

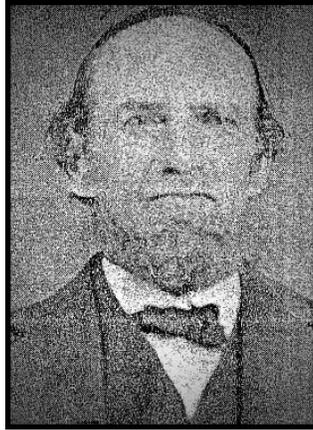
Levi Thorp Built The Cupola House

Compiled
By
Giz Herbst
2022



"Levi Thorp and his brother Jacob were early settlers in what is now the village of Egg Harbor. They were the brothers of Asa Thorp, pioneer settler of Fish Creek. Levi and Jacob purchased 1600 acres on government patent in 1855, including the present village site. They went into the cord wood and cedar business and built the necessary pier for shipping their harvest on to the emerging mid-west cities. Early shipping from their Egg Harbor pier was done with sailing craft, later followed by steam power ships"

Levi & Eliza Thorp and their Cupola House



Egg Harbor Historical Society
Egg Harbor, Wisconsin

To make Egg Harbor History come alive
for future generations through the
collection, preservation, and sharing
of the heritage of Egg Harbor.

Levi Thorp, Egg Harbor Pioneer

Over the span of Levi Thorp's presence in Egg Harbor the Door County newspaper correspondents covered Levi with a first mention in the April 4, 1866, "Advocate", it being a different publication than the "Door County Advocate". Since the first paper published in Door County on November 1, 1862, thirteen different newspaper publications have been in print in the County; seven were used in Levi's story.

Researching Levi Thorp was done with a simple search in the Door County Library's old newspaper site - www.doorcountynewspapers.org.

We read of Levi's death in the June 12, 1918, Door County Democrat.

Levi's contributions to Egg Harbor made the man a historic figure. Numerous specials have been written covering Levi. Part two deals with two of the specials, his historic home he built and left as an Egg Harbor's icon, his Cupola House.

1866.04.19 The Advocate

Egg Harbor elected the following town officers at the spring election:

Supervisors: Oliver P. Graham, Nathan Thomas, Russell Baker; clerk, M. E. Lyman; treasurer, Jacob E. Thorp; assessor, David Graham; justices, David Graham, Levi Thorp; constables, Geo. Barringer, Joseph Laroy; sealer Geo Moffatt.

1872.03.07. D.C. Advocate

A NORTHERN TRIP

Having made a trip around the shore of the county I thought a recital of my observations and what I learned during the trip might be interesting to the readers of the ADVOCATE.

Starting from Sturgeon Bay immediately after breakfast, with a spanking good team and the road in fine condition we soon reached the clearings of Egg Harbor, where at the piers of Capt. KIRTLAND and LEVI THORP, considerable activity has been made manifest by the piles of wood in their immediate vicinity; nor is this all, for many of the settlers live so near that they haul their wood on wagons and pile it on the pier at such times as they can ship the same thus saving handling and hauling the wood over again.

1875.01.15 The Expositor

LOCAL NOTES

In due time the Sheriff will notify the following persons to appear as jurors for the February term of the court: John Graham, William Manna, J. Labombard, H. Post, T. Carmody, Wm. Buchan, Levi Thorp, L. Chatterton, A. Laplant and John Lavine from EGG HARBOR.

1877.07.20. The Expositor Independent

NOTES CAUGHT ON THE FLY

The wheat harvest has commenced with an unusually large crop. Mr. Levi Thorp, of Egg Harbor, has a large amount to harvest, some, of it being very heavy. Some of his fields of winter wheat promise to return him 40 bushels to the acre.

1877.09.21. The Expositor Independent

NOTES CAUGHT ON THE FLY

Mr. Machen started last Monday for Egg Harbor, where he will be engaged for a while in building a frame house for Mr. Levi Thorp. *(Most likely the house for son Truman, across the highway from the Cupola House)*

1878.09.27. The Expositor Independent

Local Intelligence, Sparks and Flashes

Mr. Levi Thorp, of Egg Harbor, was in the village *(Sturgeon Bay)* Tuesday and Wednesday. We received a call.

1879.01.31. The Expositor Independent
Local Intelligence and General Happenings

Mrs. Levi Thorp, of Egg Harbor, has been in town several days visiting Mrs. A. Thorp, of this village. (*Sturgeon Bay*)

1879.11.07. The Expositor Independent
Local Intelligence and General Happenings

Mr. Truman Thorp, son of Levi Thorp, Esq., of Egg Harbor, was in the village Wednesday evening. We received a very pleasant call. Mr. Thorp was en route for Chicago, where he goes to buy a stock of goods to open a general store in the town of Egg Harbor. We extend a shake of the hand for the success of the new enterprise. (*The store was located across from the Cupola House next to the house Levi built for Truman, not being a success, it was sold and later burned in 1911.*)

1880.08.27. Weekly Expositor Independent
Local Intelligence Personal and Stray News
EGG HARBOR

A place where hen fruit sells as readily as any other section of the county, and the citizens are all as good-looking as "anybody else "; and where Mr. Levi Thorp has as pretty a residence as there is in the county.....Thorp & Son's store is a place where lots of goods are sold, and the pier does a large business.....Barringer Bros.' store is well stocked, and their trade is wide and extended.....Capt. Kirtland continues to make shipping with his vessel a decided success, and his pier is as well patronized as its holding capacity will admit.....Egg Harbor, like all other localities in the county, is pushing ahead in the pursuit of farming and general advancement. Considerable fruit is being raised by the egg town—Judge Lyman picked from his orchard some of as nice looking apples as we ever saw, and as he handed them to us, he remarked that "They will keep all winter." We tried'em, and now feel that unless we get rid of the apples before "all winter," that there will be an editor's funeral before spring—the apples are as active as the old judge himself.

