



# *The Babcock-Smith House Museum*

## *Newsletter*

Volume 11 Number 1

Spring 2015

### *Granite Exhibit Nearly Ready*

*Saturday, May 23, 1 PM*

If you don't have a good definition for "light years," we have one for you. Open House 2014 featured a big hole in the ground. This year's Open House on May 23 will be "light years" ahead of that situation. We encourage you to explore some of the many areas that will be open for "show and tell" in our newly completed addition.

A brief dedication service will be held at 1 pm, at which time a plaque recognizing major donors for the addition will be unveiled and tradespeople will be acknowledged.

#### Granite Exhibit

The most exciting development will be the granite exhibit which is being built. Two areas, the shed and the quarry, are substantially finished, but without explanatory text and graphics. Dominating all is the illusion of a shed, built by Ed Fazio, and featuring a 6' by 8' photo

of the Newall Shed produced by Printing Plus. John Coduri, Tony Smith, Harry Bjorkland and Ed Fazio brought in the tool rack, Cosmo Ruga's toolbox, and, without the greatest of ease, the large stone which sits on its wooden support. Then, having completed that challenge, they brought up a heavy chain, a detonator, a 3-foot high pulley and other tools for the quarry section.

David Read repainted the display cases lent to us by the Library, which now house a prototype display of the transitions in manufacturing a monument. The third area will feature large color photographs of iconic finished products and some large pieces.

#### Other Open House Features

As if that isn't enough, we urge visitors to visit the loft which houses our textile collection, new office space, and the second floor library with its collection of local history volumes. Also open will be the new 30' by 12' vault in the cellar where visitors can see the books and photographs stored there.

The Westerly Historical Society, which moved its holdings from the library to its new vault here, will also have that open.

A new exhibit in the Isaac Smith Room, researched and created by Ann Smith of the WHS, will be open to the public for the first time. The steamboats pictured were partially owned by Orlando Smith. The large framed photographs were a gift from Carolyn Burkhardt when she closed her restaurant where they were hanging. Half hull models from Ike Smith are also on display. A brochure highlighting the exhibit has been prepared by high school sophomore Emily Allen.

Docents will provide free tours of the museum house and some tasty refreshments.



Ed Fazio, Tony Smith, Harry Bjorkland and John Coduri (hidden) move the stone into place onto the stonecutter's banker.

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## Tool Conference

The Museum was thrilled to host the Early American Industries Association (EAIA) for their regional meeting on Saturday, April 18. Paul Wood, noted expert on tools, presented the main address on *Tools and Machinery That Created the Granite Industry*.

Tailgaters bought and sold tools to each other in the parking lot from 8-9 am. Participants then cycled through four events: a quick tour of the museum given by Tony Smith, an identification session with tools in the cellar of the house, a presentation of the holdings of the vault guided by Brenda Linton, and a brief 1920's documentary on rock-drilling and the trailer for the PBS documentary *Carved From Stone: Legacy of a Granite Town*.



Mary Cool and Jan Tunney prepared a unique denim bag lunch, topped off with tool-shaped dark chocolates, dusted with cocoa powder to resemble rusted tools, made by Hauser Chocolates.

## 50<sup>th</sup> Candlelight Dinner Celebration

Docents celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Candlelight Dinner by treating themselves to an evening of potluck hors d'oeuvres at the home of Carolyn Longolucco who has orchestrated these dinners since 2003. Tony and Cheryl Spino of Dunn's Corners Market have been supplying the tenderloin, which draws sighs of appreciation each time it is served. Thanks to all who have participated.

## Our Highboy Documents New Find

Recently, Arthur Liverant, of Nathan Liverant and Sons, noted dealer of high-end Connecticut and New England antiques since 1920, called the museum to ask if he could re-examine our John Wheeler Geer highboy made somewhere between 1780 and 1795. Of course we said yes, and he came to compare it with a recently discovered highboy with an impeccable provenance from Preston, CT.



Liverant wanted to present it as a surprise at the New York Winter Antiques show, but first he wanted to see how similar it was to ours. How excited he was to see that exactly the same hand had made both. Ours was "ebonized" or darkened during the Victorian era and is a darker color than his presently more popular lighter color, but it was essentially the same highboy. A recent call to the antiques dealer confirmed that his highboy had found a new home.

## You and Amazon Can Help Us

Amazon Smile is a program by which Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization selected by an Amazon customer.

The Orlando R. Smith Trust, dba the Babcock-Smith House Museum, is a registered beneficiary and the procedure to benefit our museum is fairly simple.

1. Go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). Create an account by entering your email and Amazon password.
2. If you are new to Smile, choose your charity by searching for "Orlando Smith."
3. Select "Trust U/Will Of Orlando R Smith."
4. If you already use Smile and wish to change your charity, there is a "change your charity" option under the "Your Account" dropdown tab.
5. Start shopping.

