



Westerly's Witness

April 2014

Westerly Historical Society Officers 2013-2014

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Babcock-Smith House Museum Liaison Edward A. Fazio	

Calendar of Events - Continued

Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting and Reception

Friday May 16, 2014, 5:30 PM

Masonic Lodge

20 Elm St, Westerly, RI

Reservations required.

Tickets are \$18.00. No tickets at the door.

Send check or money order to:

Westerly Historical Society

PO Box 91

Westerly, RI 02891

Calendar of Events

“At the Beach”

Sponsored by the Babcock-Smith House Museum
Sunday May 4, 2014, 2 PM

Local views of the Westerly area beaches will be shown throughout the presentation by Joseph E. Coduri, formerly of Westerly. He has been collecting post cards and preparing post card checklists for more than 30 years with a specialty in Rhode Island villages and railroad stations. He is an active member of Rhode Island Post Card Club.

At the Babcock-Smith House Museum
Carriage House, 124 Granite St., Westerly, RI

Admission: \$2.00

Museum Members: Free



Westerly Historical Society Annual Meeting and Reception Ticket Order Form

Please send ___ tickets for the
Westerly Historical Society
Annual Meeting and Reception. Enclosed
please find my check for \$_____.

Name(s)_____

Address_____

City_____

State and Postal Code_____

Send this form with your check or money order to:

Westerly Historical Society

PO Box 91

Westerly, RI 02891

Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

Our newest member of the Westerly Historical Society, Sal Lombardi of Scituate, visited with us at the April board meeting. On behalf of himself and his wife Micheline, Sal presented us with an artifact, a sailing trophy from 1929. Pictured below is a close-up of the pewter bowl awarded that year at the Watch Hill Yacht Club to the Herreshoff *Thistle*.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about the inscription is that the name of the presenter, not the recipient (and boat owner), is inscribed on the side of the trophy. Immediately a thousand questions sprang to mind about the mysterious presenter, "Mrs. C. Bai-Lihme," and life in general in the Watch Hill of 1929.

Sal Lombardi was kind enough to bring several articles he found while researching the *Thistle* and C. Bai-Lihme, but as is almost always the case, a smattering of information about particular event creates a great thirst for more facts. I wanted to know about "cottage" life among the moneyed families in those precious days before the great stock market crash. I needed to learn more about the Herreshoffs and the peculiar trophy (which, by the way, found its way all the way to Pennsylvania before being claimed by Sal at an E-Bay auction.) Even more, who owned the *Thistle* and what ever happened to the boat?



Even the pewter maker's mark on the bottom of the trophy had us wondering who made it, because only half of the imprint remains. The familiar candlestick and snuffer emblem was something I had seen before, but where?

Collectors of antique pewter and silver may

already know that the Internet offers many research tools that help in the identification of silversmith's and pewter makers' marks. Our sailing trophy, it turns out, was made by the Poole Silver Company of Taunton, Massachusetts. This company's line of pewter products was known as "Pewter by Poole." The company operated in Taunton from 1893 until 1971 at which time it was acquired by Towle Silversmiths (now part of the Lifetime Brands Group.)

Here is a clear sample of the Pewter by Poole trademark.



We wish to thank Sal Lombardi and his wife Michelina for this wonderful contribution to our holdings; not only for its intrinsic value, but for the opportunity to research a period of time that is sometimes overlooked in our area. The research for this month's piece took me on a fabulous journey to a simpler time before television and computers; when there were houses on Napatree Point, and people went to afternoon tea or looked forward to the latest "musicale."



Don't forget the annual meeting on Friday, May 16. If you are in a rush for tickets, you can reserve tickets via email. Simply send me your information at whstreasurer@gmail.com and we'll take it from there. Payment this year is by check or cash only.

Summer 1929 – Watch Hill’s Golden Days

by Ann L. Smith

The summer of 1929 in Watch Hill passed in much the same way as many summers did before and after that year. Aside from swimming and boating, days were spent golfing and playing tennis. Saturday soireés listening to bands and enjoying the company of friends were all the norm. During the day the *Flying Horses Carousel* was a big draw with the younger set and people sometimes lunched at St. Clair’s, both of which still are in operation today.

