



Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

September 2023

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Program Notes

September Program - Our September event will be held in collaboration with the Quonochontaug, Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton Historical Societies and the Friends of the Quonochontaug Grange. The program will be held **on Saturday, September 18th, at 2 PM** at the Quonnie Grange Hall located at 5662 Post Road in Charlestown. Martin "Marty" Podskoch will discuss the many construction and beautification projects that were completed in the local area by the hard working and dedicated members of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Thank You – We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Jack Spratt for his presentation this summer titled "**Last Call: Rum Runners, Bootleggers, and Watch Hill**". We would also like to thank the members of the Watch Hill Conservancy for co-sponsoring and supporting the presentation. In addition, we would like to extend our appreciation to Grey Sail Brewery for their generous support donating the refreshments and libations for the evening. We would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to Greg Pettys for videotaping the presentation and allowing us to make it available on our website located at www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org.

SPECIAL NOTICE

We have increased the size and amount of color photos and color printing in the online version of this newsletter. For best results, we strongly encourage our members to view this newsletter online at our website.

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

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WESTERLY'S WITNESS

Published by the Westerly Historical Society
P. O. Box 91, Westerly, RI 02891.

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.

Well hello there friends,

I hope this finds you well, rested and tanned from an enjoyable summer! I welcome back the regimented schedule of meetings and programs for the Fall as it brings me back together with my cherished and devoted friends serving your historical society. We sincerely enjoy what we do.

Bob Peacock, our new Westerly's Witness newsletter editor has been working diligently to prepare a season's worth of material. You can expect great things from Bob in his new role.

We are close to announcing two new businesses who are coming on board to join Grey Sail Brewing and the Wine Store as newsletter sponsors. Look for them soon!

We will hit the ground running as our first program is another co-sponsored event with our friends from the Quonochontaug, Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton Historical Societies and the Friends of the Quonochontaug Grange. We just love the opportunity to join with these amazing folks to present you an awesome program.

This month's program is presented by Marty Podskoch on the History of the Civilian Conservation Corps focusing on the Westerly and Hope Valley Camps. I sincerely hope you can join us. Look for more details within this newsletter.

I need to mention an event that disturbed many of us and that was the demolition of the Smith Quarry Company store. Many in the community assumed the Westerly Historical Society had knowledge of and condoned this event. I can assure you that our opinion was not solicited and furthermore that we have no authority over events like this. We would like to be in consideration to offer historical content to developers so that historical properties are completely understood and appreciated but we do not possess any power to stop any unfortunate decisions such as this most recent event.

Just a reminder that we are always welcoming potential board members with a passion for history and a talent to serve.

Warm regards,
Tom

EDITOR'S NOTES

As we publish our first newsletter following the very well-deserved retirement of Ann Smith, we would like to once again offer our sincerest thanks and appreciation to Ann as we proudly recognize her dedicated efforts over the past decade as a Board Member, as a Treasurer, and as an Editor of *Westerly's Witness*.

Ann has contributed so much to your Historical Society and she will be deeply missed! We all wish her a very happy and relaxing retirement!

While we expect to continue many of the newsletter layouts and concepts that Ann has developed and perfected over the past decade, we also plan on making some slight changes to put our own personal stamp on future newsletters. One of the first changes you will notice will be the publishing of more color photos and the incorporation of multiple part historical articles spread over several editions of the newsletter.

***Remember, this is your newsletter!
Please let us know what you think!***

Westerly Police – The Beginning – 150 Years Ago

By Robert Peacock

As Westerly recognizes the 150th Anniversary of the establishment of the Westerly Police Department this year, we thought it would be interesting to review the history of the Police Department through the research of Thomas O’Connell, a member of the Westerly Historical Society and the author of “Westerly’s Gold... Her People”. This article is based on his research and includes excerpts from his chapter titled “Westerly Police Department – Beginnings”.

The Westerly Police Department was formally established in 1873 and began operations on July 1st. The Town Council records indicate that work on establishing a police force began on February 10th of 1873 with the creation of a town ordinance establishing a force of six men including “a chief of police, four night police and one day police.” It was also noted “The time of service and pay to begin at the completion of the new town building on Union Street” which would serve as the police station and jail.

