

Harry Freeburn (- 7 Mar 1881)

The Evening Star, March 7, 1881

Crushed to Death By Cars

The Disaster on the B & P Railroad -- Graphic Account of It

Narrow Escape of the Ex-President's Party

Touching Scenes and Incidents

An accident occurred on the Baltimore and Potomac railroad on Saturday afternoon which resulted in the killing of two persons and the wounding of fifteen or twenty more, some seriously. This accident happened to the train on which ex-President Hayes and his family and the Cleveland Troop and others, also President Ells, of the Lake Erie Railroad, left this city. The train was run into by two engines coupled and running as one--in railroad parlance known as a double header--about 300 yards south of Severn Station (about 27 miles from Washington and 14 miles from Baltimore,) killing two men--Mr. John Oliver, a baggage master, of Baltimore and Mr. J. Weimer Young, of Shamokin, Pennsylvania. The train containing the ex-President and party was in charge of Capt. Armacost, drawn by engine 293 Pennsylvania R.R. John Unglaub engineer, McKeever, fireman, and consisted of eight cars--the first being a Pullman car, containing a number of persons from Shamokin and vicinity--the second and third, the Cleveland troops (the ex-President's escort); next, the car containing the President and party, next, Mr. Ells private car and some ordinary cars. The train left Washington at a few minutes to one o'clock, and being run as a special stopped for orders at Bowie and Odenton, the conductor receiving orders to run to Severn regardless of the "double header." The President and party had just lunched and was conversing when the accident occurred. On the double header were Engineer Freeburn, Fireman Frere, John Roy conductor, and John Oliver, baggage agent; on engine No. 1 (B&P) Jacob Rider, engineer; B. Everhardt, fireman and Robert Oliver, conductor. They were running at the rate of 40 miles per hour. The north bound train expecting to meet the engine was slowing up and the speed had been reduced to 15 or 20 miles per hour.

The Collision

Just as the train rounded the curve, which is in a cut, the engineer of the special noticed the approaching engines, and, putting on his air brake, reversed his engine, but it was too late. Mr. Rider, the engineer of No. 147, before reaching Severn saw that they were going too fast and shut down, and as soon as Freeburn discovered his mistake he reversed his engine, but without avail, for at two minutes to two o'clock the engines came together with a crash followed by the hissing of steam. Captain Armacost, the conductor, was at the time in the third car of the train (that in front of the President's), and states that when rounding the curve he noticed that the engineer had applied the air brake and reversed the engine, and as soon as he felt this the thought flashed on his mind that the "double header" was before him, and then came the shock, followed by the noise made by the escaping steam. Jumping out at once, he saw the three engines on their sides, all pitched over to the east side of the track, the first sleeping car having been telescoped by the tender and cab of the engine. The first car in turn knocked in a portion of the second one. Amid the sound of escaping steam

Cries of Distress were heard from the first sleeper. The Cleveland troop, Capt. Harris, and some of the hands of a freight train laying on the siding and Mr. A.J. Disney, who has charge of this section, with his men and others, immediately set to work taking out the people from this car--it being then supposed that those on the engine had jumped off. Mr. D.D. Domer (editor of the Shamokin Times and brother of Rev. Dr. S. Domer and Mr. G.W. Domer, civil engineer) was found with a piece of timber and the tender

resting on him. Fortunately there was a jack on the freight train, with which the weight was lifted; and he was extricated and found badly injured.

The Ex-President and Mrs. Hayes

with their party, were somewhat shaken up. Minnie, one of the servants, had her head forced through a panel. With this exception none of them were hurt, and Mr. Hayes and his sons joined the party of rescue in assisting to extricate the injured, while Mrs. Hayes and the ladies assisted in binding up their wounds.

Mr. J. Wimer Young's Body

was found under the tank on the floor of the first car, crushed fearfully about the body, and Mr. Freeburn was covered with coal, his head bleeding and blood running from his legs, which were badly lacerated. He was at first supposed to be dead.

The Body of Mr. John Oliver

was not found for some time. It was under the cylinders of engines 183 and 1, which were completely dovetailed. His entrails protruded and the upper portion of his body was literally cooked by the steam.

Dr. Schneider, surgeon of the Cleveland Troop, was fortunately on the train and attended the most seriously wounded.

Within a few moments after the accident a message was sent to Baltimore, and one also to Dr. C.B. White, living some three miles away, and it was not long ere Dr. White was on the ground. Drs. Latimer, Atkinson and Bosely, of Baltimore--Dr. Thompson remaining at the Union Dept to attend those arriving--were sent out on the train which was sent for the President. A wrecking train was also sent out, in charge of Mr. H. Hassan, of the N.C. R.R.

