



Judge William Colley, for whom Colley Township is named

Nov. 30, 2016

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . . while dusting

Our subject is William Colley, for whom Colley Township was named. We first find written information on him in Thomas Ingham's History of Sullivan County published in 1899.

This history starts with the background of the Turnpike. 1819-1820 Mr. Shiner "built a sawmill, and later a grist mill, at the crossing of the turnpike at Big Loyalsock . . . Here he established a postoffice . . . A road was built making connection with the original road connecting Lewis Lake with the old turnpike, which became the mail route from Mount Lewis [Eagles Mere] to the turnpike. . .

About 1823 Mr. Shiner contracted with his son-in-law, Amos Ellis, and sons, Evan O. and Andrew, to sell them the Shiner's Mills property."

Further on in Mr. Ingham's writings: "William Colley, who came from Columbia county when a young man, in the employ of Mr. Shiner, was of the first to engage in public business of the township. He succeeded Mr. Maxwell as justice of the peace. Mr. Colley was president of the first school board in Cherry township, and among the most active in measures connected with the organization of the county. He received the appointment as associate judge, and when a change was made, by which judges were elected, he was continued in office five years longer. (Note that in these early years of settlement, this was still Lycoming County, as Sullivan County was not yet formed until 1847. And that Colley Township was not formed – from Cherry Township - until 1849.) He served also as prothonotary and recorder, continuing to hold important public positions, either in connection with county or township, until impaired health compelled him to give up public business."

In an obituary from Sullivan Review files dated Aug. 7, 1884: "Judge William Colley, of this place, whose illness has been mentioned, died Tuesday night at 12 o'clock, aged 80 years. Judge Colley had been a resident of this place for nearly 60 years, had been one of the prominent citizens of the county, having held the offices of constable, justice of the peace, county treasurer, prothonotary and associate judge. Funeral services will be held on Friday."

This portrait of Judge William Colley comes to us from his great great granddaughters, April and Virginia Colley and Alena Colley Rickard. Either because of no other descendents or those descendents yet living for various reasons cannot take artifacts, museums are given those treasured items from the past. In this case, we so appreciate this portrait for a man serving not only a small township in a small county but for recognition of a very great service to the area he came to call home.