



Embalming table at the Museum

Feb. 26, 2020

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S
MUSEUM . . . while dusting

Let us introduce you to Mrs. Ida Cheney of Laporte. She was the widow of the late William Cheney, who was the editor of the Republican News Item at Laporte for a number of years. She suffered from a fractured hip, received at her home and was admitted to the Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre on Oct. 23rd.

From her obituary dated Nov. 8, 1956:

"Mrs. Cheney was born in Laporte, April 17, 1865, a daughter of the late Thomas and Sarah Walters Keeler." Funeral services were held at the Holcombe Funeral Home in Dushore with interment at Mountain Ash in Laporte. She'd have been 91 at the time of her death. But now we'll take you back to a hand written piece probably done by Pauline Holcombe stemming from an interview with Ida Cheney prior to her death. And it goes like this:

"About 1879 Mrs. Ida Cheney as a young girl of 14 years used to help her father in the making of coffins. Mr. Thos. J Keeler used to keep cherry lumber in his work shop so it would season and when people died, they came to him for a coffin. He would measure the corpse and make the casket in this shape [shape drawn in]. The top was screwed in. Divided at top so that much could be taken off, when body could be viewed. Mrs. Keeler used to help him line them, after he death Ida did this work.

"They were first lined with white muslin, under the muslin around the head and shoulders they put excelsior or clean shavings for padding. Then the coffin was lined with a fine white swiss pleated with a heading. Around this heading was a silver braid tacked on with silver tacks. The top was also lined. The handles were plated silver. These he bought. The outside was shellacked. These had to be done in a short time, sometimes in a day."

This has been just one story among many. For more contact us for an appointment by phoning 570-946-5020 or emailing museum@scpahistory.com. Also visit our web site at www.scpahistory.com and please like us on Facebook.