

# Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1917

*18/01/1917 The Equity, Shawville Waltham*

The Board of Railway Commissioners have decided on a drastic move; they have used the wide powers with which they are vested and have caused the cancellation of hundreds of passenger trains all over the country. -- This move offers a probable explanation for the cancellation of the "mixed" train on the Pontiac line.

*18/01/1917 Chesterville Record New York Central Berwick*

Owing to the heavy snow storm on Saturday and Sunday the passenger trains on the O&NY were three hours late on Monday.

*08/02/1917 Chesterville Record New York Central Newington*

The O&NY express bound to Ottawa on Saturday Feb 3rd passed this station five hours late.

*08/02/1917 The Equity, Shawville Pontiac and Renfrew Bristol*

The ore at the Bristol Iron Mines is being hauled out to the railway line and shipped, after lying in heaps for over 30 years, and after a railway had been built for the purpose of transportation and then torn up and abandoned. Strange.

*07/03/1917 Athens Reporter Westport*

March came in with a foot of snow. The B&W worried along for a few miles, then stalled and the crews spent the night at Forthton.

*22/06/1917 Eganville Leader Renfrew Eganville*

The G. T. Railway Co. has begun the erection of a new station at Eganville - to replace the one destroyed by fire two years ago. Considerable of the needed material is now in the ground and carpenters have arrived to begin work. The station and freight shed will be a modern and somewhat pretentious character. The measurements are 108 by 33 ft. A separate residence for the agent will be erected at an estimated cost of \$4,000.

*12/07/1917 Chesterville Record Winchester Apple Hill*

The unusual occurrence of a birth on a passenger train happened yesterday morning on the early train to Montreal. At Apple Hill the train was stopped and the medical man of the place hunted up and brought to the train and taken to Montreal, where an ambulance met the mother and babe and took them to hospital.

*30/07/1917 Ottawa Journal Ottawa Electric*

HAD TO WALK WITH THERMOMETER AT 96

With the mercury hovering around the 96 mark, hundred of residents of the Capital were compelled to either walk or lay off for the day when an Ottawa Electric ear was derailed on the curve at the Holland avenue turn at noon today, putting the Britannia and Somerset, street line out of commission.

The derailment occurred at 12.20 an hour at which many of the residents around Holland avenue, in Hintonburg, and along the line had arrived at their homes for lunch and the only service available on either of the two lines until 1.30 was a "Jigger", which could not begin to accommodate the crowds. Consequently, many walked, while others decided, in view of the heat, to call it a day, and took the afternoon off.

While the cause of derailment is not stated, it is thought that the intense heat had the effect of pulling the rails, which have not yet been fastened permanently, out of position. The back wheel of the car slid from the track in such a manner that it was impossible to quickly remedy the trouble. Aside from a slight shaking-up, none of the occupants of the car were injured..

*13/08/1917 Ottawa Journal Ottawa Electric Holland*

TIE-UP ON BRITANNIA LINE t KEEPS CROWD WAITING

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company was the subject of remarks more forceful than polite for over an hour on Sunday afternoon, when traffic on the Britannia line was completely tied up as the result of the derailment of a car on the temporary line at the Holland avenue turn. From 5.22 until 6.25 o'clock, those along the line who wished to return to the city, and those in the city who wished; to visit points along the line, wilted.

As was the case when a car was derailed at the same point about a week ago, the rear truck went off the track.

Engineer Says Whistle Was Sounded

Railway Officials Wonder Why the Occupants of Car Didn't Hear Train

The Grand Trunk railway crossing at Vars, the scene of the tragedy which cost five lives last night, is known to officials of the company as a dangerous one, the line of vision of anyone approaching the tracks from the main road being obstructed by several buildings. There is no protection such as would be afforded by gates or an alarm gong.

At the same time, the G.T.R. officials do not consider that they can be held blamable for the regrettable fatality which included among its victims, Rev. J.E. Maverty. To this Journal, this morning, they stated that the engineer had done all in his power to avert the wrecking of the automobile which was taking Dr. Maverty and his companions from the church anniversary service at Vars to Carlsbad Springs.

Engineer makes a Statement

While the report of Engineer F. Ferguson was not made public, The Journal learned that in part he stated that the lights of the automobile were not seen by him until the engine was practically upon the crossing. Then he threw the emergency brake "into the big hole" - completely on - only to hear the crash of the train into the automobile with a terrible impact.

