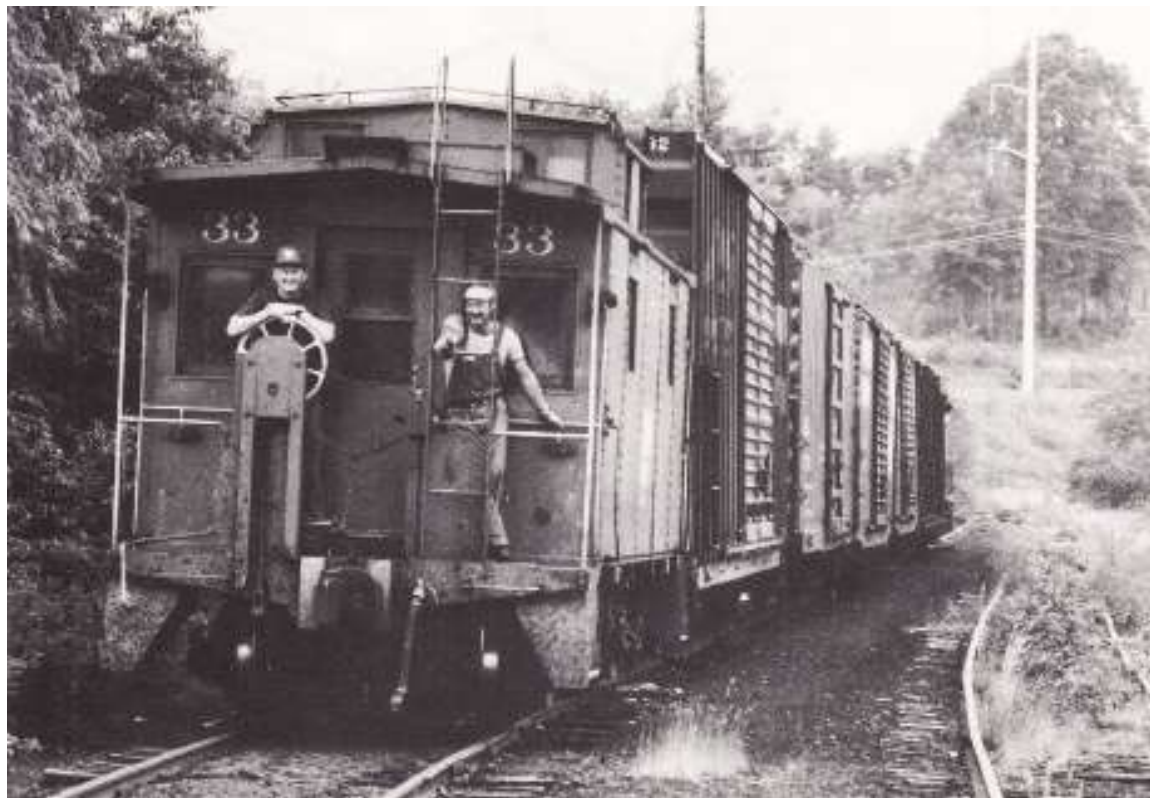


# Library Junction

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

Library Junction is located between Sugar Camp and Brush Run Roads in Peters Township at Trail Mile 34. The Library Branch was built in 1918 to serve Montour Mine #10 in Library. In 1929, the branch was extended three miles to an interchange point with the B&O RR at Snowden in South Park.

Library Junction was built as a wye track. A railroad wye is actually configured as a triangle. The branch line resembles the letter “Y”, with the main line closing the top. The wye allowed rail traffic on the Library Branch to move in either direction to or from Mifflin to the east or the Champion Preparation Plant and Montour Junction to the west.



**A train from Brookside Lumber backs through the east leg of the wye track. It will then pull out on the west leg of the wye with the locomotive leading the train. The storage siding can be seen to the right of the train.**

**Gene P. Schaeffer photo.**

The current paved section of the Arrowhead Trail follows the original Montour main line which continued into Bethel Park. The limestone section of the trail curving behind the horse farm was the railroad's Library Branch, with Montour Mine #10 and its adjacent maintenance shops located in Library at the bottom of the hill. The main Montour Trail

follows the railroad's Library Branch to connect with additional trail right-of-way in South Park as the trail heads east to Clairton.

Trains heading toward Mifflin or Snowden were considered to be eastbound. Trains going toward Montour Junction were westbound. Thus, the west switch of the wye track was closest to Sugar Camp Road and the west leg of the wye was the track closest to the horse farm. The east wye switch was the one closest to Brush Run Road, with the east wye leg along the hillside. The switch connecting the two legs behind the horse farm was called the inside switch.

The wye track arrangement was also used to turn locomotives or entire trains for better operation. In the steam days, locomotives operated better when run in the forward direction. Diesel locomotives run equally in forward or reverse, but it was better to have the engineer facing forward instead of looking over his shoulder on the opposite side of the tracks.

Trains serving some businesses in Bethel Park such as Brookside Lumber or Keifer Supply did not have anywhere to turn their engines for forward operation. Often trains returning west would be shoved caboose first several miles to Library Junction. The train would be shoved along the east leg of the wye all the way past the inside switch. The switch would then be lined for the west leg and the train would pull out onto the main line headed west but with the locomotive now in the lead. This was the railroad version of that 3-point turn you learned when driving a car.

There was also a siding track which paralleled the east leg of the wye, with a capacity of 40 cars. The siding switch was on the east wye leg near the main line and the siding ran almost to the Church Hill Road overpass. It was used for temporary storage of loaded hopper cars coming up the hill from Mine #10 before they were taken east to Mifflin or west to the Champion Preparation Plant. Empty hoppers would also be left on the siding for crews to deliver down the hill to the mine.



**Looking east at the west wye switch. The main line to Bethel Park curves to the left and the west leg of the wye diverges to the right. Loaded hoppers can be seen sitting on the storage siding along the east leg of the wye in the background.**

**Photo from Gene P. Schaeffer collection.**

There was a set of cross-over switches just past the inside switch to allow train crews to access either leg of the wye from the siding track or to allow the locomotive to run around its train of cars if needed.



**Loaded hoppers have been pushed up the hill from Mine #10 onto the siding. The train crew is now using a cross-over switch to run around the cars and couple onto the front of the train.**

**Gene P. Schaeffer photo**

There were railroad telephone booths located near the east main switch and at the inside switch to allow the conductor to contact the Montour dispatcher, before radio communication came into use in the early 1970's. The conductor would need to receive a train order from the dispatcher for permission to use the branch line or to return onto the main line tracks.

During the final years of service on the Library Branch, operations dictated that cars be shoved ahead of the locomotive due to deteriorating ties and roadbed conditions. Cars headed down the hill to Mine #10 would be shoved ahead of the engine and cars coming up the hill from the mine were also shoved from behind to help eliminate derailments. Due to the steep grade and poor track, loaded trains would often be brought up the hill in two or three sections which would be stored on the siding until the train could be put back together at the top of the hill.

Although the Library Branch was taken out of service in mid-1978, and main line operations in Bethel Park ended in 1976, the junction and the wye track were used until operations to Brookside Lumber ended in December, 1980.

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