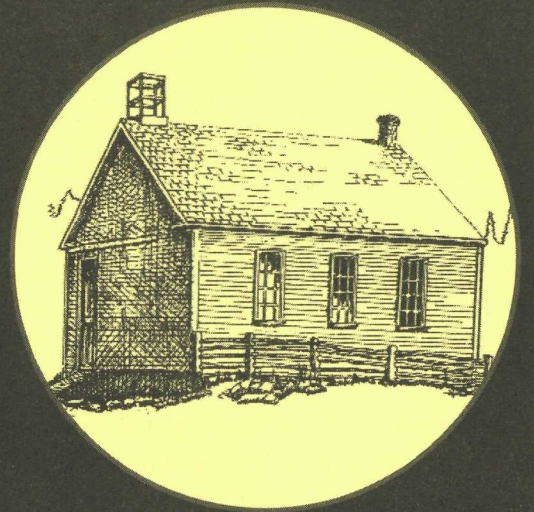




# Keweenaw County Historical Society

Eagle Harbor, Michigan



## Rathbone School Eagle Harbor, Michigan

The Rathbone School is  
open early June to mid-October  
from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

### Keweenaw Heritage Sites



Partners of Keweenaw National Historical Park



Several original objects which were put on public display were the bell that once summoned children back to the classroom; a portion of the blackboard – a true blackboard; and four and one-half desks at which the children learned their three ‘Rs.’ Numerous Knights of Pythias uniforms and artifacts are on display.

Initials carved into the desks by students who pored over their books, give a special character to the classroom. The Society Curator divided the one room classroom in half, with the Knights of Pythias artifacts on the left and the school classroom on the right. The U.S. Department of Interior has placed this building on the National Register of Historical Places. The renovated schoolhouse has been opened for public visitation since 1986.

### 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 or more

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!

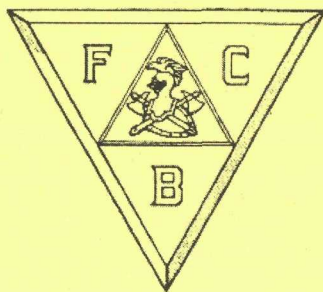
[www.keweenawhistory.org](http://www.keweenawhistory.org)

Justus H. Rathbone, a New York state native – born in Deerfield, reared in Utica – came to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula when he was eighteen years old. He arrived in the Keweenaw, as best can be determined from conflicting records, during the springtime of 1858.

He taught first at the Central Mine school and thereafter at the Copper Falls Mine location. He began a subsequent year’s teaching at the Eagle Harbor village school in the fall of 1859. The country school teacher had a flair for the stage. He read the story of Damon and Pythias and re-read it. It gripped his imagination. From the inspiration came his ritual for the Knights of Pythias, that spread from this tiny forest-locked little hamlet to embrace tens of thousands of members in every section of the United States and Canada. Justus H. Rathbone was the teacher-author of the ritual and father of the order.

It was that during his 1859-1860 off-hours from teaching that Rathbone wrote the ritual.

Fame later came to the 24 by 24 foot frail schoolhouse after the Knights of Pythias organization grew to an impressive strength of about 1,000,000. Use of the building as a schoolhouse was discontinued in the fall of 1872 when a newer two-story building in the village opened its doors to the community’s children.



The identity of those who taught in the Rathbone School from May of 1861, when Rathbone departed the area upon receiving news of his father’s death, to the time of opening of the new school has not been found.

Properly sequenced records of ownership of the Eagle Harbor property on which the one-room school is located are sparse. However, it is known that the physical condition of the property was given by Thomas E. Parks and Wife to Ira E. Randall. \$300 was paid for the property. Randall, after five years, deeded the property to the Rathbone Memorial Fund on April 14, 1910.

Eleven years sped by as the building was



maintained as a memorial to Rathbone and the Knights of Pythias Order. On October 29, 1921, the Memorial Fund organization deeded the facility to the Michigan Knights of Pythias Grand Lodge.

In 1925 the then Supreme Knights of Pythias Chancellor, Richard S. Witte, was so impressed by the words of a Wisconsin speaker who had visited the “port of Eagle Harbor” and had seen the “sacred school house,” that

he proposed a Pilgrimage to Eagle Harbor to permit more Pythians to become inspired by the “Pythian Shrine.”

Thus it was that four years later on Sunday, July 14, 1929, Wisconsin Knights of Pythias augmented by some Michigan Knights, assembled at Eagle Harbor to conduct a ceremony culminating with the mounting of a plaque on the interior walls commemorating their Pilgrimage to the “Pythian Shrine.”

On July 11, 1931, the Michigan Knights turned the facility over to the national Pythian officials – the Supreme Lodge – in ceremonies conducted in Eagle Harbor. Over one thousand people from all over the country watched as Mrs. Louis Hebbard, Grand Chief of the Pythian Sisters of Michigan, unveiled a granite monument to the memory of Justus H. Rathbone and his founding of the Knights of Pythias.

On September 23, 1983 the Michigan Grand Knights of Pythias deeded the property to the present owners, the Keweenaw County Historical Society after extensive negotiations between the two organizations.

Since that date, using funds from donations and membership dues, the Society has effected extensive repair and restoration to and of the national landmark.

On Sunday, June 15, 1986, formal ceremonies began at 1 P.M. in Eagle Harbor to rededicate the building, not only as a memorial to Knights of Pythias Justus H. Rathbone and as a Pythian Shrine, but as a historical museum for the display and preservation of artifacts relating to the school and the Knights of Pythias.