

CHAPTER 4.2

ALONG THE WEST BRANCH

The West Branch has long been a route to market for the lumbermen. For most of its route, mountains crowd it into narrow valleys. The fifty mile drive along the river from Lock Haven thru Clinton County toward Sinnemahoning is one of the most scenic, pleasant rides in Pennsylvania. Almost, but not quite, unspoiled by bill boards, hamburg stands, and beer joints, the highway curves, rises and falls to an unending series of changing views in the lovely Susquehanna River Valley.

This was a center for river lumbering; but between 1890 and 1910 it also witnessed the log railroad bringing out hemlock and mine props. Armed with a knowledge of the past, we find the drive up the valley a memorable event. Not only can we enjoy the beauty, but we can also comprehend the vast change that has occurred since the turn of the century — a change that runs counter current to the trend in most of the United States. Before delving into detail on the lumber companies that operated logging railroads, let us drive thru the valley and compare yesterday with today. This valley was more than just lumbering. Every two to four miles saw some industrial activity; today — none.

The road we drive is long established, a good one, but only two or three miles west of Lock Haven we pass the last home until we reach Hyner, twenty miles away. Three or four commercial establishments mar the scenery.

A few miles west of Lock Haven on the north side of the Susquehanna is Queens Run. Once, a large fire brick company was active here, and their railroad climbed to the mountain top for clay. A mile or two beyond is Farrandsville. A few people still live here, but its reason for existence, another fire brick company, has also long since passed into oblivion. It, too, had a railroad climbing the mountain. Both used Heisler locomotives.

Two miles further along, the highway dips down to cross Tangascootack Creek. For many years coal mines at its headwaters were served by the Scootac Railroad. Beecher and Barr built a log railroad off it up North Fork. Both are long gone.

Ferney Run, draining into the Susquehanna on the north side, is four miles upstream. William Boyer's log railroad brought out mine props. Three miles further west, a sign identifies Baker Run. Just beyond is Mill Run. Across the river are two homes, all that is left at Glen Union. A small town, a saw mill, and an extensive logging railroad network up these runs made Glen Union a busy settlement.

Just east of Hyner we cross the Susquehanna River on a concrete viaduct. At Hyner was another railroad. Three miles beyond is North Bend and Gleasonton, home of a tannery, the largest saw mill in the county, and a brick works. Both the brick works and the mill operated railroads.

Midway between North Bend and Renovo is Paddys

Run, the scene of another log railroad and a clay railroad from the North Bend brick works. At Renovo the large railroad locomotive back shop, the life blood of the town, is quiet; the buildings are deserted. A freight car repair shop continues the struggle.

A mile beyond is Drurys Run. Here were two brick plants, each having its own railroad climbing mountains on opposite sides of the run. One used a Climax; the other used a Shay.

Six miles beyond Renovo is Westport. Coal is now trucked down the mountain to the Penn Central. At one time a railroad ran along Kettle Creek to reach a coal field. Prior to that, in 1890, the Kettle Creek Railroad was incorporated by a group of Williamsport lumbermen. The purpose was to carry logs, but the railroad was never built. Instead the logs were floated downstream.

A few miles beyond Westport is Cooks Run. For many years the Susquehanna and Buffalo Railroad, in conjunction with two planes, brought coal from the Bitumen area. Two Shay locomotives were used, but in the late twenties the mines closed. Nearly forty years passed, other mines were opened, and a portion of the track was relaid. Now coal is trucked down the mountain and loaded into unit coal trains.

The brick plants are gone, the lumbering and the mills are gone, the tannery is gone, the locomotive repair shop is gone, and part of the coal mining is gone. Into these voids nothing has come. Industry has all but deserted the valley. Except at Renovo, it is not missed.

ADAM GOTSHALL — L. D. HERRITT

East Renovo

Paddys Run was the scene of one of Adam Gotshall's mine prop operations. The history of his life-long activities in securing mine props for the hard coal industry is covered in chapters 1.3 and 1.6.

