

Coverdale No. 8 (Bob Ciminell ©2012)

The Coverdale No. 8 Mine was located along the Montour Railroad between Library Junction and Brightwood. The mine's surface facilities stretched along what is now Industrial Boulevard in Bethel Park. The mine was not serviced by the Montour Railroad. The West Side Belt Railroad received trackage rights (also known as running rights) on the Montour between Salida and Coverdale in exchange for granting the Montour Railroad trackage rights between Salida and Mifflin Junction.

The mine began operation in September 1920 and operated until 1948, although it was not abandoned and sealed until the 1950s. Coverdale was the last of the "alphabet mines" opened by the Pittsburgh Terminal Railroad and Coal Company. It was sometimes referred to as the "H" Mine, although the tippie was labeled "Coverdale Mine." Coverdale No. 8 was adjacent to Pittsburgh Terminal's No. 4 Mine, also known as the "D" or Horning Mine, on the north, Montour No. 10 on the south and west, and Montour No. 4 on the east.

Coverdale had one of the largest "patches" in southwestern Pennsylvania. When the mine opened, Pittsburgh Terminal constructed 100 houses in two styles and 10 different color schemes with running water and electricity. Outdoor privies were originally used, but the company eventually installed a sewage system. The coal company planned on building 100 more homes in 1922 and still had enough room for 250 additional homes. Coverdale village overlooked "prosperous farming country with firm and well-kept roads.

Geologically, the mine was located on the McMurray Syncline, an underground valley, where the typically shallow Pittsburgh seam was 340 feet below the surface. Mines located on either side of the syncline could reach the coal through drift or slope entries dug into the hillsides and stream valleys. For example, Montour No. 10 accessed the seam through drift entries driven into the valley walls of Piney Fork. Shaft mines were obviously more expensive, but the cost was usually offset by the thicker coal at the bottom of the syncline. The seam at Coverdale averaged 66 inches in thickness.

In 1922, the Coverdale Mine complex was considered state-of-the-art because of the modern electrical system, hoisting equipment, and coal processing system Pittsburgh Terminal installed when they designed the mine.

Coverdale received alternating current (AC) power at 22,000 volts from transmission lines (probably West Penn Power) and put it through transformers to reduce it to 2,300 volts. The power then went to the main switchboard where it was either converted to direct current (DC) for use underground, or distributed to the various surface facilities, such as the main hoist,

auxiliary hoist, mine fan, and tippie. (Coverdale miners' houses received their electricity from the coal company at cost.)

To produce DC power, the mine used two motor-generator sets with 2,300-volt AC, 433-horsepower motors to drive 275-volt DC, 300-kilowatt generators. Underground power went down the shaft in two cable encased in metal conduit. One circuit powered the overhead trolley wires and the other supplied power to the coal cutting machines. In 1922, the mine still used mules to haul coal from the working face to the shaft, but the electrical system was designed for the eventual installation of a rail haulage system using electric locomotives.

The fan house was a brick building that contained the 200-hp, variable speed fan motor driving the huge exhaust fan. As the mine expanded, plans were already in place to upgrade the fan to a 300-hp motor. A small diesel engine could be connected to the fan to operate it during power failures. Continuous ventilation to sweep methane gas out of the mine was one of the most important facets of mine safety.

The main hoist had its own generator to supply DC power directly to the hoist motor. A flywheel and strict regulation of current to the hoist motor allowed the hoist to operate at almost constant speed regardless of the load on the hoist. The main hoist only handled coal and slate and was rated at 5 tons of coal or 8 tons of slate (equivalent to two mine cars) using a 1.75-inch wire rope. The hoisting system was designed to handle 600 tons per hour, which equated to 240 mine cars an hour. The hoist could make a round trip in about 50 seconds.

The main shaft was rectangular with semi-circle ends and lined with concrete from the landing blocks to the shaft collar. It was topped by a 65-foot steel head-frame over the two hoisting compartments, which each contained a self-dumping cage capable of holding two 5,000-lb capacity mine cars side by side.

The Coverdale tippie was constructed of steel and concrete. The two mine cars that came up on the main hoist automatically dumped onto a scale at the top of the tippie. From the scales, the coal either went to a screening table or was diverted to the run-of-mine chute and directly into hopper cars. The use of circular picking tables was unique to the Coverdale Mine. They saved a lot of space compared to the rectangular tables used by most mines. Slate and rock were sent to a storage bin through air-operated gates and then taken out to the mine dump on an electrically-driven Larry car.

