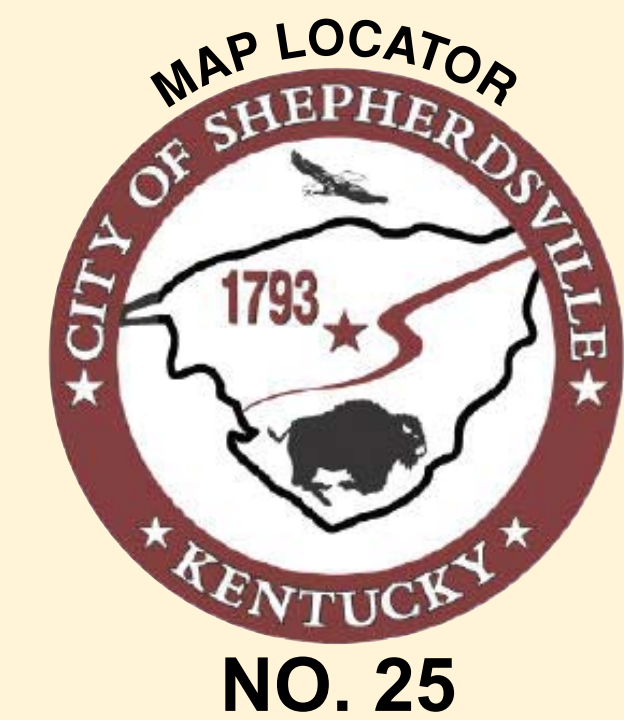


The 1917 Train Wreck

The Deadliest Train Wreck in Kentucky History



Look at the railroad tracks before you.

On December 20, 1917, these tracks witnessed a terrible tragedy that killed or injured nearly a hundred people, changing the lives of their families and communities forever.

The local train, known as the Accommodation, pulled into Shepherdsville just before sunset, its passengers crowded into two rickety wooden passenger cars. There were mothers and children, farmers, businessmen and clergymen among them.

The Flyer, an express train with nine cars of steel construction pulled by a huge locomotive, left Louisville behind schedule and sped on its way south toward Nashville on these same tracks. Its engineer expected to make up lost time along the way.

The Accommodation's conductor had instructions to take the siding at Shepherdsville if he thought he couldn't reach Bardstown Junction ahead of the Flyer. Unsure where the Flyer was, he chose to stop on the main track next to the depot to unload passengers while checking on the Flyer's location.

The Flyer passed Brooks Station at 5:24 and Gap-In-Knob three minutes later just as the Accommodation began pulling down the track in anticipation of backing into the siding to make way for the Flyer.

The Flyer's engineer expected to be able to pass Shepherdsville without slowing, and in the haze mistook signals that should have slowed him down.

The warning came too late. Although the Flyer tried to stop, it only slowed a bit. Its forward momentum and great weight imploded the back of the end car, sending fragments of wood and glass into the car and its passengers. Those nearest the back were killed instantly; others were tossed about and battered by the falling roof, the broken benches, and the Flyer itself.

The engine continued forward the length of the car, shattering it completely, scattering splinters and broken glass, debris and bodies to both sides of the track. Other victims were trapped by the massive engine when it next smashed into the smoker car. Parts of this car were tossed down the side of track into the underpass you see here.

Cries of anguish came from the wreckage, and those who had witnessed the horror moved quickly to their aid. The town's doctors arrived quickly on the scene, and every house, church and store was thrown open to care for the injured and dying.

Forty-nine people died that evening, or soon after. A nearly equal number suffered serious injuries, some that changed their lives forever. The names of those killed and injured are listed at right.



Locals view the mangled wreckage, with the Trunnell Hotel – which still exists today in another use – at right.

