

## Montour #2 – Cowden

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

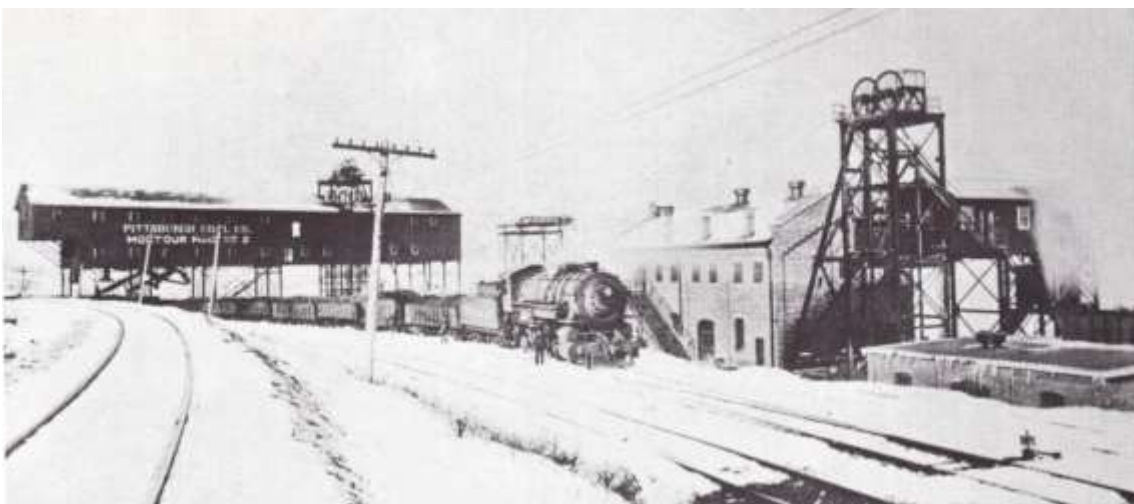
Montour Mine #2 was one of three mines opened in 1914 by the Pittsburgh Coal Company along the newly constructed Mifflin Extension of the Montour Railroad. It was located in Cecil Township, at trail mile 23.2.

The other two PCCo mines opened at the same time were Montour #1 at Southview and Montour #4 at Hills Station (Lawrence).

The Montour #2 complex sat on the hillside above Miller's Run. Its location is now occupied by the MCC International Company, which still uses one of the original mine buildings.

An earlier mine named Ridgeway-Bishop operated from 1892 to 1898 and was located across the valley, loading its coal on the Wabash Railroad (now Wheeling & Lake Erie). After acquisition by the Pittsburgh Coal Company, this mine became the Bishop Mine in 1903 until 1912, when its coal reserves were transferred to the planned Montour Mine #2. This new mine loaded its coal on the newly constructed Montour Railroad, which was owned by the coal company, thus keeping shipping costs in-house instead of paying another railroad.