In 1931, the cleaning plant at Coverdale No. 8 was upgraded to 10,000 tons per day capacity and coal was washed in addition to screening, reducing the ash content from 10% to 5% and the sulfur content to less than 1%. At this time the mine produced Nut, Pea, Lump, Egg and Slack coal. Coverdale No. 8 had 21 electric mining machines, four loading machines, 17 coal drills and 10 shaker conveyors working in the mine. Transportation was provided by 13 trolley-

powered locomotives, seven shuttle cars, 48 steel coal cars and 526 wooden mine cars operating on six miles of 44-inch gauge track.

The following table lists production figures for Coverdale No. 8 between 1931 and 1946. The mine closed in 1948. The mine last operated under the ownership of the Castle Shannon Coal Company, but was owned by the North Star Coal Company when it was abandoned and sealed in the mid-1950s.

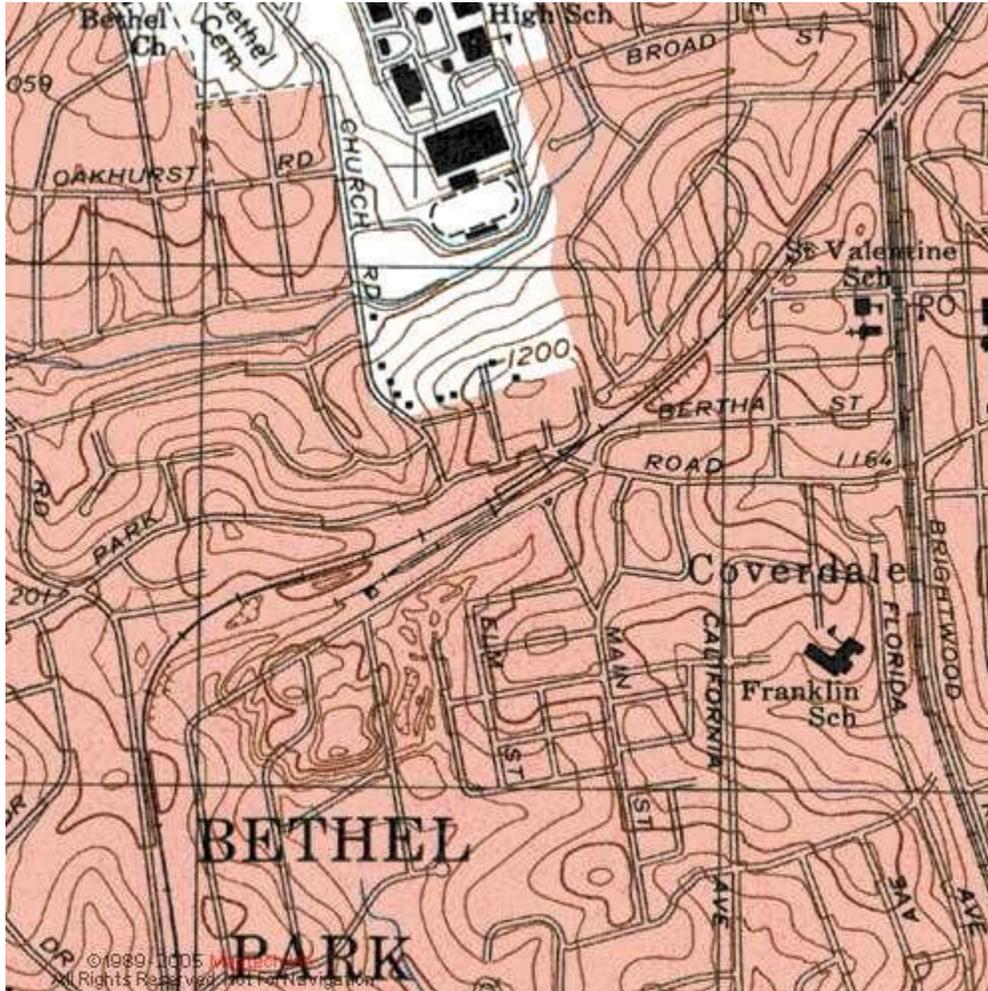
Year	Tons	Days	Employees
1931	923,237	216	919
1932	851,284	195	879
1934	797,947	238	822
1936	894,612	231	822
1945	721,511		590
1946	608,886		

The following maps and images provide additional visual details on the Coverdale No. 8 Mine.

This image from Google Earth shows the former location of Coverdale No. 8 Mine with the village of Coverdale to the east. The industrial park is located on the former mine dump. The Montour right-of-way formed the curve around the buildings in the upper left.



This topographic map shows the location of the Coverdale No. 8 shaft and the tracks that were located beneath the tippel, along with the former Montour right-of-way through Bethel Park.



This is a present day photo of some of the former miners' homes in Coverdale village.



(Photo by Chris Dellamea, www.coalcampusa.com, ©2012)

This is the former bathhouse for Coverdale No. 8 Mine.



