Robinson Family Collection

Samuel Marshall Robinson and his brother Elisha lived all their lives on a farm they inherited from their parents in Hovey Township in the northwestern-most corner of Armstrong County.

Settled in 1797 by earlier generations of the Robinsons, by 1814, they had established a tannery on the property. This entrepreneurial family furthered their business holdings by opening a grist mill, a store, a farming enterprise consisting of raising crops and livestock, and by the late 1800s, a large oil concern.

In 1874, Samuel supervised the construction of a new house on the property, writing out impeccable specifications for every aspect of its construction in a 20-page document (a page is pictured at right).
He didn’t miss a detail: the composition of the bricks and the double sash window frames as well as the thickness of the plaster are addressed in his meticulous handwriting.

The photograph at far left, taken by Wilt Brothers of Franklin, Pennsylvania, shows a thriving farm homestead, complete with house, barns, and horses. This homestead continued in the Robinson family until 2003, following the death of Charles S. L. Robinson (1912-2002), the grandson of Samuel Marshall Robinson (1830-1908).

Recently, several documents, ledger books, and photographs reflecting the Robinson family’s business enterprises were donated to the History Center. The collection is available for research in the Library & Archives, identified as MSS# 427.

The following is a transcribed excerpt from Samuel Robinson’s construction specification document:

Flooring: All the floors will be laid with well seasoned heart pine flooring mill worked and of uniform size, and the best to be selected for the principal floors, but not including the kitchen which will be laid with oak mill worked. All to be blind nailed and defects to be cut out as the boards are laid. This also includes the attic of main building.

Samuel Robinson’s meticulous construction specifications for a new house on his family’s property.