

The Montour Mine #10 Complex

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Montour Mine #10 complex in Library sat along Brownsville Road in the Piney Fork Creek valley, in the area surrounding the current end of the PAT trolley tracks and the Summit Station housing development. The mine was opened in 1918 upon completion of the Montour Railroad branch to serve the loading tippie. The Pittsburgh Coal Company added several facilities to the complex and by 1946 it had become the largest coal mining operation in the United States.

The mine started operation in 1883 in Bruceton and was known as the Lick Run Mine. The Pittsburgh Coal Company bought and consolidated many of the area mines in 1900-1901 and operated Lick Run until the Montour Railroad was constructed into Library. New entrances and a tippie building were built in 1918 and designated as Montour Mine #10 with the Lick Run coal reserves being reassigned to this new mine. The mine used two entrances, one on either side of the Piney Fork valley. One portal was on the north side above Wood Street and the other was on the south side of the valley, entering under Cardox Road. As the coal seam came to the surface on the hillsides and could be directly accessed, no vertical shafts were needed.



Miners pose in front of the Mine #10 tippie in 1920.

A coal cleaning plant was built adjacent to the loading tippie in 1927 to process the mined coal before shipping to customers. This plant was the model for other air pneumatic type cleaning plants across the United States. The dry-cleaning type plant meant that Mine #10 could ship cleaned coal directly to customers instead of sending raw coal to the Champion Cleaning Plant over 25 miles away.

An aerial tramway of Lorry Cars carried slate and impurities from the mine and cleaning plant across Brownsville Road to a slate dump beyond Cardox Road. The dump became a mountain of smoldering waste materials, and fires on the dump site were visible at night.



A brick building holding an electrical sub-station was built in what is now the Port Authority Transit parking lot. It supplied electrical power to the mine and the other facilities in the complex.

Also in the area of the current parking lot, one of the largest coal mining repair facilities in the country was built to serve all Pittsburgh Coal Company mines. Large mining machines, equipment, electric mine motors and rail cars were transported here from other mines to be repaired and serviced. The building also housed business offices for the Coal Company's mining operations.



Montour #10 repair shops and office building, circa 1930, were located on the current PAT Park and Ride lot.

A small freight house was built along Pleasant Street behind the large repair facility. It was used for delivery of less-than-carload freight to local customers and now houses the South Park Historical Society.

A retired Montour passenger coach was placed at the east end of the Library Viaduct for use by the Montour Railroad agent at Library. Since the agent was not a Coal Company employee, his office was located on railroad property, near the current Schoolhouse Apartments.

In the early years of the mine's operation, two small company stores provided groceries and other necessities to the miners and their families. A store was in each of the housing patches, one above Victory Drive and the other on Downing Street.



The Federal Supply Company store was dedicated in 1941. It is now known as Champion Plaza. Photos courtesy South Park Historical Society.

In 1940, a new Federal Supply Company store celebrated its opening at the corner of Brownsville Road and Pleasant Street. This store had a dining area, gas station, and merchandise, dry goods, grocery, and meat departments. The store basement served as a distribution point for fifty-seven other company stores in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. In later years the store was operated by the Champion Coal Company. This building still stands along Brownsville Road and is now known as Champion Plaza.

Due to a declining coal market, Montour #10 was closed in 1957 and sat idle for 13 years. It was reopened in 1970 to recover its high-grade metallurgical coal. In July 1979 the mine went to standby status and miners were laid off. In August the mine was reopened, but this did not work out and the mine was closed for good, and its entrances were sealed in December 1979.

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