



Jan. 22, 2020

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . . while dusting

Recently a postcard became available on Ebay. The postmarks are from Lopez and Mehoopany. The year looks to be 1907, which coincides with the caption on the photo of 1907. Whenever considering purchasing something of this nature, we check the compiling within the museum's archives. In this case, we found that we had an original photo quite similar but dated 1904. Both photos were by Ranald Douglas "Commercial & Landscape Photographer. Ricketts, PA."

Ranald Douglas was born 1853 as Ranald Doyles McDonald to John R. McDonald and Elizabeth Douglas McDonald. At the age of five Ranald contracted simultaneously scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough; thus leaving him deaf and mute. His parents divorced and Elizabeth reverted to her maiden name and the same for her two sons. Needing to give Ranald specialized schooling, she sent him to the White Planes, New York School for the Deaf in 1862 where he was enrolled for the next ten years. While there he was befriended by instructor Rev. Henry Syle, whom Ranald wrote to monthly until Rev. Syle's death in 1890. Then 1873 Ranald was enrolled in what is now Gallaudet University but he left in 1875 having been introduced to the art of photography. This profession lasted throughout the remainder of his life. The quality of his photography and the fact that he sold in quantity for to make his living – we are left with a historic record of this and surrounding areas. Sadly, Ranald Douglas passed away in 1910 penniless in Forkston Township, Wyoming County. His indebtedness to the county resulted in his being buried in a potters field of the Forkston Cemetery in an unmarked grave. This situation was rectified by Charles Petrillo and the Wyoming Historical & Geological Historical Society who placed a suitable marker on the gravesite.

Now to the two photos featured this week. Mr. Douglas, the photographer, isn't standing exactly in the same place but very close. The rail road and station is the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The biggest difference is the track in the 1904 photo. The picture is just of the curved one. Whereas, the 1907 photo shows a parallel track right in front of the station. Both photos show what looks to be lumber stockpiled to the left behind the station building, but the buildings to the right look either changed or the view change affected by what you can see of them. Also in the 1907 there is another chimney on the front portion of the roof, perhaps to heat a waiting room. And there is now an electric, telephone or telegraph pole sticking up behind the building. The reason these differences become important is to show the advancement at the time in transportation (of goods and people) and technology. The railroad brought both of these things to Sullivan County but with the depletion of commodities, it also spurred the demise of the economic development of Sullivan County.

For this and more, we invite you to visit YOUR museum by phoning 570-946-5020 or emailing museum@scpahistory.com for an appointment. Usually we can be here on a Tues. or Thurs. but timing is weather and personal schedules permitting.