

Double Dining Room

The Common Room, or dining room, of the tavern would be a fast-paced hub of both the portage railroad and the nearby turnpike road. The good-natured bellowing of the wagon drivers would compete with the cheery heavily accented English spoken by the Irish immigrant railroad workers. The travelers, by road or rail, would likely be engaged in quickly eating their meal and exchanging the latest news. Census records detailed the employment of up to five serving girls for the tavern.

The meal would be simple but hearty and filling. Stew was most likely served as it could be kept hot on the fire or stove all day. The meal for the day was served to all who dined; there were no menus and choice of repast. Accounts differ as to how long a break was given for meals; an hour seems most likely.

In the spring and fall, when the volume of travelers was lighter, the dining room could be separated into two rooms, and only one heated. A stove pipe in the back section of the west wall suggests that a cast iron “Franklin” stove was likely toted in and out of the room when heat was needed.

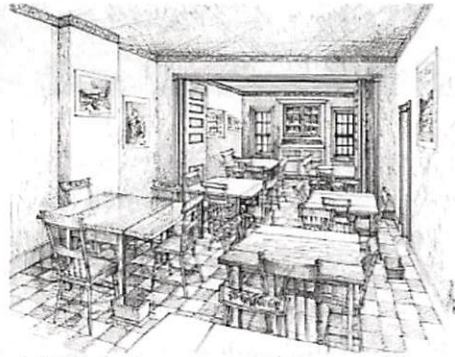


Exhibit Room

Archeological and architectural studies provided clues as to room use, paint colors, use of wallpaper, and original wood trims. The exhibit room was created to highlight and explain some of these studies as well as discuss more of the events of the 1800s.

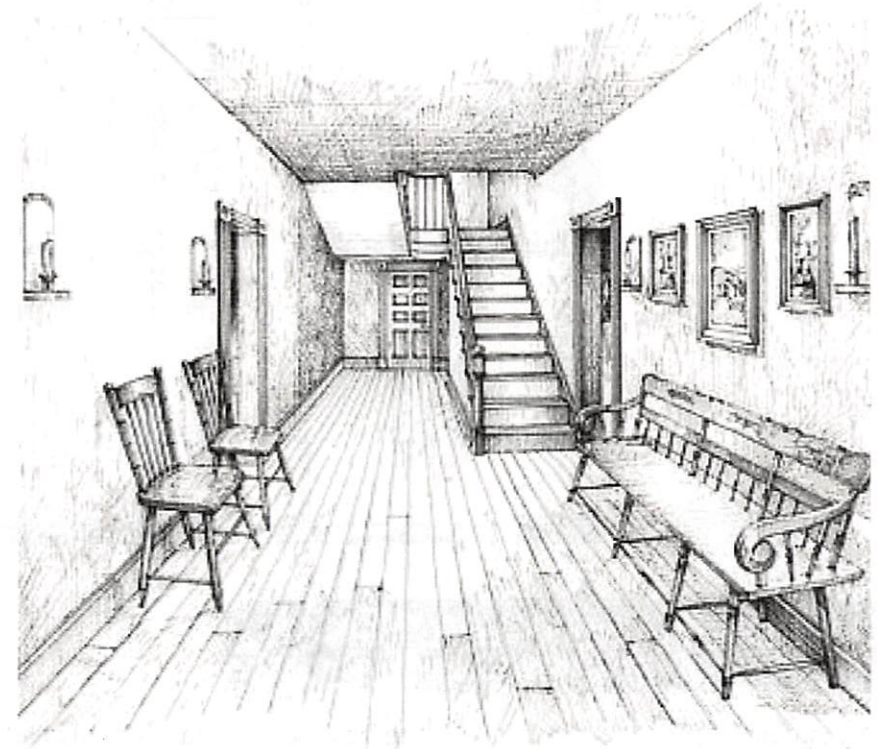
It is important that we not judge the past by today’s standards. In Victorian times, for example, it was considered a deficiency to match colors and patterns in furnishings, floor coverings, or wall coverings. The Victorian era was also a time of change and opportunity, fashion changed quickly as did total lifestyles. Remember, Samuel and Jean Lemon went from small time tavern owners to wealthy business owners in the 20 year time the Allegheny Portage Railroad was in operation.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Allegheny Portage Railroad
National Historic Site

