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# SYRACUSE HISTORICAL WALK

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Revised in 1999, 2024

## SYRACUSE HISTORY WALK

\* in front of former Syracuse Elementary School

Today we are going to take a walk around our town and learn about its past. How much do you already know? Do you know anything about the people who lived here a long time ago? Where are the oldest buildings in Syracuse? Did you know that a Syracuse personality appeared in the silent films along with the big stars? Has the Syracuse elementary school always been located on this spot? What does the Sandusky Portland Cement Company have to do with our town? What Indian tribes lived here?

These are a few of the things you will find out on our trip today. Information for this walk has been provided to us by Ron Sharp, a local historian, and Ken Harkless, a lifelong resident of Syracuse, and newspaper articles and books. Enjoy yourself today as you learn about Syracuse and its past.

Many years ago, Turkey Creek ran through the spot where you are now standing. In the early 1900's Turkey Creek was put in the channel it now follows behind the school.

The land here was very low and flat. A couple of houses stood here. At this time the elementary school was located at the site of the uptown parking lot across from the library.

In 1925 the schools in the township consolidated or joined together. The very first schools were one room schools located on pieces of land around the township. Some of these can still be seen in the country area near Syracuse. When the schools consolidated a new school was to be built and the one room schools were to be closed.

Two locations were considered as a site for the new school. One was the area which is now called Vega Field (further west on Brooklyn St.). The other was where we are now. The elementary school was on the site of the uptown parking lot, and a new high school was to be built here on what it now a playground. The new high school was completed in 1927. This building served as a high school until Wawasee High School was built. It then served as a Junior High until the new middle school was built south on SR#13. This high school building was torn down in 1992. The front entrance to this building now decorates the side of the elementary building converted into apartments.

The cafeteria and multi-purpose room were added in 1954. The multi-purpose room was a band and music room. The gymnasium, foyer, and front section of the elementary were also built at this time. The uptown school was tom down in 1955.

In 1959 the wing behind the office area was added, and in 1967 the primary wing was built. In 1989 a new library, music rooms, art room, computer lab and seven classrooms were built connecting the "59 and "67 wings. This then led to the creation of the outdoor lab.

The new Syracuse Elementary School, 12799 N Kern Rd., opened its doors

to students on August 14, 2017.

\* at the corner of Boston Street at the entrance to the former elementary school

Boston Street as you see it today is quite different from 100 years ago. The part of Boston Street north across Main Street was laid out along with the early streets of our town. The area where we are now was a swamp which was filled in much later.

If you look across the tracks, you can see a large industrial building. Jasper Plastics moved into part of the building in 2008. The building used to house the Dana Corporation which made car parts and was one of the largest industries in Syracuse. It was formerly called Weatherhead which produced brass and steel pipe components; they built the building in 1952.

We will now proceed south on Boston to Third Street. We will go left on Third Street and stop behind the former Scout Cabin at the historical marker.

\* Crosson Mill Park at the historical marker

In the early 1830's white man came into this area. They found good land, many trees for lumber, wild game, and lakes full of fish.

Around 1832, the first founder of our town, Samuel Crosson, and his wife, Nancy, arrived here. They had three daughters and one son. Mr. Crosson was described as "a very genial and gentlemanly man" and Mrs. Crosson as "a most worthy woman."

Soon after arriving, Samuel and his hired man, Ephriam Davis, built a dam. This dam is thought to have been where the bridge now crosses Huntington Street. In 1834, he built a flour mill near where we are now standing. This was the first mill in Kosciusko County.

The other founder of our town was Henry Ward. He arrived in 1835 or '36 from Massachusetts with his wife, Sarah. Ward earned his living as a surveyor and became Crosson's partner in the mill business. Soon after that, spring rains weakened the dam, and it gave way and was destroyed.

Crosson and Ward owned many acres of land in this area. They divided it into lots and named the town Syracuse.

We will now proceed to the park sign

\* at the Crosson Mill Park sign

For many years an Indian statue stood here to remind us of the Indians that inhabited this area. Vandals and weathering made it necessary to remove the statue to the Syracuse-Wawasee Historical Museum in the Syracuse Community Center. Mr. William E. Long was responsible for placing the statue here. He had become quite wealthy after he invented a bread wrapping

and slicing machine. He purchased land on Kale Island and in 1927 erected the Chinese Gardens. These beautiful gardens with bridges, flowers and swans attracted many thousands of onlookers. Mr. Long also made other contributions to our community. Listen for his name again as we walk through our town.

The Syracuse area was first inhabited by Potawatomi Indians. On the north side of Syracuse Lake is a historical marker that marks a high land area known as Indian Hill. This was found to be a burial site for the Potawatomi tribe. The Indians placed the dead bodies in trees and tied them in place. When the white settlers came, the decayed remains were found and some had fallen to the ground. A number of years ago, a skeleton was found on Indian Hill and placed in the high school for study.

Another legend concerning Indian Hill is that Indian babies were placed in a kind of swing tied to the limbs. When a breeze would blow through the trees, the little babies would be rocked.

When the Potawatomi left here, they went to Illinois. Later the federal government forced them to move to Kansas.

