

MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 41: DOWNTOWN IRON MOUNTAIN – 101-117 SOUTH STEPHENSON AVENUE

By William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation Historian



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 enlarged detail from a photograph taken by **Jorgen J. Eskil**, pioneer Menominee Range photographer, in about **1899** from the **Ludington Mine Location [25 Location]** shows the 100 block where **Fontana's Supper Club** was formerly located. This brick structure is actually two buildings which were built in **1889**, replacing the buildings lost in the fire. 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. Also note the small building to the left of the five-store, two-building brick structure which was probably **Gust Pederson's shoe shop**. The **Swedish Mission Church**, located on the southeast corner of **East Ludington Street** and **Iron Mountain Street** is visible at the upper center of the photograph. Businesses listed in the **1892-1894** Iron Mountain City Directory, the city's first directory, included the following: **101**, **Gust Pederson**, cobbler; **107**, **George Emma**, saloon; **109**, **L.A. Rouse**, barbershop; **113**, **John Virsella**, saloon; **115**, **Wallner & Banardi**, **Joseph Wallner** and **Frank Banardi**, saloon; **117**, **C.A. Petterson**, hardware, and **Edward Peterson**, saloon; **119**, **William P. Bray**, justice of the peace and insurance; **121**, **Samuel Rusky**, general merchandise and **125**, **Merritt Bros.**, **Samuel Merritt** and **Matthew Merritt**, sample rooms (saloon). *[Keen S. Scott]*

[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 41st 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

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Businesses – 101-117 South Stephenson Avenue.”

With this Menominee Range Memories installment, documentation of the history of businesses in downtown **Iron Mountain** begins. Although many buildings have disappeared over the decades, a surprising number of early structures still survive, sometimes under a remodeled facade. Most dates are given based on city directories, the earliest being **1892-1894, 1902-1903, 1905-1906, 1907-1908, 1913, 1925, 1935, 1939, 1941-1942** and **1946**. Then there is a large gap until the *Polk's Iron Mountain and Kingsford City Directory* which included other areas of Dickinson County began regular publication in **1959**.

The series begins with the downtown commercial district located on South Stephenson Avenue and then will continue with downtown side streets and later businesses on Merritt Avenue and Carpenter Avenue.

The **east side of the 100 block of South Stephenson Avenue** is one of the most confusing blocks to attempt to trace the history of business places, mainly due to changing addresses used over the past century. It is probable that the buildings in this complex were constructed after a terrible fire in the 100 Block of South Stephenson Avenue on **December 18, 1888**. Thirteen buildings were completely destroyed at a loss of \$40,000 and there was little insurance coverage.

At about 1 o'clock Tuesday morning, **December 18, 1888**, one of **Iron Mountain's** worst fires destroyed thirteen wooden buildings. According to accounts taken from the **December 22, 1888** editions of **Norway's** *The Current* and *The Florence Mining News*, the fire broke out in the **Silverman, Davis & Levy's general store** shortly before 1 o'clock, and rapidly spread to the surrounding buildings. The alarm

was given and quickly responded to by the efficient volunteer brigade, but although three streams were quickly brought to play, the flammable nature of the wooden building and the prevalence of a strong wind made it impossible to control the flames.

The following business and dwelling houses were destroyed: **Peter Baptiste** (loss, \$5,000, saloon and buildings; insurance, \$2,750); **Phil Bender's** barber shop (loss, \$100); **David Bergeron**, justice of the peace office (loss, \$150); **Thomas Buzzo's** saloon (loss, \$250) and boarding house; **Michael Carrigliotti's** double saloon (loss, \$3,000, buildings); **D. Conterini**, saloon (loss, \$200); **John Friedrich**, building, (loss, \$2,500; insurance, \$1,000); **Edwin Freeman**, saloon and livery barn (loss, \$3,500); **M. Goldman & Co.**, notions (loss, \$300); **Grenfell**, candies, etc. (loss, \$235); **Christopher Grossbusch**, general store (loss, \$4,000; fully insured); **Edward J. Ingram**, druggist, goods, (loss, \$500; fully insured); **H.N. La Duke**, boarding house (loss, \$2,500; insurance, \$1,500); **Mrs. Manning**, boarding house (loss, \$800); **V. Nomilini**, saloon (loss, \$1,000); **Gust Pederson**, shoe shop (loss, \$150); **Peterson**, household goods (loss, \$150); **Silverman, Davis & Levy**, dry goods store (loss, \$5,000; insurance, \$4,000); **Fred Smith**, building (loss, \$1,000); **C. Sundstrom's Locomotive Bakery** (loss, \$150); **William Sundstrom**, general store (loss, \$8,000; insurance, \$4,500).

