

# Six Killed When Big four Passenger Train and Automobile Collide at Oakland Park Ave. Crossing; Mrs. F.S. Hemminger and Two Children Among Dead

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## HORACE HOLBROOK, PUBLISHER, OF WARREN, O., AND TWO TRAINMEN ALSO LOSE LIVES IN ACCIDENT

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Engine, Tender and Four Coaches Leave Rails and Plow  
Along Over Ties For 500 Feet Before Overturning.

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, March 30, 1923)

### THE DEAD

Mrs. Frank S. Hemminger, aged 27, 2874 North High Street, Columbus

Robert Hemminger, aged 5

Dorothy Hemminger, aged 2 ½ years

Earl Wilson, railroad fireman, age 35, 1324½ Summit Street, Apartment 2, Columbus.

Joshua William Klee, railroad fireman, age 30, ..... Harvard Avenue, Cleveland.

Horace Holbrook aged 45, publisher of the Warren Democrat, Warren, Ohio.

### THE INJURED

#### IN GRANT HOSPITAL

W.L. Siebert, 757 Sedan Street, Cincinnati. Back crushed and skull fractured and burns.

Miss Mary Catherine Johnson, 833 East Broad Street. Scalp wounds.

F.H. Hiles, 1112 Chatham Street, Cincinnati. Bruised.

Capt. J.E. Covington, 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Ft. Ontario, home address Chattanooga, Tenn. Slightly hurt and later discharged.

Robert Henderson, colored, 737 East Ninth Street Chattanooga, Tenn. Slight injuries.

S.L. Nelson, 23, Bowdoinham, Me. Cut over eye and bruised.

Miss Helen Wheeler, Mt. Pleasant, Tenn. Suffering from nervous shock.

Miss Mary O'Harr, Syracuse, N.Y. Suffering from nervous shock.

Miss Vinita Quackenbush, Schenectady, N.Y. Injured arm.

Allen L. Thomas, colored, 16 West 136<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, porter. Bruised leg.

#### IN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Andrew Green, 59, Cleveland, engineer. Cuts and bruises.

C.G. Lewis, 25, Boston, Mass., traveling auditor. Cuts and bruises.

## IN WHITE CROSS HOSPITAL

W.E. Green, Troy, N.Y., broken rib and scalp wounds.

Dorothy Coppock, Greenville, Ohio, daughter of Fred Coppock. Arm cut at wrist.

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When Big Four train No. 11, en route from Cleveland to Cincinnati, struck an automobile driven by Mrs. Frank Hemminger, 2874 North High Street, at Oakland Park Avenue, at 8:20 Friday morning, six persons were killed and probably a score were injured some of whom may die. Mrs. Hemminger was driving a Patterson touring car and had taken her two children for a trip into the country where she expected to cancel an order for some chickens. She expedited to pick up her husband, who is an attorney with offices at 18 East Long Street, on the return trip, and the family was to motor to Piqua for the week-end. Mrs. Hemminger and both children were killed instantly.

The automobile was completely demolished and the wreckage was carried for more than a block, the train piling up at East North Broadway. According to railroad men, when the front truck of the locomotive struck the auto the wheels cleared the track and struck a switch 27 ties south of Oakland Park Avenue. The rails spread and the locomotive turned over, carrying with it the tender and four cars.

The train, which is one of the most luxurious on the Big Four division between Boston and Cincinnati, was composed entirely of sleeper, with a combination club and baggage car in front. It was due in Columbus at 7:47 a.m., and because it was 40 minutes late it was running down grade at an estimated speed of 70 miles an hour when the accident happened. The train was in charge of Engineer Andrew Green, of Cleveland who was injured, and Conductor Michael McGraw also of Cleveland. Mr. McGraw escaped uninjured. Fireman J.W. Klee, of Cleveland, was killed.

## ENGINE AND FOUR COACHES TURN OVER.

After plowing up the ground for more than a block the locomotive turned over on its side and partially buried itself in the ground. The engine cab was torn from the locomotive and the tender partially telescoped itself in the combination club and baggage car just behind. The club car, two New York sleepers and a Boston Pullman were overturned and the remainder of the Pullman coaches were derailed. E.F. Rodney of Buffalo, N.Y. was in charge of the Pullman coaches. Baggage master F.G. Kettner of Cleveland was slightly injured.

A number of passengers going through to Cincinnati were still asleep in their berths when the crash came. All was chaos with cries of injured and mixed shouts of friends and relatives calling to each other in the wreckage, mingling with the hiss of escaping steam and water from the locomotive. Members of the train crew assisted passengers to escape from the overturned coaches and a call was sent out for every available ambulance in Columbus. The dead and injured were removed to hospitals and morgues in ambulances and private automobiles as fast as they could be removed from the wreckage.

