

## Resorts - Fairview at White Lake

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Photo Courtesy of Cindy Partridge Opie from the Partridge Family Collection

Fairview was a farm-turned-resort property owned and operated by the Thomas Partridge family beginning around 1895.

In August 1902, Henry T. Stevens, a Fairview resorter from several seasons' past, had many words of praise for Fairview, as well as the lake. Mr. Stevens was a hunter and fisherman and visited every creek in the vicinity and captured 154 trout. He also caught 90 black mouthed bass in Duck Lake with the largest which weighed five pounds. He said, "White Lake is the prettiest place, to my notion, that there is on Lake Michigan. It is the nicest fishing resort and will vie with the best of them in the beauty of its scenery."

In July 1903 it was reported that the hotel at Fairview had its full quota of guests from the city where they can get far away from the noise and bustle, where one can enjoy a good night's sleep, forget all trouble, and awake refreshed, ready for a good day's sport. At Fairview boating and fishing was popular with the guests.

Fairview was the property of the Partridge family, who by their genial hospitality and untiring efforts made their resort a home for every person tired of city life who were looking for a quiet nook in the country where rest and quiet contemplation are attainable, and still if one wishes, a day's hunting or fishing could be had.

Thomas Partridge was born in Gloucester, England on 18 March 1838 and lived there until 1872, when he with his wife and four sons sailed for the United States. After a stormy voyage of four weeks, they landed in New York. Two weeks later they were on their way to White Lake.

Thomas married Matilda Vick on 19 June 1859 in England. During their marriage they would have 9 children: William Thomas (1861-1932), Anna Matilda (Jan 1863-), Joseph Walter (Jan 1865-), Harry Alfred (1867-1960), Francis Charles (1869-1936), John Roger (1871-1952), Elizabeth Maud (1874-1953), Thomas Vick (1876-1920) and Alice Vick (1879-1924).

Upon arriving in the area in 1872, the family initially lived in an area near where the Lakeside Inn was. In the early 1880s Thomas bought 40 acres across from where Schiller's Barn was located. The Partridges were the first and only settlers on the sand road for 25 or 30 years, so the road was called Partridge Road. It was later named Lamos Road after a county commissioner.

In addition to the original farmhouse, orchards, fields and cattle, Thomas saw another business opportunity in the 1880s: tourism. Grand Rapids people wanted to vacation at White Lake, so in 1902 he spent \$400 to build a second house next to the original farmhouse for summer tourist guests. While Fairview Resort had big porches all the way around, it was pretty crude by today's standards: no insulation, no electricity, no inside plumbing or water. But the lack of amenities did not stop the people, usually one family at a time, from coming.

Fairview was one of the most popular summer resorts and its boarders always remained late in the fall.

The White Lake school which had been built on South Shore Drive and Lamos in 1883 was called the Partridge School and served as a school for Fruitland Township until 1948 when the district consolidated with Whitehall. Still standing today, it is now used as the White Lake Community Club.

In October 1904 Thomas and his wife went to England and Wales for the winter months. It was there that Matilda died on 20 March 1905 while visiting at the home of their daughter Elizabeth, and she was buried in Wales.

Thomas Partridge returned to the States and continued to operate Fairview. He passed away at his home in Fruitland Township on 2 July 1933, and is buried in Oakhurst Cemetery in the Partridge family plot along with several of their children and extended family members.

Sometime around 1929, Thomas's grandson, Harry Francis Partridge, took over Fairview Resort as his own family's summer place. They enjoyed the place for over 20 years until 1951 when it was sold. Over the years some "modernizations" have taken place. A kerosene stove was replaced by propane, a well and an electric pump provided running water, and a septic tank was installed which meant the building behind the house could be torn down. But still no insulation.

In 2002, the house's centennial, then owners Jeannine and Steven Mundt, received permission from the last Partridge owner to designate the residence as the Partridge House.

For a time, it appears that it was operated as an airbnb or vrbo but is now a private home once again.