

Plowman Sawmill (Lois Amyx Barn)  
N. Bank of Payette River  
Montour  
Gem County  
Idaho

HABS No. ID-47

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PLOWMAN SAWMILL  
 (Lois Amyx Barn)

Location: North bank of the Payette River  
 Montour, Gem County, Idaho  
 UTM: 11/553350/4864450

Present Owner: United States Department of the Interior

Present Occupant: Unoccupied

Present Use: Unused

Statement of Significance: This substantially build structure originally housed a sawmill operation. Later it was converted to a barn.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of erection: 1896

Builder: Attributed to Kenna P. Plowman

Historical Narrative:

According to area historian Ruth B. Lyon, Kenna P. Plowman built this sawmill in 1896. Contemporary evidence indirectly substantiates this date. The property was originally acquired in 1884 by Stephen J. Pierce. Apparently no mill existed in 1894, as John Ireton was forced that year to go to Emmett to buy 3000 feet of lumber for a placer mine in the Marsh area. A lumber mill was in operation here by 1900, run by Pierce's son-in-law, Kenna Plowman. Local accounts that Plowman ran a saloon along with the mill are substantiated through the 1900 manuscript census, which lists a bartender among ten "servants" at Plowman's. The others included day laborers, two Japanese cooks, a gardner, teamster, and mechanic, suggesting that Plowman's was a substantial enterprise.

Logs were brought down from forests to the north, floated down the Payette River on the spring floods. According to Mrs. Lyon, Plowman built a holding pond near the mill, from which the logs were removed as needed. Rough-cut lumber from this mill supplied building material for towns in the Boise Basin and Payette Valley. Mrs. Lyon also remembers Plowman's hotel and saloon, "a long hotel, two stories high, with the typical veranda running full length." (Letter from Ruth B. Lyon to M. H. Bowers, 21 June 1979).

The mill closed in 1907, and was subsequently converted to agricultural uses. Little remains to suggest the building's original function, besides the exceptionally heavy structural system and the (now modified) clear span of the upper floor.

### Bibliography:

Letter from Ruth B. Lyon, Emmett, Idaho, to M.H. Bowers,  
June 21, 1979.

1900 Manuscript Census for Idaho

Emmett Index: 18 November 1893, 1:6; 23 June 1894, 1:4;  
15 Feb. 1906, 1:2; 14 March 1894, 1:6; 23 May 1912,  
1:6.

Saxton, Cindy. "Montour." Ms., Parkview Junior High School,  
Emmett, Idaho.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### General statement

1. Architectural merit and interest: The sawmill is a substantially built industrial structure later converted to agricultural use as a barn.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor. The siding is greatly weathered, portions of the roof structure have been removed, some of the posts are tipping, and some are rotted at ground level.
3. Summary description: Two stories; 6 bays long and 3 days wide at ground story (clear-span at upper level); 40'-6" wide and 75'-6" long; rectangular plan.

### Detailed description of exterior

1. Foundations: Under the corner posts at the southeast end of the building, there are concrete pier foundations. The aggregate is exposed; it is river gravel. Similar pier foundations are visible along the southwest side. Elsewhere, piers were not accessible to be seen, owing within the building to a large accumulation of litter. Where they were found, the foundations were 0 to 6 inches above ground level.
2. Wall construction: The walls are of vertical boards. They range from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch thick and from 10 to  $11 \frac{3}{8}$  inches wide. Many of them rise the height of the

building - from the ground to the height of the eaves. The boards are nailed with wire nails, three at each place of nailing. Many of the boards are cupped (concave outward) and pulled loose. Their surfaces are quite weathered, although they still bear traces of red paint. The boards are in best condition, with very little cupping, on the northeast and northwest walls.

3. Structural system: The structural system is a heavy timber braced frame with roof trusses providing a clear span at the upper level. The floor construction of the upper level is unusual in that it has a longitudinal system of beams  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches and a transverse system as well, also  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The transverse beams rest on the longitudinal ones at the posts and are notched  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch at their bearing. Here are four angle braces, one pair to each beam. The angle braces fit into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch deep notches in posts and beams and have a tongue at each end that fits into  $5\text{-}\frac{3}{4}$ -inch deep mortices in beam and post and is secured at them with a one-inch diameter wooden peg penetrating completely through the post and the beam. The braces measure  $5\frac{1}{2}$  by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the former dimension horizontal. Both transverse and longitudinal beams are spliced, utilizing a scarf joint with paired hardwood wedges half-way along its slope and four  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch diameter bolts vertically. The overall length of the joint is two feet, and joints are located near midspan. At the lower level the posts are approximately  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the larger dimension parallel to the length of the building so that the  $9\frac{1}{2}$ -inch side meets the  $9\frac{1}{2}$ -inch side of the longitudinal beam which bears on it. At the exposed beam ends of the southeast wall one can see that the posts are topped by tongues which fit into mortices in the lower surface of the beams. It is also evident that the floor framing here formerly extended further toward the southeast and that the beams and angle braces have been removed. On the northeast side of the building the transverse beams of the end bay at the northwest end of the building project through the siding and are cut flush with its surface.