1881.05.19. D.C. Advocate
AROUND THE HOME
Tempest in a Teapot

Considerable excitement exists, and has existed for a week or more, at Egg Harbor and that immediate neighborhood over the alleged discovery of a case of trespass of pretty large proportions. The facts in the matter, briefly related, are about as follows:

A Mrs. Hyde, of Kenosha, owns quite a tract of land in sections 6 and 31, town of Egg Harbor. Some two weeks ago she was apprised of the fact that timber, had been taken off the property in a surreptitious manner. The owner forthwith dispatched her son, N. B. Hyde, to investigate the matter. He came on and made an examination of the premises, and claims that nearly one quarter section of the land had been "skinned" and the most valuable portion of the timber taken off and banked at the several landings at Egg Harbor. An attachment was issued and about \$4,000 worth of stuff, found on the banks, seized. The stuff belongs principally to Joseph Smith, Levi Thorp, J. J. Barringer and Wm. Breunig, who had, they represent, purchased it from probably twenty-five or fifty different parties, and paid for it as soon as it was delivered on the banking grounds.

The parties whose stuff was attached promptly gave bonds, and the case will be tried in the circuit court, and in the meantime the property in question will be shipped to market

The matter has created a good deal of excitement all through the northern section of the county.

1882.10.05. D.C. Advocate
AROUND THE COUNTY, EGG HARBOR

Levi Thorp had the misfortune to lose another horse one day last week, making four animals belonging to him that have died within the past two years without any apparent cause.

1884.05.09. Weekly Expositor Independent
Local Intelligence and Happenings

We noticed Messrs. Levi Thorp & Son of Egg Harbor, and Capt. O. J. Vorous of Fish Creek, on our streets Monday. (*Sturgeon Bay*)

**1885.02.06. Weekly Expositor Independent
COUNTY NEWS, EGG HARBOR**

One of the most enjoyable social parties we have ever attended in this part of the county was gathered at the hospitable house of Levi Thorp last Friday night. About three score ladies and gentlemen were apparently as happy on that occasion as clams are supposed to be at high water. It originated as a surprise party, intended to surprise Miss Elda Thorp, but it seems the old folks got, some way, a hint of the movement, so that when the sleighs jingled up to the door with their freight of folks and fixings - the fixings consisting of bundles and baskets and hampers of choice cookery - the surprise part of the program was found to be "turned tail to," and it was a jolly joke to find that the guests were the surprised party and that "mine hosts" were the surprisers with an abundant readiness of reception and welcome. And the joke itself was a condiment which seasoned and gave zest to the hilarity and fun of the party. By some wonderful legerdemain Warren Early had been spirited over from Bailey's Harbor for the gratification of the "light fantastic," and he was kept in a scrape from early in the evening till long past early in the morning, and nobody had a thought of sympathy for the suffering catgut.

Mr. Thorpe's house is a capital place for such a party the first floor rooms are so cozy and comfortable, where the older people could lounge and gossip to their hearts' content, while the young pounding out the measures in the hall above.

At midnight a most bountiful supper was served to which all but invalids—and there were no invalids present—did ample justice. After supper a quadrille set of the oldest people present was formed in which Mr. Levi Thorp exhibited as lively legs as any of the young sprigs could boast, and the other old folks did their part excellently.

Several towns of the county were represented at this party. There were people from Bailey's Harbor, Fish Creek, Juddville, Jacksonport, Sturgeon Bay and Bay View.

At between two and three o'clock we took our leave. No one else had departed yet, and the limber legged yonths seemed intent on dancing the entire night away. We left the

gay scene with regret, and as we stepped out into the brightness of the full moon we thought to ourselves what an admirable landlady Mrs. Thorp would be.

**1886.02.05. Weekly Expositor Independent
Local Happenings, EGG HARBOR**

Egg Harbor is unusually lively this winter both in business and socially. Since the snow came about sixty teams have made the roads lively with logs to the mill and to the banking ground for shipment, and cordwood to the piers. About sixty cords per day have been hauled to Horseshoe Bay. Ten teams are delivering wood at Thorp's, and Capt. Kirtland's pier is receiving considerable wood. The little mill is running well. It employs nine men and cuts about sixteen thousand feet per day. So you see business is booming.

We are also wide awake socially. Nearly every evening there is a dance, lodge meeting, blue ribbon entertainment or singing school. A masquerade ball was given at the town hall last Thursday night under the auspices of the Blue Ribbon Club. A variety of characters were represented. Some of the costumes were striking and unique.

Eighty tickets were sold and there were a number of invited guests. It was wholly an Egg Harbor party, there being no one present from the other towns. The supper was served at the house of Levi Thorp, and there was a lively race of teams and pedestrians over the half mile of road between the hall and the supper rooms. The dancing continued till four o'clock in the morning. The proceeds of the party will nearly complete the payment of the amount due on the club's organ. The most conspicuous costumes were the following:

Bride - Miss Maud Bartlett
Queen of Hearts - Miss Emily Olson
Star of the Evening - Miss Carrie Bartlett
Queen in dress of paper - Miss Gertie Lyman
Fancy dress - Misses Katie and Emma Stelwagen
Mother Hubbard - Mrs. Frank Wellever
Snow Flake - Miss Sarah Bly
Little Red Riding Hood - Miss Hattie Leroy
Uncle Sam - Frank Overholt
Dude - Burt Kieth
Clown - Freddie Post

Turks - Louis Columb, Wallace Leroy, Ralph Manny and Wallace Alexander
There were many other characters, the names of which we did not learn. The whole affair seemed to be greatly enjoyed by all who participated in it.

1889.05.31. The Independent
THE CANINE CURSE.
How It is Discouraging the Farmers of
Door County from Engaging in
Sheep Husbandry.