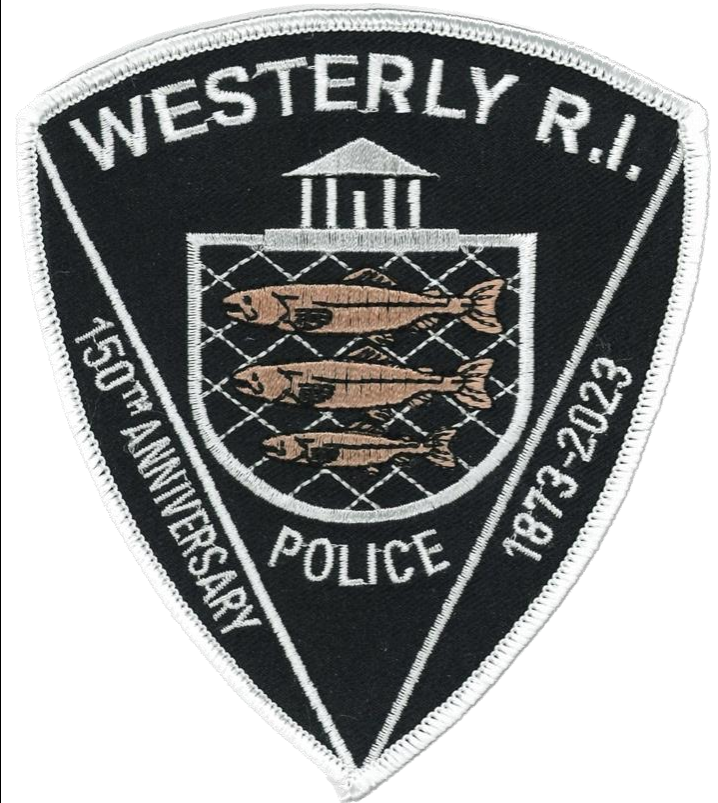
On June 23rd of 1873, the Town council voted to reduce the force by one and hire the initial officers. The records indicate “The following named persons be and they are hereby chosen & selected to the place and office of policemen with the rank & monthly pay set opposite their respective names & they are each & respectively constables.” The list included Police Chief Charles H. Chapman, Day Police Officer Benjamin York, and Night Police Officers J. Court Gavitt, J.S. Hall, and Charles E. Sisson. The Chief was to be paid 66 dollars per month and the officers were to be paid 50 dollars per month.

One week later, on Tuesday, July 1st of 1873, the Westerly Police Department began operations. Daily summaries were documented in a handwritten ledger which is now a proud part of our archives.

The initial entry dated July 1, 1873 read “Commenced duty with Chief Charles H. Chapman and four patrolmen, No. 1 J.F.Hall, No. 2 Charles E. Sisson, No. 3 J. Court Gavitt, No. 4 Benjamin York.”

On the first night, activities recorded in the ledger included a note that police had “furnished one man with lodging,” who was “noisy and disorderly”.

By the third night, Joshua Sisson received the dubious honor of being the first arrest when he was charged as a “drunk and disorderly, lewd and lascivious person”.



In honor of the 150th Anniversary, the members of the Westerly Police Department are wearing a special patch from July 1st of 2023 through July 1st of 2024.

For 150 years, the Westerly Police Department has been committed to safeguarding the lives and property of the citizens of our community.

Their website includes their mission statement which states “*The Westerly Police Department is committed to safeguarding the lives and property of the citizens of our community. The members of the Department uphold the highest of ethical standards while aggressively pursuing law offenders. We are dedicated to serving with a professional and caring approach while respecting the dignity of each individual. Our services will always be rendered with courtesy and compassion in adherence to local and state laws and the United States Constitution.*”

Their motto is **Pride, Integrity, and Commitment.**

Pride - We serve with pride in knowing the excellence we deliver on each and every call for service.

Integrity- We serve with highest level of moral and ethical standards.

Commitment - We are committed to non-bias, professional service to our citizens and visitors.

BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM COLLABORATION



BABCOCK SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM FUNDRAISING AUCTION

Auctioneer Bob Ward will auction items including antiques and collectibles donated by friends of the museum. The auction will be held on the lawn on Saturday, September 16th, at 1 PM. The rain date will be Sunday, September 17th, at 1 PM.

The Babcock-Smith House Museum is a Georgian Mansion (circa 1734) which was the former home of the Babcocks and Smiths. The mansion is elegantly furnished with pieces reflecting the Colonial Babcock years, the Victorian Smith years, and the colonial restoration of 1928. Historians and antique lovers will enjoy all the museum has to offer!

