

INDUSTRY

***FORMAN'S MAPLE FLOORING FACTORY***

***Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan***

## FIRE KING'S HAVOC

### *Forman's Big Maple Flooring Factory of Petoskey Completely Destroyed by Fire Yesterday. Enormous Loss*

*Loss Foots Up To Almost \$3000,000. Seven Million Feet of Lumber Burn.  
Nearby Buildings Also Burn. Serious Loss To Petoskey*

The Independent Democrat  
Friday, July 19, 1901

A most serious blow struck Petoskey yesterday in the destruction by fire of the big maple flooring plant of the Thos. Forman Co. Ltd. The alarm was turned in at about 10 o'clock and both fire companies responded with promptness and did splendid service. The fire which started in the southwest corner of the top floor in the stock room where the finished product was stored, had gained such impetus as to have burned the roof and gable on the south end of the building. The flames burned fiercely in the dry flooring, were fanned by a moderate breeze which gradually increased as the heat grew more intense. The fire protection of the plant, the most expensive system known where by every floor of the building was deluged with a perfect rain of water, did very effective work, as well as the company's own men with five streams from the hydrants of their own system. For half an hour the flames were confined to the south half of the building and the upper floor. In the meantime our own firemen had secured hose from the west side station and had another stream at work on the awful furnace. At first it was hoped that the destructive element could be confined to the top of the building, but as they slowly made their way along the length of the building and the north gable also fell, it was evident to all that nothing could save the plant. Every minute the flames grew fiercer and more destructive.

Perfect billows of smoke and flame arose as the north end fell with a thunderous crash. The flames creating their own draught now increased in size and violence as they recrossed the building this time in both stories, from north to south. As the different sections fell corkscrew-like tongues of flame shot hundreds of feet. The

building, well built and solid, strove in vain for over an hour against the consuming element. The fire-fighters, reluctant to acknowledge defeat stubbornly receded from one position to another as the heat made it unbearable.

The main flooring plant fell and the office building then caught, books and valuable papers, however, were secured. The water supply of the company's plant became exhausted and what water could be supplied by the pumps situated outside the engine room, as well as the stream from the city hose was directed on the lumber piles south of the plant. A special train was sent for the Charlevoix steam fire engine which arrived about 12:30. Desperate efforts were made to save the lumber and saw mill buildings.

The loss on the building and machinery is estimated at \$100,000 of which \$55,000 is covered by insurance. The loss to the community and firm cannot be entirely estimated in dollars. Throughout the fire Mr. Thomas Forman appeared to be the coolest person on the scene. The heat from the burning debris was so intense as to crack the glass of windows fully five hundred feet away. Coming as it did nothing worse could have befallen the community.

The enormous stock of lumber comprised of about seven million feet of dry maple and valued at \$13 per thousand is an entire loss. There is no insurance on the lumber. The smaller mill in the yards was insured for \$6,000.

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{Forman's Fire Continued}

The Charlevoix engine as well as the Petoskey hose companies did excellent work in preventing the spread of the fire.

The barn of Mr. Benjamin Young, three quarters of a mile distant, was entirely destroyed, with a loss of several hundred dollars. The whole country side has been on fire, several men being required at every place fighting the burning meadows, owing to the heat of the Forman fire.

The heat was so intense on the main line of the G. R. & I as to make it impossible for trains to pass at 2:30 o'clock. Every thing is swept clean; only the brick chimney and ragged walls of the engine and boiler house remain of what in the morning was Petoskey's most valuable industry.

The plant had been running for months at its full capacity and was badly behind on orders. The enormous business which the firm will lose must be added to the loss of the plant and stock. This is a particularly unfortunate feature. Whether it will be rebuilt or not could not be stated at the time of going to press. At this moment the fire fighters are trying to save some of the lumber but the heat is so terrific that it is almost impossible to approach very near.

The work of the firemen was rendered almost of no avail by the intense heat of the burning lumber which converted the streams from the hose into steam before they ever came in contact with the wood. That no lives were lost or that no one received serious injury is a marvel.

At 3:30 p. m. all of the buildings except the barn were in ashes. The Charlevoix engine, placed on the bridge over Bear river was forcing two big streams upon the flames in the scant hope of saving the barn.

