

April 3, 2013

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM

. . . while dusting



Here's a little background as written in a 1958 picture and text booklet entitled Sullivan County, Pennsylvania "Endless Mountains". A preliminary chapter leads with heading "Pioneers Carved Sullivan County From Vast Forest". A portion reads

as follows: "As early as 1820 a petition had been sent to the Legislature to organize Lewis County containing all of present Sullivan and three townships in Eastern Lycoming, with the county seat to be at Mount Lewis, now Eagles Mere. George Lewis, Edward J. Eldred, William King and William Molyneux were the moving factors at that time. Further agitation was begun in 1845 by Dr. Josiah Jackson, Secku Meylert, William Colley, Daniel Fairchild, David H. Goodwin and Isaiah Bartley, their proposed territory to include a part of Bradford County.

"Another petition was presented in 1847, on which the legislature acted favorably, and the county seat was located at Laporte, on a plateau in the center of a dense forest. Secku Meylert, who owned thirty thousand acres of land at Laporte, offered to give the land for the court house and a public square, and clear the same and erect suitable buildings to hold court in. He died before the county was organized, but his son, Michael Meylert, carried out the father's plan."

Although the article is a good capsulated overview of the times, it leaves out a key point having to do with the naming of our county. Sullivan County's name was adopted in honor of Charles C. Sullivan, then a State Senator from Butler County, who had taken an active part in procuring passage of the bill to form this county wholly from Lycoming County.

Another excerpt from the booklet refers to the featured photograph of the Lakeside hotel. "In developing Eagles Mere the Kirk family has taken a leading part. John S. Kirk, suffering from asthma, boarded at the lake during the summers of 1878 and '79, finding that he "could breathe there". In 1880 he erected a cottage on the site of the present Lakeside, and at the urge of Philadelphia friends built it large enough to accommodate a few guests. Demands increased year after year, and additions were made, ultimately resulting in the Lakeside of today [remember, this was written in 1958], with accommodations for two hundred and fifty guests. Since the death of Mr. Kirk, his son and daughter, Henry E. Kirk, Sr., and Miss Katharine Kirk, have conducted the Lakeside and its cottages. After the death of Congressman Edgar R. Kiess, who had been another outstanding figure in Eagles Mere life, Henry E. Kirk, Jr., took over the Forest Inn and Casino, the Raymond and the bathing beach."

Movies, current or older, and novels try to depict the atmosphere of what were then resorts for the wealthy. But, in looking at photographs of the time, can we even begin to imagine a way of life that for even that time period was a pampered extravagance to be experienced by only a few? Today those structures, the families and visitors of a bygone era, are but memories we can only envision through writings and pictorials about their moment in the sun.