

# LEMON HOUSE and COAL MINE



January 31, 1968

# LEMON HOUSE and COAL MINE

Allegheny Portage National Historic Site  
Historic Structures Report  
Part I  
Historical Data

by  
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January 31, 1969

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## FOREWARD

This is the historical data section of the historic structures report authorized by Resource Study Proposals ALPO-H-2 and 3. The RSPs call for a historical investigation of the Lemon House, associated outbuildings, nearby stone quarry, and coal mine. Such a study is required, as the proposal states, "to guide the restoration of the house and furnish information for its proper interpretation." The Lemon House will be one of the most important structures in the Historic Site. It will be the combined headquarters and visitor center.

The reduced funding of this project has necessitated a cut-back in the time allotted to the documentary search. The RSP contemplated a \$2,500 study of two months but with only one-third of that amount available this investigation had to be more cursory than ideal.

This study also contemplated interviewing Mr. Byron A. Roberts, owner of the Lemon House at the time the RSP was drawn up. Mr. Roberts has since died and, hence, no statement of his will appears within the report.

## Illustration Captions

Illustration No. 1: Lemon House, north side, fronting on the Portage Railway. Originally the front entrance.

Illustration No. 2: Lemon House, south side, fronting on the present route 22. Originally the rear entrance.

Illustration No. 3: Map locating the Lemon House in respect to the trace of the Portage Railroad and modern route 22.

Illustration No. 4: Engine House, head of Plane No. 6. Notice the Lemon House, left center. Photograph taken about 1845 but original source unknown. Copy print in the files of the Historic Site.

Illustration No. 5: Engine House, head of Plane No. 6. Lemon House, left center. Original source, Storm painting, c.1895.

Illustration No. 6: Map of the vicinity of the Lemon House, 1967.

Illustration No. 7: Head of Plane No. 6 looking east. Engine House, center; Lemon House, right foreground; unidentified structure, right center; log cabin, left center. Source of original painting unknown; artist unknown.

Illustration No. 8: Lemon House, north side and original front entrance, c. 1936. Source, Stotz, The Architectural Heritage of Early Western Pennsylvania, p. 183.

Illustration No. 9: Front entrance, north side of Lemon House, c. 1936. Source, Stotz, p. 150.

Illustration No. 10: Lemon House, south side, c. 1936. Source unknown.

## Introduction

The Lemon House (Illustrations Nos. 1 and 2) is a two story stone structure located between Johnstown and Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, about 400 feet north of the intersection of U. S. Route 22 and the rural road to Gallitzin which enters route 22 3/4 of a mile west of the so-called "Skew Arch Bridge" (Map, Illustration No. 3). It is situated along the trace of the Allegheny Portage Railroad at the summit of inclined plane no. 6. That railroad was the thirty-six mile link across the Allegheny Mountains connecting the eastern and western portions of the Pennsylvania Canal, rival of the Erie Canal. The railroad was an engineering triumph which accomplished its objective by means of ten stationary engine complexes hoisting and lowering cars up and down the mountain ridges.

The significance of the Lemon House rests with its relationship to the Portage Railroad. It is believed that the original builder and owner of the house, Samuel Lemon, constructed it both as a residence for himself and a tavern and hostelry to serve the passengers and laborers of the railway. Along with innkeeping, Lemon contracted with the railroad to supply water, timber, coal, horses, and other supplies and services. It is

said that Lemon discovered coal on his property and enlarged his wealth by selling it not only to the railroad but to many buyers along the route, such as the iron and steel industry which abounds in the vicinity. The coal mine shaft is believed to be located near a grove of hemlocks across the trace of the railroad and north of the Lemon House. Local people believe that the former owner of the Lemon property, Byron Roberts, filled in the shaft for safety reasons. There still is a slight depression in the ground where the mine is said to be located.

There were undoubtedly a number of outbuildings associated with the Lemon House. Today, however, the only structure other than the house, is a barn standing along the trace just across the Gallitzin road. It is not regarded as a historic structure but its stone foundation and proximity to the railroad suggest that it could be the site and ruin of some service building associated with the operation of the engine house which was situated several feet east of the barn along the trace.

As to the stone quarry, this is more accurately described as a long rocky outcropping along the north edge of the railroad trace of inclined plane No. 6.

## The Lemon Family

No one knows why young John Lemon, born 1761, left northern Ireland as a young boy and settled in the new world. Perhaps agents for the ships of the Atlantic trade persuaded his parents that the lad's future lay in America and they bonded him over to a guardian and employer in the new land, promising the boy's labor in exchange for his passage. Perhaps John was a headstrong adventurous youth who looked to the sea, enlisted in the Navy, and jumped ship in Philadelphia. Whether it was desperation or excitement, he found himself as part of a great wave of immigrants from Ulster to North America prior to the Revolution. He settled in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, and in September, 1775, enlisted in the 12th Pennsylvania Regiment and fought with Washington in at least seven battles, according to his own testimony submitted in support of a government pension. He testified to participation at the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Springfield, Brandywine, Germantown, Paoli, and Monmouth. During that procession of conflicts he received seven wounds. At Monmouth he suffered wounds in both head and left leg. It is strange that a Scot of Ulster fought against the King of England when most of his brethren were loyalists. It is doubly surprising that John Lemon survived the war with such a record of injury. Certainly he was an uncommon man for having stayed with the

revolutionary forces for the duration of the struggle -- a conflict during which most men served no longer than three months and desertions were frequent. He was discharged in 1783 and probably returned to his home in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, but no more than a decade passed before the spirit of adventure seized him once more. He enlisted in 1793 with "Mad" Anthony Wayne and accompanied him on his expedition against the Indians of the old northwest. Lemon assisted in the construction of Fort Wayne and, it is believed, fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. In 1796 he attended Wayne's funeral.<sup>1</sup>

Little is known of John Lemon's son, Neal, except that he, like his father, sought the adventure of war and participated in the War of 1812. Neal Lemon continued to reside in Huntingdon County and his eldest son, Samuel, was born there. Samuel married Jean Moore, the daughter of Robert Moore, an emigrant from Scotland, and Elizabeth Bell of Huntindgon.

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1. Louis B. Wright, The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763 (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 66-69. Also, James Martin Yeager, A Brief History of the Yeager, Buffington . . . Lemon . . . Families . . . of Pennsylvania (Privately printed, 1912), pp. 196-201. This volume was located in the Library of Congress and contains a brief but useful historical statement on the Lemon family. See also Pennsylvania General Assembly, Memorial Proceedings of the Senate upon the Death of Hon. John A. Lemon (Clarence M. Busch, State Printery of Pennsylvania, 1897), pp. 22-23. Located in the Library of Congress.

Soon after his marriage (the date is unknown) Samuel and his wife moved to the "Summit," the general location of the present day, Lemon House.<sup>2</sup>

The Lemons occupied a tract of land warranted to Thomas Bond, December 20, 1784 and surveyed June 21, 1788.<sup>3</sup> This tract subsequently fell into the hands of David and Margaret Williams of Ohio who deeded their interest to Samuel Lemon in 1826.<sup>4</sup>

This is the earliest reference to Samuel Lemon's owning and, perhaps, occupying the grounds around the present-day Lemon House. A map of 1817 does exist that shows several structures in the vicinity but without identification of owners or occupiers.<sup>5</sup> The tax records of Cambria County from 1810 to 1826 do not carry a Samuel Lemon. He is listed as neither owner nor resident freeman. The tax assessment record of 1826 is the first that reveals his ownership and this fact squares nicely with the deed of the same year. He owned twenty-eight acres of which he had cleared twenty. He owned one horse, two head of cattle, and

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2. Ibid. In James M. Yeager, p. 212, there are reproductions of the portraits of Samuel and Jean Lemon.

