First in a series —

Sudlow acquainted with history before it was history

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Anna Sudlow is a reluctant subject for an interview. She doesn't seem to feel her lifetime of knowledge is important or someone who has lived more than 96 years would have anything to contribute.

Many disagree.

When the Syracuse-Turkey Creek Township Public Library recently celebrated its centennial, the first speaker in a series of four was Sudlow. Concentrating mainly on the town of Syracuse at that event, she did throw in some Lake Wawasee tales, as well. Luckily, for posterity she was videotaped. However, she is not too keen on being tape recorded and only conceded to being interviewed without one.

And, because she has lived near Lake Wawasee almost her entire adult life and because of her and her husband Johnny's business connections, she knew a long list of men and women who had an impact on the area. From the second Eli Lilly to Frank Remy of Delco-Remy fame and founder of Wawasee Golf Club to eccentric attorney Seth Ward, she was acquainted with history before it was history.

Sudlow has spent her entire life around Syracuse. She grew up on a farm when almost everyone did. She graduated from the third and last incarnation of Syracuse High School in 1930, but attended the second on East Main Street before the new school opened.

Sudlow is as lively and spirited as always as she recounts various chapters of her life. Growing up about a mile north of Syracuse on what she calls Cranberry Hill because part of the farm was boggy and the fruit grew there, she actually was born and lived in Elkhart County but just over the line.

A TREASURE — Anna Sudlow when she appeared at the Syracuse Public Library centennial celebration in June. (Photo by Martha Stoelting)

What she remembers eating that was special isn't cranberries, but hazelnuts. Sudow explained, "That was a treat."

Her Dad was what she calls the school-hack driver for her. First it was a horse and carriage and then a bus. She went to a one-room school, Worley School, and then went to a larger consolidated four-room school that still sits at CR 52 and CR 133, northeast of town.

Moving to the newer high school was an event. "The old high school had a lot of steps so we were really excited to go to the new one. It had ramps instead of stairs," she commented. It's interesting when the Wawasee High School Class of 1994 recently had a reunion, they were discussing the ramps in their old Syracuse Junior High, the same building Sudlow went to.

Attending Syracuse High, she met her husband. "We were high school sweethearts and it took," she noted. They were married in 1931. "We were supposed to get married while flying in an open-air airplane. But, the weather wasn't the best, the plane didn't arrive, so we got married in the hangar at Goshen Airport, I don't think the minister was too keen on flying anyway," she laughed. That was Rev. Armstrong of the Syracuse Methodist Church.

It was an adventurous start for their new life together. Next week, we'll rejoin Sudlow for more of her memories.