

# *Doctors Graham & Proctor and their farm*



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## **Another look at Door County**

There were approximately three distinct periods of glaciation that are responsible for the general characteristics of the surface of the Peninsula. What was left behind the moving glaciers formed into what is now called the Niagara Escarpment. This large arched band of limestone and dolomite rock stretches from just south of the Wisconsin peninsula over to Niagara Falls in New York. Its topography formed the Great Lakes.

In the 1820's, villages of Ojibwas/ Chippewas, Ottawa and Potawatomi were seen along the length of the peninsula. The small Indian Village of Sturgeon Bay was first called Otumba. The state officially recognized Otumba in 1857, the second official town in Door County. Three years later the County approved the name change to Sturgeon Bay. Throughout the 1850's there were various tribes but by 1870, there was one Potawatomi Village. The Native Americans had left the land pretty much the same as they had found it thousands of years before. In Lake Michigan and the waters of Green Bay, fishing was abundant.

According to the old settlers, a small band of Potawatomi Indians camped for many years on the south side of current Egg Harbor, about one-half mile west of the current dock. It was a good area for hunting and fishing. The Potawatomi's called the area; Che ban ye shoda ning or "Ghost door". Numerous arrow points, stone axes and other artifacts from that era have been unearthed by modern farmers. Although there is no indication of a permanent village, there is a well-documented Native American burial site in that area.

Wisconsin became a state in 1848. Before that time, it was included within the borders of the Michigan Territory that also included Minnesota and Iowa. Hearty pioneer men started to arrive in the late 1840's and early 1850's. Up until 1851 the peninsula was part of Brown County. Before that time, it was described by the French as "Portes de Morte" which means Door of Death.

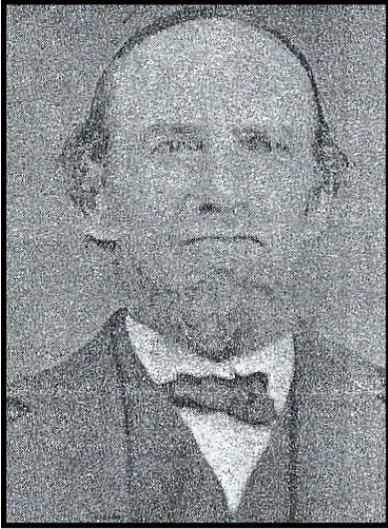
Boat passage especially around the northern tip was very treacherous since rock ledges were under water but fairly close to the surface. As boats would sail between the bay and lake, many would be lost on the rocks during violent storms. Later in the 1860's lighthouses were built to help the boat captains with navigation.

New Englanders, Scandinavians, Germans, Belgians and Irish began to immigrate to the area. The Scandinavians knew how to build log cabins. Since the peninsula was dense with forest, the one or two trails that existed were very rough and uneven. The main transportation was by boat to and from Green Bay and Menominee Michigan. Steamships brought new settlers, supplies and visitors. The steamships and side wheeler boats needed wood fuel. At one time, there were 60 piers up and down both sides of the peninsula providing cordwood and dolomite. By 1900, the peninsula had been decimated of trees.

## **Early Days of Egg Harbor**

Specifically, profiling three of the first settlers that came to the area, the actions of one man affected the actions of the next and the next. While some recorded history and facts can be found today, many family stories are lost to time. Permanent records were very scarce before the late 1840's. The Thorp, Graham and Proctor families have several similarities. They came to the semi-isolated wilderness of the peninsula with

their brothers. They had an extended family group with them and they all supported each other.



### **Levi Thorp 1823-1918**

New York Yankee, Levi Thorp came to the peninsula permanently after spending several years panning for gold during the California gold rush of 1849. His sister-in-law wife of Asa Thorp, made a pouch for him to take to California. He returned with 5,000 dollars worth of gold which allowed him to purchase land. After helping brother Asa finance a commercial pier in Fish Creek, Levi Thorp and his brother Jacob purchased 1600 acres of forest and bayside property a few miles south of Fish Creek. Levi and Jacob each built their log home on the shoreline near the current Egg Harbor Marina. Levi Thorp and his young family lived in their log cabin from 1855 until 1871, at which time he completed his 14 room home on the road that goes through the new settlement of Egg Harbor. During his first fifteen years, Levi was busy purchasing Door County land from the