The flames were spreading entirely over the lumber yard and were leaping a hundred feet in the air. Fire superintendent Chas. McCarthy is handing ham sandwiches to his badly begrimed and sorely wearied firemen. The Charlevoix fire crew have distinguished themselves and are still at work. The heat is intense, and the large crowd of spectators are viewing the progress of the flames from neighboring hillsides.

Since a day is gone and the excitement of the fire has somewhat subsided, Petoskey begins to more fully realize that the burning of the Forman factory is the direst calamity that has ever befallen, not only Petoskey, but this entire northern country. One hundred and three men were on the pay roll of the concern, besides the labor employed by the McManus mill in sawing the Forman logs, and hundreds of men who directly or indirectly derived a benefit through the lumbering operations. It is earnestly hoped that the plant will be rebuilt, but a \$300,000 fire with an insurance of only \$61,000 throws out a very faint hope. Mr. Forman and his associates, all men of honor and deserving the good will of everybody, certainly have the sympathies of this entire community.

Today, the many acres which yesterday were covered with a busy industry, the pride of our city, are an immense bed of coals. Through the heroic efforts of our firemen and the Charlevoix engine the company's barn and some adjacent stacks of lumber were saved.

The Forman factory made high grade maple flooring exclusively, and much of its product was sold in Europe, a fine foreign market having been established across the water by Mr. Forman himself some years ago.

**FELL, HILL & COMPANY SHINGLE MILL**

Emmet County Democrat  
March 5, 1886, page 1

**The Shingle Mill.**

Fell, Hill & Co.'s shingle mill which was partially destroyed by fire but a few weeks since, we are pleased to note is nearly rebuilt and will at an early day resume operation. Without stopping to consider, we are not likely to give sufficient importance to such an enterprise. The benefits derived from such an establishment to the town and surrounding country should not be forgotten. Mr. Fell tells us they give steady employment to eleven men and more than three times that number indirectly in furnishing bolts. A cord of these bolts will make on an average forty-five hundred shingles. They will manufacture in the neighborhood of thirty-five thousand shingles per day or about ten million per annum. In doing this they will consume upwards of two thousand cords of bolts for which they are paying the farmer an average of three dollars per cord or upwards of six thousand dollars every year for their material. For these shingles they find a ready market usually in the Eastern states. In car load lots seconds 16 in. are bringing \$1.25 per M., while stars bring from \$2 to \$2.25 per M. Two car loads were recently shipped to Keen, N. H.

***PETOSKEY MANUFACTURING CO.***  
***200 W. Lake Street***  
***Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan***

*Envelope addresses to  
Petoskey Manufacturing Co.  
200 W. Lake Street  
Petoskey, Mich. 49770, U.S.A.*

*From: Machinery & Electronic Imp-Exp Co  
A Division of Hunan Imp-Exp. Corp.  
85 Tianxin Road, 6<sup>th</sup> F./ Changsala,  
Hunan Province 410005, China*

**MACHINERY & ELECTRONIC IMP-EXP CO.**  
**A DIVISION OF HUNAN IMP-EXP. CORP.**  
85 Tianxin Road, 6th F., Changsha,  
Hunan Province 410005, China.

Mr. D. G. Bain  
President  
Petoskey Manufacturing Co.  
200 W. Lake Street  
Petoskey, Mich. 49770  
U.S.A.



*PLANO BENCH  
FACTORY*

*Corner Mitchell Street & Woodland Avenue  
Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan*



**PIANO BENCH FACTORY**  
Corner Mitchell Street & Woodland Avenue

The Petoskey Record, page 1  
Thursday, February 15, 1912

## **PIANO BENCH FACTORY**

**Machinery Being Installed in New Location, Corner Mitchell St. and Woodland Avenue.**

The machinery for the piano bench factory arrived last week and has been moved to their building at the corner of Mitchell street and Woodland avenue, where it is being set up ready for operation. A quantity of stock and a number of finished and partly finished benches were also brought from Wolverine and are on hand at the new plant.

The building is being slightly remodeled on the second floor, where the offices and store rooms will be located and the place will not be in readiness for operation for about two weeks. Several finishers have arrived from Wolverine and from Grand Rapids and are at work in the east room doing finishing work.

The machinery will be operated with electricity, the company having on hand two five horse power electric motors. They will employ twelve to fifteen men after the first few months but not that many will be employed at present.

Since the company decided to locate in this city it has been re-organized and the following officers have been elected: President, C. H. Hansen; vice-president, Frank Fochtman; secretary and treasurer, Wm. A. Major. The company will still do business under the name of the Bon Ton Manufacturing Company.

