



# Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

March 2024

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## Announcements

### THANK YOU!

The Executive Board of the Westerly Historical Society would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of our dedicated members who have generously renewed their membership for 2024! We sincerely appreciate your support!

### MARCH PROGRAM

#### MARCH 13th at 7 PM

We have scheduled a program on March 13th with Christian McBurney who will discuss his new book titled "Machine Guns In Narragansett Bay; The Coast Guard's War On Rum Runners". Christian will present a summary of his book followed by a focus on an incident that occurred off Watch Hill near Napatree Point.

### SAVE THE DATE

We are working on another joint summer program co-sponsored by the Watch Hill Conservancy. The program topic will be on Fort Mansfield and will be presented by Jack Spratt. The date remains to be determined but it is expected to be in late June.

### SEEKING SPEAKERS

We are still seeking speakers to present programs for the society. If you know anyone who is familiar with a particular local history topic and enjoys talking about their passion, please let us know.

*Wednesday Programs Are Held at the Carriage House of the Babcock-Smith House Museum located at 124 Granite Street in Westerly, RI  
Free Admission ~Free Refreshments*

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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 with numerous historical  
artifacts and an extensive photographic collection.

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<https://www.facebook.com/WesterlyHistoricalSociety/>

## President's Corner

*Thomas J. Gulluscio, Jr.*

Hello Friends,

Welcome to the March edition of Westerly's Witness. Our new newsletter editor Bob Peacock has settled into his new role quite well and I'm sure you will all agree that Westerly's Witness continues to be our best member benefit and a real treat to peruse each month.

This month we are looking for nominations for our Annual History Award. This award is co-sponsored by our friends at the Babcock - Smith House Museum. The history award nomination form can be found here in this newsletter or on either of our websites.

Speaking of nominations, the Executive Board of the Westerly Historical Society has made our selection of the 2024 recipient of the Julia Award. our prestigious award to a person or persons who contribute greatly to the preservation, recording, or researching of our local history.

We are more than pleased to share with you that this year's selection is Joseph Fusaro. Joe has presented several times for the society and continues to research for future publications and programs.

Please join us on May 22nd at the Haversham for our annual dinner meeting and congratulate Joe in person. Tickets will be on sale soon.

My best to you all,

Tom

## EDITOR'S NOTES

*Robert Peacock*

*Thank you to Thomas O'Connell for allowing us to print excerpts of a chapter from one of his books this month. An additional excerpt on a related topic will be in next month's newsletter as well.*

*We always welcome newsletter submissions by our members and we encourage you to consider writing an article for inclusion.*

***As always, this is your newsletter!***

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***We sincerely appreciate their support!!!***

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



**WESTERLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AND  
BABCOCK-SMITH HOUSE MUSEUM  
ANNUAL HISTORY AWARD**



**APPLICATION AND / OR NOMINATION FORM**

An annual award of up to \$500.00 will be given to a person or persons, grade 5 through adulthood, who furthers the mission of researching, studying, and/or preserving local history in our community. Secondary consideration will be given to someone who exhibits a passion for history unrelated to the local community.

Applications are available online at [www.babcocksmithhouse.org](http://www.babcocksmithhouse.org) or [www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org).

Application or nomination must be submitted by April 1 by direct mail to Westerly Historical Society, PO Box 91, Westerly, RI 02891 or by email to [whspresident@gmail.com](mailto:whspresident@gmail.com).

Name of candidate:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

If this is a nomination, please list your name and contact information:

Please describe below the candidate's contribution to local history research, study, or preservation.

Additional supporting information may also be submitted, **but will not be returned.**

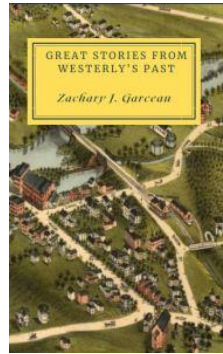


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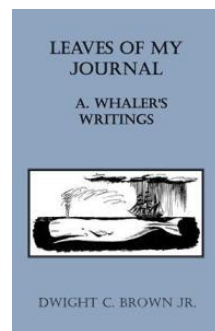
**Notes**

After we published information in January about the books written by Thomas O'Connell, a member asked what other books were available for sale. Please visit our website for more information on ordering.



