

Revealing how Chum's Corner came to be

Have a question about the history of the Grand Traverse region? Call Larry Wakefield at 231-946-8309 or mail him at 12047 S. Elk Run, Apt. N105, Traverse City, MI 49684.

In 1865, a young man named David E. Crandall came to the Traverse area from Wisconsin, where for five years he had been engaged in rafting logs on the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. He found a job at the Gibbs Brothers sawmill at Mayfield, and worked there for eight years. He was a hard-working, likable man, and he saved his money.

On Christmas Day in 1876, he married his Wisconsin sweetheart, and they started a family of two girls and two boys, one of whom they named Deronda. (Nobody now knows why they chose that unusual name.)

Meanwhile, Crandall decided to go into the lumber business. He and his brother James formed a partnership and built a shingle mill in Grawn. After many years, the partnership was dissolved, and David took over the business with his son Deronda, whom since his childhood everybody had called "Chum." In addition to the shingle mill they also operated a big sawmill. The firm was known as D. E. Crandall & Son.

The business grew and prospered for at least 20 years, but then the big timber petered out and the lumbering industry fell on hard times.

"It was the Great Depression," says his son Max Crandall. "The Depression wiped him out." Max is the founder of Traverse City's oldest ongoing home appliance busi-

ness, Max's Service, now in its third generation of ownership.

Chum Crandall didn't let the Depression get him down. In 1934, he and his wife Eva bought 40 acres at the junction of U.S. 31 South and M-37, about six miles south of Traverse City, and built a house (both highways were just two-lane gravel roads at that time.) A little later they added to the house a small grocery store

and filling station, and named it "Chum's Corner." Chum died in 1956, but Eva lived to be 104. In an interview in the 1980s, she told the story.

"It was just a little 8-by-8 shack with two gas pumps outside," she said. "But people started coming in from all over the area. Chum was such a friendly man. He loved people and they loved him. They called him Chum, and I was Mrs. Chum. In the early days, we had the only radio around, and all the farmers would come in and listen to boxing. And the people who came to their cottages ... the men would fish in the morning and the women would come and visit me, and at night the men would come to visit Chum. Chum's Corner got to be a kind of gathering place."

She said that people from as far away as Buckley and Kingsley would come to buy something else?

gas because Chum always gave a sucker to all the kids. How did Chum get his nickname?

"The workers at his father's sawmills took a liking to him and called him 'Little Chum,'" Eva said. "And it just stuck."

Curley Crandall, Chum's oldest son, remembered that Chum's Corner was a bus stop, the only stop between Traverse City and Kingsley. "It was in their schedule," Curley said. "The bus stopped there twice a day."

Curley himself owned and operated a filling station, Crandall's Super Service, on the southeast corner of Eighth and Union streets. Chum's Sinclair Service station structure was torn down in 1970, but the junction is still called Chum's Corner.

By the way, if you had a name like Deronda, wouldn't you rather be called something else?



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