

**A BIG RAILROAD, A SMALL
QUARRY, AND A HUGE
EMBARRASSMENT**



THE LIMESTONE QUARRY AT LEONARD SPRINGS

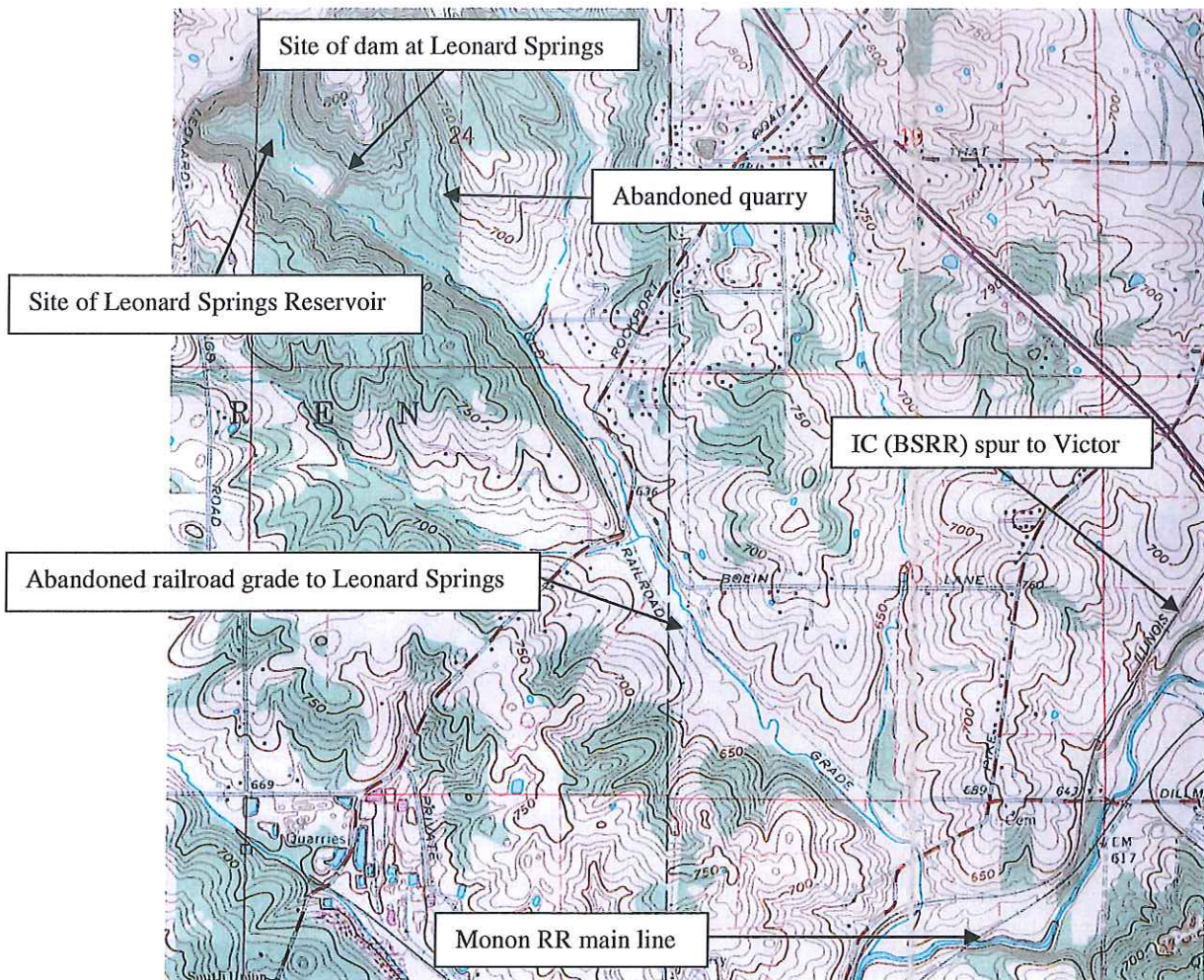
BY

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A Big Railroad, a Small Quarry, and a Huge Embarrassment¹

The railroad is a spur off the Illinois Central Bloomington Branch (or Illinois Central Stone Railroad)², the quarry is near Leonard Springs in Monroe County, and the embarrassment is, alas, mine. And therein hangs a tale. I became aware of this particular spur many years ago when, as a lad, I worked on a farm through which the railroad had run. The tracks were long gone but the faint imprint of the grade was still (and is today) discernible. See Map I.

