

Allegheny Portage Railroad

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Allegheny Portage Railroad
National Historic Site



The Lemon House



The Lemon House is an example of how the local social and economic structure developed in association with the Allegheny Portage Railroad. The building itself represents the many hostleries along the Pennsylvania Main Line where travelers stopped to eat, drink, share stories about their journeys, and sometimes sleep over. The story of Samuel Lemon is but one example of the many entrepreneurs who utilized the area's natural resources and transportation links in order to make a more prosperous living. The Historic Site focuses on the period 1830-1850. The interior of the Lemon House is restored to what was most likely during the summer of 1840.

Historic Landscape

No written record has been uncovered that specifically describes the original landscape Samuel Lemon encountered when he built his first log tavern near the Gallitzin road. By 1840, however, the area surrounding the Lemon House had become a vibrant working landscape. Where wild cherry, poplar, ash,

or chestnut may have stood a stone tavern, barn and other outbuildings, engine house, and coal wharf existed. Where open spaces may have dotted the area, fields ripe with hay grasses evolved. The Lemons likely cultivated a vegetable garden. Evidence suggests that at some point the landscape supported an orchard.

Lemon Family



Jean Moore Lemon (1797-1880)

Jean Moore of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, appears to have been a well educated, highly efficient inn keeper. She and her husband, Samuel, operated several taverns, some written materials credit her with keeping the account books. In her published obituary Jean Lemon was honored for her charity, sympathy, and generous nature. She and her husband had four children, Robert, John, Margaret, and Samuel H. Lemon.

Samuel Lemon (1793-1867)

Born in 1795 in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, of Scotch-Irish roots, Samuel Lemon seemed destined to lead a notable life. His grandfather served under General George Washington in the War of Independence and his father fought in the War of 1812. Samuel himself enlisted in the volunteer militia and served as a private. His best work seems to be as a tavern keeper and general businessman.

For More Information

The Lemon House: A Place in History
Reid Miller

The Allegheny Old Portage Railroad 1834-1854
Mahlon J. Baumgardner, Floyd G. Hoenstine

Household Tools and Tasks
Elmer Smith

The Reshaping of Everyday Life 1790-1840
Jack Larkin

Keeping House: Women's Lives in Western Pennsylvania 1790-1850
Virginia Bartlett

A Picture Journey Along the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal 1826-1857
Philip J. Hoffmann, PE

Americans on the Move: A History of Waterways, Railways, and Highways
Russell Bourne

A Brief Chronology

1826 Samuel Lemon purchased 268 acres 61 perches. He built a two-story log tavern next to the "Northern Turnpike" east of the summit of the Allegheny Mountains.

1831-32 Samuel Lemon built the substantial stone house known today as the Lemon House.

1843 Samuel Lemon and family lived in the Lemon House and operated the tavern serving passengers of the newly built Portage Railroad as well as the wayfares of the Northern Turnpike.

1847 Samuel Lemon purchased a house in Hollidaysburg to which he moved his family. Taxes were not collected on the tavern for the next five years.

1848 A tax was collected for a "store" in the Lemon House. With the railroad declining in business, the store and his coal business apparently supplemented Lemon's income.

1854-55 A new railroad was completed which bypassed the steep planes of the old Portage Railroad. Local freight including the Lemon coal mines continued to use the old portage system.

1867 Samuel Lemon died on February 25, age 72. Two sons, John A. and Samuel H., inherited the stone house and property. John A. Lemon used the house for a family summer retreat.

1882-92 Mrs. Katherine Glass and her husband were tenants for a short time.

1899 The heirs of John A. and Samuel H. disputed the disposition of the estate of John A. Lemon. Samuel H. acquired sole ownership of the stone house and surrounding land.

1900 After the old stone house had been neglected for many years, Samuel H. Lemon tore down the south and west walls of the old west wing and built a new larger wing. He redivided the second floor into small hotel rooms, added a new porch along the east gable end, installed new double doors at the main entry, a new fanlight sash in the east gable, and hung gutters and spouting along the north elevation.

1903 Samuel H. Lemon died willing the property to his wife Mary E. Lemon.

1907 Mary E. Lemon sold the property to Joseph A. Gray.

1907-12 Mr. and Mrs. David Claussen were tenants in the house, living in the west wing. Their kitchen was in the cellar. It had a wooden floor, plastered walls, and trim. Their living room was at the west wing first floor and bedroom in the second floor.

1908 Joseph A. Gray sold the property to W. J. Sherry.

1912 W. J. Sherry sold the property to Joseph and James Clyde Weston. The Westons lived year round in the house.

1933 After Mrs. Weston died her husband took in boarders and for their convenience installed the second bathroom on the second floor.

1943-61 Janes and Zella Gailey leased the house from the Westons. They also took in boarders.

1954 The Lemon House and property were sold to Byron Roberts. The Gailey lease continued.

1961 Byron Roberts moved into the house and made major alterations: adding a garage and new porch along the south side; filling in earth to raise the grade around the south elevations; building a new porch at the northeast corner; installing a new front door with side lights' cutting a new entry through the north wall with exterior steps leading to a second floor apartment' cutting a new cellar entrance through the west wall; they made changes in the interior partitions and sanded the flooring of the first floor west rooms.

1967 Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site created.

1970s The National Park Service removed the south and east porches, removed the garage, and reexcavated the old grades to expose the south cellar walls again. Park offices were on the second floor and visitor services on the first floor.

1979-80 The National Park Service reinforced the framing and restored the front entrance doorway, the east gable fanlight, all the window sash and secondary doors, and repointed the exterior walls.

1995-6 The Lemon House is closed to the public during architectural and archeological explorations. Rangers give guided tours through the house explaining the work in progress.

1997 On May 10th, the restored and first floor furnished Lemon House is reopened.

2010-11 The Lemon House exterior is repointed using a more accurate historic based mortar.