According to the engineer, the railway right-of-way, which is about a hundred feet in width, was illuminated as bright as day by the big electric headlight which he stated was operating perfectly. Its glare, he considered, could have been seen by any one approaching the crossing even while the train was a long distance off.

Sounded Whistle

Engineer Ferguson reported that he sounded his whistle a mile from Vars, at the sign post, and on approaching all of the crossings between that limit and the scene of the tragedy. He cited the names of several passengers on the train who are prepared to corroborate him in this respect.

The engineer has the reputation with his company of being one of their most efficient and careful engineers. He has been connected with the motive power department of the G.T.R. for about forty years.

Those in the automobile did not have a clear vision of the railway crossing. At the same time, railway officials remarked it strange that the occupants of the car neither heard the fast-approaching train nor saw the light shed on the right-of-way by the powerful electric headlight.

Inquest on Friday

The Railway Commissioners have not yet received the report of the railway on the fatality, and will not act in the manner until the ten days allowed for this side of the case is received. However, arrangements have been made for the inquest which will be held in Vars at 1 p.m. on Friday next. Whether the installation of gates or a bell at the crossing will be ordered remains to be seen.

Some years ago, a number of residents of Vars petitioned for the installation of a bell at the crossing, but this was met by a counter petition by other citizens, who objected and claimed that there was no need of such action, saying that the crossing was not a dangerous one

11/09/1917 Ottawa Journal

Alexandria

Vars

"Time of My Departure at Hand," Said Dr. Maverty

Concluding words of Ottawa Minister Who Half an Hour Later Met Tragic Death at Vars Railway Crossing.

Special to the Journal

Vars Sept 11. "I am now ready to be offered up, the time of my departure is at hand." This was the concluding sentence of the address delivered by the late Rev. Dr. John E. Maverty, at Vars last night. Within a half hour after he had uttered those words, he was lying in cold death at the Vars G.T.R. station.

Choosing for his text: "Where there is a will there is a way," he spoke for three quarters of an hour very enthusiastically and impressively. Dr. Maverty was well known at Vars, and his coming was awaited by many from the district. He emphasized very strongly the evils man encounters in his walk through life. He deplored the use of tobacco and then he referred to the many main things for which man was placed on this earth.

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Non-railway items omitted.

11/09/1917 Ottawa Journal

Alexandria

Vars

Freight Cars Also Obstructed View of Crossing and Engine Crashed Into Motor Car With Terrible Results

Four instantly killed, one dies in Ottawa

Instantly Killed

Rev. Dr. John M. Maverty, Ottawa, 75 years

Mrs. John Orr, 42 years Carlsbad Springs

Miss Florence Orr, 13 years, Carlsbad Springs

Mrs. J.O. Hodgson, 40 years Carlsbad Springs

Died in Ottawa Hospital

Mr. John Orr, 45 years, Carlsbad Springs.

Scene of Fatality

Vars crossing where auto containing five persons was struck by Montreal-Ottawa express about 10.45 last night

The fusion of headlight beams on the Vars crossing last night was largely responsible for the death of Dr. John Maverty, Ottawa West Methodist Church and four of his friends. Beams of light from the automobile were projected on the crossing and these rays were joined by beams from the search light of the express. The result was that the crossing was brilliantly illuminated but the train's approach was not noticed. Freight cars on a siding also obstructed the view of the approaching train from the auto.

The Montreal-Ottawa express is due at Vars at 10.40, and was on time last night. It crashed into the Dodge automobile, instantly killing Dr. Maverty, Mrs. John Orr, Mrs. Hodgson and Miss Florence Orr. Mr. John Orr died after being taken to St. Luke's hospital. Rev. Dr. Rose, of St. Paul's Methodist Church, and Dr. G.O. Barclay, Rochester street, broke the sad news of the fatality to the survivors of the late Dr. Maverty last night.

Going at Moderate Speed

Leaving the Vars Methodist Church, where he had spoken at an anniversary service, Dr. Maverty accompanied Mr. John Orr and his family and Mrs. J.O.

Hodgson in the car ride to Carlsbad Springs, the home of Mr. Orr. According to eyewitnesses, the car was driven along the main thoroughfare at the village at a moderate rate, and the crossing of the G.T.R. railway tracks was attempted at the same speed.

None of the occupants of the automobile were aware of the close proximity of the fast train, and when the car had straddled the tracks the terrible fatality took place. Travelling at a high speed the train tore the auto to pieces and hurled the bodies to one side.

