

Bridgeport Evening Post

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KELLEY EATS HIS WORDS

Witness Now Says Lurid Tale Was an Invention.

Did Not Jump from the Fated Trolley Car—In Fact Was Not Aboard of It—Has a Hard Time Explaining to the Coroner Why He Indulged in Fairy Tales—Sensation To-Day in the Inquest Over the Victims of the Peck's Bridge Disaster—Many Witnesses Examined.

William Kelley, witness at coroner's inquest is arrested for perjury—Penalty is not less than 6 months in jail or more than 5 years in state prison.

William Kelley went on the stand before Coroner Charles A. Doten and the jury this morning and said that he lied when he testified the other day that he was on the ill-fated car that went off Peck's bridge.

He gave as his motive for so testifying that it was his first appearance in court, that he was much confused and that he wanted to do what was right.

Immediately after he had completed this statement Coroner Doten ordered him under arrest and Officer Corrigan, who was in the room, took him in charge.

In directing the officer to take Kelley the coroner said that he would attend to the young man's case later on. The crime which will be charged against Kelley is perjury. The penalty for it is not less than six months in jail, nor more than five years in the state prison.

It will be recalled that Kelley, when previously examined, testified in substance that he was riding on the car, that he sat on the second seat from the motorman, that when the car went on the bridge he stood on the running board so that he could look at the bridge and that when the car went off he jumped into the mud.

He also testified, and in doing so contradicted every other witness, that the car was not going very fast when it was on the bridge, that the motorman reversed the power and applied the brakes and that the motorman did everything possible to stop the car before jumping.

The rather peculiar manner in which Kelley told his story and the way it conflicted with all the others led some people to believe that he was not telling the truth. Inquiries were made around and enough evidence was found to confirm this suspicion.

The matter was brought to the attention of the coroner and he summoned Kelley before him. But the young man kept out of sight for several days and it was not until this morning that the officers were able to find him.

When Kelley was taken before Supt. Birmingham he then and there admitted that he had not told the truth, that he was not on the car at all.

When the inquiry opened this morning Kelley was taken to the court house by Officer Corrigan. It was evi-

dent that the coroner intended to take action whatever story the young man told this time.

Upon taking the witness stand Kelley said that all his story was untrue but that part of it which related to the doings of the motorman. This he asserted was true. He told the jury that he was able to see every action of the motorman from where he stood.

Aside from this most sensational incident the coroner was able to secure some important expert testimony on guard rails and the probable speed of the car when it went down the approach.

This evidence was given by Editor Frederick C. Beach of the Scientific American, the most important scientific publication in the country. Mr. Beach resides in Stratford and he made a careful examination of the bridge and the surroundings.

He is of the opinion that the car was going at the rate of twenty miles an hour when it went off. He believes that the teetering spoken of was caused by this high rate of speed and that it was increased through the unevenness of the track. He spoke strongly about guard rails and said that he considered this bridge unsafe without them. He told the jury what he considered a proper rail and added that in his judgment the accident would not have occurred had the bridge been supplied with proper rails.

Among the other witnesses was Warren R. Merwin, a young man who said at first that he was a student, but who afterwards admitted that he worked at the barn of the Bridgeport Traction Co. He admitted to the coroner that he took the fuse from the car. His reason for taking it was because it would show that the car was in good condition as far as power was concerned and he did not want any one else to take it.

A number of other witnesses told about the embankment. Among them were the Rev. Joel S. Ives and the Rev. N. E. Cornwall, Stratford ministers. Both stated that the earth was not around the ties near the approach.

There was not a very large attendance at the hearing. The public has not shown any very great interest in the proceedings to the extent of attending the hearings.

When the proceedings opened John E. Clark, a boy of ten, was recalled to the stand. He stated that he was with his father Patrick Clark at the time of the accident; saw Kelly standing about the road; saw him go where the car lay; saw him go through the mud. Kelley was asked to stand up and the boy identified him as the man he saw walking through the mud.

Patrick Clark was recalled and asked if he saw Kelley there? He said no. He had left the scene of the accident to telephone when his boy saw Kelley.

KELLEY RECALLS. William Kelley was then recalled to the stand by the coroner and his first answer to the question put caused a sensation.

"Where you on that car, that day?"
"No sir."
"Then what you said the other day

about being on the car was not true?"
"No, it was not."
"And about what the motorman did?"

"That was true."
"How could you see it?"
"I stood down on the ground and could look right at the car."
"Who was with you?"

"There was a man named Dowling and a man named Kelley."
"And who was about being on the foot board was not true?"
"It was not."

"Did you know that you were doing wrong when you told that story?"
"No sir, not at the time I told it."
"How did you come to testify in that way?"