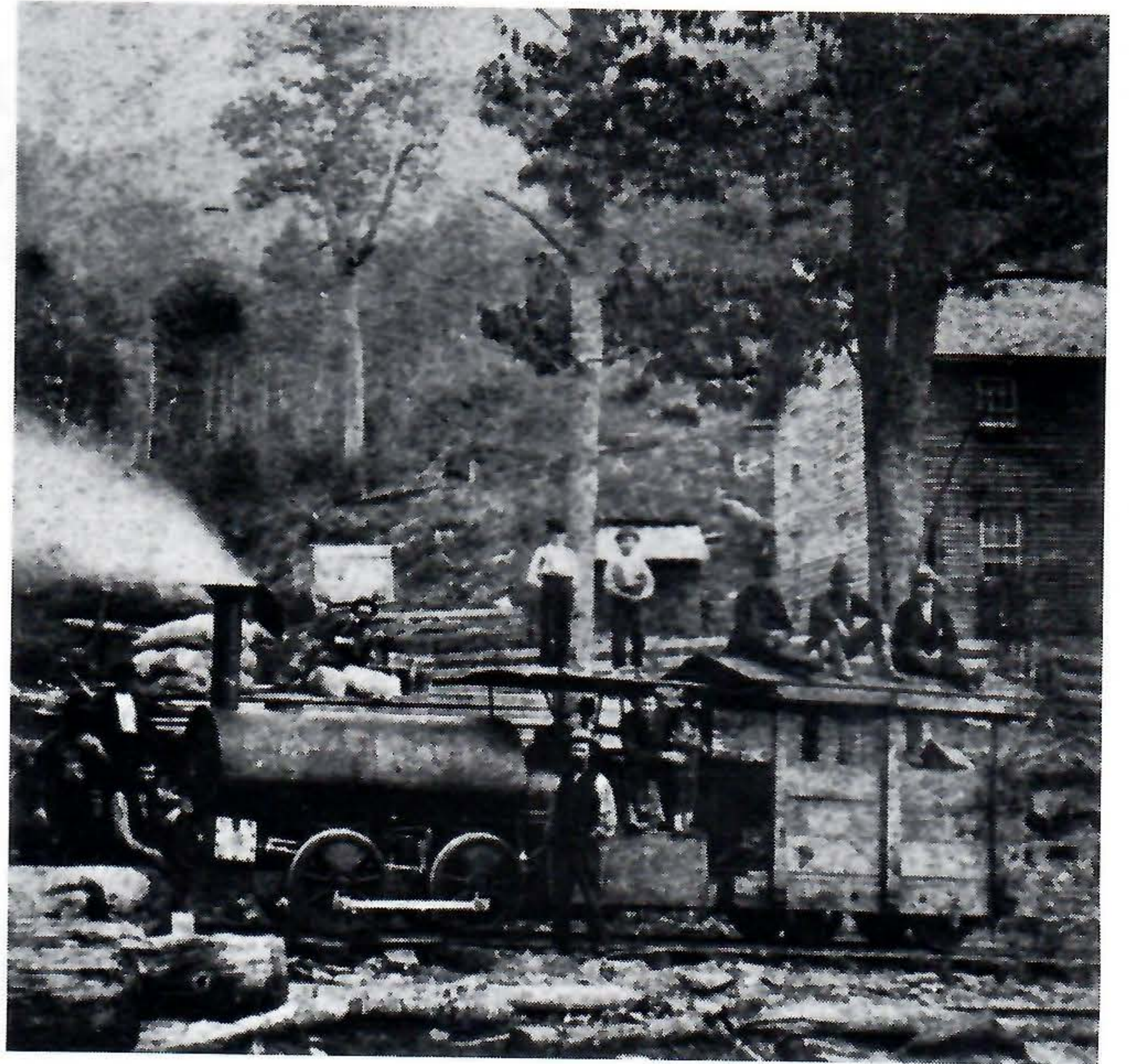
Gotshall contracted the job to Lancaster D. Herritt. Herritt had been operating at Eddy Lick, Centre County as a partner in the Lycoming Timber and Lumber Company. He had also recently jobbed in the Haneyville area. During the winter of 1900-01 Herritt built about nine miles of narrow gauge railroad along Paddys and Dark Hollow Runs to reach Gotshall's timber. A saddle tank locomotive, which Gotshall had been using in Centre County, was brought over. In 1904 it was replaced by a fifteen ton Shay. Initially there was a mill, but most logs were shipped by rail to the hard coal fields. At one time the boiler in the mill blew up.

The logging continued probably until 1908 when Herritt took a contract at nearby Dry Run for another company.



Rufus Confer

The logs have been loaded, on Gotshall's railroad, and now it is time to take them down to Renovo. Part way down, however, the locomotive needs a drink of water. The hose is dropped into the run, and water is sucked up into the tank by means of a steam pump. The Shay is No. 2. It eventually went to Yeagertown, Mifflin County, where it continued in use until 1935.



George Baker

This is one of the earliest photographs of a logging locomotive. Taken about 1878 it shows the father of George Baker in the cab of Mensch and Lowenstein's engine. The locomotive appears to have formerly been used at a mine.



Rufus Confer

The rambling nature of Gotshall's track along Paddy's Run is clearly evident. The hemlock had previously been cut, but Gotshall's interest was the remaining small timber. Hence, the complete cutting of the hillside. The locomotive is No. 1, an 0-4-0.

WILLIAMS AND FORESMAN

Hyner Run

Seven miles east of Renovo is the cross roads of Hyner. Here, the last logs were cut for the Williamsport saw mill of Bowman, Foresman, and Company. Samuel N. Williams and Seth T. Foresman were associated for many years in lumbering. However, Williams is today remembered as owner of the Lycoming Rubber Company.

