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Meet some pranksters of 19th century

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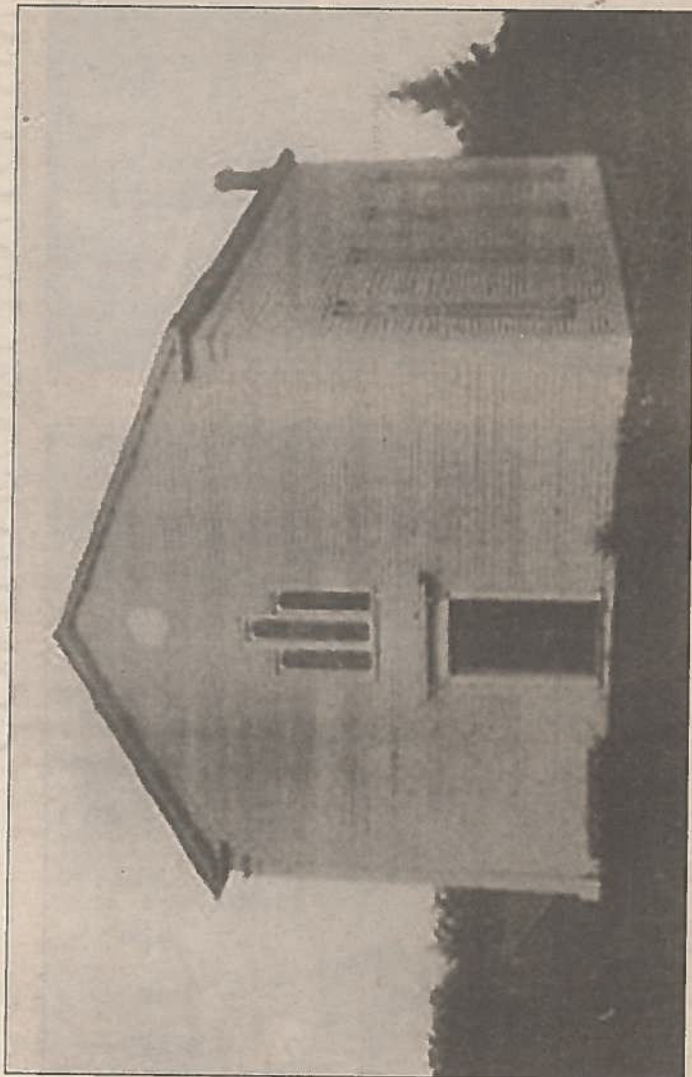
If one thinks that the youth of today are ill-behaved and mischievous, one only has to read behavioral accounts of 19th Century youths to know that our children are actually quite normal. Here is an anecdote about youths in the Town of Gaines 170 years ago.

The story is from a letter written in 1874 by W.C. Ruggles Alamanzor Hutchinson:

"... Mrs. Dewey, the young¹⁸² girls called her Mother Dewey... that I am about to relate of her just have happened about 1837. She was a positive character, and ruled the realm of her name. Her husband stayed with her and she had a daughter and they lived on the Gaines Basin road in the first house south of Ridge Road. It was a log house and in those days the woods grew near it.

"She was a conscientious member of the church, perpetual attendant, where she spent away much of her life. I remember her well as she used to come down the road to church.

"Though poor in this world's good, she was fat in person, and in robust health. She strolled along the road with



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head and shoulders erect with a big brown workbag slung to one arm and a pinch of snuff and red bandanna handkerchief swinging in the other hand...

"(In the church her seat) was in the back, directly under the front of the gallery. There she sat and slept. With nodding head and mouth wide open, all

the same whether the sermon was dull or inspiring.

"It was one summer Sunday that the old lady had taken her usual seat, had gone in to her usual sleep and the preacher had gotten well into the depths of his sermon, when two roguish boys in the gallery above her discovered her head

directly under them thrown back unusually far, and a dark hole in her face where her mouth ought to be. They itched to do something, it was too strong a temptation for mischief-loving boys.

"Instantly a fly-leaf from a hymn book was chewed to pulp. It was held over her in consulta-

tion and passed from hand to hand in trial. Finally it dropped. It was plumb drop, a bullseye shot. She choked, rolled over, coughed and spat it out. Her friends rushed to her, opened the window, fanned her, propped her up and talked of apoplexy. She said there wasn't

any apoplexy, nothing of the sort but didn't say what the matter was. Her dignity was fearfully insulted, and her indignation against somebody upstairs knew no bounds. In the melee two boys made lively tracks downstairs and outdoors."