

21 PERSONS KILLED IN READING WRECK

Suburban Trains Crash Head- On in Cut 17 Miles Out of Philadelphia.

VICTIMS BURNED TO DEATH

Rescuers Forced to Leave Many to Their Fate as Flames Spread—24 Injured.

Special to The New York Times.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 5.—Twenty-one persons are known to have perished and twenty-four were injured—four seriously—in a head-on collision between two passenger trains on the single-tracked Newtown branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway at 8 o'clock this morning at Woodmont, Pa. The scene of the wreck, which was one of the worst in the history of the railroad, is two miles above Bryn Athyn and seventeen miles from this city. The two passenger trains, traveling at a high rate of speed, came together in a deep rock cut because somebody blundered. The injured and dying, pinned beneath the wreckage of the wooden coaches of the two trains, were slowly burned to death when the débris caught fire.

The bodies of these persons have been found:

FITZPATRICK, Miss CATHERINE, Southampton.
GOVE, THOMAS, fireman, Philadelphia.
HATCH, Dr. IRVIN G., Newtown.
HEATON, Mrs. ARTHUR, Southampton.
HOGELAND, M. E., Southampton.
KRUSEN, JACK, Newtown.
PRICE, JOHN, Southampton.
PRICE, THOMAS J., Southampton.
RANSON, ELMER, Woodmont.
SCOTT, CHARLES T., Churchville.
SHELLMIRE, Miss ELIZABETH, Southampton.
SINKLER, Mrs. WILLIAM, Southampton.
VANHORN, Mrs. MORRIS, Southampton.
VOGEL, EDWARD, fireman, Ryers.
An unidentified infant.

There are eighteen bodies in a morgue at Jenkintown and one in the Abington Hospital, and two more bodies could be seen in the wreckage tonight, where workmen were endeavoring to move the twisted mass of hot steel wreckage to recover them.

Trains Meet in Deep Cut.

The southbound train from Newtown to Philadelphia had the right of way over the northbound train under the working schedule of the road; but the engineer of the latter train, instead of waiting at Bryn Athyn, rushed on for Southampton. The two trains met in a cut thirty feet deep, where there is but five feet of space on either side of the tracks. The locomotives crashed and reared. A minute later they were a mass of misshapen steel and iron, into which plowed the tenders of both locomotives. The shock of the trains could be heard for three miles.

Residents of the scattered farmhouses near the scene of the wreck rushed to the scene and, standing on the rock cliff, were staggered at the sight that met their gaze. The engines had risen on their ends, then fallen back upon the coaches, through the roofs and on the mass of humanity.

Pinned against the rock wall of the

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cut by the wreckage were two women. Their screams rose over the tumult of the hissing steam and the cries of the other injured. "Save us! Save us!" the women screamed. Then suddenly the entire indescribable mass of twisted steel and wood broke into flames from the burning gas lights inside the coaches and from the coals from the fireboxes of the engines. Rescuers tried desperately to save the two women, but the flames crept closer and closer, and suddenly the screams ceased. A few minutes later two charred bodies could be seen where the women had once been.

Burned as Rescuer Works Over Him.

John Taliaferro, a laborer, was one of the first to reach the scene of the wreck. He made his way through a window into one of the wrecked cars. Flames were eating their way toward him. Pinned in the wreckage near a window he saw a young man. The injured passenger raised his eyes appealing at Taliaferro and then looked at the onrushing flames.

"My God! Can't you do something for me? My feet are caught!" the young man cried. "I'm hurt. Get me away from that fire. I cannot get loose; get something and knock me unconscious. Get a gun and shoot me. Please don't let me die like a dog!"

The rescuer tried hard to pull the injured man to safety. The flames crept closer, and still Taliaferro worked on. The flames burned his hands and set fire to his coat. He escaped out of a window just as the flames reached the helpless man, who prayed as the flames enveloped him.

Other rescuers arrived at this time, and through the flames of the burning wooden coaches could be seen six other

victims desperately trying to crawl to safety, despite their injuries. Ropes were thrown into the blazing wreck in the hope that some one would grasp them. The ropes quickly burned away, however.

Leaning out of the window of one of the locomotive cabs could be seen the form of Vogel, one of the firemen. He feebly moved his arm. His legs were pinned beneath a mass of twisted steel. Rescuers attempted to lasso him, but before they could do so he was surrounded by the flames. His body was recovered at 5 o'clock tonight.

The first coach of the train bound for Philadelphia was soon a charred mass. The flames spread to the second and third coaches, and in a few moments the scenes that were enacted in the first coach were repeated, and the rescuers were driven away by the flames. Many of the injured in those two coaches were dragged to safety and laid on the snow-covered banks of the Pennypack Creek. Men and women slightly injured and suffering from shock ran aimlessly over the fields screaming and shouting for help. Nearly all of them left bloodstains on the snow.

The telephone operator at the Bryn Athyn exchange was notified of the wreck and she sent out calls for aid. Physicians and nurses were summoned from neighboring towns, and the fire companies from Hattboro, Southampton and other towns were called.

When the firemen arrived the wreck was a blazing pyre. They drove their apparatus over the rutted fields and pumped water from the Pennypack Creek into the flames.

For several hours the injured were being carried away in every sort of vehicle and rushed to the hospital. At 11:30 o'clock the firemen were still playing their hose upon the burning wooden coaches, but the flames were under control and fifteen minutes later the removal of the bodies was started. Only a mass of twisted steel remained of the three coaches of the Newtown train bound for this city.

The bodies, charred beyond recognition, were placed in one of the undamaged coaches. Later in the evening they were removed to Jenkintown.