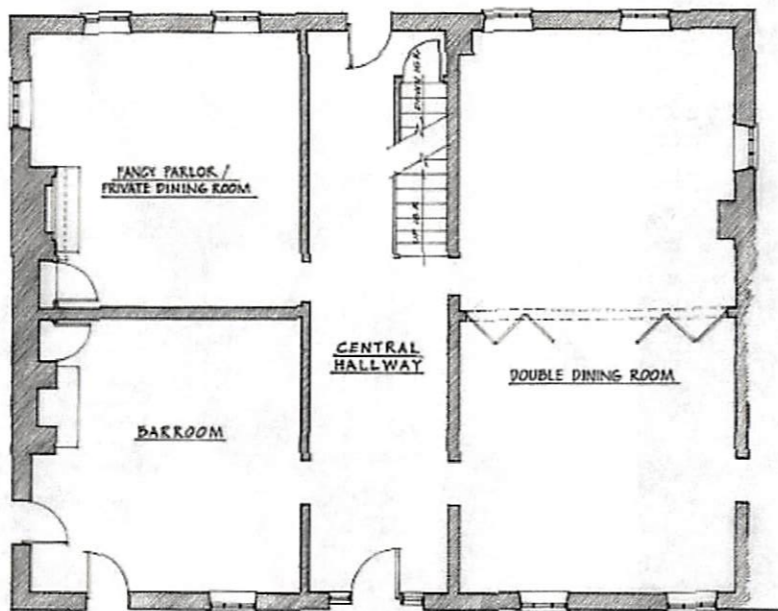
Allegheny Portage
Railroad

A Self-Guided Tour of the Lemon House



Welcome to the Lemon House Tavern, part of Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site. The National Park Service goal is to show the Lemon House as it was in 1840, the “prime time” of the railroad operation. Most of the furnishings are reproductions, although the parlor and bar are filled with period pieces. Please do not reach over any barriers to touch artifacts as even a light touch is damaging due to skin oils. Furniture without barriers is reproduction and you are welcome to sit and relax on the benches, chairs, and plank seats.

This tavern, owned and operated by Samuel and Jean Lemon, served as a rest stop for travelers. The average stop was 10 to 20 minutes, unless your transportation company had planned its meal break here. Instead of the the clean, quiet, almost sterile environment of today, the Lemon Tavern was a bustling business and meeting place for the local workforce.



Central Hallway

An excellent place to catch up on the news of the day, most travelers liked the hallway best. Newspapers and gossip were available in plenty and the open doors permitted a light breeze to caress a weary traveler. Plank chairs and a painted canvas floorcloth could withstand the passage of a damp visitor.

This summit level was not the halfway point for the railroad, but was where the apprehension about the descent began after the celebration of attaining the top of the mountain. Male patrons wishing to celebrate the summit, or mourn the descent, might visit the barroom, first door on the left after entering the tavern proper. Ladies, children and non-imbibers might have taken their ease in the hallway, or chosen to relax in the parlor (second left door) or dining room (right doorways).

Bar Room

Except during meal times, the bar was a hive of activity. Travelers and workers both frequented the bar, perhaps far too much and far too often for temperance advocates. This was a place where a man could ignore the social graces and parlor mores of the period. Ladies would not be found in a barroom. Scandalous behaviors, such as removing a dress coat or tilting your chair back onto just the two back legs, might be going on. Chromium yellow paint was the color of choice for Jean Lemon; this may indicate a nod to fashion or simple practicality since the bright color helped lighten a room in the days before electric, or gas, lighting. Imagine keeping the color bright despite cigar smoking, a wood burning locomotive paused out front, a coal-burning stationary engine to the side, or the soot drifting from the room's very own fireplace.



Fancy Parlor

A lady or gentleman who wished to dine or relax separate from the press of fellow travelers could retreat to the Fancy or Formal Parlor. The parlor was not for the rich only, but was restricted to the well mannered and gracious.

The furnishings were chosen and designed to encourage the correct posture and appropriate behavior. Chairs were uncomfortable to discourage lingering, and the chair back assured the user must sit bolt upright. Notice that even in the fancy parlor receptacles for cigar ash and tobacco chew were available. The spittoon on the floor of the parlor may look more like a silver dog dish than a cuspidor, but it was present and prominent as a necessary furnishing.

The piano is another furnishing of note. It was a sign of refinement in a lady, and the lady here was Mrs. Jean Moore Lemon. A painting of Jean Lemon is featured over the piano; an original painting donated by her descendents. For Mrs. Lemon, the Fancy Parlor might mean a peaceful retreat from tavern duties and a place to genteelly entertain neighbors and social equals.

