



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

January 2026

Westerly Historical Society Executive Board		Program Notes																									
President Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.	Membership Chair Cory Jacobson	<p>On behalf of the Executive Board of the Westerly Historical Society Happy New Year!</p> <p>"WESTERLY'S ITALIAN FAMILY TREE" WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21ST, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Please join us as Bill Mitchell, a family historian for thirty years, shares the story of how one man's search for his birth parents turned into a project documenting the families that left Southern Italy and settled in Westerly in search of a better life.</p> <p>"THE LARCHMONT DISASTER" WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Please join us as Daniel Harrington shares the fascinating details of the Rhode Island version of the Titanic disaster. This 1907 accident occurred off the coast of Westerly and resulted in tales of heroism and survival among hundreds of deaths.</p> <p>"RESTORING OUR ELM STREET HOME" WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11TH, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Please join us as Carly Callahan, discusses her family's efforts to accurately restore the exterior of their 1840 Greek Revival home on Elm Street.</p> <p>"MADE IN WESTERLY" BOOK SIGNING This program was well attended with more than 45 guests. The authors discussed the origins of the book then signed 38 copies of their new book. Thank you to all who attended!</p> <p>TRIVIA QUESTION Welcome to our monthly feature recommended by the Westerly Historical Society Executive Board</p> <p>How old is the Watch Hill Chapel Society? The answer is on the next page!</p>																									
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At Large Member Mary Jo Girard	At Large Member Paul Gingerella																										
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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.

Happy New Year Friends!!!

Welcome to a brand new year and welcome to the 113th year of your Westerly Historical Society!

We were founded in 1913 and have been proudly fulfilling our mission to research, study, and preserve the local history in our community.

I am not the type of person who commits to personal New Year resolutions, but as your President, I will resolve to deliver the very best of the Westerly Historical Society!

Fortunately, that resolution is easy to achieve with the incredible team that I have at my disposal!

2026 is a historically important year for our country, our state, and our community.

We will bring you special programs and stories that will remind us all that as we celebrate local history it is only a small part of a much larger story of extraordinary achievements by ordinary people!

So please look for our well-crafted program lineup and enjoy our newsletters as we begin yet another great year delivering our mission to you!

Wishing you all a wonderful year of great health, happiness, peace, and prosperity!

With Pride,

Tom

PS Please remember to renew your 2026 membership!

EDITOR'S NOTES

Robert Peacock

***Thank you to
Ellen Madison and Maria Bernier
for contributing an article this month.***

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

TRIVIA ANSWER – The Watch Hill Chapel Society was organized on September 1st of 1875. They recently celebrated their 150th anniversary!

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A Brief History of the Watch Hill Chapel

By Robert Peacock

The Watch Hill Chapel Society was organized on September 1st of 1875. Six months later, on February 8th of 1876, an Act of the General Assembly officially established the Society. Six months later, George M. Nash conveyed a deed for the original Chapel lot on July 20th of 1876. Construction began and the original Chapel was built in the “English Gothic style”.

In 1877, the chapel was completed at a cost of approximately \$4,000 and was formally dedicated on July 18th of 1877. The initial dimensions of the Chapel were 36 x 60 feet and had a capacity estimated at 300 people.

In 1887, the Chapel was enlarged by adding the transept to the southwest corner of the nave and by rebuilding the chancel. This enlarged the building and created a new estimated capacity of 450.

In 1902, a second enlargement included extending the transept eastward to create a full south aisle and extending the chancel 25 feet westward. This created the current dimensions of the Chapel, approximately 90 feet by 110 feet, and the current capacity of 750. During the renovation, a second front door and porch were also added as well as the organ and fixed pews.

In 1928, a renovation resulted in the exterior of the chapel being remodeled into the Colonial Revival style with the Gothic steeple being replaced with a cupola and bell tower.

The spirit of the Chapel is clearly expressed in the two mottoes that are inscribed on the interior walls of the sanctuary.

