In 1831, the governor of Pennsylvania, George Wolf, signed a legislative act stimulating the development of the Allegheny Portage Railroad. It was to be the first railroad over the Allegheny Mountains. Two phases of construction were completed in 1835. The railroad covered 36.5 miles, rising and falling more than 2,500 feet in elevation. The passage contained 10 inclined planes over its course. The completion of this leg of the railroad shortened the trip between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to less than a week. The portage railroad served travelers for over 20 years despite constant breakdowns, expensive maintenance, and safety issues.

The Allegheny Portage Railroad quarry contributed to this magnificent engineering feat by providing rock for stone sleepers (rail foundation posts carved by stonemasons), culverts, buildings, and bridges, including the well-preserved Skew Arch Bridge. On Allegheny Mountain, the quarrymen made use of a boulder field of blocky Mahoning sandstone of the Conemaugh Group, Glenshaw Formation. The Mahoning sandstone is a massive, coarse-grained rock that is occasionally conglomeratic.

The quarry area is located downhill from the Visitor Center. The quarry consisted of mostly colluvium, including large boulders, and the big blocks of rock were easy pickings for the workers. Stonemasons cut the blocks into the desired pieces, and the rock made its place in the travel history of Pennsylvania.


Allegheny Portage Railroad web page of the National Park Service.