Remains on Pilot

Mrs. Orr's remains became entangled in the engine pilot and remained there until the express had been stopped. Dr. Maverty's injuries were not apparent on a superficial examination, and the great shock may have hastened his death, he being at the advanced age of 75. Mrs. Florence Orr's body was badly mangled and Mrs. Hodgson's head was cut. Mr. Orr was mortally wounded, his injuries being many. His death took place a few minutes after being admitted to St. Luke's hospital.

According to an eye witness it was a physical impossibility to see the train approaching Vars crossing owing to the fact that the view of the tracks was obstructed by the presence of freight cars on the side of the crossing. At this point the track is straight, but once the automobile was in the path of the rapidly moving - -

## The Tragedy at Vars

The frightful accident at Vars last night by which five occupants of an automobile lost their lives directs attention to two things:

(1) The inefficient protection that is afforded the public at many railway crossings in Canada.

(2) The carelessness displayed by many drivers of motor cars and other vehicles in approaching these level crossings.

The increasing popularity of the automobile and the certainty that before long the gasoline car will largely displace the farmer's buggy and democrat makes it necessary that the danger of the level crossing should be systematically dealt with and modified. It is an economic possibility to provide all crossings with overhead bridges or even to have them guarded with gates; although there are numerous crossings - especially in villages such as Vars - where this protection should be forced on the railway companies. But on Canada's highways sufficient warning of a crossing is rarely given to a vehicle driver as he approaches it. The only sign is on the narrow railway right of way, and oftentimes an auto will actually reach the track before the driver knows of its existence.

In the United States it is the practice to erect prominent warnings 50 or 100 yards on each side of a track, and these warnings are of uniform character. It is time the Dominion Railway Commission or Provincial Legislatures insisted upon the same protection in Canada, placing the responsibility for the erection of these signs either on the railway company or the municipality.

Of course no level crossing without gates is fool proof or safe against absolute recklessness and carelessness. The tragedy at Vars should impress upon drivers, particularly of fast moving motor cars, the necessity of adhering to the strict rule of slowing down almost to a stop at all railway level crossings. "Stop, look and listen," the warning posted on United States roads, should be an automatic principle adopted almost literally by drivers in Canada.

The driver of an automobile ought never to allow familiarity to lessen his constant alertness - he owes this to himself, to his passengers, and to other users of the highways.

15/09/1917 *Ottawa Journal**Alexandria**Vars*

## Accidental Death Vars Jury Verdict

Vars Sept 15. The death of Rev. Dr. John K. Mavety and four friends, at the Main street crossing, on Monday night, was accidental, according to the verdict of the coroner's jury returned early this evening. The jury found that the crossing was a dangerous one and recommended that it be protected.

The jury's findings rested upon the evidence of Engineer Fred Ferguson and Fireman Charles Gorr, both of Ottawa. They swore that the engine whistle had been sounded before the crossing was reached and that the bell had been ringing. Four other witnesses said no warning was heard of the approaching train, but would not swear that the usual signals were not given.

In concluding that the death of the five persons on the crossing was due to an accident, the jury appended a rider pointing out that the crossing is dangerous "for the reason that the east view is obstructed by box cars usually or often placed on siding close up to the crossing, and we further recommend that this crossing be protected."

The verdict, which exonerates G.T.R. employees from blame, will be applicable in the inquiry into the death of Mr. and Mrs. Orr, Miss. Florence Orr, and Mrs. J.O. Hodgson, although inquests into their deaths will not be held. The inquest was presided over by Coroner J.P. Boyle, Casselman, and was delayed in commencing. The verdict was returned a few minutes before seven o'clock.

## Going 45 Miles an Hour.

In his evidence Engineer Ferguson stated that there were three crossings at Vars within a distance of one mile. On the night of the fatality his train was two minutes late. He sounded the whistle at each crossing and when nearing the third highway saw a horse gallop across the tracks. The train was travelling 45 miles an hour. Immediately after the horse had cleared the tracks he noticed a flash of light and thinking that an automobile was approaching the crossing applied the brakes. The distance was too short and the crash occurred. Mrs. Orr's body was thrown up on the pilot and the other four were tossed to one side of the track. The car was hurled against a fence. He is familiar with the Ottawa-Montreal route, having had 25 years' experience on the road.

Charles Gorr, 34 Lewis street, Ottawa, fireman, swore that the bell and whistle on the locomotive had been sounded as was the practice. He declared that the sounds might have been drowned when passing the box cars, on the siding, within twelve feet from the crossing.

Conductor A.J. Leamy, 123 Hinton ave., told of taking charge of the bodies after the fatality, and arranging for medical attention for Mr. Orr on the arrival of the train in Ottawa.