3. "Map of the Coal Lands of Cambria Iron Co. in the vicinity of Cresson, Cambria Co., Pa." Undated, but likely drawn in the late 1890's. Markings, "BK 778, pg. 775, Cambria" indicate the document was copied from original in the Pennsylvania Archives in Harrisburg. Also, "Brief of Title." Both documents are in the files of Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site, hereafter referred to as the Historic Site.

4. Deed Book No. 3, p. 322, recorded Aug. 1826, Cambria County, Ebensburg, Pennsylvania.

5. "A Map of Cambria County constructed according to law by Walter B. Hudson and John Morrison, 1817." Owned by Irving London, Johnstown, Pa.

operated a tavern. At three dollars per acre his land was valued at \$84., his occupation at \$75., and remaining property, presumably livestock and structures charged at \$60. for a grand total of \$219.<sup>6</sup> The site Lemon selected for his establishment was well calculated. It lay along the recently improved route of the Philadelphia-Pittsburgh wagon road at the highest summit level of the road and a good place to stop and rest. It was also located in close proximity to the suspected route of the rail link of the Pennsylvania Canal across the Alleghenies.

Samuel Lemon was determined to reap the rewards of the furor raging among the states in their haste to capture the trade and travel of the frontier. Pennsylvania's entry into the field was the Pennsylvania Canal System from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. It competed with New York's Erie Canal and Maryland's National Road and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. 1826 was too early for Lemon to have known the precise route of the rail portage even though the State of Pennsylvania had committed itself to the Canal system by that time. It was not until March 21, 1831, that the law was passed authorizing the Board of Canal Commissioners to begin construction of the Portage Railroad. Later that year a number of engineering reports determining the precise route

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6. Record of Assessments, 1810-1828, Cambria County Allegheny Township Assessment, 1826; Unseated Assessments, 1820-24.

were accepted. W. Milnor Roberts surveyed and located plane no. 6 in the spring of 1831.<sup>7</sup> Construction contracts were negotiated in 1831 and 1832.<sup>8</sup>

Although it is clear from the tax records of Cambria County that Samuel Lemon was operating a tavern at what would prove to be a lucrative junction, it would be difficult to argue that he had constructed the present-day stone mansion between 1826 and 1830. At that time, Lemon could not have had enough information about the route of the road bed to have located his stone home and tavern so profitably close to the tract as he did. Indeed, tradition ascribes to the construction of the mansion no date earlier than 1830 which is the most frequently cited year.<sup>9</sup> Since it is not until 1831 that plane no. 6 was surveyed, it does not seem likely that Lemon completed his stone tavern-home before 1832. In fact a large increase in the taxable

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7. W. Milnor Roberts, "Reminiscences of W. Milnor Roberts," Transactions of the Association of Mechanical and Civil Engineers, 7(1878), p. 199.

8. Canal Commissioners' Journal, 1830-1832, p. 588, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg. Also, the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society (Bulletin No. 44, Oct. 1937), p. 7.

9. Sesquicentennial of Cambria County (Cambria County Historical Society, 1954), p. 31. Also, G. A. Wolf, ed., Blair County's First Hundred Years (Altoona, no publisher, 1945), p. 344.

valuation of his property in 1835 suggests a date of 1834.<sup>10</sup>

An obituary for Samuel Lemon appeared in a Local Newspaper of 1867. It stated that, "on the completion of the Portage Railroad, Mr. Lemon built the large stone house at what was then called the 'head of Plane No. 6.'"<sup>11</sup> There is, therefore, no definite date for the construction of the Lemon House, but it seems to be safe to assign the building of the structure to the early 1830's.

Pictorial evidence certainly assigns the Lemon House to the period of the early portage, 1834-50. Illustration No. 4 is a copy print of a photograph probably taken in the mid-1840's. That date is indicated by what seems to be two sections of a four-section boat introduced in 1842. The Lemon House appears in the left background. The Storm painting (Illustration No. 5) also shows the Lemon House but Storm did not produce his work until the 1890's although he may have based his painting on earlier sketches. It is generally regarded that Storm was well acquainted with the Portage Railroad having been raised in the vicinity.

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10. Record of Tax Duplicates, 1835, Cambria County

11. Cambria Freeman, March 7, 1867, Cambria County Historical Society, Ebensburg.

### Samuel Lemon -- Inn Keeper

Even though Samuel Lemon did not construct his stone tavern until some years after he purchased the tract of land, he wasted no time beginning his occupation as innkeeper. Shortly after construction of the nearby wagon road referred to as the "Northern Turnpike," or "Great Northern Route," he built a two-story log house beside the road. It was considered one of the most popular "wagon taverns" along the road from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. It was said that as many as fifty wagons would spend a night at "Lemon's." The Conestogas would carry merchandise to the west and return with a "back-load" of bar iron. The teamsters' routine upon arriving at the tavern was recalled in 1867:

They would adjust the "feed-trough" on the tongues of the wagon, prepare it full of "chop-feed," secure the horses to it, unswing their own beds from the wagon, carry them to the bar-room, and after a bountiful supper, they would regale each other with stories of the road, and an occasional song, and retire to rest.<sup>12</sup>

The isolated and dormant tavern no longer evokes the impressions of exuberant confusion and activity of early days. No longer displayed is the excitement of arrivals and departures, and the colorful and gay exhibit of dress and equipage.

The journals and letters of travelers tell us about the tavern trade, although no account has been uncovered relating to the

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12. Ibid.

Lemon Tavern. One wagoner wrote,

"I have stayed overnight with Willism Sheets, on [the] mountain, when there would be thirty-six-horse teams on the wagon yard, one hundred Kentucky mules in an adjacent lot, one thousand hogs in other enclosures, and as many fat cattle from Illinois in adjoining fields. The music made by this large number of hogs, in eating corn on a frosty night, I will never forget." 13

The bars enjoyed a thriving business, offering "slings," "todys," "bounces" with "whiskey," "cherry," or "jinn." The drovers slept in the barroom, usually in a circle with their feet to the center where a supplementary stove stood. Invariably the traveler complained of the primitive board and lodging.<sup>14</sup>

The Interiors of the old taverns have been radically altered. The dining rooms were partitioned and the barrooms (the social centers of the tavern) and wagon stands changed beyond recognition. A few of them have been preserved, however. In the Defibaugh Tavern, the counter register desk and cupboards are intact. An early photograph of the White Swan barroom shows a quaint little bar, typically ornamented with fancy lattice work. The study of these examples might well apply to the Lemon House in a general way.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Charles Morse Stotz, the Architectural Heritage of Early Western Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), p. 174.

14. Ibid

15. Ibid. This work is the product of the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey. A vast amount of material, too extensive to be included in the book, is preserved in the archives of the Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. It is entirely possible that survey drawings and other photographs can be located there which would be of great importance to the architect.

In the early years before the establishment of the Portage Railroad, Samuel Lemon prospered slowly but certainly. During his second year of ownership he added over 250 acres of land to his holdings.<sup>16</sup> Gradually he added to his livestock and the valuation of his property crept slowly upward until 1835 when the tax assessor raised the value of his property almost \$1000. to \$1450. This re-evaluation was probably due to the obvious value of land located so strategically along the railroad. By 1839 the tavern seemed profitable enough for the assessor to double its worth.<sup>17</sup> By then Lemon's stone mansion-tavern was in full swing. The railroad was bringing him a great traffic for food and drink. By the mid-1840's his trade more than doubled and by 1848 the county valued his entire property at \$5020. and taxed him the enormous sum of \$72.76. On the basis of the size of this tax levy, Samuel Lemon was the wealthiest man in Washington Township and a random selection of pages from the tax records of 1848 suggests that he was one of the wealthiest persons in Cambria County. By 1847 he had outfitted his home with some fine pieces of furniture and owned a carriage conspicuous enough to be taxed.<sup>18</sup>

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16. The tax assessment record of 1826 may be in error. It lists Lemon's holdings as 28 acres and in 1827 and 1828, as 288 acres, which suggests that the 1826 entry ought to be 288 as well and a digit "8" was misplaced.