Miamia Indians lived around the lakes. They were led by two brothers, Papakeechee (Flat Belly) and Chief Waubee. Chief Waubee lived in a brick house built for him by the government. It was located in the Milford area. His name was sometimes spelled W-a-w-a-e-s-e-e. In later years, when Eli Lilly was looking for a better name for Nine Mile or Turkey Lake, he changed the spelling to W-a-w-a-s-e-e.

Chief Wawasee and his people received word from the government that they were to move to Kansas. During the night members of the tribe were seen heading for Michigan. They were never heard from again.

Chief Papakeechee lived in a brick house built for him by the government. It was located near Indian Village. When the order came for the Indians to leave, it is not known whether he left. One story claims he died and was buried near his home.

This park is named for Samuel Crosson who founded our town. On this sign the name is spelled C-r-o-s-s-o-n; however, on some of the early deeds it was spelled C-r-a-w-s-o-n. We might explain that this was due to the fact that not many people had a good education in those days.

This area was a junk yard in 1930's. The government under President Roosevelt started the WPA project to give unemployed workers a job. Many of these workers helped to make our country beautiful. WPA workers filled in this area and made a park.

Now we will proceed the end of Dolan Drive.

\* at the end of Dolan Drive

The area which is now Dolan Drive was once the mill race for the grist mill. After Crosson's first mill was destroyed by spring rains, he and Ward

built another mill at the other end of Dolan Drive where it now crosses Main Street. We will stop there later. This mill race carried the water to turn the water wheel.

After the mill was gone, people who lived along this race used it for swimming. About 1 1/2 million gallons of water leaked out of this race each day. Because there was a problem with the level of the lake, the Town Board of Trustees decided to fill in the race. People who lived along the race were unhappy to lose their swimming hole. Despite their objections, the race was filled in during the 1960's.

Dolan Drive was named after Joseph P. Dolan. He came to Syracuse as a time keeper on the B and O Railroad. He had at one time played second base for the Baltimore Orioles. Mr. Dolan was very active in community affairs and was principal of the high school for 18 years. He was the first to teach geometry and algebra. During the summer he operated a "Normal" school to train young teachers.

Now cross Highway 13 and stop in front of the Town Hall.

\* at the Town Hall

This lovely brick building was constructed in the 1980's to house our local government. There are also offices for the assessor, water department, and police department, and our Town Board meets here.

Now go to the bridge.

\* at the bridge

In the late 1800's trees were cut down around Turkey Lake as Wawasee was called then. The logs of these trees were floated along this channel and down Turkey Creek to Crosson's sawmill located down the creek from the grist mill.

Crosson's first dam was located here where the bridge is now. Problems came up when people above the dam complained of high water while people below the dam had problems with pigsties and hen houses being washed away. A study group laid plans to solve the problem. In 1964, this new dam was built and made a memorial to Col. Eli Lilly who helped to finance the dam. Eli Lilly had made his fortune in a drug company in Indianapolis. He purchased property on what became Lake Wawasee and was quite interested in the history and development of this community.

This street is called Huntington Street because it was an important road from Huntington to Goshen in early days.

There used to be a large building across the street, constructed in the 1920's. It was built to house the McClintock, Cowell, and Gordy cement road building company. When newer methods of building roads developed, they went out of business. The Syracuse-Wawasee Chamber of Commerce is now located in a building there.

Now go to the corner by the Beef's Booze Barn.

**START PROOFREADING**

\* at Beef's Booze Barn (a second story was added to the old Liquor Locker)

In the 1930's the Jones Boarding House stood where Beef's Booze Barn is now. Passengers passing through on the railroad would often stay overnight and engineers would dash over for a cup of coffee.

Just before the Liquor Locker was built, a Pure Oil Gas Station was located here.

Across the tracks is the PM Ag Products Company (former Vylactos Plant). The sometimes disagreeable smell from this industry is due to the process of making feed for cattle. A by product of this company is bird blocks.

Straight on down Highway 13 from Park Pharmacy to the bowling alley was farm land. On Sundays Mr. Hunnicutt would take people for an airplane ride for \$2.00. The hanger is located just behind Dockside Gifts and Apparel (formerly Clippers).

The streets between where we are now and Chicago Street were laid out when Syracuse was platted. This area was called Newberg. At that time you could not go up Huntington Street because there was no bridge. The town of Newberg did not grow and went out of existence.

Diagonally across the street is Patrick Industries Incorporated (203 S. Huntington St. – old Liberty Coach factory). In 1800, a flour mill stood on this site. It made Golden Wedding and Wawasee brand flour. Later it became a feed mill and also sold coal and ice. Ice was taken from the lake in winter and shipped to Chicago before there was refrigeration. Liberty Coach purchased the property in 1940.

There have been several other businesses along the street toward Jasper Plastics (old Dana Corporation). There was once an Advanced Radiator Company which was destroyed by fire. A Stamate Cookie factory was once housed in what is now Maple City Tool. A cedar chest company was also there at one time. Before Dana Corporation was built a pickle factory was located in that area.

Now go to the sign at Heny Ward Park.

