

CAMBRIA STEEL COMPANY,
WORK ORDERS OFFICE
(Bethlehem Steel Company,
Work Orders Office)
Cambria Iron Works
Lower Works
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-312-E

HAER
PA
11-JOTO,
137E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
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Location: Lower Works, Johnstown, Cambria
County, Pennsylvania
Quad: Johnstown, Pennsylvania
UTM: 17 E.676410 N.4466640
Date of Construction: ca. 1900
Fabricator: unknown
Present Owner: Bethlehem Steel Corporation
Present Use: Abandoned
Significance: Although the laboratory has been
removed and the building is vacant,
this six-story structure is an
important link in the increasingly
scientific approach to making steel
in the late-nineteenth century.
Historian: Gray Fitzsimons

Project Information:

The results of the study of Cambria County were published in
1990: Fitzsimons, Gray, editor, Blair County and Cambria County,
Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial
Sites (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project
(AIHP) and HABS/HAER, National Park Service). The contents of the
publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress as
individual reports. Research notes, field photos and copies of
historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to
the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library,
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

HISTORY

This six-story building of steel-frame construction with common-bond brick walls rests on a stone foundation. It measures 60' x 44'. The interior contains an electrically powered freight elevator and a single stairway. A fire escape is located along the west facade. Currently abandoned, the offices are strewn with papers and debris. The original multi-light, double-hung sash windows remain in place, though many are broken.

The Cambria Steel Company erected this slender, six-story office building in 1900. Upon its completion the building stood between the 18" Billet Mill, built in 1909, and the large Blooming Mill, built about 1872. To the east stood the Bessemer Steel Converter Building, erected about 1871. The first floor contained the physical laboratory, the second floor housed the works orders office, the third floor housed the rolling mill offices, the fourth floor contained the offices of the Bessemer steel division, the blast furnace division, and the open hearth division, and the fifth and sixth floors housed the chemical laboratory. As many as a dozen technicians worked in the laboratories in each shift. One lab worker recalled that the upper floors of the building provided an impressive view of the Lower Works. The men occasionally used the fire escapes along the west facade as a place to eat meals or get some "fresh" air. The lower floors served as offices for the mill operations, and consequently the building became known as the Works Orders Office.

Although the laboratory has been removed and the building is vacant, this six-story structure is an important link in the increasingly scientific approach to making steel in the late-nineteenth century. The once nearby Bessemer Converter Building and Open Hearth Plant were torn down in the 1950s, and the 11" Mill now occupies this site. In addition, the Blooming Mill was demolished in 1952. Apart from the Works Orders Office the only other building dating from the Cambria Steel period and located in this section of the Lower Works is the gutted 18" Billet Mill.

SOURCES

Bethlehem Steel Engineering Department, "History of the Evolution of the Johnstown Plant: Bethlehem Steel Company, 1852-1935; (revised 1958)," unpublished paper in the possession of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Engineering Division, Johnstown. pp. 49-53.

Giles, Earl. Retired employee, Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Interviewed 28 August 1987.

Holley, A.L. and Smith, Lenox. "American Iron and Steel Works: Works of the Cambria Iron Company," Engineering: An Illustrated Weekly Journal, Vol. 26, (28 September 1878): 233.

"Key Plan, Johnstown Plants: February 16, 1923; revised January 26, 1927, March 29, 1930, and February 13, 1939," (copy available at the Canal Museum, Center for Canal History and Technology, Easton, Pennsylvania).

Sanborn Map Company, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1891 and 1911.