

Bridgeport Evening Post.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 1908.

CORONER MAKES SEARCHING INQUIRY

Every Effort is Being Made to Fasten Responsibility Where it Belongs.

Number of Dead Now Fixed at 28—Funerals Will Take Place To-morrow—Seven in One Church—Bridgeport's Saddest Day—Injured are Improving—No More Deaths Probable.—Motorman Hamilton Under Arrest Charged With Manslaughter.

The Shelton extension horror still occupies the public mind. Nothing like it has occurred in years to come home so strongly to the minds of every person old enough to think in Bridgeport and the surrounding towns.

Universal sorrow is expressed on all sides for those who have suffered bereavement. Coupled with this sorrow is a feeling of determination that a thorough and complete inquiry must be made into the causes of the accident and that whoever is responsible must be dealt with according to law.

The first steps in the inquiry which is to be made were taken yesterday by Coroner Charles A. Doten. In view of the importance of the case he decided to summon a jury, an unusual proceeding in this state.

Six good men have been selected citizens who have the confidence of the general public, and their verdict will be accepted by all.

The coroner commenced the investigation yesterday afternoon by taking the jurors over to the scene of the accident. A searching investigation was made about the bridge and the incline leading to it. The wreck of the car was also carefully studied.

Immediately after this investigation the coroner ordered the arrest of Motorman George Hamilton. The young man was taken in charge by the Stratford officials and is now held under \$2,000 bonds to answer to the charge of manslaughter.

To-day the coroner and jury continued the inquiry. Not much progress was made as it was rather difficult to get the witnesses together. Some of the most important live in Ansonia.

It was thought that the motorman could be called to-day, but he was not on hand. There were rumors about that he had left the city, but there is no foundation for them apparently.

For the first time since the accident it has been possible to secure what is thought to be a complete list of the dead. It will be found in another column.

It will be found that two or three names which were given out yesterday are replaced by others. This list has been taken from the undertakers' books and it is believed to be correct.

This list makes the number of dead 28 and it is not thought that any have been overlooked. Of these all are identified but one. This one is a man about 50 years old, apparently a foreigner by birth. The body is at the undertaking establishment of John M. Ford. No inquiries have been made at the police station or any other place and it is thought the dead man is a stranger in the city.

The body has been partially identified several times, but the person supposed to be dead has turned up alive. It is satisfactory to be able to note that good reports come from the injured and that the death list is not likely to be increased, unless there happens to be an unfavorable turn in one or two cases.

The funerals of some of the victims took place this afternoon, but the large majority of them will be buried to-morrow. No less than seven will take place from St. Mary's church. The East Side Roman Catholic parish was a heavy loser by the accident, the list including some of its best known members.

INQUEST BEGUN.

Coroner Doten and Jury Hear Witnesses This Morning.

Coroner Charles A. Doten commenced to hold the inquest over the dead bodies of the 28 victims of the trolley accident at Peck's Mill bridge.

The coroner apparently began yesterday when he summoned the jury to sit through the hearing and in company with them visited the scene of the accident, and made an examination of the road bed which led up to the bridge and the bridge proper.

They all returned to their respective homes much wiser than when they went, but it is not known to what conclusion they have arrived in relation to the condition of the bridge and the road bed leading to it.

The jury consisted of six men, three from this city and three from the town of Stratford. The names of those from the latter place are Stiles Judson, Sr., Henry P. Stagg and J. Henry Blake-man. The Bridgeport jurors are A. J. Cable, R. T. Whiting and Henry Lee.

The hour for the inquest to commence was down for 10 o'clock, but it was 10:30 before the jury and coroner filed into the county commissioners' room on the second floor, where the hearing was to be held. They were followed by a small number of spectators.

There was not a witness present and it was fully 15 minutes before one put in appearance. This was William E. Peck who resides within 30 feet of where the accident occurred.

Sheriff Stagg was scouring the city over to get other witnesses. It was his intention to bring Motorman Hamilton in, but through some misunderstanding the latter did not put in an appearance. It is thought that he will appear some time this afternoon, as the coroner intends to hold an all day session.

The inquest was formally held over the body of William Osborn of Stratford. Before any witnesses were examined, the jury and other men present were joking and laughing in a merry way, but when a witness was put upon the stand and the fearful accident revealed once more, sadness pervaded everything.