The Museum is open in the off season on Saturdays from 2:00-5:00 PM and group tours available by appointment all year round. The suggested donation is \$5.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children under 12.

The Museum is located at 124 Granite Street and parking is available behind the Museum. For more information, please call (401) 596-5704 or email them at babcocksmithhouse@gmail.com



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to the Board!

We are pleased to announce that we have added a new member to our Executive Board. Please welcome Jane C. Perkins! Jane is an educator who currently teaches in the Education Program at the University of Rhode Island. She is a 25 year veteran of the Watch Hill Fire District and has served as Fire Captain for the past 20 years. She is believed to be the first female fire captain elected in the State of Rhode Island. Jane lives in Westerly with her family. In addition to her love of history, Jane enjoys painting and drawing.

Jane will be coordinating part of our Social Media outreach efforts including our Facebook page and will be assisting with other projects as well. We are happy to have her on the Board!

Welcome Back to the Board!

We are pleased to announce that we have added a new member to our Executive Board. Please welcome back Maria Bernier! She previously served on the Board from 2007 to 2021 and most recently was the Secretary. Maria is a librarian who currently works as the director of the University of Connecticut Avery Point Library. Maria lives in Westerly with her family. In addition to her love of research and history, Maria enjoys gardening and reading fiction.

Maria will be coordinating part of our Social Media outreach efforts including our website and constant contact emails and will be assisting with other projects as well. We are happy to have her on the Board!

Regional Joint Program

As a direct result of our Regional History Fair which we organized and hosted in September of 2022, we have forged strong bonds with several of our neighboring local historical societies. Building on these newly developed and blossoming friendships, the Westerly Historical Society has agreed to co-sponsor another interesting historical program on **Saturday, September 18th, from 2 PM to 4 PM, at the Quonochontaug Grange, located at 5662 Post Road in Charlestown.** The presentation will be focused on the many construction and beautification projects that were completed in the local area by the hard working and dedicated members of the Civilian Conservation Corps. We look forward to seeing you there and we look forward to future joint programs and collaborations with our new friends.

New Additions to Our Archives

The following historical artifacts have been donated recently to further expand the historical collections of the Westerly Historical Society.



Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Tom Gulluscio, four of the original carved ceramic tablets that were set in the concrete of the Cottrell Bridge when it was constructed in 1923 were rescued and donated to the Westerly Historical Society for preservation.

The donation from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation was made following efforts of the Rhode Island Historical Commission to find a suitable home for the artifacts.

The small but vital bridge designated as Bridge #193 carries traffic along Route 91 (Westerly Bradford Road) and allows the waters of the Chapman Swamp to flow freely beneath it. The bridge was removed and replaced with a similar sized bridge last year.

The individual ceramic tablets are approximately 4 inches by 6 inches (the size of a post card) and two remain encased in square foot blocks of concrete cut from the bridge.

We sincerely appreciate the thoughtfulness of the project engineers for seeking us out and offering us the opportunity to preserve and maintain these historical items.

If you are interested in obtaining additional information or arranging for a donation of a Westerly related historical item to our expanding collections, please email our President, Thomas Gulluscio, at whspresident@gmail.com or our Archivist, Zachary Garceau, at whsarchivist@gmail.com

Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries

An Introduction to the Discovering Westerly's Cemeteries Series

This is part one of a planned continuing series of articles that will be published in future editions of the Westerly Historical Society newsletter. The intent of these articles is to provide opportunities for our members and residents to learn about the various historical cemeteries in Westerly, to understand who is buried in them, to recognize how families buried and memorialized their dead, and perhaps most importantly, to prompt the living to remember the sacrifices of our dead.

There are believed to be a total of ninety-six cemeteries in Westerly. While many have been identified and documented by the volunteer efforts of members of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission and other local groups including the Westerly Historical Society, more than twenty have not been found and appear to be lost forever.

According to state records, in addition to the ninety in Westerly, there are approximately 3,425 marked and documented cemeteries in Rhode Island. Most of the documented cemeteries have been marked with numbered signs and corresponding GPS coordinates.

