



June 28, 2017

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

While doing some research about the Forksville United Methodist Church, much was found within the museum's compilings. The following is a synopsis taken from a writing of Mrs. Molly Wheat for church history from 1820's to 1953 and that of Rev. Ward Mosher's writing in 1898.

Bishop Asbury was the first to minister to this area in those early years of initial settlement. For spiritual uplift, three women: Sara Rogers, Betsy Bull and Martha Molyneux began holding prayer meetings in theirs and others homes. The ladies let it be known that they were looking for a preacher to "ride the circuit" and the first to answer the call was Rev. Parkhurst. He started with home visitations and eventually held services in the then new log school house in Forksville. It took preachers six weeks to make the rounds as each church belonging to the circuit had a visitation week by the preacher. By 1829, Asa Story was appointed pastor for the year and had under his charge the churches of Forksville, Eagles Mere, Sonestown, Elk Lick, Heverly settlement, Elkland, Eldredsville, Fox, Hillsgrove and Bear Creek. At that time the churches fell under the auspice of the Steuben District of the Genessee Conference.

One story goes that "Henry Wismer, pastor in 1835, was returning from one of his appointments when darkness overtook him. He heard wolves around him and climbed a tree. In order to keep awake he preached and sang to his noisy congregation. In the morning the wolves left and he went on his way rejoicing."

By 1839 a log chapel was built for services. Class meetings were formed in 1860 but died out at the turn of the century. Then in 1874 a church building of semi-gothic style was completed and dedicated. An eight hundred pound bell was installed in the steeple that could be heard miles around. Sadler Rogers, builder of local covered bridges, supervised the building of the church with the help of his brother Wesley and others. From 1820 to these writings of 1953, a total of eight-two preachers had served the Forksville Church. Increments of time served are during that period range from 3 years, 2 years or 1 year and less.

Because those early years for pastors had them traveling constantly, the need for a parsonage was not undertaken. Although the initial date of the parsonage is not in the records, it is known that after WWI there was a need to expand the then existing parsonage. By 1937 the Sullivan County Rural Electric Coop. was coming into existence and the parsonage was electrified and bathrooms were installed in 1943.

Progress throughout the county was slow in coming but as population increased and modern advancements materialized, Sullivan County made headway from one century to another. This church's travel thru time is just one example of not only the pioneer spirit then but the modern faith of today.

For this and more, come visit YOUR museum any Thursday, Friday or Saturday this summer from 1 to 5 p.m. For an appointment on another day you can phone 570-946-5020 or email [museum@scpahistory.com](mailto:museum@scpahistory.com). Meanwhile, visit our web site at [www.scpahistory.com](http://www.scpahistory.com) and like us on Facebook.