

Bridgeport Evening Post.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 1909.

JEWELL MADE TIES SPRING

More Sensational Testimony At Coroner's Inquest.

CONSIDERED IT DANGEROUS

No Dirt Under Several Ties Near Approach to Bridge.

The fourth day of the inquiry into the causes of the Shelton extension horror, started in very slow this morning, owing to the lack of witnesses. All the forenoon Deputy Sheriff Charles E. Stagg and Peter Doolan and Officer Charles Campana were out hunting for witnesses and it was said that one of the officers went out of town.

When the hour for opening the inquiry arrived, only a few were in the court room. The place looked deserted. The jury was nowhere to be seen and it was learned later that they were holding a consultation in the judge's room.

Coroner Boten hustled from one room to another to get things under way. He made several trips to his office to send messages over the telephone.

Attorneys Morris W. Seymour and Allan W. Paige were on hand in the interests of the Shelton Street Railway Co. Attorney Seymour wanted to know how long the inquest was going to last. He said he would like to have an adjournment for a week and if it possibly could be accomplished, he would like to see the inquiry end today.

The coroner replied that it was no easy task to get witnesses together. He intended to go into the inquiry very deeply regardless of the time it took. He did not think that time should come into consideration at all upon such an occasion.

It was 11:15 when Sheriff Stagg entered the court room followed immediately by George Jewell, town treasurer of the town of Stratford, who proved to be a most important witness.

Mr. Jewell went to the place on his wheel shortly after the accident. Men were busy removing bodies. After the bodies had been removed to the barn of Mr. Beck he went upon the bridge to see if he could find out what caused the car to jump the track.

A number of his friends were with him. Within a short distance of the abutment he noticed that the ties did not touch the dirt. Mr. Judd only weighs 149 pounds but when he jumped on the ties they sprung down until they touched the dirt.

A couple of his friends, who were with him did the same thing one by one and the springy motion was quite noticeable.

Mr. Jewell is of the opinion that this one thing was enough to cause the car to jump the track. He noticed a depression in the rails. They were bent somewhat just at the approach to the abutment. He thought that the cars passing over the rails when there was no dirt under the ties caused the rails to bend. He remarked to his companions at the time that the road bed was in a dangerous condition. His friends remarked the same thing.

W. W. Starr was again put upon the stand and asked numerous questions concerning the road bed and bridge.

JEWELL TRIED RAILS.

George T. Jewell, town treasurer of Stratford was the first witness called. He went up on his wheel to the scene of the accident shortly after it occurred; made an examination of the ties just south of the abutment and found that there was no dirt under them.

"My weight made the rails give a little," said the witness. "It was in this condition for about eight feet from the bridge."

"There seemed to be quite a fall from the end of the bridge. I did not go down and make a close examination. There were three ties, anyway, which were loose. There were two or three friends with me and they all noticed the ties and rails spring."

"You don't think it was imagination on your part about the rails springing, do you?" witness was asked.

"No sir, it was not."

"Did you see a car go over the place while you stood there?"

"A car went by while I was down below."

"You say that your impression was that there was no dirt under the ties?"

"I say now my impression is that no dirt was under the ties."

"What time did you get there?"

"It was about 5:30."

"Were there many people around?"

"The majority of them had left."

"Did the roadbed look as though there had been considerable tramping of feet?"

"I did not see. All I noticed was the condition of the ties. I saw then that they were in a dangerous condition."

"Did most of the people who climbed from the gulch below go up on the steps or climb up the road bed?"

"I should say that it was an even thing."

"Was there any depression in the rails south of the abutment?"

"The cars going over the rails all day would seem to me that they would be bent. I noticed the depression when I went there first."

"How much do you weigh, Mr. Jewell?"

"About 149 pounds."

"Did it feel to you that when you jumped on the ties that they struck the earth?"

"Yes sir."

"Do you know how far down the ties went?"

"I could not say."

"Did you jump on the rail or ties?"

"I jumped on the ties between the rails."

"The people that stood near you saw about the same thing didn't they?"

"Yes sir."

"Did they try to spring the rails?"

"Yes sir."

"What impression did it have when they were on the ties?"

"The same as when I got on."

MAJOR STARR AGAIN.

W. W. Starr was called and asked if he thought a man weighing 150 pounds could spring one of those iron rails.

"I don't think he could," replied the witness.

"How heavy are the rails?"

"They are 66 pounds to the yard, and are 38 feet long."

Can you give the distance of the joint of the rail on the east side from the abutment?"