\* at Henry Ward Park

This park was named for the other founding father, Henry Ward, who was Crosson's partner in the mill business. Due partly to local circumstances and the Panic of 1837, Crosson and Ward found they had many debts and lawsuits. These factors may help to explain the early death of these two men. Samuel Crosson is buried in the Syracuse Cemetery; however, no one has been able to find out what happened to Henry Ward.

Across the street was the old railroad depot. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad came through here in 1874. This was a real boom to Syracuse. Since there were no large trucks in those days, all mail and produce shipments came by rail. Dozens and dozens of trains came by.

The wooden passenger cars were far from comfortable. The engine coughed and belched steam. The seats were hard. The only heat in winter came from a coal stove. Open windows were the only means of air conditioning in summer months. Smoke and cinders also made the passengers uncomfortable.

The first depot built on this site in the 1870's was a wooden structure. This brick depot was built in 1916. In the early 1900's there were two large wooden tanks along the tracks east of the station. Water was pumped from Syracuse Lake, treated, and stored in these tanks. Syracuse was a watering stop for the steam locomotives on the railroad.

There was one train that was referred to as the Milkshake. If a farmer would set his milk can along the tracks, the Milkshake would stop and pick it up. This train ran from Garrett and arrived each day at 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

An attempt was made to save the brick depot because of its historical significance, but it was deteriorated so much, it was torn down in 2012.

Now go to the grassy area near the boat launch.

\* at the boat launch

This area was once a swamp. The town of Syracuse filled it in and made it a park.

In the early days of Syracuse ice houses were located along the shore here. Huge blocks of ice were cut from the lake and stored in these ice houses for later use. Some of it was shipped by railroad to Chicago.

Now go to the northeast corner of Medusa and Front Street.

\* at the northeast corner of Medusa and Front

If you look south along Front Street you can see American Industries. It was on this site where the Union Canning Company was located. They would take in 400 bushels of pickles a day. The plant had eleven large vats which could process 8000 to 9000 bushels of pickles each season. These vats were 14 feet in diameter and 8 feet deep.

Farmers were paid \$.60 a bushel for well-formed pickles and \$.20 a bushel for large cucumbers. Nearly two carloads of salt were used each season in the pickling process.

Across the street on the east, we see lovely condominiums. This is the location of the former Syracuse Enterprises Company. The large buildings had earlier housed Hungarian workers who came here to work in the Sandusky Portland Cement Company. These workers were cheap labor and local people did like them to be here. They were nicknamed "Hunkies". One day someone set off a bomb on the porch of the Hunkies' house. No one was injured, but it frightened the workers enough that they left town.

Now go down Medusa Street to where large cement structures used to be visible at a private residence on the right.

\* Medusa Street toward the main channel

The Sandusky Portland Cement Plant was constructed here in 1888 to 1890. It was in operation from 1901 to 1919. For a period of 18 years the Medusa Cement Company, as it was sometimes called, employed over 200 people. The plant made cement from marl it dredged from Lake Wawasee and Waubee Lake near Milford. The Syracuse and Milford Railway Company, the "Mud Line" (no longer in existence) brought the marl from Waubee Lake, touching Conklin Bay, Lake Wawasee, at the marl Slip and on to Syracuse.

One of the old timers of Syracuse recalls that the plant was dirty and smelly. The marl ran out and there were complaints about dredging the lake. Dredging would destroy the natural beauty of the lake. **Insert legislation pertaining to Wawasee** The plant closed in 1919, and most of the buildings were tom down in 1922.

The gigantic cement structures that formed the foundation of these buildings were hard to destroy. When housing developers wanted to clear this land, they used dynamite to break up the pieces. A few still remained until lately. Some land owners have left them and used them as part of the landscaping around their home.

The street leading to this area has been named Medusa after this large cement company.

Now go back to the bridge on Front Street.



\* at the bridge on Front Street

Before the dam was built on Turkey Creek, Lake Wawasee and Syracuse Lake were just one big lake. It was called Turkey Lake or Nine Mile Lake. After the dam was built, two lakes formed.

The largest lake that was formed is now the largest natural lake in Indiana. When Col. Eli Lilly was looking for a better name for the lake, he decided to call it Wawasee after Chief Waube (Wawasee).

Turkey Creek flows west to the Elkhart River. Rivers and lakes south of the continental divide, which is between Syracuse and North Webster, flow south to the Mississippi River. The building of the dam also backed up water to form this small pond.

For many years there was a steel bridge here. It was sometimes called the Hunkie Bridge because of the Hungarian workers who lived on the site of the condominiums. Since the steel bridge was too low for larger boats to pass under it, this new bridge was built.

Now go north to 108 Front Street.

\* at 108 Front Street

This house was once the Bowersox home. It was the home of our only movie star. His movie name was Charles Bowers. He acted in the silent films opposite stars like Mary Pickford. When talking movies came in, Mr. Bowers found that his voice was not good enough. He was without a job.

Mr. Bowers returned in the 1930's to Syracuse and acted in theaters in the area. This life was not as fine as he had known in Hollywood. He became depressed and decided to return to Hollywood. Shortly after he drowned in the ocean. It may have been an accident, but some believe it may have been suicide.