So many sheep have been killed in this county by dogs that some farmers have abandoned their efforts to pursue this industry, and unless there is a concerted movement in the several towns to abate the dog nuisance, by taxation or otherwise, it will be useless to establish flocks.

Only those whose business obliges them to travel much along the highways in the rural districts have any idea of the magnitude of the canine curse. Nearly every farmer has one or more dogs, some of these animals being so vicious that they assail passing travelers, frightening teams and sometimes endeavoring to spring into vehicles in order to attack the occupants. A clergyman of this city, whose ministerial duties require him to make frequent trips to neighboring towns, recently informed an INDEPENDENT reporter that he is often attacked by curs that rush out to the road and not only attempt to seize his horse but in some cases try to jump into his buggy while it is in motion, their demonstrations being so ferocious as to leave no room for doubt as to the result if they were able to accomplish their purpose. A friend who came to this city from Egg Harbor on Saturday last informed us that during his journey not less than twenty dogs ran out from farmyards and viciously assailed him, some following for a long distance as though unwilling to abandon their efforts to do him harm. The owners of these savage brutes appear to take no steps to restrain them, but often look calmly on as though the curs were engaged in a perfectly legitimate business. As a general rule none of these persons have sheep, and many of them are so selfish that they strenuously object to all measures, proposed for the protection of those who are striving to build up this

important branch of agriculture. Last year the premises of L. D. Mowry, in Egg Harbor, were invaded by dogs and several sheep were killed, others being shockingly mangled. About a week afterward another raid was made upon Mr. Mowry's flock and nearly all of the remaining sheep were destroyed. Mr. Mowry determined that since he was not to be permitted to raise wool he would turn his attention to raising dog scalps, and at latest advices he had captured a dozen or more of these trophies. But it unfortunately happens that the efforts of a single individual are inadequate to reduce in an appreciable degree the canine population, and not until our town authorities make a resolute movement in this matter will there be a change for the better. The experience of Mr. Mowry and others has been so discouraging that the culture of sheep is receiving very little attention throughout the county. In Egg Harbor the only persons who now have any are Levi Thorp, W. G. Manna and David Graham, their flocks aggregating only about one hundred and seventy. Although Mr. Mowry has wiped out of existence several dogs that may have composed part of the gang which slaughtered his sheep, there is no evidence to show that any of them participated in the raid. The professional sheep killing dog is a shrewd animal and seldom commits any depredations in the neighborhood of his own home. Instances are known where he has gone ten or more miles away, passing flocks which he might have attacked but did not because he understood the risk he ran of having the offense brought to his door. Those who understand this matter are confident that the dogs which killed Mr. Mowry's sheep came from one of the neighboring towns, probably from Baileys Harbor, and it is reasonably argued therefrom that it would be useless for one town to enforce a dog law while no restriction was placed upon these animals by their neighbors.

It may not be generally known that goats are recommended as protectors against sheep killing dogs. We are informed that one goat is sufficient for a flock of fifty sheep, and that this pugnacious animal attends so strictly to business that dogs soon learn to give a wide berth to the field of which he is the guardian. The sheep appear to instinc-

tively understand that he is not only their natural protector but that he is perfectly competent to take care of them, and instead of running away they remain to see the fun that is sure to follow. As soon as the dog approaches within butting distance he is knocked over, the operation being repeated if he returns to the charge, but one dose of the battering ram is usually sufficient and he sneaks out of the field to return no more. It does not take long for every cur in the vicinity to learn that the climate inhabited by this goat is very unhealthy, and thereafter when in want of mutton they look for it elsewhere. There being at present no prospect of the passage and enforcement of a law to abate the dog nuisance, it would be well if our farmers would inform themselves upon this subject, and if goats really perform the service with which they are credited we may be able to engage in sheep husbandry inspite of the army of worthless curs that infests the land.

1895.12.28 D.C. Democrat
Obituary

Eliza J., beloved wife of Levi Thorp, died on the 21st, inst., at the family residence, Egg Harbor. Deceased had been ailing for three years, her disease being diabetes. She was able, however, to superintend her household duties until a few days previous to her death. Mrs. Thorp was born in York state, June 29, 1827, which would make her sixty-eight years of age, Her maiden name was Ramsey, She was married to Levi Thorp, who survives her, in 1858. Two children, Truman, of Egg Harbor, and Elda, now wife of Wm. Steele, a prominent lawyer of West Superior, was the result of this union. The funeral services were conducted on Monday, at the Thorp residence, pastor Savage officiating. A large concourse of friends and relatives followed to the village cemetery the remains of one, who was unselfish in her life, and in the hospitality of her beautiful home, and who by her friends shall never be forgotten. She was a good neighbor, a dutiful wife, and a loving mother. The bereaved husband, son and daughter have the sympathy of the entire community.

1896.02.15. D.C. Advocate

AROUND THE COUNTY, ELLISON BAY

Uncle John Ellison is laid up this winter, owing to the infirmities of old age and from other causes. Uncle John, who was born in Denmark in 1823, says this is the first winter in the past forty years that he has not been at work in the woods, or doing something to keep him busy. When he first came to the county he chopped cord wood for Levi Thorp, at Egg Harbor, for which service he received from three to four shillings, and mighty glad he was to get that.

1897.12.25. The Advocate

AROUND THE COUNTY, EGG HARBOR

With the exception of Levi D. Thorp, Jack Manna, Mike Ritchenberg and a few others about all the old settlers have now joined the silent majority. Among these may be mentioned J. E. Thorp, Russell Baker, M. E. Lyman, David E. Graham, Thos. and Wm. Carmody, Mrs. L. D. Thorp, etc. While some of them have removed to other points, the majority fought it out on the old stamping ground and now lie buried in the two cemeteries of which the town boasts. Levi Thorp has been a resident of Egg Harbor for about fifty years.

