

The Bearses

AT THE ATWOOD HOUSE

by spencer grey

Although not as prevalent as the Nickersons and the Eldredges, the Bearses have long been a notable family in Chatham, as we know from Bearer's Store that once occupied the building that is now Kennedy Studios, and Bearer's Garage that is now Chatham Ford.

Prominent in the early years of the Chatham Historical Society, Eleanor Bearer Henderson served there for many years as the curator, collecting and maintaining the many documents and artifacts that make up its collection. A lifetime in Chatham provided her with many memories of years gone by, including the trains that left for Boston every morning and pulled into the Depot every afternoon, at which time hordes of children would furiously ride their bicycles to the station to see the excitement. Among her memories are those of the men who once hawked their wares in town, such as the shoe salesman, the scissors grinder, the eyeglass vendor, and the organ grinder with his monkey. Soon after marrying Bud Henderson, she and he established the Mitchell River Marina and operated it for many years. One memory from her years of selling fish from the Marina is of the Canadians who believed that something was wrong with the lobsters they were about to buy because they were green and not red.

She assisted Bud Henderson with his charter excursions, and during one of them she hooked a large striped bass that pulled her overboard while she clung tenaciously to the line. When making her way back to the boat, she encountered a shark but fortunately it ignored her. On another such trip while they were taking two men out to Monomoy for fishing, she noticed that they were carefully holding on to a box. When they saw her looking at it, they warned her not to jostle it as it held dynamite.

Eleanor's brother, Winfield M. or Winnie Bearer, loved fishing and spent many hours hunting and fishing on Monomoy Point, which he considered paradise. Winnie first went to Monomoy when he was 17 to help repair the Coast Guard Station and to move it away from the encroaching sea that constantly was washing away the beach. He had a camp at Inward Point, about eight miles out on Monomoy, where he and his friends gathered for fishing—both fin fishing and shellfishing. About once a month he and his friends would hire a plane to fly them out there, which they continued to do until they were well into their 70s.

When he first went to Monomoy, there were as many as 30 shacks occupied in the summer by fishermen and their families. In those days men carried their families and their fishing equipment out to the Point on horse-drawn barges that had wheels with wide tires so that they would not sink into the sand. At one time Inward Point was so heavily occupied that they opened a school for children.

Today there are no villages on Monomoy Point— only birds, seals, and fishermen.