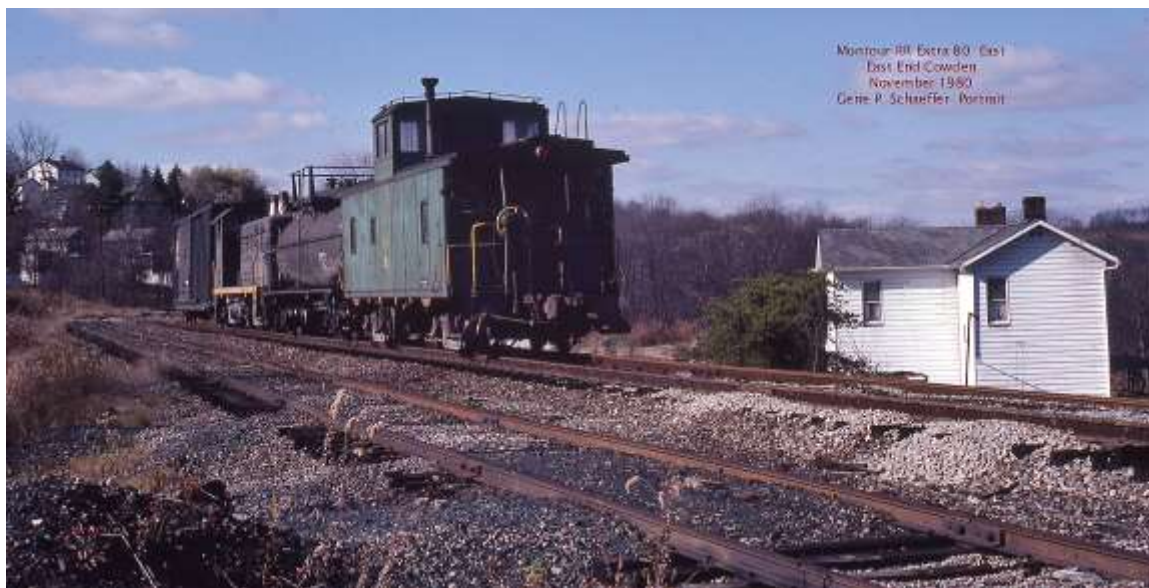
Montour #2 was a typical shaft mine of the time, with two shafts dug about 150 feet deep down to the coal seam. One shaft brought men and supplies into the mine and hoisted waste rock and slate out to be piled at the bottom of the hillside near Miller's Run. The other shaft serviced the loading tippie, bringing coal out of the mine to be cleaned and sorted before loading into railroad hopper cars for shipment.



**Montour Mine #2, circa 1930. The track on the left is the main line – now the Montour Trail. Courtesy Gene P. Schaeffer collection.**

The accompanying photo is a view to the west showing the mine complex in 1930. The train is working the loading tracks under the tipple building with its hoist shaft. To the right of the tipple is the tower bringing electric power into the complex, then the large building holding offices, supply rooms and miner's bathhouse. This building is still in use by MCC International Company. In front of that building is the vertical man shaft tower and its accompanying hoist house used to bring men and supplies into and out of the mine. At the far right is a ventilation fan and its powerhouse. Miller's Run is down the hillside to the right of the picture. The Montour Railroad main line (now the Trail) is on the left side of the picture on a bank above the loading tracks.

After the mine was closed and demolished, a 1400 foot passing track remained in place along the main line until the end of railroad operations. Up to 70 cars could be staged on this siding. When nearby mines had no space available in their yards for coal hoppers, additional cars were often staged at Cowden until space at the mine became available.



**A short Montour freight train headed east on the main line passes by Cowden Siding. Gene P. Schaeffer photo.**

Miner's houses were built in a planned community nearby, on land acquired by the Coal Co. from Thomas and Joseph Cowden and laid out similar to that at the Montour Mine #1 in Southview. Cowden Road accessed the community by crossing under the railroad through a narrow underpass bridge. The bridge was removed in 2002 to provide better access for school buses and emergency vehicles and the trail was regraded to cross Cowden Road at grade level. A company store and other businesses were included in the plan. The company store was located beside the railroad (trail) at the Cowden Road crossing and the wooden building lasted into the 1990's when it was destroyed by fire.



**Access into the Cowden community was through this narrow underpass bridge. It was removed in 2002 and the trail was regraded to provide a grade level crossing of Cowden Road. Dennis Sims photos.**

The exact date of the mine closing is not known, but was probably in the mid-1930's. Production figures go into the early 1930's, but aerial photographs taken in 1939 show the mine was closed and the tipple building removed. The waste piles along Miller's Run remained until remediation was done in the 1960's.

Thanks go to Bob Ciminel, who provided additional research on this subject. More information can be found at [montourrr.com](http://montourrr.com).

This column appeared in the January-February, 2020 Montour Trail Newsletter.  
For more information on the Montour Trail – go to [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)