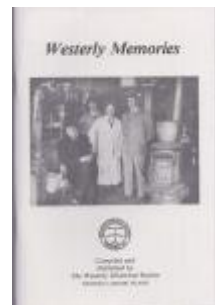
**Great Stories from Westerly's Past**

By Zachary J. Garceau  
A unique look into the Westerly's storied history offering more than 60 articles covering the people, places, and events of the last 350 years that have made Westerly the town it is today.  
Price .....\$20.00



**Leaves of My Journal**

By Dwight C. Brown Jr.  
A series of articles published in the 1861 Narragansett Weekly and written by the anonymous 'A. Whaler,' recounting a two-year whaling voyage during the 1840s as a first-hand account.  
Price .....\$10.00



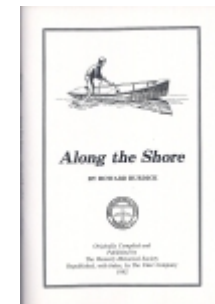
**Westerly Memories**

By Westerly Historical Society.  
Published in 1989, these articles were presented to the historical society by various authors in the 1940s and 1950s. The book also includes historic photos.  
Price.....\$10.00



**Veterans War Stories**

By Westerly Historical Society.  
Dozens of recollections of their military service by Westerly veterans with photographs of them in uniform.  
Price.....\$8.00



**Along the Shore**

By Howard Burdick.  
A compilation of "Letters to the Editor" of the Westerly Sun written by Howard Burdick, Sr., between 1930 and 1987.  
Price.....\$8.00

## New Additions to Our Archives

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

As always, we sincerely appreciate any and all Westerly related donations!

As noted last month, recent donations to our expanding historical archives include a collection from Mr. David Rathbun. The collection included this very unassuming scrapbook labeled “Cross Street / Wells Street” which has many before and after photos of sections of each road during a reconstruction project as well as photos of the work in progress. Examples are below.



“Gutter and Road Condition From Granite Street Looking West”

*Above Photo on Right is Before and Above Photo on Left is After*



“Unloading 36 Inch Tile Pipe”

“Note – Each Section of Pipe Weighing Approximately 1500 Pounds”

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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's Cemeteries

## Westerly Cemetery # 020 - The Niantic Lot

There were reportedly forty burials in this historic cemetery which is approximately fifty feet by fifty feet and contains 17 stones with inscriptions. The most recent known burial was in 1919 and the oldest known burial was in 1828. Included in the cemetery are the remains of the following individuals:

Almedia Crandall, born in 1861 and passed in 1919.

John E. Crandall, born in 1827 and passed in 1888. John was a veteran of the Civil War.

Mary E. Crandall, born in 1830 and passed in 1913.

Amy K. Saunders, born in 1810 and passed in 1906.

Ann Saunders, born in 1835 and passed in 1869.

Catherine Saunders, wife of John A., born in 1789 and passed in 1842.

Daniel B. Saunders, born in 1805 and passed in 1837.

Fanny Saunders, born in 1808 and passed in 1903.

Fanny Saunders, wife of Samuel, born in 1783 and passed in 1849.

James H. Saunders, son of John A. and Catherine, born in 1829 and passed in 1854.

(Note - James died in Baltimore and is interred in a Baltimore Cemetery but has a marker in this cemetery.)

John A. Saunders, son of Stephen and Tacy, born in 1788 and passed in 1832.

Maria L. Saunders, born in 1857 and passed in 1858.

Mary Ann Saunders, born in 1812 and passed in 1891.

Samuel Saunders, born in 1807 and passed in 1881.

Samuel Saunders, born in 1780 and passed in 1872.

Stephen Saunders, born in 1749 and passed in 1839. John was a veteran of the Revolutionary War.

Tacy Saunders, wife of Stephen, born in 1755 and passed in 1828.

According to the 1878 book by Frederic Denison, "Westerly and Its Witnesses", the cemetery was recorded in the 1860's as "lies south of Doorville, on a knoll, about 30 rods south of the Seventh Day Baptist meeting house on lands of Samuel Saunders, Jr., in a pasture enclosed by a fence." At that time, he noted that it was referred to as the "Saunders Ground" and also had "inscribed stones of children" and "a few unlettered graves"

The cemetery is located on the right side of Wayland Street at the end approximately five hundred feet in from Route 91. The cemetery is approximately thirty feet in from the road and is enclosed by rough cut granite pillars and a metal fence.