The figures for losses (\$49,485) and insurance coverage were quoted from **Iron Mountain's** *The Menominee Range* by *The Florence Mining News*. **Tullgren's** brick building was the only building remaining intact in the whole block.

The article in *The Current* noted:

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Had it not been for the recent snow it is probable that many more buildings would have been destroyed. Even now the blow is a severe one and it is a question if some of the sufferers will be able to resume business.

It has been asserted that the new volunteer fire company was unexperienced [sic – inexperienced], and some reflections have been cast upon its manner of handling the fire. Perhaps this may be true, but during a short visit immediately after the fire we noticed some ice coated volunteer brigade men who have often done able and valiant work at fires in days gone by, and we cannot think that they have lost their cunning or their grit. It is often easier to stand by and criticise [sic – criticize] the work of others than it is to improve upon it. The writer has “been through the mill” and knows that being a volunteer fireman is one of the most thankless jobs on earth.

According to *The Florence Mining News* reporter:

With but one or two exceptions, the burned buildings were mere fire-traps, and but for the losses sustained by some of the uninsured victims, the conflagration was a good thing for the city. The fire was bound to come sooner or later, and if it had occurred at almost any other season of the year, it is fair to presume that an infinite amount of other valuable property would have been sacrificed to the destructive fire fiend.

The roofs of the buildings were laden with snow on Tuesday morning, which materially aided the department in staying the progress of the flames as soon as the wooden rookeries were consumed. Nothing could save them.

The fire was in the last block on the principal street, at the northwesterly end of the street, where the track running up to the Chapin mine cuts off the street. A portion

of the same ground has been burned before. The loss is estimated at about \$50,000, though it is likely it will come considerably under this amount when the adjusters complete their work.

*Nearly all of the heaviest losers were adequately insured. The fire is believed to have been of incendiary origin and the hand of suspicion ominously points to certain individuals of **Iron Mountain** as the authors. Actual proofs of guilt are lacking at present and no arrests have yet been made.*

The Florence Mining News also congratulated “**Ed. Ingram, Iron Mountain’s** leading druggist”, over his fortunate escape, noting:

Ed recently moved out of one of the burned rookeries into an elegant brick store, thus happily saving himself a heavy loss. He lost a few goods and fixtures, however, but the loss is covered by insurance.

According to *The History of Iron Mountain* by the **Iron Mountain Women’s Club**, published **February 20, 1914**, the buildings destroyed by fire in **1888** were all rebuilt later in brick. Because of the damage this fire caused, the city appointed a new fire warden and an ordinance was amended so that only stone or brick buildings could be erected in the business district.

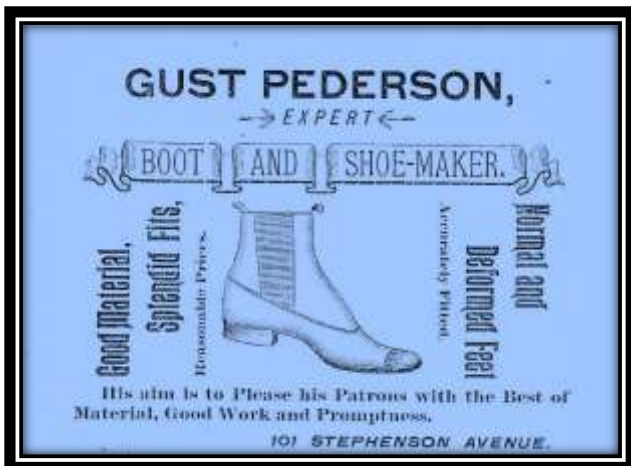
When the two buildings later housing the former **Fontana’s Supper Club** were built in **1889**, the long facade was constructed parallel to railroad tracks which went to the Chapin Mine. The tracks are long gone, but the sharp turn in the architecture still marks their route.

