



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

Summer 2021

Westerly Historical Society Officers 2021-2022

President
Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.

Vice President
Vacant

Secretary
Vacant

Treasurer
Ann L. Smith

Archivist
Zachary J. Garceau

**Babcock-Smith House
Museum Liaison**
Edward A. Fazio

Membership Chair
Vacant

Newsletter
Ann L. Smith

Programs
Pamela J. Scott

**Publications Committee
Chair**
Maria L. Bernier

Web Master
Vacant

Members At Large
Stephen Cersosimo
Eliza Griscom
Karen Griscom
John Leach
Brenda Linton
Russell Soder

Annual Meeting Held, Awards Conferred

Celebrating its one hundred eighth year, the Westerly Historical Society gathered at the Haversham Restaurant in Westerly on May 26th to conduct its annual meeting and member reception. The fourth annual Local History Award was again shared this year by two tying nominees, Roberta Mudge Humble and Judith Crandall Harbold. The winner of this year's Julia Award was Westerly Historical Society archivist, Zachary J. Garceau who also gave a short presentation about his upcoming book. Fifty six members and guests were in attendance.

In April a panel of judges met to review nominations for the co-sponsored Local History Award. The Local History Award is sponsored by the Westerly Historical Society and the Babcock-Smith House in order to encourage people to embark upon and participate in local history projects. The contest is open to anyone including students who are in the fifth grade and up.

Westerly Armory Restoration president, Roberta Mudge Humble, was nominated for her ongoing work at the Westerly Armory as well as for her continued creation and production of educational games that promote Rhode Island History. Roberta's newest game, *The Rhode Not Taken*, was released in 2020. The Westerly Armory continues to expand its collection of historical artifacts and the Armory's "People's Museum" is open to visitors twice a week free of charge.

Judith Crandall Harbold was nominated by a fellow historian and from Massachusetts, Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, FASG. (Cherry Bamberg was a Westerly Historical Society program co-presenter with the late Jane Maxson a few years ago.) Judith

(Continued on page 2)

In this Issue

Annual Meeting Held.....	Page 1
Editor's Notes.....	Page 2
Annual Meeting Highlights.....	Page 3
Babcock-Smith House Events.....	Page 4



ON NAPATREE POINT
PHOTO: ANN L. SMITH

Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

Judy Garland starred in a 1949 film entitled *In the Good Old Summertime*, but one of my favorite lines from the inimitable Miss Garland comes from none other than The Wizard of Oz. "My! People come and go so quickly here!" she exclaims in her role as Dorothy, who has just landed in Munchkinland.

Well, it's almost summertime in Westerly, and all around us people are moving in or out, whether it is to say goodbye to college classmates or, "How have you been?" to the friends folks haven't seen all winter. At the Westerly Historical Society, we are undergoing some moves of our own, except no one has called for an actual moving van so far. That's good news because even though a few folks are switching hats or changing chairs, they won't be far from the WHS home. Likewise, a couple of newcomers have been literally living around the corner from us for quite a little while.

This spring we learned that two of our board officers will not be staying on in their roles effective with the completion of the annual dinner. Our secretary, former president, and webmaster, Maria L. Bernier, has decided to focus her attention on her role as head of our publications committee and will remain a member-at-large on the executive board. Thomas A. O'Connell, author of *Fair Westerly, In and About Westerly*, and *Westerly's Gold... Her People* is leaving his position as vice president and has now retired from the executive board. Tom looks forward to spending time with his wife Fran and his extended family. In addition to authoring and donating all proceeds from his three books to us, Tom was the editor of our newsletter, *Westerly's Witness*, for twelve years and faithfully served the Westerly Historical Society's executive board for twenty-five years in all.

Coinciding with the departures of Maria Bernier and Tom O'Connell, we welcomed two new members to our executive board, Eliza Griscom and Karen Griscom. Eliza and Karen have volunteered to manage our website and take care of certain essential duties formerly carried out by Maria until officer elections are held next year.

While we can't exactly say that Tom O'Connell and Maria Bernier came and went quickly, it seems like only yesterday that they joined our ranks. We wish them well in their new activities and are excited to be working with the Griscoms as we approach the upcoming 2021-2022 season.

Annual Meeting Held

(Continued from page 1)

Crandall Harbold is a long-time member of the Crandall Family Association and worked on the newly released (2020) *A Crandall Family Reader, Articles about John¹ Crandall and His People* along with her nominator, Cherry Fletcher Bamberg, FASG.



JUDITH CRANDALL HARBOLD ACCEPTS THE HISTORY AWARD FROM WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT, THOMAS J. GULLUSCIO, JR. PHOTO: STEPHEN CERSOSIMO

Zachary J. Garceau was given the Julia Award for the hundreds of hours he has devoted to maintaining the Westerly Historical Society archives, his ongoing contributions to the website *SeeWesterly.com* (formerly *WesterlyLife.com*) and the dedication he exhibits in his professional career as a records specialist with the State of Rhode Island. The dozens of historical articles Zack has written for *SeeWesterly.com* shows his ability to turn out a high volume of well-researched content on a timetable that allows for only the shortest of deadlines.



ZACHARY J. GARCEAU ACCEPTS THE JULIA AWARD FROM WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT, THOMAS J. GULLUSCIO, JR. PHOTO: STEPHEN CERSOSIMO

Next year the Westerly Historical Society will hold elections for board officers who serve two-year terms. For more details on this year's meeting, see our related story on the following page.