Now proceed to 124 Front Street.

\* at 124 Front Street

This is one of the oldest landmarks in Syracuse. It was built about 1835 on the northeast corner of Main and Huntington Streets. Jacob Renfro built this structure as a hotel. It was in business for about 40 years from 1856-1896. It is called Lake House. At one time it was called Fremont House after a vice-president of the United States.

Lake House was moved to this location and made into a residence. Ken Harkless explained that many buildings were moved in those days. He recalls seeing many buildings rolled to a new location. It was apparently less expensive to move an old building and fix it up than build a completely new structure.

As you walk up this street, notice the curbs and gutters. They were placed here in the 1930's under a WPA project. This street was also the first blacktop in our town. This area has always been mostly homes.

Now go to 404 Front Street.

\* at 404 Front Street

This house was once an ice cream factory. Since there was no refrigeration in the 1930's, ice from the lake was used to make ice cream. Ice houses were located on the lake in front of this house to store ice to make ice cream. The ice was also used to cool meat and other foods.

You could purchase a large box of delicious ice cream for 10 cents. Jose Snavely owned and operated the business. It is said that she was quite a character. When refrigerators came into existence in the 1940's, the ice cream factory closed.

Now go to 700 Lake Street. Notice the stone house at 605 N Lake as you go. It was built in 1888 of field stone and mortar.

\* at 700 Lake Street

This lovely home sits on the site of the former Lakeside United Brethren in Christ Church. In 1946 the United Brethren and Evangelical Church combined to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Under the leadership of Rev. Ken Robinson these two local congregations purchased land on Highway #13 to build a new church. These churches then joined with the Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church in 1968. The church is now called Calvary United Methodist Church. The bells from the two original churches were placed in the present church's bell tower.

Now go to 706 E. Main Street.

\* at 707 E. Main Street

It was on the area just in front of this house, where the Harkless Machine Shop stood. In this shop Sheldon Harkless had a machine repair shop and built an early automobile. The car may be seen in the Syracuse-Wawasee Historical Museum inside the Syracuse Community Center.

The machine shop was tom down in the 1950's to build this house. It was the home of Sheldon Harkless's son, Ken, until his death in 1987. After Mr. Harkless retired from his marine business, he began to develop his interest in painting and drawing. He took instruction and began copying faint photographs that once belonged to his father. The museum has some of his paintings on display. The next time you are there, take time to study them.

Because Mr. Harkless lived out his entire life in this community, he was very interested in community affairs and its history. Since Mr. and Mrs. Harkless had no children they left most of their estate invested to benefit organizations in the Syracuse area. Mr. Harkless attended the high school on the uptown parking lot and is responsible for the marker that is there.

Now go to the parking lot across from the Syracuse City Park.

\* at the parking lot across from the Syracuse City Park

The area where this parking lot is was at one time a very high hill. The park area was a swamp and junk yard. Early residents recall that rats made it scary. Boys however found it amusing to shoot or throw rocks at them. In the 1930's with the help of several clubs, the park was filled in. It now belongs to our town.

The road past this park is named after W.E. Long who you may recall owned the Chinese Gardens and donated the Indian that stood in Crosson Park. It was his idea to plant the beautiful magnolia trees that line this street. They are a lovely sight every spring. Later we will find the Mr. Long purchased the Pickwick block and was responsible for its beautification.

\* at the stone marker in the park

In 1937 an Indian pageant was held in Syracuse to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the granting of land to the white settlers by the Indians. This marker was placed here then at a special memorial dedication. Governor Clifford Townsend and W.E. Long were present at this ceremony.

Now go to the gazebo.

\* at the gazebo

You will notice that this gazebo has been named in honor of Lela and Ken Harkless. You will recall that they were interested in preserving our past and left most of their estate to the town of Syracuse. This gazebo is used for weddings, outdoor concerts, and other entertainment.

Now go to the large gray house at 212 E. Washington Street

\* at 212 E. Washington Street

Although this house has been sided, it is one of the oldest brick houses in Syracuse. It can be seen in one old photograph which was taken over 100 years ago. As we walk, you can identify other older houses by the foundation. The foundation will be made of cement and field stones.

Now proceed to the corner of Washington and Harrison

\* at the corner of Washington and Harrison (Church of God)

This is the oldest church in Syracuse. It was organized in 1863. At that time Syracuse has a population of about 300. Elder J. Schock was instrumental in the building of a frame house of worship in 1866. The cost was about \$3000. The land was donated by Joseph DeFrees.

Now go to the steps in front of the downtown lower parking lot.

\* at the parking lot

The first three schools in Syracuse were thought to be log cabins. One was one block south of the stoplight where the Syracuse Cafe is located. Another was thought to be near the Church of God site. Samuel Crosson's daughter, Jane, was thought to have operated this school. The third school was thought to have been where the United Telephone parking lot is now. A frame building was later constructed on this site and served to educate the community's children until 1874.

In 1874, a new four room brick school replaced the frame building. Joseph P. Dolan was the principal for 18 years. By 1907, Syracuse had outgrown its classroom space. A new school was built on the lower part of the school yard in front of the 1874 structure. A new high school was built in 1927 on the Brooklyn Street site, but this building continued to be an elementary school until 1955. Ken Harkless attended this school.

