

Chatham Bars Inn

AT THE ATWOOD HOUSE

by Spencer Grey

Between 1707 and 1839, the land that is now the Chatham Bars Inn was the Sears Farm, originally established by Squire Richard Sears (1749-1839) in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Extending from Main Street by the present war memorial to the eastern shore, the land was used for raising cattle and sheep before being divided into smaller parcels and sold to individuals.

In 1912 a wealthy Boston stockbroker, Charles Hardy, believing the land could be put to better use, began acquiring the lots so that he could fulfill his hope of building a hunting lodge for those who might wish to enjoy hunting the abundant game on Monomoy Point. But by the time he completed his project, he had created a large and luxurious inn that he named Chatham Bars Inn.

When it opened on June 14, 1914, the complex consisted of the main inn, nine cottages, a golf course, a garage for the guests' cars, and a dormitory for chauffeurs on Chatham Bars Inn avenue. The guests who attended the grand opening found an elegant hotel that proudly advertised "plastered, soundproof rooms with electric lights, steam heat, long distance telephone in every room and private bathrooms with both fresh and ocean water baths." As the manager, Hardy hired Nat Eldredge, the former manager of the Chatham Beach Hotel that had been located near Inward Point on Monomoy but was torn down when the ocean crept dangerously near its foundation.

So that the guests would be assured of fresh produce and dairy products, Charles Hardy established a 25-acre farm on the land now used by the Chatham Agway store. As a result the inn could boast of cuisine that was considered "the best of New England cooking with special attention to sea foods." Because there was no town water at that time, Hardy built wells that fed two large water towers behind the inn, and a pump to feed that water to the main building and cottages. Another water tower and pump were located near the water, along with a pump to feed salt water to the guests' bathrooms.

In 1915 a long pier was constructed that stretched from the hotel beach across a shallow body of water to a sandbar that fronted the ocean, making it possible for guests to enjoy the calm, warm waters in the sheltered bay as well as the cool ocean water on the outside. Over the years the sandbar eroded, making the pier no longer necessary.

Because he feared that the town of Chatham offered too few amusements to attract guests to his inn, Hardy, along with other investors, funded the construction of the Eastward Ho! Golf Club, which opened in 1922, and was available to the public but with special privileges for guests of the inn. In addition, he had the "brick building" constructed on Main Street to attract more merchants to town. He also restored the Godfrey Mill on the hill above the Mill Pond so that it would be a tourist attraction.