You must shop from [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) in order to give the museum credit for your purchases.

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*Donors to the Carriage  
House addition are  
recognized on page 2.*

Our thanks extend to all our members who have contributed their time, talent and other gifts to the Babcock-Smith House Museum. We have made every attempt to make the list accurate as of January 2015. Please inform us of any errors.

**Become a Member**

Mail to: Babcock-Smith House Museum, c/o  
Ellen Madison, 149 South Woody Hill Road,  
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I would like information on: \_\_\_ candlelight dinners for 12 \_\_\_ including the Museum in my estate plan

My donation will be matched by \_\_\_\_\_

## Popular Programs Bring Crowds

We were both stunned and pleased when we looked at our 2014 statistics to discover that we had presented programs to 863 people. Of course, some of those are our very much appreciated "regulars," but the variety of programs also attracted first-timers. So far in 2015, we have presented programs to 324 people: the biggest crowd by far was one of 92 folks at the Wheeler Library for the North Stonington Historical Society, and that was a program rescheduled due to snow. Folks were sitting on tables and the floor as well as on chairs.

From tractors to protecting personal data, our expanded space means that people don't have to stand during our programs in the Carriage House. Just this year, Harry and Maureen Bjorkland drew the antique tractor aficionados while Chris Allen helped us all understand the various means of protecting our data. Judge Frank Williams brought his coterie of Lincoln lovers while Betty-Jo Cugini showed us why she is so respected in the field of media. Linda Chaffee's Palm Sunday program on The Gospel in Granite brought a new awareness to the way that granite can help express one's faith. Bruce Brawley shared his expertise and knowledge of stone walls. All these speakers are members of the museum and prove what a wealth of talent we have.

Videos of past programs are available from the home page of the museum website. Program schedule is continually updated, so please check the website events page.

## Library Loan Enables Easier Research

Thanks to a long-term loan of granite materials from the Westerly Public Library, the records of the Westerly granite industry have been consolidated in the museum's vault.



Order books from the New England Granite Works (pictured), Smith Granite Company, and the Joseph Newell Company are now available in one place. Photographs from the Library join with the photos from the Babcock-Smith House to provide the most comprehensive collection of Westerly granite photos ever amassed. At one location researchers are able to find primary sources and both contemporary and historical photographs. In conjunction with a previous loan from the Library, which included the material that was part of the Library's granite exhibit, the recent loan enhances a broad picture of the industry. Many of the items are part of the exhibit at the Carriage House addition.

Heartfelt thanks especially to Brigitte Hopkins, Nina Wright, and Alan Peck for their assistance in making this loan a reality.

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## Snippets

Volunteers are needed as greeters (no knowledge of museum required) and tour guides for the summer season. We can always use volunteers to help with A Celebration of Trees, Joshua's Store, newsletter, and textiles. If you don't see your talent listed, just ask us.

The RIPBS DVD, *Carved from Stone: Legacy of a Granite Town*, is available at Classic Framers, owned by museum member Lido Mochetti, in downtown Westerly. It may also be ordered through the museum's website.

*A Tour of Westerly Granite* DVD, featuring commentary on the iconic granite buildings, such as the Town Hall, Christ Episcopal Church, the library and the present Westerly Land Trust building, will be available for \$10 at the museum.

Mary Ann McCarty is planning a docent outing for Thursday, June 25 with a tour of the 1767 General William Hart House in Old Saybrook and lunch at the Black Seal.

On February 23 snow could not keep volunteers at home: Ann and Ed working in the library on steamboats, Jackie in the loft doing textiles, Susan and Brenda in the vault working on Sullivan Granite Company photos, and Ellen and Linda inventorying the Library loan.

## National Magazine Features Museum

Last fall, a stranger from Ohio spent an entire day adjusting lights, curtains, and camera settings inside the museum and on our grounds. That solitary endeavor resulted in eight pages of glorious photographs and an accompanying story by Winn Ross in the June issue of *Early American Life*, a magazine with a large national distribution, catering to those interested in early homes and history.

It is no secret that every small house museum—and even large ones—face the challenge of keeping alive. Loved by locals, but unknown to folks beyond village boundaries, these house museums must find their niches in order to survive and then thrive. A second story, written by Trustee Ellen Madison, addressed this challenge and shared some of the techniques which have worked for us, while freely admitting that we don't always succeed at doing what we know we should.

Now, members from Colorado to California who cannot visit frequently can see the house as it is in living color. This



national exposure should increase our visibility and subsequent attendance. Copies of the magazine can be obtained online at [EarlyAmericanLife.com](http://EarlyAmericanLife.com) or at Joshua's Store while the copies last.

