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## Oronoque, CT Trolley Falls Off Trestle, Aug 1899

Posted May 9th, 2008 by [Stu Beitler](#)

CAR FALLS AND 36 ARE KILLED.

DISASTER ON A NEW TROLLEY LINE NEAR BRIDGEPORT.

ON AN UNGUARDED BRIDGE.

WHEELS LEAVE THE RAILS AND THE CAR DIVES INTO A POND.

RUSH DOWN A GRADE.

CATASTROPHE COMES SUDDENLY AND ALL BUT TWO ON BOARD MEET DEATH OR INJURY.

Bridgeport, Conn., Aug. 6. -- The greatest catastrophe recorded in Connecticut for nearly half a century occurred shortly before 4 o'clock this afternoon on the Stratford extension of the Shelton Street Railway, when a loaded car went off the trestle over Peck's Mill Pond, at Oronoque, about six miles north of Bridgeport, and sank in the flats forty feet below. Thus far thirty-six persons are known to be dead, and several others are injured. Only two persons are known to have escaped unharmed. It is believed that there were nearly fifty passengers on the car, but the indicator was removed by a conductor of another car and spirited away, so that at present it is impossible to ascertain the exact number. The scene of the accident is midway between Shelton and Bridgeport. The car was north-bound, running toward Shelton. It was in charge of Conductor JOHN CARROLL of Bridgeport, who is among the killed, and Motorman HAMILTON of Bridgeport. The latter escaped by jumping.

The trestle is 440 feet long and constructed of iron, with stone foundations. It is not protected by any guard rails. South of the trestle is quite an incline, down which the car ran at a rapid rate. After it had run about ten feet on the trestle the trucks left the rails. The car continued on the ties for about seventy-five feet, when it bounded off the trestle and dropped into the pond below, overturning completely, and striking on one end. When the car struck, the motor, which weighs four tons, and the heavy trucks crushed into it, instantly killing many of the passengers.

WILLIAM KELLEY of Bridgeport, who was in company with MISS MARGARET FARRELL, escaped death by jumping from the car, as he felt it swaying, to the flats below. Soon afterward the car toppled over. He sustained a severe shock, but was otherwise uninjured. He said to-night that the car was not running unusually fast, but was swaying considerably when it struck the trestle, and he realized the danger, and knew his only safety was in jumping.

GEORGE WILLIS, Superintendent of the R. N. BASSETT Company of Shelton, was on the highway not more than 100 feet from the scene, and witnessed the car toppling over. He said that there was one unearthly shriek as it went down, and after that, silence.

The accident was witnessed by MISS FRANCES PECK, who resides about 400 feet from the bridge. She was up stairs at her home when the car passed, and she asserts that it was running at an unusually high rate of speed. FRANK CRAMER, who was bething near the bridge, says that the passengers were all singing when the car passed him.

Rescuers Reach The Scene.

DRS. J. C. LYNCH, R. W. IVERS, and J. M. JOHNSON of Bridgeport, who were passengers on a car a short distance behind, were quickly on the scene, and rendered all possible assistance to the injured persons. Word was sent to Bridgeport, and three ambulances and a police wagon were hurried to the scene, in which wounded passengers were taken to the Bridgeport General Hospital. Several other conveyances were pressed into this service.

Medical Examiner COGGSWELL of Stratford improvised a morgue in the main room of the Town Hall at that place, and in a very short time twenty-three bodies were laid out, awaiting identification.

Undertaker CURTIS of Stratford was notified almost immediately after the accident, and he utilized all sorts of conveyances to carry the bodies to the improvised morgue. Nearly the entire medical force of Bridgeport responded to telephone calls sent in, but when the doctors arrived they were able to render but little assistance, as so few of the passengers escaped instant death. The car, after falling, soon settled over on its side, and there was little difficulty in removing the bodies of the dead or in assisting the wounded. A camping