The firm of Crawford Bros. & Wixson have secured the agency for the benches in Emmet, Charlevoix, and Cheboygan counties.

Michigan Maple Block  
Addition

City Offices Petoskey Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

November 21, 1974

Michigan Maple Block Company  
Box 245  
Petoskey, Michigan, 49770

Gentlemen:

The City of Petoskey is honored to receive the birdseye maple gavel and the miniature butcher block from the oldest and original home of the maple butcher block of Michigan. We want to extend our thanks to the employees of your company for this token of their continued efforts to make our City one where government and governed are working together for the good of the total community.

The history accompanying your gift is especially interesting and will take on real value as the years pass by. I have made a copy of this history to be kept in our City Library and the original copy will be preserved at the City offices. The gavel and butcher block will be passed along to successive mayors of our City.

A special thanks is also extended for the very personal presentation made to the City by Gerry Smith. I have come to know him as a man who has a real heart for this community and is willing to give greatly of his time to make our community better.

Sincerely,

CITY OF PETOSKEY

*Barbara A. Waters*

Barbara A. Waters  
Mayor

*Copy submitted by Drew Cherven  
Petoskey District Library*

*Narcissa - I  
thought you could  
preserve safely this  
copy of the history of  
our official  
gavel!  
Thanks*

WOOD  
WELDED  
TRADE MARK

# MICHIGAN MAPLE BLOCK COMPANY

MANUFACTURERS OF  
LAMINATED HARDWOOD PRODUCTS

PHONE  
616-347-4170

BOX 245  
PETOSKEY, MICHIGAN 49770

Sept. 20, 1974

Mayor Barbara Waters  
City of Petoskey  
Petoskey, Michigan 49770

Dear Honorable Mayor:

We are so pleased to present you with this birdseye maple gavel and this miniature butcher block from the oldest and original home of the maple butcher block of Michigan.

The maple in this gavel comes from the Canadian forest about 50 miles west of the Canadian capitol, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

To be more specific the tree that this maple came from was cut during the winter of 1973-74 at or near Whitney, Ontario on the edge of the great Algonquin Provincial Park. The lumber was sawn at the Murry Brothers sawmill at Barrys Bay. Purchased from them by the Maple Block Company and trucked to Petoskey by the Noble Graham Transport of Brimley, Michigan. This lumber was then dried in our kilns, processed through the Petoskey, Michigan Maple Block Company and this birdseye piece was selected and made into a gavel for the Mayor of Petoskey.

Along with this is this miniature butcher block made from maple cut on the 75 Club at Hessel, Michigan, during the summer of 1974. Sawn at Chards Sawmill and trucked to Petoskey, Michigan Maple Block Company by Chards own truck. This wood also was graded, kiln dried and processed through Michigan Maple Block Company and chosen for a sample block to be presented to the Council Chambers and Mayor of Petoskey, Michigan.

Sept. 20, 1974

All this is an honor to the employees of Michigan Maple Block, those from the City of Petoskey, the township and the county, to be able to present the City with this token of their efforts to make Petoskey a better place to live.

MICHIGAN MAPLE BLOCK COMPANY

Mr. Jack Dau, President  
Mr. Bob Dau, Vice-President  
Mr. Robert Starmer, Sec. Treas.  
Mr. Gerald (Gerry) Smith, Prod. Eng.

*Copy submitted by Drew Cherven  
Petoskey District Library*

**ALFRED J. DAU RITES MONDAY**

Services for Alfred J. Dau, 80, a pioneer businessman here, who died early today at Lockwood-MacDonald Hospital after a long illness, will be at 11 a.m. Monday from the First Presbyterian Church. Burial will follow in Greenwood Cemetery.

Mr. Dau was chairman of the board of Michigan Maple Block Co.; chairman of the board of Bally Block Co., Bally, Pa., a founder and developer of Burt Lake Shores and Indian Point and operated the Petoskey Housefurnish Co. from 1927 to 1964 when it was sold to Gately's.

He was a past Lieutenant governor and Petoskey club president of Kiwanis and was the founder of the Kiwanis White Elephant Sale, an annual charitable fund raising event started in the 1920's. He was a member of the Masons; Knights Templar, Elks, Presbyterian Church and was a charter member of the Petoskey Bay View Country Club.

