

June 5, 2013



TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM

. . . while dusting

While doing an interview for background history on another subject, this writer was visiting with Linda Griffith, daughter of John and Grace Norton. The visit with Linda produced more than was bargained for because in the course of conversation, Linda asked if we still had the glass dome that held feather flowers. Bingo! This artifact has been on display for a number of years within the museum, even before the 1988 new Pauline Holcombe wing was added but no one seemed to know where it came from, just that it was interesting. Linda's recollection was that a relative on her father's side had brought it back from the World's Fair. And that the woman had carried it the whole way by train on her lap. Now began the adventure of research. It turns out that the fair in question was held in Chicago in 1893. And that the woman was Hannah Norton Molyneux, wife of David, born in 1849, she died in 1894 at the age of 45 leaving three children. The feathers in the vase within the glass dome were not original to the piece but added by Hannah while it was displayed in her home. Many people from Sullivan County traveled, usually together to the Chicago World's Fair.

To add further to the history of this particular display, the doily it sits upon was hand crocheted on linen by Vida Weisbrod. This acquisition has as the gifters identity a number 9. We are now up to the number 967 in gifter identity numbers so this was given quite early on to the museum's beginning by Mrs. Titus (Hilda Weisbrod) Weisbrod who had died in 1971.

This brings us to yet another subject: volunteering. Previously mentioned is Grace (Molyneux) Norton (1909-2009). Grace was active with the Sullivan County Historical Society long before they even had a home. Beginning in 1932 when her (maiden) name appeared on a playbill for fundraising for the museum. I can remember coming to visit the museum in the early to mid 1980's as Aunt Grace sat in an old ornate courthouse chair at the then entrance to the museum and gleefully greeted all visitors. Back then it was only the four rooms of the old section built in the 1880's. Today, and Grace had seen the additions and changes in a positive light, there are four buildings on this complex with (almost) all material available for research. To be open for visitors during summer's Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays 1 to 5 p.m., the complex needs to have two persons performing as docents. The Webster's Dictionary definition of a docent is to teach or lecture or tour guide, as at a museum. But, in order to do that, we need volunteers. If you're considering this, please know that you'd not be "thrown in the water to sink or swim" but rather work (the term is used lightly) with experienced personnel. Should you consider being a docent, please contact the museum at (570)946-5020 or phone Melanie Norton at home at (570)924-3027. For more information about the museum and its contents, check out our website at scpahistory.com and our Facebook page which is sullivancountypahistoricalociety.