The timber on Hyner Run was principally owned by Williams, Foresman having a relatively minor interest. The timber was near Lycoming County. In 1899 the jobbing contract was given to B. V. Wykoff, who had recently completed a contract at Sinnemahoning. Included was the necessity of building a railroad. Logs would be loaded on Pennsylvania Railroad flat cars and shipped to Williamsport.

Additionally, there was the saw mill of Frederick S. Johnson and William Weaver two miles up Hyner Run. Logs would be brought down from part of their 9100 acres on Hyner Run and the Left Branch. Finished lumber would also be shipped. The bark would be loaded into gondola cars, moved to Renovo, weighed, and brought back to the Gleasonton tannery. This served as a source of bark for the tannery after Howard and Perley cut all their Black Forest hemlock. Timber too small for lumber would be used for mine props, and William Boyer received that jobbing contract. He formerly had jobbed and operated railroads on Trout Run at Cammal and Ferney Run. Two to four cars of mine props would be shipped daily.

Two deaths changed plans. Wykoff died in 1901. Andrew Simpson became superintendent, according to Lee Johnson, whose father, Andrew Johnson, was a major jobber for the operation. Johnson cut in the Right Fork and East Branch. Jobbers on the Left Branch were Lee Reitz and Dill Phipps.

The second death was that of Frederick Johnson. Williams then purchased the thirteen square miles of the Johnson and Weaver tract. Most of it had been cut, but it gave Williams ownership of all the land drained by Hyner Run in Clinton County including possibly some of the higher ground drained by Young Womans Creek.

From six to eight carloads of logs were shipped out each day. John Poletto, one of two former employees still living, thought that the daily average for their best month was 50,000 feet. During 1907 the last logs were cut, and the railroad was removed.

Martin Cummings, the other living employee, also assisted in the research. He ran the locomotive which he said was an old Pennsylvania Railroad 2-8-0, Class R (H-3) with a fan tail (slope back) tender. According to Mr. Poletto, the locomotive later went to the Juniata Southern Railroad in Huntington County on an ill-fated operation of the Greico family.

Mr. Cummings fortunately was spared any serious accidents. However, the forest fires that burned the slashings one year almost ended disastrously, and he told about it: "We had brought our train of logs down to Hyner as we did every afternoon. Normally we returned to the engine house which was four miles up at the Right Fork. They also had the office there, and we all lived there."

"On this day we were told to go back up where the fire was and get cars that were being loaded before they were burned up. The whole area that had been logged off was on fire. It was quite exciting for awhile. Way up on the hills, about seven miles, they had cars that the Boyers were loading. They were loading prop timber on Pennsylvania Railroad cars. We tried to get them out. We got three or four, but two on the upper end burned up."

"The fire was all over everywhere. Coming down the road, the railroad was built right in the run. Both sides of the hill were blazing, and it was so hot that it cracked the windows in the cab. The superintendent was in the cab with us. His name was Thad Moore from Emporium. Around each curve he would holler 'hold her', 'let her go'. We were darned lucky. We didn't jump off the track and came right on thru."

Mr. Cummings added a few other points worthy of inclusion. "The locomotive had blind drivers (the two center pairs) so that it could go around sharp curves. Our curves were so sharp that they put extra rails beside the track so that the blind drivers wouldn't fall off. John Poletto was my fireman part of the time, and he later ran the engine after I left. The other members of the crew were Ken Strickler on the Barnhart loader, Joe Rupert, Trude Manning, and Joe Phluefeller, tongmen. Lee Rankin was a loaderman later. Some of these men came over from North Bend after Howard and Perley shut down. Angelo Poletto was in charge of the track after John Orlander was murdered." This murder took place in July, 1902. Two later loadermen were Milford Koon and Pete King.

Angelo Poletto was track foreman for five years. His camp for the track gang was up by the engine house, miles from a source of beer. Angelo, however, accommodated the needs of his men by keeping a stock of cold beer in the spring house. This he sold to his men. In the eyes of the law he was running a pigs-ear — an unlicensed establishment for the sale of alcoholic beverages. Word got back to the township constable. To the camp he went, when Poletto returned from work, he arrested him.

