



Dec. 20, 2023

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . . while dusting

There are times when doing a search that the need arises to contact living descendants to a newspaper article. This was the case with the following news article appearing in the Williamsport Sun on Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> 1908, page 1:

“Father Rescued Child From A Burning House – The home of Chester Peterman, a half mile east of Nordmont, was destroyed by fire about 6 o'clock last evening. A child one and a half years old was so badly burning that his life is despaired of. A second child escaped from the burning house. Mr. Peterman was dreadfully burned about the hands and arms in rescuing the other. The fire was caused either by the overturning or explosion of a lamp.

“Mrs. Peterman had gone to the stable to milk the cows and do the chores, leaving the two boys – one of four years and the other a child of one and a half years just learning to walk – in the kitchen. She had placed a lighted lamp on a shelf for them. At 5:45 o'clock Mr. Peterman, who is a teamster for the chemical works at Nordmont, drove up to the house. He saw a strange light inside, and just then the oldest boy ran out screaming that the house was on fire. Mr. Peterman found the kitchen enveloped in flames, and his youngest boy in the midst of it, with his clothing already practically burned off.

“Mr. Peterman carried the child out of doors, his experience at rescue being such that he was badly burned himself. The attention which the child necessitated prevented any effort being made to save the house and it was destroyed, together with about all the household effects. Dr. Voorhees, of Sonestown, was sent for. It was feared at first that the child must die, but word from there at noon today was to the effect that it had a fighting chance to recover.

“When Mr. Peterman opened the door he saw the child lying on the table. He fought his way through the flames, but just as he got hold of the baby he fell to the floor, almost overcome. He crawled back to the door on hands and knees. The older boy says the lamp was on the table, and just how it came to be overturned he cannot say. He thinks it may have been upset by the dog, which was leaping up in play toward his baby brother, who had climbed to the table. The dog was burned.”

The clipping was sent in to the Museum with a handwritten caption along side which stated “Here is a copy of a clipping on the fire you folks had when you, Dad and Harry was small. According to this Dad wasn't the one who started the fire – the dog was that young Lab. He talked like he blamed himself some reason. Like his folks and you all blamed him for it.” To add to this, a descendent to the Peterman family supplied information that the two children were presumed to be Harry Merton Peterman, the oldest of the two boys mentioned (1905-1991) and Harold Jay Peterman, the younger child (1907-1987). So, ergo the rest of the story.

Prior to electricity, oil lamps were the mode of lighting. Between them and heating fires, many a home and barns were destroyed by fire. Add to that that in the early years of places like Sullivan County, there was no fire departments, let alone emergency responses. Life was precarious, and in this instance, came out on the positive side.

For this and more, you can contact the Museum by phoning 570-946-5020 or emailing [scpahistory@gmail.com](mailto:scpahistory@gmail.com) for an appointment.