History of 101: **Gust Pederson** repaired shoes at this address in **1892-1894**. In **1902-1903 Sam Anderson** was found in the street listing for 101-103 South Stephenson Avenue, but was not found in

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the alphabetical listing. **Mrs. P.A. Lagerfelt** ran a boarding house, probably on the second floor, at 101-107 South Stephenson Avenue in **1902-1903**. **Perry Morrison** did “cleaning and pressing” here in **1907-1908**. There was no listing for this address in **1913** or in **1925**. In **1935**, the **Beckstrom & Greenquist Decorating Company**, operated by **Harold C. Beckstrom** and **David E. Greenquist**, was located here. The Beckstrom & Greenquist Decorating Company was listed at 103 South Stephenson Avenue in **1939**, but was probably still located at this address. By **1941** this address was not listed, but 103 South Stephenson Avenue was listed as “vacant.” This address was listed as “vacant” in all Polk city directories from **1959** through **1990**.



This advertisement for **Gust Pederson, Boot and Shoe-Maker**, appeared in *Bunn and Simons' Iron Mountain City Directory, 1892-1894*.

History of 103: In **1902-1903** **Sam Anderson** was found in the street listing for 101-103 South Stephenson Avenue, but was not found in the alphabetical listing. **Mrs. P.A. Lagerfelt** ran a boarding house, probably on the second floor, at 101-107 South Stephenson Avenue in **1902-1903**.

There is no listing for this address in **1907-1908**. This address was listed as “vacant” in **1913**. In **1925** **Fred. H. Gustafson** ran a garage at this address and **Louis Johnson** sold automobiles. **Louis Johnson** operated a garage here in **1935**. The building located at 103-107 was known as the **Chapin Building**. The **Beckstrom & Greenquist Decorating Company**, operated by **Harold C. Beckstrom** and **David E. Greenquist**, was listed at this address in **1939**, but had been listed at 101 South Stephenson Avenue in **1935**. In **1941** this address was listed as “vacant.” This address was listed as “vacant” in all Polk city directories from **1959** through **1990**.

History of 105: **Mrs. P.A. Lagerfelt** ran a boarding house, probably on the second floor, at 101-107 South Stephenson Avenue in **1902-1903**. There is no listing for this address in **1907-1908**. This address was listed as “vacant” in **1913**. There was no listing for this address in **1925** or **1935**. By **1939** the **Nelson Garage**, **Axel Nelson**, proprietor, was located here, and was still listed at this location in **1941** and again in **1946**. This address was listed as “vacant” in all Polk city directories from **1959** through **1990**.

History of 107: **George Emma** ran a saloon at this address in **1892-1894**. **Mrs. P.A. Lagerfelt** ran a boarding house, probably on the second floor, at 101-107 South Stephenson Avenue in **1902-1903**. In **1907-1908** **Raffaele Corsi** sold wine and liquors and resided at this location with his wife **Lena Corsi**. **Alex Vespa**'s name appears in the street listing, but not in the alphabetical listing in **1907-1908**. This address was listed as “vacant” in **1913**, but **Michael Oswald**, working as the agency organizer for the **Prudential Insurance Company** at 110 East Ludington Street, was found at 107 ½ South Stephenson

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Avenue in the street index, probably living upstairs, but in the alphabetical listing was shown to reside with his wife **Theresa Oswald** at 105 South Stephenson Avenue. This address was named the **Chapin Building** in **1925**, and served as a residence for **Willis J. Wilson**, an autoworker, and his wife **Mary J. Wilson**, **Ronald Wilson**, a machinist, and **Vada Wilson**, a student, as well as **Mrs. Exilda Belfi**, widow of **Willam Belfi**, **Dorothy Belfi** and **Eli Belfi**, an autoworker. **Louis Johnson** ran a tavern in this portion of the Chapin Building, (103-107 South Stephenson Avenue) in **1935**, and also resided here.

By **1939** the **White Star Tavern**, **Louis Johnson**, proprietor, was operating here, and was still located at this address in **1941** under the same ownership. In **1946** **Sallmon Otto** operated the White Star Tavern here. Beginning in **1959**, the Polk city directories the White Star Tavern was operated by **Eric A. and Ingrid Hedlund**. By **1967** **Robert T. and Emily L. Anthony** operated the White Star Tavern. In **1969** and **1970** the owners were **Chester D. Lindholm** and **Earl J. LaCount**. In **1971** and **1972** **Earl J. LaCount** was listed as the sole owner, and the name changed to the **White Star Bar & Grill** under the same ownership in **1973**, continuing operation until **1976**. From **1977** until **1990** the structure was an apartment building.