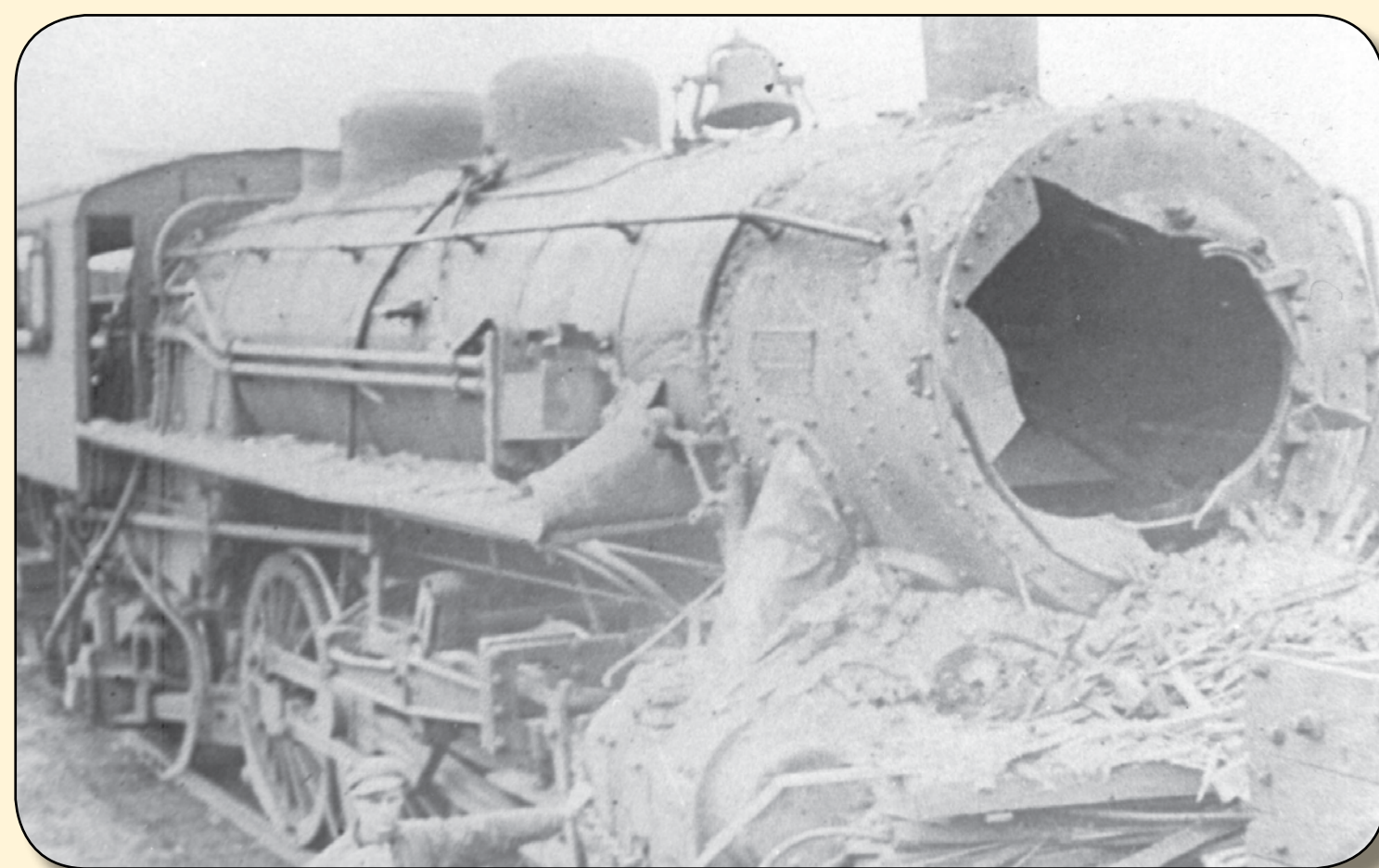


The wreckage of a demolished traincar. The Second Street underpass is just at the right edge of this photo.



A heavily damaged passenger car rests alongside the track among the debris.

More details can be found at the Bullitt County History Museum or in the Ridgway Memorial Library.



The damaged front of the express train The Flyer, which slammed into the passenger train Accommodation.



The splintered wooden framework of a passenger car.



The Christmas shopping list found in the purse of Carrie May Simmons, who died in the wreck.

Those Killed:

Father Eugene A. Bertello, Joshua Bethel Bowles, Hollis Bridges, Miss Josie Bridges, Mahlon H. Campbell, Carrie B. Cherry, Redford Columbus Cherry, Sr., Redford Columbus Cherry, Jr., Raymond Thomas Cravens, George C. Duke, Virginia Frances Duke, Lawrence C. Greenwell, Henry Z. Hardaway, Mattie E. Harmon, Joseph Raoul Losson Hurst, Louisa B. Hurst, Mrs. Catharine "Kate" A. Ice, W. C. Johnson, Silas "Sil" C. Lawrence, David Maraman, Emily Haycraft Mashburn, Miss Elizabeth McElroy, Amelia Miller, Lillian Miller, Mabel Brown Miller, W. McMakin Miller, Garnette McKay Moore, Lucas Moore, James Hartwell Morrison, Cora May Muir, George Shadburne Muir, Nathaniel Wickliffe Muir, Frank L. Nunn, Estella B. Nutt, Forrest L. Overall, Maggie Mae Overall, Bettie Phillips, David Phillips, John T. Phillips, Alice May Pulliam, Emory Samuels, Thomas Schaffer, Carrie May Simmons, Miss Mary Alethaire Simms, Thomas Spalding, J. W. Stansbury, Ben Talbott, James Thompson, N. H. Thompson.

Those Injured:

Henry Bowman, James Bradbury, Margaret Bradbury, Arthur Cahoe, James Carrico, Walter Carter, Benjamin Chapeze, Ed Clarkson, Miss Anna Cravens, Eliza M. Cravens, Frank Daugherty, Dr. D. S. Dodds, Mrs. George C. Duke, John Ford, Jeff D. Gregory, Judge Nat Halstead, Natalie Halstead, Edith Hatfield, Miss Lena Hatfield, Thomas W. Hoagland, Charles Jenkins, Charles Jessie, John Keyer, Howard Maraman, Ezekiel Masden, John McClure, George Moore, Claude Lee Nutt, Daniel Nutt, C. H. Perkins, Miss Ella Phillips, J. Frank Ratcliff, Annie Reed, Leonard Riney, Lee Roby, Harry Samuels, Susie Sheckles, C. William Shelton, Charles Showalter, John Showalter, Susan S. Simmons, J. E. Smith, Michael Smith (Bullitt County), Michael Smith (Louisville), Ethel Thornton, Roscoe Tucker, Elizabeth Ward, Henry Wilhite, Marvin Williams.

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