17. Record of Tax Duplicates 1830-1839, Cambria County.

18. Records of Assessments, 1841-49, Washington Township, Cambria County.

Recent accounts of the Lemon House refer to the structure as a "hostelry," suggesting that the mansion provided overnight accommodations. Accounts contemporary with the operation of the structure do not describe it as a hotel, but as a place for momentary respite and a meal and drink. Undoubtedly, there were overnight guests but probably not on a scheduled basis. While the Lemon House is a large home, it is not a hotel. Furthermore, other more spacious establishments along the route and at the termini of the Hollidaysburg-Johnstown run were operated specifically as hotels.<sup>19</sup>

There is one account which, on the contrary, indicates that the Lemon House was indeed frequented as a hotel. It is an extract in the possession of Mr. Irving London of Johnstown. The passage entitled "Travel over the Portage Railroad, 1835-1845, page 177," describes, "the Mansion House" as a "large and commodious hotel where passengers and emigrants could obtain lodging, food, and other refreshments. . . ." It further relates that the hotel was "erected at the Summit." Neither Mr. London nor this writer has been able to locate the source of this statement and thus it cannot assuredly be identified as a contemporary or modern source.

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19. Sesquicentennial of Cambria County, no pages. Wolf, p. 344. Peregrine Prolix [P.H. Nicklin], Peregrination Through the Prettiest Parts of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1836), p. 124. Pennsylvania Board of Canal Commissioners' Records (MSS in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Penna.), W2 f4, document 91. David Stevenson, Sketch of Civil Engineering in North America (London, 1838), p. 273.

Occasionally it is heard that many famous individuals stayed at the Lemon House -- Henry Clay, Governor Joseph Ritner, Charles Dickens, Abraham Lincoln, and others. That they traveled on the Portage Railroad there is no doubt but no reference has been found that establishes that any notable stayed at the Lemon House. In fact, the place most frequently referred to in contemporary documents is the "Summit House" or "Riffles" or perhaps "Denlinger's." This was a hostelry of some 42 rooms. It was where the opening of the Railroad was celebrated and more likely the meeting place for general festivities.<sup>20</sup> It is probable that many historic figures momentarily stopped at the Lemon House. It would have been reasonable for them to have rested within or taken a meal there while the locomotive or horse team was being affixed to their train for the level section of track. If they did, however, no evidence of it has yet been seen.

#### Samuel Lemon -- Mine Operator

Samuel Lemon's financial success was not tied only to the tavern and hostelry. In fact his success was probably rooted

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20. Sesquicentennial of Cambria County. Thomas J. Chapman, The Valley of the Conemaugh (Altoona, 1865) p. 86. Ebensburg Sky, Dec. 4, 1833, p. 2.

in the coal industry. His obituary notice of 1867 had this to say about his coal operations:

[When the Portage Railroad was completed, Lemon] commenced mining and shipping from the vast bed of bituminous coal with which the Mountain abounds, and this completed what in the country would be considered more than a competence, if not a fortune.<sup>21</sup>

The story is related that the discovery of coal on the Lemon land was quite an accident. It occurred in the pursuit of another enterprise -- supplying water for the boilers of the engine house. A well-digger was hired to drill for water and while proceeding, discovered a vein of coal which proved to be 4 feet thick at that point. That vein has since become known as the Lemon seam.<sup>22</sup> No historically contemporary documents have been located to corroborate this story but it is not likely that the Lemon seam was undiscovered until this event. Indeed, the Lemon seam was evident from its numerous outcroppings among the hillsides. For this reason it was probably the first vein of coal in the area to be discovered. Therefore, the field was known to have existed much earlier than the time of the railroad construction.<sup>23</sup>

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21. Cambria Freeman, March 7, 1867.

22. Harry H. Jacobs, The Juniata Canal and Old Portage Railroad (Blair County Historical Society, Hollidaysburg, 1941).

23. Jerome C. White and Samuel Law, "The Coal Industry in Cambria County," Sesquicentennial of Cambria County.

The earliest evidence that Samuel Lemon sunk a coal shaft on his property appears in 1840. The tax assessment records of that year, for the first time, indicate the presence of a coal bank valued at \$150. By 1843 the coal bank was assessed at \$500. and the following year it tripled again in value to \$1500. It is not until 1847 that its value began to diminish falling to \$700. and eventually in the 1850's to its original level.<sup>24</sup> Its eventual collapse in value was probably due to the gradual demise of the Portage Railroad and the playing out of the seam.

That the coal shaft existed in 1840 is further corroborated by a map of that year showing a coal mine north of the Lemon establishment.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand an earlier map (c. 1832) of the Portage Railroad showing the Lemon place does not indicate a coal mine.<sup>26</sup> These facts place the development of the Lemon mine during the early years of the development of the Allegheny Portage Railroad.

During the life of the railroad Samuel Lemon may have shipped 970 tons of coal over the line. The coal didn't all come from the one shaft north of his home. It is reported that he opened

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24. Tax Assessment Records, 1840-59, Cambria County.

25. Michel Chevalier, Histoire et Description des Voies de Communication aux Etats-Unis 3(Paris, 1840), Book of Plates.

26. Pennsylvania Land Office, Harrisburg, Map Book 3 - c11, Tin Box 3.

a mine near the foot of plane 5 and an 1840 survey shows a coal mine directly east of the Lemon House.<sup>27</sup> This latter survey raises the question whether other shafts might be present on the Lemon grounds. The shaft north of the Lemon House across the railroad trace is indicated on a map of 1897.<sup>28</sup>

The stationary engines of the railroad required coal for fuel and a report to the Pennsylvania Senate, 1831-32, discussed the presence of fuel sources along the proposed route.

Coal in abundance in the vicinity of all planes on the western slope and also near the summit, and not far from the line on the eastern slope, will ensure an unexhaustible fuel supply for the stationary engines.<sup>29</sup>

Samuel Lemon was, therefore, well aware of the fuel resources residing in the ground and this knowledge was probably the major factor for his obtaining the tract in the first place.

Lemon sold coal in two ways. He contracted with the superintendent of the railroad to supply coal for use at the engine houses and shipped coal to iron mills in the vicinity. In 1849 he sold coal for use at planes 8-10 at 3 cents a bushel and the following

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27. H. W. Storey, History of Cambria County, Pennsylvania (New York, 1907), p. 574. "Map Exhibiting the Summit of Allegheny Mountain," Pennsylvania Land Office, Map Book 3-cll, Tin Box 3.

28. "Map of Lemon Mine property of Cambria Iron Co., July 28, 1897" (redrawn April 18, 1903), Historical Files of the Historic Site.

29. "Report on the Allegheny Portage Railroad," Pennsylvania Senate Journal, 2 (Session 1831-32), p. 128.

year supplied planes 6-10 for the same price.<sup>30</sup> He shipped his coal in his own private cars. In 1854, an accident occurred on one of the inclined planes, probably due to runaway cars, which destroyed his cars. In response, he filed a damage claim against the railroad for \$1364.<sup>31</sup>

#### Samuel Lemon -- Railroad Contractor

Lemon derived income from other sources as well. The outcropping of stone along the right-of-way was quarried and supplied to the line for use as ties. Many of these stone ties are still buried along the route and at the site of the Lemon "quarry" several stones have drilling scars and contain holes where bolts were inserted to secure the rail.

In the early days of the railroad, trains were drawn along the levels by privately owned horses. In 1835 Lemon bid on a contract for the supplying of teams to do that job. He offered six horses and three drivers. He didn't secure the contract but undoubtedly did obtain several others.<sup>32</sup>

The Portage Railroad also leased or purchased lots for necessary structures along the way. On Samuel Lemon's property the company secured a lot of 51 perches, perhaps for the construction

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30. Pennsylvania Board of Canal Commissioners' Records, hereafter PBCC, (MSS in Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Penn.), Group 17, Box 2, W2 f 6, Vol. 6 - Contracts, documents 179 and 192.