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## Did You Know These Letters Existed?

### Excerpts from Letters Sent to Joshua Babcock from Benjamin Franklin Yale University Library

London, Dec. 10, 1761

I have been favour'd with yours by your valuable Sons (Colonel Henry and probably Luke), on whose promising Worth I congratulate you and good Mrs. Babcock. I should be glad to see them oftner than I do. But young Men find in England, Amusements more agreeable than Company of old ones. The Colonel (Henry) is gone down with my Son to Bath, where I last Night had the Pleasure of hearing they were both well.

Philada, Dec. 16, 1762

. . . I rejoice with you likewise in the safe Return of your two valuable Sons, to whom, on Account of their own Merit as well as the Obligations I am under to you, I wish it had been in my Power to have been any way serviceable. Be so good as to assure them of my best Respects and Wishes, which also attend Mrs. Babcock and the other branches of your good Family. I hope to have the Pleasure next Summer of seeing you all once more, in a Journey I purpose to Boston. I shall ever retain a grateful Remembrance of your Hospitality, and of the pleasing Hours I have pass'd in your Conversation and with your most agreeable Family; and I long for a Repetition of that delightful Entertainment.

Boston, Sept. 5, 1763

Returning hither from Portsmouth, I find your agreeable Favour of Aug. 19. containing your kind Invitation to Westerly, where I am sure I could pass some Days with great Pleasure; but doubt whether it will be in my Power. . . the Happiness I should enjoy in your Conversation, and in the true, ancient, cordial Hospitality, with which you and good Mrs. Babcock always entertain your Friends.

Newport, Oct. 18. 1763

We are set out this day, so as to lodge at Cases' tonight, and purpose to take a bed under your hospitable Roof the (next) Night, if not cast away among the dangerous Rocks of your Coast.

Philada. Nov. 10. 176

Dear Friend

Your Goodnature will be pleas'd to hear that your Guests went on well after they left you. . . Sally joins in grateful Remembrance of your many Civilities and Kindnesses to us, at your House and on the Road;

London, Jan. 13. 1772

It was with great Pleasure I learnt by Mr. Marchant, that you and Mrs. Babcock and all your good Family continue well and happy. I hope I shall find you all in the same State when I next come your Way, and take shelter as often heretofore under your hospitable Roof. The Colonel (Henry) I am told, continues an active and able Farmer, the most honourable of all Employments, in my Opinion as being the most useful in itself, and rendering the Man most independent. My Namesake, his Son, (Joshua's grandson, Benjamin Franklin Babcock) will soon I hope be able to drive the Plough for him.

Babcock-Smith House Museum  
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## Upcoming Events

All events are held at the Carriage House. Non-members \$2 until September 1, after that \$5; members free.

### ***Museum Open House and Granite Exhibit Preview***

Saturday, May 23, 2015, 1 pm

Preview the new Westerly Granite Exhibit, explore the new addition, see the new home of the Westerly Historical Society, tour the museum and savor refreshments served by our docents.

### ***Two Years in China***

Sunday, June 14, 2015, 2 pm

Elizabeth Fitzroy joined the Peace Corps when she was 57 and spent two years living in a town in Ganzu Province where she taught English in a local college. She will share her experiences living in China and interacting with the Chinese people.

### ***Some Wisdom on Staying Healthy as You Grow in Years***

Tuesday, July 7, 2015, 7 pm

Phil Clark, Professor of Gerontology at URI, will lead us in a discussion of all the ways we can stay healthy as we get older.

### ***Lessons from Sculpture***

Tuesday, July 21, 7 pm

Linda Chaffee, granite historian, will feature Westerly granite monuments in four of the five boroughs of New York City and illustrate how they document our history from our infancy through World War I.

### ***Downton Abbey: Fashion and Social Change***

Thursday, August 13, 2015, 7 pm

Susan Jerome, textile expert from URI, will explore the social, technological, and political changes that occurred throughout the time period depicted in *Downton Abbey* and how these changes influenced fashion.

### ***Connecting the Threads of History Through Quilts***

Tuesday, August 25, 7 pm

Barbara Barber, nationally known quilter, will present a program marked with her creativity and sense of humor.

### ***Westerly and Its Business (1878)***

Sunday, September 20, 2015, 2 pm

Using an 1878 *Narragansett Weekly* article as his guide, Lido Mochetti will share photos and stories of 1878 businesses and people, including the Fat Man's Club, hotels, mills, and the granite industry.

### ***Little Rhody and the Other 49***

Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 7 pm

Roberta Mudge Humble will tout Rhode Island but offer an eye and earful of the other 49 states, as well. It is meant to both entertain and inform. The audience will realize Rhode Island to be a state as significant as any other – all in the very best of ways.