



Sept. 17, 2014

## **TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM**

### **. . . while dusting**

With the following excerpt from *Pioneering with Sullivan County Pioneers*, published in 1953, we can get an appreciation for times gone by. The piece, entitled "Sullivan County Potatoes" starts like this:

"Three prosperous farmers with three decades of patient application to

their chosen ambition, plus foresight and business ability, have turned the bane of life for former farm boys into a blessing. Many wanderers from the farm trace their desertion to a losing battle with weeds and bugs - - their weapon of defense a dull hoe in a stony 'tater patch. Perhaps they never dreamed of machines conquering this drudgery or the ease and speed with which future farm boys would accomplish that which to them was impossible. The winning of this victory by these three leaders, with the cooperation of neighboring growers on a lesser scale, has brought to the county an envied reputation among potato growers in adjoining states.

"Our hard ancestors, sons of Old Erin, driven out of Ireland by successive failure of potato crops in the 1820's, brought their crude mattocks and hoes with them and soon proved that the red shale soil of Cherry and Forks townships was naturally adapted to raising their staff of life."

The narrative then jumps to the 1920's, where one-hundred years later, the government was now involved in certifying potato crops, preceded by multiple inspections of them. Frank Rhoe saw the advantage of selling his ready crop at fifty cents more per bushel over that of commercially grown potatoes. One acre yielded 300 bushels and over time of twenty six years, that grew to twenty acres for a total yield of 6,000 bushels per year. The piece goes on to say "David Vought [Vough] of Forks Township laces his faith in land adaptability and the quality of fertilizer and seed. Then thousand bushels of top grade marketable potatoes are his average yield." Then there's Kimberly Conner of Dushore who owned four farms, highlighting potato growing by "breaking up ground weed-grown and neglected for years, and raising thereon bumper crops, thus changing a liability into an asset. Twelve thousand bushels are produced by Mr. Connors annually."

All in all, those early farmers were contributors to not only the communities of Sullivan County but also all markets of their enterprise.