Access is gained from Wayland Street by traveling through light brush from the road to an opening in the fence on the right side of the cemetery. The interior of the cemetery is covered in a deep layer of fallen leaves and is infested with dense vines and bull briars making interior access very difficult especially in the spring and summer seasons.

For those using GPS, the cemetery is located at 41 Degrees, 23 minutes, and 46.9 seconds North by 71 degrees, 44 minutes, and 49.2 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 thirty feet in from the road and is enclosed by rough cut granite pillars and an old rusted chain link metal fence with a gate on the side closest to Route 91.***





*The interior of the cemetery is covered in a deep layer of fallen leaves and is infested with dense vines and bull briars making interior access very difficult especially in the spring and summer seasons.*





*A substantial amount of brush cutting and debris removal is needed to allow better access to this cemetery.*

**The following is an excerpt of a chapter in one of Thomas O'Connell's books printed with his permission.**

In Westerly. It is Friday, May 15, 1931. Fill your senses with the sights and sounds and smells of a late spring afternoon. The days are longer and warmer. It has been a very polar winter. Just now with the sun is dipping a little closer to the horizon. The neighborhood kids are wending their ways home. They have been enjoying the after school hours outside playing games with their friends. They're not quiet about it. Their loud play-happy voices and the baaang of kitchen's screen door slamming against its frame boisterously proclaims their return home to be fed.

Suddenly, there on the kitchen table, one of them spies the Westerly Sun, folded, as if by chance, to reveal in very large headlines a story that would hold their interest for some time to come. Their curiosity was piqued by this lengthy bold print announcement – US CHAMPION MAY LIVE HERE IN WESTERLY – MARBLE SHOOTERS WILL HAVE THEIR FIRST ELIMINATION SATURDAY –INTEREST SHOWN – BEST FIVE BOYS or GIRLS WILL GO TO PROVIDENCE NEXT WEEK. Boys and girls all over town began to read the story under the headlines and dreamed and planned and wondered...

The Palestine Temple, Mystic Shrine of Rhode Island, tomorrow at 2:30 p.m., will hold a play off to determine who the local marble champs are. Be at the High Street athletic field [Craig Field\*]. All that is required of the kids was that they be under 15 years of age. The Shriners will provide the marbles. Their parents know that it is all for a good cause. The Shriners were well known for their support of crippled children, just as Shriners today respected for their concern for burn victims.

Medals will be awarded to the five best finalists. In addition, the Westerly Sun reported “the best five contestants will be given a chance to compete for the Southern New England Championship to be held at the Shrine Circus at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet in Providence [Cranston] next week.” What's the catch? No catch. It's all free, for nothing.

It's been at least several generations since most school children have played marbles. Manual dexterity today is measured by success with a Gameboy or other computerized games. This writer's adolescence lacked an episode with marbles, so Fred Sturner will have to explain the game before this article continues.

Fred Sturner (What Did You Do When You Were A Kid? Pastimes from Past Times) recalls fond memories of marble games he played as a youth. Back then, “marbles came in all sizes, colors and were made of various elements.” Some of the sizes he discusses are KABOLAS, oversized marbles the size of jawbreaker bubblegum balls. Kabolas were made of glass in a kaleidoscope of colors. STEELIES or pinballs were extracted from the amusement arcade machines. JUMBOS were smaller than steelies and made of glass. The regular or average marbles measure about a half inch in diameter. And some smaller marbles called PEEWEES or MIBBIES.

The game presented below is most likely the one Westerly kids played.

The second game we played with marbles was played on a patch of dirt between the sidewalk and the street. A circle was made about 12 to 15 inches in circumference. In it each kid placed five or six marbles. Then each kid in turn would shoot his marble by placing it between his thumb and forefinger and propelling the marble with a forward motion of his thumb. The idea was to use this one marble referred to as a shooter to knock as many marbles out of the circle and thereby keep those that you hit out for yourself, providing that the shooter itself did not get stuck in the circle. If yours was stuck in the circle you left it behind and you started from the original shooting line, which was usually six feet from the circle. Then again you went in turn, shooting your marble, trying to retrieve as many as you could. Sometimes you put a steelie in the middle, making it quite impossible to move out of the circle unless the shooter had another steelie.