Of the seventy-four cemeteries in Westerly that have been located and marked with signs, some are very well kept and some are in need of just a little tender loving care but many are in need of significant clearing and revitalization. Many of these cemeteries have inscribed stones that are present but often difficult to read due to the ravages of weather and time while many are simply marked by unlettered fieldstone markers. Unfortunately, many of these markers have slowly sunk into the earth during the past hundred years or more and are only a few inches exposed. They can be discovered but only if you look very closely.

Historical Cemeteries are protected by Rhode Island State Law and Westerly Town Ordinances. The town ordinance notes that "the town hereby adopts the following regulations governing the preservation of historic and archaeological burial sites". The ordinance further states that "The Town Council finds that historic and archaeological gravesites possess archaeological and scientific value, often are of great artistic, cultural, and religious significance, and represent for all cultures a respect for the sanctity of human life. It is, therefore, the policy of the Town that marked and unmarked historic cemeteries are to be preserved and are not to be altered or removed except as provided for in this article."

It is interesting to note that possibly in deference to the lack of specific locations and measurements available in the historical records, the town ordinance as well as state law specifically expands the area of all cemeteries and includes an area 25 feet in width around the perimeter of the cemetery.

Many of the cemeteries of Westerly were visited and documented in the 1860's through the diligent and dedicated efforts of Reverend Frederic Denison who travelled the town speaking to residents and documenting their memories.

In the 1868 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", Denison speaks reverently of the burials and numerous graves in Westerly by writing "Among the sacred and eloquent witnesses to the town are the ancient graves and graveyards. One cannot visit these without emotions of tender affection and pious reverence. They are the memorials of the honored and good who nobly toiled for their generation and for us. We are unworthy of name and character if we neglect their tombs."

Denison wondered, "What must have been the feelings of the first settlers here as they opened the earth, in the little valley or on the cleared hillside, near their cabins, to bury their first dead, a father, a mother, a child, or a companion? A first grave in the wilderness was surely dewed with tears. The first small graveyards were indeed holy ground."

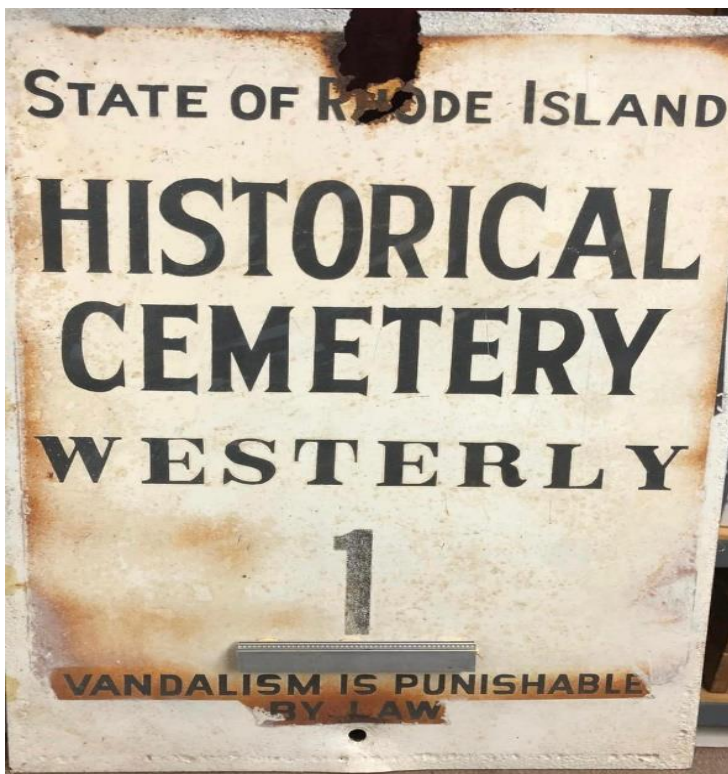
Denison answers the question posed by many as to why many graves were marked only by unlettered fieldstones. “Do any wonder why certain of these graves are without chiseled slabs or full inscriptions? Consider how difficult it was for the first dwellers in a wilderness to procure monumental stones, and workmen skilled in the use of a chisel. In some instances, families sent to England for headstones, and had the inscriptions cut in the mother country. All this was attended with great effort, expense, and delay.”

It is useful to note that granite markers, which dominate many newer graves in the local cemeteries, were not available until approximately 1845 when the first veins of granite were discovered in Westerly and quarried by men like Orlando Smith. Prior to then, large flat unlettered field stones, so named because they were literally found in the fields, were stood up on end and partially buried to mark the graves of the dead. Denison notes with wonder that “When the circumstances of our ancestors in the first planting of the land are carefully considered, we shall often wonder at the care they took in guarding the dust of their dead.”