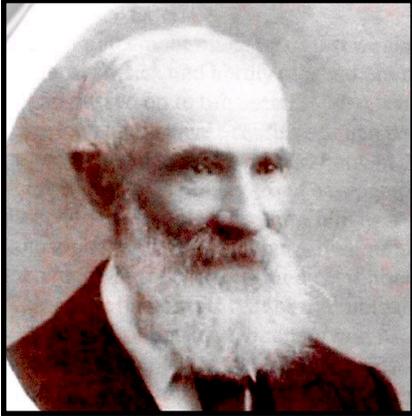
U.S. Government Land Grant Office in Menasha at the price between \$1.00 and \$1.25 per acre. From 1849 through 1873, Thorp had approximately nineteen transactions. This was during the time when United States Presidents James Buchanan, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson and Ulysses Grant were in office.

The trees surrounding the bay of Egg Harbor consisted mostly of cedar, hemlock and white pine. The wild old growth forest attracted the lumberjacks. The Thorp brothers shipped very large quantities of cedar and cordwood from their commercial pier. Initially, the trees were chopped down by hand using an axe. This was before the two-man cross cut saw had been invented. Levi hired Belgium immigrants as well as Native Americans to do the job.

Up to this time there were only a few rough trails in the peninsula. Sturgeon Bay was separated from Green Bay by fifty-miles of land thick with trees. All travel was on boats or on the ice in wintertime. Many docks protruded from the shores of the peninsula over the next three decades. Thorp owned his pier and sawmill from the 1850's until 1904.

By 1904, Levi and his adult children had left the county.

Why is Levi Thorp mentioned in this article? It was Dr. David Graham's brother O.P. Graham that Levi's brother, Asa Thorp met while traveling through the bay of Green Bay. Asa learned of the need for a pier between Rock Island and Green Bay. This was so the ships could refuel at the half way point of the route. Levi came to the area because his brother Asa settled in Fish Creek in the late 1840's. David came to the area because his brother Perry came to Sturgeon Bay, Levi owned the land next to the property that Dr. David Graham purchased in the 1860's. For several decades in Egg Harbor, the two families were neighbors. Also, in 1867, Levi and Eliza Jane Thorp's granddaughter married David and Elizabeth Graham's son Henry.



## **Doctor David Graham 1815-1882**

David Graham was born in Painesville, Ohio in 1815. When a young man of 16, he began his training in the iron moulding trade. He worked in that industry for fourteen years. David and Elizabeth Searles married in Ohio in 1837. They started a family with their first child, Annie. She was born in 1842. Son Henry was born in 1845. By 1846, the Graham family along with some of the Searles family members had moved from Ohio to Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Son Ezra was born there in 1849.

While still in Ohio, David studied homeopathic medicine. A local doctor took him under his wings. Before the family left for Wisconsin, David was given some remedies and a small book of instructions. David continued to study while working the farm in Sheboygan.

By the late 1840's, David's brother Oliver Perry Graham had set down roots in Sturgeon Bay. Soon another brother, Robert Graham, joined him there. Both men became pillars of the small village community and worked hard to contribute to its successful growth. It was O.P. Graham that told Asa Thorp of the need for a pier to be built half way between Rock Island and Green Bay.

Around 1856, David Graham's neighbor in Sheboygan found some property for him in the very small settlement town of Juddville. It was located next to the bay of Green Bay, about a mile and a half south of Fish Creek in Gibraltar township. He and his family lived there until the late 1860's. Besides being a boat captain, David's brother O.P. was a road engineer. He and his crew started laying out a more deliberate road from Sturgeon Bay to Fish Creek.

The township of Egg Harbor officially became a "Town" (township) in 1861. The Village of Egg Harbor was not incorporated until 1964. In the 1860's, David Graham purchased land on both sides of County Trunk 1 (now Highway 42) some of it from Levi Thorp. By 1868, a farmhouse was built and soon afterwards a barn, outhouses and a well shack. Later, several small shacks were built for the seasonal workers that arrived in summer to pick the ripe cherries and apples from his orchards. The barn, home and out-buildings served the family well.

Over the years and throughout northern Door County, Graham was active in his homeopathic practice, hardly ever charging for his knowledge. Because he counseled and helped many families, he received the nickname of Doctor. Graham also served as a commissioner on the board of supervisors for the county, representing Egg Harbor. He was a well known and well respected resident of Door County.