"No sir."

"Say, if the joint was two feet from the abutment, would it have a tendency to send the car from the track?"

"I would say that the spikes would be drawn from the bridge."

"Did you see anyone drawing spikes on the bridge or anywhere on the roadbed near by?"

"No sir."

"Whose duty was it to see that the road bed was kept up to grade?"

"It was as much mine as anyone."

"When was the last time you looked at the approach and bridge?"

"I crossed the bridge about 1:30 Sunday afternoon."

"Did you look at the road bed within 30 feet of the bridge?"

"I did not notice it in particular."

"Did you notice the car tester at that time?"

"I did not. When I got there after the accident there was a large crowd. They were climbing up the bank and tramping between the ties."

"If there was no dirt under the ties when a car went over them what impression would it have on it?"

"I should say it would have a tendency to throw the car from the track."

"What is your opinion as to the cause of the accident?"

"I do not like to give an opinion. It might be right or it might be wrong."

"Did it occur to you that the approach to the bridge was in a dangerous condition?"

"It did not."

"When you went up with the motorman in the afternoon, did you notice him use any precaution in turning his car when approaching the bridge?"

"Yes sir, he went very slowly."

"If he had not, you would have told him to go slow?"

"I certainly would."

"Then you rather thought that it would be dangerous to go fast over the bridge?"

"It is just as well to go slow when going around curves or over bridges."

"Was it on Motorman Hamilton's car that you rode to Shelton early in the afternoon?"

"No, I could not say what the conductor's name was. I don't think I would know him if I saw him again."

Mr. Starr produced a drawing of the approach to the bridge, part of the bridge proper and roadbed on the south side. It was marked for evidence.

David McGregor, inspector of the Bridgeport Traction Co., said he never heard that car No. 2 ran off the track before.

"This was all that was wanted of this witness, so he was excused. No other witnesses were present and the coroner said he would take a recess. The jury went into consultation. After a few minutes' wait the coroner announced that the recess would continue until two o'clock."

AFTERNOON PROCEEDINGS.

The inquiry when resumed this afternoon was changed from the common pleas court room to the superior court room on account of some interior work being done in the former room by painters. The jury and coroner went into consultation to consider in some expert testimony, owing to already been taken and when they emerged from the secret chamber it was just 2:40 o'clock.

Shortly before this time Detectives Arnold and Cronan came into the court room and were ushered into the presence of the coroner and jury.

Col. William H. Stevenson was around talking to this one and that, and it was said he was there to give in some expert testimony, owing to the fact that he had formerly been connected with the Consolidated railroad.

NOTICED LOOSE TIES.

John J. Curley of 48 Fifth street, was at scene of trolley accident between 5 and 6 o'clock; his attention was called to the condition of the track, just this side of the abutment; noticed that the ties were loose.

Other witnesses to be called this afternoon were B. G. Andrews of Congress street, and J. E. Barton of Orchard street.

CONTRACTOR TALKS.

Dwight W. Blakeslee of the firm of C. W. Blakeslee & Son, who constructed the bridge off which the trolley car was wrecked in Stratford last Sunday was asked to-day about the story which was told by a witness during the coroner's inquest at Bridgeport yesterday to the effect that a big gang of men was at work Monday morning, the day after the wreck, in dumping dirt to bring the approach to the bridge higher. Mr. Blakeslee said:

"The story is true as far as having a few men at work Monday morning. We had them at work every day after the road was opened last week perfecting the new banks which, of course, are bound to settle slightly for a few days. We had the usual number of men at work near the bridge Monday morning, no more, no less."

"We had the same gang of dump cars and the construction cars on the road near the bridge that we had had every day since the road was opened. I could not see that the approach to the bridge had settled perceptibly, although of course it had somewhat."

INJURED EXAMINED.

Coroner and Jury Hear Stories of Those Who Went Down With Car.

The inquiry into the causes of the Shelton extension disaster was continued yesterday afternoon in the county court house and also at the Bridgeport hospital where a number of the injured who survived the wreck, gave in their testimony.

Clarence Blakeslee of the firm of C. W. Blakeslee & Son was called to the stand. He stated that his company had the contract to build the trolley

road from Paradise Green to Shelton. His company laid the rails and the Berlin Bridge Co. the ties.

Witness had been in the employ of the Consolidated road, but during the past four years had been employed by C. W. Blakeslee & Son. He continued:

"I got to the scene of the accident about 5 o'clock. I immediately went below to do what I could for the people. I did not go on the bridge. I noticed nothing wrong with the ties. There was a little settling. The ties on the bridge are ten inches wide while the ones on the road are six inches."