"Well it was the first time I was ever in the court room and I was very much confused. I only wanted to do what I thought was right."

PLACED UNDER ARREST. After thinking a moment Coroner Doten turned to Officer Corrigan and said: "Officer, you may take this man in charge. You will lock him up and will decide about his case afterwards."

Kelley turned pale and ran his right hand across his forehead as the coroner spoke. He then left the stand and the officer led him away.

Frank B. Sammis was recalled to explain fully about the block under the end of the approach to the bridge. He said that the block rested on the abutment; the end of the rail rested on the block; there was a wedge under the rail and it looked as though it had been blocked up; the block was between the ties; there was no block under the other rail.

THAT SUSPICIOUS BLOCK.

Rev. Norman E. Cornwall, rector of Christ church, Stratford, was called. He was at the scene of the accident about four o'clock Sunday afternoon; noticed block under the rail which led on to the bridge; block was between the ties; there was a wedge on the block, too; the block was not under the other rail of the joint. Witness examined the ties; there was no earth around at least three feet between them; saw a man jump on them as usual; writing asked witness about the block, Mr. Sammis said it was between two ties.

TOOK THE FUSE.

William R. Merwin, a youthful looking individual, answered the coroner's next call. Merwin said he was a student at the Yale scientific school. When questioned about being in the employ of either the Bridgeport Traction Co., the Shelton Street Railway Co. or the Milford Street Railway Co., Merwin at first persisted in saying that he was only a student on electrical matters, but finally he admitted that he was taking a course of electrical study at the barn of the Bridgeport Traction Co.

"Did you examine that car on Monday?" asked the coroner.

"Yes sir."

"Did you remove any of the electrical apparatus?"

"Yes sir."

"Did you remove the fuse?"

"Yes sir."

"Did you look at the controller?"

"Yes sir."

"Did you remove any of the fuses?"

"No sir, I did not."

"Why did you take the fuse?"

"I did not wish anybody else to take it."

"What did you do with it?"

"I turned it over to Mr. Butler."

Questioned by Juror Whiting: "Was the fuse intact when you took it out?"

"It was."

"Any particular reason for taking it out, other than what you have given?"

By Juror Cable: "Any value to the fuse?"

"No sir; not more than two or three cents."

By Juror Whiting: "Then why did you take it out?"

"I thought that it might be of some importance to show that everything was all right with the power when the car went off."

"Would the fuse show that it was all right?"

"I think it would."

EDITOR BEACH ON GUARDS.

Editor Frederick C. Beach of the Scientific American, who resides in Stratford was the next witness called. He was there to testify as an expert and he has some very interesting

things to say.
"Did you examine this bridge?" asked Coroner Doten.

"I did."
"What does it appear to have in the way of a guard rail?"

"I think on wooden guard rail on the outside. The guard rail is not very high, not more than five, or five and a half inches, I should say."

"In your opinion is that a proper guard rail for this bridge?"

"No sir, not at all."
"What would be a proper guard rail?"
"I should say that there ought to be one on the outside that was at least two inches higher than the other. That is the usual custom. Then they usually put an iron facing on the edge and that increases the protective power."

"If they had a guard rail of this character on the bridge do you think it would have prevented the accident?"

"In my judgment the accident would not have happened if the guard rail had been higher and if the outer edge had been lined with steel."

"In your judgment at what speed was the car going when the accident happened?"

"It must have been going at a very high rate. There is quite a grade at that point. It is about three per cent—three feet in a hundred. I understand that the approach at this point is over 800 feet long. A car in going down that grade would get quite a motion of itself."

TWENTY MILES AN HOUR.

"About how fast do you figure it was going?"

"Well, a car like that weighs about 15 tons, without passengers. Full of passengers there is even greater weight in going down that grade. I should estimate that it would reach a speed of about eight miles an hour of its own momentum. If electricity was applied it might be going at the rate of about 20 or 25 miles an hour by the time it reached the bottom."

"How do you arrive at that conclusion?"

"From what I have read of the testimony. Everyone has said the car was going very fast."

"You do not take into consideration the use of the brake?"

"No, and then the car going at such a headway would be hard to stop even with the brake."

"Have you any other way of estimating the speed?"

"Yes, I have had experience with my electric vehicle. This is run much the same as a trolley car. I have tried it down the grade leading to the railroad bridge in Stratford. This grade is a little more than the one at Peck's bridge. When we reached the bottom we would go at the rate of about twelve miles an hour after shutting off the power."

"About the guard rails on the New York elevated road—what of them?" and one on the outside of the regular rail. The one on the outside is about six inches high and about five inches from the rail. It is lined on the edge with iron, two inches wide and three eighths of an inch thick. The inside guard rail is lower than the other, I think about an inch."