(Photo by Chris Dellamea, www.coalcampusa.com, ©2012)

The former shop building for Coverdale No. 8

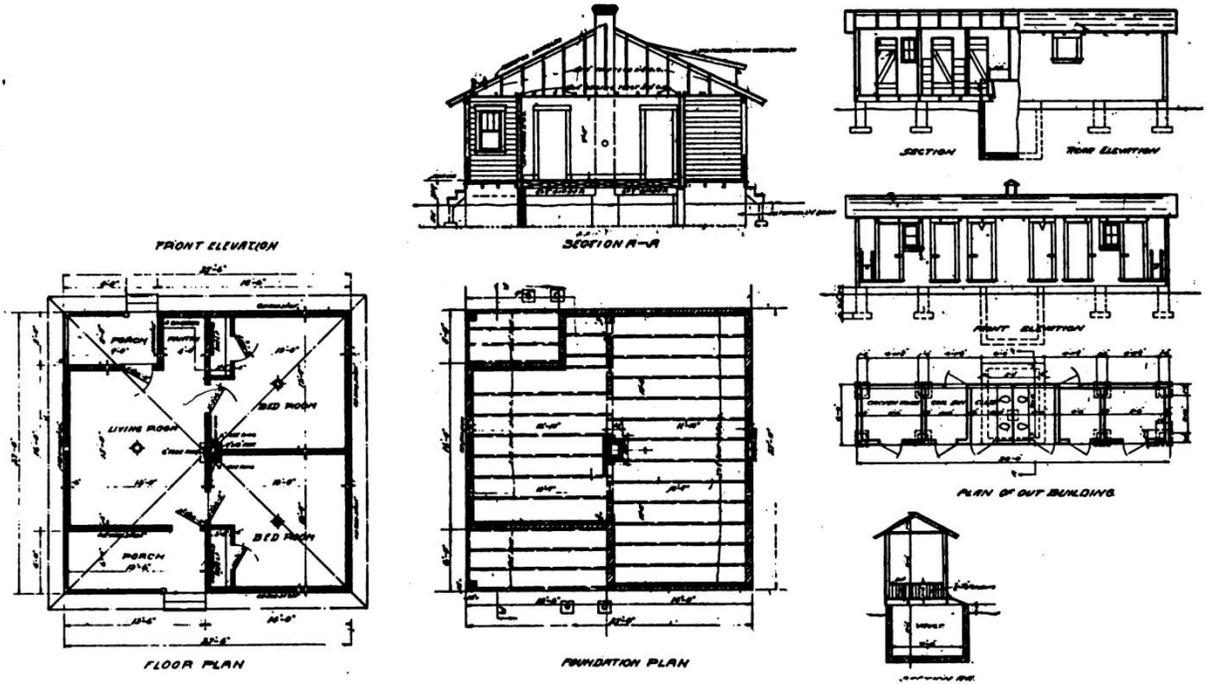


(Photo by Chris Dellamea, www.coalcampusa.com, ©2012)

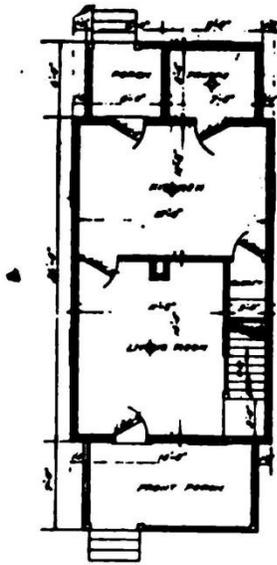
The company store at Coverdale No. 8 was operated by the Mutual Supply Company



This was the layout of the single-story 3-room houses built by the coal company for Coverdale No. 8 village.



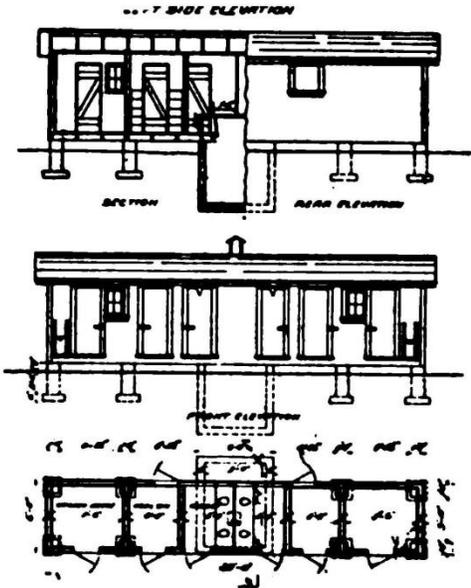
The four-room 2-story houses had a more room for larger families.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