On Sundays many went to hear a sermon at the Watch Hill Chapel and retired to the Misquamicut Beach Club for a leisurely meal afterward. These things too are still part of the relaxing landscape that is Watch Hill in summertime.

Anyone who has walked along Bay Street and looked out onto Little Narragansett Bay is familiar with the boats (both big and small) that are moored or tied up there. On weekends visitors can catch a glimpse of the Junior Sailing Program in operation at the Watch Hill Yacht Club. Most people don’t realize that the Junior Sailing Program at this location dates back to at least the 1930’s.

The Watch Hill Yacht Club has long been a center of activity not only for pleasure-boating, but for sailboat racing as well. Founded in 1913, the first racing fleet consisted of twelve sloop-rigged Swampscott dories. In the early 1920s a new fleet of Alden sloops replaced the Swampscott dories. In 1923 the club added eleven jib-headed mainsail Herreshoff sloops to its racing fleet. These were a modification of the Buzzards Bay 15-footer called the Watch Hill Class.

According to the Watch Hill Yacht Club, this organization may be the only club which maintains an active fleet of Herreshoff “15s.” The information at <http://www.whyc.net/WH15.php> states,

“In September, 1922 eleven members of the Watch Hill Yacht Club commissioned Nathaniel Herreshoff to design and build a fleet of small sloops well suited for sailing and racing on Little Narragansett Bay and Fishers Island Sound. He and his Herreshoff Manufacturing Company (HMCo.) made minor modifications to the 1898 Buzzards Bay 15 hull design and converted the rig from gaff to marconi. The prototype, HMCo. # 880, named Josephine, was launched and trial sailed in December 1922. Following the trial sail, the mast was shortened three feet and the remaining ten boats were built for delivery in the Spring of 1923.”

Among these eleven new sloops was the *Thistle* and its owner was Robert Barrie. (A complete listing of the *Thistle*’s owners throughout history can be found on the following page.) Barrie and his cohorts, it seems, had exciting times with their little fleet. The major contenders had names like *Spider*, *Pixie*, and *Howcom*, but it was Barrie, who by 1929, had distinguished himself by earning no less than five trophies running the *Thistle* in the racing program for that year.

Below are a few excerpts from a *Seaside Topics* (the Watch Hill

weekly paper) article published on September 5, 1929.

Trophies Presented at Final Yacht Club Tea

Cups and prizes for the winners of the races during the season were presented at the Yacht Club tea on Labor Day afternoon at which Mrs. Frank A. Sayles served as hostess. There was dancing to the music of the Wittstein Orchestra of New Haven and many friends of the winners were present to see the cups presented. Commodore Knowlton made the presentations. Robert Barrie, the skipper of the Thistle, took the lion’s share of the awards receiving cups for the season series in the Herreshoff class, the July series, the August series, the Fourth of July race and the Labor Day race. ...

Prizes for the Wednesday and Saturday afternoon races were awarded as follows:

In the Herreshoff class, the July 6 prize went to the Howcom; July 20 to the Thistle; July 27, the Thistle; August 3 the Spider, August 10, the Howcom; August 17, the Pixie, August 24, the Thistle; and August 31, the Thistle. ...

In presenting the prizes, Commodore Knowlton [addressing the junior sailors] praised the young skippers for their good seamanship and in a word to the losers, called them to good sports, and urged them to keep on trying.

continued on page 4)

Summer 1929 – Watch Hill’s Golden Days (Continued from page 3)

Still, not a single mention was made in the article of Mrs. C. Bai-Lihme. An Internet search of the name brings the inquirer back to the history of the Watch Hill Yacht Club. During one of the many renovations that the club underwent, it was Mrs. C. Bai Lihme who donated the cost of the architectural redesign in 1923.

Notoriety did not begin for the Bai Lihme family in Watch Hill, however. Christian Bai Lihme was a Danish chemist who worked as superintendent of the Illinois Zinc Company from 1895-1910. He later formed the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company of La Salle, Illinois and served successively as secretary,

vice president and president. He was a director of several banks and mining corporations, and was a member of the Metropolitan, River and Union League Clubs of New York. In 1901, Mr. Lihme married Olga Hegeler, daughter of Edward C. Hegeler, a pioneer zinc smelter.

