



October 23, 2013

**TOURING SULLIVAN
COUNTY'S MUSEUM
. . . while dusting**

A short continuation from last week's excerpts of a 1988 Now & Then edition: "The Plank Road – When the firm [Thornedale tannery] commenced operating so extensively in this wild region, and owing to the lack of roads over the rough and stony ground, they found it necessary to secure a charter for the construction of a plank road

from their tannery near Laporte to Thornedale and Schreyvogel's, a distance of some nine or ten miles. The building of the road was a heavy job and cost the firm \$20,000, but it more than pays in the ease and facility it affords in the transportation of heavy goods from one point to the other. Nearly 1,500,000 feet of hemlock plank were required in its construction, which was manufactured on the ground." [This from a 1874 article by A.R. Sprout and J.F. Meginnis about their trip through Sullivan County.]

The tannery was owned, built and operated by Thorne, McFarlane & Company and was situated five miles from Laporte on Glass Creek. This plank road the excerpt speaks about was a common place way of not only building a road but also utilizing the timber. Because the hemlock bark was the primary ingredient at that time for producing the acetone needed for tanning, the remaining log itself became a sort of by-product for immediate needs. Hence, the stripped log now had an important part in the transportation in and out of the tannery for finished production of leather.

Within the compilings at the museum is a collection of background on the Susquehanna & Tioga Turnpike, also known as Berwick-Newtown (Elmira) Turnpike and sometimes referred to as the Tioga Turnpike. Parts of this initial turnpike are still utilized today. There is also detailed mapping on not only the turnpike as it existed but also alternate routes and other purposed connecting spurs to that original routing. Numerous photos were also taken that depict the route as it appears today, including that of the Ellis Cemetery[sic]. Much of the property today is on private land and anyone wishing to make this journey is asked to respect landowners by obtaining permission to traverse those old sections.

From a copied history of Luzerne County: "In 1807 a company was incorporated to build a turnpike road from Berwick to Elmira, N.Y. Work was commenced at Berwick and pushed northward. A considerable portion of the south end of the road was along the top of a high ridge until it reached the south line of Bradfrd county. [Much of this refers to Sullivan County.] The state had given about 400 acres of land to this enterprise, and the corporators owned large bodies of land that the turnpike would be of great advantage to. It was not completed until about 1825. . . But as early as 1810 it was the first good wagon road in this part of the state"

This fascinating read into the history of early transportation is from the efforts of Connie Hatch. Her diligence to the detail of its history is to be commended and is well appreciated.

For this and more about the different facets of Sullivan County History, you can make an appointment to come in (usually Tuesdays and Thursdays) by phoning 570-946-5020 or emailing museum@scpahistory.com Or, visit our website at scpahistory.com and/or see us on facebook.