



We invite you to join the

Keweenaw County Historical Society

Yes, I am interested in assisting the work of the Society.

- ☐ Please sign me up as a member. My first year dues are enclosed.
- ☐ Historian\$20 per year
- ☐ Copper Miner\$35 per year
- ☐ Lightkeeper\$75 or more per year
- ☐ Life\$500
- ☐ Please mail me additional information about Society membership.
- ☐ I'm not interested in membership, but want to help. My \$ _____ donation is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Please detach and mail to:

KEWEENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
670 Lighthouse Road
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950

Thank You!



and the Camp Kitwen State Department of Corrections have also put in many hours of work in the building and on the grounds.

As a museum, it contains two artifacts from every Catholic Church in Houghton and Keweenaw Counties, past and present.

The Church of the Assumption, frequently referred to as the Phoenix Church, now appears much as it did when folks from another century knelt in prayer, a fitting memorial to one chapter of Keweenaw's proud heritage. Although now deconsecrated, the church is still used for weddings, memorial services, annual blessing of the pets and an annual Mass.

On March 15, 2000, the U.S. Department of Interior placed this structure on the National Register of Historic Places.



KEWEENAW
NATIONAL
HISTORICAL
PARK

**Cooperating
Site**

Keweenaw County Historical Society

Eagle Harbor, Michigan



Church of The Assumption Phoenix, Michigan

The Phoenix Church Museum is
open mid-May to late October
from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

This picturesque building was donated by the Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Marquette to the Keweenaw County Historical Society on the 21st day of June, 1985. Friar Matthew Krempel, Pastor of the Keweenaw Catholic Missions, acted as agent for the Marquette Diocese.

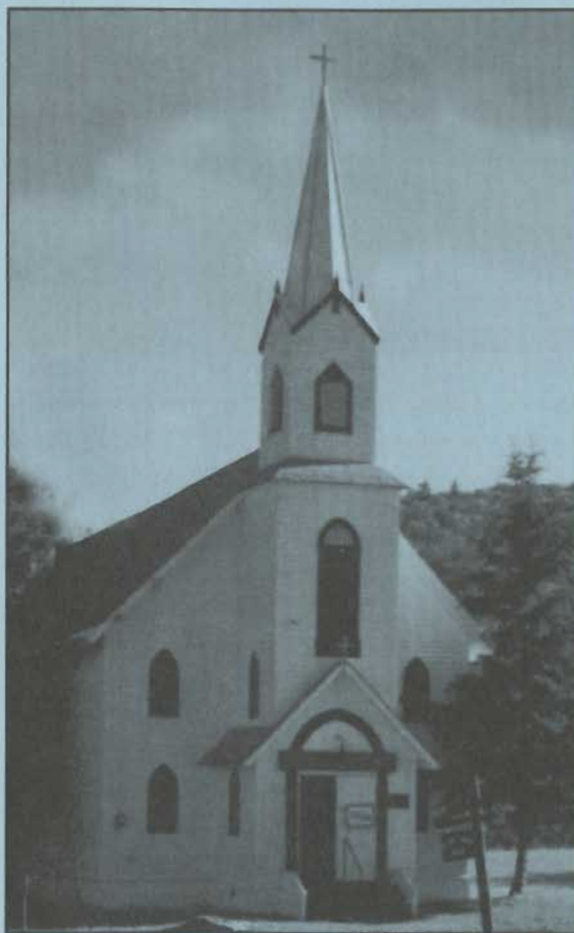
The Phoenix Church, as is commonly known, was originally built at the Clifton townsite in 1858 and named the Saint Mary's Church. There it served the needs of copper mining families at the Cliff and Eagle River until 1899, upon formation of the Phoenix Consolidated Copper Company. Then the building was cut in half and moved by horse and wagon to the present site at Phoenix. Here it was reerected and assumed a new entity of the Church of the Assumption.

The history of a need for a Catholic Church at the Cliff began back in the 1840's when Bishop (the Father) Frederic Baraga traveled from his domicile at Assinins, near Baraga, to the community of Eagle River. He arrived in Eagle River on the 11th of January, 1847, thus becoming the first priest to visit the Keweenaw.

Amongst the "civilization" that he found, were a large number of Catholics. In the absence of a church at the Cliff or in Eagle River, Father Baraga said Mass in the house of John Kerry who had built a new home in Eagle River. Father Baraga returned to the Keweenaw twice a year until the 21st of October, 1854, when he ordained Rev. Henry L. Thiele and sent him to Eagle Harbor.

Operating out of Eagle River, Father Thiele said Mass every third Sunday of each month in the school house at Clifton, the miners location who worked at the Cliff. In 1858, the North American Company of

Detroit donated one acre of ground at the Cliff for use in building a church. Nicholas Gasser was given a contract in the amount of \$1,860.00 to build a church. Gasser a year earlier had built the Holy Redeemer Church in Eagle Harbor for a similar dollar amount. He used the same building plans for both churches.



Although no specific date is known, Rev. Henry L. Thiele began services in the new church, named Saint Mary's, presumably in the fall of 1858. The church was physically patterned after the Holy Redeemer building at Eagle Harbor, with living quarters attached to the rear of the structure. However, it is

impossible to correlate these words with an early photograph purporting to the Cliff Church, which showed a small, log cabin-type structure adjacent to the cemetery. The Cliff Mine was closed on May 25, 1870.

Many Catholics were working at the Phoenix Mine, so the church was moved there. On October 9, 1899, Rev. Alexander Smietana (or Smietna) became the regular pastor and began services in this newly moved Phoenix facility. Precisely when the church was renamed "Church of the Assumption" is not known.

In 1933, services were held commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the church's founding. In the early 1950's, regularly scheduled services gave way to periodic Masses. 1957 is the year in which it is estimated that the last regular services were held.

In 1985, the Keweenaw County Historical Society took over the property for preservation and maintenance, and hereafter as a memorial to the illustrious heritage of the Catholics in Keweenaw County. The building was in desperate need of repairs so much work has been done in preventive maintenance. U.S. Air Force personnel painted the exterior. The Navy Reserve Sea Bees, a construction unit, replaced the old cedar log foundation with concrete blocks, installed a new tar paper roof, repaired the back room, and much of the interior wainscot ceiling and walls which were damaged due to the leaking roof. Several of the glass windows were replaced (no problem as they were not stained glass). They also hung a bell obtained from the Catholic Church at Gay when it was demolished. Work crews from the Tri-County Community Corrections Department