

A History of Thorp House Inn & Cottages

In 1902 Freeman Thorp and his wife Jessie Kinsey Thorp dreamed of building a beautiful Queen Anne style family home that also offered accommodations for family and tourists visiting Door County. They purchased land overlooking the Fish Creek harbor (originally part of a 1858 land grant received by Freeman's uncle Asa Thorp), and quickly began building. Freeman, a boat builder by trade, was highly involved in the development of the home and laid the wood flooring in the parlor himself.

When the ground floor of the home was nearly finished Freeman traveled across the bay to Minominee, Michigan to gather supplies for the second floor. He boarded a steamer named the *Erie L. Hackley* for the return trip to Fish Creek but never finished his journey. On October 3, 1903 the steamer ran into a storm, overturned and split in two. Eleven passengers perished in the wreck including Freeman, who would never see his home completed. His body was later recovered and he is buried in Pioneer Cemetery located in Peninsula State Park.

Suddenly a widow, Freeman's wife Jessie finished the second floor and fulfilled the couple's dream of having a welcoming home with plenty of room for visitors. She made her income by renting rooms in the upstairs of the house and lived there herself until her mother fell ill around 1915, and Jessie moved closer to care for her. Max Schmidt of Chicago rented Jessie's home as a summer residence during this period. Jessie passed away in 1932 and the Thorp house was sold to Elmer and Esther Anderson in 1936.

The Anderson's built five cottages on the property and named their new resort 'Cedar Ridge'. In 1942 the upper half of the property was sold to Ida Anderson and she built four additional cottages known as 'Ida Anderson's Breezy Hill Lodge'. The property was sold in 1974 to Neil and Selma Kinsey, relatives of the original owner Jessie. They renamed their new summer residence 'heritage' and enjoyed it until 1982 when they sold the home and cottages to Richard and Carol Skare. Owners of 'The Cookery', a restaurant across from the property, the Skare's briefly used it as employee housing for their workers.

Christine and Sverre Falk-Pedersen bought the property in 1986 and the 'Thorp House Inn & Cottages' was officially established. Christine and Sverre opened the house as a bed and breakfast and contributed countless features to the house including adding on a back section, adding brick pavers, and naming the rooms after women of the Thorp family. Many of the decorations and furniture were also curated by them. After 25 years of operating the business Christine and Sverre sold it to Melanie Camp. Melanie furthered the business by making extensive renovations to the cottages.

In late 2018 Matt Ranzau stayed at the inn while looking for other lodging for sale in the area. With little luck finding the right property, Matt spoke with Melanie about his interest in owning lodging and to his surprise she was interested in selling. In a stroke of good luck and timing Matt became the current owner of the Thorp House Inn & Cottages and has since added a new inn room, and updated the common areas and cottages. The house today still reflects Freeman's original design for the home, and he and Jessie's desire for it to be a welcoming accommodation for travelers is continually fulfilled by the many guests who visit each year.