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**



Of course, you always took the chance that someone could hit your steelie out and keep it. If you knocked any marble out of the circle you would continue shooting until you missed, at which time the next person would go. When your turn came around again, you would shoot from the last place you landed. If your opponent yelled “knuckles down tight” before you could pick up your marble to shoot, you had to shoot while keeping your knuckles flat on the ground, and your fingers close together. Otherwise you could elevate your hand and shoot from any height you desired. When the last marble was knocked out of the circle you would start over again, putting new marbles in, calling Larry to see who was first and so on down the line.

Early Saturday afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup>, parents, relatives, pets, cars, trucks, and kids converged on the High Street Athletic Field. No doubt, there were more than a few wicker picnic baskets crammed with thick homemade sandwiches, fruit, baked goods, and cool drinks. It would appear that a large part of the town's North End turned out to cheer their kids on.

Bringing order to this tumultuous event was John Farnsworth who “was in charge of the local tournament and much credit is due him for the fine manner in which he ran the tourney.” He skillfully arranged the 150 youngsters into five groups. Everyone quickly got into the spirit of things. Defeat meant elimination from the tournament. At the end of two hours the five winners were declared.

The boys who gained the title of champion were Everett Peduzzi, 12, of 6 Haswell Street; Joseph Barboza, 14, of Rose Avenue; Beppo Muntimuri, 14, of 72 Pierce Street; Pasquale Iacoi, 13, of Marion Avenue and Peter Wucik, 14 of John Street. The winners were presented silver medals and a fresh supply of marbles to practice with in preparation for the State Preliminaries at the Shriners Circus at Rhodes.

On Tuesday, May 19, two of the Westerly boys came through the Preliminaries unscathed. Beppo Muntimuri Decisively defeated Vasso Polli of Pawtucket in only two games 9-4, 11-2. Pasquale Iacoi triumphed over Leo Spaziorio of North Providence 11-2, 13-0. The other three Westerly boys were not quite so fortunate. Joseph Barboza fell to Nesto Casorilli of Providence 13-0, 13-0. Everett Peduzzi was bested by T. Rossi of Pawtucket 13-0, 9-4. While Peter Wucik was narrowly defeated by Hector Marcotte of North Attleboro 8-5, 7-6.

Because of their successes on Thursday night, it looked as though one of the Westerly lads might have a berth in the State Finals. Although Beppo Muntimuri lost his first match with Nestore Cosovilli of Providence 6-7, he came back to win the next two out of three games in that set 10-3, 9-4. Pasquale Iacoi had little difficulty eliminating Joseph Travers of Bristol, 10-3, 12-1.

As fate would have it, both Muntimuri and Iacoi were to lose in the quarterfinals on Saturday afternoon, May 23. The boys played valiantly forcing their opponents to best two out of three sets. Edmund La Rue of Bristol defeated Beppo Muntimuri 11-2, 3-10, 10-3. Westerly's nemesis Hector Marcotte of North Attleboro had to deploy all his skills to roll by Pasquale Iacoi 6-7, 7-6, 7-6.

The Tournament Champ was Edmund LaRue, a student at St. Mary's School in Bristol, who exclaimed, “Gee!” in excitement at the achievement. Judge Antonio Capotosto presented LaRue with his prizes at the first evening performance of the Shrine Circus. The prizes included a gold medal, a silver cup both courtesy of the Palestine Shriners, and a complete outfit of clothes from the Outlet Company of Providence, as well as a trip to Ocean City, NJ to participate in the national finals.

### **NOTES**

**The name of the High Street Athletic Field was changed to Wallace Charles Craig Field in 1934. Craig, a 1916 graduate of Westerly High School, was the first Westerly boy to die in the service of his country in World War I. He served in the U.S. Navy.**

**Nesto Casorilli and Nestore Cosovilli are most likely the same youth. Spelling errors occurred in newspapers from time to time.**

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