



Madison County Genealogical Society



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Terrible Railroad Accident

One Brakeman Killed Outright

Engineer Badly Mutilated

Engine, Tender and Five Loaded Freight Cars Completely Demolished.

Owing to the terrible rain of last Tuesday night, the Sioux City train over the C. St. P. M. & O. railroad, due here at 7:45 P. M., laid over at Wayne, which is thirty-five miles from this place, through fear that washouts might have occurred and would not be seen in the night. On their way in on the following morning, at about half past six o'clock and when they were about five miles out from Norfolk, they ran into a culvert or small bridge which had been completely washed from under the track, yet the rails and ties were still left in position so that the damage was not noticed until too late to be avoided. The locomotive dropped directly into the opening; the tender and first freight car were completely demolished; the second car passed completely over all yet mentioned, reaching its full length upon the solid grading and then rolled upon its side into the ditch. The third car lay smashed above the engine, while the fourth and fifth were pitched right and left cross-wise of the track, each with one end in the water and the other reared high in air; both were very badly broken up. The locomotive is apparently completely destroyed.

Joseph Pheasant, the head brakeman, who at the time of the accident was riding in the cab with the engineer, was so completely buried up that his body was not recovered until about four o'clock in the afternoon. His injuries were such as would likely have caused death even had he not been held under water as he was. He was a resident of Norfolk and leaves a wife and six sons and daughters, one of whom is married.

Samuel T. Reed, engineer, was caught below one knee by some of the timbers of the floor of a car, and held in the water up to his chest until eleven o'clock when he was released. The leg below the knee was mashed to pieces, and also a portion of the foot. The left hand also sustained some injuries. During the whole time of this trying ordeal of four and a half hours duration, with one leg mashed and firmly held fast by timbers, and nearly the whole of his body under water which was very cold, Mr. Reed bore it all like a hero.

The fireman, at the time was outside at work upon the engine, and was thrown into the water and hurt by something striking him on the back. He was also badly strangled, but succeeded in making his way to the bank.

Word was at once sent to this place, when the U. P. engine, which was just starting out on its regular trip to Columbus, was recalled and with two box cars dispatched to the scene of the disaster and remained there until eleven o'clock when Mr. Reed was released and brought to town. A large number of our citizens went out on the special train, and when there all who could see where their services could be of any benefit turned in and worked with a zeal that was commendable. Especially did the railroad boys exert themselves to the utmost, getting into the water frequently up to their necks, in their efforts to free the imprisoned foot of the unfortunate engineer. This, however, could not be done with all the power that could be brought to bear upon the obstruction, until the U. P. engine was backed up and hitched to the same with their cable and hooks, which had the desired effect and the poor fellow as set at liberty. A shout of joy went up from the crowd, but the recollections of the victim still undiscovered suppressed any great demonstrations. Mr. Reed was at once placed upon the train and brought to town, and in the afternoon Drs. Bear and Richards amputated the leg below the knee.

On Thursday at 12 o'clock an inquest was held by Coroner Tanner and a verdict rendered to the effect that Joseph Pheasant came to his death by being crushed about the hips and drowning. The extent of each cause the jurors were unable to decide. Following are the names of the jurors: Herman Pasewalk, J. A. Light, D. S. Crow, Louis Sessions and J. C. Morey. Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday May 11, 1883, page 3.

Last Tuesday night we were visited with the heaviest fall of rain which this country has experienced in several years. For about two hours and a half the rain fell in torrents, until the whole surface of the ground was literally covered with water. How many railroad washouts this will be the cause of it is hard to tell, but at this writing (Wednesday P.M.) we have the accident on the St. Paul road, of which we give an account elsewhere, and the morning train due here from Creighton, still stands on the track two miles north of town, with a washout of one hundred and fifty yards of grading which will have to be replaced. Passengers will be transferred by a special train sent up that far from the lower depot.

Later---The above mentioned break has been repaired so that trains are now making their customary runs.

Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday May 11, 1883, page 3.

Charles Ransom, conductor on the wrecked train where Reed and Pheasant lost their lives, was quite sick for several days afterward from the effects of working in the water at that time. He is now out and around again, though not able to resume his place on the train.

We hear of a railroad accident which happened between Blair and Omaha last Monday which was very similar to the one between here and Wayne, of which we gave an account last week. In this case the engineer, named Getty, brother of our fellow townsman, was scalded to death.

Samuel T. Reed, the unfortunate engineer on the smashup of the St. Paul train last week, died on Friday night at half-past ten and was buried on Saturday. He leaves a mother and several children, his wife having died in Iowa a few years ago. He was about thirty-three years of age.

Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday May 18, 1883, page 3.

Card of Thanks

The undersigned respectfully takes this method of expressing her sincere thanks to friends, neighbors and citizens for their kindness, sympathy and aid in the time of affliction. Mrs. Joseph Pheasant.

Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday May 18, 1883, page 3.

Card of Thanks

A card of thanks is most heartily rendered by the family of S. T. Read to all those who assisted and sympathize with us o'ver our grief and great loss. The memory of them will ever be cherished in the hearts of the remaining members of his household. M. J. Read.

Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday May 18, 1883, page 3.

Railroad Wash Out

The Creighton train encountered a wash-out in the road near Norfolk Wednesday morning on its way down, which compelled it to stop and transfer its passengers and cargo to another train.

On complaint of neighbors, the salty sirens were "pulled" from their up-town retreat Monday morning by Sheriff Martin. They were allowed to take the U. P. train for other parts on the promise that they would never again return to Madison county.

The St. Paul train was obliged to return to Norfolk Wednesday morning on account of several washouts on the road occasioned by the heavy rain of the night before. One of the washouts was at the bridge where Reed and Pheasant, lost their lives in the wreck a few weeks ago.

Source: Norfolk Journal, Friday June 22, 1883, page 3.