

THE BRUCE FAMILY OF SMITHS ISLAND, MD. Scottish & ENGLISH DESCENT

JOHN FRANKLIN BRUCE B. 1863 - D. Oct.1, 1941 - 78 Years

TEENIE MARSHALL B. 1875 - D. ----- 1931 - 56 Years

Captain John (Johnny) Bruce of Scottish Ancestry, is believed to have been raised in a New York City orphanage, later as a young man found his way to Westmoreland County, Va. (on the lower shores of the Potomac River), worked as a farm hand for several years, near Colonial Beach. There is evidence that later at the age of 27, John Bruce began working as a crewman aboard the oyster schooner "J.A.Mahoney" owned and Captained by William Harrison Bradshaw who was born on Hollands Island, and came to Smiths Island as a boy of 17, after his father Jacob Bain Bradshaw was drowned in Chesapeake Bay, when his schooner sank in 1858. There were hundreds of full crewed sailing oyster dredging schooners, pungys, and bugeyes in the late 1800s. As many as five thousand men worked on these vessels catching more than twelve million bushels of oysters during the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Boom years in the 1880s and 90s.

Smiths Island had a total of 20 oyster schooners, and pungys during the "oyster boom" years. Some of them worked in the Potomac River just off of Colonial Beach where young Bruce lived and worked. However, about the year 1890, the "call of the sea" beckoned him, and he became a seaman aboard the J.A..Mahoney, one of the Smiths Island schooners that dredged oysters in the Potomac, and sometimes harbored in the Upper Machodic Creek, above Colonial Beach. The oyster vessels from Smiths Island spent many weeks away from the island dredging the Bay, and the rivers, but occasionally would sail homeward for short periods of time where the oystermen could be with their families and friends for awhile

Subsequently, during one of the return voyages to Smiths Island by the "J.A.Mahoney" crewman Bruce met, and later fell in love with a very young lady Elpitina (Teenie) Marshall. Teenie was the eldest daughter of the 7 children born to William (Billy) and Margaret Ann Tyler Marshall of Drum Point (Tylerton). John began courting Teenie each time that the "J.A. Mahoney" returned to the island between voyages. Its believed that they were married about the year 1893, when John was 30, and Teenie was 18. John continued to work with Capt. Bradshaw dredging oysters untill about the year 1899. (There's no record of the Bruce Family in the 1900 Smiths Island census). But the first two children of John and Teenie Mary Ella born c/a 1894 and Carson H. Sr. born in 1897, were probably born at Tylerton, on Smiths Island.

After about 8 years of dredging oysters with Capt. Bradshaw on the "J.A.Mahoney, John Bruce apparently decided to move his new family, back to the shores of the Potomac at Colonial Beach. This turned out to be a good move, because the large oyster catches in the Bay began to decline in the early 1900s. In the meantime, another son named Ollie was born to John & Teenie in 1902, at Colonial Beach. John, who had acquired some experience at working on the water, continued working on, and around the waters of the Potomac River for a living. Sometime later, he purchased a river-boat to transport passengers across various Creeks, and crossing points, on the Potomac.