

30 HURT, 500 IN PERIL IN ODD TRAIN WRECK ON 3D AV. ELEVATED

Cars Jump the Rails at Switch and Dash a Signal Tower to Pieces.

FLAMES MENACE WRECKAGE

Police Climb From Street and Put Out the Fire With Sand.

DEBRIS HITS MAN IN STREET

Six Among the Victims Seriously Injured—Towerman Disappears— Bronx Prosecutor to Investigate.

A derailed Third Avenue elevated train, turned into an uncontrollable battering ram on its lofty structure over the "hub of the Bronx" at 149th Street and Third Avenue, last night toyed with the lives of 500 passengers while it ripped out a big wooden signal tower and enacted many other queer freaks for a watching crowd of 10,000 persons.

One of the freaks of this fantastic accident fully fifty feet above the busiest part of the Bronx was that only six persons were seriously injured, although one of the cars was virtually smashed to bits as it contested right of way with the solid-timbered signal house. Between twenty and thirty other persons among about 200 in the three forward cars of the train of seven wooden cars were bruised and slightly cut by flying glass.

Another freak of the accident was that one of the persons who were most seriously injured was not in the train at all, but was driving a taxicab under the structure at Third Avenue and 150th Street when a shower of debris suddenly battered his vehicle to the ground. A heavy brakeshoe from the demolished car struck the driver on the head, probably fracturing his skull, and he was taken to Lincoln Hospital. He was identified as Isador Saltland of 888 Fox Street, the Bronx.

All the other injured were in the second car of the train, which was wrecked beyond repair, and had to be cut to pieces by wrecking gangs that were clearing the right of way.

The Injured.

Among the injured were:
DERMODY, JAMES, conductor, 323 East 178d Street. Slightly cut and bruised.
DONOHUE, EDWARD, policeman attached to Beach Street Station, Manhattan, severe burns. Went home.
O'CONNOR, JOHN, 48 years old, 424 East 174th Street. Bruises and cuts; not serious.

MARGOLIES, HIRSCH, 50 years old, 485 East 172d Street. Fractured right leg, scalp wounds and possible internal injuries. Lincoln Hospital. Condition serious.

MARGOLIES, REBECCA, wife of Hirsch. Several scalp wounds and internal injuries. Lincoln Hospital. Condition serious.

SPITZELL, WOLF, 55 years old, 386 East 169th Street. Fracture of the left leg. Sent home.

TALIMAN, JAMES, 32 years old, 465 Forty-sixth Street, Brooklyn. Burns and lacerations; serious.

Fire threatened to make the accident more serious, but here again the freakishness of the accident was manifested. The lightning flashes of the third rail as the contact shoes were derailed set fire to the wreckage, but the blaze went out, to reappear along the elevated structure in a streak of flame from 150th to 152d Street. Policemen who climbed the structure had this fire almost put out with sand from the boxes of the train before the fire apparatus arrived, and only two persons suffered burns.

The cause of the accident had not been established definitely last night, although Interborough officials and the police questioned the train crew and all other employes they could find. The towerman, believed to be J. Broderick, and a signal maintenance man, who was believed to have been in the tower with him when the structure was wrecked, had disappeared when the police arrived and they had not found them at midnight. Interborough employes said they thought the towerman had been injured in the accident because they had seen a man running away holding his head, which was bleeding.

Jumps Rail at Switch.

One theory of the cause of the accident also was based on a freak action of the train. Immediately over 150th Street and Third Avenue is a spur track, which formerly was used in detouring trains from the elevated structure to the subway structure two blocks away. For several months this track has been used only for the storage of cars, and the switch was supposed to be locked in the tower structure.

The police have been unable to learn whether this switch was locked last night, but they believe that it was. Anyway, the front trucks of the first car of the train started off on this spur track, while the rear trucks and the remainder of the train continued on north on the Third Avenue elevated structure, instead of turning off on the spur in Westchester Avenue.