Mr. Dau was born Oct. 25, 1888 in Sonderborg, Denmark, and left as a young man for England, then went to South Africa. In 1912 he came to New York, then moved to San Francisco, then Chicago and lived briefly in Milwaukee prior to moving here in 1925.

He was a salesman for Michigan Maple Block Co. when he lived in Chicago. He was married to Beatrice Schmitt April 23, 1925 in San Francisco.

In 1927 he purchased the controlling interest of John Shields and Watson Snyder in the Petoskey Housefurnishing Co. which was established in 1913. In 1938 the business outgrew the Mit-

chell-st. location and he built a new store on Bay View-rd. and pioneered business moving from the downtown main street.

He sold the store in 1964 and devoted his time to the two block companies.

Surviving are his wife, Beatrice; three sons, John J. of Pottstown, Pa.; Alfred J. of Atherton, Calif.; Robert J. of Kenilworth, Ill.; a brother, Johan in Denmark; a sister, Mrs. Marie Brix, in Denmark and seven grandchildren.

The body is at the Stone Funeral Home. The family has suggested that those wishing to honor the memory of Mr. Dau may make a contribution in his name to the Emmet Cancer Society.



Alfred J. Dau

**BEATRICE MATILDA DAU, 96**

Former Petoskey resident Beatrice Matilda Dau, 96, died April 17, 1992, at The Sequoias Retirement Home in Portola Valley, Calif.

Memorial service and interment at Greenwood Cemetery will be announced at a later date.

Mrs. Dau was born in 1895 in Chicago, Ill., daughter of Fred J. and Minnie (Sturmer) Schmitt. The family moved to Petoskey in 1903 where her father was president of the Michigan Maple Block Co.

She attended Petoskey High School and Ferris Institute.

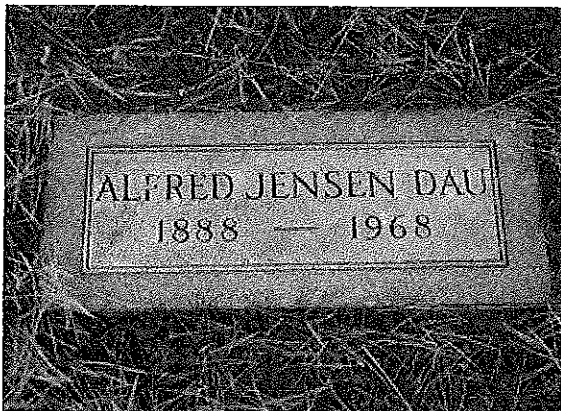
In 1925 she married Alfred Jensen Dau in San Francisco, Calif. They returned to Petoskey where Mr. Dau was president of the Petoskey House Furnishing Co.

She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, Eastern Star, Reader's Club, Koterie Club and Bay View Association.

Mrs. Dau was preceded in death by her parents, husband, three brothers, Arthur, Melville and Fred Schmitt, and a sister, Mildred Sergeant.

She is survived by three sons and daughters-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Dau of Bally, Pa.; Mr. and Mrs. Alfred M. Dau of Atherton, Calif.; and Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Dau of Kenilworth, Ill.; seven grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the charity of one's choice.



Greenwood Cemetery  
 Section P, Block 109, Lot 22  
 Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan



Greenwood Cemetery  
 Section P, Block 109, Lot 22  
 Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan

**ROBERT JENSEN DAU 1931 - 2015**  
President of Wood Welded International  
{marketing arm of the Mt. Maple Block & Bally Block Companies}

**Robert Dau**

**remembered  
for generosity**

**RWAN BENTLEY**

(231) 495-9211 • [rwant@petoskeynews.com](mailto:rwant@petoskeynews.com)

**A** generous nature and a love of art are two of the attributes the late Robert Jensen Dau, a Petoskey native and retired businessman, will be remembered for.

Dau died Nov. 23 at his residence in Petoskey's Independence Village. He was 84.

In Petoskey, one community resource which Dau played a key part in securing is a statue of city namesake and Native American chief Ignatius Petoskey, which overlooks Little Traverse Bay.

Another statue Dau proposed to commission and donate to the community — that would depict famed author Ernest Hemingway — did not come to gather in his lifetime. But at least one Petoskey official hopes the city can work with Dau's family to make the project a reality.

