

WEST BRANCH PENNSYLVANIA CANAL, LOCK NO. 34,  
LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE  
South of Route 664 along north bank of the West  
Branch Susquehanna River, 2,000 feet east of the  
Jay Street Bridge  
Lock Haven Vicinity  
Clinton County  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-188-B

HAER  
PA  
18-LOKHA. V  
4B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HAER  
PA  
18-LOKHA  
4B-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

WEST BRANCH PENNSYLVANIA CANAL,  
LOCK No. 34, LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE HAER No. PA-188-B

Location: Located on the south side of Route 664, approximately 2,000 feet east of the Jay Street Bridge, Lower Lockport, Lock Haven Vicinity, Clinton County, Pennsylvania

UTM: 18.295090.4336740  
Quad: Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: c. 1834

Present Owner: Richard Raible  
322 Hobson Street  
Mill Hall, Pennsylvania 17751

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The lock keeper's house at Lock No. 34 (see HAER No. PA-188-A) is a historically significant remnant of the Pennsylvania state-built canal system. Part of the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal (see HAER No. PA-188), this c. 1834 resource was one element of a transportation system that did much to economically develop the valley of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River from 1834 to 1889 and that served to catapult Lock Haven--and neighboring Lockport to a lesser extent--into a center for transporting, processing, and distributing agricultural products, iron and coal, and lumber.

The lock keeper's house was constructed as a residence for the attending lock keeper, who was required to tend the lock on a twenty-four-hour basis. The existence of a relatively intact lock and keeper's house is rare, adding to the property's significance. The house is architecturally significant as one of the oldest existing buildings in Lower Lockport. The house maintains its architectural integrity through the retention of vernacular Greek Revival stylistic details and the core of its original form. The house is a typical example of lock keeper's houses along the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal, in that the original section of the house adheres to the standard dimensions, use of materials, and architectural styling dictated in a plan book developed for the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal and evident in surviving examples of lock keeper's houses along the former canal.

Project Information: Documentation was undertaken in October and November 1991 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the Lock Haven Area Flood Protection Authority. The documentation serves as a mitigative measure for the treatment of historic properties that were identified and evaluated in a series of

studies and that would be affected by the proposed Lock Haven flood protection project. The protection project calls for a series of floodwalls and levees to be constructed around Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. When these features are in place, the resource addressed in this report will be located in an area of induced flooding. The resource will not be demolished or moved but will remain as is in its existing location. Documentation was prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, by the Historic Preservation Group of Kise Franks & Straw, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: M. Todd Cleveland, project manager; Susan C. Nabors, historian; Martin B. Abbot, historian; and Jill Cremer, graphics. Robert Tucher provided the documentary photographs. Steve Humphrey and Lance Metz of Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums, Easton, Pennsylvania, conducted much of the research and writing for the preparation of this HAER report.

## I. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The associated lock keeper's house at Lock No. 34 would have been occupied by the Pennsylvania Canal Company employees between about 1834, when the canal was first opened to navigation, and 1889, when disastrous flooding largely destroyed the entire canal system. The only lock keeper that has been positively identified is William A. Packer. The 1850 census identifies Packer as "Lock Tender" and indicates that his household included his wife and son, and a female boarder and her daughter; he is listed as owning no real property of his own. The 1860 census describes Packer as "Collector", with \$6,000 in real property; his household included only his wife and son at that time. No other individuals can be identified as lock keepers, although the 1895 Lock Haven city directory lists Theodore Myers as "canal supt.". Myers does not appear in the 1900 census.<sup>1</sup>

For additional information, see West Branch Pennsylvania Canal (HAER No. PA-188).

## II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Lock No. 34 of the West Branch Division of the Pennsylvania Canal and the associated lock keeper's house are located on 1.1 acres situated between the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and Route 664, approximately 2,000 feet east of the Jay Street Bridge in the village of Lower Lockport. No other structures survive on this site. (See accompanying site plan.)

## III. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE

The lock keeper's house is a two-story side-gabled building that was built in two sections. The original section (west) was constructed about the same time as the adjacent Lock No. 34 in c. 1834. This section is notable for its vernacular Greek Revival stylistic features, such as a raking cornice, a transom above the front door, pilaster corner boards, and tall, narrow window openings. The later section (east) is larger than the original section and appears to have been constructed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This section is characterized by its simple, functional design.