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<a href="#">Georgia</a>	party, which included CLIFFORD CALVERTY, the rope walker, was in the vicinity, and its
<a href="#">Hawaii</a>	members rendered considerable assistance to the survivors.
<a href="#">Idaho</a>	The scene about the wrecked car was one of horror and seemed to stun all the early ones
<a href="#">Illinois</a>	who appeared on the scene to render assistance. Fortunately the passengers who were not
<a href="#">Indiana</a>	killed instantly were rendered unconscious, so that few of the gruesome scenes connected
<a href="#">Iowa</a>	with most disasters were presented. All of the persons killed sustained fractured skulls.
<a href="#">Kansas</a>	The Stratford Town Hall, where the bodies were taken, was soon besieged by more than
<a href="#">Kentucky</a>	1,000 persons, some of whom had relatives or friends among the dead, and three Deputy
<a href="#">Louisiana</a>	Sheriffs had considerable difficulty in handling the crowd of weeping women and anxious
<a href="#">Maine</a>	men. All the bodies of the Bridgeport dead and the few unidentified were brought to the
<a href="#">Maryland</a>	Morgue at Bridgeport late to-night.
<a href="#">Massachusetts</a>	The Dead And Injured.
<a href="#">Michigan</a>	The identified dead are:
<a href="#">Minnesota</a>	S. BANKS, Shelton.
<a href="#">Mississippi</a>	ELIAS E. BRADLEY, Selectman, and wife, Milford.
<a href="#">Missouri</a>	MRS. FRANK BLEW, two children, boy, aged three, girl, five, Stratford.
<a href="#">Montana</a>	MRS. PATRICK BRENNAN, aged fifty, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Nebraska</a>	JOHN CARROLL, conductor, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Nevada</a>	HENRY C. COGSWELL, Bridgeport, aged sixty; employe of New York, New Haven and
<a href="#">New Hampshire</a>	Hartford Railroad; member of the Board of Education.
<a href="#">New Jersey</a>	WILLIAM COTTER, aged twenty-five, Bridgeport; identification not positive.
<a href="#">New Mexico</a>	IRVING DORUSE, aged twenty-three, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">New York</a>	DANIEL GALVIN, Ansonia.
<a href="#">North Carolina</a>	JOHN GALVIN, aged twenty-two, Ansonia.
<a href="#">North Dakota</a>	JOSEPH HOTCHKISS, Bridgeport; engineer Fire Department.
<a href="#">Ohio</a>	WILLIAM H. HARVEY, aged thirty-seven, and wife, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Oklahoma</a>	MRS. ARTHUR HOLMES, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Oregon</a>	WILLIAM KELLY, Bridgeport; sprained arm.
<a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>	FRANK KRAFT, aged twenty-five, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Rhode Island</a>	WINTON LANTHEAR, motorman Bridgeport Traction Company.
<a href="#">South Carolina</a>	MRS. McDONALD, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">South Dakota</a>	THOMAS McNALLY, aged thirty, Bridgeport; identification not positive.
<a href="#">Tennessee</a>	WILLIAM McCULLOUGH, Stratford.
<a href="#">Texas</a>	PATRICK McDERMOTT, aged fifty, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Utah</a>	WILLIAM OSBORN, Stratford.
<a href="#">Vermont</a>	ALFRED PITT, aged twenty-two, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Virginia</a>	MRS. J. H. RUGG, Stratford.
<a href="#">Washington</a>	PETER RING, aged twenty-eight, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">West Virginia</a>	BESSIE TOOMEY, aged twenty-two, Bridgeport.
<a href="#">Wisconsin</a>	ORLANDO B. WELLS, aged sixty-three, shoemaker.
<a href="#">Wyoming</a>	The seriously injured persons at the Bridgeport Hospital are:
<a href="#">Browse Canada</a>	MARGARET BRENNAN, scalp wound.
<a href="#">Browse by Year</a>	CHARLES DELANEY, New York, stock broker; injured internally.
<a href="#">1755</a>	MARGARET FARRELL, right leg amputated above knee; will probably die.
<a href="#">1769</a>	ARTHUR HOLMES, Bridgeport; contusion about body, left leg crushed.
<a href="#">1782</a>	FRED HILLEROUS; scalp wound, bruised about body.
<a href="#">1788</a>	GEORGE HAMILTON; scalp wound; injury to legs.
<a href="#">1793</a>	FRANK KRATT, Bridgeport; injuries about head and back.
<a href="#">1795</a>	MATTHEW OLBIN; scalp wound, cut and bruised.
<a href="#">1800</a>	MRS. SIDNEY A. PITT, Bridgeport; right leg fractured.
<a href="#">1805</a>	MABEL RUGG, aged five; arm broken.
<a href="#">1811</a>	Cause Of The Accident.
<a href="#">1812</a>	The road, which is practically controlled by the Bridgeport Traction Company, was opened
<a href="#">1813</a>	for traffic last Thursday. President ANDREW RADELL was in Derby when he received news
<a href="#">1821</a>	of the catastrophe, and he immediately drove to the scene. He was completely prostrated
<a href="#">1822</a>	when he saw the extent of the disaster.
<a href="#">1823</a>	The cause of the accident probably will not be known until after Coroner DOTEN conducts
<a href="#">1824</a>	an investigation. Motorman HAMILTON, who escaped death, is suffering from such a severe
<a href="#">1825</a>	shock that it was impossible to learn anything from him to-night. President RADELL said
<a href="#">1827</a>	that it was impossible for him to account for the accident. Immediately after his arrival at
	the the scene he made a thorough inspection of the tracks on the trestle, and he could see
	nothing wrong. The cars were running over the trestle as usual soon afterward. He denied
	that the cars were being run at a high rate of speed, and asserted that every possible
	precaution had been taken to prevent such an occurrence. Seven Inspectors had been put
	on to watch the running of the cars over the trestle, he said, and a time allowance of half
	an hour had been made and extra cars put on to provide for this.
	One theory advanced is that faulty construction was responsible for the accident. At the
	point where the cars leave the road for the trestle it is alleged that the rails had sunk a

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little, and though the forward trucks took the rails all right, the rear trucks did not connect, and jumped the track, which caused the forward trucks also to leave the iron. It is the belief that if proper guard rails had been placed on the trestle the car would have been prevented from toppling over. The conductors and motormen have been ordered to run the cars to-night not faster than four miles an hour.  
Upward of 6,000 people visited the scene of the catastrophe this evening, and pick-pockets took advantage of the crowd to secure considerable booty.

The New York Times New York 1899-08-07

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Researched and Transcribed by Stu Beitler. Thank you, Stu!

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