

Confusion on the tracks led to death of engineer

"Firemen Castelto was only slightly injured in jumping from the engine, but the poor engineer leaped into eternity."

—*Bloomington Telephone*, Dec. 21, 1886.

It was 1:20 on a Sunday morning in December when Daniel Heaphley, engineer of the Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Railway, drove the 17-car No. 34 north out of Bloomington. He had been told that he would pass another train (No. 33) at the Wood Yard Station four miles north of town.

Something went terribly wrong. The *Telephone* described what happened. "Just before reaching the Wood Yard there is an up grade, and at its summit before starting down is a curve. No. 34 came over the grade and started down at full speed, when turning the curve, the engineer and fireman noticed the other freight train, No. 33, that they were to pass, standing on the main track."

Two trains can't occupy the same track at the same time. In the split second that Heaphley and the fireman, Mike Costelto, saw the situation, they had to make a deci-



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

sion. In fact, they had less than a minute.

The engine was immediately thrown into reverse and the brakes applied. There was little time for communication. "...Engineer Heaphley told the fireman to save his life, then jumped. Instead of there being a collision, however, the switch had been turned, and the train at full speed rushed onto the side track, but into another danger equally as great."

There was no way to stop the train, and what was even worse was that the rear end had become uncoupled. With it went the brakeman.

Relieved of the weight of the rear cars, the engine gathered momentum. Not all of the other train was off the main track, and the

engine of No. 33 rammed it.

Continued the *Telephone*, "The fireman, seeing what was coming, jumped in time to save himself. The wreck was complete. A large freight engine was thrown cross-ways to the west of the road, so terrific was the shock. Ten freight cars were completely demolished and piled up in every conceivable shape."

And what of Heaphley? He, too, jumped, but was not so lucky as the fireman. As the newspaper graphically described it, "As he jumped his feet struck the platform of the depot, and it being icy, he was thrown under the wheels, his head striking something sharp, doubtless the end of a tie, cutting a terrible gash from the forehead back over the head, causing a compound fracture that resulted in instant death."

If the head injury were not enough, poor Heaphley suffered further injury. Since he had been thrown on the track, the train passed over his body, severing his legs just below the knees. Added the *Telephone*, "The remains were gathered up as best possible, his clothing being scattered for ten rods or

more."

Heaphley was carried back to Bloomington on another engine. An inquest was conducted at Vanzandt's (presumably an undertaker). He was undoubtedly prepared for another train trip to his home in Lafayette.

The deceased was 40 years old, the father of three children, and a valued employee of the railroad. The *Telephone* noted that Heaphley was a member of the Locomotive Brotherhood, was insured for \$8,000, and his funeral expenses were to be paid.

The newspaper speculated about the cause of the accident. He (Heaphley) doubtless thought the train would be on the switch, and when he saw it on the main track thought a collision would have been the same, as he could not have jumped between his train and the one on the main track, and to have remained at his post was certain death."

Concluded the *Telephone*, "The track was again cleared by three o'clock in the afternoon."

H-T 12/5/94