History of 109: In **1892-1894** **L.A. Rouse** operated a barbershop at this location. There was no listing for this address in **1902-1903**. **John Blixt** ran a barbershop here in **1907-1908**. In **1913** **Casper Wilt**, a painter, resided at this address. There was no listing for this address in **1925**.

The **City Flower Shop** occupied 109-113 South Stephenson Avenue in **1935**, run by **Ida M. Quilici**, advertising “Plants,

Ferns, Cut Flowers, Corsages, Wedding Bouquets and Funeral Designs a Specialty.” In **1939** and again in **1941** the City Flower Shop, operated by **Mrs. James (Ida) Goulette**, was still located here. **Cyrilla Grocery**, operated by **Americo Pelliccioni**, was also listed at this address in **1941** and again in **1946**.

By **1959** **P A’s Barber Shop**, owned by **Peter A. Alexander**, operated here through **1969**. In **1967**, however, the address was listed as “vacant”.

History of 111: Listed as “vacant” in the Polk city directories or unlisted from **1959** to **1990**.

History of 113: **John Virsella** ran a saloon at this address and also lived here in **1892-1894**, as did **Natale Rutolanti** in **1902-1903**. There was no listing for this address in **1907-1908**. **Theodore H. Firme**, a plumber, conducted his shop here in **1913**.

On Saturday evening, **August 30, 1924**, the **Blue Bird Café** was formally opened at this address, having actually been open for business on Wednesday, **August 27**. The proprietor, **E. Elli**, stated in the **August 27, 1924** edition of the *Iron Mountain News* that the cafe would accommodate 400 persons and had “in connection a dance floor” that would be open every evening.

The building’s interior had been entirely remodeled over a period of some months, and represented “an investment of from \$28,000 to \$30,000.” In addition to 24 booths there were a number of tables on both the main floor and the balcony which encircled the interior. The dance floor accommodated “from 30 to 40 couples with comfort.” A 10-piece orchestra played for the formal opening on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and a five-piece orchestra was to be engaged for every evening from that time on.

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George Wilde, an “expert chef who was a member of **Sherry’s** staff for 10 years in **New York**,” was the manager of the new establishment and was to be in charge of the cuisine. According to Wilde, “strict decorum” was to “be maintained at all times and nothing but clean entertainment and dancing” would be allowed.

Apparently the new restaurant had some difficulties with staff and management changes. An article in the **May 8, 1925** edition of the *Iron Mountain News* recorded a lawsuit filed by **Thomas F. O’Connell**, former chef at the **Bluebird Restaurant**, for \$300 which he “alleged was due him for labor performed.” The trial occurred on the afternoon of **May 7**, and “a jury of six men” allowed O’Connell \$125 for back wages. O’Connell, the plaintiff, was represented by

Ray Dundon, and **Edward Murphy**, the defendant, was represented by **Ray E. MacAllister**.

In the **1925** directory **Edward Murphy**, of **Escanaba**, was the owner of a restaurant at **119 South Stephenson Avenue** which was listed as “vacant.”

James A. Mitchell ran **The City Cash Market** here in **1925**, featuring “fancy and staple groceries and meats.” By **1935** the **City Flower Shop** occupied 109-113 South Stephenson Avenue, run by **Ida M. Quilici**, and advertising “Plants, Ferns, Cut Flowers, Corsages, Wedding Bouquets and Funeral Designs a Specialty.”

In **1939** and again in **1941** the City Flower Shop, operated by **Mrs. James (Ida) Goulette**, was still located here.



Taken during a State of Michigan Survey in **1975**, the south half of the double building located on the 100 Block of South Stephenson Avenue shows **115 South Stephenson Avenue** and other addresses before the remodeling was done for the **Brave Bull**, **Geline’s Rib Cage** and **Fontana’s Supper Club**. [*State of Michigan*]

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History of 115: Wallner & Barnardi (Joseph Wallner and Frank Banardi) operated a saloon here in 1892-1894. Frank Banardi also lived at this address, as did Peter Battosti, a miner, at that time. Travaggio & Saratoni (Emanuel Travaggio and Louis Saratoni) operated a saloon at this location in 1902-1903, and also lived here. Robert Quilici, listed at this address in 1907-1908, sold liquor, cigars and ran a pool room, as well as residing here with his wife Magdalena Quilici and Feore Orellio. In 1913 Robert Quilici was still at this location, operating a saloon and residing here with his wife “Batiste” Quilici.

