On December 18, 1888, a disastrous fire destroyed thirteen buildings on the east side of the 100 block of South Stephenson Avenue in Iron Mountain’s business district. This detail from a photograph dating from about 1910 to 1915 was taken from the Oliver Iron Mining Company superintendent’s house, now the Chippewa Club, near “C” Ludington Shaft of the Chapin Mine, where the Cornish Pumping Engine is located. The north end of the 100 block where Fontana’s Supper Club was formerly in business is visible in the center of the photograph. This brick structure is actually two buildings which were built in 1889. The first building with lighter-colored brick contained two stores, while the second building with darker-colored brick contained three stores. Note the difference in the cornice brickwork in the two buildings. The two brick buildings south of this long structure are 119 and 121 South Stephenson Avenue, and are also still standing in 2018. Businesses listed in the 1913 Iron Mountain City Directory included the following: 103, no listing; 107, no listing; 109, Casper Wilt, painter, who resided here; 113, Theodore H. Firme, a plumber; 115, Robert Quilici, saloon and also resided here with his wife “Batiste” Quilici; 117, the Iron Mountain Light & Fuel Company, Thornton B. Anderson, superintendent; 119, Christopher Grossbusch, the treasurer of the City of Iron Mountain, resided here with his wife Madeline, as well as Clara A. Grossbusch and Mary B. Grossbusch, probably their daughters; 121, the Gately-Wiggins Company, (John Williams, manager), selling clothing and furniture. The short-lived Blue Bird Cafe, E. Elli, proprietor, opened on August 27, 1924 at 113 South Stephenson Avenue following extensive remodeling and contained 24 booths, a number of tables on the main floor and in the balcony which encircled the interior overlooking the dance floor, accommodating 30 to 40 couples. Edward Murphy, of Escanaba, was listed as owner of the Bluebird Restaurant at 119 South Stephenson Avenue which was “vacant” by May, 1925. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]
[NOTE: Dates, placed chronologically, are highlighted in boldface red letters for easier reading, and names of individuals and places are highlighted in boldface black letters to facilitate finding information.]

The 42nd installment of Menominee Range Memories, a series of articles by William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation historian, now available on the Dickinson County Library’s website, is titled “Downtown Iron Mountain Businesses – 119-129 South Stephenson Avenue.”

This article deals with the buildings south of the long, two-building structure encompassing 101-117 South Stephenson Avenue which are described in Menominee Range Memories 41.

The structures together with a history of businesses which occupied the site are listed by address.

**History of 119:** In 1892-1894 William P. Bray, “a resident of this city since 1881,” was a Justice of the Peace and sold insurance at this address. Christopher Grossbusch, a “Dealer in Fruit, Confectionery and Vegetables, Notions, Toilet Articles, Toys, Cigars, Tobacco, etc.” at 417 South Stephenson Avenue, lived here in 1892-1894. There was no listing for this address in 1902-1903. In 1907-1908 Christopher Grossbusch, retired, is identified as living at this address in the street listing with his wife Magdalena Grossbusch, but the alphabetical listing places them at 123 South Stephenson Avenue. Christopher Grossbusch, city treasurer, and his wife Madeline Grossbusch still lived here in 1913, together with Clara A. Grossbusch and Mary B. Grossbusch.

Edward Murphy, a resident of Escanaba, Michigan, ran a restaurant here in 1925, but the street listing noted the location was “vacant.” This address was vacant in 1935.

By 1939 the Hoyle Sign Service, operated by Robert C. Hoyle, was located here, and the owner lived here with his wife Audrey Hoyle. By 1941 the business was known as Hoyle’s Sign Art Supply, and the owner and his wife still lived at this address. In 1946 Robert C. Hoyle still operated the Hoyle Sign Service and the Hoyle Sign Art Supply and lived at this address with his wife Audrey Hoyle. Ray’s Neon-Lites, Ray Poisson, owner, also was in business at this address in 1946.

In the 1959 Polk’s city directory La Count’s Super Market, Earl J. La Count, owner, was located here, remaining through 1970. In 1971 the address was listed as “vacant”. Beginning in 1976 through 1990 this building contained apartments.

**History of 121:** S. Rusky ran a general store at this address in 1892-1894. Frank Grossbusch sold confectioneries and furniture at this address in 1902-1903, and lived upstairs with Annie Grossbusch, who also worked in the store, as well as Christ Grossbusch, Clara Grossbusch, and Mary Grossbusch.