The floor of the upper story is framed with joists three by twelve inches running across the building. At the side walls there are heavy timber posts running up to a wall plate and angle braces connect posts to plate and to the lower chord of the truss. The connections here appear to be similar to those at the lower level. At all of the trusses except the first one in from the southeast end, there are 2 x 8s used as columns and nailed to the trusses at the third points of the span, necessary because the diagonals have been removed from the central span of the trusses, making them inactive as trusses. The walls are built with girts at midspan at each story to provide lateral support for the vertical board siding. The girts at the second

story are 2 x 8s or 2 x 6s, the larger dimension horizontal.

The lower chord of the trusses measures 7½ inches square, and the upper chord appears to be the same size, as are the beams superimposed on the horizontal central portion of the upper chord to form the peak of the roof. The truss diagonals are approximately 3½ by 7½ inches. The vertical tension rods are placed at the third points of the span and are one inch in diameter. The diagonal members bear against these rods. The lower chords are spliced with a scarf joint bolted through by the tension rod. It appears that the building was originally built with seven trusses spanning its six bays - that is, there were trusses at the end walls as well as at the intermediate spans - and that when it was converted into a barn, and the unloader installed with its track suspended from the center of the horizontal upper chord of the trusses, the truss diagonals were removed to provide an open way for use of the unloader. For some reason the diagonals of the truss nearest the southeast end of the building were left intact.

The roof is formed of purlins 3 by 6 inches, notched about ½ inch and resting on the trusses or upon the central roof beams supported by the trusses.

In general, the structural timber is rough sawn and shows evidence of cutting by a circular saw.

4. Porches, etc.: None.
5. Chimneys: None.
6. Openings, doorways and doors: Doorways consist of simple openings in the siding with whatever minimal structural framing that is needed. Doors are built up of planks on cleats arranged in a Z pattern.
7. Windows: None.
8. Roof, shape, covering: The roof is a gable in shape and is covered with corrugated iron, painted red on most of the northeast slope. The roofing on the southwest slope and the northwest end of the northeast slope is unpainted and shiny, as though new. The ridge is formed by projecting the iron of the southwest side over that of the northeast side; there is no ridge cap.

#### Detailed description of interior

1. Floor plans: At the lower level, the northwest end of the building is divided into three rooms. Following around the northeast side of the building, next to the room at the north corner there are two more rooms. The

upper level is one large space.

At the southeast end of the building and at the northeast side near the north corner, there is evidence that the beams of the floor construction of the upper level formerly extended beyond the building. See Structural System.

2. Stairway: There is evidence of a former stairway at the center bay of the southeast end of the building. The stairway has been removed, but the stairwell remains. A crude ladder fastened to the northwest exterior wall provides access to the upper level.
3. Flooring: At the lower level there is some 2-inch plank flooring in the small rooms, and at the east corner there is some concrete flooring, but not the full extent of the bay. The ground level was covered with much litter, but it appears that it is largely unfloored.

At the upper level the flooring in most of the center bay on the southeast end and the adjoining bay on the northwest is principally vee-grooved matchboards. The rest of the upper-level flooring appears to be of the same material as the exterior siding and in some places is in poor condition.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: At the lower level of the center room on the northeast side has board walls and some of the rooms at this level have board ceilings.
5. Doorways and doors: Only simple openings.
6. Interior trim: None.
7. Hardware: Very little; ordinary.
8. Mechanical and electrical equipment: Suspended from the center of the upper chord of the roof truss is an overhead rail of two wooden members. From these in turn a metal rail hangs by means of metal loops, hooks, and eyes. There is an unloader from which a pitchfork-like device is suspended by means of pulleys. The lettering on the unloader reads "MYERS OK UNLOADER ASHLAND OHIO STEEL BEARING(or Gearing?) 1821 - (could be 1921, the numbers are indistinct) - R.E. MYERS & BROTHER ASHLAND."

