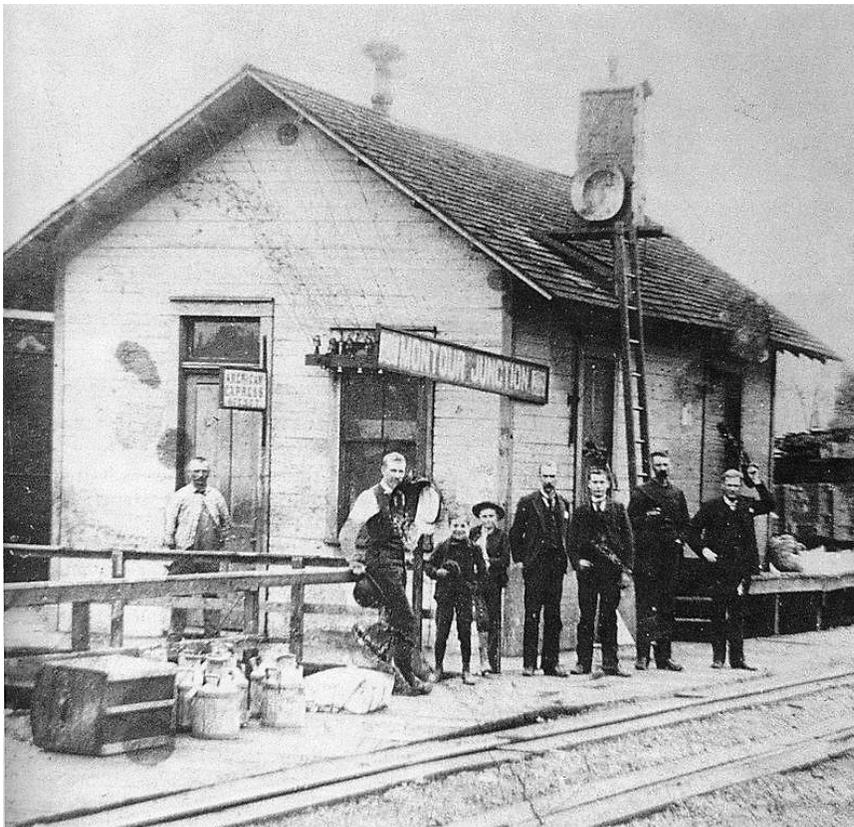


Montour Railroad Passenger Service

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Montour Railroad began operations in June of 1879, hauling coal from Cliff Mine to a barge loading facility in Coraopolis. Four months later, a connection with the newly opened Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad was established, which also provided connecting service from Montour Junction to Pittsburgh. Passenger service was then started on the Montour, serving fifteen stations along its twelve-mile length. A contract to carry U.S. Mail was granted to the Montour and the Railway Express Company established express shipping service to various stations along the Montour route.

The original station at Montour Junction was a one room building serving two railroads, with the P&LE track in front and the Montour running behind the station. By 1900 a new, bigger station was built which included passenger waiting rooms and a covered freight platform.



The original Montour Junction passenger station at Coraopolis in 1879. The Montour track ran behind the station while the P&LE ran in front. Photo courtesy Coraopolis Historical Society from Dr. Frank Braden Collection.

As the Mifflin Extension was opened in 1914, passenger service grew with the addition of new stations bringing the total to 38 stations in 42 miles of track. In railroad terms, a

station is a fixed physical point on the railroad. It is not necessarily a building or structure. Many of the passenger "stations" on the Montour may have been simply a small trackside shelter or platform. Most of them are listed on the timetable as Flag Stops. The train would stop at those stations only if someone was there to be picked up or dropped off by the train. A red flag might be displayed to tell the conductor and engineer a stop was to be made, or passengers would simply wave down the train. Scheduled stops would be made at designated stations or depots listed on the timetable. These might have a railroad agent or Ticketmaster and/or Railway Express office where stops would be mandatory.

In 1915, Montour passenger trains ran between Montour Junction and Longview in Bethel Park. The Montour also operated passenger trains between Groveton and Moon Run on its Pittsburgh & Moon Run subsidiary.

Montour passengers could make connections with passenger trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad's Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway Panhandle Division at McDonald and Primrose, and with the PCC & St. L's Chartiers Branch to Canonsburg and Washington at Hills Station (Lawrence). Connections also were made with the Wabash & Pittsburgh Terminal Railroad at Southview; the Pittsburgh Railways Washington interurban car line in Peters Township (Valley Brook and Old Washington Roads); and the Pittsburgh & Charleroi interurban streetcar line in Bethel Park. There was also a connection with the West Side Belt Railroad at Longview Junction in Bethel Park.

Passenger service was provided by three trains in each direction on weekdays and two on Sundays. The Moon Run Division operated three trains on weekdays only. Passengers carried by the Montour in 1916 averaged around 9,000 per month. The fare from Montour Junction all the way to Longview was \$1.60.



Milk cans are loaded onto a Montour train at the Steubenville station (Trail Mile 12) circa 1915. The bridge in the background is Rt. 22. Sam Matchet photo from the Lee Matchet collection.

The Montour also received revenue from shipments of milk and produce carried from local farmers along the route to the Montour Junction station where it was transloaded to P&LE Pittsburgh bound trains. The farmers were charged 7.5 cents per milk can. In 1914, 18 percent of passenger service revenues came from milk shipments. In April, 1915, 9,775 cans of milk were shipped, an average of 325 per day.

While passenger service was a profitable piece of the Montour Railroad, the main business was hauling coal and that remained the focus of the railroad.

In the 1920's, cars became more popular, roads were being improved, and trucks started hauling freight, milk and produce directly to Pittsburgh markets. Passenger revenues were declining, and aging locomotives and equipment were nearing the end of their service life and needed replacement. Thus, in 1927 the decision was made to end passenger service on the Montour.

One last passenger train ran on a portion of the Montour in 1981, when the Allegheny County Industrial Committee sponsored a passenger excursion to demonstrate the potential of commuter service in the Pittsburgh area. The Montour segment was envisioned as a future line to the Pittsburgh airport, but those plans never came to fruition.

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