1898.07.08. D.C. Democrat

IN THIS COUNTY, EGG HARBOR

Mr. and Mrs. Steele, of West Superior, are visiting with her father Mr. Levi Thorp and other relatives. They intend to remain throughout the summer season and occupy the old residence of Mr. Thorp.

1898.12.10. The Advocate

AROUND THE COUNTY, EGG HARBOR

Levi Thorp is today the oldest resident of Egg Harbor, if not in the county, having first come here in 1843, something like fifty-five years ago. He is still on deck and doing his full share in keeping things moving. His brother Asa, of the Creek, is also doing well, all things considered, although now in his eightieth year. Both men are among the most estimable and respected citizens of the county, in which they have resided for upward of half a century.

1901.07.20. The Advocate

**NEWS OF THE COUNTY
EGG HARBOR**

Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Mowry have been occupying the Levi Thorp residence for the past six weeks or so while looking after their farming interests here, and both are enjoying the best of health since they spent much of their time in the open. They expect to remain until along in September, Mr. Mowry having obtained a leave of absence from his duties in the Merchants Exchange Bank until that time. Theod. Vanderbeck is assisting Mr. Mowry in the farm Work, and they are a strong combination.

1904.12.03. D.C. Democrat

County Correspondence, JACKSONPORT

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wilson attended the surprise party on Levi Thorp, of Egg Harbor, given by Mrs. James Wilson last Wednesday, it being his eighty-first birthday.

1905.08.26. The Advocate

COUNTY NEWS, EGG HARBOR

T. A. Thorp is preparing to close out his mercantile business and remove to the Pacific coast. His father, Levi Thorp, spent some time in that country in the early 40s prior to coming to Door county, and the old gentleman has always thought that that is about the only place for a man to live in, having meanwhile kept himself pretty well posted through the medium of a local paper published out there, and to which he has been a regular subscriber for the past fifty or more years.

1907.11.23. D.C. Democrat

In the obituary for Asa Thorp of Fish Creek it was noted the Asa's brother Levi Thorp, aged 84, was living in Manawa, Wisconsin.

1908.02.08 D.C. Democrat

Summer Resort at Egg Harbor

The following item clipped from recent issue of the Green Bay Gazette will be of interest to residents in the city and northern part of the county:

The Cady Land company of this city (Green Bay) and C. A. Speaker, of Marinette, have just closed negotiations effecting the

title of about \$30,000 worth of property. Half of this property is located in Oconto county, comprising two first class improved farms, one being close to the village of Abrams and former owned by Mr. Brienan, now of this city and the other being a 135 acre farm in the town of Chase, formerly owned of Fred Fisher, also well known here. This property has been deeded by the Cady Land company to Mr. Speaker and the company has accepted in payment for the same a 100 acre farm located in the center of the village of Egg Harbor. The property is all improved and contains one of the largest and finest apple orchards in the state, the orchard consists of something over 85 acres of finely selected apple trees all bearing. The Cady Land company received \$4,000 in cash together with the above property for their Oconto farms. A Chicago concern is now negotiating with the local company concerning the exploiting of the Egg Harbor property for summer resort purposes. The farm overlooks the bay and is a beautiful and ideal spot for summer cottagers, being already utilized for that purpose by some Chicago people.

The property at Egg Harbor is what is known as the Levi Thorp homestead and is admirably adapted for the purpose to which it is proposed to use it.

1908.02.13. The Advocate

Personals

Dr. J. M. Phillips of Egg Harbor was in the city Tuesday night, having come here to take back with him a ton or more merchandise which arrived from abroad by rail. The Dr., who is the successor of T. A. Thorp, is a native of Peshtigo, but he has lived elsewhere since he graduated and became a fullfledged physician. He came to Egg Harbor last September, and he and his family like this peninsula very much owing to its healthy and invigorating atmosphere. They make their home with Geo. W. Gard, who is tenanted in the commodious Levi Thorp residence. (*Phillips purchased Truman Thorp's store, it would burn in 1911*)

1913.07.04 D.C. Democrat

County Correspondence, EGG HARBOR

Mr. and Mrs. Will Steele and daughter Rea of Superior made a short call in Egg Harbor

on Thursday and Friday of last week. Mrs. Steele says her father, Levi Thorp, is in good health. T. A. Thorp and family also live at that place and are doing well.

1918.06.12. D.C. Democrat

DEATH OF EARLY SETTLER

**Levi Thorp, One of Door County's
Pioneers, Dies at Superior, Wis. Burial at
Egg Harbor.**

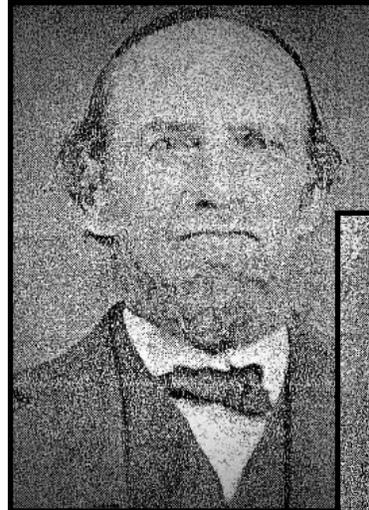
Levi Thorp, one of Door county's early pioneers, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Wm. Steele, at Superior, Wis., on Saturday of last week, the body being brought to this city Tuesday and taken to Egg Harbor where the remains were buried alongside of his wife. The remains were accompanied by his son Truman and son-in-law Attorney Wm. Steele of Superior.

Deceased was 94 years of age, having been born in New York in 1823. He was united in marriage to Jane Ramsey in 1858. and is survived by two children, Mrs. William Steele and Truman Thorp of Superior. Also two half-brothers, A.D. Thorp of this city and Rudolph Thorp of Mott, N. D.

Levi Thorp settled in Egg Harbor in 1855 and engaged in shipping cordwood and cedar and for many years was the principal business man north of Sturgeon Bay. He was among the early gold miners of California and met with considerable success. During the time he was engaged in business in Egg Harbor he accumulated considerable property in the village and township. After the death of his wife a number of years ago. he closed out his interests and went to Superior, where he made his home with his daughter.