“The Church is Many as the Waves, but One, as the Sea.”

This motto was suggested by the Honorable James Leland Howard, a founder and early President of the Chapel.

“In Essentials, Unity: In Non-Essentials, Liberty: In All Things, Charity.” This motto was attributed to Petrus Meiderlinus (1592-1651), a Lutheran priest.

Please visit their website at www.watchhillchapel.org to view photos and a video of the beautiful interior of the sanctuary.

Many thanks to Mrs. Edith Eglin, President Emerita, and Mrs. Beth Bean, President, and Mr. Grant Simmons, Trustee, for providing information for this article. All photos are taken from the Watch Hill Chapel website.



VIEW AFTER CONSTRUCTION IN 1877



VIEW AFTER RENOVATION IN 1887



VIEW AFTER RENOVATION IN 1902



VIEW AFTER RENOVATION IN 1928

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Announcements

**PLEASE CHECK OUT THE DECEMBER
DIGITAL ONLY EDITION
ON OUR WEBSITE**

While we normally do not publish a December edition of the Newsletter, we did share a special digital edition only with our digital subscribers who choose to receive the newsletter via email each month! Their willingness to forgo the black and white mailed hard copy and enjoy the colorful digital version is appreciated! It saves us postage and printing costs while also reducing paper usage and helping us to be environmentally friendly.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND ENJOY THE EXCERPT AND PHOTOS FROM A BOOK COVERING THE HISTORY OF THE FIRE PROTECTION IN BRADFORD THAT WAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

www.westerlyhistoricalsociey.org

SEEKING PROGRAM SPEAKERS

We are always seeking new speakers to present programs for our society. If you are familiar with a local history topic and enjoy talking about your passion, please let us know.

SEEKING NEWSLETTER WRITERS

We are always seeking writers to submit new articles for our newsletters. If you are familiar with a local history topic and enjoy writing about your passion, please let us know.

RHODE ISLAND LITTER FREE GRANT

Thanks to a grant received from the State of Rhode Island to cover the supplies and disposal costs, our members and friends contributed 44 volunteer hours to visit 37 historic cemeteries in Westerly and pick up 23 bags of litter totaling 78 pounds of trash!

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!

Two more Post Cards in our collections sent from a father in Watch Hill to his daughter in Ohio depicting the Surf Men of the Watch Hill Life Saving Station as they conduct their weekly surf boat drills to maintain and improve their skills.



This Post Card is postmarked and dated as August 30, 1910.

Titled; "Start of the Drill"

This card was sent to Miss Isabel Helm of Cincinnati Ohio with the message "*My Dear Daughter, Hello Isabel. How did you enjoy the parade? Was it nice? Love and kisses to you and Mother. Daddy.*



This Post Card is postmarked and dated as September 11, 1910.

Titled; "Life Boat Righting Itself"

This card was sent to Miss Isabel Helm of Cincinnati Ohio with the message "*My Dear Daughter, Hello Isabel. How are you? I'm OK but am feeling homesick to see you and Mother. Daddy*

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.

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 # 04 – The Chapman Burial Ground

By Robert Peacock

There were reportedly twenty-five burials in this cemetery with thirteen marked by fieldstones and twelve marked by inscribed headstones. The most recent known burial is 1892 and the oldest known burial is 1803.

The files of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission identify 13 of the people buried here including six members of the Chapman family, two members of the Brown family, two members of the Kinyon family, two members of the Gavitt family, and one member of the Averill family.

Included are the remains of the oldest known burial, Captain Joshua Kinyon, who was born in 1740 and passed on July 31 of 1803 and his wife, Mary Kinyon, who was born in 1752 and passed on October 20th of 1818. Their carved brown sandstone grave markers with intricate carvings of an urn and a willow tree on the top are very well preserved and still legible. In addition, Abby Kinyon Averill, wife of Jabez Averill, and daughter of Joshua and Mary Kinyon, who was born in 1789 and passed on August 24th of 1814 in her 26th year is buried near her parents.

