

Feb. 6, 2019

Mary White upon completion of the 8th grade at 14 years old, taught at the Woodside School in Cherry Twp.

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . .while dusting

As schools go today, we in Sullivan County are unique in that we've only one school for the whole county. But, such was not the case in the early years prior to the inception of the county's formation. An interesting piece from the Sullivan Review in 1964 reiterates a history of Sullivan County schools from the writings of Myrtle Magargel. To quote her: "the earliest attempt to start a public day school in Elkland in 1808 failed and few are aware that such an attempt was made. The recording of the effort does not detract from the honor due Mrs. Sarah Huckle for her donation of land on which the first permanent schoolhouse was built at Forksville when this county's area was part of Lycoming's vast acreage.

"Ulysses Bird was the authority for the story of the first effort to start a day school. The story was published over his signature in the Sullivan County weekly of February 21, 1889. Quote: The schoolhouse was built on a ten-acre tract given by Joseph Priestly for that purpose. In addition to the land he donated nails for the shingling and glass for the windows. In a township meeting at Eldred, then called Liberty Hall, a set of resolutions was adopted for the building of the school and a constitution for its government. The building would be 20 by 30 feet and 10 feet high. It was to be financed by taxables in proportion to the distance their children must travel to school. If any lived more than 12 miles away they need not pay for its erection but only for the salary of the teacher. This was first set at \$1.50 per quarter and then raised to \$2.00 per quarter. John Bull was employed to teach. There were less than 25 pupils to attend. The people were really too poor to pay for a school even though their fee was produce at market price. The school could not continue long."

More quotation: The building was also used by the Quakers for a meeting house, and in June 1818, a free Sunday School was organized in the building and was continued for more than 20 years. In this Sunday School boys and girls were taught separately; the boys by two men, and the girls by two women. Lessons were not restricted to Scripture but included reading, writing and the rule of accounts. In summer the school opened at 8 a.m. and dismissed at noon for a vacation not to exceed two hours. After this it was resumed until 5 p.m. In the winter the hours were shorter. During the two hour nooning any religious society might have meetings, one sect following another from Sunday to Sunday until all had exercised their rights.

"This school was under the direction of an Association made up of men who signed an agreement or resolution and whose duty it was to pay such expenses as were incurred, wood for fuel, and other necessities. They had complete jurisdiction over the project. After Charles Mullen built a schoolhouse near the present village of Eldredsville this school was moved there. Meanwhile, the building became known as the Friends Meeting House."

Those of you who are students today – can you possibly put yourselves in the place of the children of early settlers? There is somewhat of a joke in the telling by grandparents of having had to walk uphill for to get to school in blinding snowstorms, or to await a school bus in a tiny sometimes three sided building for the school



bus. But, when you think about these early school kids quite literally walking (or if they were super lucky, riding a horse) can you even begin to imagine yourself doing that? Perhaps not really, but we have to admire the pure gumption of our ancestors to have struggled so hard to learn.

For this and more, you can contact the museum by phoning 570-946-5020 or emailing museum@scpahistory.com And checkout our website at www.scpahistory.com and please like us on Facebook.



Caption for schoolhouse: The Woodside School in Cherry Twp. was located on the corner of Marshal (or Drake) Rd. and Harney Road. Circa late 1800's was still an advancement compared to early 1800's schools. Note the buggy for transportation.