

Bridgport Evening Post.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1899.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR AWFUL DISASTER LOCATED TO-DAY

Company and Motorman Equally to Blame, Says Coroner's Jury.

Verdict a Straightforward, Convincing Statement—Hamilton
Criminally Negligent by Proceeding at Reckless Speed—
Shelton Street Railway Co. Culpable in Running Cars
Over an Unfinished Road Bed—Recommends the
Licensing of Motormen and a Special Session of the
Legislature to Appoint Commission to Supervise Con-
struction of Trolley Roads.

Henry Lee,
Arthur J. Cable,
Russell T. Whiting,
Henry P. Stagg,
J. Henry Blakeman,
Stiles Judson, Sr.

These are the men who, after careful deliberation, found the Shelton Street Railway Co. and Motorman Hamilton jointly responsible for the fearful disaster of August 6.

The coroner's jury on the Shelton extension disaster handed down a verdict this morning.

The jury finds that Motorman George Hamilton was criminally negligent in running the car at a dangerous rate of speed down the approach and onto the bridge and that the Shelton Street Railway Co. was very negligent in running the cars over the approach to the bridge when that approach was not in a fit condition for use, owing to the lack of dirt about the ties, and in not seeing that its orders about watching the track and running at a moderate rate of speed were obeyed.

The jury made further that the accident was made possible through the absence of a proper guard rail, although the one on the bridge was the same as used on all trolley roads.

The jury then turns to recommendations. It says, first, that all cars ought to be made to come to a full stop at either end of the bridge before going on it; that the hours for work for motormen and conductors ought to be shortened and that they ought to have reasonable intervals of rest for their meals; that all trolley bridges ought to have inside guard rails and an outside guard rail not less than eight inches high and lined with iron; that no man should be allowed to serve as a motorman until he has passed an examination before a commission and has received a license, and, lastly, that Governor Lounsbury be asked to call the general assembly together as early as possible to appoint a commission which shall have charge of all matters pertaining to electric roads.

The jury was unanimous in reaching this finding and in deciding upon the recommendations. Every man gave the tremendous amount of evidence, covering over 400 pages, the most careful consideration and the verdict noted is the result of their deliberations.

The men who make this finding are County Commissioner Henry Lee, Charity Commissioner Arthur J. Cable and Russell T. Whiting of Bridgeport, and Town Clerk Henry P. Stagg, Representative J. Henry Blakeman and Stiles Judson, Sr. of Stratford.

After the jury retired yesterday morning they took up the mass of evidence and went carefully over it. They held a session until late in the afternoon and when they were ready to go home they had practically agreed upon

some they had practically agreed upon a finding.

Just before they adjourned the coroner was called in and their ideas were submitted to him. He made a written draft of them and this morning, when the jury came together again, they read it over carefully for final action.

After some little discussion one additional recommendation was made and the finding was ready for the public.

The jury came out of the room and was received by Coroner Doten. The coroner asked them if they had agreed upon a verdict. Foreman Henry Lee said they had, and he handed up a typewritten document to the coroner.

The coroner took it and read it over aloud. He then thanked the jurymen for their labor and announced that their services would no longer be required.

The most prominent coroner's inquiry in the history of Fairfield county was over and it now remains to be seen whether the many important recommendations made by the jury are adopted.

Below will be found in full the findings and recommendations of the jury. The document was signed by every one of the jurymen.

THE FINDING.

The undersigned jurors being duly impaneled and sworn by the Coroner of said County to diligently inquire, under his direction, into the cause and manner of the death of William Osborn of Stratford, whose death was sudden and untimely, and the cause and manner of which was unknown, having viewed the body of said deceased, and considered the evidence given to us, do present over our signatures to the coroner and on our oaths,

do say that said William Osborn came to his death by reason of a fractured skull, caused by being thrown from a bridge in a trolley car, on which he was a passenger, at a place called Peck's Mill in Stratford, said car being operated by the Shelton Street Railway Company. We find that said car was derailed at said bridge and fell into the ravine below in the manner and for the reasons hereafter stated.

We find that by reason of the rapid running of the car and the defective condition of the approach adjoining the bridge, the car was derailed. We find that the guard rail, although of the style generally used on all trolley bridges was not of sufficient height

case by reason of the speed and momentum of the car. We find that in view of the fact that the track was new and untried, and the road-bed not completed, that the car was run at a dangerous rate of speed approaching the bridge and onto the bridge.

We find that the motorman, George Hamilton, was guilty of criminal carelessness in so running said car. We find that on said day said car was in good order and running condition.

We find that the Shelton Street Railway company was very negligent in the following particulars:

First, in allowing an imperfect condition of the roadbed to exist on Sunday, said sixth day of August, at the southern approach to the bridge, in that the ties were insufficiently supported by dirt or other filling, thereby causing a depressed condition when the car passed that point.

Second, in that the order of the company as to speed at this point, and as to the constant all day inspection of the track at this point on said day was not enforced.

In view of the foregoing we recommend:

First, That all cars be required to stop before crossing the bridge at Peck's Mill 30 feet distant from the bridge at either end.

Second, that all trolley bridges have inside guard rails and that the outside guard rail be not less than 8 inches high and be lined with iron.

Third, that no man be allowed to act as motorman for a trolley car until he shall have qualified before some competent board of examiners and be licensed therefor.

Fourth, we recommend that the number of working hours of motormen and conductors be reduced, and that they be allowed a reasonable time for their meals.

Fifth, in view of the large increase in mileage of trolley lines in this state and a probable further increase, we recommend that His Excellency, the Governor, convene the legislature at the earliest possible date, for the purpose of creating a commission with ample power, whose duty shall be to supervise the construction and operation of trolley lines.

The Coroner is hereby requested to communicate with the Governor and to transmit to him a copy of this verdict and finding.