In 1907-1908 the Gately-Wiggins Company, “complete house furnishers,” managed by Patrick Downey, occupied the first floor, while Charles Grossbusch, a furniture dealer, and his wife Lena Grossbusch resided upstairs, as well as Anna Grossbusch, Clara Grossbusch, a stenographer, Frank Grossbusch, Madelen Grossbusch, a stenographer, Mary Grossbusch and Minnie Grossbusch, a clerk. The Gately-Wiggins Company, selling clothing and furniture, was still located at this address in 1913 with John Williams, manager. There was no listing for this address in 1935, 1939 or 1941-1942.
History of 123: In 1907-1908, Christopher Grossbusch, retired, was identified as living at this address in the alphabetical listing with his wife Magdalena Grossbusch, but the street listing places them at 119 South Stephenson Avenue. There were no listings for this address in the city directories for 1892-1894, 1902-1903, 1913, 1925, 1935, 1939, or 1941-1942.

The numbering of buildings occupying 125, 127 and 129 South Stephenson Avenue which were combined when Edward G. Kingsford built his Kingsford Motor Car Company on the northeast corner of South Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street in 1917 is somewhat confusing, and the 123 South Stephenson Avenue history could actually be 125 South Stephenson Avenue.

This photograph, dating to about 1913, shows the first-floor store front of the Gately-Wiggins Company, 121 South Stephenson Avenue with employees posing at the doorway. Note the basement windows which provided additional light for that area. Note the window displays with household goods, including parlor kerosene lamps, clocks and phonographs with the morning glory horns in the left show window and women’s clothing in the right show window. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]
In 1907 the Gately-Wiggins Company, “complete house furnishers,” managed by Patrick Downey, occupied the first floor of 121 South Stephenson Avenue, while Charles Grossbusch, a furniture dealer, and his wife Lena Grossbusch resided upstairs, as did Anna Grossbusch, Clara Grossbusch, a stenographer, Frank Grossbusch, Madeleen Grossbusch, a stenographer, Mary Grossbusch and Minnie Grossbusch, a clerk. The Gately-Wiggins Company, selling clothing and furniture, was still located at this address in 1913, about the time this photograph was taken, with John Williams working as the manager. Several employees posed for the photographer at the doorway. The door at the left provided access to the second story. Note the window displays which included women’s clothing at the right. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]

Bengo, who ran a saloon in 1902-1903 at 107 West Fleshiem Street, was found in the street listing for this address. Louis Sjostrom was listed as selling “liquors and cigars” at this location in 1907-1908, and as operating his saloon here in 1913. There was no listing for this address in 1925, 1935, 1939, 1941-1942 or 1946.


History of 127: Louis Zaio operated a saloon at this location in 1902-1903, and P.A. Tremontin, agent, resided here. In 1907-1908 Basilio Fedrizzi sold “wines, liquors and cigars” at this address and also lived here with his wife J. Carlota Fedrizzi. By 1913 Charles W. Johnson operated a saloon here.

History of 129: In the February 5, 1881 edition of Escanaba’s The Iron Port, under “Range Items”, the following was noted:
Schaller & Co., druggists, of Quinnesec, have opened a branch store at Iron Mountain with Doc. Beaudette as physic compounder.

Joseph Schaller opened Iron Mountain's first drug store on the northeast corner of South Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street in late January, 1881.

In 1882 George Frederick Seibert took charge of the Iron Mountain branch as the junior member of the firm of Schaller & Company, druggists.

A fire in the early 1880s destroyed the building at the northeast corner of South Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street.

A new drug store was built at the northeast corner of South Stephenson Avenue and East Hughitt Street. In mid-March, 1884, George Seibert took over as sole manager of the Schaller & Co. Drug Store.

By 1902-1903 Ella Seaburg ran a millinery shop at this location. Mrs. Hattie Morgan operated a millinery shop here in 1907-1908, and Laura Morgan worked as a milliner here in 1913.

Charles W. Johnson operated a saloon at 127 South Stephenson Avenue by 1913. On February 6, 1917, Edward G. Kingsford purchased lots 125, 127 and 129 to construct the Kingsford Motor Car Company. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]
KINGSFORD MOTOR CAR COMPANY
125-129 South Stephenson Avenue

An article in the December 3, 1914 edition of the Iron Mountain Press noted that Edward G. Kingsford, the local and Upper Peninsula agent for the Ford Motor Company, had moved his office and repair shops to “the large building north of the office of the Oliver Iron Mining Company” on the corner of North Stephenson Avenue and Fourth Street. The building had been thoroughly repaired and equipped with a plant of machinery for general repair work. The shop was in charge of a machinist who was foreman of a large Milwaukee Ford garage for a number of years. A complete line of supplies was in stock and gasoline and oils could be purchased.