The north elevation of the house exhibits the two distinct sections of the building, each being three bays in width with irregular fenestration under simple, boxed cornices. The east section contains three window openings at the first level and two at the outer bays of the second level. The west section contains the primary entrance to the building at the east bay of the first level and a window opening in the adjacent center bay. The second level contains two window openings at the center and west bays. The south elevation of the house at first sight appears as one long elevation due to the extension of the clapboards across the entire length of the building at the second level and the full-width shed porch addition at the first level. The two sections are visible, however, and are fenestrated irregularly like the north elevation. The eastern section has a doorway at the east bay and a window at the west bay of the first level, and two window openings at the center and west bays of the second level. The western section has two doorways in the east and west bays of the first level (concealed from exterior view by the enclosed portion of the shed porch) and two window openings in the east and west bays of the second level.

The east elevation of the house is two bays in width and exhibits regular fenestration: two window openings at each of the two levels. The west elevation is also two bays in width but has irregular fenestration. The first level contains a window opening in the north bay and a doorway

in the south bay. The second level contains a horizontal window opening in the north bay. At the attic level within the gable, there are two small openings at the north and the south bays.

A basement exists beneath the eastern section of the house and consists of stone walls, a dirt floor, an exposed timber ceiling, and stairs to the first story and to the outside cellar entrance on the east facade. There appears to be a crawl space beneath the western section of the building. The attic contains heavy timbers, some burned. Overall, the western section of the house exhibits a smaller scale than the eastern section. At the first level, this older section is one room wide with a hallway and staircase on the eastern wall, while the second story is one room wide and two rooms deep (most likely not an original configuration, as one room is now a bathroom). The floor plan in the later section is two rooms wide and one room deep.

Both sections of the house are of heavy timber construction. The building sits on a stone foundation and exhibits narrow, non-historic clapboard siding, with the exception of the east facade of the western section, which rises above the later section and exhibits vertical tongue-and-groove siding. Composition asphalt shingles cover the roof. The only extant chimney is of brick and is located at the ridgeline on the eastern facade of the original section of the house. A small porch with chamfered posts and simple, decorative brackets and balusters is located at the north elevation primary entrance. The entrance contains a single-leaf wood-panelled door with a door-width transom above. At the west elevation, a wooden canopy with simple brackets is located above the door.

Additions to the building include a shed porch along the south elevation, which is enclosed along the western section of the house and open at the eastern section. The porch contains simple squared posts and wooden flooring. The open section of the porch rests on brick piers, while the enclosed section has a concrete-slab foundation. The porch dates from sometime after the turn of the century, as is evidenced by a c. 1900 photograph of Lower Lockport showing the house with its original western section and later eastern addition but without the rear porch addition.<sup>2</sup>

Window treatments are varied, with some openings containing six-over-six double-hung sash and others twelve-pane side-hinged sash. A paired three-over-one double-hung sash window is located at the first-story kitchen on the west elevation. At the second level of the west elevation, there is a horizontal paired six-light window. Many windows (and doors) have been removed from their openings and covered over with plywood. The window opening at the second level bathroom has been downsized.

The interior of the house exhibits simple elements throughout. Walls and ceilings are sheathed in plaster and are in poor condition; lathing is exposed in many areas. Narrow-width floorboards are common, although some flooring in the western section exhibits a wider dimension. Simple plank and panelled doors are located throughout the house, with the more decorative details and door surrounds found on the first level. Historic hardware is still extant on most interior doors; some contain latches and porcelain knobs. Window surrounds in the eastern section are beaded, and some exhibit added manufactured trim over older, simple plank surrounds. A few historic light fixtures are located in the eastern section of the house. A large section of the second-story ceiling has been removed due to fire and/or vandalism, and roof rafters are visible in the eastern section of the house. The eastern section also exhibits built-in closets. Dropped ceiling tiles are located in the kitchen on the first story of the western section.

The centrally located staircase provides a distinct break between the two sections of the house and contains a distinctive bannister with squared and handcarved members. The staircase narrows above the first landing where the banister is present. A wood-panelled door is located at the bottom of the staircase within the entry hall.

#### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE

The lock keeper's house at Lock No. 34 was constructed c. 1834 as a residence for the attending lock keeper, who was required to tend the lock on a twenty-four-hour basis. An examination of a bound copy of the Lockhouse Lot Plan Book for the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal at the archives of the Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums in Easton, Pennsylvania, reveals that the lock keeper's house at Lock No. 34 is typical of lock keeper's houses along the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal system in terms of its dimensions, materials, and styling. From the map and description in the Plan Book, the building appears to exhibit no unusual characteristics. The typical dimensions and materials of a West Branch Pennsylvania Canal lock keeper's house are cited as:

House to be framed 30 feet by 36 feet and two stories above the basement story, lower story 9 feet, upper 8 feet, whole height of building above basement story 19 feet of frame, weather boarded, shingle roof painted, lathed and plastered. The whole of the work must be good clear stuff (material).<sup>3</sup>

Use of vernacular Greek Revival styling was typical of lock houses constructed along the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal. All lock houses were constructed in the early 1830s, when the Greek Revival style was first gaining in popularity. Construction of the houses was contracted, although records do not exist that name a contractor or architect. The house at Lock No. 34 exhibits such Greek Revival-inspired elements as a raking cornice, a transom above the primary entrance door, pilaster corner boards, and tall, narrow window openings. The house is one of three remaining lock keeper's houses along the former West Branch Pennsylvania Canal that share similar vernacular Greek Revival styling.<sup>4</sup> For its dimensions, materials, and architectural styling, then, the house (i.e., the original western section) is typical of West Branch lock keeper's houses. The house is significant, however, for being one of only three remaining examples of West Branch Pennsylvania Canal keeper's houses.

In its present condition, the lock keeper's house retains its integrity, especially as to its plan and form. Major spaces and corridors have survived, although some secondary rooms have been remodeled for kitchen and bathroom use. On the exterior, enough detailing has survived so that the vernacular Greek Revival styling of the building remains evident. Along the south elevation of the building, the shed porch addition obscures the original western section; however, it would appear that construction of the porch has not caused any irreparable damage to the house. Inside the building, interior details and features survive as well, although many of the major features, such as sash, doors, and plasterwork, have been removed or damaged beyond repair. The house retains its integrity of setting, as the building is still located adjacent to the lock and, further south, the river. The survival to this day of the lock and the keeper's house in their relatively intact state adds to the property's significance. Moreover, the house is locally significant in Lower Lockport as one of the oldest existing buildings in the area.

## V. SOURCES

A. Architectural Drawings: None

B. Historic Views:

Floyd, J.W.C. Historic photograph PA-132, Lockport, Pennsylvania, c. 1900.  
In the possession of the Ross Library, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

C. Interviews:

Metz, Lance, Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums, Easton, Pennsylvania.  
11 March 1992. Telephone conversation with Susan C. Nabors, Kise  
Franks & Straw, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Cassel, Clara M. "The West Branch Division of the Pennsylvania Canal."  
Master's thesis, Bucknell University, 1933.

Lockhouse Lot Plan Book, West Branch Pennsylvania Canal. In possession of  
Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums, Easton, Pennsylvania.

Vento, Frank J., Philip T. Fitzgibbons, Scott D. Heberling, and James Herbstritt.  
*Phase I Inventory Investigations of Potentially Significant Prehistoric and  
Historic Period Cultural Resources for the Lock Haven Flood Protection  
Project, Clinton County, Pennsylvania.* Prepared for the U.S. Army  
Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, by Vendel Enviro-Industrial  
Consultants, 1989.

2. Secondary and published sources: None

## VI. NOTES

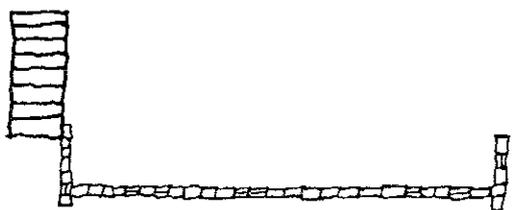
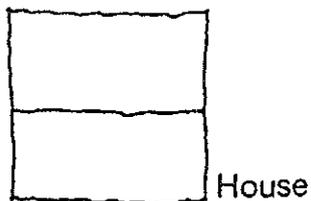
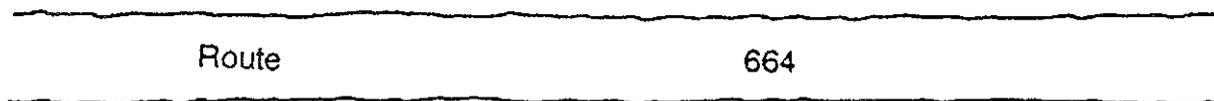
<sup>1</sup>Vento, Frank J., Philip T. Fitzgibbons, Scott D. Heberling, and James Herbstritt. Phase I Inventory Investigations of Potentially Significant Prehistoric and Historic Period Cultural Resources for the Lock Haven Flood Protection Project, Clinton County, Pennsylvania. Prepared for the Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by Vendel Enviro-Industrial Consultants, 1989, 218.

