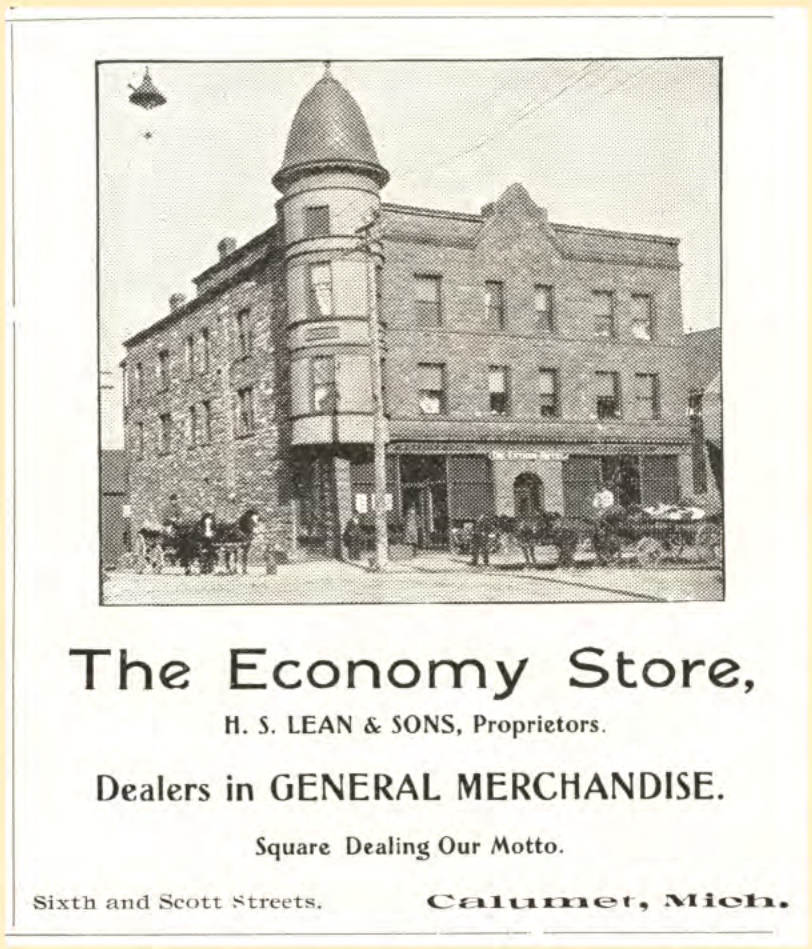
Kinsman Block 1898



NPS, Keweenaw NHP, Curto Album 2 #33, ca.1910

The lot where the Kinsman block now stands was previously occupied by a wood-frame two-story duplex with a stable at the back. In 1898 the duplex was demolished and W.C. Kinsman built the existing sandstone building. It was designed by architect Charles Maass, and built by masonry contractor Paul Roehm and carpentry contractor Bajari & Ulseth. Initially, the north storefront housed Kinsman's horse and carriage supply store, specializing in harnesses, saddles, whips, ropes, blankets, and bells. Kinsman was known as the pioneer harness dealer in the area, having started in business in 1872.

By 1903, the building was home to The Economy Store, H. E. Lean and Sons, proprietors, which occupied both storefronts and carried general merchandise. The Esther Hotel occupied the upper floors. Harold E. Lean and Joseph A. Lean also lived upstairs for a time in the early 20th century. In the 1910s, Kinsman's son Frank opened a hardware store in the south storefront with Charles C. Wagner. Wagner remained in business here until sometime after 1948.

NPS, Keweenaw NHP, Curto Small Photos, Esther Hotel ca. 1900

By 1913, the Economy Store had probably already moved from the Kinsman Block to a larger building on the corner of 7th and Elm Streets, recently vacated by the Croatian Co-Op. Kinsman and Wagner General Hardware was likely in business here by that time, supplying stoves, plumbing repair supplies, auto supplies, sporting goods, harnesses, blankets, and other hardware.