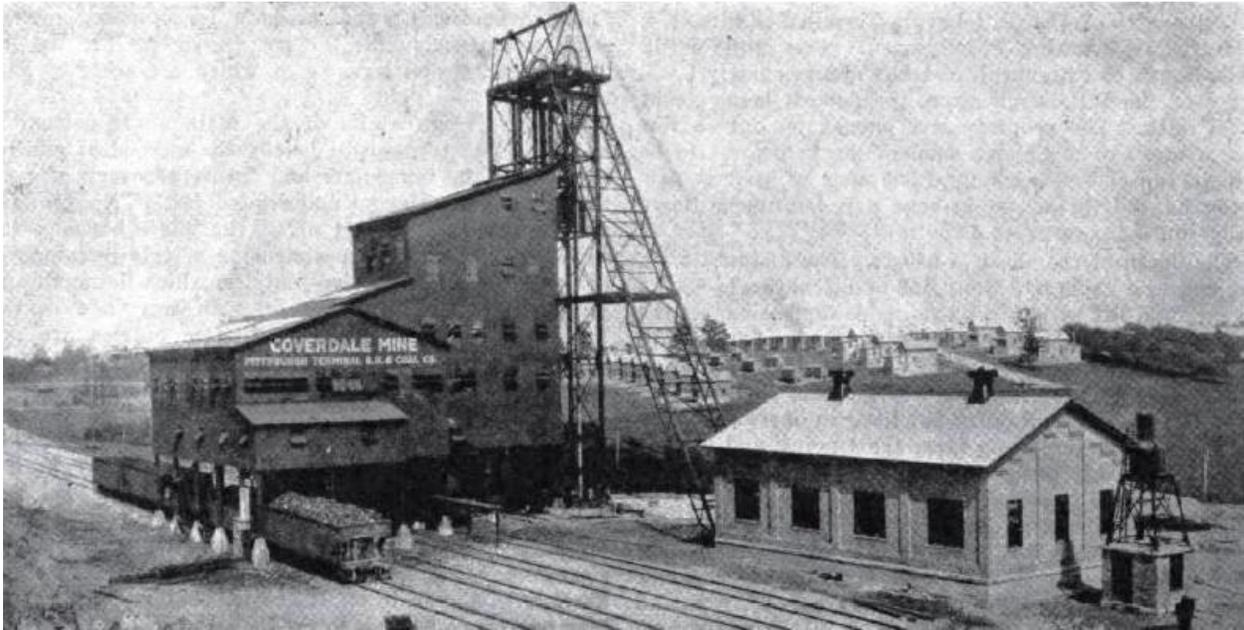


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

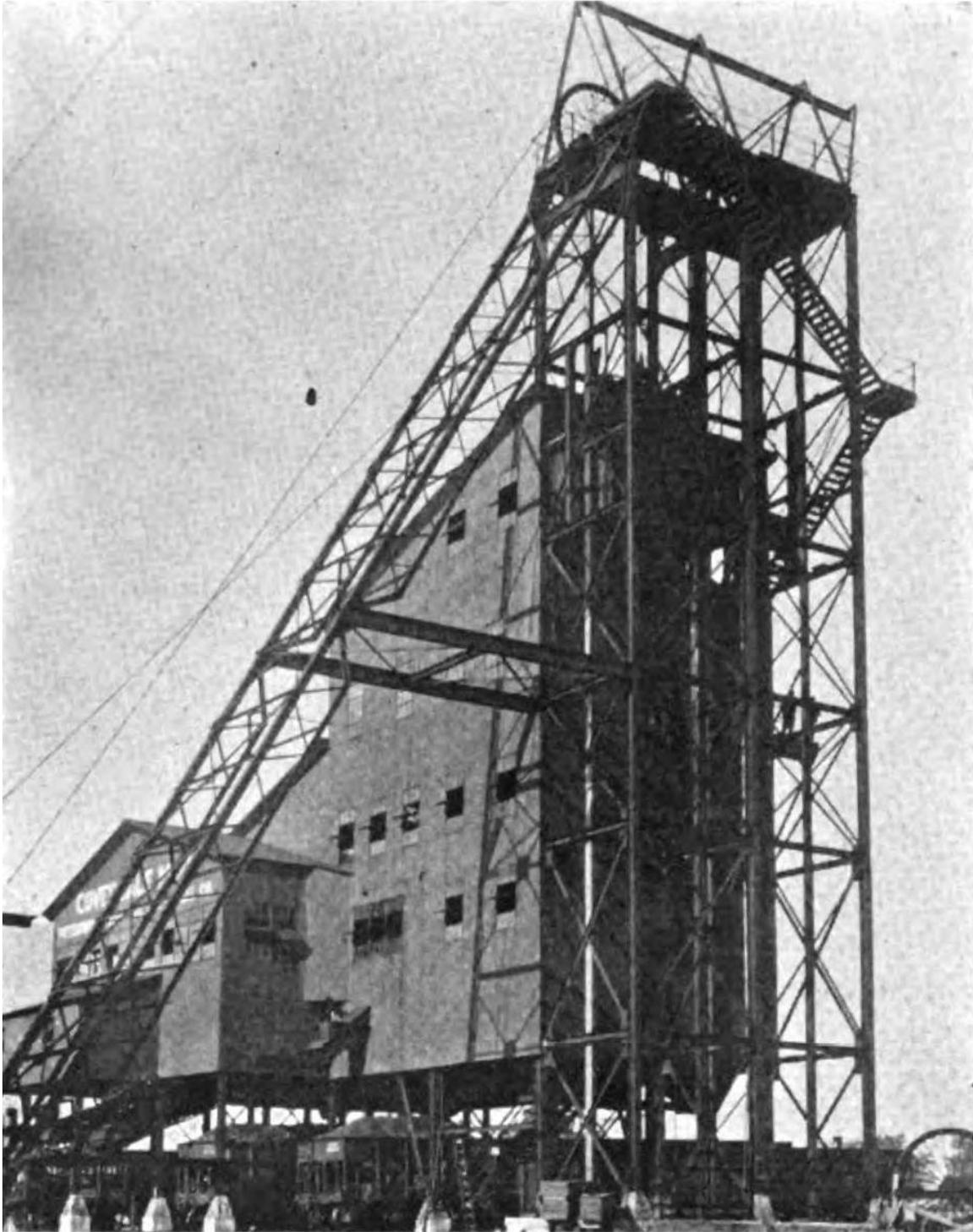


PLAYSET BUILDING

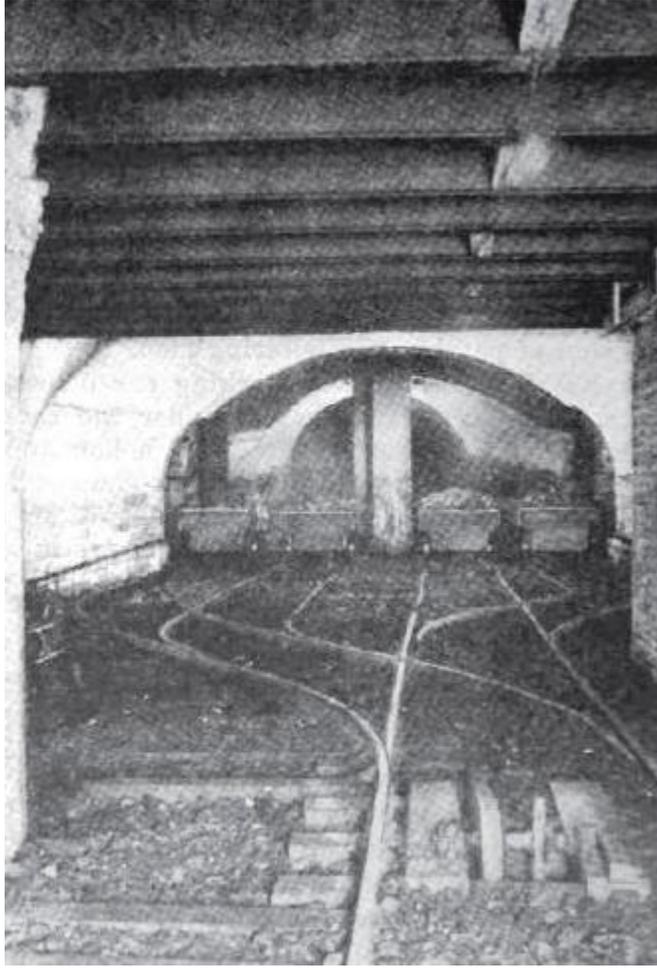
This 1922 photograph shows the tipple and hoist house for Coverdale No. 8, along with the yard tracks and the miners' homes in the background. Note that at this time it was simply called the Coverdale Mine. The number 8 was used to designate it as the eighth and final mine built by the Pittsburgh Terminal Railroad & Coal Company. The view would be timetable east on the Montour Railroad.