<sup>2</sup>J.W.C. Floyd. PA-132. Lock Haven, Pennsylvania: Floyd Collection, Ross Library, ca. 1900. Photograph.

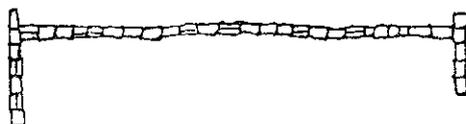
<sup>3</sup>Clara M. Cassel, "The West Branch Division of the Pennsylvania Canal," (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bucknell University, 1933), 62-63.

<sup>4</sup>Lance Metz, Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums, Easton, Pennsylvania, telephone conversation with Susan Nabors, Kise Franks & Straw, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1992.

WEST BRANCH PENNSYLVANIA CANAL,  
LOCK No. 34, LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE  
HAER No. PA-188-B (Page 7)



Lock 34

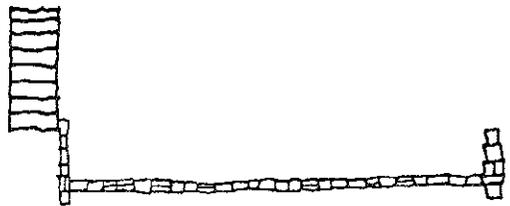
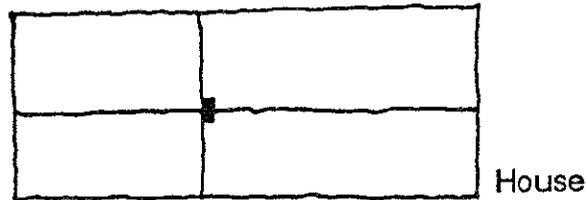
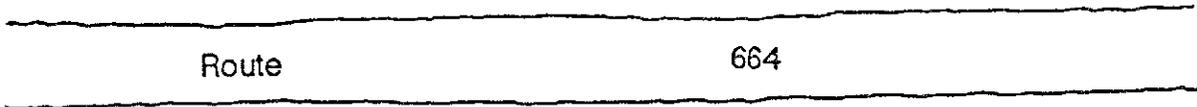


Conjectural Site Plan, circa 1834-1850  
Not to Scale  
Date Drawn: 1992  
Prepared By: Jill Cremer

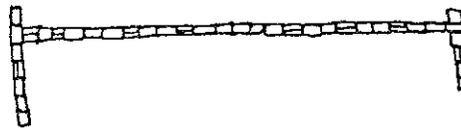


Sources: U. S. Bureau of the Census. Manuscript Census Schedules, Pennsylvania: Clinton County, 1850. Unpublished Manuscript, Washington, D.C.; Physical Inspection, Kise Franks & Straw, Inc. October 1991.; See Also: Vento, Frank J., Philip T. Fitzgibbons, Scott D. Heberling, and James Herbstritt. *Phase I Inventory Investigations of Potentially Significant Prehistoric and Historic Period Cultural Resources for the Lock Haven Flood Protection Project, Clinton County, Pennsylvania*. Prepared for the Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by Vendel Enviro-Industrial Consultants, 1989, 218.

WEST BRANCH PENNSYLVANIA CANAL ,  
LOCK No. 34, LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE  
HAER No. PA-188-B (Page 8)



