

Sept. 10, 2014

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM ... while dusting

A piece written in the *Pioneering with Sullivan County Pioneers* published in 1953 intrigues us for two reasons. The first of which is the resilience of people. It begins with: "The late Horatio Alger would have enjoyed writing the story of a recent pioneer family in Sullivan County, whose exploits in accidentally developing as business enterprise that succeeded far beyond their fondest dreams would bring him face to face with an experience in which truth is stranger than fiction."

"Noticing on the outskirts of Dushore Borough, a collection of neat and orderly buildings, painted



green, and flanked by streets of outdoor runs and sheds, and seeing thousands of pure white hens active upon a two acre plot, motorists comment upon the size and scope of this industrial plant and would doubt the true statement that in the space of eighteen years this plant and modern dwelling grew from a flock of twelve backyard hens and the perseverance of a determined wife and mother to provide a living for her family, her husband having met with a serious and nearly fatal accident under a fall of rock in the Forksville coal mines. A long year of pain and suffering and slow regaining of health prevented his return to his former job and kept the Souto family on the trail of their success. Mr. Souto laughs away the memory of the soul-trying days of adversity. Mrs. Souto refers to this period in her life in terms of "The Egg and I".

"In 1920, while in his teens Manuel Souto, a Spanish youth, left his native land for Cuba where he labored for four years. He then went to New York, landing in 1924. Hearing that laborers were needed in the Pennsylvania hard coal mines, he came to Jessup, Pa., where he met and married Miss Frances Shenuski of Throop, whose parents came from Lithuania. The Soutas [Soutos] came to Dutch Mountain and later to Forksville, where the accident occurred December 17, 1934, soon after they had purchased their modest home and two acres of land in Dushore and before the birth of their eldest son.

"Meager compensation insurance and the twelve hens, five of which were kept in incubation, was their sole income. In 1947, a small incubator was purchased for \$69. This equipment has grown into a plant of 15,000 capacity, with air-conditioned buildings housing 3300 egg producers. Fifty thousand broilers are sold annually and from twelve to fourteen thousand are available at all times. The big wooden buildings were constructed from salvaged lumber from unused breakers and empty miner's homes at Bernice. Mr. and Mrs. Souto doing the carpentry, with no outside labor used, the family caring for every detail and with neighbors willing and eager to clean the building for the valuable fertilizer which is never allowed to accumulate. Cost of fuel for the central heating plant is \$6,000 per year and daily cost of grain is over \$100. The hatching machinery and brooder equipment cost more than \$25,000.

"The plant is under regular Federal inspection and is given high rating for sanitation and efficiency.

"Asked for an estimate of the value of the plant, Mr. and Mrs. Souto replied "It is not for sale. Perhaps if we ever grow old, we may sell." Their youthful appearance and enjoyment of the music of their talented sons would place the infirmities of age for them a long way in the future. Mr. Souto is a Thirty-Second Degree Mason, an enthusiastic member of the Chamber of Commerce and proud of his American citizenship. The family, by their warm-hearted courtesy and friendliness, have won a high place in the community life."

This excerpt/interview was done in the early 1950's, Mr. Souto passed away in 1973 at the age of 73. His obituary states that he sold the poultry business in 1964. In checking with Doc Shoemaker, the chicken farm was located out Thompson Ave. which parallels Carpenter Street. While technically still in the borough, it is east of the center of town.

The second thing that intrigues us is that a business of this size once existed in Sullivan County. For the publications we have to highlight growing concerns such as this, would have meant they'd become an intricately woven part in the fabric of the lives at the time. And to think, all this coming from an injury happening in yet another industry from within our county.