The Wounded

were made as comfortable as possible and taken back to Odenton, where they remained until a new piece of track had been constructed around the wreck, which took some two and a half or three hours. Mr. Unglaub, the engineer of the north bound train, was badly bruised and is supposed to be internally injured. As soon as he was released, he having remained in his car and been forced into the drawing-room of the car occupied by the Shamokin party, he attempted to walk but fell. He was taken to the station and Mrs. Disney placed a bed in her front room for him and had one fixed up in the office for Mr. Freeburn and another for Mr. U. in her parlor.

He Stuck to His Engine

Mr. Unglaub stated that he saw the engines as soon as he was about turning the curve, and might have jumped, but he put on the brakes and reversed his engine and stuck by his engine, but they were too close then to prevent the collision. The ex-president and Mrs. Hayes went around among the wounded, as did others of the party, speaking encouragingly to them. Mrs. Hayes having heard of Mr. Unglaub's gallant conduct, with Mr. Hayes called on him. She said, "You have acted

The Part of a Real Hero

and we have to thank you that so many of us are safe. Your conduct has saved our lives." Mr. Hayes added, "Yes, sir, not one of our coach is injured." Mr. Unglaub, with much feeling, said, "But, my God, what has become of the poor souls who were in the first car?" Mrs. Hayes remarked hastily, for her feelings were getting the better of her, "Please say no more, for you could not help it."

The Members of the Cleveland Troop

suprised all present by the system with which they worked. It was remarked that all on the train who were uninjured did all they could to alleviate the sufferings of those that were hurt. Ex-President Hayes and Mr. Ells, of the Lake Erie railroad, tendered everything on their cars if necessary to relieve suffering, and Mrs. Hayes tore up one of her skirts for bandages.

The Ex-President Continues His Trip

A special train sent out from Baltimore took the President to that city, where he arrived about 4:30 o'clock and remained at the residence of Mr. S.M. Shoemaker until a new piece of track had been built around the wreck and the cars of the train which were uninjured--which included the special--could be sent in. This was accomplished in about four hours, and in that time the wounded, with the exception of Mr. Freeburn, were taken into Baltimore. Mr. Freeburn was brought to his sister's house, on 4 1/2 street in this city, yesterday.

The Killed and Wounded

There were two killed--J. Weimer Young, merchant of Shamokin, Pa.; John Oliver, baggage-master, Baltimore and Potomac railroad, and ten wounded, as follows: D.D. Domer, editor Shamokin (Pa.) Times, wounded about the head and right arm, condition critical; J.W. Somers, Shamokin, cut on the left side of the head, condition critical; J.A. Weaver, mayor-elect of Shamokin, cut on the left side of the head; W.P. Morall, Shamokin, hurt about the head; D.G. Geiger, postmaster at Shamokin, head and hands cut; W.H.M. Orem, Frank Crone, W.W. Littlehales, Shamokin, head cut; G. Marshall, Shamokin, hand cut; John Purcell, Shamokin, both hands hurt; W.L. Huntly, Shamokin, leg hurt; G.W. Barnhardt, Girardville, head cut; Edward Williams, of First Cleveland (Ohio) Troop, right ankle fractured; Dr. Taggart, Frackville, knee injured; H.A. Weldy, Tamaqua, head cut; W. Arden Jones, Shamokin, bruised about the body; C.G. Homer, Girardville, back injured; C.F. Holshoe, Shamokin, slight sprain--18. Railroad employees--G.G. Orr, Pullman car conductor, right ankle cut; James Johnson, Pullman car porter, left leg broken; H. Freeburn, engineer, skull fractured and leg badly cut; John M. Unglaub, engineer, injured in side, leg and head; Robert Oliver, conductor, bruised; E.M. Skeen, train hand, G. Frere, fireman, Jacob Rider, engineer, Robert Everhart, fireman, and William Talbot, train hand, slightly injured--10.

A Special Dispatch from Shamokin

says that "D.D. Domer, editor of the Shamokin Times and John W. Somers are both lying in a critical condition. The latter will scarcely recover. The injuries of the others are very slight. The funeral of J. Weimer Young, who was killed instantly, will take place Tuesday. Mr. Young was about 48 years old, and leaves a family.

Removal of the Bodies

Mr. Oliver's body was taken to Baltimore from which his funeral will take place, and Mr. Young's body to Shamokin, Pa.

