

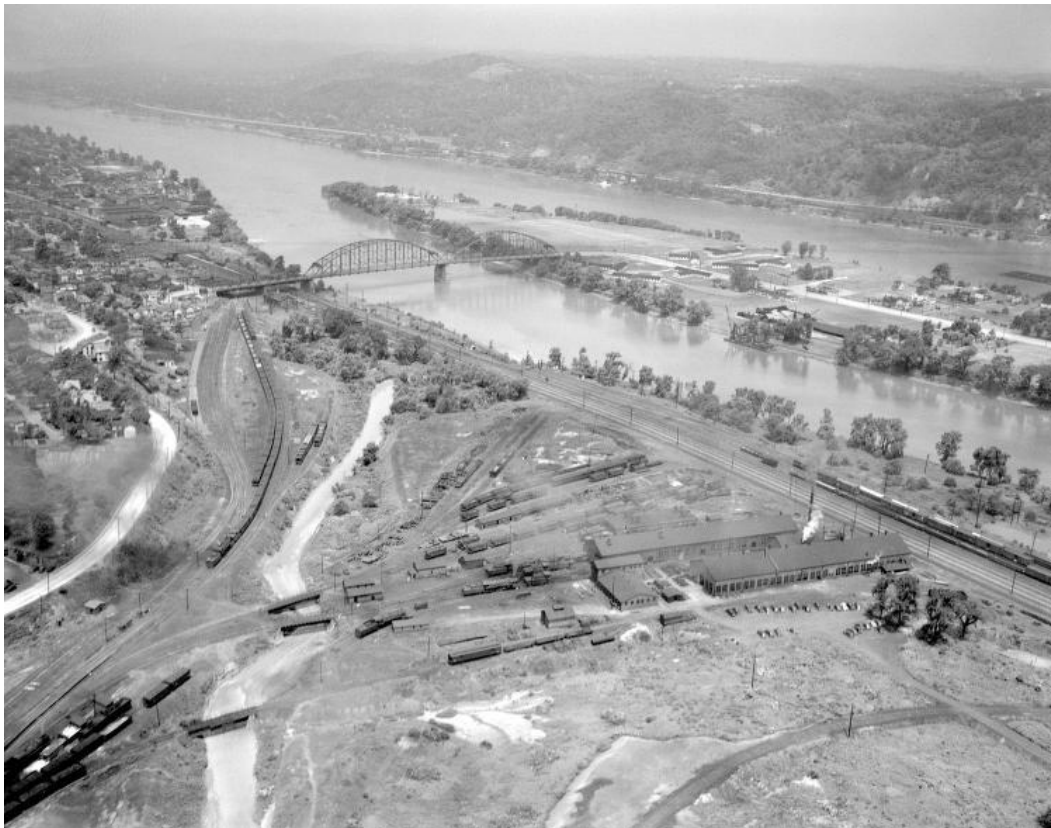
Junctions and Interchanges on the Montour Railroad

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

In railroad terminology a junction is where two or more railroad tracks meet with a physical connection between them. It could be a connection between two different railroads or a place where a railroad splits into two diverging routes. It is basically like a “T” intersection on a road.

Interchanges are places where two different railroads meet but do not have a direct physical connection. An interchange (or transfer track) runs between the two railroads to allow exchanges of rail cars and freight traffic. Cars from one railroad can be set out onto the transfer track and then picked up by the other railroad. Think of it as two rooms connected by a hallway to allow traffic to flow between the two.

The Montour Railroad had several junctions and interchanges at locations which can still be found along the Trail. They provided traffic between the Montour and five other railroads serving the Pittsburgh area, allowing shipments to and from anywhere in the United States.



Montour Junction in 1946 shows the yards and Montour shops complex in Coraopolis. The switch connection with the P&LE RR was at the top left near the bridge. P&LE photo.

Montour Junction (West of Mile 0) was a sprawling complex between Rt. 51 and the Neville Island Bridge making a connection between the Montour and the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie railroads. It contained a large rail yard, including a scale for weighing cars and a connection point with the P&LE. The Montour shops and offices were also located here.

The McDonald Transfer track (Trail Mile 17), known on the trail as the Montour-Panhandle Connector, was an interchange track that connected the Montour to the Pennsylvania RR Panhandle Division at McDonald. Trains of empty hoppers would be delivered to the Montour and taken to the Champion Preparation Plant for loading. Loaded trains would be returned to McDonald for outgoing shipment on the PRR.

The Southview Transfer track (Trail Mile 19) at Southview allowed interchange with the Pittsburgh & West Virginia (later Norfolk & Western) Railroad. It was located where the current railroad branch to Westland is sited but climbed the hillside in the opposite direction between Antil Street (lower Montour end) and Galati Road (higher P&WV end).

Gilmore Junction (Trail Mile 21.5), located along Southview Road near Rt. 50, was where the Westland Branch left the main line to service two coal mines. The Midland spur was constructed in 1922 to reach the near-by Morris Mine in the community of Gilmore. In 1927, it was extended 4 miles to reach the Westland Mine and became known as the Westland Branch. The current trail shelter now stands where a track gang's tool shed was built between the tracks.



Gilmore Junction in January 1981. The main line ran to the left of the tool shed and the diverging Westland Branch to the right. Tim Sposato photo.

Muse Junction (Trail Mile 23.3) was located near the Muse-Bishop Road bridge in Cecil Township. This branch was built in 1921, running into Muse to service the National #3 coal mine. After the mine closed in 1953, a chemical reclamation company leased some of the mine buildings, using the branch until 1980. The Muse Branch trail segment currently under development runs through the McConnell Trails housing development.

Hills Transfer connected the Montour with the Pennsylvania Railroad near Montour Mine #4 in Peters Township (Trail Mile 30). Two tracks curving along the hillside held empty hoppers delivered for loading at the mines as well as interchanging non-coal freight.



Non-coal freight is picked up on the Hills Transfer track in Peters Township. The caboose and coal hoppers sit on the main line – now the Montour Trail. The loaded hoppers on the right are at Montour Mine #4. Roy Parkinson photo – Gene P. Schaeffer collection

Library Junction (Trail Mile 34) was located between Sugar Camp and Brush Run Roads in Peters Township. The Library Branch left the main line to serve Montour Mine #10 in Library and continued on to a B&O interchange point at Snowden. Library Junction was built as a wye track, a triangle which allowed rail traffic on the Library Branch to move in either direction to or from Mifflin Junction to the east or the Champion Plant and Montour Junction to the west.

Mifflin Junction (Not on the Trail) was at West Mifflin, where the Montour met the Union Railroad. The Montour maintained scales, an agent's office and locomotive servicing facilities. Coal loads and freight cars from several other railroads were exchanged through the Union Railroad connection.



Mifflin Junction showing the Montour Scale house in the lower right. Most of the yard was operated by the Union Railroad. The Montour used only a couple of tracks on the right for delivery of coal loads and to pick up empty hoppers.

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