



July 30, 2014

**TOURING SULLIVAN  
COUNTY'S MUSEUM  
. . . while dusting**

Last summer we had Justin Haas as a speaker on the subject of blacksmithing. This talk was one of the most well attended to date and has since brought visitors to the museum for even more information. This was all brought about because of a predecessor of Justin's who used to attend an artisans exhibit that the museum held each summer.

His name was Dick Swenson of Ghent of Bradford County. He would come with his pick-up truck

and actually fire up a small forge to show the skills of blacksmithing. As participation waned for this event, we held our last one with the always present invitation to Mr. Swenson, who upon the day of that event – never arrived. Repeated phone calls produced no response. Not knowing what had happened to him, we assumed he'd either found other interest or become ill. Then in the summer of 2013, we received a call from his neighbor who identified herself as the executor of his estate. In Mr. Swenson's will, he'd clearly indicated that all (and he listed each item) his blacksmithing tools and equipment be given to the Sullivan County Historical Society's museum. To that end, she and her son loaded all that was listed and delivered them to the museum. What you can look at now is one man's passion for a by-gone trade. Mr. Swenson's love of his craft showed in the care of his tools. That care was further enhanced by Justin's present attention in that he has now completed the resetting up of Mr. Swenson's shop in a corner of the Wagon Shed which is aside the Barn within the museum's complex. Justin even went to the trouble of placing coal in the forge pan and a bucket beneath it for emptying out the ash. Each tool has found its originally intended home within the surround of the work table and the hammer patiently awaits its next duty call. Two men - bridging time - across the years to now bring you a detailed example of this pride filled trade. When we today go to a store and so easily pick up our needed articles for home, office, farm/yard, etc., it is with difficulty that we try to imagine a way of life before this. The individual hands-on and the specialty workmanship from past times would have made the daily needs of life different from our world today. So, as you gaze at this corner display, your concept of their lives can be much more readily appreciated.