

Over, Under, Around and Through

By Bob Ciminel - Montour Railroad Historical Society

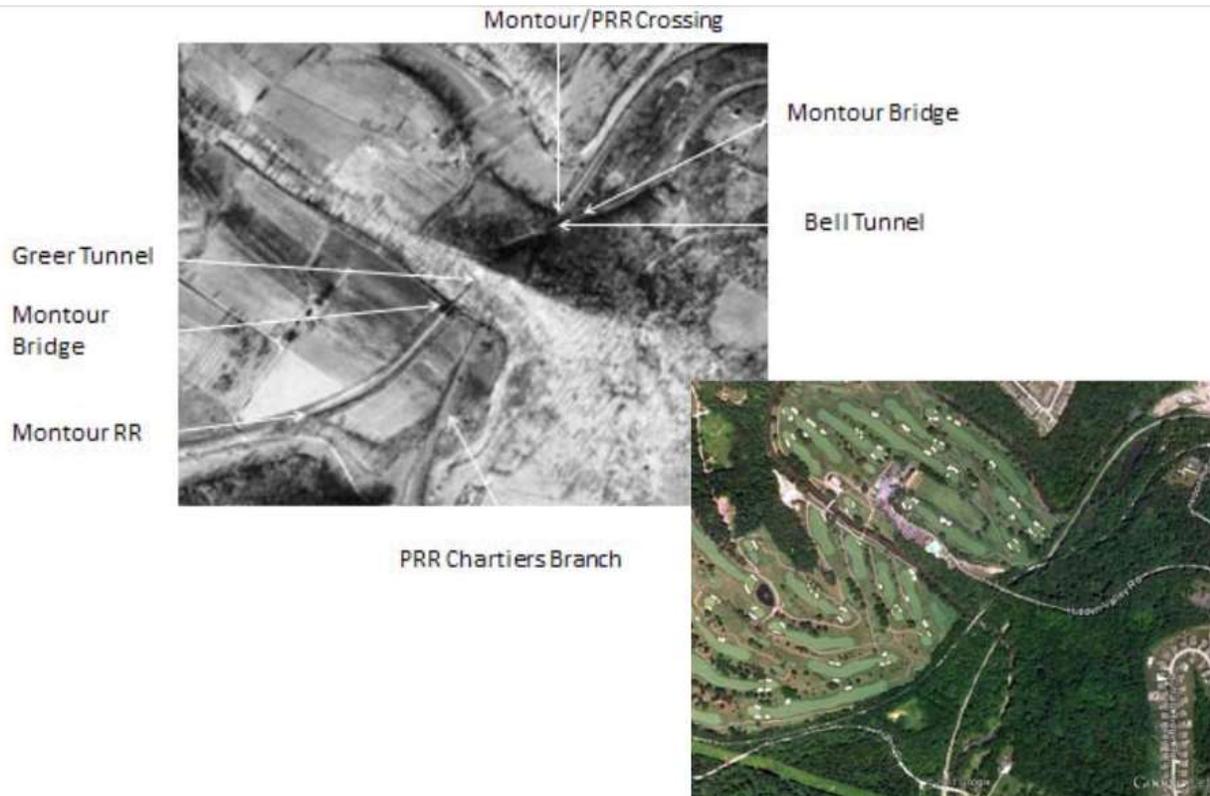
Our last article discussed the McDonald Transfer area where the Montour crossed over the Pennsylvania Railroad Panhandle Division main line on the 962-foot long McDonald Viaduct. There was another Montour/PRR crossing at Milepost 29.5, east of Rowley Station (Trail Milepost 28.5), and this one was a little more complicated than erecting a bridge over the tracks.

For reasons only known to geologists, Chartiers Creek decided to make a reverse curve where Valleybrook Golf Course is currently located. Evidently the rock at that point was a little too tough for the creek to cut through and the curve was too sharp for a railroad going south along Chartiers Creek to get around it. (The early Montour Railroad faced a similar situation at Jeffreytown Tunnel.)

The first railroad to face the wall of rock south of Greer Pond was the Chartiers Valley Railroad as it built its line from Washington, Pennsylvania to Mansfield (Carnegie) in the early 1800s. The CVR bored the 500-foot long Bell Tunnel through the outcrop and was the only railroad in the area until the Montour built its Mifflin Extension in 1914.

Faced with the same obstruction as the CVR, which by 1914 had been taken over by the PRR and was called the Chartiers Branch, the Montour had to bore the 235-foot Greer Tunnel. The tunnel is also known as Greer Tunnel; however, it is spelled "Greer" on the track diagrams available to the author. There is similar confusion regarding Jeffreytown Tunnel, which is sometimes referred to as Enlow Tunnel. Jefferytown station was located at the west end of the tunnel, and Enlow station was at the east end, and we suppose the name was based on whichever way one was looking at the tunnel. And to add more confusion, after Conrail was created in 1975, its track diagram for the Chartiers Branch (in 1986 it was called the Canon Industrial Track) referred to the PRR's Bell Tunnel as Greer Tunnel.

Fortunately, the topography allowed the Montour to maintain a descending grade from Hendersonville as it followed McPherson Creek to where it emptied into Chartiers Creek and cross the PRR without any major deviations in elevation. The Montour crossed the creek on three 90-foot spans, entered Greer Tunnel, and then crossed the PRR on another 140-foot bridge, continuing its descent through Kamps Cut to Montour No. 4 Mine.



November 1938 aerial photo courtesy of the Penn Pilot web site. Current image courtesy of Google Earth.

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