Rev. R.E. Backus, Methodist minister here, told the reason for the presence of Dr. Mavety and his party at Vars. They had attended an anniversary service at his church. None of the victims were familiar with the crossing where they met their death.

## He Heard Whistle

Hearing a whistle sounding when he was several hundred feet from the tracks, William Rees, who was driving home from the meeting, paid no attention to the warning and continued across the rails. It developed that Mr. Orr was a short distance behind the witness and not hearing the train attempted to cross. The witness said it was impossible to see the tracks on account of the box cars on the siding. He did not see the beam of light from the engine's headlight. Miss Edna Nelson, who was in the buggy with him, corroborated his evidence.

Walter Hall, who preceded Rees, did not hear the train, or see it until he was on the tracks. The headlight shone full in his face. Station Agent J. Armstrong said he heard the warning blast from the engines (sic). The box cars had been placed on the siding about twelve feet from the path for pedestrians. They prevented a full view of the track from the crossing.

Walking within 60 feet of the car containing Dr. Mavety and his party, Mr. William H. Harrison, Carlsbad Springs, said the auto was not going more than 10 miles an hour. He was unaware of the presence of the express train. He claimed that the open box cars drowned the sound from the approaching train. If the box cars had been out of the way the train could have been seen by the motorists and himself.

Erwin Hilliard, K.C., M.P.P., Morrisburg, represented the estate of the late Dr. Mavety: J. Maxwell, Casselman, the Crown; and J.P. Pratt, Montreal, the G.T.R.

17/09/1917 *Ottawa Journal**Alexandria**Vars*

## Ten Miles an Hour at Vars till Probe is Over

Sir Henry Drayton, chairman of the Board of railway Commissioners has instituted an inquiry into the railway crossing tragedy at Vars last week in which Rev. Dr. Mavety and four others travelling in an automobile, lost their lives.

Until a decision has been arrived at regarding the cause of the accident the trains crossing the highway at Vars will only travel at a speed of ten miles an hour.

26/09/1917 *Athens Reporter**Westport**Delta*

The large crowd of 5,000 persons at Delta Fair had an unexpected on its closing day. An aeroplane from Camp Mohawk became lost in the fog and got off course, then being almost out of gas, had to find a place to land. The pilot circled the fairground twice and then made a safe landing near the station. After obtaining a supply of fuel, he attempted to rise from the rough ground and crashed into the wire fence, breaking off the propeller. The pilot was not injured, but the aircraft had to be loaded on a large truck and taken back to base.

Letters to the Editor

The Vars Crossing

Sir, I notice in your paper of Sept. 18th a statement by Sir Henry Drayton, chairman of the Railway Commission, re Vars tragedy. I do not agree with his views. It is one thing for a man of his high standing to sit in an office chair, and make the statement, which he did about something with which he is not familiar, and it is quite another thing to be on the spot and see several persons on different occasions being nearly hurled into eternity on the same crossing.

Now, Mr. Editor, this is a dangerous crossing and on different occasions people have been nearly caught: and only a few years ago when I was a member of our Township Council, I brought the matter up and had a resolution drawn up and forwarded to the Grand Trunk Railway Company, stating such to be the case, and asking them, to erect a bell or provide some protection for the travelling public, but our request was ignored, as they considered there was not sufficient traffic to warrant protection at this point.

The fact that such a prominent man as Rec. Dr. Mavety being a victim in this tragedy, has brought this matter of railway crossings more before the public, and it is quite time something was being done, as in the case of the Vars tragedy, no blame whatever could be placed on the motor driver, as it was impossible for him to see the headlight, no matter how powerful it might be owing to the obstructions, which the railway company had placed within twelve feet of the public highway.

In conclusion, Mr. Editor, I would say, to those familiar with the situation the blame for the Vars tragedy rests entirely with the Grand Trunk Railway.

Subscriber

Vars, Ont

Sept 24, 1917

Blames Spreading Rails for Wreck on the G.T.R.

Spreading rails, it is said, was the cause of the wreck on the G.T.R. line between here and Renfrew recently, when seven freight cars were derailed a short distance past South March station. The deraiment occurred about three o'clock in the morning. No one was hurt, although several lengths of track were torn up and service on line was tied up for several hours. According to C.W. Asmuseen, of Asmuseen's Chemical Laboratory, who arrived at the scene of the wreck before the track was cleared and took a few snapshots, the spikes holding the rails to the ties were loose on that portion of track. It was owing to this condition, he believes, that the rails spread.