Denison also answers the question posed by many as to why the older graves were dug so unusually deep by stating in a morbid yet straight forward manner, “And here it may be remarked, as an aid to those who may seek to remove the remains of their fathers, that the first generation of settlers were accustomed to dig their graves to an unusual depth. This was a precautionary measure against the depredations of wolves and other carnivorous wild beasts.”

Interestingly, Denison did not record much information of the burials of small children in Westerly and justifies this decision by writing “We have omitted the records of small children, as such were not influential actors in the town’s life”. This seems to be a strange but perhaps normal indicator of the prevailing attitudes towards death and dying in the late 1800’s.

As we explore the cemeteries of Westerly over the next year in this series of articles, we will learn about the history of our ancestors and about the people who paved the way for us as the original citizens of Westerly. One of the oldest marked grave we have discovered in our journey is of William Champlin who was born in 1654 and passed on December 1st of 1715. Amazingly, his grave marker remains almost completely legible. The small slate marker is very intricately carved with several obscure circular designs as well as what appears to be a skull with wings. The inscription appears to read ‘Here Lyeth the body of William Champlin who died in the 62d year of his age Dec 1st 1715”



This is one of the original porcelain signs that were used to mark historic cemeteries through the state.

The sign was originally located in the cemetery on the South side of Route 1 near Shore Road which is owned and maintained by the Westerly Historical Society.

The sign was replaced many years ago with a new sign and the old sign was saved and is maintained in the collection of the Westerly Historical Society.

Denison noted the intent of documenting the graves was to remember the dead. He wrote “It is hoped, too, that the record may prompt the living to a more pious regard for these places of sepulture.”

We hope to continue the prompting! As noted at the beginning of this article, the intent of this series of articles is to provide opportunities for our members and residents to learn about the various historical cemeteries in Westerly, to understand who is buried in them, to recognize how families buried and memorialized their dead, and perhaps most importantly, to prompt the living to remember the dead.

Unfortunately, the ravages of weather and time over the past hundred years or more have not been kind to the markers in the historic cemeteries. The carvings have become difficult if not impossible to decipher, the carved markers have fallen and been slowly covered by blowing dirt and vegetation, the unlettered field stone markers have slowly sunken into the earth until only a few inches remain visible.

Fortunately, many of these historical markers can still be discovered... but only if you look very closely.

If you choose to visit a historic cemetery, please keep in mind the following recommendations of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission.

Do Park appropriately and respect the neighborhood during your visit.

Do seek permission if needed to cross private land to reach a cemetery.

Do use bug spray, tick repellent, and sunscreen liberally.

Do be conscious of ticks, animals, poison ivy, oak, sumac, and other environmental hazards.

Do take many, many photographs.

Do take a few moments to look around and enjoy the surroundings.

Do take a few moments to remember the souls of those that are buried beneath you.

Do assume that all markers are very fragile and may have internal cracks or damage.

Do Not sit on, lean on, rest on, step on, or touch the old markers. They are very fragile!

Do Not attempt to move, lift, or reset a marker without proper training. Again, they are very fragile!

Do Not leave trash, litter, or any other signs of your visit.

In Washington County, and specifically covering the Westerly area, is a local historical cemetery expert who represents the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission and dedicates hundreds of hours each year to preserving, maintaining, documenting, and literally saving historic cemeteries. Commissioner Larry Hunter is a wealth of knowledge and is very willing to talk with anyone who shares an interest in historical cemeteries.

In fact, if you have any questions regarding the historic cemeteries in Westerly, we highly recommend that you reach out directly to Larry. He is a Westerly resident and is highly regarded as the local historic cemetery expert. He welcomes questions and can be reached at his cell phone number which is 860-485-6776 and his email which is Lphunter53@yahoo.com.

Rhode Island state law provides exemption from liability for private landowners who allow others to access the cemeteries. Section 23-18-10.2B states “A private landowner permitting access over his or her property to a historical cemetery for the purpose of voluntary maintenance or repair of the cemetery shall not be held civilly liable for any breach of duty resulting in injury to the person or damage to the property of those seeking to repair or maintain the cemetery.” The Section provides similar protections to towns and public bodies.