Also included are the remains of the two most recent two burials which were Sumner Chapman who was born on April 3rd of 1806 and dies on February 10th of 1892 and his wife Sarah Brightman Chapman who was born on May 8th in 1818 and passed on November 23rd of 1886. Their graves are marked by matching large but simply carved granite headstones.

The cemetery is approximately 100 feet by 100 feet and is enclosed by a tall wall of large rough cut granite blocks. It is moderately overgrown with bull briars and vines and has a large tree fallen into the cemetery over the wall as well as numerous fallen limbs inside the cemetery. The exterior wall includes a large granite block with “Sumner Chapman 1887” carved into it.

According to the 1878 book by Frederic Denison, “Westerly and Its Witnesses”, the cemetery was recorded in the 1860’s as being “located on the top of the rocky, sandy ridge, in the rear of the farmhouse on the north side of the shore road, on the old Chapman farm, a few rods east of the driftway that runs northward.”

At that time, Denison recorded information on nine people buried there including six that died young including Mary Chapman who died at age 32, Sarah Chapman who died at age 28, Martha Brown who died at age 33, Mary Gavitt who died at age 27, Otis Chapman who died at age 25, and Abby Averill who died at age 26.

The cemetery is located on the left side of Tom Harvey Road approximately seven hundred feet in from Shore Road in the area of pole number F. The cemetery is approximately fifteen feet in from the road and situated on a slope surrounded by a granite block wall.

According to Larry Hunter, a Washington County Commissioner for the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission, this cemetery is rather unique and unusual for the time period for those buried there. The headstones face forward towards the footstones and are facing east instead of west. During this time period, the normal custom was that the headstones normally faced away from the footstones and faced west.

For those using GPS, the cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 20 minutes, and 18.3 seconds North by 71 degrees, 47 minutes, and 52.7 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.



The cemetery is approximately 100 feet by 100 feet and is enclosed by a tall wall of large rough cut granite blocks. There were reportedly twenty-five burials in this cemetery with thirteen marked by unlettered fieldstones and twelve marked by inscribed headstones and a few footstones. The most recent known burial was in 1892 and the oldest known burial was in 1803.



Unfortunately, several unlettered fieldstones have sunken significantly into the earth and one of the inscribed headstones has fallen over and broken. The most recent two burials were Sumner Chapman in 1892 and his wife Sarah Brightman Chapman in 1886. Their graves are marked by matching granite headstones seen in the lower right photo. Note the large tree that has fallen into the cemetery.

RHODE ISLAND STATE GRANT RECEIVED TO REMOVE LITTER FROM WESTERLY CEMETERIES

The Westerly Historical Society is proud to announce that we received a second state funded grant to assist with disposal costs in removing trash and litter from many of the historical cemeteries in Westerly.

The Litter-Free Rhode Island Cleanup Microgrants are intended to highlight and support the Litter-Free Rhode Island campaign and the value of the environment, and to recognize the importance of people improving the quality of life in their communities.

Offered through the Office of the Governor and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, applications for grants of up to \$500 each to qualified applicants to conduct litter pick-ups were accepted.

The grants could be used for local volunteer cleanups and beautification projects and included an educational component. We encourage you to learn more at www.litterfree.ri.gov and we encourage you to read and sign the Litter-Free Pledge.

Thank you to Larry Hunter, Becky Jacoinski, Cory Jacobson, Liam Jacobson, Jane Perkins, Mary Jo Girard, Cheryl Molina, Kim Cullinane Pearson, Tom Gulluscio, Dylan Harrington, and Bob Peacock for assisting with these cleanups!