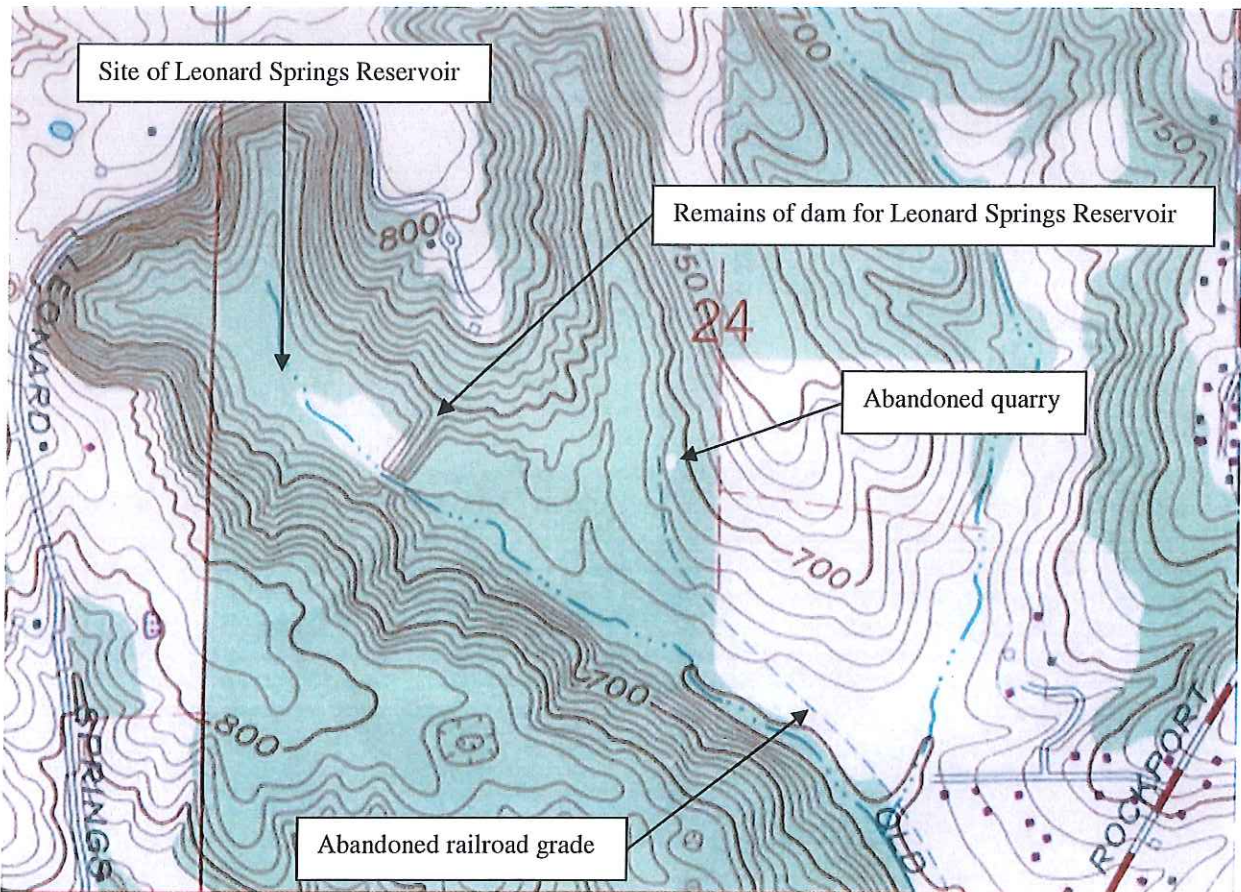


Map I This is a 1965 Photorevised Clear Creek Quadrant USGS map showing the spur that came off the Illinois Central Stone Railroad to Victor and going to the Leonard Springs area in Section 24.

¹ With some additional information, this is a reworking of pages 33-38 in my “Bits, Pieces, and Curiosities of Monroe County Railroads,” unpublished manuscript written in April, 2017.

² This branch of the Illinois Central left the main line in Bloomington and headed south through Clear Creek to the quarry at Victor. It served several quarries and mills in between. It was constructed from 1907 to 1914 and extended 9.2 miles. It was abandoned in 1988 and portions of it are now part of the Bloomington hiking trails.

For years I assumed the spur heading northwest to the site of the Leonard Springs Reservoir was related to the building of the dam and possibly the transporting of coal to run the pumping station for the city water works. Construction on that dam and reservoir was begun in 1915³ and my earlier assumption led me to believe the railroad spur would have been built then. I was wrong and not the crackerjack local historian I thought I was. Too many assumptions. I have walked the railroad grade and it does appear to go to the remains of the pump house and I could discern no grade running anywhere else, even though the maps show it curving and heading up the valley to the northeast. See Map II. It is difficult to follow the railroad grade in this area where the creek has flooded repeatedly over the last hundred years.