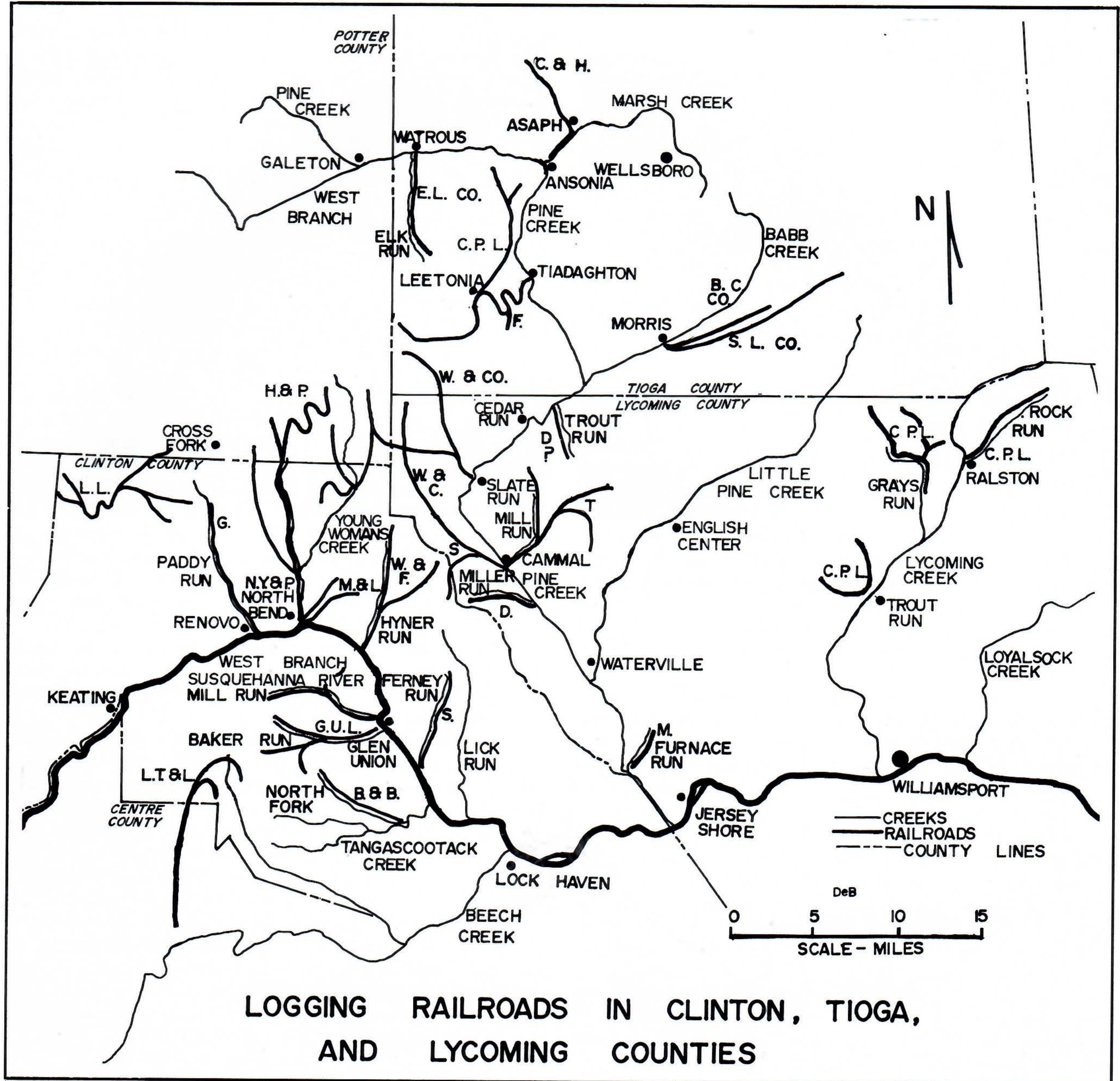
Eventually the case came to court where the judge declared Angelo not guilty. His reasoning for the verdict was simple: Everyone knew that an Italian couldn't live without his beer, and there was no legal source available.

MENSCH AND LOWENSTEIN

Gleasonton

One of the earliest railroads built specifically for logging was in Clinton County at Gleasonton. Railroad logging in Pennsylvania did not become firmly entrenched until the late eighties, but more than a decade earlier Mensch and Lowenstein had theirs. The short narrow gauge ran up the right hand branch of Young Womans Creek three or four miles. A locomotive was used to pull the empty cars up. On the return run, the cars may have coasted. The Renovo newspaper in 1874 mentions the railroad being in existence, and in 1878 reported the mill being destroyed by fire.

Samuel Mensch then moved to Renovo where he operated a store. Old timers still refer to a portion of Gleasonton as Jew Hill near where the saw mill and home of Lowenstein was.



LOGGING RAILROADS IN CLINTON, TIOGA, AND LYCOMING COUNTIES

LOGGING RAILROADS OF NORTH-CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

Initials	Company Name	Railroad Name	Initials	Company Name	Railroad Name
B&B	Beecher and Bullick		LL	Lackawanna Lbr. Co.	
BCC	Blossburg Coal Company		LT&L	Lycoming Timber & Lumber Co.	
C&H	Campbell and Hagenbuch	Asaph R. R.	M&L	Mensch & Lowenstein	
CPL	Central Penna. Lbr. Co.	Leetonia R. R.	M	H. A. Miller	
D	Francis Deloy		S	Daniel Shepp	Ferney Mountain R. R.
ELC	Emporium Lbr. Co.	Tiadaghton & Fahnestalk R. R.	S	Daniel Shepp	Trout Run R. R.
F	C. B. Farr		SLC	Slaght Lbr. Co.	
GUL	Glen Union Lbr. Co.	North Bend & Kettle Creek R. R.	T	C. E. Titman	Oregon & Texas Ry.
H&P	Howard & Perley Lbr. Co.		W&Co.	James B. Weed & Co.	Slate Run R. R.
			W&F	Williams and Foresman	
			W&C	Woods and Childs Lbr. Co.	Cammal & Black Forest Ry.