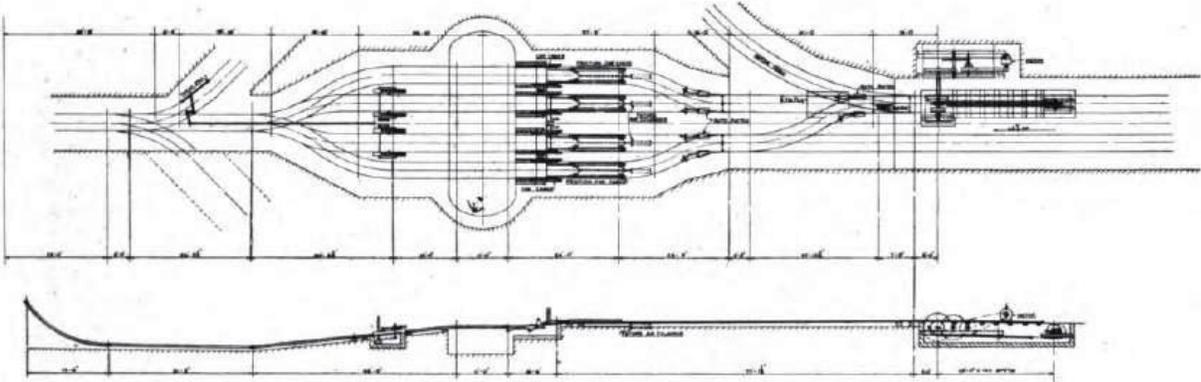
This is a close-up shot of the Coverdale tippel looking timetable west on the Montour.



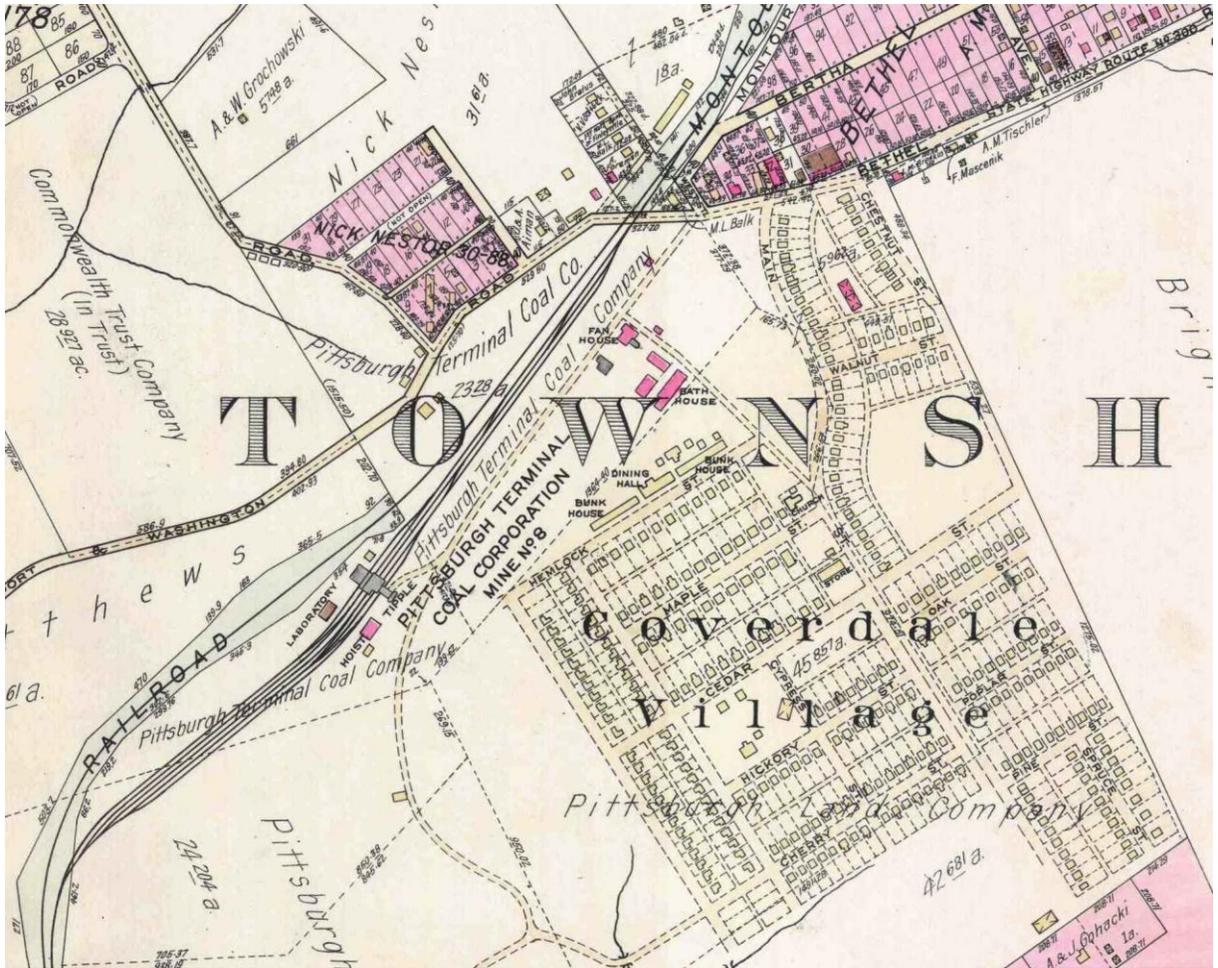
This is a photo of the shaft bottom at Coverdale showing the twin hoisting compartments with two mine cars ready to go up the shaft. The concrete ceiling was installed because of a bad mine roof at the shaft location.