Map II This is Section 24 and part of the eastern edge of Section 25 and is an enlargement of Map I.

A series of Emails from Frank McGill saved me from putting my erroneous assumptions in writing. Earlier I had attempted to research the history of Leonard Springs Reservoir, one of Bloomington's several early and inadequate water sources, and discovered the paucity of information about it in city records or local museum archives. Frank has proven indefatigable in probing newspapers and magazines for information. He found the following in *Stone* magazine:

³ Wendy L. Natt, *Archaeological Reconnaissance of the Proposed Leonard Springs Nature Park in Monroe County, Indiana*, City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation, 1999, p 7.

Opening Up a New Limestone Field

A company has been formed at Dayton, Ohio, with a capital of \$200,000 and headed by W. W. Dodson, of that city. The company plans to open a quarry in a valley near Leonard's Mill, six miles southwest of Bloomington, Ind. This is several miles out of the regular limestone district, but the property has been core drilled and it is said that the result proved satisfactory. The land is about a mile and a half from the line of the Monon Railroad, and if the quarry proves successful, the company intends to build an independent railroad, having its own engine and cars, connecting it with the Monon. It is hoped to get that quarry equipped and in shape this summer, so that stone can be taken out next spring.⁴

William W. Dodgson⁵ obtained an option to buy land in sections 24 and 25 in February, 1911 and was allowed to core drill in "four or five places."⁶ On May 6, 1910, articles of incorporation had been filed for the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company with capital stock of \$200,000 divided into two thousand shares of one hundred dollars each. The incorporation members were:

William W. Dodgson of Dayton, Ohio
Samuel F. George of Dayton, Ohio
William H. Rogers of Bloomington, Indiana

The directors for the corporation were the same as above with the addition of Harry H. Griffith.⁷

Through the miracle of Facebook, Alan Tate provided Frank with the following quote from the *Indianapolis Star* sometime in March, 1913:

LET ROAD CONTRACT MARCH, 6 Officials of Bloomington Southern Will Build Road to New Quarries

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. March 2, Announcement is made that the contract for the construction of the branch line of the Bloomington Southern Railroad to the quarry of the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company is to be let March 6 and the estimated cost is \$25,000. The quarry is one recently opened by a party of Ohio capitalists headed by W. W. Dodson of Dayton. The new line will pass through the farms of Kelly Thrasher, Jonathan May, William M. Borland, Mary Trisler, Laben Green and Jonas R. May. It is expected that the work will be completed during the summer.⁸

The railroad was not built at that time and a hint of the financial problems facing the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company can be gleaned from the labor lien filed by Iva Quinn against both the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company and the Leonard Springs Stone [sic] Company for work done

⁴ "Opening Up a New Limestone Field," *Stone*, Vol. 32, 1911, p. 423. Normally Cleveland banks and people have interests in the Limestone District here in Indiana. This is the only association with Dayton of which I am aware.

⁵ Monroe County records always give his name as William W. Dodgson.

⁶ Monroe County Miscellaneous Record Vol. 6, p. 271.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-3.

⁸ Joseph A. Batchelor, *An Economic History of the Indiana Oolitic Limestone Industry*, (Indiana University: Bloomington), 1944, p 153 writes that the bondholders of the Ohio-Oolitic Stone Company "lost all, or substantially all, parts of their investments."

from May 18, 1914 to August 14, 1915 for which she wasn't paid.⁹

Let us review the chronology a bit. In 1910 the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company was incorporated and early in 1911 it obtained an option to buy land and core drill. There is a newspaper story about a railroad spur to be built to the quarry. The story is dated in March, 1913, but the railroad is not built at that time (see below). From May, 1914 to August, 1915 the company is not paying an employee. Since the labor lien is against both the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company AND the Leonard Springs Stone Company, I assume (there I go again) that the company had a reorganization and emerged with a new name. I could find no records in the court house in Bloomington that would confirm this but the later history, such as it is, would show that the company did have a new name, albeit it was the Leonard Springs Quarry (or Quarries) Company.¹⁰ The labor lien was filed on August 21, 1915 and the confusion about the name of the new company might indicate that the transition was occurring at just that time.

On July 19, 1917 the Leonard Springs Quarry Company agreed to provide land free of cost on which the Illinois Central railroad could build a spur to the quarry. It also agreed to provide ballast and a bumping post¹¹ and to maintain the track. The railroad agreed to build the spur and provide the rails.¹² On March 3, 1916 a warranty deed was granted to the Leonard Springs Water Company for \$500 for some land and later on November 28, 1917 more land changed hands to the water company for \$10,000.¹³ The smaller amount and the anticipation of the larger amount may have been just enough to handle what limited financing was necessary to have the railroad spur built and convince the Illinois Central to build it. With the ongoing rivalry with the Monon railroad for stone business, it may not have taken much convincing.