31. Pennsylvania State Land Office, Harrisburg, Auditor General Book, 76-1 e p, p. 221-223.

32. PBCC Records (copy in Cambria County Historical Society Archives), folder A, K-97, drawer 2.

of a government house.<sup>33</sup> A tax assessment record of 1853 reveals that three other government structures were built on Lemon property -- a "Rigger's House" and two "shops."<sup>34</sup> An early ground plan of these buildings describes them: The "Rigger's Shop, loft, etc" was a frame structure 33 1/2 by 100 feet with two doors and seven windows. Separated from the rigger's shop by a 26 foot lumber yard were two shops -- one for the carpenter and the other for the blacksmith. Between the two was a small coal yard. The fronts of these structures were fifty feet from the center of the railroad.<sup>35</sup> The exact location of these structures is not known but compass readings given in the historic ground plan might be used in conjunction with further archeological investigation to identify the sites. Two historical paintings (Illustrations Nos. 7 and 5) reveal a number of outbuildings in the vicinity of the Lemon House -- one light-colored structure directly east of the mansion on the south side of the track; a log cabin north of the track; finally, a third of at least two rooms, revealed left of center in the painting done by Storm (Illustration No. 5).

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33. PBCC Records W2 b 34

34. Record of Assessments, 1853-57, Washington TWP., Cambria County.

35. PBCC Records (PSAH), W2 b 34, Files of the H.S.

### The Decline of the Old Portage Railroad

The early 1850's experienced the decline and demise of the railway that founded Samuel Lemon's fortune. New and more economical routes were located and the so-called Old Portage gave way to the New Portage which, by 1853, eliminated a number of the expensive inclined planes. But 1853 was fatal for the Portage route, even with all its modifications. The "iron horse" of the Pennsylvania Railroad, that very year, pushed through its Mountain Division from Altoona to Johnstown by punching a tunnel through the summit. The state spent over two million dollars to improve the Portage Railroad -- the effort was doomed.

The public clamored for the disposal of the wasteful piece of property. In 1857 it got its wish. That year the Portage Railroad and the entire canal system was sold at public auction for 7 1/2 million dollars.

Samuel Lemon was no longer located as well as he had been. His front door no longer opened on to the "main line." He no doubt continued to sell his coal but he was getting older and his entrepreneurial spirit was waning. The assessment on his land decreased in 1856 to a fifth of what it had been ten years earlier. Thereafter it stabilized and the description and value was carried over from year to year.<sup>36</sup>

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36. Record of Assessments, 1853-57, Cambria County.

It was probably during the first few years after the sale of the Allegheny Portage Railroad that Lemon retired to nearby Hollidaysburg to pass his remaining days. At the age of 72 he died February 25, 1867.<sup>37</sup>

Upon his death the estate transferred to his family. Thereafter, the Lemon House became a summer cottage for the family and friends.<sup>38</sup>

Samuel Lemon's son, John, was noteworthy in his own right. A longtime resident of Hollidaysburg he rose in political circles of that town. His constituents, who affectionately called him "Uncle John," elected him State Senator from the Cambria-Blair district. Eventually he became Auditor-General of the Commonwealth. His older brother, Samuel H., Jr., resided in Philadelphia and, following his father's trade, became a noted railroad contractor.<sup>39</sup>

About the turn of the century, the Lemon property was sold to J. C. Weston who operated it as a farm and may have been responsible for constructing the barn which lies immediately east of the Lemon House. His son, J. Clyde Weston of Bruceton,

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37. Cambria Freeman, March 7, 1867.

38. Telephone conversation with Joseph L. Gifford, Camp Hill, Penn. He is the great-Grandson of Samuel Lemon and has been collecting historical data on the family.

39. Yeager, pp. 200-201. Pennsylvania General Assembly, Memorial Proceedings, pp. 22-23.

Pennsylvania, inherited the farm in 1912.<sup>40</sup> Early in the 1950's Byron Roberts purchased the property and undertook many efforts to preserve the Lemon Mansion besides modernizing a section of the house for use as living quarters. Mr. Roberts recently passed away and his widow sold the property to the Federal government.

#### Structural History: A Summary

This report is concerned essentially with the Lemon House structure and the various outbuildings related to the mansion. It also deals specifically with the coal mine shaft and stone quarry located on the Lemon property. Word should also be said about the possible remains of the government structures which were part of the railroad and were built in the immediate vicinity of the Lemon House. The area map (Illustration No. 6) identifies the structures and sites reviewed in this report.

#### The Lemon House

In summary, the stone mansion house built by Samuel Lemon is significant because of its intense relationship to the development of the Allegheny Portage Railroad. Its existence, use, and location are dependent upon the railroad. The House is the only historic structure along the trace of the Portage Railroad that can be satisfactorily utilized to interpret the social and economic effects of the railroad.

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40. Altoona Mirror, Feb. 3, 1955.

The Lemon House was constructed in the early 1830's at the time of the construction of the Portage Railroad. It was Samuel Lemon's intention to profit from the operation of the rail line. To this end he utilized a part of the structure as a tavern and store, serving passengers, laborers, and settlers who were drawn to the area by the influence of the railroad. The house was used as living quarters by Samuel Lemon and his family. The use of the mansion as a hostelry seems to have been occasional rather than usual. Undoubtedly, the structure was also used as headquarters of Lemon's coal operations. After Lemon's retirement to Hollidaysburg, the building became a summer cottage and family retreat until it was sold to J. C. Weston about the turn of the century. Weston operated the property as a farm. Bruce Roberts, who purchased the property in the 1950's undertook modernization of 2/5 of the interior. The exterior has been less altered. The precise modifications can be gauged by the appended photographs (Illustrations Nos. 9, 10, 11, 1 and 2).<sup>41</sup> The illustrations, however, demonstrate only the structural changes that occurred since the 1930's. The earliest pictorial evidence of the Lemon House, available to this writer, is the painting by an unknown author of the head of inclined plane no. 6. The work shows the Lemon House in the right foreground (Illustration No. 7).

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41. Stotz, pp. 150 and 183.

The painting, or the subject on which it is based, is assumed to be contemporary with the operation of the Portage Railroad. The Lemon House is shown with less length and fewer windows than it exhibits today. This fact has led some people to suggest that the west end of the structure was added sometime later. If this was done at all, it is not of recent memory . . . and no documentary evidence other than the painting has been discovered to support that position.

Although the painting suggests the extension of the structure, the reduced size as shown in that work might be the product of artistic license. On the other hand, the painting seems to be a literal translation of the subject matter and the possibility of the enlargement of the building should not be ignored. Furthermore, observation of the basement reveals the remains of a foundation wall separating the main structure from the west wing. It appears that a stone wall at that location was knocked out and later replaced by a frame wall. This fact tends to support the theory of an addition. The few early maps available do not show the Lemon House as anything more than a dot or rectangle. Later maps of the 1890's show the structure generally as it appears today. Fundamentally, the evidence is not sufficient to decide this question. Hopefully, closer architectural examination of the building will evince more of the details.

## The Barn

The field Investigation Report of 1962 says the "barn adjacent to the engine house site was not part of the historic scene and should be removed."<sup>42</sup> Samuel Lemon likely maintained a barn to stable and feed his livestock. It is unlikely that the present barn was the one used by him. However, the frame superstructure of the building is older than indicated in the field report which dates it 1955. The fact that its main supports are secured to cross-beams by mortise-and-tenon joints makes the structure more than twelve years old. In fact, the description of the barn carried in the field investigation report does not fit the structure.<sup>43</sup> The foundation of the barn seems originally to have been composed of a stone floor and rock walls, although the floor has been cemented over.