Attorney Allan W. Paige and M. W. Seymour appeared in the interests of the Shelton Street Railway Co. Once or twice they requested the coroner to ask the witness in relation to the speed of the car, but outside of that they said nothing. Both took notes.

After Mr. Peck had been examined there was a delay of about 15 minutes before his cousin, Miss Frances E. Peck came into the room. Her breath came quick and short. She was asked to take a seat and it was several moments before she could speak. The cause of the shortness of breath was the exertion in climbing the stairs and being rather nervous in thinking that she would have to recall the terrible accident once more to her mind.

There were tears in her eyes when she started in to tell what she saw but she soon became composed and proved to be a good witness. She was strong

in her belief that Motorman Hamilton was running the car too fast.

Medical Examiner William B. Cogswell of the town of Stratford knew nothing about the accident further than that he viewed the bodies as they lay in the town hall.

Miss Katie Taylor proved to be quite an interesting witness. She saw the car as it left the bridge and made the awful plunge.

The first witness called was William E. Peck. He was near the trestle when accident occurred. He thought it happened about half past three o'clock. The first he heard was the thump of the car; went right over, and was the first man on the scene; saw the car all smashed with a lot of people under it; knew William Osborn; saw men put a body in wagon; someone said it was Osborn; did not see the motorman; did not pick that the body was within a few feet of the cars fast. It was not properly fixed up," said the witness.

This ended his examination and the coroner asked the jury if they wanted anything more of the witness. He was asked by them if, to his knowledge, anything had been done to the approach of the bridge since the accident occurred.

He did not know that any repairs had been made to the road, as he worked rather late at night and could not see what was done during the day.

Mr. Peck resides in the immediate vicinity of the bridge, and at the time of the frightful accident occurred. It was his barn that was used to store the dead until sufficient teams could be secured to transfer them to the town hall at Stratford.

The watch tackle which was fastened to the bridge and bottom of the car, which raised the cruel burden from the injured and dying, belonged to him.

Mr. Peck worked with a will, and was the first to think of the tackle. His house was thrown open to admit the injured and dying, but it was not necessary to take anyone there.

When the accident occurred he was sitting near the place just around the curve with Asa Bradley and Frederick Wheeler. They were conversing on different topics of the day, when suddenly their attention was attracted to the terrible crash, which was followed immediately by groans and shrieks.

MISS PECK TESTIFIES.
Mr. Peck's cousin, Miss Frances E. Peck, who lives in next house, was the next witness. She also lives within 30 feet of the bridge. The house is in plain view of the scene of the accident. "I was up stairs at the time of the accident," said Miss Peck. "When I first saw the car; it was down by the road, about 100 feet. From my window I should judge I could see down the road about one-eighth of a mile."

"The car was running very fast when I first saw it. I don't know whether there is a grade or not. I did not notice any peculiar motion of the car until it went across the driveway, which goes between the two houses."

"I did not notice anything peculiar until it was hid to view by Mr. Peck's barn. I then heard a very peculiar, rumbling sound."

"When the car came in view again, I then noticed that it was on the left side, was swaying back and forth. I have no recollection of seeing the motorman. I noticed that three men were on the running board. I saw no one jump. All seemed to go down together."

"When I saw the car coming so fast, felt, as though something was going to happen. I went back and forth across my room; I felt nervous."

Arthur J. Cable, one of the jury, asked witness how that car fell, if it was end over end, or sideways. Witness said it fell sideways. In answer to other questions, witness said that the car which comes from the south, and which enters the approach of the bridge, comes more than when coming from the north. "Almost all the cars slow down," said the witness. "But I could not say that this one did. Some run faster than others, while going across the bridge. I often noticed that the cars rocked back and forth, and teetered, but I never saw any of them away until this one came over."

Attorney Morris W. Seymour asked witness what she considered was the speed of a car when it was going fast.

She answered that, considering the places, she would think that the speed of the car which went to its

room, with its human load, was going far too fast for safety. She also thought that the car was going too fast if it had been running on a level and not entering on a high road bed.