GLEN UNION LUMBER COMPANY

Glen Union

Glen Union was the locale for the longest operating railroad mill in Clinton County. Today, it requires careful searching to locate traces of the mill and railroad. Neither Baker Run nor Mill Run, on which the log railroads were built, have even a forestry road. Nor is anyone known to be still living who worked on the operation, which ran from 1889 until 1909.

The company's activities date from April 1, 1889. John W. Beecher of Pottsville and Coleman K. Sober of Lewisburg purchased about 15,000 acres, almost twenty square miles, from the West Branch Coal, Iron Ore, and Lumber Company. The pine had previously been cut, and evidently there were few large hemlocks. Prop timber was the chief objective.

Plans were made to begin lumbering, and the partners incorporated themselves as the Glen Union Lumber Company on September 3, 1889. E. S. Bullock of Audenried, Carbon County became the president of the new company with Beecher acting as secretary-treasurer and Sober as general manager. Bullock was involved with coal mining at Hazleton, but headquarters for the new company were at Pottsville.

In December, 1889 another 3,500 acres were purchased at a price less than eight dollars an acre.

The most serious problem facing the fledging company was how to get the logs and lumber across the Susquehanna. The Pennsylvania Railroad was on the

north side, the timber was on the south side, and the 1889 flood had just washed out almost every bridge on the entire river. A suspension bridge was first considered, but an areal tramway was finally chosen. Back in the 1860s John DuBois had used one successfully at Williamsport to carry lumber from his mill across to the canal and railroad.

The tramway proved an ideal solution. It operated for nineteen years without serious problem. The cableway carried a single car of lumber or props across the river where a horse moved the car alongside the Pennsylvania transfer for reloading. The tram was taxed to its fullest capacity when it carried a locomotive. Undoubtedly many breaths were held when the Heisler was taken across. The tram supposedly could take a twenty ton load. But could it? The Heisler weighed seventeen tons. Twice, the locomotive made it safely across.

The saw mill was located near the mouth of Mill Run. Reportedly, it could cut 40,000 feet a day. The original mill burned in August, 1891, but was promptly replaced. Later a band saw replaced the circular saw.

William Schrimshaw was the last living Glen Union Lumber Company employee in the Renovo area. He started with them in 1895 and continued until the end in 1909, at which time he was in charge of dismantling. He always enjoyed talking about the "good old days," and from tape recordings comes his reminiscences which follow.

"The mill was located at the mouth of Mill Run.



Mrs. Robert Wallace

A car of logs starts its ride across the river. According to William Schrimshaw, the tramway was built by the Trenton Iron Company. The two towers were each sixty five feet high. Two 2 1/4" cables carried the load, and they were 850 feet long. The cables were attached to yellow pine logs that were held down by rocks. The main cables and the anchor cables had turn buckles to take up the slack. The pulling cable, 2,100 feet long and 7/8" diameter, was operated by a large Lidgerwood hoisting engine located on the north side of the river. Its engine house can be seen behind the tower. The tramway hardly appears strong enough to carry a locomotive.