During his younger days Mr. Thorp followed the sea and visited many interesting places on the globe, among them being the Isle of Juan Fernandez, famous for its association with Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday.

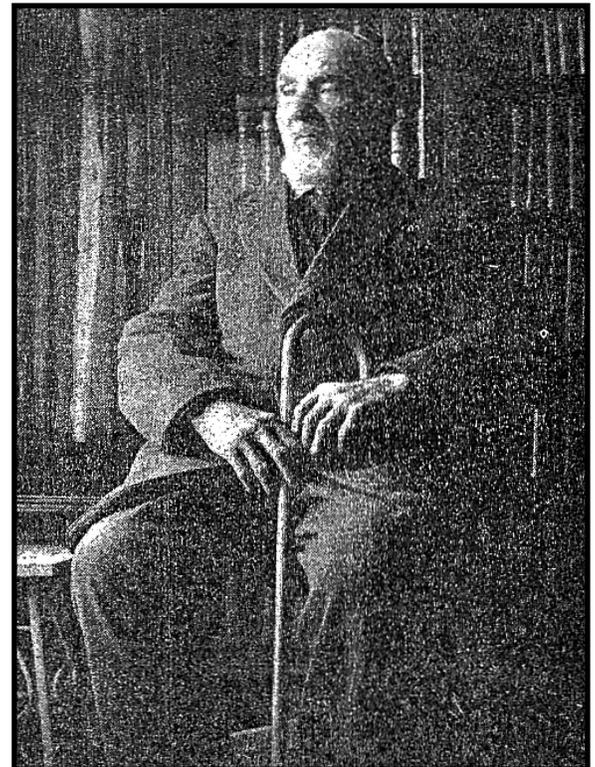
**Levi Thorp
1906**



Levi



Eliza



The story of Levi Thorp; how he got to Egg Harbor, what he did while he was here, and what he left for us and future folks to appreciate has been the matter of numerous articles. The following two articles appeared nigh 50 years after the passing of Levi, his life and his Cupola House still of interest.

1969.02.27 D.C Advocate

**Cupola House at Egg Harbor
was early county landmark**

By Frances Badtke

Cupola House at Egg Harbor, also called the Cady House, has been used as a summer residence for many years by the same family. At one time it came near being the "Wade House of Door county."

The Door County Historical Society some years ago planned to purchase the home and refurnish it in the, style of the time, during which it was constructed. However, plans fell through and instead the Society refurnished the Eagle Lighthouse in Peninsula State Park.

Cupola House is Victorian in style and has 14 rooms and an interesting history. Since great care was taken in selection of materials and the construction that went into it, it is still as sound structurally as when it was built nearly a century ago.

In addition to the house itself, the property also contains a barn which would be large enough for a collection of old vehicles, a milk house of all stone, with walls two and a half feet thick, which would be suitable for a display of old time dairy equipment, and modern living quarters in a cottage nearby for a caretaker, in the event the project had been completed.

The original owner of Cupola House was Levi Thorp, who built it. He was the younger brother of Asa Thorp of Fish Creek. Their father was Jacob Thorp who had ten children, six boys and four girls.

Levi was born in 1824 and listed in his heritage is the fact that he was the grandson of a Revolutionary War soldier. As a child he played often with his grandfather's sword. Levi has an adventurous spirit and as a young man he went to, California during the Gold Rush of 1849 to seek his fortune.

He went across land to New York, there taking a boat which sailed around the Horn,

the entire trip taking six months. In his possession he had a chamois money belt with little bags attached to it. This had been made for him by his sister-in-law, Mrs. Asa Thorp.

After several years in California he returned to Door county, his chamois money belt bulging with \$5,000 in gold dust and bringing along a Chinese companion and helper who had been with him on the West Coast.

Levi had a dream, one which was to take all the money he had so carefully saved. He wanted to build an outstanding home in Door county overlooking the bay. Feb. 22, 1855 he bought the land on the bluff at Egg Harbor on which the house now stands from the U.S. Government.

Levi married Eliza Jane Hoffstater, a girl of Dutch descent. The couple had two children, Truman and Elda. For 16 years the family lived in a log house at the foot of the hill, just below the site of Cupola House.

During these 16 years Levi made plans and gathered building materials for what was to be the finest house for miles around. Only the best quality of lumber was acceptable and choice white pine lumber was shipped across the bay from Menominee, Mich.

He would not accept a single board or plank that had a knot in it and even the wide planks on the attic floor are of the finest quality. It was put together with handmade nails and by the time he had completed his "dream house" he had spent the \$5,000 he brought back from California with him and had added another \$500 to it.

When the house was completed, Thorp had a paperhanger come from Milwaukee to paper the halls. They still have the original wall paper which Mrs. Thorp called "Fresco." Eliza Jane had her own sitting room on the north west corner of the house over looking the water.

Some years ago when nine layers of paper were removed from the living room

walls, it was discovered that the original paper had been a rich, velvety olive green background decorated with golden urns and garlands.

On the south side of the house are yellow roses brought by Eliza Jane from her childhood home in Ohio. Each June they are a sunburst of glorious golden yellow against the white house.

Upstairs was a large room with wainscoting that was the ballroom where dances were held. When the house was completed the Thorps had several large house parties, each lasting a week long. Guests came from neighboring towns for the festivities.

The ballroom also was the scene of the wedding of the Thorps' daughter Elda when she became the bride of Charles Steele of Sister Bay. He later became Judge Steele of Superior.

The Thorp family lived in Door county in various sections, but there were numerous family reunions. The last time the family gathered together at Cupola House was New Year's Day in 1896. Plans were made for another happy reunion that coming Christmas, but Dec. 21, 1896 Eliza Jane Thorp died at the age of 69. She is buried in the Egg Harbor cemetery where a marble slab marks her grave.

