

Boggs

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

Boggs was an important area in the operation of the Montour Railroad and especially the Champion Preparation Plant. The west end of Boggs was located at the current Boggs Road trailhead at MP 11.4 and Boggs then curved eastward along Potato Garden Road toward the Route 22 overhead bridge at MP 12.

Boggs was originally built as part of the 1913-14 Mifflin Extension east from North Star. A 1920 track chart shows a passing track, station platform and shelter shed. It also shows a spur off the main track near the east end of the siding that went to "mine entries" with three additional tracks. The west end was listed as a private grade crossing, which could be the current Bugay Lane crossing at the Boggs trailhead. Local farms shipped milk and produce from the Boggs station to markets in Pittsburgh until the Montour ended passenger service in 1927.

When the Champion Preparation Plant was built east of Steubenville Pike (Route 22) in 1928, Boggs became an integral part of that operation. Additional tracks were added to make Boggs Yard, which was under the jurisdiction of the Champion Yardmaster. The four track yard could hold approximately 140 cars.



Looking east from Boggs Road, coal from the mines fill three Boggs Yard tracks as it awaits unloading at Champion in 1956. Potato Garden Road can be seen beyond the hoppers and Bugay Lane runs to the left of the tracks. Fred Bradley photo.

In order to keep tracks clear for operations at Champion, loaded hoppers from the mines would be stored at Boggs until Champion was ready to accept them for unloading. After unloading, the empty

hoppers could be returned to Boggs until trains were made up to take them back to the mines. Also, eastbound cars of processed coal were often sent to Boggs to await shipment to connections with other railroads, clearing tracks at Champion. With Champion unloading up to 200 carloads of stop-off mine coal every day and over 100 cars of processed coal loads for shipment plus empty cars returning to the mines, Boggs was a busy place as cars were shuffled in and out of the yard. With a direct lead into the Champion track complex, the Champion crews could shuttle and switch cars without using the main line track, thus keeping the main line clear for through train traffic.



A Montour coal train pulls down the main line through the east end of Boggs in 1979. In the background above the coal cars, the Route 22 bridge and the top of the Champion buildings can be seen. Gene P. Schaeffer photo.

Boggs included several coal mines operating in the immediate area. In its early days, several shaft mines were dug that had loading tipples served by rail which branched off the sidings at Boggs. In later years, several strip mines harvested coal, including unmined coal that remained from the previous shaft mines. The Boggs, Solar, Sunnyhill and Rider Mines all had tipple structures near Boggs and the Russell, Maraca and Aloe strip mines loaded coal as well.

The Boggs area was also used as a slate dump to dispose of refuse from Champion's coal cleaning process. Side dump cars of slate and rock were taken from the Champion plant to the dump at Boggs until the 1950's, when a new slate dump supplied by a conveyor belt was opened across Rt. 980 from the plant.

Montour 84-76-83-75 East

West End Boggs

January 4, 1980

Gene P. Schaeffer Portrait



A Montour coal train passes through the west end of Boggs on a snowy day in 1980. This location is now the Boggs Trailhead and parking area for the Montour Trail. Gene P. Schaeffer photo.

With the demise of the coal market during the 1970's and Champion in need of significant physical overhaul after 50 years of operation, the cleaning plant was closed in 1983. Montour Railroad operations ended and official abandonment of the railroad was accomplished in 1985. A year later, the rails were pulled up and Boggs Yard became a vacant area.

With the Montour Trail Council acquisition of the original Montour right-of-way and construction of the trail through this area in the late 1990's and into the 2000's, Boggs has again become an active pathway for Montour patrons.

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