

REVEREND JOHN REDPATH

Pioneer North-Country Minister

PETOSKEY HOME NAMED STATE HISTORIC SITE

By Kendall P. Stanley
News-Review staff writer

A Petoskey house owned by Emmet County first **Circuit Judge Charles J. Pailthorp** and later by Presbyterian missionary **John Redpath** has been named a Michigan historical site by the Michigan Historical Commission.

The **Pailthorp** house, at 613 E. Mitchell St., is now owned by **Martin and Nancy Breighner**.

The land for the home, three lots along Williams Street, was in what is now called the **Francis Petoskey** addition to the city. **Francis Petosgay** and his wife **Mary**, sold the land to **Pailthorpe** in 1877.

*"When **Pailthorpe** built the house is not exactly clear, **Nancy Breighner** said, although the best guess is in 1877."*

At one time **Redpath**, who was establishing missionary churches throughout the area, stayed with **Pailthorp** at the house. **Redpath** and his wife **Sarah Upjohn Redpath**, she of the Kalamazoo **Upjohn** family bought the house in 1897.

The **Redpaths** were one of the longest owners of the house, residing in it from 1897 until 1928. **Redpath**, who gave his last sermon in August 1925 in the church named after him, the **Redpath Memorial Church** in Cross Village, died in the house in 1926.

*"Circuit Judge **Benjamin H. Halstead**, who practiced law about the time of **Pailthorp**, also spent time in the house, although he never lived there, **Breighner** said."*

The **Redpath** family sold the home in 1928 to **Alfred H. Dau**, one of the founders of the Michigan Maple Block Co., one of the city's oldest business firms. All of the **Dau** children, some of whom continue to run the wood-processing firm, were raised in the house

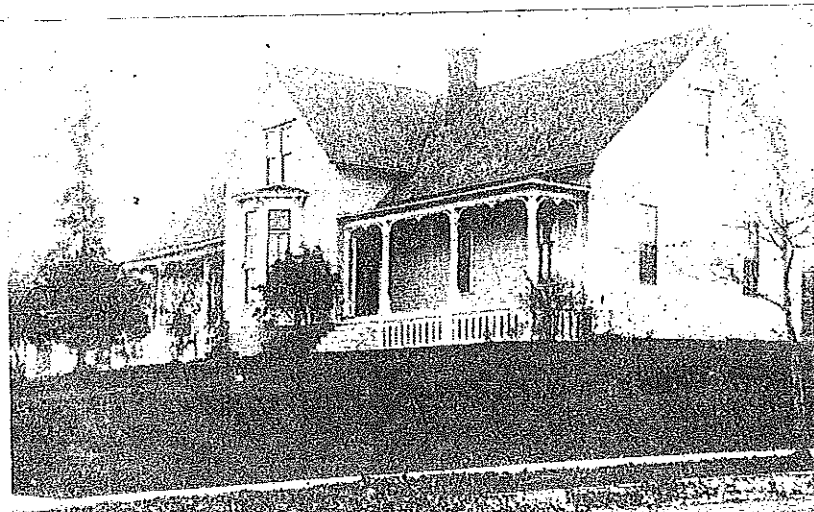
Dr. Bernard T. Alm and his wife bought the house in 1947, and they owned it until 1951, when it was briefly owned by **Daniel and Minnie Wilson** and **Mabel Weimer**. **John and Charlotte Bellamy** bought the house in 1952. In 1956, **Martin Breighner** came to Petoskey to practice law with **Bellamy**, and he and his late wife, **Ruth** purchased the home in 1958.

The Historical Commission cited the house for its historical significance in terms of the past residents, not the architecture. The commission noted new siding, new windows and a new porch were added to the home, compromising its architectural significance.