The Syracuse Public Library was organized in 1908 in the east room of the basement of this school. The first librarian was paid \$125 a year. Most of the books were donations. Hours were limited to afternoon and early evenings, three days a week.

In 1916, the library board decided to investigate the possibility of securing funds from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. Andrew Carnegie had made a fortune in the steel industry and was interested in establishing libraries. A grant was received for \$10,000. Local funds were raised to cover the remainder of the cost. The building was dedicated in 1921.

Renovation of the library began in 1990 and a dedication took place in July 1991 when the project was completed. The cost was about one million dollars. A meeting room is located in the basement, and a computer system is used to catalog books and keep records.

Look at the two- story structure west of the library. This is the

Hillabold House. The house was used as a nursing home in the early 1900's. The Gafill Oil Company moved the building six feet back from its foundation to make a service station. Bart Cox had a print shop here in the 1950's and later the license branch was housed here. The Hillabold House fell into disrepair but was rescued by the bank. It was moved back to its original foundation and renovated in 1972. First Charter Insurance Co. was located there and it now (2024) houses Bass Audiology.

Go to 201 E. Pearl.

\* at 201 E. Pearl

This house is known as the Grandma House. It was originally located across the street from the Church of God and is one of the oldest homes in Syracuse. In a 1907 photo it was a one-story house. Edwin Forrest Holloway and his wife "Grandma" Barbara Ellen lived in it then. Later owners added a second story and more rooms.

Now go one block south to the corner of Harrison and Carroll.

\* at the southeast corner of Harrison and Carroll

On the southeast corner, 201 E. Carroll, is the location of the first hotel in Syracuse. James Hall purchased this house from Samuel Crosson and converted it into a hotel. It was known as the "Rough and Ready House."

Now proceed one block west and one block north on Huntington Street to the corner of Carroll and Huntington.

\* at Carroll and Huntington

If you look across the street next to the Compass Thrift Store (formerly named Methodist Thrift Shop), you see the Schleeter House. This Greek Revival style house was built around 1850. Lake House and the Hillabold House were also built in this style. The Schleeter house was originally located where the Pickwick Theater is but later was moved here and was remodeled around 2023.

Now go one block north to the corner of Pearl and Huntington.

\* at Pearl and Huntington

If you look east on Pearl Street you will see an old brick building with a rounded roof just behind The Revolving Closet (formerly Love Furniture). This building served as the gymnasium for the school until the gym was built on the Brooklyn Street site in 1927. This building is now being remodeled.

The house beyond this building at 104 E. Pearl is also an old home. It

was built between 1849-1861.

Go north 1/2 block and stop just past the alley.

\* at the alley

Huntington Street was the location of many taverns. An early saloon called "Billy's Place" or "Silver Moon Saloon" was in this block. Mr. Harkless recalls that when he was young there were seven saloons or taverns in Syracuse.

Now proceed to the southeast corner of Main and Huntington streets.

\* at the southeast corner of Main and Huntington streets.

Older residents recall that the buildings between here and the Hillabold House have housed grocery stores and meat markets. The Winegard Clothing Store and Connolly Dry Goods and Dress Shop once occupied a building next to the bank which was tom down to make a parking lot. In recent years businesses such as these have located in the Village south of town.

In a 1937 photo of downtown Syracuse, there is a large wooden arch which reaches from this comer across Main Street. It was built as part of W.E. Long's plan to beautify Syracuse. There seems to be no record of when it was torn down.

Now cross Main Street and stop of the northeast corner at the stop light

\* at the northeast corner at the stop light

No one seems to know for sure how Syracuse got its name. It may be that some of the early settlers had come from Syracuse, New York or perhaps they knew of the ancient city on a hill on the island of Sicily. Maybe they just liked the name.

This has always been the main part of Syracuse. It was on this comer that Samuel Crosson built a small frame building that became the first store in Syracuse. Later the Lake House stood here and served as a hotel and rooming house.

The brick structure (covered with siding) that stands here now was built for the LeGrande Hotel. One resident recalls that as a small child she would ring the bell on the door. A dear old lady with white hair would invite her in to select penny candy.

Now cross Huntington Street and go north just across from the communications tower

\* across from the communications tower (formerly United Telephone building)

The Kelly House stood on the site of the telephone building. It was constructed in 1867 and first served as a home. When Dr. D.C. Kelly purchased it in 1873, he added rooms to it and made it into a hotel. In 1882 it was the scene of the Washington Day Ball.

Go north to High Street and follow it west to the gate of the cemetery.

\* at the cemetery gate

This cemetery is the oldest cemetery in Syracuse. When the first child, Jeremiah Dennis, died in March of 1835, there was no cemetery to bury him. Samuel Crosson donated the land as a cemetery so the child could be buried here. In the section to our right as we go up the drive, you will see the burial sites of early residents of Syracuse. Many of the stones have eroded and the information is hard to read. Vandals have been responsible for breaking many of the markers.

Between 1849 and 1853 there were forty deaths. That suggests that there was some sort of epidemic that caused an unusually large number of deaths. The population at that time was only 300.