Her husband continued to live in the house for many years. He had built a store across the road from his house for his son Truman. Truman was not a successful merchant, however, and his father lost a great deal of money through this business venture.

The store burned down in 1911 and the heat was so intense that it scorched the paint on the front of Cupola House.

Levi also built a large dock and crib at the foot of the hill below the house. Here he sold cord wood, some cut by men he had hired and some bought from others which he resold. In those days wood burning side-wheelers stopped to refuel at Egg Harbor on their way to Fish Creek, Ephraim and Mackinac Island.

It is said that Levi often sat in the cupola on top his house with a spyglass where he could watch the activity of his workers on the dock and ships as well as in the fields and orchards.

Levi always had considerable hired help and all of them lived in the house, using the back stairs to four bedrooms up there. These stairs are still in place although they have been floored over. A door separated this part of the house from the front section used by the family.

In 1906 Levi decided he wanted to go back to California so he sold his property at Egg Harbor to C. A. Speaker. Speaker used the house as a hotel and overnight stop for the horse-drawn stage.

When Levi stopped to say goodbye to his daughter at Superior she would not let him go West by himself and for the next 12 years he lived with her. He died in 1918 at the age of 94. He was buried alongside his wife in the Egg Harbor cemetery but his grave is not marked.

His body was brought back by his son Truman in April, 1918. The roads were blocked by blizzards and they had a terrible time getting the coffin through the drifts on a bobsled.

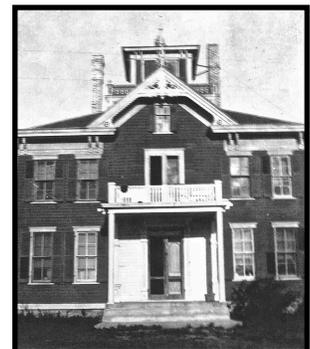
Levi's holdings included much of what is now the village of Egg Harbor. Forty acres was planted three-fourths to Duchess apples and the rest in Hyslop crabs, alternating the trees in diagonal rows. It is said that the sight from the Cupola of the house was a breathtaking checkerboard when the trees were in bloom as the Duchess blossoms are very pink and the Hyslop blooms are pure white.

C. A. Speaker sold the house and 130 acres of land in 1907 to the Cady family, who has owned it since. Speaker had kept the property only one year himself.

From 1910 to 1912 the property was planted with cherries and apples and at the peak of its production the orchard yielded 16,000 crates of cherries and 15,000 bushels of apples a year.

Cupola House now has only one acre of land as the orchards were sold off years ago. The Cady family still spends its summers in Egg Harbor.

**The Cupola House,
early on painted a
green color with
white trim**



1971.07.29. D.C. Advocate

**Family feels close to
familiar Cupola House**

If buildings have gender the Cupola House in Egg Harbor could be compared with a graciously aged but nonetheless stately grand dame of the Victorian era. Having missed the antebellum period by one short decade, Egg Harbor's noted landmark with its columned portico, clean lines and spacious rooms bears a lingering resemblance to certain legendary, long vanished southern mansions the kind the Little Colonel might find familiar.

There is, of course, a happy blend of New England architecture combined with this southern dignity, spiced with a soupcon of Midwestern practicality, and garnished with such exotic touches as embossed wallpaper (called "Frescoe" by its original owner) and a wainscoted ballroom. The hallmark of the house, of course, is its eye-catching cupola, also known as a widow's walk, designed to observe vessels at sea.

Now a prestigious 100 years old, the Cupola House has been jointly owned for the past 10 years by the Rockford Fairchild family of Marshfield and Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild of the Nut Tree in California. The two brothers and their wives purchased the immense home (it takes 30 gallons of paint for one coat) in 1961 from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cady, who had owned it since 1907. Mrs. Rockford (Elizabeth) Fairchild is the Cadys' niece and she and her husband have both had ties with the Cupola House since their childhoods.

But, let's start at the beginning. The annals of this particular dwelling go back to 1871 but the story of its builder begins in 1824, the year Levi Thorp, son of Jacob Thorp and younger brother of Asa Thorp, was born. The Thorp family helped pioneer Fish Creek and some of Asa's adventurous spirit must have rubbed off on Levi, who at the age of 25, succumbed to the lure of Sutter's discovery and left with the '49ers' to pan for California's gold.

He returned with \$5,000 in gold dust and a Chinese companion whose length of stay in Door county has gone unrecorded. What is a matter of record, however, is that on Feb. 22, 1855, Levi Thorp bought about 130 acres of

land, including the Egg Harbor bluff, from the federal government and over a period of 16 years built his 14-room mansion.

Using choice white pine lumber shipped across the bay from Menominee, Mich, Levi Thorp's dream house slowly became reality. Its cost exceeded its owner's \$5,000 nest egg by \$500, but even that added expense couldn't deter Levi's wife, Eliza Jane Thorp, from importing richly embossed wallpaper from Milwaukee. This same paper may still be viewed in the hallway of the home.

A large front room on the second floor served as a ballroom and servants' quarters, self contained with a private stairway, were situated at the rear of the home. The family used a wide, bannistered stairway opening from the front entrance.

Newspaper accounts report that the Cupola House was the scene of the wedding of the Thorps' daughter Elda when she became the bride of Charles Steele of Sister Bay. The last time the Thorps entertained en famille was New Year's Day in 1896. Eliza Jane died in December of that year and Levi occupied the home alone for several years.

His only son Truman Thorp lived across the street and operated a singularly unsuccessful business which "lost his father a great deal of money."

By 1906 Levi had had it. Determined to return to the scene of his gold digging days in California, he sold the home to a C. A. Speaker, who had the temerity to turn the Thorp homestead into a hotel and stage-coach stop. Levi, in the meantime, was persuaded by his daughter to refrain from venturing west and to make his home with her and her husband (who by now was a judge) in Superior. He did so until 1918 when he died at the age of 94.