Mrs. Robert Wallace

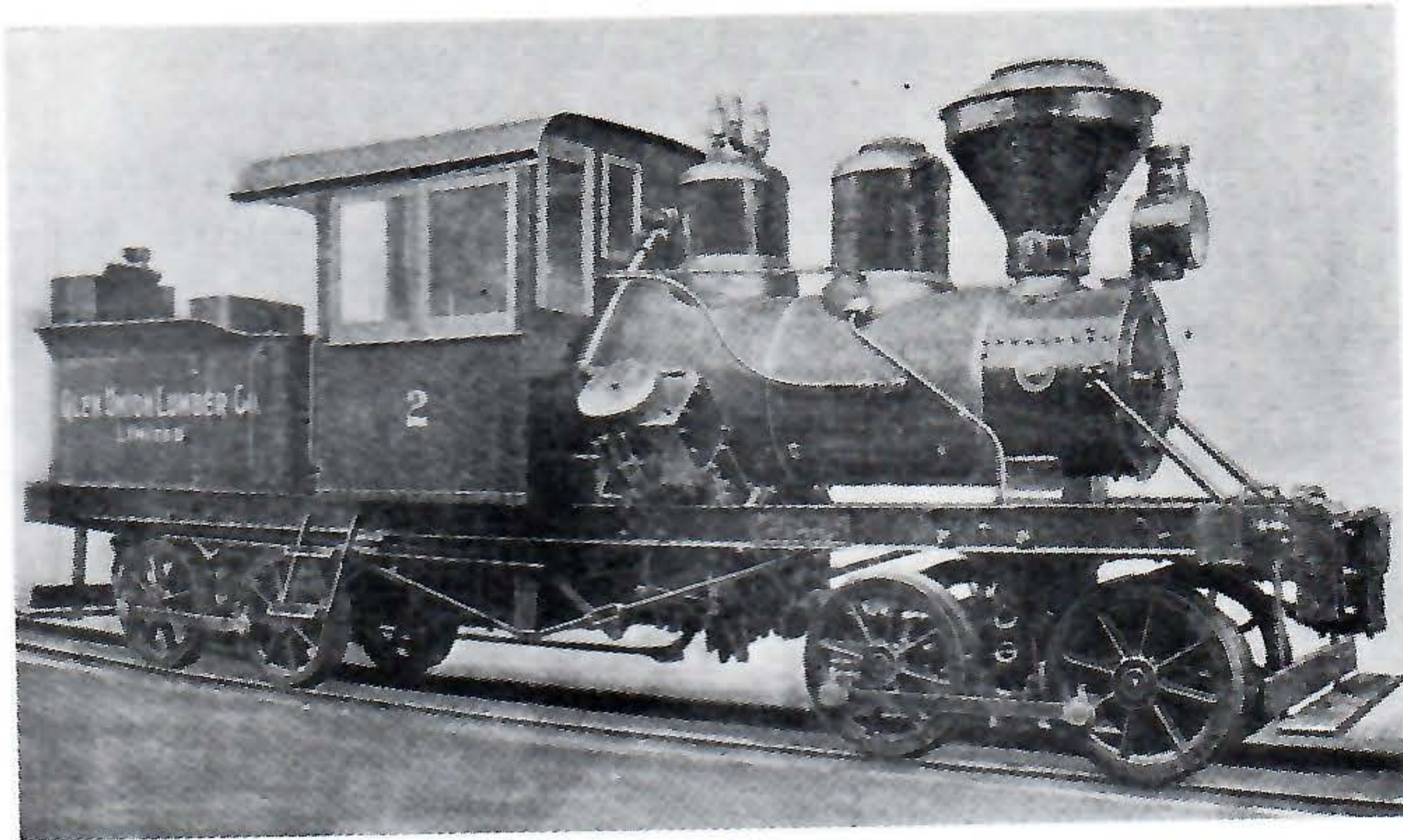
A close up of the tower.

There were twenty homes at the mouth of Baker Run (a quarter mile away) and a church and a school. These had been built years before by the West Branch Coal, Iron Ore, and Lumber Company, and were then used by the Glen Union Lumber Company. On the Pennsylvania Railroad side of the river were a depot, three homes, and the superintendent's house."

"I started there in 1895. They were tearing up the railroad on Mill Run and moving it to Baker Run. They had a Shay and a Dunkirk locomotive. They sold the Shay just after I got there, and later in the year or early in 1896 they bought a Heisler. (This was probably only the third Heisler locomotive to be built after the company started in 1894.) The Dunkirk locomotive weighed about sixteen tons and had a horizontal boiler. The company also had a Climax for several years."

"On Baker Run they ran two log trains each day. The Dunkirk might go out Shoemaker Run and bring in six cars of paperwood and six cars of logs. The Heisler would go up Benjamin Branch and bring down fourteen cars of prop timber. On another day they might go somewhere else and bring out a different number of cars. At each log landing there were several skid ways and the different types of logs were sorted so that one held mine props, another saw logs."

"When they were on Mill Run, they went up it and then switchbacked over the mountain down into Green



Glen Union purchased one the the first Heisler locomotives constructed. It is believed to have been C. N. 1002?, built in 1896. The little locomotive with the big cab could not exceed twenty tons, the capacity of the tramway which had to carry it across the river.

Run near Ritchie. On Baker Run they went up all branches — Shoemaker, Clendennin, Smokey Hollow, Rock Run, and Cranberry Swamp. At Smokey Hollow it was only a walk over the mountain to the other logging operation on Mill Branch of North Fork. This was Beecher and Barr's operation. They took out mine props."

"There were alot of different jobbers. George Snyder was the woods foreman at Hasting Springs on Shoemaker Run. Another camp was at Smokey Hollow on Shoemaker. David Strohecker was foreman. On Rock Run Irvin Miller was camp foreman. At Roger Hollow on Benjamin Branch a camp was built by King Rogers. There was a camp on Clendennin Branch, but I don't remember who had it."

Sometime after 1900 the saw milling portion of the business tapered off. During the winter of 1903-04, the mill was closed for six months. For the year of 1905 it sawed only 3,500,000 feet. The final cutting took place in 1909.