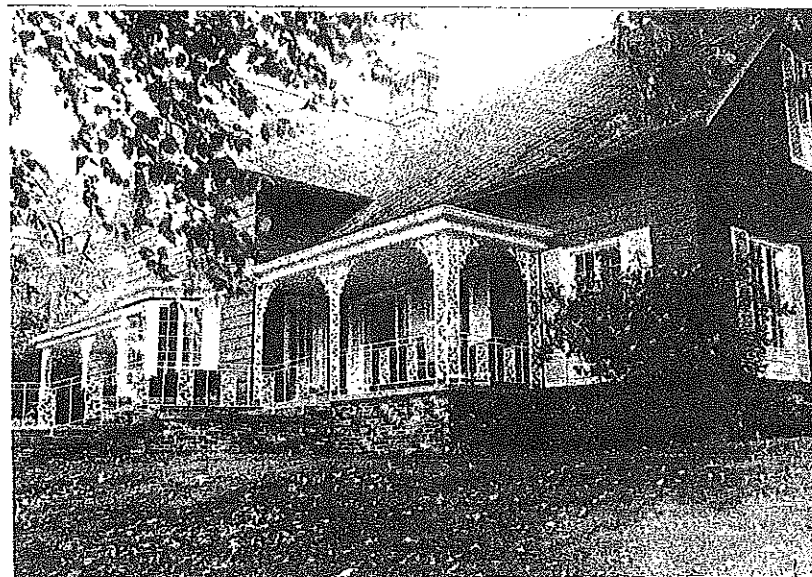
*"They call it the **Pailthorp** house, but I'd prefer the **Redpath House**," **Breighner** said. She said **Redpath** was instrumental in getting many outlying churches started in the early part of the area's history, making an important contribution to the area."*

"In the 110-year history of the house, three judges have lived here, **Pailthorpe, Halstead** and **Breighner**," she said, "The people who lived here have always been interested in the development of Northern Michigan."

The **Breighners** have the home up for sale, and are looking for a buyer who appreciates an historic home and the love and caring that entails. *We hope the people who buy it will maintain its importance in the community," she said.*
Extracted from Petoskey News-Review, Monday August 11, 1986.



THE PAILTHORP house as it appeared before the turn of the century. (Photos courtesy Nancy and Martin Breighner)



THE ADDITION of new siding, windows and a front porch has compromised the Pailthorp house architecturally, but the home remains historically significant because of its past residents.

A SERVANT OF GOD

When historians recount the deeds of memorable leaders in Michigan's north country they don't very often include the early churchmen who had such profound influence on the daily life of our pioneers. Yet the rough cut lumbering communities of long ago needed every bit of the help they got from men of the cloth.

Men named Dougherty, Porter, Ferry, Baraga, Greensky and Wycamp, to name a few, left their mark on the northwestern portion of the lower peninsula, and deserve far more attention than they receive.

The same goes for no-nonsense John Redpath, whose name sounds like a family among the hundreds of native Americans whose lives he touched in a dozen towns for half a century up and down the old GR&I railroad.

Actually John Redpath was as Scottish as they come, in name, appearance, character - and Presbyterian persuasion. No man ever elected a tougher row to hoe than he, or became better known in this entire region.

The family name - literally, *Red Path*, came from the color of the soil around the family home in Maxton Parish, Scotland, a countryside well-known to poet Robert Burns.

His father died when John was seventeen. His mother decided to move to the United States with her eight children, migrating to Richland, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. The family crossed the Atlantic in two groups; the ship that carried John required fifty-one days for the trip, a crossing you can make today in just hours if you are in a hurry.

John attended Kalamazoo College, then switched to Union Theological Seminary in New York, intending to become a missionary.

Upon graduation in 1871, he decided to follow in the footsteps of intrepid David Livingston, whose field was East Africa, but found that the last boat of the season heading in that direction had already sailed.

Rather than delay his career, John followed faculty advice to minister to the spiritual needs of the red men and lumberjacks in the northern Michigan wilderness, just then on the threshold of its fabulous lumbering era.

With the blessing of the Presbytery of Grand Rapids which was just beginning to establish the Presbyterian presence in the northern reaches of the lower peninsula, Redpath went to the newly established village of Clam Lake (now Cadillac), arriving in May, 1872.

The GR&I railroad had pushed north to Clam Lake the previous winter. A rough building displayed a shingle with the legend: "Village of Clam Lake, Mich. U.S. Post Office, John McLain Postmaster".

There were also two log boarding houses for lumberjacks, one called The Mason House, a blacksmith shop, a general store and two sawmills with a combined capacity of 50,000 feet of lumber a day.

The young minister was really starting from scratch in his first assignment. There was no church building, no funds. And no congregation. So, on his first Sunday in town "he selected a pine stump in front of The Mason House as a pulpit and preached to the open air", according to a centennial booklet published in 1972 by the First Presbyterian Church of Cadillac.

On September 24, 1872, Mr. Redpath was ordained by the Presbytery and formally directed to take up ministry in the northern counties in Michigan. By June the local paper reported that services were being held regularly in a hall located on Cadillac's main street.

Soon that hall was replaced by a large space over a butcher shop, but in no time at all still more space was needed as the congregation continued to grow.

Accommodations were found this time over McCarty's Saloon. As Rev. Redpath reported to the Presbytery: "The saloonkeeper cooperated by closing his business during services and shooing all his customers to the church above, but opened to accommodate them as they came downstairs after service."