The following advertisement in *Stone* magazine appeared (date unknown) sometime in 1919:

FOR SALE OR LEASE
A Bedford Stone Quarry
THE LEONARD SPRINGS QUARRIES CO.
Bloomington, Ind.

160 acres on the Illinois Central Railroad. \$1,000 worth of marketable buff stone on hand taken out of new opening.

Ready to operate, fully equipped.

4 channellers, steel derrick, jib crane, 3 power plants, blacksmith shop, stone crusher, steam drill, lot of small tools and supplies, practically no stripping, free water facilities, residence for caretaker.

\$50,000 buys it on easy terms.

For further particulars address H. P. Radley, Mgr. Jos. Kramer, Pres. 138 Wistaria Drive, Dayton, O.¹⁴

⁹ Monroe County Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 7, p. 171.

¹⁰ The scant court records give "quarries" sometimes and "quarry" sometimes. I will settle on quarry.

¹¹ A bumping post is a device at the end of a dead end railroad track that prevents cars from rolling off the tracks.

¹² Monroe County Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 7, pp. 344-345

¹³ Monroe County General Index of Deeds for Van Buren Township, 7 A.

¹⁴ I am indebted on again to Frank McGill for providing this crucial piece of information.

This advertisement was proof that the quarry was indeed opened and we already knew from the old abandoned grade that the railroad was built. It was now a matter of finding it. I had made a perfunctory search but as it turned out, I was looking in all the wrong places. Again, Frank McGill came through and located it. Much to my further embarrassment, it was located EXACTLY on the Geological Survey map where the abandoned railroad grade terminated. I visited the site and took the photographs included herein.

It isn't known to what extent, if any, the city waterworks made use of the railroad. It certainly wasn't there when the dam was built, since it was begun in 1915 and the railroad was constructed in the latter part of 1917 or 1918. A property owners map for 1932 shows the railroad was still there.¹⁵ The reservoir was abandoned in 1943 and the dam was breached shortly thereafter. The tracks were definitely gone by 1946.¹⁶ If the tracks were not being used by the city, I would think they would have been removed at a much earlier date.

Map III shows the location of the quarry near Leonard Springs as it relates to the closest points where successful quarry operations were (and still are) carried out. Our little abandoned quarry is just about midway between (1 ½ miles from each) these two elaborate quarry fields. It would take an experienced stone man and a geologist to draw conclusions about whether the location of the quarry had anything to do with the failure of the enterprise. Lots of things can cause a business to fail. Lack of operating capital, poor management, and lack of expertise are just a few. All of the above can be correctly in place but in business, as with comedy, timing is all important. The table on the following page gives a look at the state of the limestone business. Another way that poor timing will result in failure even in the face of good preparation is the matter of architectural taste in the color of limestone. If your quarry only produces buff stone and the market suddenly prefers grey, then you are caught with perfectly good unsalable stone. Larger quarry operations have many acres of open ledges and can shift the areas of production from one ledge to another depending upon the color. Very small operations do not have this luxury.

William H. Rogers was the local man in the organization of the company and it would seem he had the appropriate experience. He had been involved in the organization of the Hunter Valley Stone Company in 1895, the Morton C. Hunter Stone Company in 1890, and the National Stone Company in 1903.¹⁷ Maybe his time was overextended. Who knows?

Text continues on page nine.

¹⁵ 1920 Map of Monroe County Indiana compiled by Elmer E. Van Buskirk, County Surveyor, and similar map of property owners for 1932 made by Cyrus R. Clevenger, Registered Civil Engineer, Land Surveyor, and Architect. Maps can be found at IUB Maps. The 1920 map oddly does not show the railroad.

¹⁶ Natt, *op. ct.*, p 7; Personal interview with Helen Zike who moved in 1946 to land formerly occupied by the railroad. The tracks were definitely gone by then.

¹⁷ Clay W. Stuckey, "Origins of the Indiana Limestone Company," unpublished manuscript, 1990, pp.46-47. The middle initial of Mr. Rogers can be very confusing in court house records.