Now proceed to the top of the hill at the tall marker on the right. The name is Dennis.

\* at the Dennis marker

Jeremiah Dennis was the first person to die in Syracuse. He died in March of 1835 when he was only one month old. You will notice that this one marker contains the names of several family members.

Now go to the Veneman marker in the next row.

\* at the Veneman marker

This is the marker of the second person to die in Syracuse. William Veneman died in September of 1835 at the age of three years.

Now proceed north to the historical marker.

\*

\* at the historical marker

This is the burial site of one of the founders of our town, Samuel Crosson. His wife and children are buried next to him in separate lots. During the sesquicentennial celebration in 1987, this historical marker was placed here as part of the closing ceremonies for the celebration. It is a fitting reminder of the important role this man played in the history of our community. Unfortunately, the plaque was stolen. The barely legible grave

stone has been replaced.

Now go down the drive to the Eli Holloway marker on the right.

\* at the Eli Holloway marker

Eli Holloway was a brother of Edwin Holloway who lived in the "Grandma House". Eli and Edwin were the only Syracuse residents who served in the Civil War.

Eli worked for a local wagon maker until he bought a drug store and jewelry repair business. He and his wife lived on Main Street.

Eli served as town treasurer for two different terms. On April 28, 1889, he died of "camp dysentery" which he contracted during his service in the Civil War. He was only 46 years old.

Now cross the cemetery to where you see a clump of trees and concrete bench.

\* at the clump of trees

During the sesquicentennial in 1987, a time capsule was buried here. The vault was donated by the Eastland/Harris Funeral Home. It contains letters, pictures, videos, and other objects from people in the community. When Syracuse celebrates its 200th birthday, the capsule will be raised and opened. Items in the capsule will go to the persons named on each item.

Now proceed down Mill Street to where it intersects Conrad.

\* at the Mill/ Conrad intersection

If you look off to the west along Turkey Creek to where our sanitation plant is, you will be looking at the site of Crosson and Ward's Sawmill. It was built in 1836 and was destroyed in the same flood that destroyed the mill.

Now go to the corner of Mill Street and Main

\* at Mill Street and Main

Mill Street gets its name from the early grist mill and saw mill that were on Turkey Creek near here.

The house on this corner is known as the Opal Keim residence, although she no longer lives here. If you look at the way the house is built you can see that it resembles the Hillabold House, Lake House, and the Schleeter House.

Years ago there was no bridge across Turkey Creek. If you wanted to get to the other side, you would have had to ford the creek.

Now go up Main Street to the alley by the parking lot.

\* at the alley on Main Street



The Syracuse Fire Department was located on the parking lot area next to the theater for many years. On March 2, 1960 at 1:00 a.m. a fire alarm went out. A stove in the front of the fire station had caught the building on fire. There was no way to get the fire equipment which was in the back of the building. No one could enter the building and all the equipment was lost.

At an earlier date the Holton Hotel was located where the theater is now. The hotel is mentioned in a 1901 newspaper.

Go on down Main Street to just past the theater.

\* just past the theater

It was in the middle of this block that Eli Holloway had his drug store. This store was a popular meeting place in the early 1900's. Ed and Eli were musically talented and entertained between drug sales by playing instruments and singing. They were known as the "Musical Holloways".

Now go to Pickwick Place.

\* at Pickwick Place

This square is now called Pickwick Place. This corner has had three tragic fires.

The first tragic fire occurred in 1901. A fire started one Sunday evening when a clerk went to the back of Kilgore's Grocery Store to get some oil for a customer. The clerk lit a match to see and the oil ignited. The entire block was destroyed.

In 1936, W.E. Long purchased the block and had it rebuilt in the English style.. He hired a well- known architect and planned the block in old English style. It was called the Pickwick Block. Parades, floats, and fireworks opened the block. Never had Syracuse seen such crowds. Because Mr. Long was interested in cultural things a theater was included. However, on February 8, 1946, fire again burned the block.

The block was rebuilt with more modern buildings. Then 14 years later in March of 1960, the block burned for the third time.

The last time the block was rebuilt, it was called Pickwick Place. What you see here now is the result of the last rebuilding.

Now cross Main Street to the southwest corner.

\* at the southwest corner of Main and Huntington streets

The buildings on this side of the street are quite old. This corner building was once Miles Grocery Store. A photography shop operated by the Beardsley family was on the second floor.

Go west to the next building.

\* at the second building west on Main

This building housed the Klink Butcher Shop.

The Bushong Barber Shop has been **operating in this location** for several generations. During the sesquicentennial in 1987, the Bushongs were given a flag from the nation's capitol for having a business over 100 years.

Proceed to the hardware on the alley.

\* at the hardware

Between Bushongs and the hardware there was the L.A. Seider Grocery Store. A bag of candy was given when charged grocery bills were paid. It made a child wish his parents would not pay cash for groceries.

Before becoming the Uptown Hardware, there was a hardware owned by E.E. Streiby. Sam Akers, a portly built clerk in this store, was known to pass on clever remarks that would cheer one up for the rest of the day.