The barn occupies an area which is either directly on or adjacent to the site of the engine house. This raises the possibility that the barn basement may have been part of the engine house complex or perhaps a section of a subsidiary structure related to the railroad operation. Such a structure appears between the engine house and Lemon House in one of the historic paintings (Illustration No. 7).

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42. Richard P. Wittpenn and others, Allegheny Portage Railroad: A Proposed National Historic Site, National Park Service, Northeast Region, Department of the Interior, Field Investigation Report (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 6.

43. Ibid. Appendix, p. 2.

### Engine House

The engine house straddled the track of the railroad at the head of plane no. 6. It housed boilers and engines, the later connected to shafts and pulleys which operated the lifting cable used to hoist the cars up the incline. The pulley housing and engine foundations were apparently set deep in the ground and have been filled in since the days of operation. Today, a land slump has developed in the middle of the trace just off the northeast corner of the barn.

Further archeological investigation of this cave-in in conjunction with the adjacent barn foundation should be carried out to establish the historical authenticity of the sites involved and their interrelationship, if any.

### Lemon Coal Mine

It is reasonable to conclude that Samuel Lemon's most profitable venture was coal mining. Regardless of the traditional account of the discovery of the "Lemon" seam, documentary evidence discloses that Lemon possessed a "coal bank" and was indeed shipping coal along the Portage Railroad. Tradition holds that a historic shaft to the seam exists in the vicinity of the hemlock grove just north of the mansion. The shaft, being a safety hazard, was filled in by former owner, Byron Roberts. A map of 1897

does indeed show a "shaft to Lemon Seam" in that approximate location. <sup>44</sup> That same map also points out an "Old Opening, Elev. 2288.2," along the outcropping of the Lemon Seam 200 feet due south of the engine house. Besides these two sites there is also a land slump about 40 feet south of the south corner of the barn. Was this a coal shaft, a land cave in due to undermining, or an air shaft? It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. The point is that there is abundant evidence of coal workings in the vicinity of the Lemon House. Their nature, age, and relationship to the Lemon story will have to await the opportunity of further investigation. Certainly any prospective archeology should consider them. For the present, however, tradition and documentary indications, slim as they are, suggest the shaft near the hemlock grove as the original Lemon Mine. Certainly its location at the level across from the house made it convenient for loading.

Local information describes the mine as a pit shaft operation -- the coal hauled 40 feet to the surface. The shaft, it is asserted, was stone lined with a lifting rig suspended over the opening. Local people say the checkerboard technique was employed in mining the coal. This was a method of leaving columns of coal in a pattern much the same as the squares of one color of

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<sup>44</sup>. "Map of Lemon Mine, Property of Cambria Iron Co., July 28, 1897," Files of the Historic Site.

a checker board. This provided excellent support for the  
surface.<sup>45</sup>

#### Stone Quarry

The quarry has been described as a rocky outcropping running along the north side of the railroad. It does not have the appearance of a pit quarry. As the railroad construction proceeded, stone was cut out, fashioned into ties, and imbedded in the ground. Some of the blocks are still scattered about the site. No documentary evidence concerning the quarry was located.

#### Government Shops

The Canal Commissioners contracted for government-owned structures along the track to provide necessary services to the railroad. At the head of plane no. 6, a lot of 51 perches was secured and elsewhere on the Lemon property, parallel to the track, several shops were erected. These were the rigger's shop, carpenter's shop, and smithy. Their location is unknown but might be discovered by archeological investigation.

#### Miscellaneous Buildings

Several historic maps done between 1830 and 1867 indicate from two to four structures in the vicinity of the Lemon House.<sup>46</sup>

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45. Francis R. Holland, Jr., Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site; Interpretive Prospectus, National Park Service, (Washington, D. C., 1965).

46. D. G. Beers, "Map of Cambria Co., Penna." (A. Pomeroy, 1867). Also, Michel Chevalier, "Book of Plates."

Blair County tax assessment records demonstrate that Lemon<sup>47</sup> rented lots and several "houses" to various tenants. One of the early paintings (Illustration No. 7 ), shows a log cabin, left center, and the structure already mentioned between the Mansion and the engine. The use of these structures can only be guessed at. The Storm painting (Illustration No. 5) also reveals a building, left center, between the engine house and the Lemon House.

Historian Earl J. Heydinger, suggests the presence of several other structures in the vicinity of the east end of the summit level. He proposes the finding of a downslope pit and weight well just east of the engine house. Also located in the vicinity were the water well and wooden piping contracted to supply the railroad engines. Heydinger also mentions the existence of an 1851 wooden cistern and 1850 switch and turnaround. There remains the possibility of an engineer's residence located on the site.<sup>48</sup>

#### Water Pipeline

In 1836 many of the new boilers installed in the engine houses proved defective because of the corrosive effects of the underground

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47. Tax Assessment Records, 453-1871, Blair County Court House, Hollidaysburg, Penna.

48. Earl J. Heydinger, Comprehensive History of the Pennsylvania Canal System, with Particular Attention to the Allegheny Portage Railroad . . . Portion: "Plane #6, National Park Service, Northeast Region (Phila., June, 1966), pp. 12-13.

water which probably contained coal sulphur.<sup>49</sup> To correct this problem, Samuel Lemon contracted in 1837 to lay two-inch bored pipes from a run "south of his Mansion House to the engine house."<sup>50</sup>

#### Preliminary Archeological Survey

An introductory archeological study was undertaken in mid-1967 of the areas proposed for inclusion in Allegheny Portage National Historic Site.<sup>51</sup> At the time, the investigator was unable to view the vicinity of the Lemon House.<sup>52</sup> He did, however, refer to the collapsed entrance of a coal mine downgrade toward the present route 22 and suggested that the shaft runs into the "Lemon Vein."<sup>53</sup> While this mine may run in the Lemon seam, caution should be taken not to confuse this mine with the vertical shaft north of the Lemon House.

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49. Pennsylvania State Journal, Appendix to Vol. 2, 1835-36, p. 80.

50. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Penn., 42 f4, Document 91.

51. Edward McM. Larrabee, Interim Report of Preliminary Archeological Survey, Allegheny Portage National Historic Site, National Park Service, Philadelphia Service Center (Phila., June 6, 1967).

52. Ibid., p. 18.

53. Ibid.

According to the survey, the location of the engine house "is not immediately apparent" and "can only be inferred from the grade and alignment of the railroad."<sup>54</sup> The presence of the land slump near the barn and in the middle of the trace suggests the location of the foundation and pit of either the engine house or the downslope propelling sheaves. As already stated, the barn's foundation might be a remnant of the engine house, or subsidiary structure.

#### Conclusion

Structural history of the Lemon House site is slim and some of it conjectural. Available documentary evidence is meager and limitations of time do not permit the detailed search necessary to uncover likely existent sources. Nevertheless, structural resources are abundant if only in the form of buried ruins. An investigation of these ruins might well prove fruitful. At any rate, it is hoped the architectural and archeological surveys will add significantly to the broad outlines recorded here.

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54. Ibid.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration No. 1: Lemon House, north side, fronting on the Portage Railway. Originally the front entrance.



Illustration No. 2: Lemon House, south side, fronting on the present route 22. Originally the rear entrance.