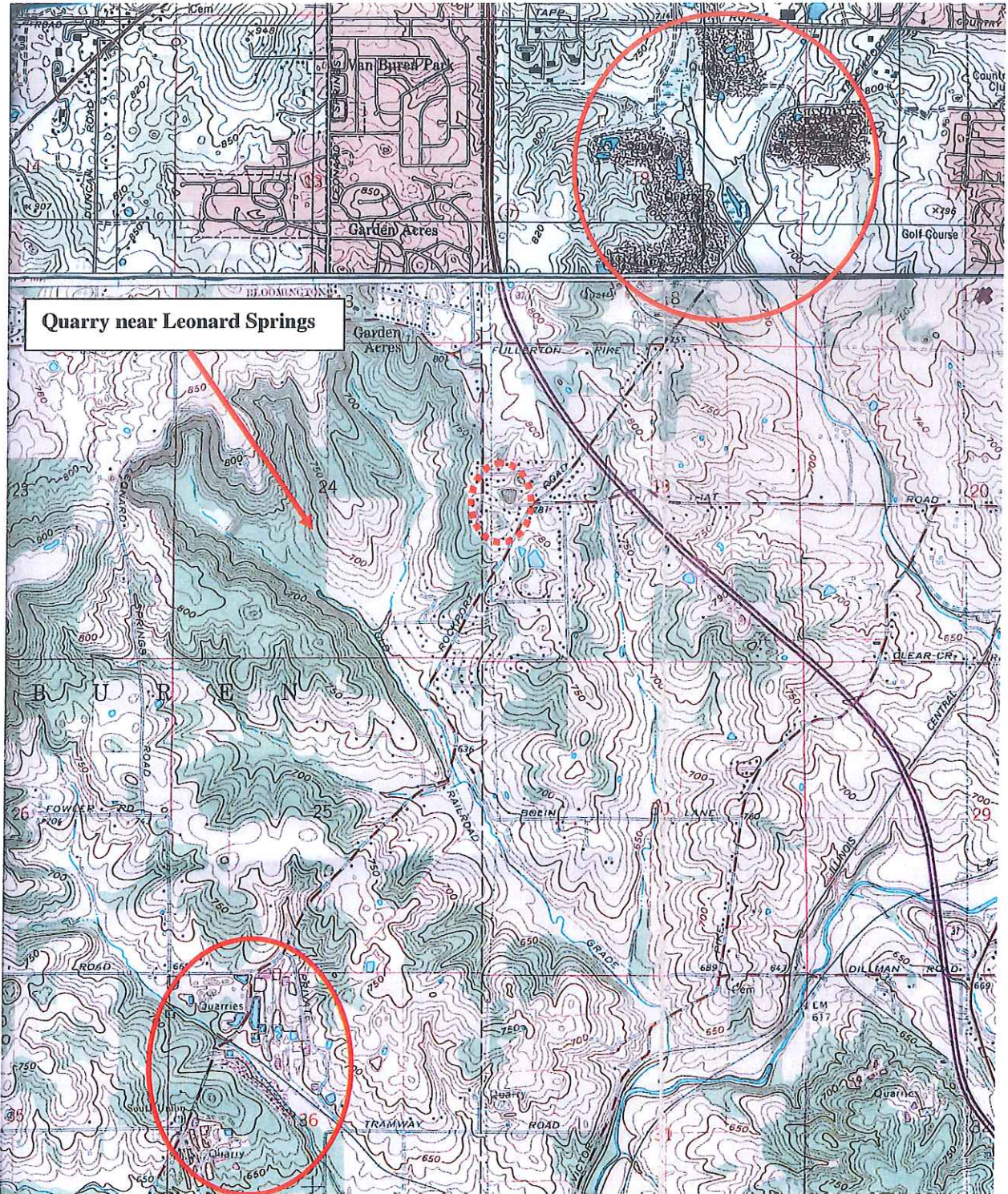
The following table is a modification of Table 10 which appears on page 83 of *An Economic History of the Indiana Oolitic Limestone Industry*, by Joseph A. Batchelor. It was published by Indiana University in 1944.

