

SIX KILLED, TWENTY INJURED WHEN B&O FREIGHT COLLIDES WITH K. OF P. EXCURSION TRAIN

Locomotive plows Through Wooden Coach Rendering It Into
Splinters and Scattering Wounded Along Tracks

INJURED BROUGHT TO GRANT HOSPITAL ON RELIEF TRAIN

Passenger Engineer Stops for Water and Neglects to Send Back Flagman –
Train Had Been Delayed Because of Heavy Rains and Was Behind Schedule

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, August 12, 1915)

THE DEAD

LOGAN HALLER, aged 22, farmer living at Five Points, Pickaway county.

MARGRET SOLLARS, aged 21, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Janes Sollars of Greenland, near Mt. Sterling.

THORNTON NEFF, aged 25, Mt. Sterling.

THADDEUS MITCHELL, aged 14, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Mitchell of near Mt. Sterling.

CARL REICHELDERFER, aged 16, of Five Points (died at grant Hospital).

FRED GEARHART, Mt. Sterling (died at grant Hospital).

THE INJURED

At grand Hospital:

GEORGE GROSSGLASS, aged 30, Mt. Sterling; tinsmith. Fractured ribs.

MRS. GEORGE GROSSGLASS, aged 27, Mt. Sterling. Bruises and cuts.

GROVER GEARHART, Mt. Sterling. Cuts and bruises.

FRANK MILLER, aged 40, Mt. Sterling. Fractured ribs.

GERALD MOORE, aged 16, Mt. Sterling. Broken leg, cuts and bruises.

CLEO SOLLARS, aged 18, Greenland (sister of Margret). Broken leg and hip. Serious.

VIRGIE SOLLARS, aged 20, Greenland (sister of Margret). Broken Leg.

CLARK BUSIC, aged 18, Mt. Sterling. Fractured skull and leg.

ROSS HILL, aged 16, Mt. Sterling. Broken leg and cuts and bruises.

HAROLD JOHNSON, aged 16, Five Points. Fractured shoulder. Serious.

WEBSTER JUNK, aged 14, Mt. Sterling. Fractured shoulder.

EDWARD LYNCH, aged 24, Mt. Sterling. Internal injuries. Serious.

At Mt. Carmel Hospital:

THOMAS FINLEY, Williamsport. Broken arm.

At Orient Hospital:

MRS. THORNTON NEFF, Mt Sterling. Probably fatally hurt. Husband killed outright.

GILBERT HILL, aged 14. Arm and leg broken.

MISS FLOYD BOGENRISE, aged 21, Mt. Sterling. Right arm crushed.

MISS GLADYS BOGENRIDER, aged 19, Mt. sterling. Right leg crushed.

Four were killed outright, two died at Grant Hospital several hours later, and more than a score were badly injured, some perhaps fatally, when a westbound B.&O. freight train ran into the rear of a B.&O. excursion train at 2:30 Thursday morning, at Orient, 16 mile southwest of Columbus. The engine of the freight plowed two thirds the way through the rear coach of the passenger train and killed or injured practically every occupant. It is estimated that there were 35 in the rear coach.

The coach next to the rear was thrown over on its side, but nearly all its occupants escaped without serious injuries. Many of the injured were taken to Mt. Sterling. The rest were brought to Columbus Hospitals.

Cause Not Definitely Established

The cause of the accident is not clearly explained. The passenger had left Grove City, six miles from the scene of the accident, ten minutes before the freight. The passenger had stopped to take water at Orient. It had just started to pull out for Mt. Sterling when the freight plunged into it.

Most of the killed and injured are persons living in and near Mt. Sterling. They were members of an excursion party gotten up by the Mt. Sterling lodge of the Knights of Pythias. The excursionists went to Cedar Point Wednesday morning. They started on their return trip after dark Wednesday evening. There were seven coaches on their train, all comfortable filled.

PASSENGERS ASLEEP.

The excursionists were hardly more than a half hour's ride from their homes when the collision occurred. Most of the passengers, weary from the trip, were asleep in their seats. Only a handful in the rear coach were apprised of the coming of the freight before the crash came. One of them was the conductor of the excursion train, August Shefier. Another was the passenger agent of the B.&O. who was in charge of the trip; F.B. Dickason, whose home is in Dayton. Both jumped from the rear coach a few seconds before the crash.

Pandemonium reigned when the freight struck the rear coach without warning. Rain was falling in torrents and partly drowned the screams of the injured. It was intensely dark and the lights carried by the trainmen failed to penetrate the heavy rain torrents. The engine of the freight was giving off ear-splitting explosions of steam.

DEAD BADLY MANGLED.

The bodies of two of the dead were terrible mangled. Thornton Neff was found lying on the pilot of the freight engine. His body was dismembered. Logan Haller was found under debris of the splintered coach a few feet away. The body of Miss Sollars was found lying near the side of the freight engine. She breathed her last just as train men and others reached her. Thad Mitchell, 14-year-old boy, was picked out of the debris later, dead.