The couple had four children, one of whom married into Viennese royalty when she married Prince Edward Joseph Lobkowitz in 1925. Lobkowitz’s father was Prince August Lobkowitz, the Privy Counselor and Lord Chamberlain to Emperor Franz Josef.

By 1929 the Bai Lihme family

had moved to New York City and lived in an opulent triplex apartment at 950 Fifth Avenue that overlooked Central Park. They maintained a winter home in Palm Beach, Florida and their summer home in Watch Hill. The Bai Lihme residence was none other than Norman Hall located at 29 Ocean View Highway. This sprawling property was also known as Stone House or Lihme Castle. Beginning in 1965 it served as a retreat house for the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambery but in 2004 once again became a private home.

Christian Bai Lihme died in New York on October 15, 1946.

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Historical Detail of the *Thistle*

Status:	FOUND		
Original Name:	Thistle	Current Name:	Thistle
Hull No:	883	Boat Location:	Watch Hill, RI
Contracted By:	R. Barrie	Current Owner:	Bruce Grinnell
Contract Date:	9/14/1922	Owner Since:	2001
Class:	15-Footer	Sub-Class:	Watch Hill 15
Original Rig:	J&M	Current Rig:	marconi
Original Price:	\$1,533	Restored By:	George Nicholas
LOA:	24 ft. 6 in.	Beam:	6 ft. 9 in.
LWL:	15 ft. 0 in.	Draft:	2 ft. 3 in.

Designer: Sidney Herreshoff

Owner	Years	Location	Boat Name	Sail No.
R. Barrie	1923 - 1932	Watch Hill, RI	Thistle	4
Geoffrey Moore	1932 - 1938	Watch Hill, RI	Geanca	4
J.M. Schoonmaker	1948 - 1951	Watch Hill, RI	Neptune	4
Harold Q. Moore	1951 - ????		Neptune	
Parker Brothers	???? - 1971	Greenhaven, CT		
James Nicholas	1971 - 1995	Watch Hill, RI	Thistle	4
George Nicholas	1995 - 2001	Watch Hill, RI	Thistle	4

Watch Hill's Golden Days
(Continued from page 4)

Olga Bai Lihme passed away from a heart attack at her winter home in Palm Beach, Florida on November 9, 1956. She was 79.

Just as businesses or pasttimes may come and go and others stand the test of time, so it seems with families and their legacies. We still have our *Flying Horses* carousel and St. Claire's Annex. The Watch Hill Yacht Club and the Misquamicut Beach Club have become two great icons. The Watch Hill House hotel, however, is hardly even a memory. And there are families that have been a part of our historical tapestry for hundreds of years. Others, like the Bai-Lihmes, just fade away.

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THISTLE BY LOCAL ARTIST MATT COOPER

A matted print of this image is available from the Herreshoff Museum in Bristol, RI. Ordering information can be found at

<http://herreshoff.org/store/product144.html>

or by calling the museum at

401-253-5000

Annual Meeting and Dinner Reception
May 16, 2014
5:30 PM

The nominating committee has put forth a slate of officers which shall be voted upon at the annual meeting. The following board officers have been nominated, each to serve a two-year term.

President	Edward A. Fazio
Vice-President	Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.
Secretary	Maria L. Bernier
Treasurer	Ann L. Smith

There is no other formal business on the agenda.

Pendleton-Chapman Farmhouse

As promised in our last edition, we wanted to bring you up to date on the progress at the Pendleton-Chapman farmhouse reconstruction. While it may be difficult to imagine the finished project by looking at the house in its current state, we have included the latest pictures for you to see. Images of the entire frame are shown on page six.

Here is a close-up showing the meticulous workmanship involved in putting the original beams up. Notice how the old-time craftsmanship is being preserved but reinforced for modern use.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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

The Pendleton-Chapman Farmhouse



The Pendleton-Chapman Farmhouse under reconstruction.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM SMITH