

Clinton Block Mine

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Clinton No. 1 Mine was serviced by Montour trains. It was located about two miles from Imperial on the north side of U.S. Route 30. The mine was in the area between Route 30, the Findlay Township Sports Complex, and the airport I-376 & PA 576 interchange. The Airport Connector segment of the Montour Trail runs along the east and north edges of the mine area.

The mine was owned by the Clinton Block Coal Company, which was formed and opened the mine in 1917. The Coal Company also built a tipple loading facility and the Clinton Block railroad spur to service the mine.

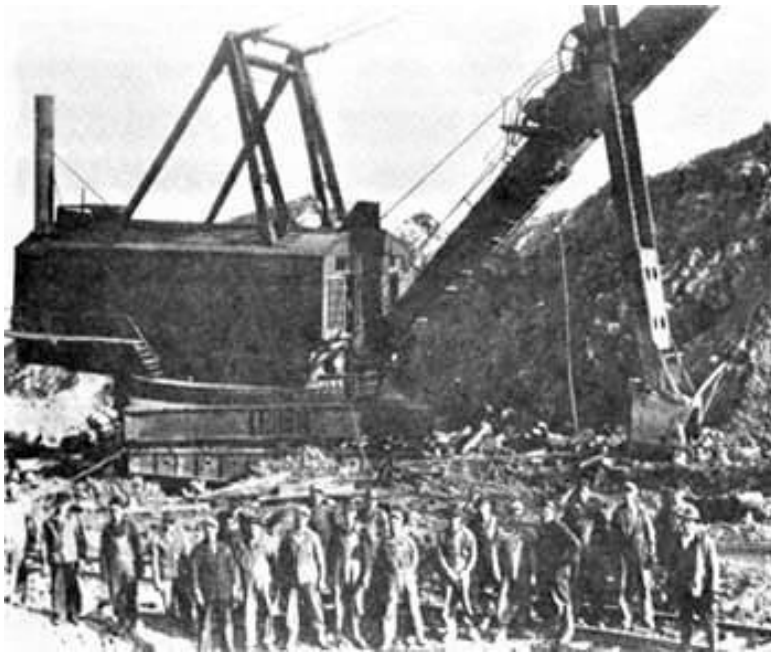


The original tipple at Clinton Block Mine ca 1917.

The Clinton Block Spur left the Montour Railroad main track a short distance west of Route 30 in Imperial (near Trail Milepost 9) and followed the North Fork of Montour Run up the west side of Route 30 to a grade crossing just south of the Burgettstown Road intersection. The old right-of-way going up to the mine is about a tenth of a mile beyond the entrance to the Findley Township Sports Complex. Trains using the Clinton Spur (later named the Clinton Block Branch) would have to run past the switch at Clinton Block Junction and then back into the spur and shove cars up to the mine. At the time the spur was built, the Coal Company said it would run no more than six trains per day at speeds not to exceed 15 mph. Since the spur was built by the Coal Company the Montour did not own or maintain the tracks but did supply all railroad service.

With the coal seam outcropping directly onto the hillside, no vertical shafts were needed to access the coal, and Clinton No. 1 began as a drift mine with workings on both sides of Route 30. It also operated as a strip mine beginning in 1918. Underground workings primarily worked the coal to the northwest and southwest, with the stripping operations working to the northeast. With only 40 or 50 feet of overburden needing to be removed to reach the coal seam, stripping operations using a large steam shovel were economically feasible.

Information about the stripping operation in 1920 shows a large steam shovel was used to remove the overburden soil. Its digging bucket could remove 6 cubic yards in a single bite. A smaller loading shovel was used in the coal seam to dig out the coal and send it to the cleaning tipple.



A steam shovel and crew strip mining at Clinton Block Mine during the 1920's.

The accompanying magazine ad circa 1929 touts a rebuilt tipple and cleaning facility at the mine. Coal was cleaned and processed at the mine site, and thus could be shipped directly to customers. The ad shows several Montour hopper cars being loaded at the new tipple.

**Clinton Block Coal Co.'s Rebuilt
Tipple at Imperial, Pa.**

**- uses Arms Vibrating
Screens,
Menzies Hydro-Separators
and
Arms Air
Concentrating
Tables**

An advertisement for the newly rebuilt tipple at Clinton Block from a 1929 trade magazine.

Production records from the 1930's showed both deep and strip mining with coal shipped by rail and trucks. Average mine employment was 132 men with a peak of 226 in 1932 and 1940. Coal shipments declined through the 1930's and by 1941 employment was down to 68 miners in the deep mine and 17 at the strip mine. Rail

shipment records end in 1940, and after that time, coal was shipped by trucks. In 1942, the mine was bought by the Union Colliery Company. It was then taken over by the Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal Company in 1944.

The Clinton Block Branch was also the location of a Peoples Natural Gas compressor station that used steam-driven compressors and coal-fired boilers. Coal was delivered from an adjacent mine via an inclined plane. This mine may have been privately owned as there are no records for it. There was a short railroad spur at the compressor station into the 1940's.

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