The Ignatius Petoskey statue — originally created in wood by a Melbourne Township sculptor, Petr'o Vihroth, and



Dau

**DAU FROM A1**

reproduced in bronze by Michael Petruck's Fine Arts Sculpture Center in downstate Clarkston — was financed by Dau.

The Little Traverse Historical Society cooperated in that statue project. Candace Fitzsimons served as the society's executive director as the project came together in the mid-2000s, and recalls interacting regularly with Dau.

"Mr. Dau was a wonderful man," she said. "He wanted to leave something really nice for the community."

Fitzsimons added that Dau was a historical society member who helped support the group with generous annual donations.

Fitzsimons said Dau took a close interest in the details the statue would depict, and worked with the historical society as well as some of the chief's descendants in the planning process.

Prior to his mid-1980s retirement, Dau had served as president of Welded Wood International, the marketing arm of Petoskey's Mt. Maple Block and Sister Wood products company. Dau's Blythe, in Pennsylvania. After dividing his time among homes in Bay View, Illinois and California in recent decades, Dau re-established primary residency in Petoskey this year.

Alanson resident Tom Fairbairn Sr. got acquainted with Dau decades ago. Fairbairn's plumbing and heating business performed work at a cottage the Dau family owned at one point along Burl Lake. In the past few years, the two renewed their friendship by way of the Campus Club at Bay View, in which Fairbairn is a member and to which Dau sometimes paid visits.

Fairbairn recalls Dau as someone who enjoyed boating and reminiscing about the past in Northern Michigan.

**IN MEMORY**

**Memorial services**

Celebrating Robert Jensen Dau's life are planned for spring 2016 in Palm Desert, California, and summer 2016 in Bay View. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Robert Jensen Dau Foundation, 560 Green Bay Road, Suite 100, Whitefish, IL 60093.

Funeral arrangements have been handled by Gaylord Community Funeral Home & Cremation Service.

"He was all business when he went to deal with something, but one thing I remember — he liked a good joke. He liked a good story," Fairbairn said.

Fairbairn also remembers Dau as astute when it came to art, and something of an art collector. When Dau encountered a well-done piece of furniture or picture, he had enough education to know immediately what it was and what the general value of it would be.

Like Fitzsimons, Petoskey resident Betty Turis remembers Dau as a community-minded individual.

"He just was a very nice person and I tried to be a good Christian like and do a lot for his community," she said.

Turis and her late husband, Vaughan, sometimes socialized with Dau and his now-deceased wife, Nancy, and the two men often golfed together. Turis recalls Dau's love of Bay View, his positive attitude and his enthusiasm for gardening.

Turis added, "Every time I pass

the (statue of) the chief up there, I say, 'Thank you, Bob.'"

With his more recent proposal to donate a likeness of Hemingway — who spent summers at Walden Lake while growing up and lived in Petoskey as a young man — Fairbairn said Dau saw an opportunity to boost Petoskey's visitor traffic.

"He thinks a lot of people would go there," Fairbairn said. "Petoskey would be known as more of a Hemingway town. The city could build more advertising around it."

Progress toward the statue project stalled in recent months as the would-be donor and several city council members differed on where the author's likeness should be placed.

City staff proposed placing the statue of Hemingway along the rail corridor on the east side of Pennsylvania Park — about halfway between Lake and Bay streets — and Dau embraced this location as well. But the city council — which would have final say on the statue's placement, and reviewed numerous possible sites around downtown and the waterfront — instead decided to place it at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania Park, across Bay Street from Stanford's Ferry Hotel.

Dau initially expressed some willingness to consider the council's chosen site. But after paying a visit to that spot later, he later said it seemed unworkable for the visual concept he had in mind.

Several observers have maintained hope that the differences over siting can be resolved, and that the project can move ahead.

Petoskey city manager Rob Strabel said he hopes to work with a representative of Dau's family — his daughters, Terannda Dau Fisher — to identify a location for the statue that the family and city council would find agree-



FILE PHOTO

**This area 1919 photo of Ernest Hemingway is seen as a possible guide for a proposed Petoskey statue of the famed author.**

"This daughter did say that she wants to see this done," Strabel said.

The city manager expects more discussion on the matter in early 2016, and said he hopes an agreement can be formulated that would specify both parties' responsibilities.

"I am optimistic at this point that the statue project will move forward, but ultimately it's up to the city council and their votes," he said.

*Copy submitted by Duane Chavira  
Petoskey District Library*

Send all on page 16