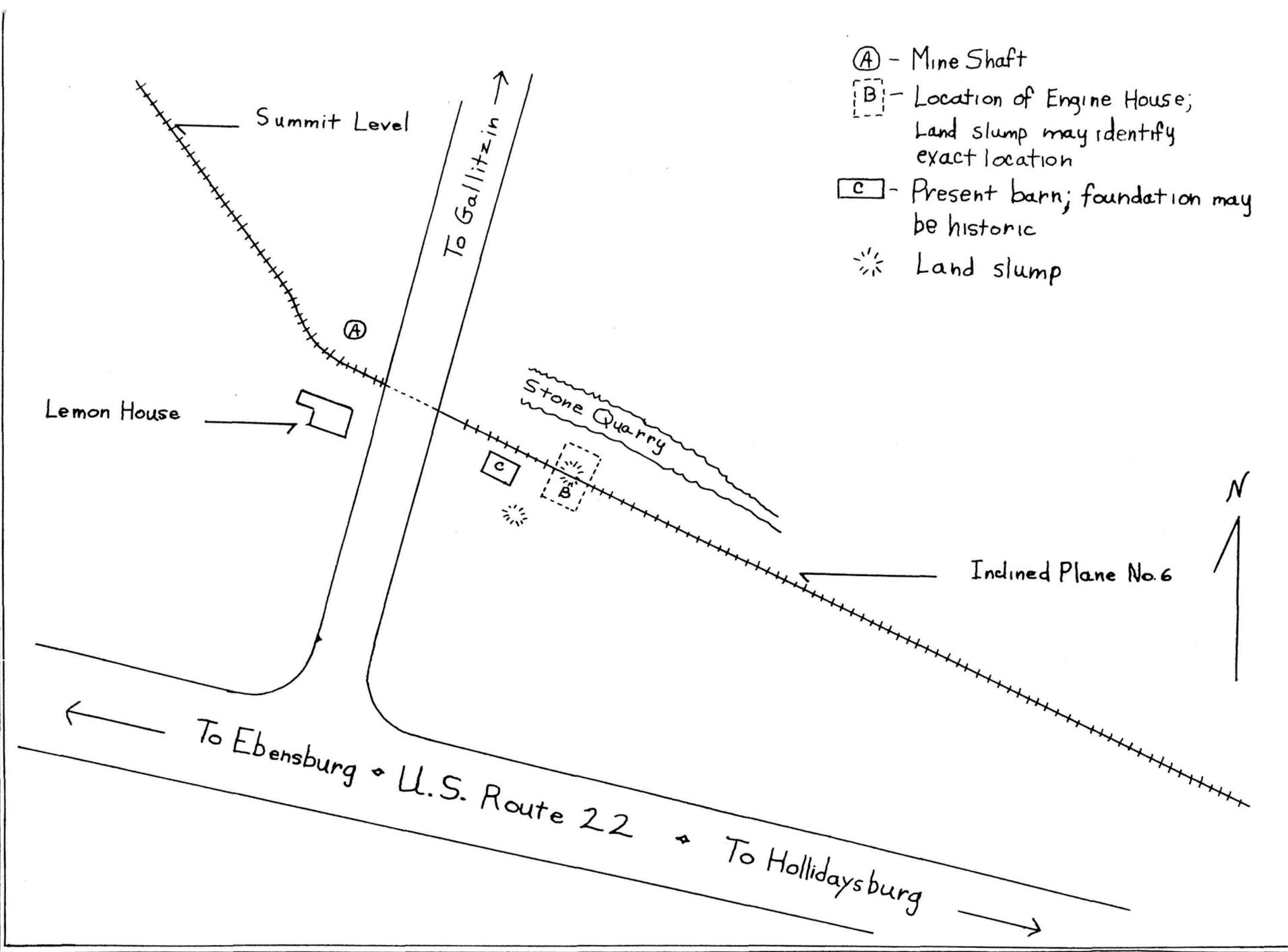


Illustration No. 3: Map locating the Lemon House in respect to the trace of the Portage Railroad and U.S. Route 22.

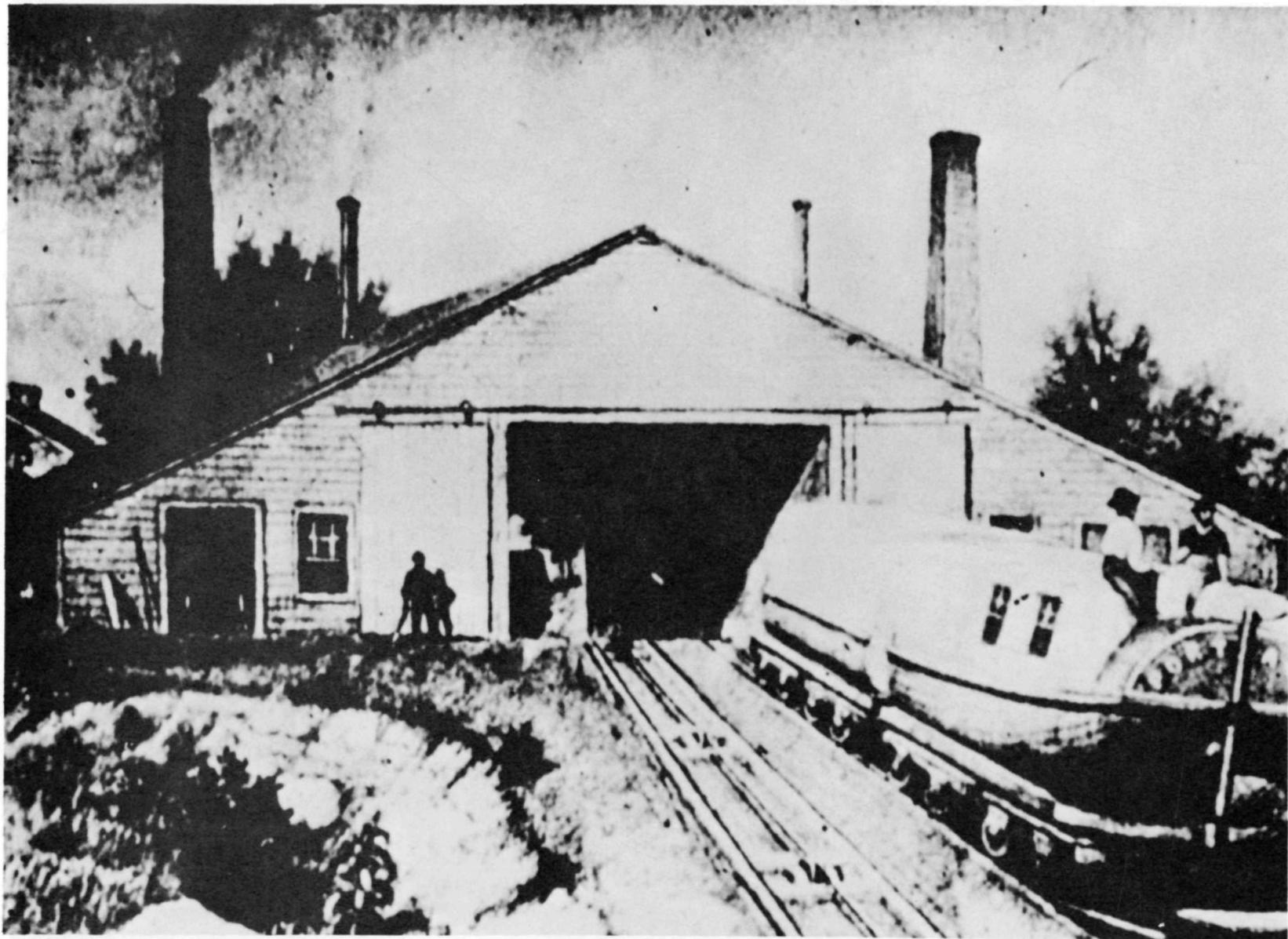


Illustration No. 4: Engine House, head of Plane No. 6. Notice the Lemon House, left center. Photograph taken about 1845 but original source unknown. Copy print in the files of the Historic Site.