SALES OF INDIANA OOLITIC LIMESTONE, 1911-1918

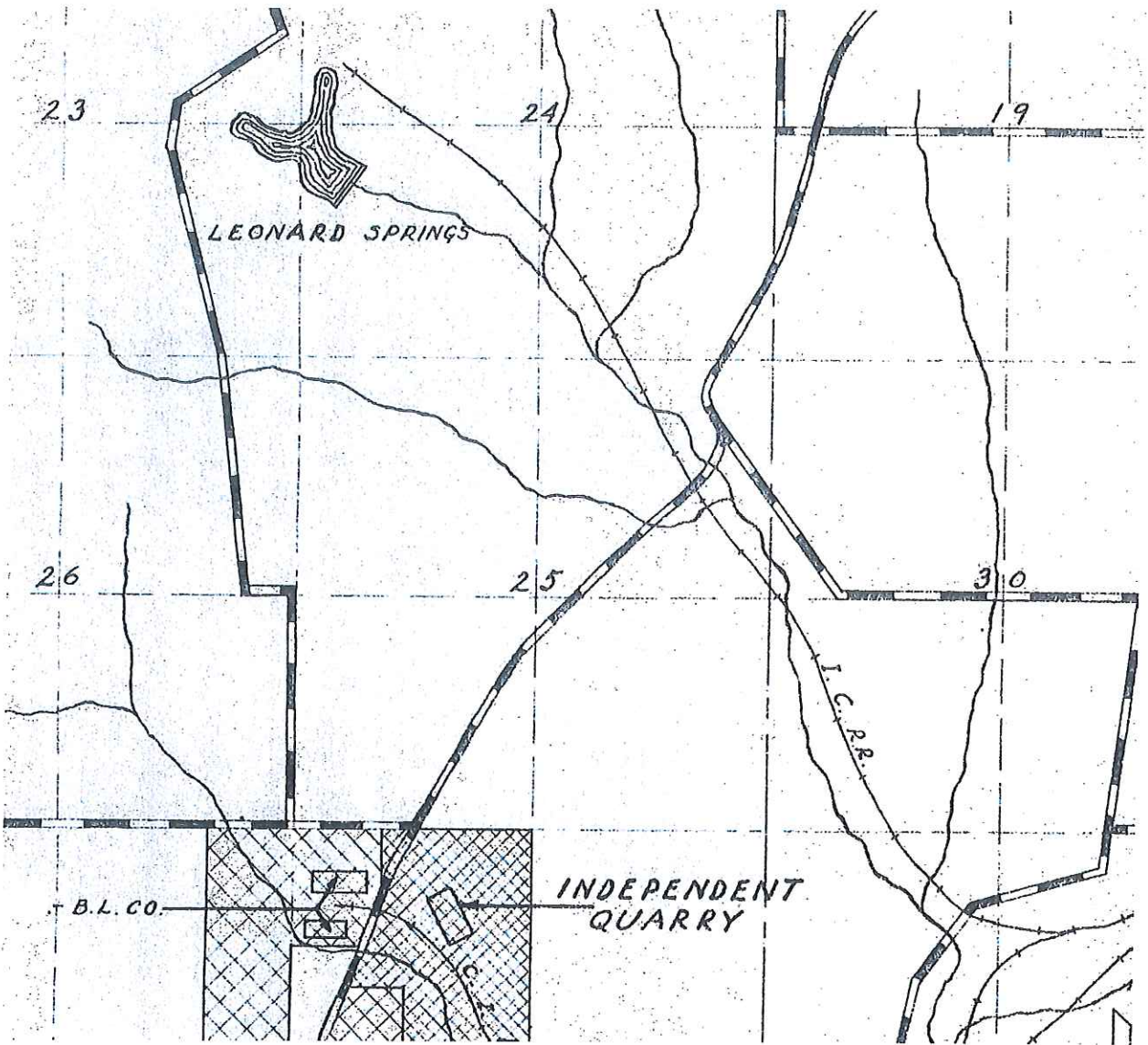
Year	Estimated Number of Quarries Owned by Going Concerns	Total Cubic Feet Sold	Value	Average Price per Cubic Foot
1911 ----	36	9,528,442	3,000,728	.315
1912 ----	35	10,442,304	3,447,242	.330
1913 ----	37	9,010,672	3,087,747	.340
1914 ----	34	7,929,006	2,171,215	.274
1915 ----	34	8,685,213	2,933,427	.338
1916 ----	35	8,545,534	3,493,765	.409
1917 ----	35	6,774,674	3,261,107	.480
1918 ----	35	2,701,745	1,800,167	.674



Fig. 1 Anybody walking through the dense woods looking for a quarry and running across something like this can rest assured that the quarry is close by. This is an anchor for a guy wire that would have supported a derrick.



Map III This is a blend of Bloomington Quadrangle, 1998, USGS map at the top and the Clear Creek Quadrangle USGS 1965, photorevised 1980 map on the bottom. The two large circles are major quarry fields that have proven to be quite successful. The small dotted circle in the middle is not known to be a quarry area, but if it was at one time, it was not very productive. I have not walked the area as it is residential.



Map IV This is a portion of an excellent map of the entire limestone district provided by Pete Pedigo. It is *MAP OF INDIANA OOLITIC LIMESTONE DISTRICT MONROE COUNTY-LAWRENCE COUNTY AND OWEN COUNTY INDIANA PREPARED BY THE BUILDING STONE ASSOCIATION OF INDIANA INCORPORATED BLOOMINGTON INDIANA MADE IN U.S.A. AND COPYRIGHTED 1931 BY THE BUILDING STONE ASSOCIATION OF INDIANA INCORPORATED*. This is one of several maps that show the railroad spur leading to an area east of Leonard Springs Reservoir. That no information on this map shows limestone ownership around the reservoir is further proof of the conclusion reached in the text of the short-lived efforts there to establish a successful quarry. Note that the location for the spur is misleading in the area of Section 24.

