

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

No. 21

Vol.XX

5-29-98

## GAINES FIRE MAY DAY 1910



Our photo shown here this week was taken around eight-eight years ago in the hamlet of Gaines after a disastrous fire. It depicts the remains (cellar wall foundations) looking across the road to the Hatch Blacksmith Shop and Dr. F.H. Lattin's office (the little white building), both to the extreme left.

It seems that after the turn of the century Albert Appleton ran a store at the southwest corner of Gaines. The building was known as White's Hall and housed not only the store, but the town meeting headquarters, post office and Grange Hall. Through the Orleans County Oral History project Clure Appleton, son of Albert Appleton, recounted the facts of the fire: "I remember when I was a kid, eight years old, one Sunday we had an awful storm... my dad was taking a nap... all at once a young boy by the name of Lorraine Fuller (rushed in) and he was very excited. He was dressed in a pair of overalls only, that's all he had on and one strap was over his shoulder the other was hanging down. And he hollered, 'Your store's on fire!' and out he went... we got there immediately and lightning had struck the store and gone right down through the roof and through the store and then into a big kerosene tank buried in the cellar. Dad opened the store door and went in... he immediately went to a rear room that they used as a town hall and started carrying out town clerk records and he saved well over half... he was going to make another trip and they wouldn't let him... Other people... went into the store... risked their lives, to throw out a mess of straw hats... They covered the road and even over in John Hatch's

blacksmith shop. And dad had some barrels of molasses and vinegar out on the front steps of the store and they rolled these down the north road and some of them ended up on Mr. Burroughs' front steps.

"But practically everything burned up... And Dad had ordered twenty-five hundred dollars worth of dry goods (to start a business)... It hadn't even been opened... After the building had caved, Matson Burroughs and Doc Lattin and several other people including myself and Brick were down in the back (at)... a drainage ditch... they were using well water with buckets and were dipping water out of the ditch to throw on the fire... some body threw a pail of water... and it landed where there was some unburned kerosene and went "Poof"... And Matson threw the pail of water over his right shoulder and it turned bottom side up right on Doc Lattin's head. I'll never forget that if I live to be a hundred years old. It was a kind of serious proposition but a laughable one too."

The grange which had met in the building was formed on Nov. 30, 1908. In May of 1909 forty people initiated a Good Templar Lodge which also met in the building. A. Appleton rebuilt his store after the fire and the grange used the second floor until the spring of 1915 when they purchased Thurber's Hotel on the northeast corner of Gaines. This is the building to the far right in the photo, now owned and used as a residence by George and Sharon Kerridge. The brick building was also a store and later used by Dr. William O. Burbank. It was torn down some twenty years ago.