Everything was promptly torn up. The old Dunkirk locomotive was sold to the West Branch Fire Brick Company on Drurys Run, and the Heisler was sent to Virginia.

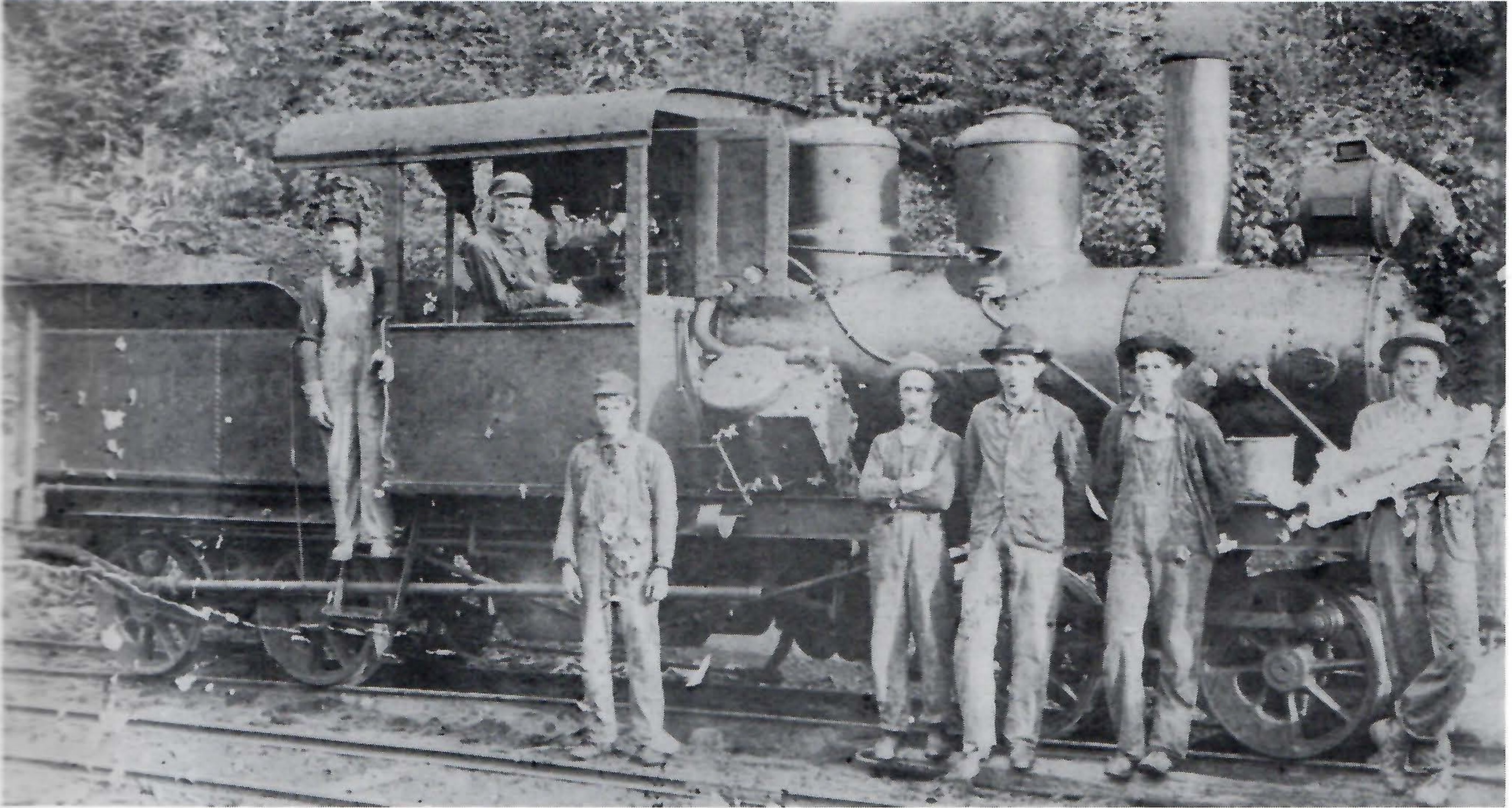
BEECHER AND BARR (or BULLOCK)

Tangascotack Creek

About 1901 according to William Schrimshaw, the only person who remembered the operation, Beecher and Barr built a railroad off the Scootac Railroad on Tangascotack Creek to get prop timber. The tramroad followed North Fork and Mill Branch into Beech Creek Township.

