

## LOCAL HISTORY

# Blackwood or Grawn, town now virtually abandoned

**R**emember Blackwood? Hardly anyone does. The name of a tiny village nine miles southwest of Traverse City didn't last long enough to stick in people's memory.

It was in the late 1870s or early 1880s when a man named James B. Blackwood platted and recorded the village, and gave it his name. That was his privilege, since he owned a majority of the lots in the original plat. Little else is known about the man.

But when the Chicago & West Michigan Railroad came through in 1890, they renamed it Grawn Station. And the name was short-

ened to Grawn when the village was given a post office in 1890. William H. Gibbs was its first postmaster.

Grawn was the name of the village's most prominent citizen, Professor Charles T. Grawn. Before moving to the Traverse City area, Professor Grawn was superintendent of State Normal School at Mt.

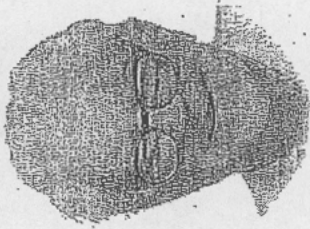
Pleasant. He resigned in 1884 to become superintendent of Traverse City Schools, a position he filled for 13 years. He was also the maternal grandfather of Michigan Governor William G. Milliken.

By 1905 Grawn was on its way to becoming a fairly

and still growing. Today, Grawn still has its post office and many of the old houses within the original plat are still inhabited. But, over time, it has lost its identity as an integrated community. It has no shopping facilities or industries and, by some standards, it qualifies as a bona-fide ghost town, swallowed up by Traverse City.

The old hotel still stands on the corner of State and Brook streets, but it's empty now, dilapidated and devoid of paint. The building's last tenant ran a small grocery and liquor store; he closed its doors at least 20 years ago, the last commercial enterprise in

town. Next to it lies another deserted wooden building: the old blacksmith and livery stable. The last Chesapeake & Ohio passenger train passed by the town on Saturday morning, Oct. 29, 1966. Hardly anyone was around to say good-bye. Larry Wakefield, a longtime resident of Traverse City, is the author of 17 books on Michigan history. His column appears every other Monday in the Record-Eagle.



**LARRY WAKEFIELD**

Local columnist

good-sized town. It had two sawmills, shingle mill, barber shop, drugstore, three general stores, a produce company, hardware store, saloon, millinery shop and a big two-story hotel. Its population was about 300,