Speaker sold the house and land in 1907 to the Cady family who owned it until 1961. Both Charles and Ethel Cady, who now live in Green Bay, spend summers in Egg Harbor. Their niece Betty (Elizabeth Fairchild) says she spent vacations at the Cupola house from the time she was a baby.

"Rocky" Fairchild's roots go back to 1947 when his parents William and Hulda Fairchild rented the downstairs. Although Rocky was living away from home at the time he, too, summered at the Cupola House and met his

future bride there in 1949. They were married in 1953 and eight years later were offered the chance to buy the property by Cady.

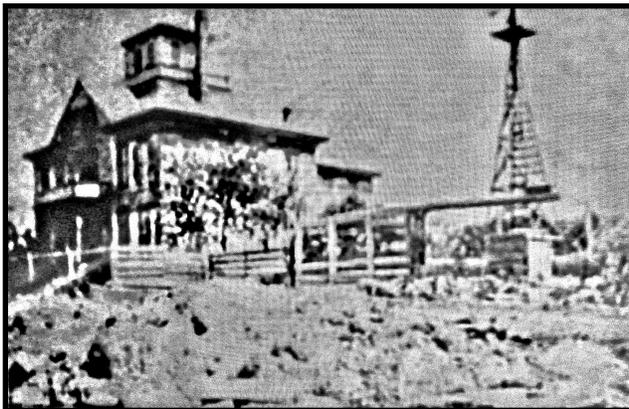
“We thought it over about 15 minutes,” says Rocky, “and knew we couldn’t let the place go to strangers. My brother Everett and his wife Mary Helen felt pretty much as we did. The four of us decided to buy it.”

It has been the Fairchilds’ summer retreat ever since and although its youthful owners regret not being able to refurbish the Cupola House with authentic period pieces, nothing can detract from its century old charm.

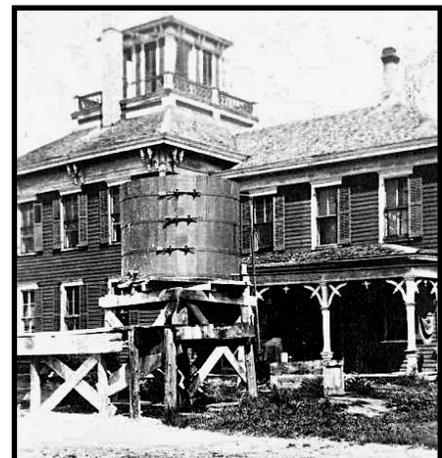
It’s a beautiful home, home capable of sheltering succeeding generations of appreciative tenants. And Brian, 11 year old son of the Rockford Fairchilds, already shares his parents’ sentiments.



Cupola House was painted white in early 1920s by Charles Cady, owner 1907-1961



Above - Earliest photo of the Cupola House. To right - with a water tower.



Levi Thorp's story started with family enterprises in Fish Creek and later with his brother Jacob; he and Jacob opened up the area surrounding the harbor that would become the community of Egg Harbor. The history of the Thorp family is well documented by Door County historians. This manuscript is a collection of the writings of correspondents for the Door County newspapers who reported the stories as they happened. Their newspaper reports painted the picture of a man, Levi Thorp, who was an successful lumberman, shipper, businessman, and farmer. As well as being a man buried in his work day endeavors, he was known to open up his prize possession, the Cupola House, for some of the social highlights of the area.

There are some resorces listing the date of 1855 as to when Levi D. Thorp purchased 1600 acres of Egg Harbor. However, the documentation below puts the date at 1858-1873 that Levi D Thorp made 14 transactions, Earlier purchases may have been under the name of Jacob, or both of the brothers. Levi would go on to buy out Jacob's holdings in Egg Harbor.

Levi Thorp Government Land Patents

Levi Thorp acquired 1022 acres of his 1600 in the vicinity of what is now the Village of Egg Harbor through these 14 transactions. In partnership with his brother Jacob, his intentions were to harvest the forest. Land transactions below ran from 1858 to 1873.