Former Service Director George Borden and Mrs. Borden were eating in the breakfast room of their home at East North Broadway and the Big Four crossing when the crash came.

They looked just in time to see the locomotive leave the tracks and catapult into the air. They sent out the emergency call for physicians and ambulances before they rushed to the scene of the wreck.

Together, with employees of the Clintonville Lumber Co., Mr. and Mrs. Borden were the only eyewitnesses of the tragedy.

#### **MAYOR DIRECTS POLICE AND FIREMAN.**

A corps of physicians and nurses was hurried to the scene of the catastrophe from Grant hospital and they gave first aid treatment as fast as the injured were removed from the debris.

Chief French dispatched all available emergency police to the scene of the accident and fireman under the personal direction of Chief Daniels assisted in the rescue work. Mayor Thomas, Safety Director McCune and Service Director Duffy were at the scene of the accident within a half hour. H.M. Patton, general agent of the Big Four railroad, took personal charge of the rescue work and checkup of dead and injured. Mr. Patton brought a rescue train from the Union Station. A number of passengers who were uninjured were taken back to Columbus in automobiles and taxicabs. Forty-nine passengers were removed to the Union Station in the rescue train and were placed on another train which was hurriedly made up to proceed to Cincinnati. Wrecking trains and crew from the Norfolk & Western and Pennsylvania lines were placed in emergency use to clear away the debris. The Toledo division of the Pennsylvania lines is temporarily blocked while the wreckage is being removed. The Pennsylvania tracks run parallel to the Big Four right of way. Railroad men estimate that it will take 36 hours for the tracks to be cleared so that traffic may be resumed. Meanwhile Big Four trains are being detoured over the Pennsylvania tracks through Columbus.

#### **MANY HAD MIRACULOUS ESCAPES.**

Miraculous were the escapes that were reported by passengers and members of the train crew. Veteran railway employees declared that Friday's accident is one of the worst that has occurred in this part of the country for many years, and after looking over the condition of the mass of wreckage they expressed surprise that so few were killed. However, fears are entertained that there may be some bodies buried in the tangled skein of steel and wood.

One of the first railroad men to assume direction of the care of injured was F.B. Sheldon, resident vice president of the Toledo & Ohio Central railroad, who was returning to his home after an official visit to New York City. Though badly shaken Mr. Sheldon suffered nothing further than a nerve shock. First reports were that this official of the New York Central lines had been killed.

Passengers who escaped without injury were very distinct in their praise of the conduct of the train crew. One woman, whose name was not learned, declared that she was pinned under a seat and hardly had she realized that had happened until one of the Pullman porters, equipped with a first aid kit and an ax, was at her side giving her attention. Other passengers reported similar acts by members of the crew.

Four passengers who were riding in the club car told of the heroic work of A.L. Thomas, colored, attendant in that coach. Thomas, whose home is in New York City, had taken a 30-day

trial position on this train and was making his last run to Cincinnati, having decided not to accept the position. When the crash came Thomas suffered a bad gash in his left thigh and another deep wound in his right arm, but thinking first of the passengers, he grabbed an ax and chopped out the club car transom in one end and cleared away a hole into the baggage compartment ahead, from which he assisted one of the passengers, who was dazed, to escape.

### **QUICK WIT SAVES GIRL'S LIFE.**

John Craven, a former Ohio Wesleyan athlete, on his way from Syracuse, N.Y., to his Dayton, Ohio, home, perfected the rescue of several of the more seriously injured. Mr. Craven was in his berth in the car immediately behind the club car when the crash occurred. Among the passengers taken out by him was Miss Dorothy Coppock, of Greenfield, Ohio, who suffered severe burns and a badly lacerated arm. Her condition was relieved by him by the immediate application of a tourniquet. Flying glass caused several abrasions on Mr. Craven's head, but otherwise he was uninjured.

Miss Mary Catherine Johnson, daughter of Charles F. Johnson, 833 East Broad Street, returning from an eastern school, accompanied by her cousin, Miss Virginia Smith, 1075 East Broad Street, for the Eastern holidays, was among the last removed from the scene of the disaster. She was the victim of scalp wounds and was taken to Grant hospital for treatment.

The family of R.H. Bradley of Syracuse, N.Y., on their way to Mobile, Ala., believes its escape from injury due to the insistence of Elizabeth, the seven-year-old daughter, that she have her breakfast at that early hour. The Bradleys had occupied a compartment in the club car and had left their quarters but a few moments before the accident to go to the dining car, which was the last coach of the heavy train. This was the first time little Miss Elizabeth had ever taken a railroad journey.

