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The Bolton Wreck

Manner in Which Owen Sound Passenger Train Came to Grief

Two Coaches and Baggage Car Went Over an Eight Foot Embankment

About a score of people were more or less hurt, none seriously, in the wreck which occurred between Mono Road and Bolton, on the C.P.R. about 6:30 Tuesday evening of last week, when three coaches of the Owen Sound express, due in Toronto at 8:30 p.m. left the rails, and after bumping along the track were flung down an embankment, turning completely over on their sides. The accident, which was stated to be due to a loose bolt in a fishplate, causing the rail to spread, occurred midway between the two stations, when the train was travelling at a speed variously estimated at from 25 to 35 miles per hour.

The train was made up of a baggage and mail car and two passenger coaches, the latter being comfortably filled, and according to the statements of passengers, the wreck occurred as the engine was taking a curve. How it really happened, however, is at present a matter of conjecture, but the general opinion held by those on board is that the baggage car first tore loose, dragging the two passenger coaches with it. Bumping along the side of the track for 60 feet, the derailed coaches were finally flung on their sides down an eight-foot embankment. It was in the rear coach, which contained about 40 passengers, many of whom were women, where most of the injuries were sustained.

The names of those injured are: - W. Davie, Earlton, scalp wound, taken to Western Hospital; W. Griffith, Melita, Man., rib fractured, removed to Western Hospital; F. H. Elliott, Harriston, cut head and twisted back; W. J. Ostrander, Shelburne, head cut; He formerly lived at Huttonville; A. Edwards, baggageman, 318 St. Clarens Avenue, foot broken; Mrs. W. L. Young, Markdale, bruising and badly shaken up; H.G. Tucker, Owen Sound, bruised and badly shaken up.

Baggageman Edwards was attending to his duties at the time and the first intimation he got that something had happened was when he was thrown violently against some baggage, which commenced to pile all over him. When removed from the car it was found that some small bones in his foot had been smashed. Following the receipt of the news of the accident the Sudbury train was backed up the line from Bolton Junction to the scene of the wreck, and the passengers transferred from the derailed coaches, arriving in Toronto at 10:30 p.m.

Mr. W. L. Young, Markdale, who with Mrs. Young, was on a visit to Toronto, gave a graphic description of the accident.

"We were, as well as I remember, travelling about 30 miles an hour," he said, "when suddenly there came a tearing, scrunching sound and the next moment I realized that we were off the track. On our car bumped for about 40 feet, and then with a crash turned right over on its side. My wife was thrown violently against the hat rack, while I was pitched along the coach for some distance. There was not the slightest sign of panic, notwithstanding the large number of women passengers. Possibly the fact that the lights did not go out helped to make matters better. I noticed several people suffering from bad cuts, chiefly about the head, and many complained of being bruised, but the wonder of it all is that no lives were lost."

Another passenger, a travelling man, who escaped uninjured, stated that he was in the smoker, which was immediately in front of the passenger coach. "The first I knew of the accident," he continued, "was being pitched over another man's head on to a vacant seat. While I hung on this, the coach bumped along for some distance until, with a sudden swerve, it pitched over on its side. Broken glass and woodwork flew everywhere, two or three men being hurt in that way. I clung to my perch through it all."

Mr. Wm. Griffith, of Melita, Man., who sustained a fractured rib, had been on a visit to his old home in Owen Sound, which he had not seen for 16 years. He was on his way to Toronto to take the Winnipeg train.

"Say, it's the most marvelous thing I ever saw that there was not loss of life in that wreck." exclaimed Mr. H. G. Tucker, barrister, of Owen Sound, when seen by a Mail and Empire reporter in his room at the Prince George Tuesday night. He sustained a few minor bruises and cuts and was badly shaken up, but gave a most graphic account of his experience.