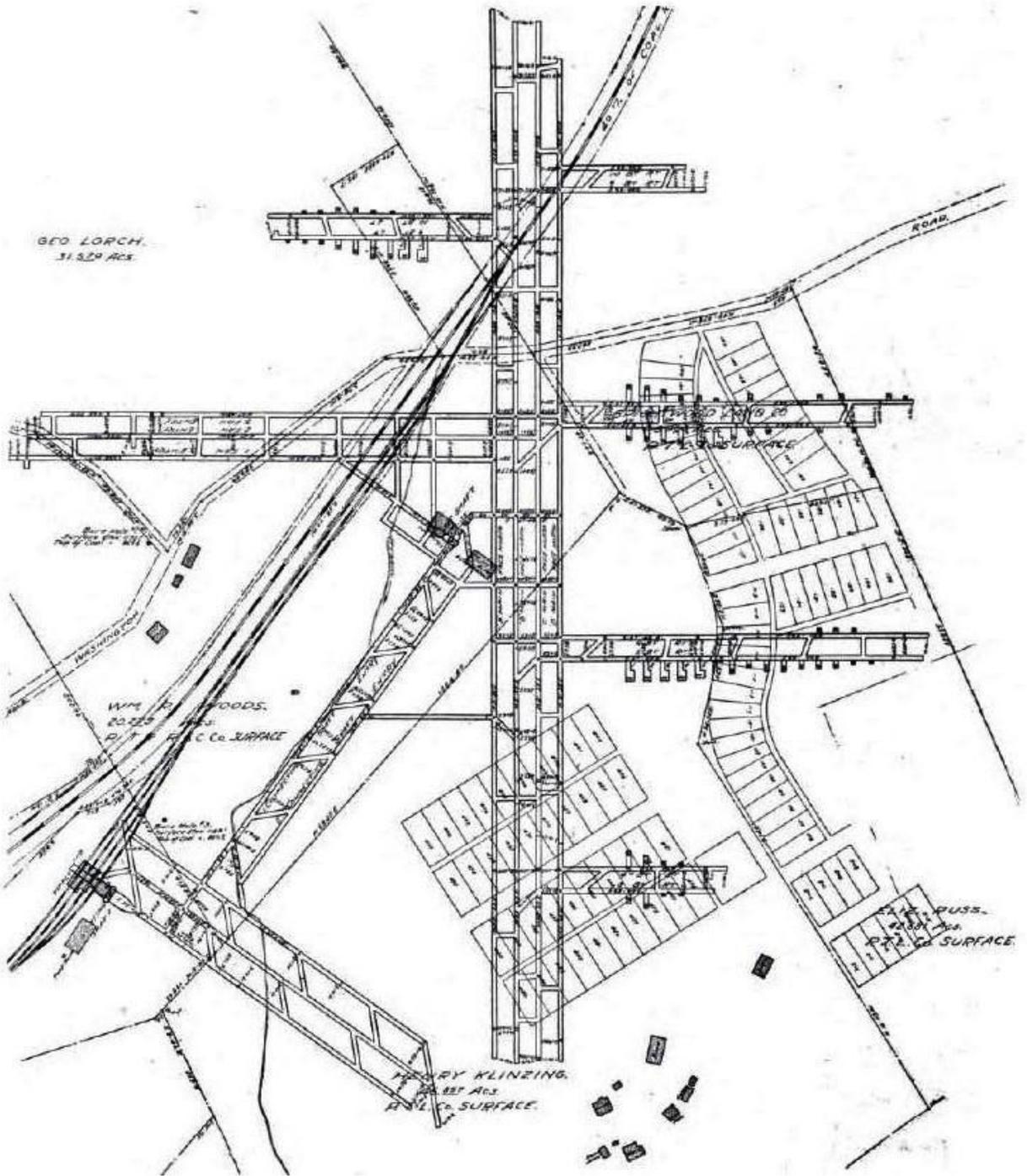
This is a diagram of the shaft bottom. A 50-car trip of loaded cars enters from the right and the locomotive uncouples and takes the diverging track. A chain-driven feeder moves the loaded cars through automatic switches onto the hoist cages. As the loaded cars enter each cage, empty cars exit to the left and roll by gravity up a kick-back trestle and reverse course to take one of the diverging tracks the left and right.