Late in August, 1873, first services were held in the basement of a new church building, which was completed the following year. A shiny new edifice convinced the parishioners no end, not to mention pastor Redpath who set up bachelor quarters in the basement, luxuriating in the improvement over his cramped boardinghouse environment.

Meanwhile the GR&I continued laying track northward to Petoskey. As soon as it arrived there Mr. Redpath became one of the first commuters, in order to serve a Petoskey congregation of about sixteen, the majority Indians, who had been meeting, but without a minister, for several years. Having completed organization of the Clam Lake church, he considered his task there completed, and requested a commission to build a church in Petoskey.

The Presbytery complied and Redpath set some sort of record by raising \$3,600 from various Michigan Presbyteries to start building The First Presbyterian Church of Petoskey. It was built on a donated lot at Rose and Division Streets, and dedicated in August, 1876.

Mr. W. O. Hughart, President of the GR&I was on hand for that first service (he having provided a railroad car for services during church construction.)

A year later the ever-restless John Redpath left Petoskey and spent some months working with the Presbyterian congregation at Big Rapids.

His next stop was the mission field of Boyne Falls where he and his new bride Sarah Upjohn Redpath took up residence and proceeded to establish a local Presbyterian church.

During his unduly long residence in Boyne Falls, the compulsion to start still another church led him to Boyne City, six miles away. The result was a healthy congregation and soon a church building in that booming lumbering community too, in 1883.

In the nineties, Redpath organized congregations and or built Presbyterian houses of worship in Elmira, East Jordan, Traverse City, Bay Shore, Bay Township (Charlevoix County), Crofton and Westwood.

Not surprisingly, since these were all lumbering communities, several of them disappeared completely after the timber was gone. But the job of getting churches and groups started under horse-and-buggy conditions forever established John Redpath as a tireless leader.

It is a pleasure to report that there is one more chapter to this story. As he approached the end of his career, Mr. Redpath and his wife chose Petoskey as their retirement community. Here, he concentrated his attentions on the tiny Presbyterian Church in Cross Village, preaching every Sunday to its handful of parishioners with all the zeal and faithful pastoral attention one would expect to find in a New York or a Chicago.

When the Cross Village church building was lost in a disastrous fire that swept the village in 1918, Mr. Redpath was determined that it be rebuilt.

Quoting from the dedication service of the new church building August 21, 1921: *The Presbyterian Church is the only Protestant church in this section and it serves the community for miles around...for years it has been ministered to by Rev. John Redpath, who is now in his eightieth year. Mr. Redpath travels through all weathers from his home in Petoskey to serve his people...When the church was lost, along with the stores and homes...with characteristic energy, the congregation, led by Mr. Redpath, determined that the church must be rebuilt, and they subscribed money, time and labor. Summer residents of Harbor Springs and vicinity encouraged the movement by substantial contributions. Mr. A.L. Deuel donated the new lot. Mr. Earl H. Mead, the architect, to whose taste and skill so many of our beautiful homes are due, generously donated his services. Mr. E.C. Powers has charge of the carpenter work, Mr. James Finnock the stone work, Mr. Charles Pond, the painting...thus far \$3,043.66 has been expended on the ground and building...THE LAWN PARTY at Birchwood Farms on Friday, August 26th, 1921, is given by the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Otis, of Chicago, for the purpose of completing the funds needed for the church.*

How fitting that this modest, handsome fieldstone building is known as "The Redpath Memorial Presbyterian Mission at Cross Village".

And that a simple headstone in the Redpath family plot in Greenwood Cemetery, Petoskey reads:

"John Redpath, a Servant of God"

John Redpath, a "Servant of God"
article copied from:

"People, Places, Happenings"
in Northern Michigan by William H. Ohle

Emmet County Democrat
Friday, June 25, 1875
Page 3, 3rd column

NEW CHURCH AT PETOSKEY. - Rev. Mr. Redpath, who as Presbyterian pastor at Clam Lake, was instrumental in procuring the erection of a new little-church edifice there, is now engaged in a similar enterprise for Petoskey. Several parties in this city have contributed for that purpose quite liberally, and he hopes to receive in money and materials \$300 or more here. Messrs. Robinson & Barnaby, architects, have furnished a design, which we have seen, for a handsome wood structure, Gothic, which will not be unduly expensive, and will be an ornament to the new village rapidly growing at the northern terminus of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad. It will be the first edifice of the kind in that region, the most noteworthy one now being ninety miles this side of Clam Lake. - Grand Rapids Eagle.