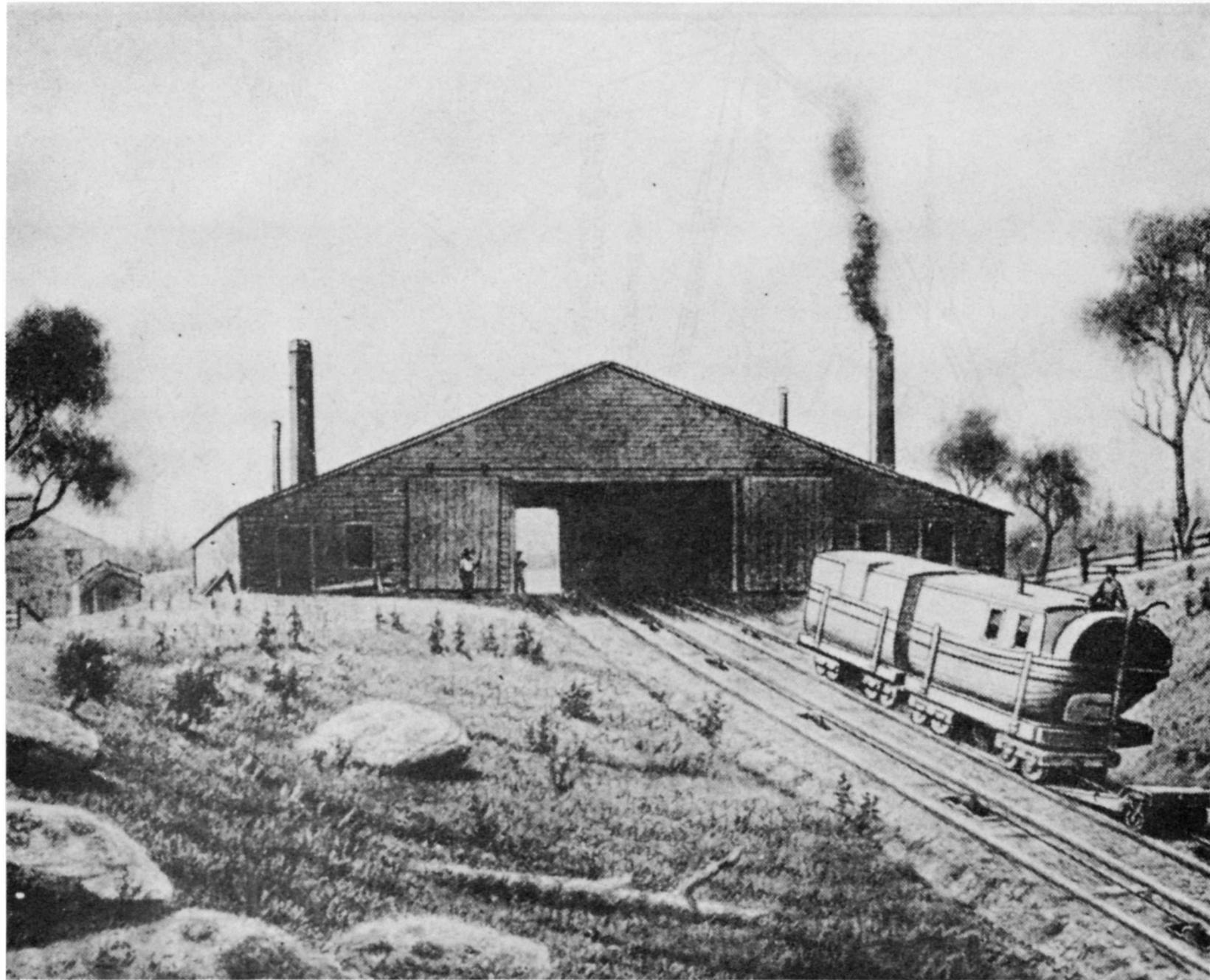


Illustration No. 5: Engine House, head of Plane No. 6. Lemon House, left center. Original source, Storm painting, c.1895.



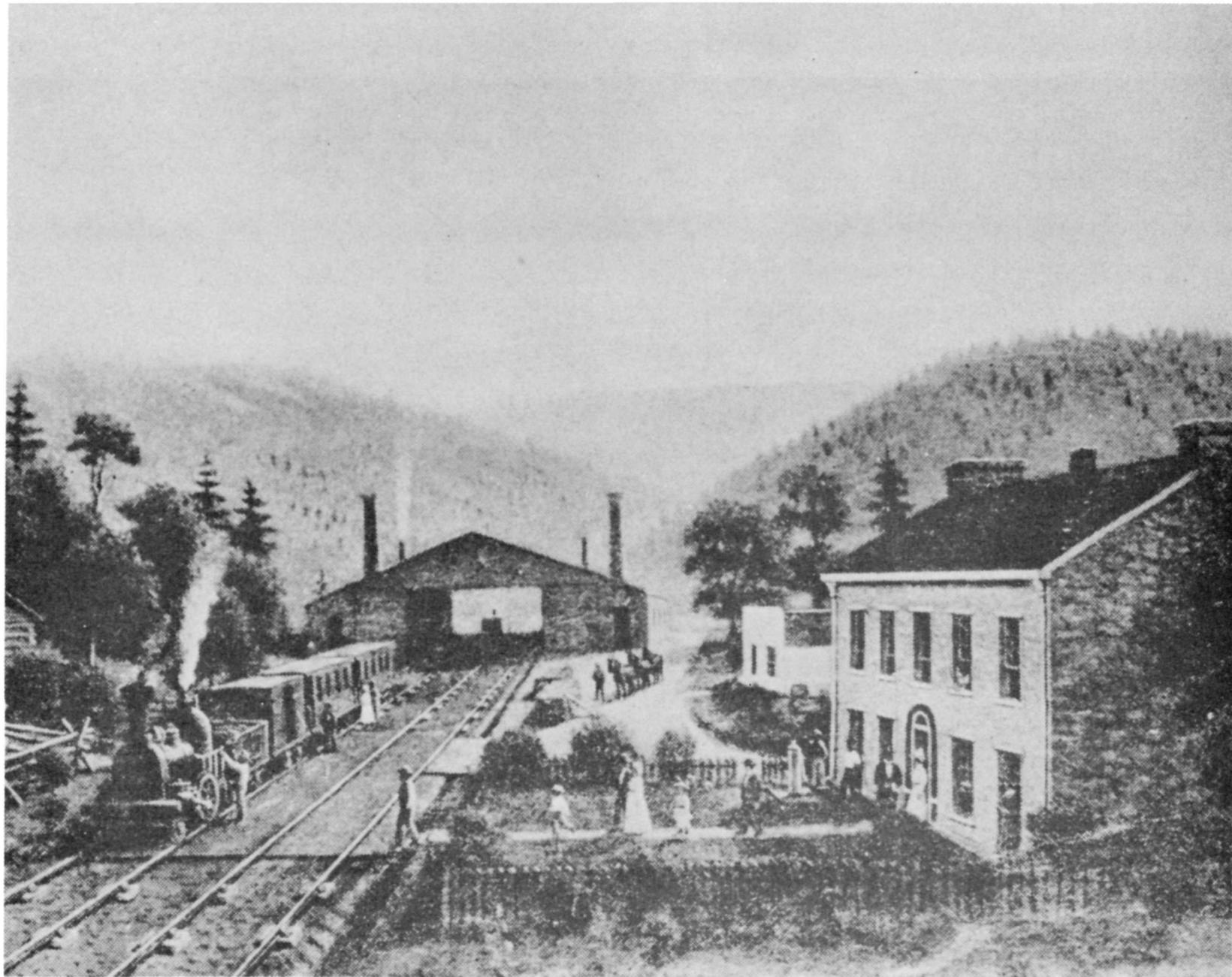


Illustration No. 7: Head of Plane No. 6 looking east. Engine House, center; Lemon House right foreground; unidentified structure, right center; log cabin, left center. Source of original painting unknown; artist unknown.

