

July 31, 2013

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM ... while dusting

The Sullivan County Historical Society's Annual Dinner/Meeting will again be held at the Forksville United Methodist Church, across the road from the Forksville Covered Bridge on Route 154 on Thursday, August 15th. The dinner is *pre-paid reservations only* (\$15/person) and payment must be in by Sat., Aug. 10 at 5 p.m. Reservation money is not refundable. The dinner begins at 6 p.m. followed by a short meeting at 7 and the speaker's presentation. You need not attend the dinner to come hear the speaker.

Robert E. Lee III of Columbia County will be speaking on his quest to unearth the treasures below outhouses. He will talk about excavating outhouse sites throughout a six county area of central Pennsylvania. Robert stated digging as a hobby to recover pottery for the historical and educational displays in which he was involved. "At first it was the artifacts, then it became the stories behind these historical artifacts – all



different and unique", he says that after eight and a half years of digging. Robert studied art education and ceramics at Kutztown State College. He displays and/or demonstrates old pottery techniques at Warrior Run reenactments. He will also be soliciting the people of Sullivan County for possible "dig sites" within our county. If you have one in mind but are unable to attend Robert's talk, you can contact Melanie Norton either at the museum (570)946-5020 or her home (570)924-3027. Thus far Robert has not had a dig in our county but would be very interested in doing some.

Outhouses have also been referred to as "house behind the house" or a privy or an earth closet. Usually they were located away from the house and fresh water sources, and faced the opposite direction from the home. They were (and sometimes still are) a simple, small structured building placed over a pit that becomes a toilet. Their earliest existence appears to be in the fifteen century or 500 years ago. Because of the lack of education, literacy was a problem so to designate early outhouses for the sexes, a sun standing for the men or a moon for women was cut into the door. This allowed for not only a little light but also some venting. Eventually the sun insignia for men was changed to a star. Today the moon is a recognized symbol for the outhouse as the stars slowly disappeared. Speculation is that men tend to like to go behind a tree and then there's the general housekeeping and upkeep that may have been performed well by women for the care of their outhouses. And of course, in modern times, the outhouse was replaced by the water closet, better known as indoor plumbing. But, whatever the reason, in its day the outhouse served a necessary function that the majority of us wouldn't begin to appreciate today!

For this and more, you can contact the museum at the previously given numbers or email museum@scpahistory.com We're open for summer hours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m. or by appointments for other times. And, remember to like us on Facebook at [sullivancountypahistoricalociety](https://www.facebook.com/sullivancountypahistoricalociety) or visit our website at www.scpahistory.com