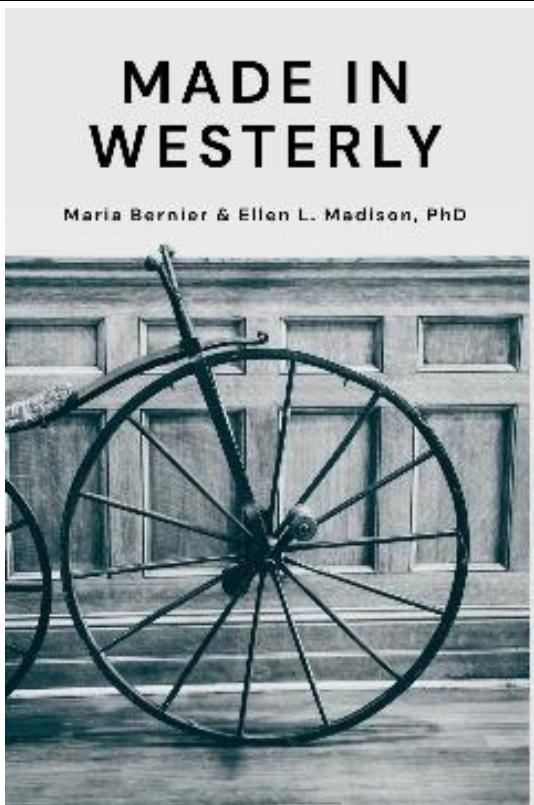


Our members and friends contributed 44 volunteer hours visiting 37 historic cemeteries and picking up 23 bags of litter which totaled 78 pounds of trash!

We sincerely appreciate their assistance!

Made In Westerly

By Ellen L. Madison, PhD and Maria Bernier



This article is a collection of excerpts from the book "Made In Westerly" which was written by Maria Bernier and Ellen Madison, PhD. And published by the Westerly Historical Society. We hope you enjoy this small portion of the book and we encourage you to purchase the book to learn much more about the Westerly industries profiled in the book.

The Moore Company is known internationally for producing elastic web and developing new high-performance fabrics (for use by the NHL, MLB, NFL, and NCAA) and playing a major role in medical applications. Despite having had plants throughout the world, it has maintained its headquarters in Westerly since 1910 because Mr. Moore and his family "have always loved Westerly."

The mill whistle blew at 6:55 a.m. to call the employees, who had gathered at Moore's Hall for coffee and chatting, to work which began at 7:00 a.m.. Italians comprised most of the early workers, but in the 1920's, immigrants from England and those of French-Canadian heritage filled out the ranks. The company did its own training, and each worker took great pride in being responsible for his or her own loom.

Employees were treated as family and taken good care of, a lesson which Mr. Moore said he learned as a youngster. In fact, the employees, to this day, have never chosen to be unionized because they are already treated well. Even if they leave for "greener pastures" and then want to return, they are welcomed back.



The Moore Company saw their workers as people with needs beyond just a paycheck. Moore Hall had a basketball court, with half the court still sporting the painted lines in 2019. (The other half has been converted to office space.) There was a stage for variety shows and a bowling alley with duck pins.

Moore Company basketball, baseball and soccer teams competed against teams from other mills. The Twilight League provided entertainment for both players and spectators and lasted until textile mills started moving south.

Photograph courtesy Westerly Historical Society,

Early on, a harmonica band gave employees a chance to display some musical skills. It morphed into a Fife and Drum Corps which was a staple for years in parades in downtown Westerly where workers marched with their departments. In 1932-3, the company paraded under the banner of "We Do Our Part," which was to recover from the Depression. The Corps was organized by Irene Godet and Mrs. Pendleton, won many awards, and was long-lived, lasting until the advent of TV which provided music of a different kind.

The history of The Moore Company, and its subsidiaries, The George C. Moore Company and Darlington Fabrics, cannot be told without highlighting the role of its founder, George C. Moore, who is credited by the Elastic Web Manufacturers as being the founder of their industry. He was adventurous, enterprising, willing to take chances, and laid the foundation for a successful company which has been managed by four generations of Moores for more than 100 years.

