

BLAMES CHAUFFEUR FOR DEATH OF TEN

Driver of Auto-bus Failed to Heed Signal at "Death Crossing"—Three Mothers and Babies Are Among Victims. Inquiry Begun by Officials

Responsibility for the accident which resulted in the death of ten persons and the injury of five others in Camden Sunday night when a motor bus was struck by a Pennsylvania Railroad electric express, was placed yesterday on Vincenzo Strattoni, driver of the bus, by Coroner David Bentley, of Camden.

A rigid investigation of the accident has been ordered by Mayor Ellis, of Camden. Council will be asked to probe the grade-crossing situation in Camden and to take steps to prevent further accidents. Measures also will be taken to curb recklessness on the part of "jitney" bus drivers.

Identification of the bodies of the victims, many of which were mangled almost beyond recognition, was not made until late yesterday afternoon. A constant stream of anxious persons arrived at the Morgue, at Fifth and Federal streets, and one by one the bodies were picked out.

The complete list of the fifteen passengers of the motorbus are as follows:

THE DEAD

- VINCENZO STRATTONI, 30 years old, 332 Viola street, Camden.
PERCY D. GUNN, 35 years old, 1555 Minnesota road, Fairview.
MRS. ELIZABETH M. HYATT, 28 years old, 2760 Constitution road, Fairview.
QUENTIN HYATT, ten months old, Mrs. Hyatt's son.
MRS. HAZEL DALTON, 26 years old, 1069 Collings road, Fairview.
EILEEN DALTON, eighteen months old, daughter of Mrs. Dalton.
WILLIAM A. STREEKER, 26 years old, 261 Kansas road, Fairview.
MRS. ALICE STREEKER, 29 years old, his wife.
DOROTHY STREEKER, 3 years old, their daughter.
KENNETH STAFFORD, fourteen months old, Fairview.

THE INJURED

- ROBERT STAFFORD, 29 years old, 2504 Constitution road, Fairview; fractured skull.
MARGARET STAFFORD, 27 years old, his wife; fractured nose and cuts of the head.
JAMES DALTON, 26 years old, husband of Mrs. Dalton and father of Eileen; fractured skull.
JOHN MYERS, 24 years old, Fairview; cuts of the head and had right arm amputated.
NEIL HEROLD, 17 years old, 1417 Collings road, Fairview; cuts.

After an examination of William Osborne, engineer of the electric train, and Tony Verne, the watchman at the crossing, Superintendent A. G. Mitchell, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, also placed the blame on Strattoni, who was killed. It was admitted, however, that the safety gates at the crossing were out of commission since August 19.

Verne insisted that he waved his lantern and shouted to the driver of the bus. Strattoni is said to have replied: "I can make it all right. Go to hell, you," and started the machine across the tracks into the path of the train.

The wreck, which occurred at 8.30 o'clock Sunday night, is said to be the worst in the history of the New Jersey grade crossings. All the passengers of the bus were either killed or injured seriously, with the exception of Neil Herold, who escaped with slight cuts.

Two of the victims at the Cooper Hospital are expected to die.

The bodies of William A. Strecker, his wife and daughter were the last to be identified. Alfred Bath, of 3076 Sumter road, Fairview, a brother-in-law of Strecker, broke down and wept when he found them in the morgue.

Bath said the Streekers had attended services in the Blockley Baptist Church, Fifty-third and Wyalusing streets, to hear a pastor whom they had known when they lived in Asbury Park, N. J. With Miss Violet Ettinger, of Hamilton Square, near Trenton, they crossed on the ferry. Miss Ettinger bade them good night and the Streekers entered the bus.

The bodies of Mrs. Hyatt and her son were identified by her mother, Mrs. Ida Wadsworth, who lived with her at Fairview. She said that Mrs. Hyatt and her son had been visiting friends in Wilmington. When they did not return, Mrs. Wadsworth became worried and, hearing of the tragedy, hurried to the morgue.

"It's my daughter, my poor little girl," she sobbed when she saw the silent form on the marble slab. Half fainting she was led to a nearby stone and there found the baby, Quentin, who she was able to identify only by its clothing.

Mrs. Hyatt was the wife of Theodore M. Hyatt, who is chief yeoman on the battleship Idaho, now stationed with the Pacific fleet. Hyatt never saw his son, as the child was born after he joined the fleet.

The Dalton family were involved in the crash as the result of a trip to Broad Street Station here, accompanying relatives who had spent the week-end with them.

They were identified by neighbors, who noticing the milk bottles and papers on their front, suspected that they were among the victims. Inquiring at the Cooper Hospital they found Dalton, who is suffering from a fractured skull; later Mrs. Dalton and Eileen were discovered at the Morgue.

Coroner Bentley, after the investigation was completed, said:

"The accident was the fault of the bus driver, according to all the witnesses we have examined. The watchman at the crossing swung his light and called to Strattoni, but he failed to heed the warning and drove in front of the express. It is a bad crossing and drivers of vehicles should be extremely careful when crossing there."

The Coroner also said that no inquest would be held in the present case.

"In fact, there hasn't been an inquest held in Camden for nearly fifteen years. The Board of Freeholders will not appropriate the money to pay for an inquest. I hope this case will stir them up a bit. The responsibility in a case like this should be decided by a jury."

Mayor Ellis said that he had communicated with the railroad several weeks ago when a similar accident had occurred and asked it to take measures for the public's safety. The reply was that such precautions had been taken, and that gates were being erected, the Mayor said.

"I have requested Council to take up the matter of grade crossings at the Thursday meeting, and in the meantime I am having a rigid investigation instituted by Chief of Police Gravenor. If I find that bus-drivers are endangering the lives of their passengers, arrests will be made to check their recklessness."