Through out the 1870's and early 1880's, The family lived a full and prosperous life. By this time David and Elizabeth were in their 50's and 60's. Their youngest two boys David Edgar (b.1856) and Charles (b.1860) grew up on the farm. The 1870 Federal Census states that his real estate property value is \$1,000. He was a wealthy land owner compared his neighbor in those days. David probably enjoyed having his brother O.P. and his family living nearby in the township.

Dr.He left a widow and five adult children to morn his death. Annie (Graham) Stevens and Ezra Graham along with their families, were living nearby in Gibraltar township.



notice given, there were mourners from Sevastopol, Jacksonport, Gibraltar, Bailey's Harbor, and Sturgeon Bay, while nearly every family in the town of Egg Harbor had one or more representatives in the sad procession. The obsequies were a fitting tribute to the noble and truly Christian spirit that had forever passed away from the scene of its beneficent labors. But while his generous heart has ceased to beat, the memory of his kindly deed will be for him a monument more precious and enduring than "storied urn or animated bust."

In all the relations of life, Mr. Graham was a bright example to those around him. As a husband and father, he was so tender and loving that his domestic hearth was one of the pleasantest spots in the world. As a neighbor he was considerate and obliging, for he recognized the fact that we are all the children of a common parent and are thus measurably bound to extend a helping hand to those who require assistance. As a citizen he zealously strove to promote the general good, and discharged every trust confided to him with fidelity and honor. He was identified with the History of Door county from almost the day of his arrival here, and for many years was one of the most faithful and efficient members of the county board in which capacity he was noted for his sterling honesty and unflinching hostility to all schemes to further private interests at the expense of the public purse.

David Graham was born in Painesville, Ohio in 1815, and was consequently about sixty-seven years old at the time of his death. He came to Door county in the autumn of 1858, first locating in what is now known as Juddville. There he remained until 1867, when he removed to the town of Egg Harbor, where he continued to reside until the close of his life. He leaves a widow and five children to mourn the loss of one of the best and noblest of men, while a thousand other faithful hearts are sorely stricken by the sad event. It is not often that the death of an individual assumes the character of a public misfortune, as is the case in the present instance, and it may afford some consolation to his relatives to be assured that their regrets do not alone follow the good man to his final resting place.

### **Dr. Graham's Obituary:**

In the town of Egg Harbor at his home, Friday morning, April 25, 1882, after a short but painful illness, Dr. David Graham, aged 67 years, 2 months, 5 days. Deceased leaves an aged widow and a family of grown-up children. Doctor Graham, born in Lake county, Ohio, Feb 23, 1815 had been a resident of this county about 25 years. The grief caused by this an announcement will not be confined to Egg Harbor alone, for his loss will be keenly felt throughout the entire county. By his death we have sustained the loss of one of our oldest and most revered citizens. Being a physician much of his time and care has been spent among our sick and suffering. Generous in disposition no appeal was made to him in vain. Blessed with abilities of a high order he was ever ready to use them for the advancement of any object which tended to the welfare of his fellow men and benefit of his town and county.

On Sunday the remains were in Egg Harbor amidst universal regret. The funeral

was the largest which has ever taken place in town. It was thoroughly representative of all classes and nationalities and varied interests of the citizens testified in so marked a manner their respect for the memory of one whom in life they delighted to honor.

The body was removed from his residence to the school house soon after eleven o'clock where an appropriate discourse was delivered on his life and services by the Rev. G. W. Prescott of Sturgeon Bay from there it was followed by upwards of seven hundred friends and mourners to the grave where they laid him to rest, but if the living form of our friend will no more be visible, thank God there is left a memory that will live.

Gone to the grave, through like a fallen tree at one with nature, flowers and fruitage crowned. Thy form may perish and thine honor lie lest in the moldering of the ground. Gone to the grave for there the Savior lay. In death's embraces, ere he rose on high, and all the ransomed by the narrow way. Pass to the eternal life beyond the sky. Farewell, dear friend, till the day break and the shadows flee away.