Continued on Next Page

Made In Westerly

By Ellen L. Madison, PhD and Maria Bernier

Born in Congleton, England on June 21, 1856, George C. Moore received a common school education, going only through grammar school. By the time he was ten or twelve, George was working at Luke Turner Web Manufacturing Co., a manufacturer of narrow fabric, where he learned his trade.

In the early 1880s, George became a weaver at the Glendale Elastic Fabric Company in Easthampton, MA, and was soon promoted to overseer, superintendent and general manager. Many patents taken out in his name still comprise the basic technology for the elastic industry.

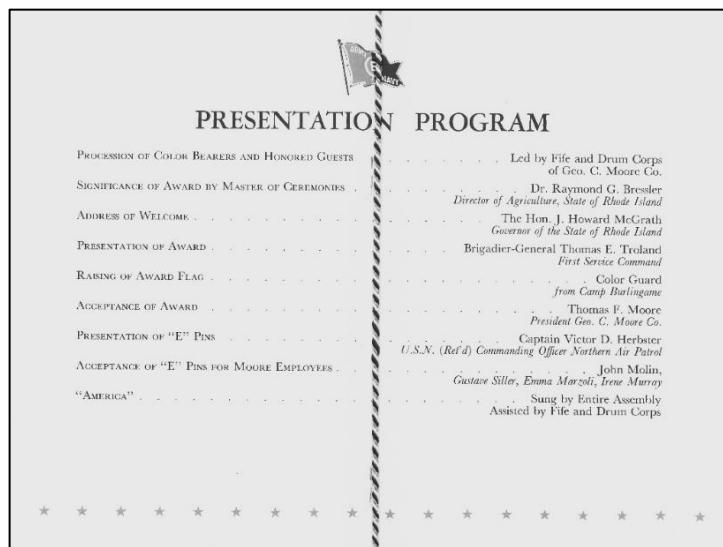
In 1877, he married Mary Connery and began what would end up as a very large family. Four of his children (Thomas, Harold, Geoffrey and Cyril) would all work at the Moore Company.

In 1910, he formed the George C. Moore Co in Worcester Massachusetts. By 1912, the business had taken off and needed more space. Moore found a modern mill on Beach Street which had been previously occupied by the Westerly Narrow Fabric Co. Westerly was particularly attractive because of the abundance of textile firms and a good workforce.

So eager was the Moore family to get to Westerly, it is said that they figured out a way to keep the looms working even as they were being moved. The business grew quickly, and the mill was enlarged in 1915, 1920, 1925 and 1931, and additions continued thereafter at a similar speed.

George took frequent trips back to England and happened to be there when World War I broke out. He foresaw the duration and the demands of what was going to happen, came home and immediately bought as much yarn as he could, long before his competitors knew what was happening. He filled all available storage space with yarn, so he was ready for wartime demands. It is said that “for his foresight, plus action, George C. Moore reaped a well-deserved fortune.”

George C. Moore died in 1931, leaving the business leadership to four of his sons: Harold, Geoffrey, Cyril and Thomas as President. It is interesting that two of George’s daughters, Eleanor and Emma, had earlier not only worked in the mill but had also managed the office and business until the younger brothers had finished their schooling. At its peak, the company employed 1,000 people on three shifts. Even during the Depression years, employment averaged between 700 and 800.



Among the many awards that have been bestowed on the company is the Army-Navy Production Award on January 11, 1943. Listed on the program are the dignitaries, but local folks had a big role. The Procession of Color Bearers and Honored Guests were led by Fife and Drum Corps of Geo. C. Moore Co. The Raising of Award Flag was done by the Color Guard from Camp Burlingame. As the finale, “America” was sung by the entire assembly assisted by Fife and Drum Corps.

Image courtesy of the Westerly Library, Local History Collection.

For more details on the history of the Moore Company as well interesting stories covering many other local industries, please check out the newest book published by the Westerly Historical Society, titled “Made In Westerly” and written by members Maria Bernier and Ellen Madison, PhD.

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