In conclusion, we have located a small quarry operation that struggled briefly and went bust for unknown reasons. The court house Miscellaneous Record gives us no clues nor do they even provide a date or explanation for the transition in name for the company. In the great scheme of things it was just another little entrepreneurial adventure that went awry. Hopes were smashed and men lost money. There is certainly nothing unique about that. It did, however, leave a hole in the ground, some piles of stone, and a faint indication in the ground where a railroad

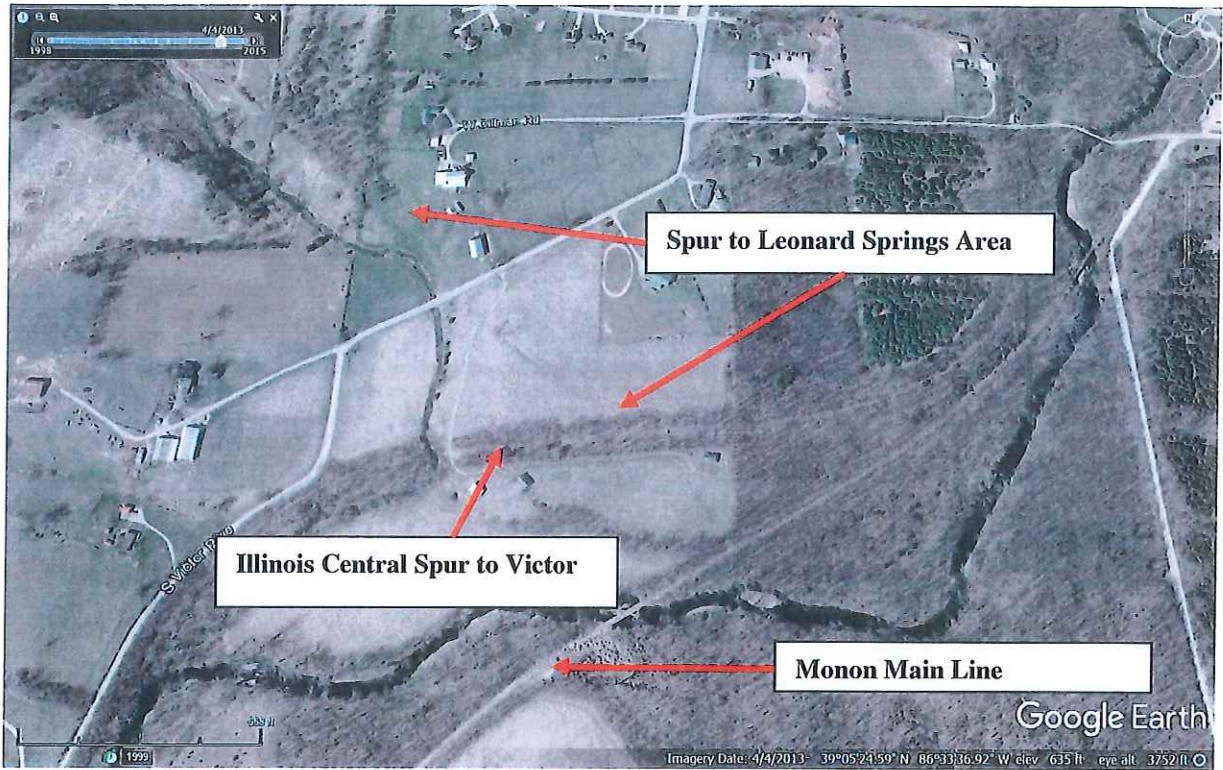


Fig. 2 This 2013 Google Earth image shows the faint indication of where the Leonard Springs spur left the main Illinois Central Spur to Victor.



Fig. 3 This 2017 picture by the author shows the field directly across Victor Pike as seen in the Google image (Fig. 46). Directly in the center of this picture you can faintly see a slight hump. I am standing on the old railroad grade indicated by the dotted line. It is not known when the tracks were removed but they were gone by 1946. I-69 is in the upper left.



Fig. 4 This was the tallest pile of grout pile.