In addition to visiting the cemeteries, opportunities abound for individuals and groups to join in cemetery clean ups and cemetery revitalization efforts. While simply visiting a local cemetery is an opportunity to reconnect with history while enjoying a walk with families or friends, offering to help clean and maintain one provides a strong sense of personal satisfaction and community service.

If you would like to organize your own cemetery clean up, please feel free to contact Larry Hunter for guidance or questions. Again, as noted earlier, if you have any questions at all regarding historic cemeteries in Westerly, we highly recommend that you reach out to Larry.

Frederic Denison noted in his 1868 book that the intent of documenting the graves in his book was to remember the dead. He wrote “It is hoped, too, that the record may prompt the living to a more pious regard for these places of sepulture.”

We hope to continue the prompting! The Westerly Historical Society encourages individuals and groups to visit local historic cemeteries, to join in cemetery clean ups, to assist with cemetery revitalization efforts, to reconnect with history, and to bear witness to the sacrifices of our former residents.

The information for this series of articles on local historical cemeteries was obtained by personal visits to the cemeteries as well as from information obtained from the research of Reverend Denison in the 1860’s, the files of the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission, the personal knowledge of Historic Cemeteries Commissioner Larry Hunter, and information gathered from cemetery neighbors and other local sources.



THOSE PESKY PIES!!!! By Thomas A. O'Connell

The following excerpts are the first part of a four part series that will review the strange and twisted case of the poison pie epidemic which swept through Westerly and Pawcatuck in 1915. It was originally written by Westerly Historical Society member Thomas O'Connell for of his books. The article is shared here with his permission. We thank him for his research and his desire to share the information with others.

Summer 1915 was a great time to be alive!

Here in Westerly the police chief, Thomas E. Brown, posted regulations daily about "Bathing in Public Places" as ordained by the Town Council. *No person shall in the day, unless properly clothed, bathe in any public place or within one-eighth of a mile of any public highway or any street, or make any indecent exposure of his person at any such place or places, upon the penalty of not less than two dollars, no more than fifteen dollars.*

Before the Fourth of July, Police Chief Brown also had printed in the Westerly *Sun* almost in its entirety the Rhode Island state statute entitled "Of Arms and Fireworks" which explained the penalties for the sale and use of fireworks *especially any repeating toy cone for discharging any explosive, any toy pistol or any other toy device designed or used for the discharge of blank cartridges.* There were, of course, fines, if caught and convicted.

Chief Brown's first thought was to protect the townspeople from themselves.

Early in June, the United States Department of Agriculture was behind an article printed in local newspapers dealing with the home care of milk. The Department warned, "The advent of warm weather increases bacteria [in milk]." Its author admonished readers to keep milk cool (50 degrees F.), fly-free, dust-free, and stored in clean vessels. Failure to do so would encourage the growth and rapid multiplication of harmful bacteria.

An informal survey of area temperatures for the months of June through August 1915 registered a range in degrees Fahrenheit from 49 to 94. These numbers yielded an average low of 53 to an average high of 82 degrees.

Life was sumptuous in the downtown district. The Central Theatre at 41 West Broad Street was showing *The Morals of Marcus* starring Marie Dow for the admission price of only ten cents. Central was also giving away free gold pieces and passes on Friday evenings. Not too far away up on Union Street, "The Coolest Place in Town", the Union Theater (formerly the Ancient Order of Hibernians Hall and now the Congregation Sarah Zedek Synagogue) was offering a feature picture and two reels of comedy for a matinee fee of five cents, evenings for ten cents.

Merchants were busily drumming up customers with alluring ads in the local paper. J.F. Barber & Sons on Vincent Lane offered Batavia Tires, "Guaranteed for Four Thousand Miles – Ask the Man Who Used Them." The jeweler Albert L. Castritius at 56 High Street sold gold pocketknives for \$2.00. William H. Goodgeon, opposite the Post Office, listed Betty Brown 3-piece tea sets for \$2.50.

Two sweets shops were attempting to out scoop each other the entire summer. An ice cream merchant, John D. Traggis & Co., known as the Westerly Candy Kitchen on the Bridge, heralded "Safety First" in his store's ad copy. The Westerly Ice Cream Company at 66 High Street, trumped him later in the summer declaring, "Purity First is Safety First". This High Street ice cream purveyor, in addition, boasted, "Our auto delivery always 'Gets There' on time. How much please?"