This action of the first car broke the coupling attaching it to the other cars and it ran off about 150 feet down the Westchester Avenue tracks before it stopped. The front trucks remained on the tracks while the rear truck leaped across to the next track and put the flanges down on the rails there. The airbrakes were not working on this car after the coupling broke, and before the motorman could use the handbrakes the car had stopped. None of the passengers in this car were injured seriously and they were able to walk to safety over the elevated structure.

This wild car, carrying away the air brake apparatus and all other means of control for the entire train, apparently sideswiped the signal house, which is situated in the "V" of the switch, but

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the wrecking job was finished by the second and third cars of the train. They had behind them the weight of four other cars which remained on the rails.

Wreckage Hangs Over Street.

The second car of the train hurled itself head-on into the signal structure and toppled it at a dangerous angle over the street, and then, itself shattered, passed on up the track. The third car also crashed into the signal structure and left it a network of splintered timbers and metal strips hanging like a wind-smashed birdhouse in the air. How the men in the structure escaped is another inexplicable freak of the accident.

Still further doubt as to the actual cause of the accident was caused by the motorman of the train, who said to Policeman Louis Gandert of the Morrisania Avenue Station:

"I don't know whether I am to blame or the switchman. I won't talk. I'll have nothing to say tonight."

A report of the accident was sent to the office of the District Attorney in the Bronx and he will start an investigation to determine the cause of the accident. No authoritative account of the accident could be obtained last night from any of the Interborough officials at the wreck, and the detectives admitted that they had been unable to find any one who could tell them more than theories of the cause. They consider it possible that something went wrong in the signal tower and thought that the towerman might be able to clear up this mystery.

Thousands of persons heard the crash as the wild train ripped out the signal structure and saw the flashes, which lit up the Bronx for several blocks as the electric shoes left the third rail. They hurried to the square to watch the wrecking crews clear up the wreckage, and reserves from five precincts in the Bronx had difficulty handling the throngs while the passengers were com-

ing down from the runaways of the structure.

One of the first men to leave the wrecked car in the lead of the train was Policeman Donohue of the Beach Street station, who hurried back to the station at 149th Street and Third Avenue to send in an alarm for the reserves, the fire apparatus and the ambulances. Then he hurried back to the forward end of the train to help the women and children along the runways to the 149th Street and 156th Street stations.

Firemen Aid Passengers.

The first call brought out Hook and Ladder 117 and Engine Company 41 under the command of Deputy Battalion Chief Samuel Poling and Captain Cornelius Cunningham, and they hurried to put up ladders to the structure so there would be no jam of passengers on the runways as the cars emptied. Lines of hose were strung to guard against the possibility of extension of the slight fire, but this danger was averted.

Hearing the noise of the crash, priests from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, at 150th Street and Melrose Avenue, hurried to the structure to give assistance to the injured. Lincoln Hospital turned out three ambulances and one came from Fordham, and the police were preparing to send for more when they learned that the seriousness of the accident had been exaggerated in the first reports.

Several policemen were slightly injured in getting women and children down the ladders to the ground. Patrolman Donohue suffered burns fighting the fire before the apparatus arrived, but he continued his work of rescue and assisted scores of women and children to safety. He was joined in this work of rescue by Patrolmen Frank M. Phillips and Michael Kelleher of the Morrisania Station.

After all the passengers had been cleared out of the cars, policemen went through the cars hunting for lost articles and for children that might have been abandoned in the excitement. They found twenty-five purses and valises, which were taken to the Morrisania police station.

The train, a seven-car Bronx Park local, had left Brooklyn Bridge at 7:20 o'clock, with many passengers, who were returning from Coney Island and other pleasure resorts. It reached 149th Street at 8:20.

Service was resumed on the Third Avenue line a few minutes before 11 o'clock, and the streets were so cleared of debris by that time that the trolley cars also were able to resume.