Lock 34



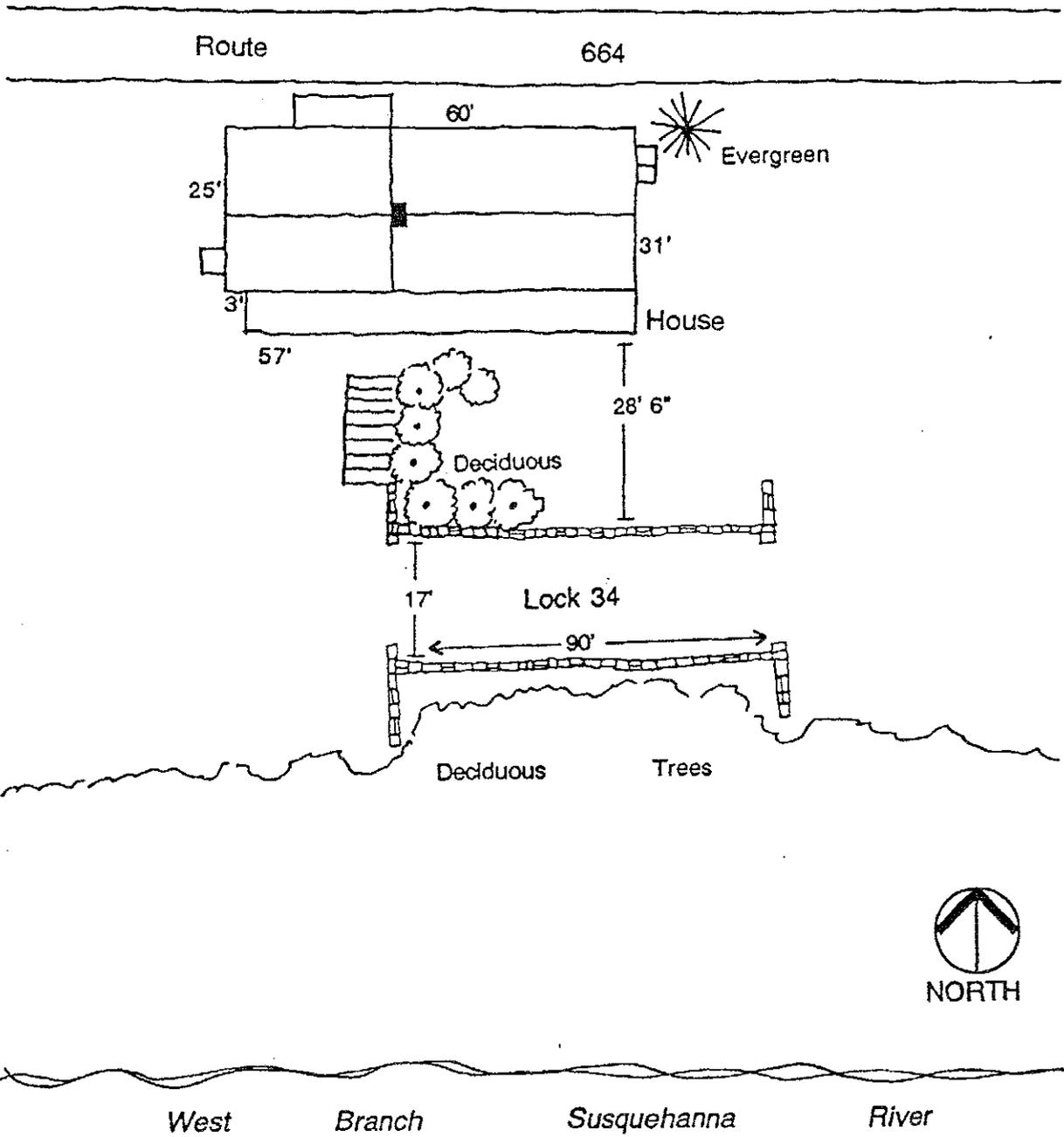
Conjectural Site Plan, circa 1900  
Not to Scale  
Date Drawn: 1992  
Prepared By: Jill Cremer