Now cross the alley to the next building.

\* the free-standing building across the alley

This free-standing building was the second post office in Syracuse. The first one was located across the street near the theater; however, it was destroyed in the 1901 fire. The post office was moved from here to the brick building across from the Revolving Closet. The newest post office is now north of town on Highway #13.

The upstairs of this building once housed Blanche Wingard's Hat Shop. The pretty plumes and flowers delighted the women folk.

After the post office moved, a number of restaurants occupied the building. Then the local license branch was located here. A veterinarian was in this building. Now it is West Main restaurant.

Now go to the corner of Main and Dolan Drive.

\* at the corner of Main and Dolan Drive

This is the site of Crosson and Ward's second grist mill. One spring, the creek became swollen with water and the mill was washed away. The large mill stones dropped to the bottom of Turkey Creek and were never removed.

It is believed that the first log house in Syracuse was built by Samuel Crosson somewhere near this mill. The exact location is not known.

A small white building used to sit across Dolan Drive and served as the Syracuse jail.

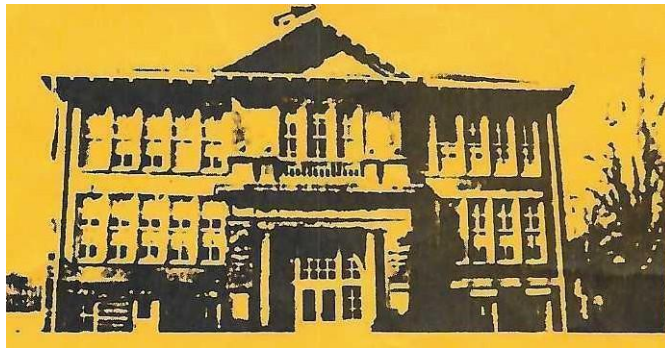
As we walk along Dolan Drive recall that this was once the mill race.  
Water flowed from the lake down this race to turn the large mill wheel.

Stop at the brick apartments.

\* at the apartments

The bricks in this apartment building came from the school that was located on the uptown parking lot. As years go by, old buildings are torn down and new ones take their place. Our town is always changing, but if you know where to look you can find bits of its past.

Be proud of our town. Do your share to preserve its past and make it a pleasant place to live.



1909

## HISTORY OF SYRACUSE SCHOOLS

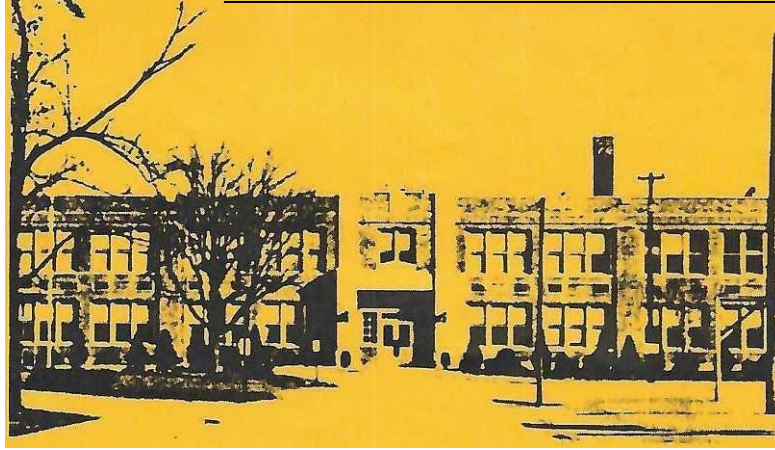
As far as recorded evidence goes, organized education has been in existence in Syracuse since 1836, even before the town was laid out in 1837. The first school was in a log building constructed on the hill in Syracuse at the corner of Harrison and Washington Streets. Turkey Creek Township settlers about the same time also transformed a log barn into a school building. These two schools, taught for a three or four month term during the winter by teachers who boarded with patrons, were the forerunner of a township system finally consisting of nine school districts which had in 1887 a total of 517 pupils enrolled.

The first log school was replaced by a frame structure about 1862. Some of the early teachers were a Mr. Fattis, William Morrison, William Dennis, William Worley, Daniel Brown, Rebecca Sprowl, Isaac Kitson, Hannah Galbreath, George Hattle, and Martha (Guy) Whitehead.

There seems to be some discrepancy as to the date in which a four-room brick structure was erected facing East Main Street. According to the Kosciusko County history published in 1887, it was built in 1868 at a cost of \$10,000 by the township. However, the Pottawattamie, the yearbook of 1907, states that this building was erected in 1874 through the efforts of Joseph Kindig, a trustee of Turkey Creek Township, who was severely criticized by the citizens for such extravagance. The first year of school in this building was taught by E. M. Chaplin, Samuel Eby, and Amy Aber. Mr. J.P. Dolan, a prominent citizen of the community for many years, was connected with this school for almost two decades. In characterizing Mr. Dolan, the Pottawattamie of 1907 says:

"The citizens of Syracuse are indebted to no other person as much as to Mr. Dolan for his eighteen years of untiring effort in behalf of the school and community. He made the Syracuse school the best school in a radius of many miles. The summer normals conducted by him attracted students from several adjoining counties. His personality was evident in all the schools of this region, for young men and women went out from the school as teachers imbued with his high ideals of the dignity and worth of the teaching profession. The man for years put his whole effort into his work, did it well and should now find great satisfaction in looking back over a career fraught with the highest and noblest service."