MEDICAL EXAMINER TALKS.
Dr. William B. Cogswell, medical examiner of Stratford, was called. He had examined the body of William B. Osborn when brought to town hall. The cause of death was fracture of the skull. There were other cases which were brought to his attention. There were 28 in all. Some were injured that did not die in the town of Stratford. Witness could not give the names of those. He did not know how those other people were killed. Knew nothing about the circumstances attending the accident. He simply knew that there were 28 dead people in the hall, and two at Strawberry Hill.

As the doctor was not at the scene of the accident, there was nothing further to inquire from him.

MISS TAYLOR SAYS IT.
Miss Katie Taylor resides at 161 East Main street. She was one block from where the accident happened. Saw the car as it approached the trestle; it had a teeter motion and was going very fast; it did not slow up, as

it went upon the bridge. "I was too excited to know much," said the witness. "There was a friend of mine on the car. I ran out from my sister's residence and waved my hand. I had never seen a car cross the bridge, and I was rather curious to see it."

"I did not notice what the motorman did. I saw him after he was brought upon the bank. I did not notice that he was hurt. The car went off the bridge sideways. I think that the car was going far too fast to cross the bridge. I saw two gentlemen on the rear of the car. Did not see them jump."

"When the car went by I stood in the center of the car tracks, and watched it. I don't know what made me do it. There was a thick cloud of dust which was raised by the car, and I could not see very much until it topped the bridge. I heard the crash, while I was running in the house to tell Mr. and Mrs. Webb, my brother-in-law and sister. I then ran out and told a small boy to telephone for the ambulance. My sister and myself got sheets and pillow cases and went to the scene of the accident. We remained all the afternoon, doing what we could for the injured and dying."

Miss Taylor was a guest at her sister's house for the day. The jury were compelled to remain fully an hour after Miss Taylor was examined, as there were no other witnesses present. The coroner then gave notice that he would adjourn the hearing until two o'clock this afternoon.

ENGINEER STARR.
The hearing was resumed this afternoon at 2:10 o'clock, and the first witness was Major William W. Starr, who inspected the road and bridge after its construction. In his opinion the condition of the road was good; may have been a little slack in width. There is always a shrinkage for months after a road is built. There was no appearance of a shrinkage at the particular point, where the accident occurred.

Any new bank has a certain amount of elasticity. It will give to a certain extent; had been over road every day since the construction of the bridge; did not notice that car rocked when it passed over the rails on the south side of the bridge.

There is a guard rail about a foot from the rails; it is the kind that is generally used on steam roads; there are guards between the rails; these were ordered last week.

Major Starr could not explain why it was that the guard rail on the bridge did not hold the car; could not say what the distance was from the end of the bridge to where the car went off. The distance from the bridge to the bottom, where it landed, was 67 feet.

YESTERDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

When Coroner Doten realized the importance of this accident and peculiar circumstances which led up to it, he made it his duty to take a departure from the rule in such cases in this state and summons a coroner's jury.

The jury was empanelled yesterday afternoon and the following named citizens of Bridgeport and Stratford were drawn to serve on it: County Commissioner Henry Lee, President Arthur J. Cable of the board of charities and Russell T. Whiting of Bridgeport, and Town Clerk Henry P. Stagg, former Selectman Stiles Judson Sr., and J. M. Blackman of Stratford.

The jury was called together about three o'clock and after the oath was administered they went with the coroner to Stratford to go over the scene of the accident and to view, as the law requires, the body of William S. Osborn of Stratford, over whose remains the formal inquiry was to be held.

Upon arriving at the bridge the jury and coroner made a careful examination of the road bed and the incline leading to it. From the comments it did not appear that they found anything out of the way.

Considerable time was spent in examining the bridge and the marks made by the car when it jumped off. The marks of the wheels were found just as they were described in The Post last evening.

After looking at the bridge the jury went down to where the wreck of the car lay, measurement of the height from the top of the bridge to the ground showed the distance to be 37 feet. This was considerably less than most of the estimates made with the eye.

Upon making an examination of the car some comment was passed upon the condition of the flanges on the car wheels. They were found to be very much worn.

After examining the car the jury returned to the bridge and asked questions about its construction. There was absolutely nothing the matter with the rails or the trusses. The jury looked at what was supposed to be the guard rail and one and all condemned it.