Fish Creek, May 3 1882



### **Doctor Thomas C. Proctor 1873-1963**

Thomas was born in 1873 in the "Show Me" state of Missouri. After he graduated from medical school in 1895, he started a practice in Kansas City, Missouri. Dr. Thomas Proctor and Georgie Noel married in 1898. In two years, the newlyweds moved to Sturgeon Bay.

By 1902, Doctor had his practice set up in Sturgeon Bay and lived on Grant Street. He also purchased the 240 acre Graham farm in Egg Harbor as a side interest. November 1902 Advocate: "Dr. Proctor, the owner of the David Graham farm in Egg Harbor township, will put in forty acres next spring to Alaska peas, this being now the most profitable crop that the farmer can grow if prevailing prices continue, which is not unlikely, as the territory adapted to the successful cultivation of these particular varieties is said to be limited."

The Door County Advocate posts in spring of 1903 "Dr. Proctor says he has been offered \$49 an acre for the standing timber remaining on what was formerly the David Graham farm, and there are about 100 acres that still remain. It will be seen that he has gotten a pretty good thing right there. The removal of the timber means the practical clearing up of the land which is worth nearly as much more."

The 1905 Wisconsin State Census: the Proctors own their house on Grant St. (*now Michigan St.*) in Sturgeon Bay. He states his occupation is physician. Thomas is 28, Georgie is 22 and they have a domestic servant who is 22 years old.

The couple did not live permanently on the farm orchard. Over the years, a few managers would live and work on the property to keep the farm going. The Proctors

would come up on weekends by stage (a motorized open air bus transportation service) to oversee the 240 acres of farmland. Local roads continued to be improved.

Advocate 1905 “Dr. Proctor is building a hip-roof barn on the David Graham farm, the foundation for which has already been completed. It will be 40x72 feet, with a basement the full size 10 feet high. A fine team of horses has recently been added to the farm and the Dr. is getting the place in good shape.” The existing barn that the Grahams built may have needed too much repair or did not meet the needs that Doctor Proctor required to make room for more livestock.

Another announcement in the Advocate in 1908 states “ Dr. Proctor leases the farm in Egg Harbor to Herman Simon”. He needed a caretaker to oversee the daily operations of an active farm.

In July of 1909, daughter Martha Proctor was born. The family continues to live in Sturgeon Bay.

In 1915, Dr. Proctor had the barn remodeled as a dairy barn. The blue prints were recently (2020) discovered in the attic of the Proctor Cottage in the current Cherry Bluff subdivision.

Upon retiring in 1926 from his medical practice, Dr. Proctor and Georgie would winter in Florida then reside in Egg Harbor from spring to fall. Even though he did not live in the farmhouse, he would be involved with his apple and cherry orchards. He built a small unheated stucco home that overlooks the bluff with westerly views of Green Bay. A half mile path from the bluff to the farm was used as a short cut through the woods.

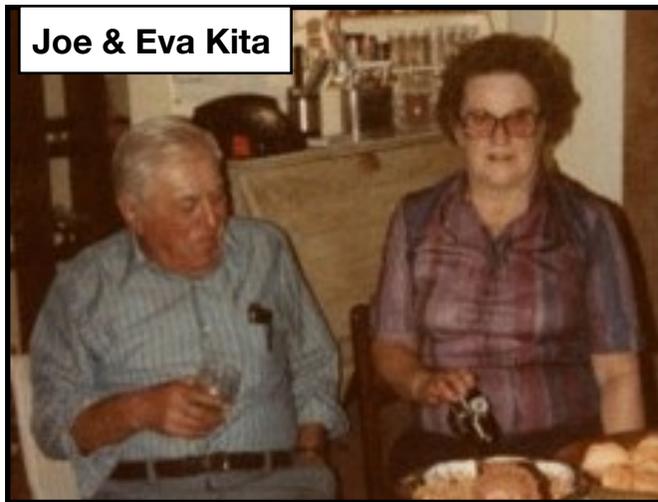
Progress in the County was happening as new telephone and electrical lines were being installed in the early 1930's. The Federal Census states that Dr. Proctor, wife Georgie and 20-year-old daughter Martha's main address is now in Egg Harbor. His occupation is that of a proprietor of a farm orchard. The couple are in their 50's.

June of 1931 saw the wedding of Martha to John Cmeyla. The couple moved to Kewaunee county and raised 2 children. In the 1930's, Proctor had another stone cottage built next to the house on the bluff, probably to prompt his daughter to visit more often.