#### Site and surroundings

1. Orientation and general setting: The ends of the building face approximately 30 degrees south of east and 30 degrees

north of west. For convenience the ends have been designated northwest and southeast, and the sides northeast and southwest. The paved road, which proceeds south to the town of Montour, is raised on an embankment; it is at the west of the building and goes in a south-southwest direction to a bridge across the Payette River. The access road to the site descends from the paved road at a place south of the building. The southeast end of the building is about 35 feet from a berm, which is about two feet higher than the ground level at the building. To the southeast the berm descends to the shore of the Payette River, which flows from northeast to southwest. The immediate site of the building is flat, but there is a hill which rises near it to the northwest.

The U.S. Geological Survey map mentioned shows what appears to be the remains of the mill-stream which furnished power to the sawmill.

Alva McConnel, last private owner of the Mitchell, Marsh and Ireton Ranch House, stated that the mill obtained its water power some 400 feet upstream and that the channel was about 30 feet from the mill, opposite it, where there was a concrete housing for the turbine, which generated electric power to operate the electric motors of the sawmill.

2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by Dennett, Muessig & Associates, Iowa City, Iowa, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, Pacific Northwest Region. It fulfills the Bureau of Reclamation's obligations under a memorandum of agreement between the Bureau, the State of Idaho, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR 800. The structure was photographed, measured, and drawn March - September 1979 by Sarah J. Dennett and Hans Muessig, Project Supervisors; Wesley I. Shank, Project Architectural Historian/Historical Architect, (Iowa State University); Martha H. Bowers, Project Historian; Robert A. Ryan, Project Photographer; and Philipp Muessig, Project Assistant.

APPENDIX

CHAIN OF TITLE: PLOWMAN SAWMILL

Description: Portion of lot 1, Section 21 and lot 5, Section 22  
T7N R1E, Boise Meridian  
Reference: Recorder's Office, Gem County Courthouse, Emmett, Idaho

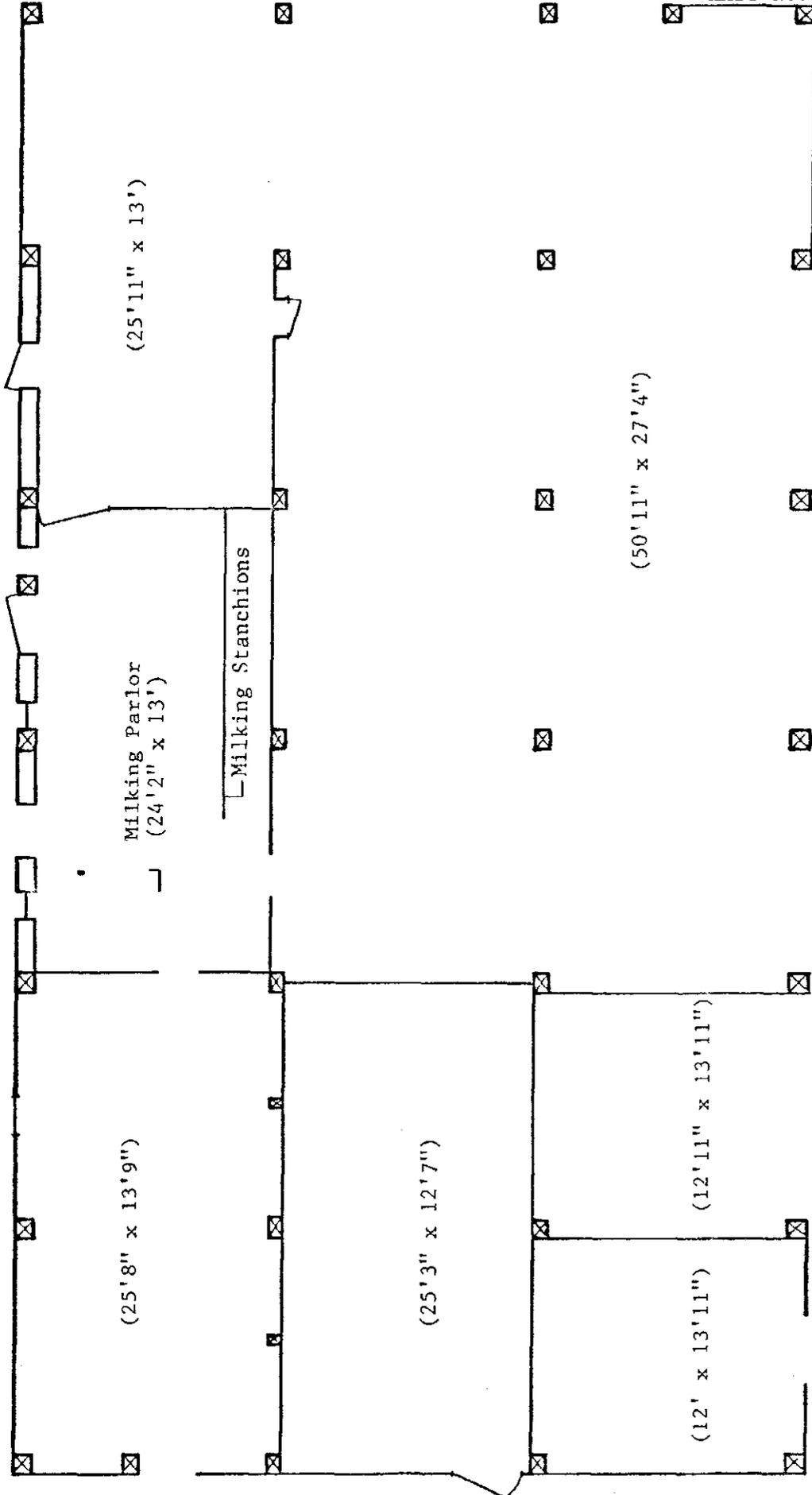
- 1884 Patent Hd. Cft. #376 5 June 1884  
Recorded 15 December 1900  
Book B. Deeds, p. 548  
U.S.A.  
to  
Stephen J. Pierce
- 1900 Deed 12 December 1900  
Recorded 8 January 1901  
Book A. Deeds, p. 591  
Stephen J. Pierce and Deborah Pierce  
to  
Mary K. Plowman, heirs and assigns
- 1910 Deed 3 January 1910  
Recorded 17 January 1910  
Book A. Deeds, p. 97  
Mary K. Plowman  
to  
Southern Idaho Land Co.
- 1910 Deed 11 January 1910  
Recorded 18 February 1910  
Book B Deeds, p. 416  
Southern Idaho Land Co.  
to  
Lew A. Wilson, C. H. Lansing & John G. Dillon
- 1911 Deed 31 May 1911  
Recorded 10 June 1911  
Book B. Deeds, p. 33  
C. H. Lansing & Elizabeth Lansing  
to  
Oscar F. Wilson & Jane Wilson
- 1911 Deed 1 September 1911  
Recorded 23 November 1911  
Book B. Deeds, p. 51  
Lew A. Wilson & Anna Wilson  
to  
J. B. Wilson & Huldah E. Wilson