"I had a talk with Mr. Radel on Tuesday and when he asked if the road would be ready to open Wednesday, I replied that it would not, but he could open it on Thursday. I considered the road safe."

"Do you know anything about guard rails?" was asked.

"Yes sir."

"Can you give any reason why the rail couldn't be higher?"

"No sir."

"Could it be two feet higher?"

"At that distance it would interfere. On the Consolidated road the guard rails are six inches."

"Are you satisfied that the approach to the bridge was perfectly safe?"

"Yes sir. I would not say that the road was in perfect condition on the day it was opened, but I will say that it was in perfect condition on the day we left it. The dirt between the ties would naturally settle by the cars running over the road bed. We were looking for such spots and on Saturday night Mr. Radel sent Mr. Molliday with me to see if there were any places that wanted fixing up. We found one spot up the road that required fixing and Mr. Mollineux gave orders to have it attended to. We went over the road in a car."

In answer to a question witness said that it was only customary to put guard rails on the inside of the rails around curves. He never saw them on a straight line.

"As to the cause of the accident," said witness, "it would be a prettish thing to judge but I would say that the car going at a high rate of speed from an elastic bed to a hard surface caused it to jump the track. A slight

difference in the gauge of the track and the gauge of some cars caused the swaying motion. It would be necessary to run at a high rate of speed to cause the car to teeter."

"When constructing the road bed near the bridge it was never considered that the cars were to make a sudden change from an elastic bed to a solid surface. The grade changes to the level about 50 feet south of the bridge. I never knew any instance where a trolley car mounted a guard rail before. If there had been no planking on the ties I think it would have had a tendency to stop the car."

A few minutes before 4 o'clock on that fatal Sunday afternoon Dr. F. M. Tully drove rapidly to the scene of the accident. He walked on the bridge before he came away to see if he could find out the cause. He noticed a depression and was of the opinion that the dirt, ties and all had lopped.

F. G. Coley of Stratford also noticed the depression. He saw three or four ties near the abutment was a space of about two inches between them and the dirt. "As I am not a practical road builder I could not say as to what effect it would have on the rails if the ties which does not touch the dirt were taken out altogether."

P. J. Clark of 299 Pembroke street was sitting in his carriage at the north end of the bridge. There was a boy with him. He turned to the boy and said, "Here comes and he saw the motorman jump to one side, and I saw the motorman jump to one side."

"Something went down the incline. I don't know whether it was the motorman or not."

John H. Clark the 11 year old son of the former was put upon the stand, but he was excused.

Thomas McCarthy of Pembroke street, was standing next Mr. Clark when the car went off the trestle. He saw it before it went on the bridge; saw it shake and go over; saw the motorman with his hands on the box.

At this point the coroner decided that the jury should go to the hospital and hear the testimony of those patients who were able to talk.

Mrs. Jennie A. Pitt was the first one of the injured to be heard after the coroner and jury arrived at the hospital. She does not yet know the terrible truth about her husband and child and she appeared quite bright when the party entered the room. She had not very much to tell that was new.

She said she was on the car with her husband and child. When the car was nearing the bridge she thought it was running quite rapidly; she felt no fear, however, as she did not know that there was any danger; the car was not running much faster than cars usually run on that route.

When the car neared the bridge witness noticed that it rocked and jolted. The first she remembers after that was that the car was going sideways; was on the car three seats from the rear; did not see what the motorman did; there was not much excitement on the car; no one seemed to realize what was about to happen; witness was talking to her husband just before the accident happened. Mrs. Pitt said she was conscious when the car went over and conscious when it struck the ground. She did not lose consciousness until taken out of the wreck.

Frank Krapp was the next one to be seen. His case is as sad as that of Mrs. Pitt. He was out for a ride with the girl he was about to marry. She was killed and he is left, but the sad truth has not yet been broken to him. He told how the car rocked before it went on to the bridge. He sat on the west side of the car with his arm on the rail. Miss Toomey sat beside him. He thought the car was going very fast; there was considerable jolting before the car went off; just before it left the bridge all the passengers were thrown upon their knees. Witness did not see anyone jump from the car.

Matthew Robln was questioned through an interpreter. His most important statement was that the car rocked like a ship from front to rear, just before it went on the bridge. The car was rocking when it went off. He rode over the bridge in the morning. The car in the afternoon went faster than the one in the morning.