The building on East Hughitt Street, former headquarters for Kingsford’s garage, was to be used as a storage warehouse.

Kingsford planned to erect an electric sign at his new Stephenson Avenue location containing the word “Fords,” and about eight electric lamps were to be used in its construction.

In the February 8, 1917 issue of the Iron Mountain Press a major change of location was noted as Edward G. Kingsford, the Upper Peninsula agent for the Ford Motor Company, had purchased lots 125, 127 and 129 at the northeast corner of Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street on February 6, 1917. The deal, termed by the newspaper “one of the most important business deals consummated in Iron Mountain in many years,” assured the erection on the property of a business block at a cost of not less than $20,000.

The deal was closed through the Commercial Bank with the owners of lots 127 and 129. The adjoining lot on the north (125) was owned by Louis Sjostrom.

At the time the property was occupied by three frame buildings. The corner building (129) was occupied by Fornetti & Aimone (James Fornetti and Peter Aimone) as a barber shop, the next building (127) by Frank Caviani as a saloon, and the third building (125) by Louis Sjostrom, the owner, as a saloon.

This corner lot had an interesting history. Some twenty odd years before it was purchased by the Chapin Mining Company with plans to erect a handsome building to be occupied by a bank which the mine management intended to organize. The lot cost the company about $10,000. The bank was never organized due to the retirement of C.H. Cady, who was superintendent of the Chapin Mining Company at that time. Later the lot was purchased at a greatly reduced price by the Kramer Brothers (Benjamin Kramer and Meyer Kramer), owners of the Kentucky Liquor Store at 401 South Stephenson Avenue in 1892-1894, who in turn sold it to the Commercial Bank.

By the terms of the sale, Kingsford would not secure possession of the property until the first of May, when the saloon licenses of the two tenants would expire. Kingsford’s goal was to sell the three frame buildings then occupying the property, or, if they weren’t able to be sold, to wreck them as expeditiously as possible. The terms of the sale were private.

The building to be erected by Kingsford was to be one of the most substantial in the city. It was to be fireproof throughout constructed of brick, stone, steel and concrete.

The building was to have a frontage of sixty-nine feet on Stephenson Avenue and a depth of one hundred and twenty feet. It
would be two stories in height with a full-sized basement.

The basement would have a height of not less than ten feet in the clear and would have an entrance on East Brown Street.

The main or street floor would be employed for offices, show rooms and stock rooms. The machine shop would be on the second floor. Much new machinery was to be added to this department. A portion of the second floor would also be utilized for storage purposes. Cars would also be able to be stored in the basement. The three floors would be connected by a freight elevator of sufficient capacity to easily handle the largest car. The heating plant would be located in the basement.

Kingsford estimated the cost of the building at not less than $20,000. It was stated, however, that no expense would be spared to make the structure the best and most modern automobile service station north of Milwaukee. Work of excavating was to commence as soon as Kingsford secured possession of the property and construction work would be rushed to the limit.

An article in the April 5, 1917 edition of the Iron Mountain Press stated that the plans for the large garage to be erected by Edward G. Kingsford at the corner of Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street would soon be ready for the contractors. Because it was “practically impossible to secure an early delivery of structural steel,” it was decided to substitute other fireproof materials.

Kingsford expected to sell the larger of the three buildings, a well-built structure then on the site. The small building was to be used for storage purposes while the garage was being erected and the third one was to be either sold or wrecked. Building operations were to commence as early as possible in May.
Edward G. Kingsford’s Ford dealership, the Kingsford Motor Car Company, pictured here in 1927, was constructed in 1917 on the northeast corner of South Stephenson Avenue and East Brown Street. The two-story building with a full basement had 69 feet of frontage on Stephenson Avenue, and a depth of 120 feet on East Brown Street. The main or “street” floor contained offices, show rooms and stock rooms. The machine shop on the second floor also had some storage area. The basement was 10 feet clear in height with access on East Brown Street. Cars could be stored in the basement. The three floors were connected by a freight elevator which could handle the largest automobile. The building was fireproof throughout, constructed of brick, stone, steel and concrete at an estimated cost of $20,000. [Ford Archives]

On May 3, 1917, about the time construction was to begin on the new Kingsford garage, the following article appeared in the Iron Mountain Press:

Many new automobiles are being sold here this spring and the demand for light delivery trucks is very large. During the past ten days, Edward G. Kingsford, agent for the Ford, has received and sold over sixty cars. He has orders booked for many more. Johnson & DeGayner (Gottfried “Guffy” Johnson and Eugene J. DeGayner) have sold a number of Overlands and are expecting three carloads. Nearly a dozen new trucks have appeared on the streets during the past few weeks.
This postcard view, postmarked September 23, 1951, shows LaCount’s Super Market, Earl J. LaCount, proprietor, at 119 South Stephenson Avenue, and the Kingsford Motor Car Company Ford dealership at 127-129 South Stephenson Avenue. Edward G. Kingsford built his Ford dealership in 1917 and Ford, Mercury and Lincoln automobiles were sold at this location through about 1962. The sign for paints, wallpaper and glass just visible at the left was for the Hoyle Sign Service and the Hoyle Sign Art Supply, owned by Robert C. Hoyle at 117 South Stephenson Avenue. The building on the southeast corner of East Brown Street and South Stephenson Avenue was Strand’s Furniture. Note the parking meters and parallel parking on both sides of South Stephenson Avenue. [Don Khoury]

Just over two years earlier, in an article in the July 1, 1915, edition of the Iron Mountain Press stated:

Edward G. Kingsford, the district agent, received another large consignment of Ford automobiles during the week and the demand is still unsupplied. To date, in the local market, Mr. Kingsford has sold sixty cars and expects to sell at least twenty more. In the district for which Mr. Kingsford is the general agent, 360 cars have been delivered to purchasers to date.

On September, 2, 1915, the Iron Mountain Press reported:

District Agent Kingsford, of the Ford Motor company, is doing a “land office business” just at present. During the past ten days he has received five carloads of Ford automobiles. The total consignment was over thirty cars. The cars reach here in “knock-down form” and are erected at Mr. Kingsford’s shops.

The Kingsford Motor Car Company Auto Sales (Edward G. Kingsford and Edward S. Kingsford) occupied this site in 1925 and was still there in 1935, selling “Ford and Lincoln Motor Cars, Trucks and Tractors.” The Kingsford Motor Car Company was still here in 1939 and 1941-1942.

In the 1959 Polk’s city directory, the Kingsford Motor Car Company was listed at 129 South Stephenson Avenue. Carl A. Minella was the manager, Herbert F. Knutsen was the sales manager, Edmund J. Trudell was the parts manager, Edwin E. Davey was the service manager and Mrs. Olive A. Grimord was the office manager at that time.

By 1963 the building was listed as “vacant”. From 1966 to 1978 the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company occupied 127-129 South Stephenson Avenue. From 1979 to 1982 the building was again listed as “vacant”.

In 1987 Advanced Business Equipment with Donald Johnson, Mike Nicometo and Jim Riverside, owners, occupied the building. In addition the Advertising and Design Agency, Thomas A. Liubacka, owner-artist, conducted business here.

In 1989 the owners of Advanced Business Equipment were Donald Johnson, president; Jim Riverside, vice-president; and Mike Nicometo, general manager; while Cover Shot Photography and UPCAP Project Choices also occupied a portion of the building. In 1989-1990 the local branch of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was headquartered here.

In 1990 Allstate Insurance, Philip Morris USA (John J. Pietrantonio, Jr., territory manager), WYKX-FM Radio 104.7 and The Computer Shoppe (Michael Nicometo and Don Johnson) were located here, as was Advanced Business
Equipment with Donald Johnson, president, and Mike Nicometo, general manager.

Taken August 22, 2010, this photograph shows the buildings located on the east side of the south end of the 100 block of South Stephenson Avenue. These buildings are all standing in 2018. [William J. Cummings]
MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 42: DOWNTOWN IRON MOUNTAIN – 119-129 SOUTH STEPHENSON AVENUE
By William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation Historian

Taken August 22, 2010, this photograph shows the ornate brickwork on the cornice of 119 South Stephenson Avenue, once the site of LaCount’s Super Market. [William J. Cummings]

Taken August 22, 2010, this photograph shows the ornate brickwork on the cornice of the building north of 119 South Stephenson Avenue. [William J. Cummings]
Taken **August 22, 2010**, this photograph shows the former **Kingsford Motor Car Company** building, constructed in **1917** at **125-129 South Stephenson Avenue**. At the time this photograph was taken the **American Postal Press Association**, **Great Lakes Insurance** (Jeffry P. Couper, owner), **R.C. Peterson Law Offices**, **Rainsoft** (Michael Zaio, manager) and **Upper Peninsula Office Furnishings** were located in this building.  

[William J. Cummings]