Chautauqua Week was about to arrive in Westerly during the week of July 15-21. Pre-event publicity announced "It is Westerly's first experience with this form of instruction and healthy amusement and it ought to be the first of an annual event that will bring people from all over this section to Westerly, and will give to the people something that is clean and uplifting to say the least."

(Continued on next page)

THOSE PESKY PIES!!! By Thomas A. O'Connell – Part 1 (Continued)

On the Bridge, there was a popular eating-place called Gavitt's Restaurant. Owner, Alexander R. Gavitt, was renowned for his pies, especially.

Gavitt's Restaurant was so centrally located that it served pie-starved consumers in both Westerly and Stonington with an expansive menu that was both taste buds appealing and eclectic. Folks would stop by of a Sunday morning, for instance, to procure these circular confections for an afternoon's dinner. Driving an automobile to the restaurant meant that customers would disperse with their pies for miles around.

The village of White Rock is a hefty walk from downtown Westerly. People in those days were accustomed to covering many miles on foot. Perhaps that is why on Sunday, July 4, 1915, Timothy J. Sullivan of White Rock didn't mind the distance he had to walk after Mass at Saint Michael the Archangel Church on Liberty Street, Pawcatuck, to Gavitt's Restaurant On the Bridge to select a dessert for his family's dinner. His choice was a cocoanut custard pie. It beamed up at him from the display case, wantonly begging escape. The whole family craved cocoanut custard. Timothy had bought the delicacy there before. He paid clerk Tom Fontana, shouted a greeting to the dishwasher, Jim O'Gara, toiling in the steamy kitchen, waved a goodbye to Ruby Congdon, the waitress, and began at a brisk pace the walk home in the near 80-degree weather.

With a warm smile and a buss, Mrs. Mary Sullivan showed her approval of his confection selection. She placed the pie in her pine and pierced-metal pie safe - to keep the children away until the appropriate time.

It wasn't until later in the afternoon that the family was entitled to dessert. Mrs. Sullivan apportioned pieces to those who still had stomach space. Daughters Julia and Mary enjoyed their portions, as did their father.

Later that Sunday afternoon all three were not feeling that well. A vague nauseous sensation, a rumbling in the tummies. All day Monday the three would retch, frequently, and not in a gentle manner. Unable to effectively swallow liquids they became dehydrated.

Dr. John L. May, with an office at 19 Canal Street, was urgently summoned to the home to assist Mrs. Sullivan who was beyond knowing what to do for her gravely ill family. He examined the trio and queried her as to what the patients had recently eaten. Their symptoms indicated ptomaine poisoning to Dr. May. Mary, the elder daughter's situation was severe, but not beyond recovery. The little girl, Julia, was not expected to pull through. Their father, Timothy, did not. He died Tuesday afternoon, July 6, at the age of 48. He left a wife and six children.

Canal Street is the main road to White Rock, and as such, it was only normal that the Savage family who lived not far from the Sullivans would also telephone Dr. May when family members too experienced unpleasant intestinal discomfort.

One of Patrick Savage's daughters returned home that same Sunday with a cocoanut custard pie from Gavitt's Restaurant. The Savages had company from Monson, Massachusetts. Abbie Savage and James Duggan were stopping for the weekend. Following a pleasant Sunday afternoon dinner with a dessert of the cocoanut custard pie, Mr. and Mrs. Savage, Abbie, and James all fell very ill. Dr. May analyzed the symptoms and diagnosed what would be another four cases of ptomaine poisoning. Ironically, the daughter who purchased the desert, consumed none of it.

Another White Rock resident, Patrick Lynch, who worked as a steward at the Rhode Island Hotel on Broad Street called the hotel from a pay phone to say that he was too ill to report for work. At home for lunch, Patrick had eaten some of Gavitt's cocoanut custard pie and was soon diagnosed as another victim of ptomaine poisoning.

The Westerly *Sun* also reported that Dr. May had treated several others living on Pierce Street for the same symptoms. A sense of fear and uncertainty was spreading quickly throughout town.

Stay Tuned to read part 2 of this series in next month's Newsletter as we learn more about the story of the "Westerly Poison Pie Epidemic".

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 @greysail
 www.greysailbrewing.com

Distillery:

Facebook.com/SouthCountyDistillers
 @southcountydillers
 www.southcountydillers.com

63 Canal Street, Westerly