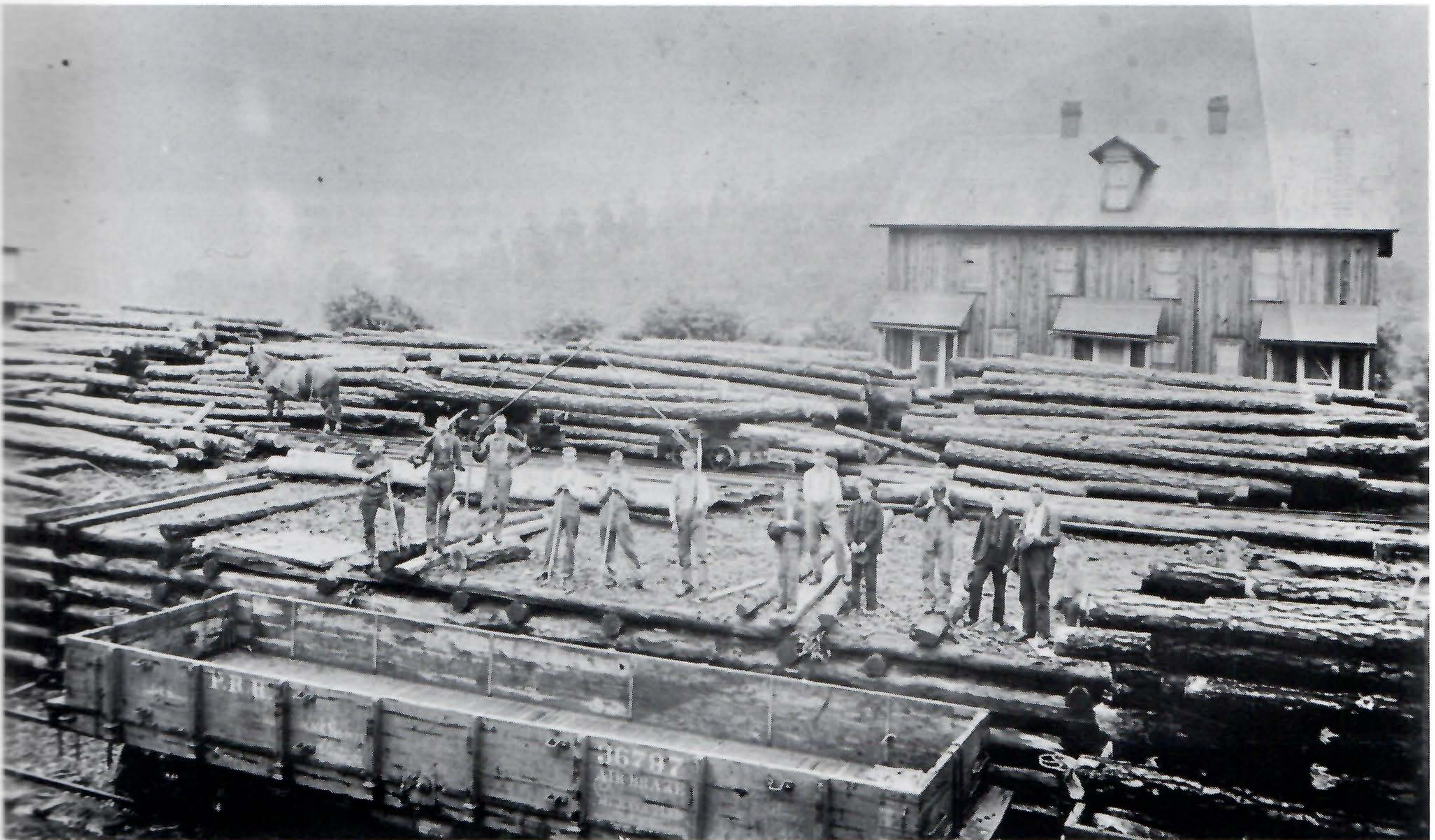
This was a separate operation from the Glen Union Company, but the lands were adjacent and Beecher and Barr were part owners of Glen Union. He recalled that a small rod locomotive, either a saddle tanker or a former elevated locomotive was used on the railroad.

Court house records conflict on the ownership. Daniel Shepp sold this tract of 2,055 acres to J. W. Beecher and E. S. Bullock in November, 1899 in Bald Eagle and Beech Creek Township. There is no mention of a Barr. Either Barr was the jobber or else the passage of sixty years had created an error in Mr. Schrimshaw's memory.



William Schrimshaw

Although numbered 2, the Heisler was the third locomotive Glen Union owned. The locomotive is only three years old, but has already received several alterations: an extended smoke box has been added to improve its steaming and a new headlight. There being no fire hazard at the time, the balloon stack has been removed and the straight stack put on. The men in this photo are, left to right: Ellis Tyson, foreman; George Schrimshaw, engineer; William Schrimshaw, conductor; Al Huff, brakeman; Layton Shady, brakeman; Earl Shady, brakeman; and Ed Zerby, mill foreman.



Mrs. Robert Wallace

Transferring mine props from log cars to Pennsylvania Railroad gondolas. One car is loaded, and now the crew will load the second car. In the background is the horse that was used to shift the cars to and from the tramway.