The rail was measured and it was found to be four and a half inches high, or only about half an inch higher than the rail upon which the cars run. The marks made by the wheels of the car showed that this rail was no obstruction whatever. The wheels went right over the wooden rail apparently without any difficulty.

MOTORMAN ARRESTED.
After the jury had completed the examination of the bridge and the surrounding territory, the coroner, Coroner Doten, then decided to have Motorman George Hamilton arrested. Deputy Sheriff Charles E. Stagg left for this city with a warrant and Hamilton was taken to Stratford. He was taken before Justice Charles H. Peck who held him in \$2,500 surety to answer to the charge of manslaughter. Bail was furnished by William P. Tuttle of Stratford.

The jury returned to this city and were dismissed until ten o'clock this morning.

After Hamilton was arrested an effort was made to get an interview with him, but he refused to talk. He said he would tell his story before the coroner and would not say anything until then.

BRIDGEPORT'S SAD DAY.

Funerals of the Victims To-morrow—Seven at St. Mary's Church.

To-morrow will indeed be a sad day in Bridgeport. The funerals of the majority of those killed in the trolley wreck at Peck's bridge will be held and the whole city will mourn. Every available horse and carriage will be utilized during the day and from present indications the florists will be forced to work nearly all night in order to have the floral pieces made up which go to express the sympathy for those homes which were made desolate by the hand of death.

Perhaps there has never been such a feeling of sorrow over an accident as that which occurred Sunday and it is likely that many places of business will be closed on account of the death of some near and dear friend or relative.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1899.

On every hand are heard expressions of sympathy for the relatives of the deceased and remarks deploring the occurrence. Some of the funerals were held to-day but the majority will be held to-morrow. Those to-day were:

Sidney Alexander Pitt, and his son, Sidney Arthur, held to-day from the residence of Mr. Pitt's parents, 200 Main street at 4 o'clock. Interment was in Park cemetery.

Mrs. Frank Blue, Melville and Maudie Blue, from their late residence, Strawberry hill, Stratford, where prayers were said at 8 o'clock this morning. The remains were sent to Gibbon, Nebraska, for interment, on the 9:22 train from Stratford.

William Osborn, aged 19 years, 6 months, from the residence of his uncle, Lucius Judson, Jr., Stratford, at 2 p. m. Rev. W. E. Jeffries, pastor of the Methodist church officiating. Interment was in Union cemetery, Stratford.

To-morrow will see one continuous cortege from various parts of the city to the different cemeteries, and the heart which is not touched by the sight must indeed be difficult to reach. They will be as follows:

Henry C. Cogswell, from his late residence, 574 Washington avenue, at 8:30 p. m. Rev. Dr. Fisher and Rev. John De Pen, pastor of the North Congregational church officiating. Interment will be in Mountain Grove cemetery.

Osmer B. Wells, at 2 p. m. from his late residence, 2684 North avenue, Rev. H. E. Burnes, pastor of the First Methodist church, officiating. Interment will be in Mountain Grove cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Harvey, at 2:30 in St. Paul's Episcopal church, Rev. H. M. Sherman, rector of the church, officiating. Probably all the lodges to which Mr. and Mrs. Harvey belonged will be represented by large delegations.

Kileen Brennan, widow of Patrick Brennan, from the residence, 284 Ogden street, at 7:30 o'clock and St. Mary's church at 8 a. m. Interment in St. Michael's cemetery.

Peter Ring, from his late residence, 45 Seymour street, at 8:15, St. Mary's church at 8:45. Interment in St. Michael's cemetery.

Bessie Toomey, from her late residence, 43 Revere street at 9 o'clock, St. Mary's church at 9:30 a. m. Interment in St. Michael's cemetery.

John F. Flynn, from his late residence, 10 Reade street at 9:35, St. Mary's church at 10:15 a. m. Interment in St. Michael's cemetery.

John E. Carroll, from his residence, 1731 Stratford avenue, at 10:30, and St. Mary's church at 11 a. m.

Irving Dorns, from his late residence, 18 Franklin street, at 8:30, St. Augustine's church at 9 a. m. Interment in St. Michael's cemetery.

Joseph Hotchkiss, from his home, 15 Prospect street at 1:30. Interment in Lakeview cemetery.