By 1925, during the Prohibition era, Camilla Tiglint sold soft drinks here. Robert Quilici and his wife Lena Quilici resided upstairs, as well as Adam Quilici, Ida M. Quilici, a bookkeeper, and Viola F. Quilici.

The May 1, 1925 edition of the *Iron Mountain News* announced that the Coney Island Red Hot stand had opened for business at 115 South Stephenson Avenue. The interior of the restaurant had been remodeled and new fixtures installed. In addition to a lunch counter, booths and tables were provided. The establishment specialized in red hots and chile con carne. Sam Saltis, of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and A. Pappas, of Marinette, Wisconsin, were the proprietors. Neither of these men were listed in the 1925 directory.

The Crystal Lunch was located here by 1935 and was still here in 1939, and 1946, operated by Viola Quilici. Robert Quilici still resided here in 1935, as did Viola Quilici.

By 1941 the business was known as the Crystal Inn, but was still operated by Viola Quilici. James Goulette, a member of the

Michigan legislature, lived here with his wife Ida (Quilici) Goulette in 1941.

In the 1959 Polk’s city directory the Crystal Bar was operated by Viola Klett [sic].

By 1961 the Buddy Bar, Herbert C. and Violet Hughes, proprietors, was listed at this address, operating until 1971. In 1972 the proprietor was listed as Joseph L. LeBlanc. In 1973 the address was listed as “vacant” but in 1974 the Buddy Bar was again operated by Herbert Hughes.

By 1976 Wayne Goulette operated the Brave Bull, a tavern, here and by 1978 the owners were Wayne Goulette and Wade and Janice L. Geline.

In 1979 the Geline’s Rib Cage, owned by Wade Geline, was the establishment’s name. Al Bolan also operated The Athletic Club & Lounge at this address in 1979.

By 1981 the address was listed as “vacant” and remained so until 1985 when Fontana’s Supper Club opened, operated by Thomas Fontana and occupying the entire block from 101-117 South Stephenson Avenue.

History of 117: In 1892-1894 C.A. Petterson dealt in “hardware, stoves, tinware, watches, clocks, jewelry, sewing machines, pianos and organs” at this address, and Edward Peterson also ran a saloon here at this time. J.A. Clancy, an architect, had his office at this address in 1892-1894, advertising “Designing and superintending the construction of public buildings a specialty.”

J.A. Sundstrom ran a hardware store on this site in 1902-1903, and Pietro D’Inocenzi and Andrio D’Inocenzi, both miners, boarded upstairs. In 1907-1908 Otto Anderson was named at this address in the street listing, but not in the alphabetical listing.

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By **1913** the Iron Mountain Light & Fuel Company, Thorton B. Anderson, superintendent, had its office here. Noel H. Turner, of the International Construction

Company, and his wife Margaret Turner, lived upstairs at 117 ½ South Stephenson Avenue in **1913**.



By **1913** the Iron Mountain Light & Fuel Company, Thorton B. Anderson, superintendent, had its office at **117 South Stephenson Avenue**. Note the cast iron cook stove in the show window at the left and the lamps and lighting fixtures in the show window at the right. Three suspended lamps, probably fueled by gas, lit the store front. Also note that there were windows at the basement level where the Fitting Department and the Meter Department were located. There were a number of business places where basement windows were used in the early part of the twentieth century. *[Menominee Range Historical Museum]*

Louis A. Fox had a clothing store here by **1925**, and also lived at this address with his wife **Minnie Fox**. **Frank F. Goodenbour**, a helper, and his wife **Sarah L. Goodenbour**, also resided here in **1925**. Louis A. Fox was still operating the clothing store at this location in **1935**, residing here with his wife **Mary Fox**. **Louis Fox**, now

the proprietor of the **Fox Fish Company**, lived here with his wife **Minnie Fox** in **1939**.