Continued - Chain of Title for Plowman Sawmill

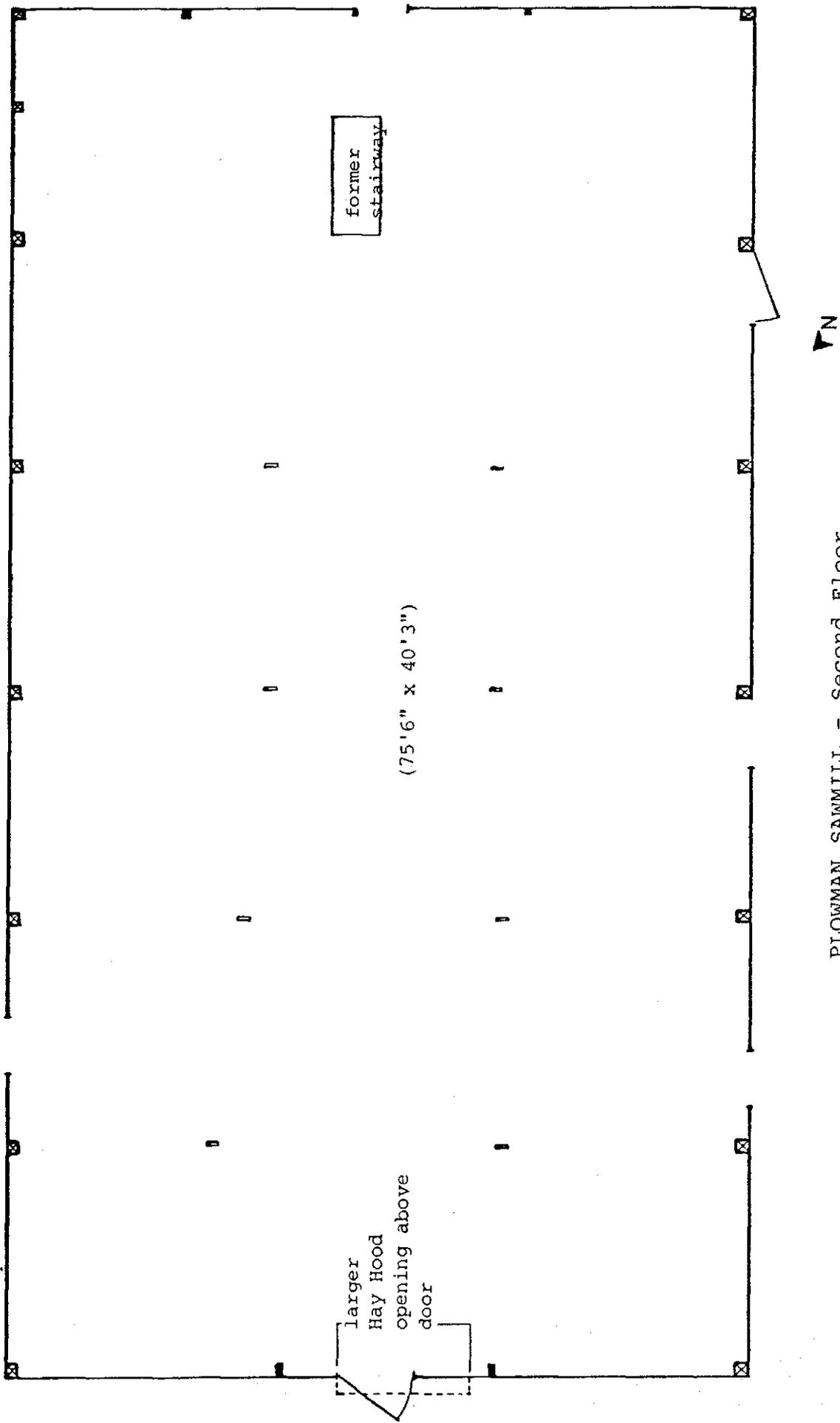
- 1911 Spec. W. Deed 11 November 1911  
Recorded 13 November 1912  
Book A. Deeds, p. 195  
John G. Dillon & Iva Dillon  
to  
John B. Wilson & Hulda E. Wilson
- 1916 Sheriff's Deed 12 January 1916  
Recorded 18 January 1916  
Book 1 Deeds p. 159  
Dave Nichols, Acting Sheriff at Gem County  
to  
G. D. Hoseley
- 1916 Deed 14 January 1916  
Recorded 13 March 1924  
Book 16 Deeds, p. 27  
G. D. Hoseley & Bird Hoseley  
to  
J. A. Armstrong
- 1917 Deed 24 August 1917  
Recorded 13 March 1924  
Book 16 Deeds, p. 28  
J. A. Armstrong & Frances A. Armstrong  
to  
E. T. Juvenal
- 1918 Deed 27 September 1918  
Recorded 13 March 1924  
Book 16 Deeds, p. 29  
E. T. Juvenal & Lenna V. Juvenal  
to  
David R. Wood
- 1920 Deed 19 March 1920  
Recorded 13 March 1924  
Book 16 Deeds, p. 31  
David R. Wood & Olive C. Wood  
to  
Bank of Echo
- 1924 Bargain and Sale Deed 1 May 1924  
Recorded 24 June 1924  
Book 16 Deeds, p. 125  
Bank of Echo  
to  
Joseph Cunha

Continued - Chain of Title for Plowman Sawmill

- 1927 Deed 1 July 1927  
Recorded 31 July 1928  
Book 18 Deeds, p. 568  
Joseph Cunha & Ortance Cunha  
to  
Fred B. Amyx
- 1958 Decree of Distribution 7 July 1958  
Recorded 12 July 1958  
Deed Instrument #77000  
Fred B. Amyx, Deceased  
to  
Jane Amyx, Widow
- 1960 Deed 12 July 1960  
Recorded 21 July 1960  
Book 39 Deeds, p. 559, Deed Instrument #80662  
R. B. Amyx & Juanita Amyx  
to  
Joe Amyx & Lois Amyx
- 1960 Deed 5 August 1960  
Recorded 16 August 1960  
Book 39 Deeds, Deed Instrument #80768  
R. B. Amyx & Juanita Amyx  
to  
Joe Amyx & Lois Amyx
- 1978 Deed 12 May 1978  
Recorded 18 May 1978  
Deed Instrument # 124211  
Lois Amyx  
to  
U. S. A.



PLOWMAN SAWMILL - First Floor  
Approx 1/8 Scale (now used as a barn)



PLOWMAN SAWMILL - Second Floor  
approx. 1/8 scale (now used as a barn)