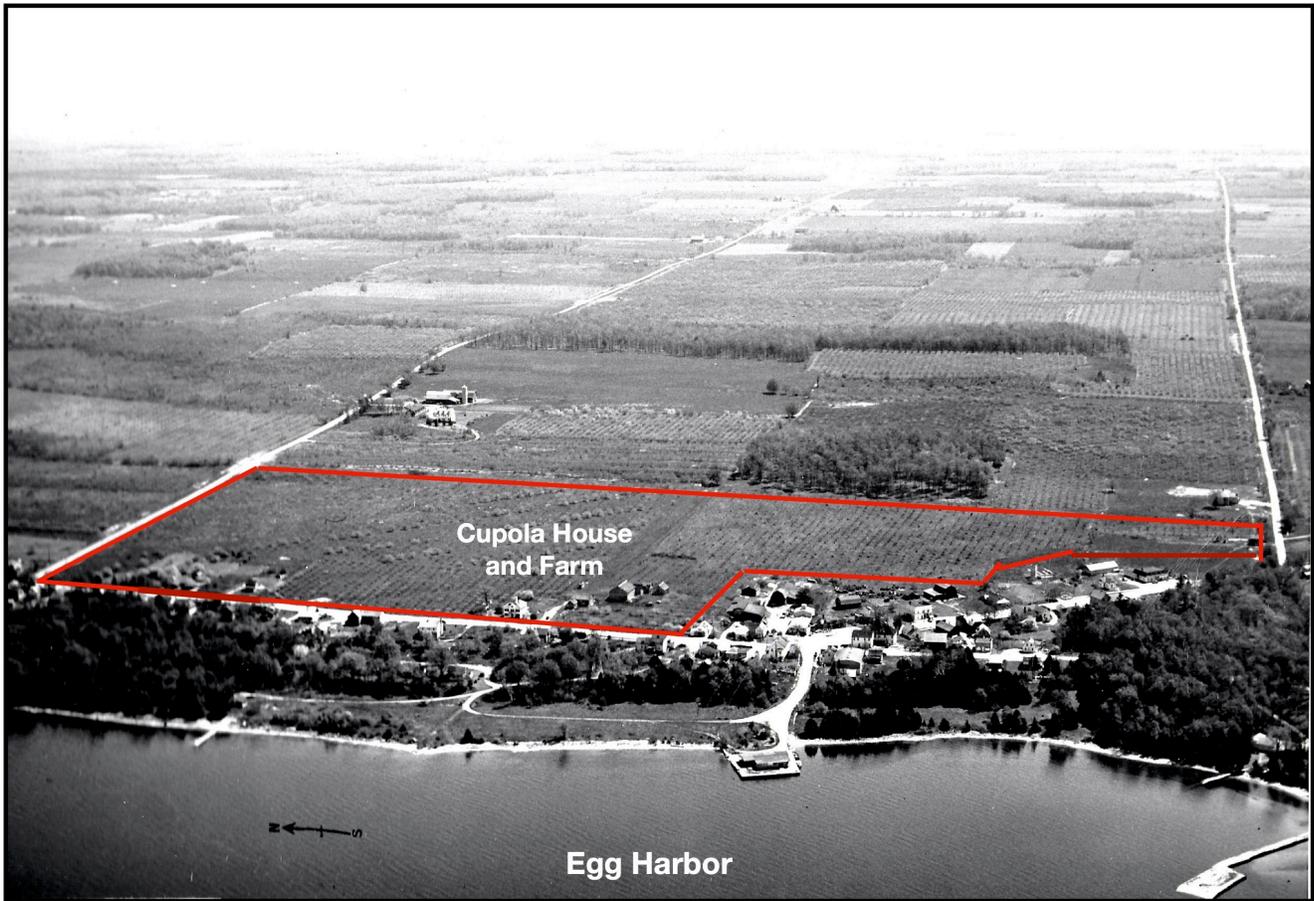
Levi Thorp and his brother Jacob were among the first settlers in what is now the village of Egg Harbor. They were the brothers of Asa Thorp, pioneer settler of Fish Creek. They went into the cord wood and cedar business and built the necessary pier for shipping their harvest on to the emerging mid-west cities. Early shipping was done with sailing craft, later followed by steam power ships.

According to Hjalmer Holand (Door County historian), in its early years of existence, Egg Harbor's population consisted mainly of Indians and European immigrants, who though they couldn't speak English, they could chop wood for the Thorps. The wood cutters used axes to fell trees and cut them into 4 foot lengths for splitting. They were paid 50 cents per cord. (a cord is a stack 4' wide x 4' high x 8' long)

Overall the wood business proved profitable because of the cheap labor, but not entirely, sometimes the wood sold for as little as \$2.00 a cord and the Thorps had to pay the shipping charges. Levi eventually bought out Jacob and went on to become one of the biggest businessmen north of Sturgeon Bay.

Land Patent Transactions

Accession	Names	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
WI1510__133	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	19717	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 1	25	25	Door
							030N - 026E	25	Door
WI1520__063	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	20805	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 3	25	25	Door
							030N - 027E	W½NW¼	30
WI1540__204	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	22026	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	W½SW¼	19	25	Door
WI1560__060	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	22968	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E				Door
WI1560__061	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	22969	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 5	25	25	Door
WI1560__062	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	22970	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	SW¼NE¼	31	25	Door
WI1560__063	THORP, LEVI D	2/22/1858	22971	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	NW¼SW¼	30	25	Door
WI1590__021	THORP, LEVI D	3/1/1858	24632	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 4	25	25	Door
WI1590__022	THORP, LEVI D	3/1/1858	24633	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 1	26	26	Door
							030N - 026E	24	Door
WI1620__409	THORP, LEVI D	3/1/1865	26446	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	SW¼NW¼	31	24	Door
WI1620__410	THORP, LEVI D	3/1/1865	26447	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 026E	Lot/Trct 2	13	24	Door
WI1630__047	THORP, LEVI D	11/15/1865	26567	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	NW¼NW¼	19	24	Door
WI1630__048	THORP, LEVI D	11/15/1865	26568	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	NW¼SW¼	22	24	Door
WI1690__225	THORP, LEVI D	2/10/1873	29934	WI	4th PM - 1831 MN/WI 030N - 027E	NW¼SW¼	22	24	Door



Approximate location of **Thorp's Estate** when it was sold to Charles Cady in 1907



Levi finished his Cupola House in 1871 and sold it to C.A. Speaker in 1906. A year later, 1907, Speaker in turn sold it to a Green Bay real estate dealer, Charles Cady, who operated the orchards and used the house for a family retreat until he sold the house 1961. (See the book in the Kress History Center on Charles Cady)

Brothers, Rocky and Everett Fairchild purchased the house from Cady in 1961 and used it as their summer retreat. Two other names appear in connection with the Cupola House; Dorothy and Therman Deerwester and Adele Carley-Hake, that was before Gloria and Richard Hansen purchased it in 1980 and refurbished it into the Cupola House Gallery. Over the years the Thorp land holdings had been sold, from 1,600 acres down to the Cupola House acre, or so.

In 1921 the Cupola House was sold to Greg and Melissa Bieker. (The Biekers are the owners at the time of this writing, 2022)



Approximate **acreage remaining** of Thorp's original 1,600 acres when Charles Cady purchased the Cupola House and orchards in 1907.

By Giz Herbst
2022

Egg Harbor Historical Society
Egg Harbor, Wisconsin

To make Egg Harbor History come alive
for future generations through the
collection, preservation, and sharing
of the heritage of Egg Harbor.

