

Eagle River Historical Museum

Houghton Township
Community Building
Eagle River, Michigan



East Main Street, Eagle River

Keweenaw County Historical Society

Eagle Harbor, Michigan

The Eagle River Historical Museum is
open mid-June to mid-October.

Keweenaw Heritage Site

Partner of Keweenaw National Historical Park



Help Preserve Keweenaw's Proud Heritage

Founded in 1980, the Keweenaw County Historical Society depends on the generous contributions of members and friends to fund its continuing preservation, restoration and exhibition work.

The members of the Society have profound respect for those who went before, those who created the history we study and preserve. And we have a profound responsibility to those who will come after, to ensure that the history is still there. We are the connecting link, and it is important that we do our job well. Every membership and every gift is vital - we could not continue the Society's important and exciting work without such support.

Please join us! Members of the Society receive our award-winning quarterly newsletter, *The Superior Signal*, and other benefits.

To join, or ask for additional information about membership, or assist our work with a donation, please use the form on this brochure. Detach or make a copy of it and mail it to the Society today. Your involvement will be very much appreciated.

www.keweenawhistory.org



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\$30 per year

Copper Miner.....\$50 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.

I wish to volunteer, please contact me.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Please detach or copy

and mail to:

Keweenaw County Historical Society
670 LIGHTHOUSE ROAD
MOHAWK, MICHIGAN 49950
www.keweenawhistory.org

Thank You!

Eagle River Historical Museum

Eagle River, founded in 1843 at the beginning of the Keweenaw copper mining rush, soon became one of the major mercantile centers and shipping ports on Lake Superior. Its establishment was a direct result of the opening of the Cliff Mine, located a few miles away, where the adjacent town of Clifton was built. The discovery of copper at the Cliff Mine ushered in a great mining boom. Native Americans had already been mining copper for several thousand years, but in 1844 John Hays, a Pittsburgh druggist, visited an Indian copper mining pit near the bluff about six miles from Eagle River, and this discovery started it all. News of his discovery traveled fast and soon hundreds of people from the east, as well as from Europe, flocked to the area.

Eagle River served as the lake port for exporting copper to foundries on the lower Great Lakes and for transporting mining equipment, supplies and the people who came to work in the mine and to start businesses. A post office was established in 1856, and by 1860 the town had 3 hotels, 2 breweries, several taverns, 3 general stores, 2 sawmills, a blacksmith and tinsmith shop, a potash plant and a fuse factory. There were 3 physicians, 2 jewelers, boot and shoe makers, an attorney, an insurance agent and a school for the children.

At Clifton, a one-room school served the miners' children, and three churches were established to meet the spiritual needs of the miners' families. A small village of Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) Indians also lived nearby on the west side of the Eagle River.



The restored 1852 Emerson piano was rescued from the 1912 fire that destroyed the Phoenix Hotel in Eagle River. It is now on display in the museum.

However, between the 1870s and 1880s, the Cliff Mine and the towns of Clifton and Eagle River witnessed dramatic changes. As copper production declined, the Cliff Mine closed. Without jobs, the miners and their families moved away. The buildings in the town of Clifton were abandoned, and by 1900 it had become a ghost town.



Clifton Ghost Town

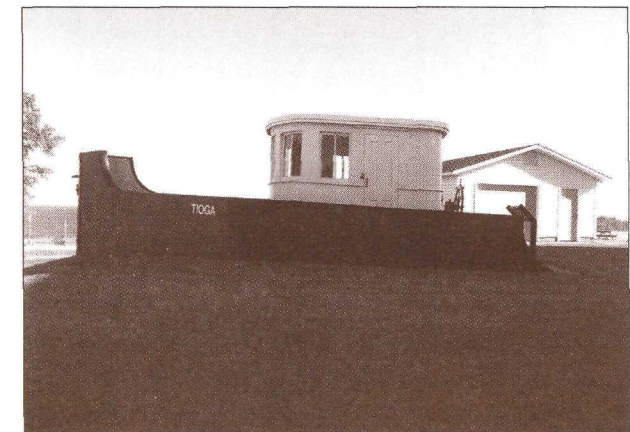
After the mines closed, Eagle River changed its identity as a busy lake port to a resort town where summer visitors could enjoy the beach and the cool breezes off Lake Superior. The old homes became summer cottages. A huge resort called Crestview was built on the bluff just south of the town and became a popular destination for day trips, facilitated by the Keweenaw Central Railroad, established in the early 1900s.



Crestview Resort

On Thanksgiving Day in 1919, in a blinding snowstorm, the steamer Tioga ran into the Sawtooth Reef, located off the coast of Eagle River. The entire crew was rescued, but the ship sank and still rests at the bottom of the lake. Town residents rescued the pilot house which floated to shore. In 2015 it was moved from a yard in town to the Eagle River Historical Museum and was restored.

The museum, located in the old Eagle River School (now the Houghton Township Community Building), tells the colorful stories of the communities of Clifton and Eagle River and the people who lived there.



The restored pilot house from the steamer Tioga now sits beside the Eagle River Museum, overlooking Lake Superior.