

Aug. 16, 2017

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . . while dusting

On Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup> of this year a storm called 'straight line winds' came thru Sullivan County and reeked havoc on many of us. One farm affected was that of Wylie Norton in Elkland Township. The storm hit a little after 7 p.m. and the brunt of it last all of fifteen to twenty minutes. In the case of this farm sitting atop the mountain outside Estella, trees literally fell in witness to the gust of Mother Nature. Some trees simply uprooted and keeled over while others broke off like toothpicks eight feet or more up. It was shocking to look into the woods surrounding the farm and literally not be able to see within because of the number of tree tops laying on the forested floor. Fruit trees were in blossom and they along with any leafed tree or hemlock took the impact of the wind, while dead standing trees stood like sentries. Because of an old large apple tree across the drive and into the house, Wylie did not know of further damage until the next morning because he worked into dark to clear the drive. His wife, Melanie, went out to do morning chores the next day and discovered that all four sides of their bank barn had moved off the stone laid foundation, not necessarily all in the same direction. Meanwhile barn batt on the upper floors of the barn had come off and flown about the pastures, yard, garden and fields – in many cases with nails (sometimes bent) pointing upward. The animals had been in the barn as would be their normal habit with even the least amount of precipitation. Needless to say, not only were they now out of the barn but they had no intention of returning into it. Later we locked them into a back pasture, not to come back up until repairs could be completed – having at that point no idea of what to do. Many of the old and big beams that ran from wall to wall under the ceiling of the ground floor hung loosely or came entirely off the opposite wall bringing with them much of the original stone laid wall.

Contacting the insurance company, interviewing contractors and making choices took a whole lot longer than anticipated. But, repair started in mid July to place cribbing underneath the barn, then supporting apparatus on the back, then taking out all in-ground walls, barn ramp and original support system to be followed by hoisting the barn up in the air by at least eight feet!

A new wall of concrete will replace the old one and then center posts throughout the ground floor, with the final move of gently lowering the barn onto its new foundation. Finishing touches will then take place as not one single outside door has survived this whole process and the ground removed around the barn to accomplish the lifting is in high piles around but away from it to be returned to complete a bank barn. Electric will be restored and windows installed, fencing and gates replaced and important to the animals – feed troughs placed about their "living room". The hope is to have all this finished before winter sets in for not only the comfort of the animals but also their safety.

There aren't many old bank barns left around that are still in working order. This particular barn was first built in our back pasture in the 1850s. It was then moved to its present location and added onto with an extended hay maw and tack room and a hand dug well put in behind where the house would eventually be. Then in 1861 the original homestead house that was out in where the corn field is today was abandoned, for Sadler Rogers to begin building the home we live in today. Mr. Rogers took time out towards the end of the Civil War to join that and returned to complete the house in 1865. So in a few harrowing moments, a barn that had stood for approximately 165 years bowed to the winds of time but will rise again. We are fortunate to

be able to save history and just as fortunate to be able to tell just one aspect of the history of Sullivan County.

The museum will be open for one more set of Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays this week and next from 1 to 5 p.m. Then we'll be at a booth at the fair on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from noon to 8 p.m. 8/31, 9/1, 2, and 3. After that you can reach us by appointment or happen chance throughout the fall, winter and spring. Phone 570-946-5020 or email [museum@scpahistory.com](mailto:museum@scpahistory.com) and please like us on Facebook.