By **1941** the **Beckstrom & Greenquist Decorating Company**, operated by **Harold C. Beckstrom** and **David E. Greenquist**, was located here and was still at this location in **1946**, although by then **Mary Beckstrom** was listed as a widow. The

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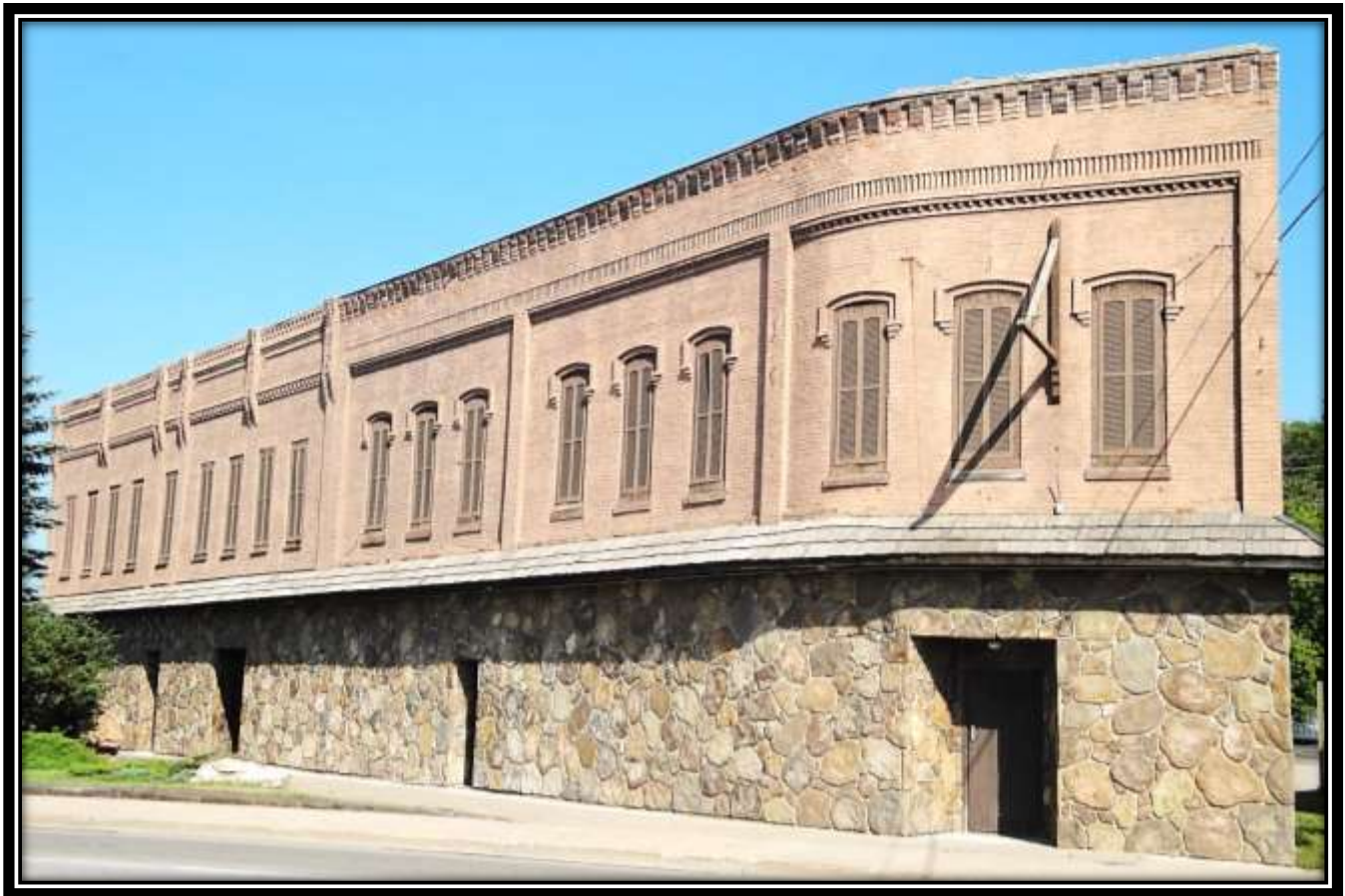
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Beckstrom & Greenquist Decorating Company, owned by **David F. Greenquist**, was listed in the Polk's city directories from **1959** until **1969**.

In **1970** the **House of Fashion** opened here with **Mrs. Dorothy J. Oien** serving as manager. In **1972** Mrs. Oien's business was listed as the **House of Fashion**

Beauty Salon. **Hayward Interiors** was also in business at this site in **1972**, owned by **Mrs. Jo Hayward** and **Mrs. Carol Muraro**.

In **1976** **Hope House**, a youth center, operated here but by **1977** apartments were listed, continuing until **1990**.



This photograph was taken in the summer of 2010, showing Fontana's Supper Club. *[William J. Cummings]*