West Branch Susquehanna River

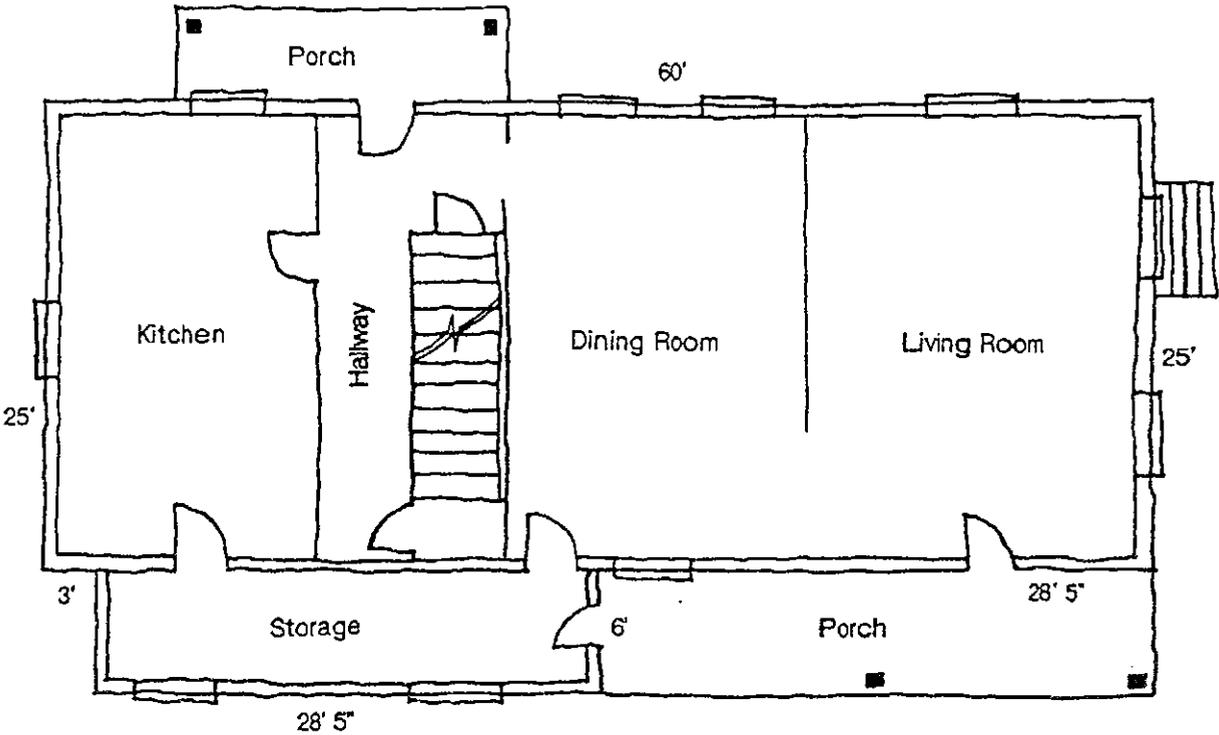
Source: J.W.C. Floyd, Photographer, c. 1900, Floyd Collection at the Ross Library, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

WEST BRANCH PENNSYLVANIA CANAL,  
LOCK No. 34, LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE  
HAER No. PA-188-B (Page 9)



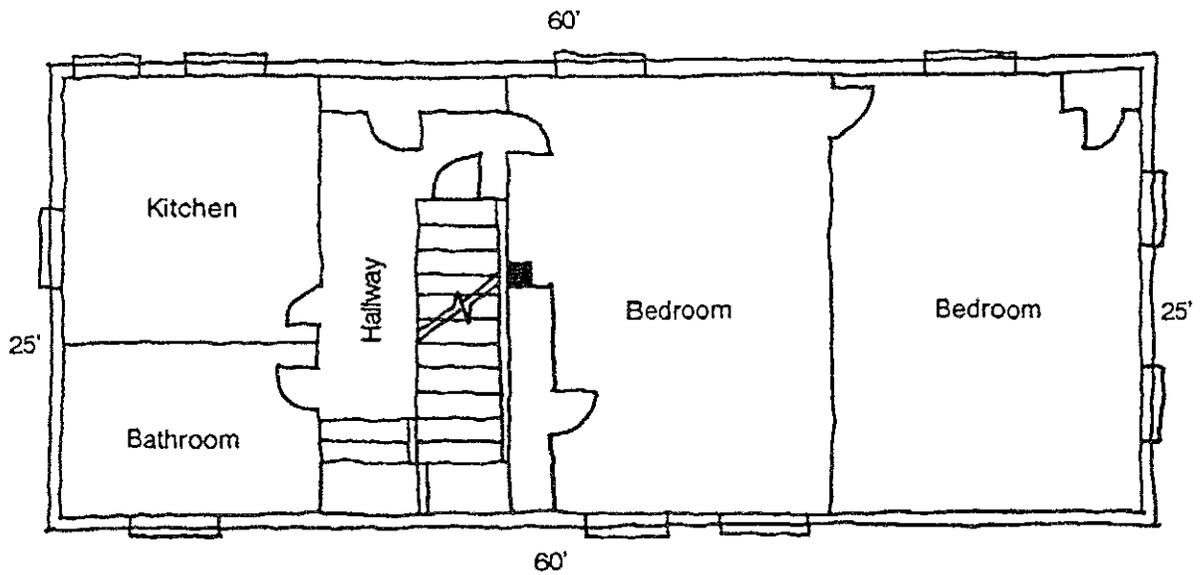
Existing Site Plan  
(Not to Scale)

Date Drawn: 1992  
Prepared By: Jill Cremer



First Floor Plan  
(Not to Scale)

Date Drawn: 1992  
Prepared By: Jill Cremer



Second Floor Plan  
(Not to Scale)

Date Drawn: 1992  
Prepared By: Jill Cremer