (*Read more in the October 2024 Newsletter*). The common comment, as we stood there, was how often we had driven on Route 216 and never noticed this cemetery. There was gratitude for those who work to maintain these historic grounds. At this point, my tripmates did not want to end the Field Trip. To finish out the theme of the day, we headed over to the Gardiner-Green Lot (HP #046).

Technically in Hopkinton, we used the Grills Preserve Land Trust trailhead located on Bradford Rd (Route 91), just north of the canoe launch. When I had walked in these woods, this cemetery was a surprise find on the trail, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. It is a beautifully stone walled cemetery, with rough-hewn granite pillars marking the entrance. These burials date from 1842-1876, with one in 1919. The comments here were why it was located so far away from everything. This may have been more like farmland at one time, with no large trees (there is a stone foundation ruin on the property) or had been a more bustling area due to the proximity of the river. In an interesting coincidence, if I looked to the west, and if there were no trees, I'd have a clear view towards a house that my daughter now lives in. Perched on a hill on Route 216, it is a cape style house with a massive center stone fireplace built in 1795. Could long ago inhabitants of that house have peered toward the Gardiner-Greene lot, looking for comfort at the plot where their loved one lay buried? I'd have to do some research as to who built the cape...the makings of another field trip!

# Annual Awards

*By Robert Peacock*



## WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM ANNUAL HISTORY AWARD

The Annual History Award of \$500.00 is given to a person who furthers the mission of researching, studying, and/or preserving local history in our community. Secondary consideration is given to someone who exhibits a passion for history unrelated to the local community. The award is sponsored jointly by the Westerly Historical Society and the Babcock-Smith House Museum. The winner is selected by a joint committee which reviews and evaluates nominations submitted by local residents.

### The 2025 Annual History Award was presented to Alan Angelo.

Alan Angelo is a retired history teacher. He has assisted the Babcock Smith House Museum locate hundreds of Westerly granite monuments throughout the country including Maine, Philadelphia, New York, and Pennsylvania. Al is very active with the Charlestown Historical Society and works extensively in documenting, clearing, and maintaining historic cemeteries. John and Brenda Linton nominated him for this annual award and particularly cited that “Al Angelo has greatly contributed and continues to contribute to our local history research, study, and preservation.” The selection committee agreed and chose him unanimously.



## WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY JULIA AWARD

The Julia Award which is selected by consensus of the members of the Westerly Historical Society Executive Board. The award is presented in honor of Julia Smith, daughter of Orlando Smith, who founded the Westerly Historical Society in 1913. The award is bestowed annually on an individual who has made a major contribution to the preservation of Westerly's history.

### The 2025 Julia Award was presented to Thomas Gulluscio.

Tom has served for more than a decade as President of the Westerly Historical Society. He is always willing to donate his time and efforts and is continually engaging with the community. He was selected by the Executive Board, without his knowledge, based on his extensive and unwavering commitment to preserving the history of Westerly. Tom is very well known in the community and well versed in all aspects of Westerly history. The Executive Board sincerely appreciates his passion and dedication and chose him unanimously for this prestigious award.

# Annual Meeting Highlights

*By Robert Peacock*

The Westerly Historical Society held its annual meeting on May 28th at the Haversham Banquet Hall where approximately forty members and guests gathered to enjoy a delicious buffet dinner followed by a brief business meeting and presentations of the Annual History Award and the Julia Award.

President Tom Gulluscio hosted and presented a slideshow highlighting our organization's achievements during the past year. Highlights of his presentation include the following information:

## **Archivist Zachary Garceau:**

- ☞ Over the last year, we made several facilities and storage improvements including upgrades to the archival materials storing our most sensitive items and reorganizing our vault to maximize space.
- ☞ We have continued our work to make records of all items in our collection available on our website.
- ☞ This includes adding indexes and finding aids for our largest collections such as the Dwight C. Brown Jr. Collection and multiple photograph collections.
- ☞ We have worked to add images of all newly processed items in our collections.
- ☞ We have also developed "Town Games: The History of Sports in Westerly" which is the current Special Exhibit at the Babcock Smith House available for viewing until November 2025.
- ☞ Since June 1, 2024, we have cataloged 287 new items in our system. We have also received many more new items which have not yet been cataloged and processed and will be added to our collections in the near future.
- ☞ We would like to extend our gratitude to all those who offered artifacts to the Society this year.

## **Social Media Chairperson Jane Perkins:**

- ☞ The goal continues to be to post once a week on the days that the majority of our followers are active and most likely to engage with the posts. (Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays)
- ☞ We currently have 2,577 regular followers, of which: Approximately 62% identify as female and approximately 38% identify as male. This is an increase of 417 followers from last year.
- ☞ Our most popular post this past year was a 1912 photo of Bay Street and Fort Road taken from the Atlantic House. The post reached 25,742 people, with 481 reactions, 69 comments, and 47 shares.
- ☞ Another impressively popular post was the photo and story posted on the anniversary of the ultimately fatal nuclear accident in Wood River Junction which involved Westerly Ambulance which transported the victim to Westerly Hospital and then to Rhode Island Hospital. The post reached 17,206 people, with 256 reactions, 211 comments, and 157 shares.
- ☞ Please encourage your friends and families to follow our page, and to like, share and comment.

## **Web Master Maria Bernier:**

- ☞ Uploaded new recordings from the Reflections oral history project to YouTube with corrected captions and added those links to the Reflections page on the WHS website.
- ☞ Submitted a grant report to the Chelsea Groton Foundation for their funding to support the Reflections oral history project.
- ☞ Updated the Current Newsletter page each month as the new issue was released.
- ☞ Sent Constant Contact emails to members about the online version of the newsletter.
- ☞ Sent Constant Contact emails about upcoming programs.
- ☞ Updated the Events page to contain the most current information and moved past events to the Events Archive page.
- ☞ Updated and activated the Annual Meeting page so members can purchase tickets online.
- ☞ Updated the Bylaws and Collections Policy posted on the website

## **Treasurer Bob Boucher:**

The Total Income was \$27,873.31. The Total Expenses were \$21,465.31. The Total Operating Funds Balance, as of May, was \$20,862.84.



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