In 1935 Proctor hired a single local young man; Joe Kita to manage the farm and live in the farmhouse. This arrangement proved to be a good partnership. Joe grew up on the Kita farm which was just a few miles east of Proctor Orchard.

In November of 1939 the Advocate announces “All are invited to come to the dance hall - Fernwood Gardens to honor the newlyweds Joe and Eva Kita. Admission was 15 cents to join the wedding dance party. Music was provided by the Midnight Rounders.” Eva joined Joe at the Proctor Orchard farm.

Throughout the 1940's 50's and 60's Joe and Eva Kita were managers of the Proctor Orchard. They were very social and enjoyed many of the activities Egg Harbor had to offer. The Proctors and Kita's enjoyed each other's company and worked well together. Dr. Proctor hired several Mexican families, Native Americans and the local teenagers to pick the ripe cherries and apples from the orchard.



Sadly, in 1962 Georgie Proctor passed away. Thomas Proctor joined her at Bayside Cemetery in Sturgeon Bay in 1963. Joe and Eva continued to manage Proctor Orchard.

Martha Proctor Cymeyla operated her parent's estate, and continued working with Joe. The Door County Advocate June 11, 1968. "Landowners have planted conifers on land formerly used for cropland, including fruit production. Many had made use of the mechanical tree planters, purchased by the district superiors for this specific purpose. At Proctor

Orchard, Egg Harbor, Joe Kita said that about 15,000 trees had been planted on land that was formerly in cherries. The tops were removed but the stumps were left. In between them, three rows of spruce and pine were planted, with spacing about six feet." These rows of conifers still exist today in the Cherry Bluff subdivision.

It was during the late 1960's that Martha decided to sell off the Orchard property. For several years, she put ads in the paper. Little by little, it was sold off. Joe and Eva Kita bought some of the property. By 1972, the last 90 acres were sold for \$9,900.

In 1970, some of the Proctor property was sold to the current Cherry Bluff Estates subdivision partnership on the west side of Highway 42. At that time, 72 lots were approximately one and one half acre to two acres each. The residential roads were excavated and a tennis court was put in on the common lot for the residents to enjoy. The northern border touches Gibraltar Township. Fifty years later, the wooded neighborhood contains forty five homes, wooded lots and summer cottages.

### **Dr. Proctor's Obituary:**

Dr. Thomas C. Proctor, 90, Egg Harbor, died Wednesday at an out of town hospital. He was born Jan. 24, 1873 in Monroe City, Mo., to Dr. and Mrs. T. C. Proctor. Dr. Proctor graduated with the class of 1895 from the Washington University Medical School in St. Louis, Mo. He took his graduate work at the Manhattan Graduate School and Hospital.

Prior to coming to Sturgeon Bay in 1900, he lectured in pathology at the Kansas City University Medical College, taught at the Woman Medical School in the same city and acted as chemist for the K.C., F.S. and M. railroad.

He was a member of the Door County Medical Association, the State Medical Society, and the American Medical Association. He belonged to the Masons, the Lions, the Shrine, and was active over a long period of years in church and civic as well as professional affairs.

After his retirement in 1926 he and Mrs. Proctor spent their winters in Florida or California, returning to Door county every spring. He was an apple and cherry grower and had a summer home in Egg Harbor.

His wife, Georgia Noel Proctor, died in January of 1962. Surviving are a daughter, Mrs. John Cmeyla (Martha) Proctor, Kewaunee, and two grandchildren, Mrs. Harmon S. Graves III, Denver, Colo., and John P. Proctor, Princeton, N. J.

**“As a two-year resident of Door County, I already feel historically rooted in the community of Egg Harbor. It has been my privilege to talk to many long-time residents and absorb their knowledge of this wonderful Village. Due to the current pandemic, I have been unable to retrieve more detailed information, but the search is always ongoing! ”**

**Laurie Baum 2021**



*The Graham farm built in the late 1860's remains on Hwy 42, just north of the Village*

*The farm before the Orchards Golf Course and Wood Orchard Market*



*A special thanks to Laurie for her work, it can also be found in the Kress Pavilion-Egg Harbor Library's History Center. The EHHS welcomes historic research covering Egg Harbor, if you have such a project that you would like to share, contact the Egg Harbor Historical Society.*