VF Worstville

A town by any other name ...

By GEORGE COLE

You won't find this village on current maps of Paulding County. It's practically a ghost town although 35-40 people still live there. Worstville was the place, but was it really as bad as its name indicates? Or did the village get its name for another reason?

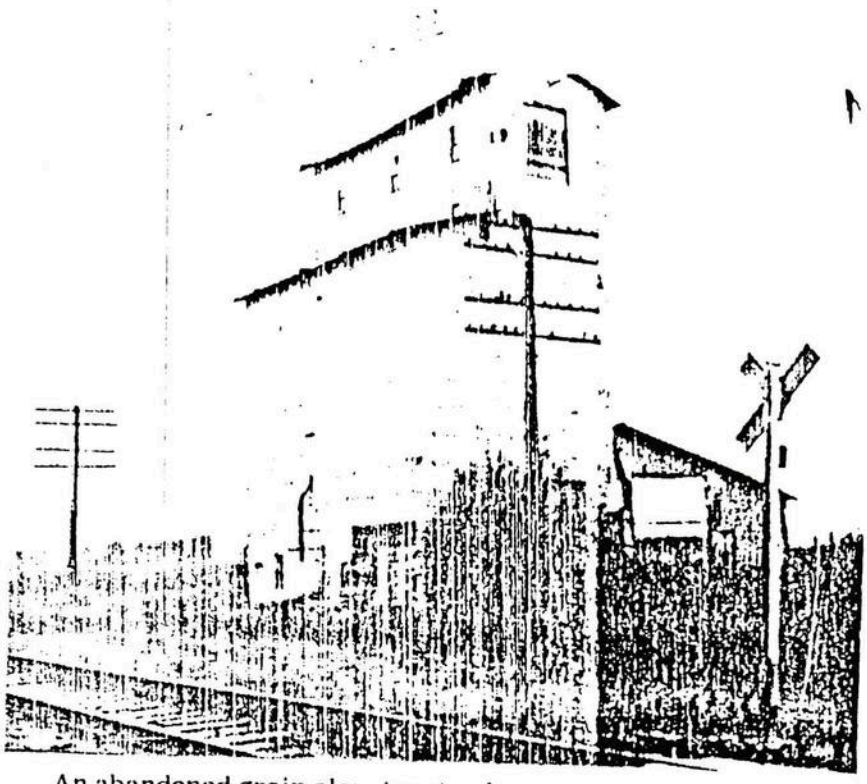
W-ville is on county road 71, several miles southwest of Paulding, just south of state route 613 along the Nickle Plate Railroad. It's tucked in a niche three miles east of Payne and two miles west of Briceton.

The small village was created at about the same time the adjacent Nickle Plate Railroad was built in 1881. In later years the railroad was known as the Norfolk and Western. The town's main industry at the start was the making of barrel staves. While it thrived during the latter part of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, the hamlet boasted a church (Methodist), school, hotel, grocery store, post office, depot and some saloons according to the Center for Ghost Town Research in Ohio, based in Galena. However, interviewed residents and former residents stated no knowledge of any saloons.

For the most part, it was quiet times. One incident was different. Charlie Cline as a young boy lived with his brother and parents on a farm, one half mile south of the hamlet proper.

In the early morning hours Cline noticed flames shooting from the top of one of the tall grain elevators. Cline loaded his two boys into a buggy and went to the fire where they had a front-row seat. At the time of the blaze there was no fire department close by. The grain elevator burned down but was later rebuilt.

Charlie, now 81, still farms at the south edge of Worstville. He



An abandoned grain elevator stands as a silent reminder of the once-flourishing town of Worstville.



Charlie Cline tested his memory for events in Worstville's past.

Paulding Pathways
PAULDING COUNTY CHAPTER OGS
AUG. 1995 VOL. 9 # 3 PAGE 74

remembers another grain elevator burning down just a few years ago — this one in Haviland, south of Worstville.

He said a house next to the elevator was destroyed also. He told about a man selling insurance who just may have had something to do with the blaze.

The Clines moved their family from the south edge of town to about a half-mile further south when Charlie was seven years old. Around 1919 they moved back to the closer place, to where Charlie farms to this present day.

"I like farmin'" said he. The family farm has been on county road 71 on the south side of the railroad. "I believe the last grain I hauled was in 1979, when my mother died." His father passed away 19 years ago.

The proprietor of the town grocery store lived in Charlie's current house.

In its heyday Worstville claimed a population of over 200. Charlie Cline, one of them, said he didn't know why the town had the name!

A small girl came to Worstville in the early part of the century. She was Lula Robeson, who now lives retired in rural Antwerp. She later married Lem Fulmer. During their days in Worstville, they bought up a number of properties in town and became landlords.

Lula Fulmer tells of a severe weather jolt back in 1948 that struck the "terribly-named" town. Much of Indiana along with western Ohio felt the brunt of a tornado funnel. Half of Brady's barn in Worstville was blown down. Small buildings were toppled. Fortunately no injuries were reported.

The twister hit on March 11. The daughter of Mrs. Fulmer, Ilean (now Banks) remembers it well. It was on her birthday. Ilean was born in Indiana and she came to Worstville in 1932. Went to the local school, then switched to the nearby Hardesty School that was one mile north, and finally finished up at the Payne Schools. This coincided with her getting married at 18.

Mrs. Fulmer who lived some 49 years in Worstville, according to her count, rattled off the names of several other residents — Alice Gephart, Mrs. Piper, the Proxmires, and Joe Carlisle who operated the general store in town.

Neither the moth nor the daughter could recall the reason for the naming of their town.

Across the railroad tracks (to the north) the Bradys had a big barn in which they kept straw. Sam Wren lived in a house next door — a house that is now completely boarded up. Originally two grain elevators reached for the skies, one on either side of county road 71. One was destroyed by fire, while the second one is still there on the west side of the road. However, it has been out of business a long time.

The Worstville School was located on the east side of the county road, north of the Nickle Plate Railroad. Today a big open field marks the spot with a "for sale" sign in the middle. Approximately 32-33 students were in school in 1906.

The Worstville School went out of existence about 1937. The structure was torn down and the boards were transported to Edgerton, Indiana.

The lumber, reportedly, was used to build a house.

Where did the working men ply their trades back then? Two worked at the beet factory in Paulding — Mrs. Fulmer's father worked at a blacksmith's shop.

Another former resident at W-ville was Edith Dreifke who now lives in Fort Wayne. Off hand, she couldn't remember much out of the ordinary happening in her home town. Like most we talked with, she didn't know either where Worstville got its name.



Lulu Farmer (left) and daughter Ilean Banks once called Worstville home.