Death of Engineer Freeburn

Mr. Freeburn, who was brought her yesterday, was able to converse a little before he left Severn, but after his arrival here about all he said was to complain of coldness in his legs. He was taken to his sister's house on 4 1/2 street near F southwest, and although yesterday afternoon he brightened somewhat, at night he commenced to sink, and between 3 and 4 o'clock this morning he died. Mr. Freeburn was one of the best known engineers in the service of the company. He was about 37 years of age, a native of Phillipsburg, Dauphin county, Pa., and since he was 15 years old has been engaged in railroading, being on the Pennsylvania Central, Northern Central and the B & P since its commencement, and has always been regarded as one of the most careful employees of the road. His mistake (the

failure to keep out of the way of the special train), which led to the accident is a puzzle to those who know him. It has been ascertained that he must have had full control of his faculties just before he reached the station, for he blew his whistle for the crossing and his engine was reversed. One who has worked with him since his boyhood says that for a moment he must have become oblivious as to where he was. It was found that besides the injuries to his legs, his skull was fractured both in front and rear. The deceased engineer was a member of Harmony Lodge, No. 17, F.A.A.M., Lafayette, R.A. Chapter, No. 5, and Columbia Commandery, No. 2, K.T. He was not married. His remains will be interred in Congressional Cemetery on Thursday. The story that he ran ahead in violation of orders is denied by friends, who say his orders were to go ahead, make all possible time, and await orders en route.

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The B & P Railroad Accident

The Inquest of the Body of Engineer Freeburn

The inquest on the body of Mr. H.H. Freeburn, better known as Harry Freeburn, the engineer who was injured in the accident at Severn, on the B & P R.R., on Saturday last, was continued yesterday after our report closed.

Capt. Calvin Armacost, conductor of the special train, testified that he left Washington at 12:50; received orders at Benning's to run as "second section of number one," and at Odenton not to pass Severn (3 1/4 miles north of that point) till engines 1 and 147 had arrived. The next thing he knew was the application of air brakes, within 300 yards of Severn, and the crash came within 50 yards of the switch. The curve is in a cut, and the approaching train could not be seen till quite close.

John Roy, conductor, testified that he was on Saturday morning running on the extra, bound south. Left Baltimore at about 1:33 p.m. Witness read his orders, "Run to Severn regardless of second section, number one; all third class schedules are annulled." This means that he had the right of the track to that point, and then should have gone on the siding by the north end. Did not do this. Both conductor and engineer sign these orders, and with this both complied. They are required to open the switch--the conductor being responsible for this. About 400 yards from the switch Freeburn shut his engine off and blew a long blast. Witness took his keys out and got on the tank, expecting to open the switch. A young man walked across the track in front of the telegraph office and witness thought he had an order for them. The engineer blew "up brakes," which means "go ahead," and he got on the step ready to catch the orders; found the young man had no orders and sprang back into the engine to stop the engineer; by this time they had reached the south end of the siding when the other train was approaching around the curve. The engineer blew "down brakes," applied his air brake and reversed his engine. When within 10 feet of the train witness jumped off. They were running then 20 to 25 miles per hour. It was witness' business to have stopped the engineer, and he would have done so were it not for seeing the man on the platform. The witness with some feeling said: "Engineer Freeburn and myself are solely responsible, and as he is dead, I am the responsible party for this accident." Mr. Lappin read the order to them twice and distinctly before they left.

Frank Lappin (train dispatcher), of Baltimore, testified to the orders as above, and the order books from Union depot and Odenton were shown; corroborating the testimony.

The Verdict

of the jury was that death was caused by injuries received in a collision near Severn station, on the Baltimore & Potomac railroad, which was caused by the neglect of said Freeburn to obey orders.

The Evening Star, March 10, 1881

The Engineer Who Was Killed at Severn

The funeral of the late H.H. Freeburn, better known as Harry Freeburn, who died on Monday last from injuries received in the accident, on Saturday last, at Severn, on the B & P R.R., took place this afternoon, from his sister's residence, on 4 1/2 street below F street southwest. Prior to the hour of the funeral there were many callers to take a look at the remains. The body was attired in a black suit and encased in a handsome walnut casket with silver bar handles, furnished by the Lee Bros.; and on it were the following floral tributes: A broken column, from his friends at the St. James' Hotel; a pillow, from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and a cross from the officers and employees of the B & P R.R., with the letters H.F. and B.P. R.R. The services were conducted by Rev. Dr. Samuel Domer, of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and there were present Harmony Lodge, No. 17; Lafayette Chapter, No. 5, and Columbia Commandery, No. 2, of Masons, and a large representation from the Locomotive Engineers. Two pall-bearers were taken from each organization. Many of the officials of the road were present. The cortege proceeded to the Congressional Cemetery, where the interment took place.