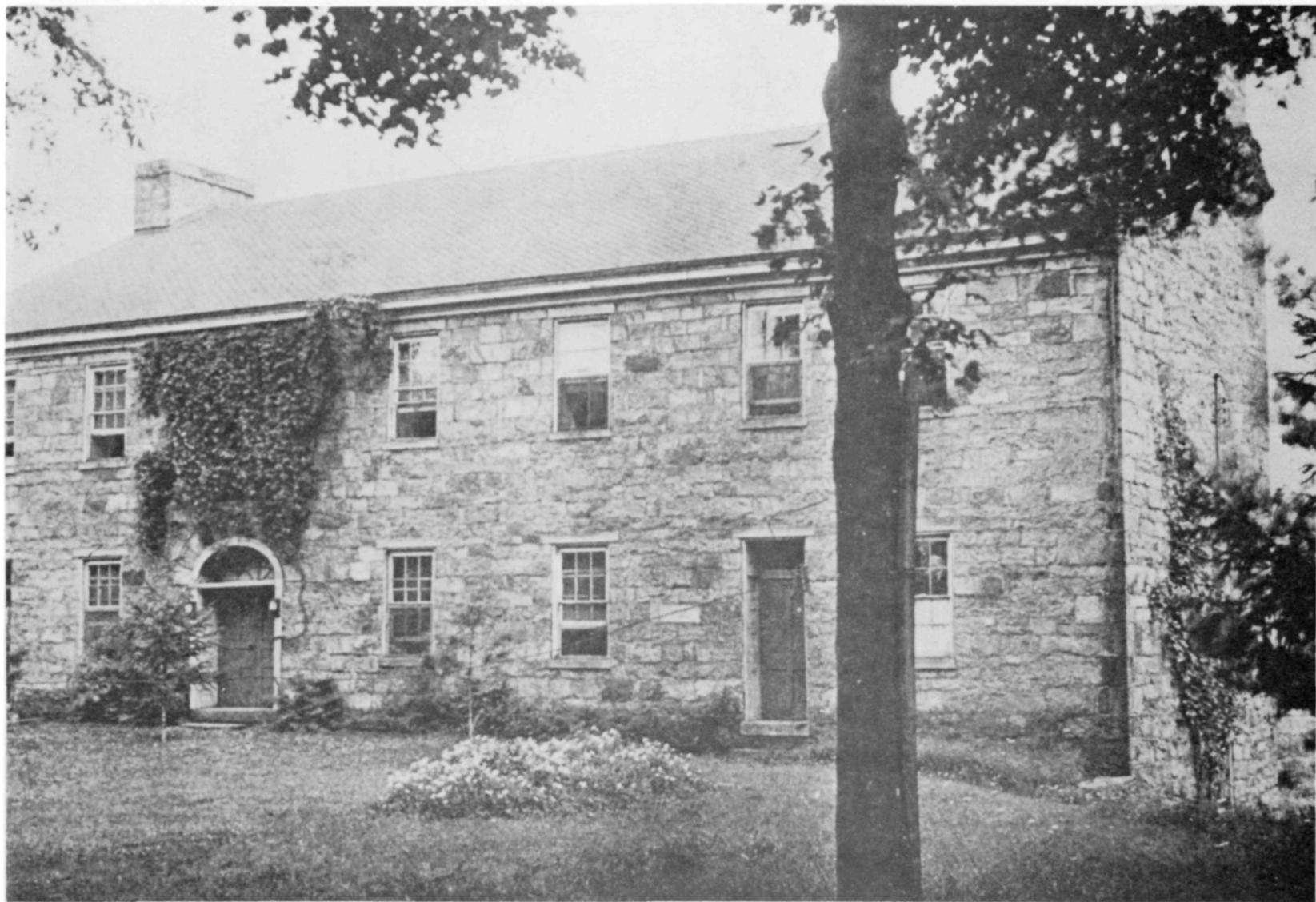
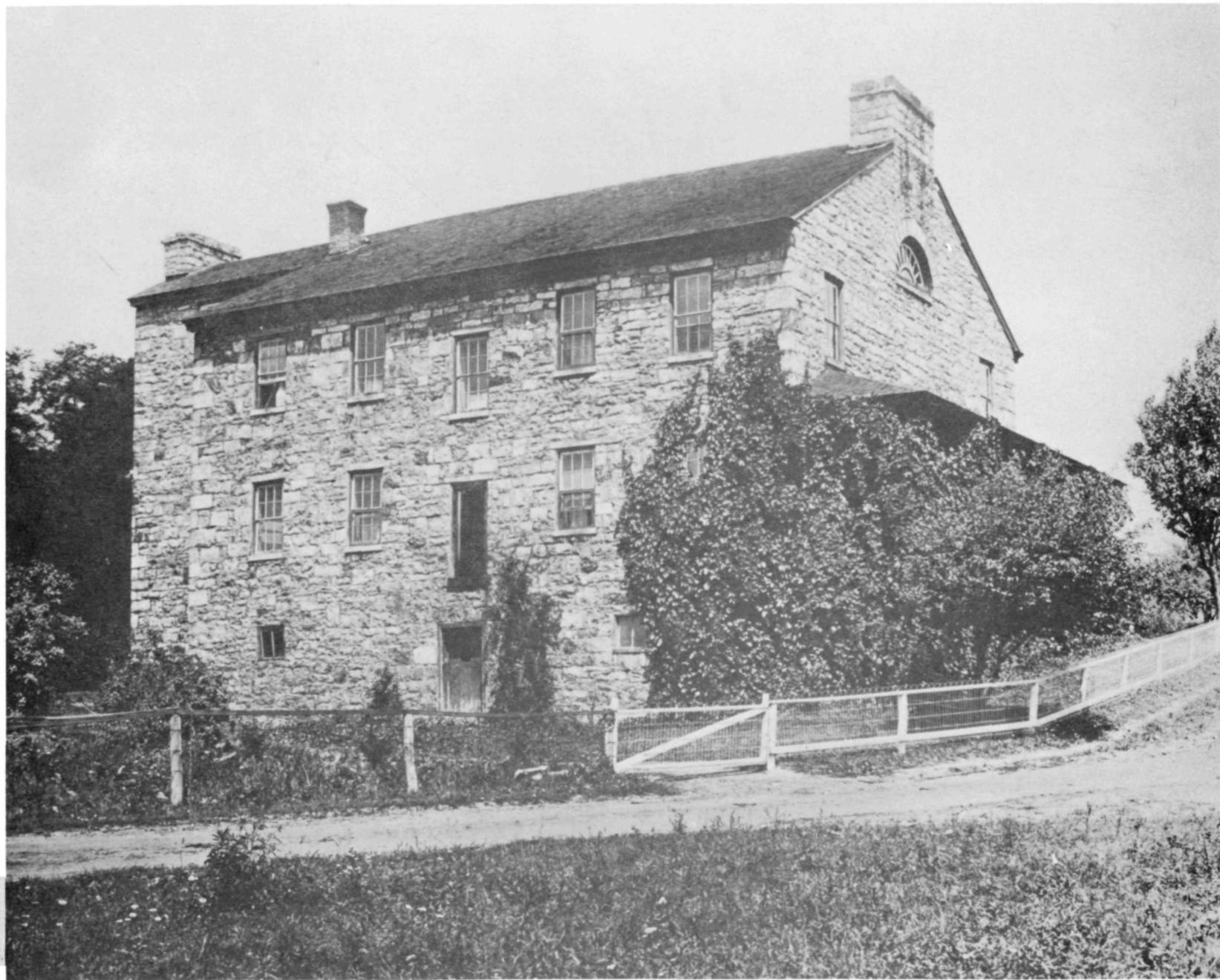


Illustration No. 8: Lemon House, north side and original front entrance, c. 1936.  
Source, Stotz, *The Architectural Heritage of Early Western Pennsylvania*, p. 183.



Illustration No. 9: Front entrance, north side of Lemon House, c. 1936. Source, Stotz, p. 150.



GPO 940-290

Illustration No. 10: Lemon House, south side, c. 1936. Source unknown.

