



KAISER'S FERNWOOD LODGE

T40N R5E SEC 35 LOT 8

Fred Kaiser - 1924 TO 1938

The second resort in the Vilas County section of our lakes was opened sometime around 1924 by Fred Kaiser on the narrow peninsula that separates the two lakes south of the thoroughfare. From this site the resort had access to both lakes. It must have taken a lot of work to get a passable road to this location which is twelve miles from Minocqua or Woodruff. The first record of the resort comes from the Lakeland Times from March 13, 1925

and reports that a two-story building was being built to house the dining room and kitchen on Kaiser's Point. A more detailed article appeared two weeks later in The Times:

"Construction work on the new main building at Kaiser's Fernwood Lodge on Lake Shishebogama is progressing very nicely. F.W. Kaiser, owner of the resort, states that the new building will be completed in ample time for occupancy before the opening of the summer season. The lower floor of the building will be occupied by the dining room and kitchen of the resort and also a store. The upper level will be devoted to guest rooms. The new building takes place of the one that was destroyed by fire last November.

The resort now consists of seven small cottages, and with the addition of the new building will accommodate sixty-five guests. Mr. Kaiser plans to build more cottages this summer. Kaiser's Fernwood Lodge is located on a beautifully wooded point between Lake Shishebogama – "Lake of Many Bays" – and Gunlock Lake. The resort has an ideal location as some of the best fishing grounds in Wisconsin are nearby and scenic natural beauty at its best surrounds it on all sides."



Sample from the 8-page Fernwood Lodge Brochure:

**Kaiser's
Fernwood
Lodge**

Small floral ornament

*Kaiser's Fernwood Lodge
Gunlock & Shishebogama Lakes*

Shishebogama and Gunlock Lakes
Twelve Miles From
MINOCQUA, :: WISCONSIN

Lodges—Kaiser's Fernwood Lodge is made up of seven individual lodges furnished for light house-keeping. In addition to this there is a main lodge where you can take your meals if you desire. The main lodge has ten double rooms. Our beds are provided with Spring-within Mattresses. All of the lodges are newly built. Well screened porches and first class equipment add to the enjoyment of a vacation spent at this place.

Hay fever and asthma sufferers here find instant relief.

About Fred Kaiser

Fred William Kaiser was born in Milwaukee on April 17, 1890. The 1900 Milwaukee census shows him at age ten living at 862 S. Berg St with his parents and a 12-year-old sister. His father was the owner of W. F. Kaiser Pharmacy.

The next record of Fred William Kaiser is a draft registration card from June of 1917. It shows him as married and living at 1608 4th Ave. in Minneapolis. He is working for the Lane Amusement Company. He is claiming exemption from the draft because of varicose veins and his wife. Perhaps she is not well. He is described as medium height and build with blue eyes and light hair. I have not been able to find a record of this person, and it cannot be verified that this is the same Fred William Kaiser.

He married Annette Hannon sometime around 1920 but no record of when and where is available. The 1919 city directory for Milwaukee lists Annette J. Hannon working as a “pkr” and living at 518 Clinton. There are two Fred W. Kaiser’s listed. One is a beveller at Enterprise Art Glass, the other is a machinist. It is not clear which, if either, is our subject. Other details around this time are also unclear.

Another mention in the newspaper about the resort appeared in the Minocqua Times on October 8, 1926:

“Fred Kaiser, of Kaiser’s Fernwood Lodge on Shishebogama and Gunlock lakes, is making extensive improvements to his main lodge to accommodate winter tourists. The lodge is heated with a large fireplace, has running water with shower baths. The sleeping rooms have been refurbished with new, comfortable beds, springs and mattresses, and guests will be assured of as good accommodations as can be secured at the best hotels. It will be warm and comfortable at all times. Thirty people can be taken care of during the winter. The cottages are also piped with running water. The present improvements represent an outlay of \$5,000 which is conclusive evidence that Mr. Kaiser has faith in the future of the recreational industry in Northern Wisconsin.”

On June 15, 1927 they hosted a group of friends and guests to celebrate the new opening of a new dance hall, lobby and dining room addition. The party danced to the music of an eleven-piece orchestra with an electric piano, followed by refreshments.

After settling in at the resort they became involved in charitable causes and the social scene. They were present at a radio party at the Gotchy home with the Minch’s. In 1928 Fred was elected president of the Minocqua chapter of the Isaak Walton League. He was also a member of the Kiwanis Club. He served for a time as secretary of the newly formed Minocqua District Resort Association. Fred and Annette were members of the Minocqua Chapter of the Masonic Order of the Eastern Star.

In November of 1927 Fred purchased the Williswood Resort on Little Spider Lake for \$27,000 for speculation purposes. The property consisted of 7,000 feet of lake frontage, a main building, 7 log cottages, a boathouse and a dog kennel. An obituary from 1938 for Fred’s father, William, states he was the owner of the property. There was a listing in the Minocqua Times on March 4, 1934 offering Williswood for rent. It was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Edward Pack in 1940 and renamed Pine Acres Country Lodge.

Around this time he purchased another property called Fernwood Gardens and located on Highway 70 where he ran a tavern. **This building still stands today as Rustic Pines.**

Many mentions of the success of fishermen staying at the resort were published over the years, many of the guests coming from both the Milwaukee and Chicago areas.

Fire was a continual concern in the Northwoods and an article from the Lakeland Times on November 4, 1932 reports on just such an occurrence at the resort:

“Fire of unknown origin Monday totally destroyed the main building of Fred Kaiser’s Fernwood Lodge located fifteen miles west of Minocqua on Shishebogama and Gunlock lakes. No one was at the resort at the time the fire broke out, both Mr. and Mrs. Kaiser having left the place during the afternoon. The fire was discovered around five o’clock by a man from Merrill who stopped at Fernwood Lodge while trying to locate the Anderson brothers. When neighbors arrived the fire had progressed so far that nothing could be saved.