Annual Meeting Highlights

By Ann L. Smith

On a clear Wednesday evening, fifty six members and guests of the Westerly Historical Society gathered at the Haversham restaurant in Westerly to hold its annual meeting. This year's meeting and dinner was held at a different venue from the previous four and many positive comments were received regarding the event.

President Thomas J. Gulluscio welcomed the attendees and Vice President Thomas A. O'Connell led the group in the pledge of allegiance and gave an invocation just prior to the meal being served. A delicious buffet featuring chicken marsala and beef steak tips with various side dishes was enjoyed by all.

The business portion of the meeting began at 7:01 PM as the room was called to order by Tom Gulluscio. The minutes of the 2020 annual meeting were accepted as written. President Gulluscio, using slides as visual aids, listed the major accomplishments of our society during the previous year. The official record showed that the Westerly Historical Society continued to conduct business despite the COVID-19 pandemic, presented four virtual programs and published six issues of *Westerly's Witness*. Our archives area continued its support of the community by fulfilling requests for local history information and archived images.

Program chairperson Pamela Scott spoke briefly about how the virtual programs were managed and reminded everyone that they are still accessible via the Westerly Historical Society website. Ann Smith solicited contributions for the newsletter and spoke about how her recent research has allowed her to connect with some new people and businesses in our community.

Archivist Zachary Garceau described the improvements to the collection over the past year including facility modernizations, a revised collections policy, and enhancements to the record-keeping system. Zack noted the major contributions of the Hopkinton Historical Association, the donation of charcoal sketches drawn by artist Maria Greenhough Stillman, and mentioned that acquisitions had been received from Ellen Madison and Tom O'Connell. Zack also previewed his goals for the coming year.

Treasurer Ann Smith gave a brief overview of the financial statement for 2020 noting that a deficit was posted. Future budgets will continue to include planned deficits as the society's sizeable reserves are used to benefit its members and the community at

large. One example of the ways in which funds are used for the benefit the members is that the ticket price for the annual dinner is subsidized in part by funds from the treasury.

Tom Gulluscio welcomed Eliza Griscom and Karen Griscom to the executive board, both of whom joined the board this spring. Gifts of appreciation were presented to Maria L. Bernier who is stepping back from her duties as secretary, and Tom O'Connell who is retiring from the executive board but will remain a regular member of the Westerly Historical Society.

Tom Gulluscio recognized the winners of the 2020 Julia Award, Betty-Jo Cugini Greene and Jim Karpeichik, and the 2020 History Award winner, Reed Tremblay. President Gulluscio then introduced the 2021 History Award co-winners, Judith Crandall Harbold and Roberta Mudge Humble. The 2021 Julia Award was bestowed upon Zachary J. Garceau who then spoke about his upcoming anthology, *Great Stories from Westerly's Past*. (For more information on this year's History Award winners and Zachary Garceau's accomplishments, see our story beginning on Page 1, "Annual Meeting Held—Awards Conferred.")

Zack Garceau's new book, *Great Stories from Westerly's Past*, will contain many of his previously published articles about Westerly people and places of times gone by. As a way to whet our appetites for this upcoming collection, Zack shared the story of Anna Thornton Williams, an accomplished African-American who rose from a life of slavery to become a successful businesswoman. One of her many distinctions was that she was the first woman to cast a ballot in the November 1920 election in Westerly. It was the first time in the United States that women had been allowed to vote following the ratification of the 19th Amendment. She is buried in River Bend Cemetery and her tombstone bears the following inscription: ANNA THORNTON WILLIAMS—BORN A SLAVE IN KY IN 1856. SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD.

Zack's presentation was well-received and his talk concluded the business portion of the meeting. The proceedings were officially adjourned at 7:55 PM. Guests lingered to exchange contact information with one another and offer compliments for an affair that was enjoyed by all.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Westerly Historical Society

P.O. Box 91

Westerly, RI 02891



BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE EVENTS

As the Westerly Historical Society adjourns for its annual summer hiatus, the folks at the Babcock-Smith House are just gearing up for a busy summer season. The historic Babcock-Smith house was once the home of Dr. Joshua Babcock, one of Westerly's most prominent citizens of the 18th Century. It was from this house that Joshua Babcock ran a general store and post office, practiced medicine, and participated in colonial politics. The house and surrounding farm was later owned by Orlando Smith who established a granite quarrying business on the property. Westerly granite became known all over the United States and the world for its fine grain and excellent texture.

Today the Babcock-Smith House is a public museum maintained by the Orlando Smith Trust. Along with the board of trustees, the Babcock-Smith House docents take an active part in preserving this landmark's history and serve as tour guides when open to the public. The Westerly Historical Society is a major supporter of the BSH mission and the museum continues to partner with the Westerly Historical

Society by allowing us to use their Carriage House for board meetings and public programs. Because of the close working relationship between our two organizations, we are pleased to announce that a full slate of events is planned at the museum house this summer. The museum is open every Saturday from 2:00 to 5:00 PM in addition to tours by appointment and will be open Thursday through Sunday during July and August..

We hope you will plan to visit the Babcock-Smith House on Saturday July 3 to see the new blacksmith exhibit and updated educational materials. At 4:00 PM there will be a tree dedication by The Children of the American Revolution. This event is free.

The popular "Down By The Riverside" cemetery tours will be back during July and August, and on September 18 an auction of "treasures" from the museum's attic and library is planned. Please check the *Events* tab at <https://www.babcocksmithhouse.org/BabcockSmithHouse/events.htm> for more details and information.