Mrs. Arthur Holmes, from the residence of her mother, Mrs. Charles J. Charlesworth, 247 Helen street at 3 o'clock. Interment in Lakeview cemetery.

Howard R. P. Baldwin, from the residence of Mrs. George N. Burbank, 14 Judson place, Stratford, at 11 a. m., interment being in Fair Haven, Conn.

Mrs. Joseph Rugg, from her late residence, Strawberry hill, Stratford, at 2 o'clock. Interment in Union cemetery.

Victor Anderson, from Black Rock, at 8 p. m. Interment in Mountain Grove cemetery.

The double funeral of Patrick and Annie McDermott will be held at 7 o'clock from their late residence, 829 Pembroke street, and from St. Mary's church at 7:30 a. m. Interment in Auburn, N. Y.

It will be noticed that there will be seven funerals from St. Mary's church to-morrow morning. The funeral of Michael and Daniel Galvin will be held to-morrow morning in Ansonia.

INJURED IMPROVING.

Doctors Now Think That All Will Recover in Time.

Most of the persons injured in the trolley wreck Sunday are feeling comfortably to-day and doing as nicely as may be expected. Those at the Bridgeport hospital, Frank E. Krapp, Arthur Holmes, Mrs. Sidney A. Pitt, Matthew Robin, Miss Margaret Farrell, Miss Margaret Beaman and Frederick Ellierkus, are in as favorable a condition as possible under the existing circumstances. The physicians feel pretty positive at the present time that they will recover. This news will be welcomed by those who have waited anxiously to hear from their loved ones at the local institution. Should nothing unforeseen develop it is quite certain that all will recover.

Michel Rugg, 10 years of age, injured on the hip and hand, is resting comfortably at the house of her parents, Strawberry hill, Stratford. Whether there are any internal injuries cannot be stated positively at the present time.

Harvey Rugg 2 years of age, was picked up apparently unharmed Sunday, and unless internal injuries exist which are at present unknown, will be all right in a day or so.

George Canfield and John Crute of Derby, and William Kelley of this city, were only slightly injured and should not be placed on the injured list.

William McCallough, the gate tender in Derby, was removed to his home, and although internally injured, will probably recover. The condition of Charles H. Delaney, who is staying at the residence of the late H. C. Cogswell, Washington avenue, is fairly good to-day. He did not pass a very restful night, and the result in the improvement is not marked, but at the same time he is doing as well as can be expected. Unless something unforeseen develops in the next day or so, Dr. C. H. Hill, who is attending him, hopes to bring him out all right.

NOTES.

The unidentified man in John Ford's undertaking parlors was viewed by many people early in the day who were unable to identify him. It is probable that unless he is identified within a few days that the funeral will be at the expense of the town of Stratford.

A representative of The Post visited the residence of Mrs. Annie McDonald, 79 Colorado avenue, this morning and learned that the late motorman was not killed in the catastrophe Sunday nor was she in it. She is alive and in good health.

It has been generally supposed that the Bridgeport Traction Co. is the owner of the Shelton extension. This is a mistake. The extension is owned by the Shelton Street Railway Co., although the Bridgeport Traction Co.'s cars were used, the two companies operating the line together.

OUTSIDE COMMENT.

What the Press Have to Say About the Shelton Railway Accident.

THE SHELTON ACCIDENT. (New York Tribune.)

Just why the Bridgeport trolley car went off the track is not yet clear, but it would seem that a high trestle work at the foot of a grade invited special precautions against a car jumping the track and going off the bridge which were not taken. A light, fast moving trolley car goes off the track easily. Many of them are so balanced that they rock a great deal and are likely to jump at an obstruction or serious unevenness of the track. They are probably more subject to this danger than steam railroad cars, which roll along the track as decidedly as trolley cars bound. Then, too, trolley road tracks are lighter and cheaper, and likely to have inequalities. These conditions were plain enough to warn the railroad managers against leaving any chance for a jumping car to plunge from the trestle. Indeed, they appear to have noted the danger, and were preparing to put guard rails on the bridge, but did not do it soon enough. They were too anxious to take advantage of the summer excursion business to wait till all dangers they had foreseen were fully guarded against. The foreseen mishap occurred before they were ready for it, and was no more an "accident" than if they had sent the cars running on the stringers without rails. It is said also that the danger of speeding down the grade to the trestle was foreseen and an order given regulating the rate. But there are orders and orders. Our street car men have orders about their speed which

have orders about their speed which the companies practically force them to disobey in order to make the trips required of them. Was the Bridgeport order a perfunctory one, or was it issued with such distinctness that a motorman understood the danger as well as his superiors? The apparent willingness of the managers to take chances with guard rails does not carry much confidence in the strictness of discipline necessary to protect passengers.

