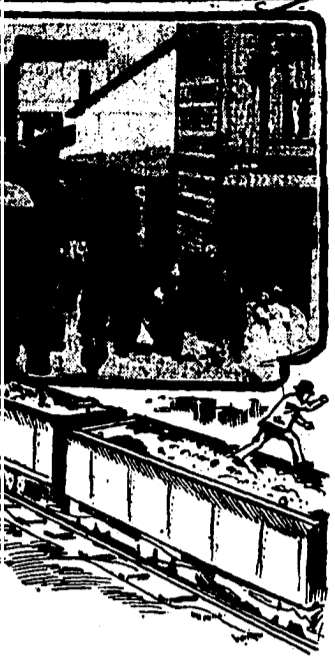


RUNAWAY CARS CRASH INTO PASSENGER TRAIN

Dash Down Five-Mile Grade



SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT AT TWENTY-FOURTH AND MISSION STREETS, AND PORTRAIT OF CHARLES SYMONS, WHO WAS INJURED.

CHARLES SYMONS

Wild Gravel Cars Strike at Seventy Miles an Hour.

RUSHING at a terrific speed along the Southern Pacific tracks through the crowded Mission district, two heavy rock-laden steel cars crashed into the front end of a passenger local in the narrow alleyway between Mission and Capp and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth streets yesterday shortly before noon. By the most fortunate circumstances no one was fatally injured, and but one man, brakeman Charles Symons, was seriously hurt.

The runaway cars, loaded with gravel and having a total weight of 150 tons, had coasted for six miles from Ocean View, where they had broken loose from a switch train. During the wild ride of six miles, in which the immense cars gained a velocity calculated at over seventy miles an hour, Symons, who was on the runaway cars when they were loosened from a string of twenty-one cars in the yards at Ocean View, clung to his post, shouting warning to the wagons and people along the way and waving a red flag in the hope of attracting the attention of the passenger train that he knew was approaching on the same tracks.

From the depot at Third and Townsend streets the San Bruno passenger train, with three coaches, fortunately carrying but two passengers, had left on its schedule time at 11:30 o'clock. In charge of the train was Conductor E. A. Arnold and Engineer George Reasing and Fireman F. C. Hanks. As the train approached the alleyways curving through the streets and among the closely built houses, Engineer Reasing became aware that something unusual was approaching him. Leaning far out from the cab window and trying to peer around the sharp curves of the track he suddenly saw a cloud of dust and could hear the thunder of a train bearing down upon him. Realizing that some runaway train was coming toward him he shut off his steam, reversed the engine, and with his fireman was enabled to leap from the cab windows just in time to escape the terrible crash that followed.

The impact was so fearful that for blocks around the impression was had that an awful explosion had occurred. Symons, who had been clinging desperately to the swaying cars, was hurled with awful violence several feet into the air, landing senseless and bleeding in the alleyway beside the wreck that followed. In the baggage car back of the passenger engine James Herrin, a Wells-Fargo Express messenger, was thrown to the floor, sustaining painful lacerations of the face and head. In the rear the two passengers were shaken and cast about by the shock and frightened by the flying glass of the windows, but were uninjured.

In their mad career through the thoroughfares of the city the runaway cars created the wildest confusion and excitement. A cloud of dust, a deafening roar and a wild rush and the cars dashed by like a demon of destruction. Women screamed and horses shied as the cars went tearing by. Nobody knew what it was. The velocity of the cars was so great that nothing could be seen but a big streak of the whirl of dust and gravel swept past the various crossings.

William Dolan and M. Clark were passing out Mission street in an automobile near Twenty-fourth street, when the collision occurred. "The only impression I have of the accident," said Dolan, "is that suddenly I heard a deafening noise and, zip, something went across Mission street so fast that I couldn't see it and then an explosion

followed. I knew that it was a collision, so, thinking I might be of assistance with my machine, I went to the corner and saw that one man had been seriously hurt. I took him immediately to the nearest hospital, the St. Luke Hospital."

According to the statement of the injured switchman, the cars were loosened from the switch train by his directions. The gravel train was in command of Foreman John Gallagher, and was switching about the tracks at Ocean View during the morning. Beside Symons, there was one other brakeman on the train. During the course of the morning it became necessary to place the two cars that were on the end of the string on another track and, Symons being on the back end, motioned to uncouple the cars believing that he could control the cars on the grade at that point. He was mistaken, however, and when the cars started down the incline he put on both brakes, but to no effect. Realizing that the cars were beyond his control his one idea was to warn whoever was in front of him of the danger.

That the cars did not leave the tracks as they dashed around some of the curves is considered most remarkable and at the scene of the wreck the fact that no fire ensued was very fortunate. The danger of flames in the crowded alley, on both sides of which were frame houses, instantly struck Patrolman E. J. Egan, who was on the scene when the collision occurred. Seeing the fearful results that would follow if the dripping oil should be ignited he ran to the fire box on Twenty-fourth and Howard streets and turned in an alarm.

At the hospital it was said that the injured switchman had sustained a simple fracture of one of the bones of the left ankle, several very painful wounds of the face and body and possible internal injuries. Symons was injured much in the same way two years ago, when several bones were broken in a railroad accident.

The damage to the passenger engine, No. 1668, was estimated at \$600, the front part and the tender being badly damaged. The front of the baggage car, in which Express Messenger Herrin so fortunately escaped death, was utterly demolished. The tender of the engine had been jammed completely through the woodwork.