

GAINES FIRE 1910

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During the first decade of the 20th century, Albert Appleton ran a store in Gaines at the southwest corner of Ridge Road and Gaines-Waterport Road. The building was known as White Hall and also served as the Town Clerk's Office, post office and Grange Hall. On May 1, 1910, this building burned to the ground leaving only the cellar foundation wall that we see in this photo.

The two buildings in the picture are John Hatch's blacksmith shop and Dr. Frank Lattin's office on the other side of Ridge Road. Clure Appleton, son of Albert, gave the following account of the fire as he remembered it a number of years later:

"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



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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. ... Somebody threw a pail of water ... and it landed where there was some unburned kerosene ... and it went "poof" ... and Matson threw that 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."

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dressed in a pair of overalls only, that's all he had on and one strap was over his shoulder and 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