The bodies of Mrs. Hemminger and her two children are at the morgue of the Sherman D. Brown Co. The mother and the son were removed first to the Pletcher chapel, where they were identified by the father, while the body of the baby sister was removed first to the Amos Co.

Joshua William Klee was the fireman on the wrecked train. He was 30 years of age and was single. He leaves his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Klee, and three brothers and four sisters. His body is in charge of the Schoedinger Co. and will be sent to Cleveland for burial. His home in Cleveland was at 10,803 Harvard Avenue.

### **WARREN PUBLISHER**

Horace Holbrook, aged 45, was the publisher of the Warren Democrat at Warren, Ohio. His body is at the Amos Undertaking establishment until word is received from his relatives.

Earl Wilson, aged 35, railroad fireman, is survived by his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson; a daughter, Helen; his father and one brother, Reed Wilson, who is postmaster at Pleasant City. Three weeks ago he was badly injured, being burned by an engine while traveling near Delaware. His body is in charge of the Glenn L. Myers Co.

Frederick B. Sheldon of Columbus, who is one of the vice president of the New York Central lines, escaped injury. He was returning from a directors meeting in New York and was traveling in the drawing room. He was showered by glass from the braking windows.

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# TRAIN “BUCKLED” WHEN ENGINEER THREW ON AIR BRAKES IN EFFORT TO AVOID CRASH

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## Making Speed of 70 Miles an Hour When Andrew Green Saw Automobile Pull Across track Not More Than 20 Feet in Front of His Locomotive

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, March 30, 1923)

“We were running at 70 miles an hour and, when only about 20 feet from the crossing, I saw the nose of the automobile slide out on the tracks from behind a cut of cars standing on the siding at Oakland Park Avenue,” declared Andrew Green, age 59, Cleveland engineer of the Big Four train. “Immediately I threw on all the brakes, but in that short distance the automobile had reached the tracks. Our train buckled, leaped into the air, there was a crash, and that’s all I can recall,” Green continued.

Green is at the University hospital, where he is suffering from burns, scalds and bruises received during his efforts to free himself from underneath the overturned engine, where he was pinned along with three other men who were in the cab. Green is bruised about the head, and there is a deep gash above his left eye.

“I do remember crawling out from underneath my engine, but I could not see anything because I was so blinded with burns,” the engineer continued.

### FOUR MEN IN CAB

“Four men were riding in the cab,” Green repeated. “My fireman, John Klee, and Earl W. Wilson, a traveling fireman, were standing on the footboard, and W.L. Siebert, another traveling fireman, was in the fireman’s seat. How I got out of there with these few bruises is beyond me, but I guess my time hasn’t come yet,” he said.

For 33 years Green has been an engineer on the Big Four railroad; he has been with that company for 41 years, and for 16 years he has piloted the famous *Southwestern Limited* between Cleveland and Columbus. This is his first accident.

Green stated that his train pulled out of Cleveland at 5:42 Friday morning.

“I remember passing through Worthington at 7:21, and only about five minutes later the accident occurred.” He said. Green said his run stopped in Columbus and that he piloted No. 46, which leaves here for Cleveland at 12:05 each afternoon. The *Southwestern Limited* makes only one stop between Cleveland and Columbus and that is a Galion.

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# EYE WITNESSES TELL VIVID TALE OF RAIL TRAGEDY

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## Grover DeLong and Walter Epps Working On Lumber Pile as Accident Occurs.

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### HELP REMOVE INJURED

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Hear Deafening crash and Cars Go by in Cloud of Dust and Splinters.

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, March 30, 1923)

One of the most vivid stories of the tragedy is related by Grover DeLong and Walter Epps, employees of the Clintonville Lumber Co. eye witnesses of the accident. The offices of the lumber company cut off the view from the north, the direction from which the train was coming, and Mrs. Hemminger was driving her car with side-curtains on, they said.

“We were unloading a car of lumber when the auto started across the tracks,” DeLong said. A deafening crash followed and the train passed by in a cloud of dust and splinters.

“We didn’t realize what had happened. We dropped our work and ran down the track. We found the Hemminger boy dead about 50 yards from the crossing. The girl was farther along and Mrs. Hemminger was picked up from under the pilot of the engine.

When we reached the coaches, which had overturned, people were crawling out like ants and we immediately started to bring out the seriously injured. It all happened so quickly, though that I can hardly remember what happened.”

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