The rear coach was broken into small bits of splintered wood. It was not, therefore, difficult to extricate the injured. Relief calls were sent to Columbus, Mt. Sterling and other points and ambulances were rushed to the scene from many direction.

Meantime a special train had been sent from Columbus, arriving at the scene before ambulances. It carried most of the injured to Columbus, where ambulances took them to Grant Hospital.

SOME TAKEN TO HOMES.

Those less seriously hurt were put on a special train and taken to their homes in Mt. Sterling. Many were cared for temporarily at the hospital of Dr. J.A. Knight at Orient.

A freight car of the train which was responsible for the accident was converted quickly into an emergency hospital and first aid was given there. It was soon lined with cots.

The little railroad passenger station at Orient was converted into a morgue and there were carried three of dead. Later they were taken to Mt. Sterling for burial. The fourth was first carried into a nearby house in Orient and later taken to Harrisburg.

Insofar as any information can be had of the circumstances leading up to the accident, the catastrophe was the result of gross carelessness.

The engineer of the freight train, which had left Newark about midnight Wednesday bound for Cincinnati, refused to explain the accident. The fireman F.J. Davidson of Newark said that the freight train had proceeded west for Grove City ten minutes after the passenger had left. He had believed the passenger to have gone through Orient without stopping. The action of the passenger in stopping therefore had been wholly unexpected.

CLEARANCE UNEXPLAINED.

Just why the freight was given clearance ten minutes after the passenger is wholly unexplained.

The engineer of the freight was George Stevens of Chillicothe. He stuck to his post but was not hurt, since the freight engine did not leave the track.

Fireman Davidson said he did not realize the impending collision until a few seconds before it happened. Then he jumped and escaped injury.

“We were coming along not so very fast and it was raining terrible.” said Davidson. “The first thing I knew I felt the emergency air being put on and I realized that something was going to happen. I looked ahead and saw through the rain and darkness the tail lights of a train. I stepped down from my seat and jumped. Then the crash came.”

FREIGHT NOT WARNED.

The conductor in charge of the freight was Samuel Hagers of Newark.

The crew of the passenger train were: Engineer P.J. Clancy of Newark; conductor, August Shefier of Newark. None of the passenger crew evidently knew that the freight was running so close behind. It could not be determined whether or not a flagman stopped at Orient. It is held by trainmen, however, that if a flagman had been in the rear, the accident could not have occurred. The torrential rain may have had something to do with the neglect of important details which caused the accident.

Pitiable experiences attended the collision. Mrs. Thornton Neff, whose husband was killed outright, was sitting at his side near the rear of the rear coach. She was badly hurt.

Three sisters, Margaret, Cleo and Virgie Sollars, were seated together also near the rear of the splintered coach. Margaret's death was instantaneous. Virgie was badly hurt, but the third sister escaped with lesser injuries. Virgie and Cleo were brought to Grant hospital, Columbus.

CAR GROUND TO BITS.

It is considered remarkable that any occupant of the rear coach escaped death. Hardly a piece of that coach can be found that is more than a few feet in dimension. It presents the spectacle of having begun chopping to bits through some fiendish design. The killed and injured were caught between chairs and doors and flooring and mangled. In the case of Thornton Neff the legs and arms had been torn off the head partly severed.

It is also considered remarkable that so many of the occupants of the coach second to the rear escaped serious injuries. This coach was thrown upon its left side and practically every bit of its chairs and furnishings were demolished.

TANNER'S LUCKY ESCAPE.

Edmond Tanner, aged 20, of Mt. Sterling, miraculously escaped serious injury or death. He was walking from the last coach on the train to the next coach forward when the crash occurred. "I was just stepping from one platform to the next coach," he said, a short time after the wreck, "when there came a great crash. It all happened so quickly that I didn't know what was wrong. The shock threw me into the next coach just as it was turning over on its side. I fell against a cushion seat. It was so dark I couldn't see, but I finally managed to get to the door and climb out. My mother and father were in the next coach and were not hurt."

A piece of flying timber struck Tanner on the head but his straw hat protected him from injury. His hat was mashed flat to his head.

SECOND COACH OVERTURNED.

But most of the second coach occupants did escape with only slight hurts. So great was the confusion and so intense the darkness that hardly a passenger on this coach can give any coherent account of the disaster. Most of them, hurried in all directions, escaped quickly through the front door, which was unobstructed, although lying horizontal.

Practically all the occupants of the rear coach, who escaped death, were too badly hurt to talk. Many of them are unconscious.

F.B. Dickason, the B.&O. passenger agent, who was in charge of the excursion and who jumped just in time, seeming could not definitely explain the cause of the accident. He was much overcome by his experience.