The Minocqua fire department made the 15-mile run over winding roads in 22 minutes and succeeded in putting two good streams of water on the fire in record time, but the flames had been fanned by a strong wind and the building was practically a wreck on their arrival. It is believed that the loss is in the neighborhood of \$12,000. The building destroyed was a two-story frame structure. The upper rooms were devoted to sleeping quarters and on the first floor were the kitchen, dining room and lobby. This is the second disastrous fire that the Kaisers have had in the operation of Fernwood Lodge. Nine years ago the main building of the resort was destroyed by fire.”

An undated postcard shows a very modern looking two-story lodge with a wraparound screened-in porch. The lake is a short walk away with a couple of boats at a small dock. A brochure from the resort notes that in the lodge there are ten double rooms with “Spring-within Mattresses”. There are also seven newly built cabins with screened porches.

A December 3, 1937 article in the Lakeland Times newspaper reports on Fred being charged with game law violations, possession of venison in a closed season and with purchasing venison. The charges were dismissed when two of the witnesses, Lac Du Flambeau Indians, recanted earlier testimony when they said they were “pretty drunk” when they were arrested and didn’t remember saying that they sold him the deer.

In January of 1938, Annette passed away at age 40. There is no mention of what caused her death. Two months later Fred’s father died in Milwaukee at age 74, from a heart attack. At 48 years and left to run the resort himself, he decided to sell the business. A classified ad in the Milwaukee Journal from February 13, 1938 read:

“For Sale By Owner: Cheap. Resort, 6 cabins, 5 other buildings. Gunlock and Shishebogama lakes: running water, electric lights: must sell: death. Fred Kaiser, Minocqua, Wis.”

Fred married again in 1939, this time to Hazel M. Penard of Polk County, Wisconsin, 27 years his junior. On May 2, 1939 Fred and Helen were caught selling alcohol to an Indian for the second time. Fred was fined \$100 and given a suspended sentence of six months. Hazel was fined \$50 and her sentence of six months was also suspended.

The 1940 census shows Fred as age 50 and Hazel 23. They also have a 6-month-old son, Eugene. Fred's occupation is listed as proprietor of a tavern. The excitement of a first son was short-lived however. After a brief illness, Fred passed away on February 7, 1941 at his sister's home in Milwaukee.

The Minocqua Times paper from July 28, 1939 mentions a fisherman catching a 34-inch musky five minutes after arriving at Moll's Fernwood Resort. There is no other mention of who this Moll person was. A Michael Peter Moll ran a resort on Fawn Lake on the Manitowish chain from 1977 to 1995, but I have found no connection.

There is a classified ad in the February 17, 1941 edition of the Rhinelander Daily News selling a resort. Although it doesn't give a name, the description of the property seems to point to Fernwood Lodge: six furnished cabins, electric lights and water. Bath and toilet in main lodge, boats, motors, garage and laundry. 1,100-foot sandy beach on Lake Shishebogama. Also, there is the frontage on Gunlock Lake. It also mentions good fishing and duck hunting. Fernwood Lodge is the only location with frontage on both lakes.

An ad was run in the Milwaukee Journal on September 26, 1941 selling a tavern and resort in Woodruff in a good location. It states that it is in a good location and reasonable in price, selling due to illness. No name was given but I believe that it is for the Kaiser property. The resort and tavern were sold to Frank Litchfield who ran it until the mid-1950's.

Fernwood Lodge 1942 TO 1955 – Frank Litchfield

The first mention of Frank Litchfield being the new owner of Fernwood Lodge appeared in the Minocqua Times on August 14, 1942. It reports on a guest from Waukegan, Illinois that caught a 30-pound musky within 100 yards of the shore in front of the resort. There is no record available to know if the lodge was open in 1940 and 1941.

Frank Litchfield was born in Longton, Stratford England on March 25, 1897. His family came to the United States on February 16, 1911 at the age of 13. The 1920 census from Virden, Illinois shows him as 22 and single. He is employed as a laborer in a coal mine as is his father. On October 30, 1929 he was married to 33-year-old Louisa J. Felger in Chicago. The 1930 Chicago census reports that they are renting a 3-flat at 2430 Wilson Ave. along with his mother-in-law and an aunt. At 33, Frank is working a salesman in the radio industry. Louisa as a stenographer for a furniture company.

Frank received his naturalization papers on March 21, 1937 and he was employed as a fuel supervisor. They live in Melrose Park. The 1940 census for Melrose Park, Illinois finds them owning a home at 1302 N. 14th Ave. The home value valued at \$5,600. It is still there and appraised at around \$275,000. He is working as a troubleshooter for a coal company. Louisa is employed doing general office work for a wholesale house. Louisa's mother, Freda, is still living with them. It is probable that Frank and Louisa had been to the Northwoods before buying the resort by 1942. I believe that they only lived part time at the resort and spent the off season back home.

In June of 1943 Litchfield's purchased an apartment building and two small homes in Minocqua and improved them to attract tenants. There are a few mentions in the Minocqua Times of the fish caught by clients, usually Frank was the guide. The other mentions of the resort are short posts noting their comings and goings between Minocqua and their Melrose Park home. Louisa seems to have traveled back and forth a number of times for visits and then leaving for home while Frank stayed behind to run the resort. The last mention of them appeared in 1955. At some point they moved back to Melrose Park where Frank died on March 1, 1974. There is no record of when Louisa died but they are buried next to each other in Virden, Illinois.

I do not know when they closed the resort. The last mention in the newspaper was in 1955.

Research & Article by Gerry Klemm, SGLA member and Lake Shish resident

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