In 1887 a two-year high school was started. In 1889 Blanche Sprague became the first graduate of Syracuse High School. In 1898, Allen A. Norris became principal. Also, about this time, the overcrowding problem began to be felt. A partition of one of the upstairs rooms was made in 1900. In 1902, the old Kern building was moved onto the south end of the school grounds facing Main Street and the high school grades, which now followed a four-year course, moved into it.



1956

(2)

Mr. Norris retired as principal in 1904 and was succeeded by W.B. Owens who had the position for one year. C.C. Bachman became principal in 1905. By 190 the pressing need for a new building was being felt as some of the classes had outgrown the two buildings on East Main Street and were moved to a house on West Main Street and the Progressive church building. There were eight teachers by this time, two of whom, C.C. Bachman and Marion Mentzer, were teaching the high school.

On September 23, 1907, ground was broken for the new school building on East Main Street, which is remembered with much nostalgia by many Syracuse citizens as the school where they learned the "3 R's". This building was completed for the school year of 1908-09. It housed both the elementary and high school as well as the public library until the Carnegie Library became a reality following World War I. A detailed description of this building was given in the Pottawattamie of 1908. Following is a quotation from that description:

"The walls are laid of an excellent quality of impervious, red pressed-brick. The basement walls and quoins are laid in black mortar and the field in white. The two colors of mortar produce the appearance of a slight difference in the shades of the bricks in the quoins and the field, which adds to the beauty of the exterior. The cut stone in the front makes it impressive. The entrance is made imposing by the tall stone columns and the beautiful designs in stone on each side of the entrance.

The halls are wide and well lighted. The main hall is sixteen feet, and the east and west hall is twelve feet. Since the building is on the hillside, the front basement rooms are practically only half-basement. One of the front basement rooms will be used for a library the other will be a place of meeting **for** the Town Council. The remainder of the basement will be used for the heating plant and the closets.

The heating system is the best that could be bought. It is known as the steam-blast system. The air is heated by passing among steam coils, and is forced into the room by a large fan. The fan is propelled by an engine supplied with steam from the boiler. Each room will be provided with a thermostat, which will regulate the movement of the dampers and keep the temperature within a degree or two of that desired. The pressure forcing the air into the rooms is sufficient to cause a movement outward at all time. The air in each room will be changed every two minutes.

(3)

The first floor is occupied by four class rooms 32 feet by 26 feet each, principal's office, and a teachers' lavatory. The class rooms will seat fifty pupils. The light is admitted to the rooms on the left side only.

Each room will be provided with a Wilson Sanitary Wardrobe. They stand against one wall of the room. They have a front similar to the roll-top of a desk, and are connected with the ventilating flue so that there is a continuous circulation of warm air through them.

There are two stairways leading to the second floor, which is occupied by two class rooms, an assembly room for the high school, a recitation room and a laboratory. The assembly room will seat eighty or ninety pupils.

The building will be finished in oak. The floors of the halls will be of Terrazo--a material somewhat resembling tile. Drinking fountains, provided with filters, will be placed on each floor.

The building is modern in every respect. No pains have been spared to provide in every way for the health and convenience of teachers and pupils. Surely, Syracuse is fortunate in having such a building in which to house and school its young people."

This building served as both elementary and high school until 1927 when a new high school building, from which the class of 1929 was the first to graduate, was constructed on East Brooklyn Street. From that date it served as the elementary school until a new wing was added to the high school in 1955 for the lower six grades. The old building was demolished and a parking lot took its place. At the same time the high school was enlarged to include a new and larger gymnasium, a band and music area. Earlier, a shop area had been added and later a modern science addition became a part of the high school.

Some well-known names of long-time faculty members at the high school include Court Slabaugh, principal for a number of years; Lillian Hamman, who graduated in 1909 and returned after college to spend almost all of her active teaching career of 49 years in Syracuse; Calvin Beck, who was a teacher and coach as well as township trustee; Leonard Barnhart; William Gants; and Loren Longenbaugh, still teaching in junior high school.

Yearbooks have had spasmodic publication since soon after the turn of the century. The Pottawattamie was the first. After it ceased, there apparently was a long period with no official yearbook. During the 1920's and 1930's, there were some pasted-up books in the nature of scrapbooks. However, there was no official name given to this series of yearbooks. In 1947, the publication known as The Echo was started and had a continuous publication for twenty-one years until 1968.

In 1962 in the move over the state for consolidation of school districts, the Syracuse school system became a part of the Lakeland Community School Corporation. Along with Milford, North Webster and Leesburg, the latter eventually becoming a part of the Warsaw school system. Overcrowding of buildings, a continuous problem since 1900; as well as the advantages of combining the three high schools, led to the construction of a new high school building in 1968 to be known as Wawasee High School. After continuous operation for eighty years and graduating over 1700 alumni, Syracuse High School will pass out of existence. (1968)