“I was on the rear coach near the rear door when I heard a scream of warning,” said Dickason. “I do not know where it came from. But I looked back and saw the lights of coming engine. I jumped. In five seconds afterward the crash came.”

Meantime the conductor of the passenger had heard the same cry of warning and he had jumped just at the time Dickason did, but from the other side of the train.

RAIN OBSCURED SPECIAL.

Many trainmen at the scene of the wreck said they believed the blinding rain, which had been falling all through the night and which had reached perhaps its greatest fury at the time of the accident, wholly obscured the view of the engineer of the freight. It would have been possible for the engineer not to have seen a flagman or even a light a few feet ahead, they [said].

The rain had one beneficent effect, however. It obviated the danger of the braking out of fire after the collision.

The accident came as an appalling climax to many hours of fun and frolic. The excursion was the annual outing of Tallmadge Lodge – 194, Knights of Pythias, of Mt Sterling. It had been a particularly happy one and probably the most successful in the history of the lodge.

Members of the lodge live not only in Mt. Sterling, in Derby near, and other adjacent towns, but also on farms surrounding. Nearly all the members had taken their families on the trip. It had been expected to start on the return trip from cedar Point late Wednesday afternoon but plans miscarried, and it was well into the night when the train began its trip south. For this reason the excursionists were worn into sleep when death and injury came upon them. Many children were asleep in their mother arms. Parents had fallen into slumber with the heads resting on the backs of seats or the window jams of the coach. Probably not a half dozen all told realized what has happen for many minutes after the collision. It is certain that the dead had no conscious moments before being ground into eternity.

WERE WOODEN COACHES.

Horror was added to the catastrophe by the fact that the old type of wooden coaches were carrying the passengers. The engine ripped and tore its path through the rear coach as if it had been built of thin pine boards. Had steel coaches been attached to the excursion train, the appalling death and injury list would have been at least greatly reduced. Some trainmen hold that steel cars probably would have been merely thrown from the track by the collision.

It is considered remarkable that the freight engine escaped being hurried from the track. In fact it was not seriously damaged and was able afterward to proceed under its own steam.

INJURED AT GRANT HOSPITAL.

The relief train reached Columbus at the B.&O. crossing at West Broad street, at about 3:30. It consisted of an engine and three Pullman coaches. While the relief train was speeding toward Columbus calls had been put in for every ambulance in Columbus to meet the train. The Brown-Myers, H.A. Pletcher, Schoedinger, H.H. Shaw, Mt. Vernon, two police ambulances and the city patrol were on hand when then train pulled in. All of the injured had been given first aid before reaching Columbus.

The first injured person to be taken from the train was placed in an ambulance and taken to Mt. Carmel hospital. The other fourteen were taken to Grant Hospital.

As they were taken into the receiving rooms they were placed on trucks and immediately taken to the operating rooms. Here a corps of hospital physicians and surgeons augmented by a number of volunteer surgeons, made hasty examinations and prepared for the more serious operations.

Eleven out of the fourteen taken to Grant hospital were immediately prepared for the X-ray laboratory, where more minute examinations could be taken to the injured. It was found that Fred Gearhart was the most seriously injured. He was suffering from a fractured shoulder and a pierced lung. At 9 o'clock a call was sent from the hospital to Mt. Sterling, notifying his parents that he was dying.

Carl Reichiderier, living at Five Points, near Mt. Sterling, was found to have serious internal injuries. Clark was thought to have a fractured skull and a fractured leg.

Mr. and Mrs. George Grossglass were found to be badly but not seriously injured. Mr. Grossglass had sustained two fractured ribs while his wife was suffering from cuts and bruises.

Grover Gearhart had slight cuts and bruises.

Chleo Sollars sustained a broken leg and fractured hip, and Virgie Sollas a broken leg.

Harold Johnson has a fractured shoulder as has Webster Junk. Edward Lynch is suffering from internal injuries.

Rose Hill had a broken leg and cuts and burises.

None of the injured were in any condition to tell their version of the accident. Most of them had been taken to private rooms and the physicians had urged that they be left undisturbed.

The Sollars girls were not informed of the death of their sister.

Several Mt. sterling residents, who had taken the excursion train, got off at Columbus and remained there. Two women, Mrs. James Anderson and her daughter, living on a farm near Mt. Sterling, immediately came to Grant hospital when they received news that a wreck had occurred.

STATE MAKING PROBE

Utilities Commission Will Fix Blame For Orient Wreck.

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, August 12, 1915)

Investigation with the purpose of fixing the responsibility of the disastrous wreck at Orient Thursday morning was started bright and early by the state utilities commission. Three inspectors were sent to the scene and after their report is made to the commission it is expected that a hearing will be given.

The commission was notified of the wreck shortly after 8 o'clock Thursday morning, and within a half hour the inspectors were on the way to the scene of the wreck to get first hand information. Their finding will be incorporated in a written report to the commission, which will be made at the earliest possible moment.
