



*This typical card of its time was similar to brochures that would be used today. This one would have been for the early 1900's.*

Nov. 2, 2016

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

Have you ever said or heard someone say "Well, now I've seen it all!"? And in truth, the temptation to say that simply means you're so surprised at something that your astonishment gets the better of you, when in truth, if you wait then this won't be the

last time you're surprised. Such is the case with our upcoming election. But let's step back in time, 1884 to be exact, to a troubling time as well. There was a hotly contested election race for judge of our judicial district. Newspapers were abound throughout Sullivan County and very often in the same towns were two papers – one Republican and one Democratic.

From the Sullivan Republican in August of 1884 a report of the Republican County Convention that was held for "the purpose of nominating a county ticket and transacting such business as shall come before the convention." Delegates were listed by townships and boroughs. Then in October of that same year: "There is an interesting contest in progress in the smallest judicial district in the State, composed of Wyoming and Sullivan Counties. The combined population of the district does not reach 24,000, and the entire annual term of court in both counties scarcely covers two months of time or two score of cases and yet the struggle for this one non-political office has absorbed the attention of every inhabitant to the exclusion of every other question. It can scarcely be said that the contestants are divided by party lines. Judge Ingham is president Judge. He is an honest, efficient and learned man, and has faithfully performed the duties of his position during his term. He was renominated by the Republicans. The opposition is a number of lawyer and litigants within and without the counties who have taken exception to Judge Ingham's rulings and charges. They have induced the nominate one of an opposing candidate on the Democratic ticket and they propose to show the next judge of that district who shall be boss on the bench. With an adverse party majority of only 500, it is fair to credit the people in such a contest with sufficient intelligence and sober sense to stand by their own interest in the re-election of Judge Ingham. – Philadelphia Press." [At that time, the newspapers printed state and national news, sharing among each other and, as in this instance, commenting on areas other than their own.]

The previous month there had appeared in the Republican with W.M. Cheney as editor the following: "There was a so-called Democratic Convention held at LaPorte. We say "so-called" because it was not properly speaking a Democratic Convention at all. It was run by a clique of Sittser men who were not delegates and who could not have been elected delegates in the districts in which they reside. . . The truth was that the whole Convention was made to bend to the wishes of Mr. Sittser, except in the nomination of Hon. B.S. Collins, who had strength of his own that insured him the nomination. The offices were given to townships where it was hoped it would add to the vote of the monopolists candidate for Judge. Cherry and Forks two populous townships, each secured a Commissioner. Benj. H. Tripp of Fox, one of the most intelligent and upright men in the County, was "thrown" because the vote there is not regarded as important. Wm. Fulmer of Shrewsbury and Chas. Hugo of Elkland, both good men, were likewise disposed of in a breath. They were raised up to be candidates by the adroitness of a politician who claims to carry the German vote in his coattail pocket and then when they got here were rudely crowed off the track because Cherry and Forks, the big townships must have the offices."

Another article reads "Sittser & Co. have been canvassing the western part of the county with but very little success. We had supposed that the Editors of the Wyoming Democrat were men of brains, but we must admit that we were badly deceived and that they are lacking in that most essential part. This is shown by the last issue of the paper. It is almost wholly made up of vile abusive and slanderous assertions against the character and public life of Judge Ingham. Bosh! They only injure themselves by such foolishness."

Such was the climate in a most heated election in 1884. To follow up though, we found a 1911 obituary for John. A. Sittser of Tunkhannock entitled "Ex-Judge", for the Sullivan/Wyoming judicial district. In it it states that Judge Sittser was in fact elected to the position in 1884 thus defeating Thomas. J. Ingham (who had served a ten year term). Judge Sittser was then defeated for re-election in 1894 by E.M. Dunahm by a small majority.