Apparently the transportation companies both in Maine and Connecticut were trying to do as much business as possible on the least outlay, and were straining the plant they had prepared. One was hurrying to use its line before the last touches had been put upon it. The other provided what it knew to be inadequate ferry accommodations for the crowd it placed on the wharf and thereby provoked the rush of many people to be early aboard. Even if the gangplank had stood the test there would have been a serious failure of duty. Now that the gangplank broke, it will not do to say that the overcrowding so invited was the cause of an unavoidable "accident."

THE STRATFORD ACCIDENT.

(New Haven Palladium.)

The accident on the electric railroad trestle at Stratford Sunday was probably due to a lack of proper precaution on the part of someone, at least all the information now at hand indicates that the accident was not unavoidable. The public should, however, withhold judgment until a full investigation has been made, which, in this case is to be done by a coroner's jury. That is a departure here in Connecticut that should become the rule instead of the exception, and we trust that the inquiry will be thorough and will result in placing the blame where it belongs.

Because the motorman saved himself we should not be hasty in passing judgment on him. He fortunately lives to tell his story, and there are other survivors of the accident who should be able to tell as to the speed of the car when it was approaching the trestle.

One thing is plain, and that is that the railroad officials and engineers had not considered the running of cars on the trestle sufficiently dangerous to take the precaution against just such an accident by laying guard rails on the structure. In the public mind this appears to be a precaution with which the motorman had nothing to do.

THE STRATFORD HORROR.

(Hartford Post.)

It is perhaps too early to comment with entire justice and a full understanding of all the details. It is a difficult matter to treat of so great a tragedy, such a wholesale sacrifice of human life, calmly and dispassionately. But it is admitted that there were no guard rails on the bridge and it is stated by a number of witnesses, some in fact who survived the disaster by jumping from the car before it took its awful plunge, that it was running at an extremely rapid rate of speed. The road had been hastily completed in order to be put in use for the summer business. It is evident that this fearful slaughter would never had occurred if the motorman had run the car slowly down the incline leading to the bridge. It is very doubtful further, if anybody would have been hurt if there had been proper protecting rails on the structure. It would seem that any well managed company in building a bridge of this character, over 400 feet long and 50 feet high would have provided every necessary safeguard, merely to save itself in case of possible disaster. If it was not over-scrupulous for the safety of its patrons, but in this case this certainly was not done.

THE TROLLEY ROAD HORROR.

(New Haven Register.)

The accident, which one cannot accept as an accident for which there is no explanation, shows how constant must be the oversight on the part of the management in its hiring of men, and how intelligent its general policy of control. It won't do to say that all danger of accidents cannot be removed so long as the companies neglect to man their cars with men of good judg-

ment and known sobriety. In order to trace satisfactorily an accident like that of yesterday, a beginning must be made with the management itself. Its origin, its spirit of control, its general policy, and finally its understanding of its obligation toward the public. A river cannot rise above its source, and so we see reflected upon every trolley line, the character of the management in the behavior and judgment of its men. We have no doubt that if the affair is probed deep enough it will be found that there has been a lack of common foresight somewhere exercised, and that the risk the motorman ran can be traced to it. He ought to have known better than to run at full speed over the trestle, but that he did not shows that he was either improperly selected for the post or improperly coached in his duties.

It is specifically the saddest catastrophe Connecticut has seen in years, and causes double shudders to disturb one when contemplated with the Maine disaster. Together they prove that eternal vigilance is not only the price of liberty in politics, but the price of life in the ordinary conduct of the public transportation business. It is a fearful commentary that the loss of over a score of lives is necessary to the cultivation of managerial skill.