"The train," he said, "was speeding along very fast between Mono Road and Bolton. I was in the smoker sitting with my back to the engine, when, at a point where there is a considerable curve in the road, I felt a motion which I knew to be caused by the cars leaving the rails. I jumped to grab a hat guard at the top

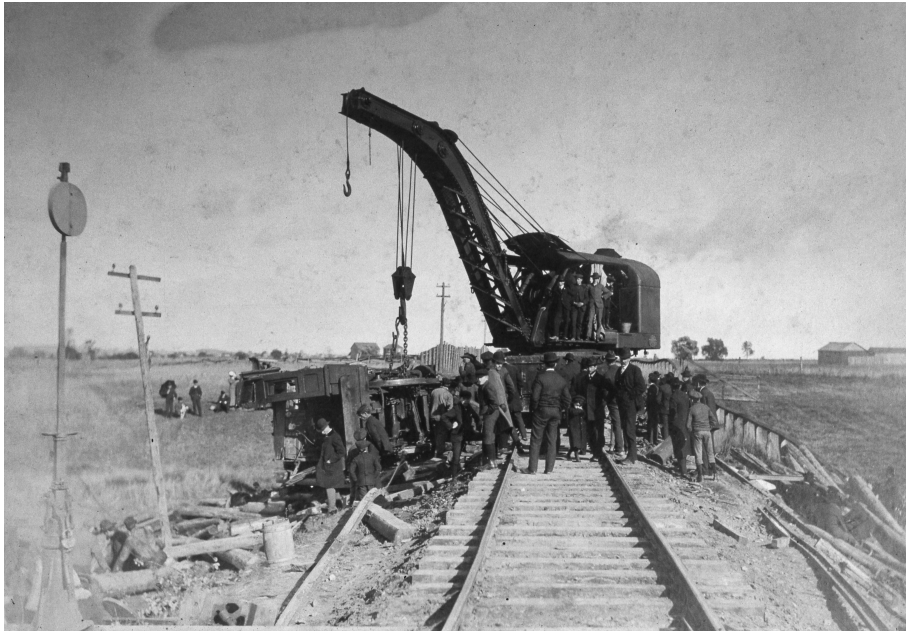


Photo: ABHS Margaret Henry

Collection. While this cannot be confirmed as a photo of the wreck it is entirely possible.

of the car but I was shot from the middle of the car to the rear end. I was momentarily stunned, and upon gaining my senses the lights were out. I saw a man commencing to light a match, and I immediately called out to the passengers, 'Let no one light a match and we'll get out of this all right.' The car had rolled completely over, down an embankment of about eight feet, and, as it afterwards turned out, was about 17 or 18 feet from the tracks. I found another man, who was a prisoner being taken to the Central Prison¹ along with four others to whom he was shackled, lighting a match. I struck him and put the match out. The officer in charge of them then said, "I have four men in chains here. For God's sake give me a light so I may release them. There is no danger from explosion as the windows are all broken." I then lit a match, and he released the prisoners. The latter, instead of trying to escape, turned to and worked manfully in

assisting the passengers to escape from the wrecked cars: smashed windows and doing all in their power to help the passengers to get out. One prisoner in particular did heroic work. He thought of the stove in the car, and with considerable difficulty crawled through a window and by the application of snow succeeded in extinguishing the coal fire."

So impressed were many of the passengers with the splendid conduct and heroic efforts of the four prisoners that later when all were assembled about a bonfire, a petition was signed on behalf of the prisoners. It was addressed to the Hon. J. J. Foy, Attorney-General of Ontario, and requested him to take cognizance of the manly conduct of the prisoners, who, when given their liberty, instead of trying to escape, had heroically stood by the passengers and helped them to escape from the wreckage. The petition was signed about fifty passengers including prominent business and commercial men throughout Ontario and the Dominion.

When the train arrived on the scene to bring the passengers on to Toronto the prisoners were not re-shackled and were conducted to the Central Prison without manacles.

¹ Information about the Central Prison: <http://www.torontohistory.net/central-prison/> and <https://libertyvillagetoronto.com/the-hidden-history-of-1800s-prisons-in-liberty-village>