"Do you consider a guard rail of this character essential?"

"I do as a matter of safety."

"Do you know of any electric road that has a guard rail of this character?"

"Yes, the one at Hoboken, N. J."

Witness said that he noticed most of the bridges on the Consolidated road had guard rails. He gave a description of them.

By Commissioner Cable: "In your examination of the bridge did you discover any reason why the car when it went off should go to the east?"

"Yes sir, I noticed that the end of the rail on the east side extended further onto the bridge than the one on the west side. I thought at the time it might tend to send the car in that direction."

"Do you consider this bridge unsafe without guard rails?"

"I do."
"If there had been inside guard rails on the bridge would the accident have happened?"

"In my opinion it would not."
Juror Whiting asked: "Have you any idea, Mr. Beach, of the cause of this accident?"

"In my opinion the power was put on when the car was going down grade. The acceleration of speed caused the teetering spoken of by the witnesses. This teeter motion was increased by the uneven condition of the track. When the car struck the bridge it jumped."

The witness was asked some questions by jurors in regard to the bridge of the Consolidated road in this city. He said he had not noticed it and could not tell whether there were any guard rails on it. He would consider guard rails necessary unless the cars were run at a slow rate of speed.

Attorney Paige desired to ask some questions but the coroner said that it was not the custom to allow cross examination. He would put some questions that counsel might suggest.

Mr. Paige wanted the witness to tell whether this Hoboken bridge was not a cable bridge before electric power was used. The witness said it was.

The witness was then questioned about some of the bridges on the Consolidated road. He was asked to specify those which had guard rails. He could not name any. He did not know about the Norwalk bridge, but he was under the impression that it had no guard rails.

By Juror Lee: "Do you consider this bridge strong and safe in every other way?"

"I do."
After a few more unimportant questions the witness was allowed to go. He left some drawings of guard rails such as he thought would be the proper thing for this bridge.

THAT BLOCK AGAIN.

Frank E. Sammis was recalled again. By the coroner: "Have you been to the bridge since the Monday after the accident?"

"Yes, I have been there twice. I went last Thursday and yesterday."

"Did you see that block again?"

"When I was there on Thursday the block was still there. When I went again yesterday I could not find it. I poked around with my stick and found it. It was three inches below the rail. The joint did not rest on anything."

Rev. Joel S. Ives was called. He went to the scene of the accident soon after it happened, assisted in taking out the dead and injured; went up to look at the track about five o'clock; examined approach; thought that the dirt about the approach had been jarred away; there was not much dirt on the ties from five to six feet from the abutment; the ties did not appear to be properly supported; three ties were not supported by any dirt. Witness did not notice the block under the ties.

PRESIDENT RADEL RECALLED.

President, Andrew Radel was recalled. He stated that no special instructions had been given to any one to examine the approach on Sunday. Instructions had been given to the civil engineers to keep a eye on the bridge all day, but nothing was said about the approach.

"How many bridges are there on the Shelton extension?" asked the coroner.

"There are four bridges on the Shelton extension. They are all built by the Berlin Iron Bridge Co."

"Yes sir."
"Do you make the contracts with that company?"

"No sir. The road was built by the Syndicate Construction Co. of New Jersey. It made the contracts with the Berlin Iron bridge. The iron work for the four bridges cost \$150,000."

"Has the Construction company ever turned the road over to the Shelton Street Railway Co.?"

"No sir."

"But you are running your cars over it? Yes, we notified the company that we were going to commence running cars over the line."

"Who are the directors of this Construction company?"

"John F. Krelger, his brother Fred Krelger and my brother are the only ones I can recall now."

"Are you a director?"

"No sir."

"Do you own stock in the company?"

"No sir."

Juror Lee asked: "Is the Shelton Street Railway Co. a separate corporation from the Bridgeport Traction Co.?"

"Yes sir."
"Has the Shelton road issued any passes?"

"No sir, practically none. I have signed some papers which I gave to Mr. Starr for the use of certain employes on the road for the present."

OTHER WITNESSES.

David B. Booth testified that he lived a quarter of a mile from the scene of the accident. He arrived there about twenty minutes after it happened. He examined the approach about 5:30. The jury and coroner did not care to hear any more evidence on this point as the witness was dismissed.

William Hoey, a retired railroad contractor who resides in this city, was recalled. He stated that he went over the bridge and the roadbed on the previous Thursday and in his opinion it was perfectly safe. He had had considerable experience as a railroad contractor and had constructed ten miles of the New England road.

Mr. Hoey was of the opinion that the guard rail on this bridge was safe, as any. He did not think any guard rail could prevent an accident if the car struck it at an angle.