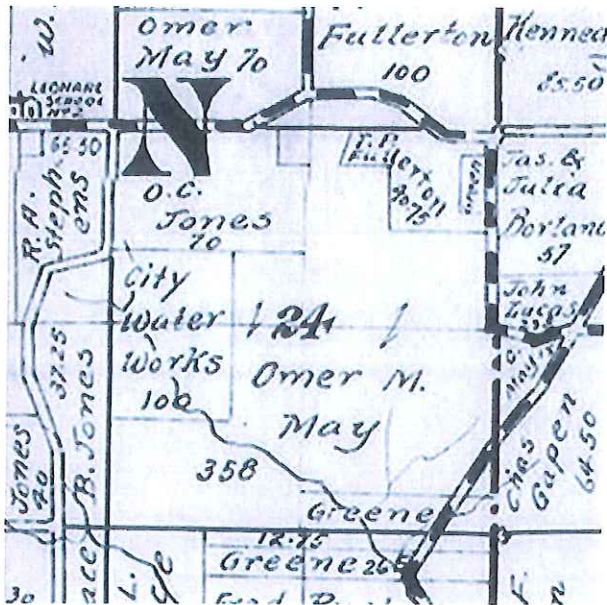
Fig. 5 This was the extent of what would be called a "quarry hole." The view is looking west.



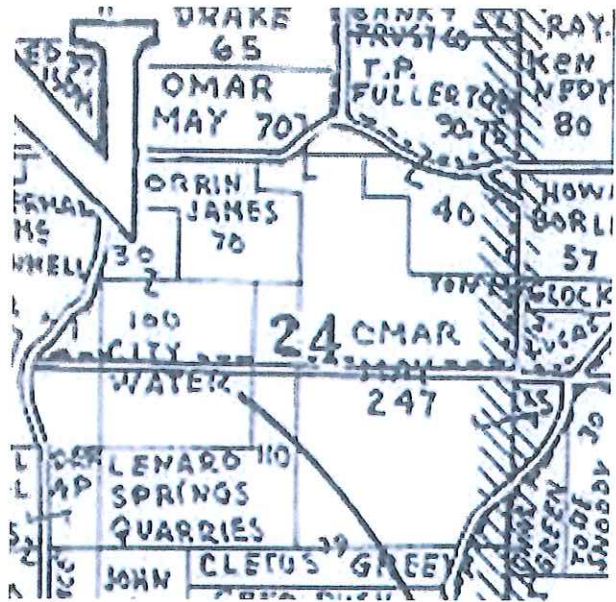
Fig. 6 This panoramic arrangement shows the quarry looking east.



Fig. 7 This is the only remains of quarry equipment other than the anchor for the guy wire shown before. I found two pieces of cable but never located a derrick pedestal.



Map V 1920 Map of Monroe County, Indiana by Elmer E. Van Buskirk, County Surveyer.



Map VI 1932 Map of Monroe County, Indiana by Cyrus R. Clevenger. Note the reappearance of “Leonard Springs Quarries” which was not there on the 1920 map. Also note that the railroad spur, indicated by the dark line, is shown here but not in the 1920 map. It is as though this map and the previous one have their dates switched but that is not the case. Also note the road running due east and west through section 24. This road is no longer there.

once ran. One thing we do know is that Omer M. May owned the land where the quarry was to be back in 1914.¹⁸ His heirs were still in possession in 1949¹⁹ and the two owners’ maps for 1920 and 1932 show that as well. Perhaps the land reverted to Mr. May for reason of non payment by the original purchaser, the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company.

I was wrong about the reason for the railroad and its construction date, I couldn’t find the quarry, and for a good while refused to believe it existed. I am happy to have corrected those errors but I can’t help but wonder what new ones I have made. My track record on this little historical vignette is not good, you see.

¹⁸ Monroe County Deed Index 7A Van Buren Township: Transaction of Jonas R. May to Omar M. May on September 1, 1914. The name Omer is not a common one and the variations on this in the records are many.

¹⁹ Monroe County Deed Index 7C Van Buren Township Vol. C dated 9/17/1949. The heirs of Mr. May are selling land to Charles B. Townsend.



Fig. 8 This 2017 view is looking north at the remains of the Leonard Springs Reservoir. I am standing on the old dam looking north. This was once one of Bloomington's sources of water.



Fig. 9 Here are some remains of what was once part of the piping for Leonard Springs Reservoir. The piles of brick were presumably from the old pump house.

Acknowledgments

I want to especially thank Frank McGill and his Facebook correspondent Alan Tate who provided information vital to our understanding of the brief history of the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company. Pete Pedigo and Phil Childress were the sources for the key maps and my longstanding debt to them goes back through many a manuscript.

All the photographs were taken by the author.

Anyone who has any additional information about the building of Leonard Springs Reservoir, the Illinois Central Railroad spur, or the Ohio Oolitic Stone Company can reach the author at the following address:

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