

Johnstown Passenger Railway Company,
Baumer Street Powerhouse
Baumer Street, .15 mile S of PA 56
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-258-C

HAER
PA,
11-JOTO,
2-C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
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JOHNSTOWN PASSENGER RAILWAY COMPANY, BAUMER STREET POWERHOUSE

HAER No. PA-258-C

Location: Baumer Street, .15 mile S of PA 56, at B&O tracks, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Johnstown, Pennsylvania (1:24000)
UTM: 17 E.677280 N.4465040

Date of Construction: ca. 1890

Builders: Tom Johnson
Johnstown Corporation

Present Owner: none

Present Use: demolished in 1988

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Indiana, Fayette and Westmoreland counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Blair County and Cambria County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1990), edited by Gray Fitzsimons and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

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History:

This structure, completed in 1900, was the second powerhouse constructed by the Johnstown Company. The first was located immediately behind it against the hillside from which coal was mined. Some of the foundation of the original powerhouse appears to be intact, at the base of the Route 56 bypass on-ramp at Bedford Street.

The Flood of 1889 devastated the Johnstown Passenger Railway Company by sweeping all of its tracks away and damaging much of the rolling stock. Subsequently, Tom Johnson of the Johnson Steel Street Rail Company purchased the city's street-car property and began electrifying the system. In 1890 Johnson constructed a powerhouse on Baumer Street to provide steam generated electricity for the street car line. A coal mine located behind the power house provided the coal for the boilers. (The original coal tipple still exists.) By 1911 the turbines had a 1,000 horsepower capacity. In 1945 the company began purchasing electricity from Penelec, and the powerhouse was converted to a substation. It was shutdown in the early 1960s, when the Johnstown transit system converted to buses. Currently, the structure is owned by Dale Oxygen, Inc., and one-half of the building is leased to an auto repair firm.

Prior to its demolition in 1988, the tall one-story powerhouse measured 105' x 100'; the engine room was taller than the adjacent transformer room. The powerhouse contained brick pilasters, steel roof trusses, and a stone foundation. Its walls were composed of stretcher bond red brick. The powerhouse featured circular brick arches spanning the multiple, double-hung sash windows. None of the steam engines, generators, exciters, or transformers remained in the building at the time of the HAER inventory.

Sources:

- Coleman, Nancy. "The History of Public Transportation." Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley. Johnstown, Pennsylvania: Johnstown Flood Museum, 1984.
Rohrbeck, Benson W.. Johnstown Traction Co. 1888-1960. Westchester, Pennsylvania: Ben Rohrbeck Traction Publications, 1976.
Sanborn Map Company. Johnstown, Pennsylvania. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1911.