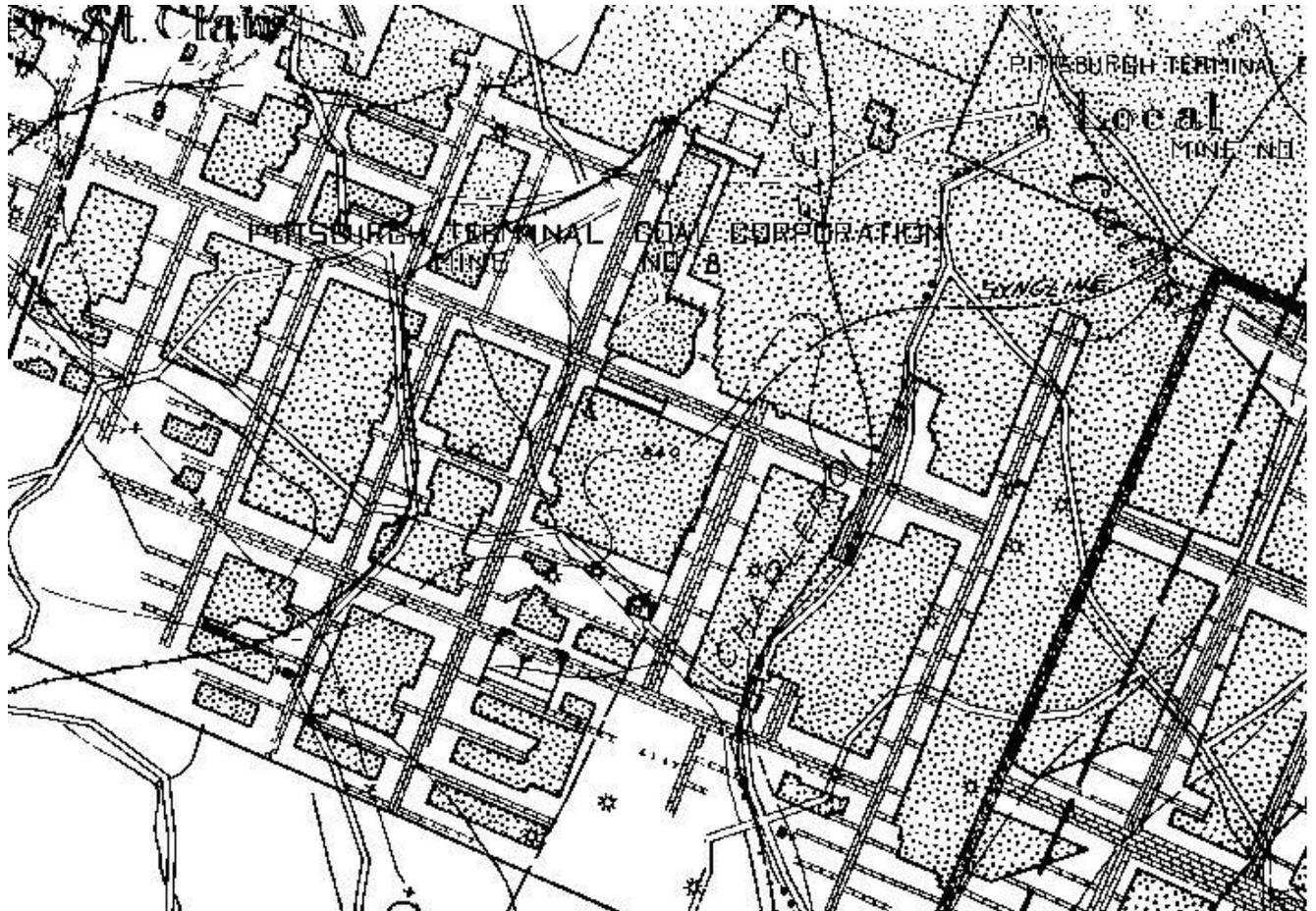
This 1934 real estate map provides a highly-detailed look at Coverdale mine and the miners' village as it was completed. Note the length of the mine siding and the number of tracks needed to support a mine that could produce 4,000 tons per day (about 80 car loads).



This underground map shows how the mine was laid out when it first went into operation.



By the 1930s, the mine had removed most of the coal around the shaft (the straight section of Montour track beneath the words "Pittsburgh Terminal"). The dark line in the lower right is the barrier pillar that separated Coverdale from Montour No. 10.



Mining is in full swing in this 1939 aerial photo, and the view of the “prosperous farm country” mentioned in the 1922 description of Coverdale is blocked by the ever growing waste pile. The large number of cars in the empty yard attests to the amount of production going on at Coverdale No. 8.



It's 1957 and Coverdale is closed and sealed, the tipple is gone and the waste dump is being reclaimed. Some industries have already occupied the former mine yard. Coverdale village, however, still looks like a mine patch.



By 1967, the industrial park has grown down into the old waste dump and Coverdale village is sporting trees and shrubs and is beginning to look like a suburban community.

