

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SYSTEM

Broad Street Station
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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Pennsylvania Station
PITTSBURGH, PA.

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The Tragedy—and the Cost—of Railroad Trespassing

At the meeting of the National Association of Railway Commissioners in Washington, on October 28, 1913, a report was read showing that of 192,542 persons killed on American railways during the past 23 years, the deaths of 175,610, or 91.2 per cent., were in no wise due to faulty train operation—only 8.8 per cent. of all the deaths and injuries could be said to have been due to causes other than the *fault of the unfortunate persons themselves*.

By far the greater number of such accidents—to be exact—103,566, or 59 per cent.—were due to trespassing upon railroad property. Trespassing is an evil of profound concern to railroad managers.

To emphasize the difficulties of the situation and to show how the problem is being dealt with by the railways, the following paper, prepared for the Pennsylvania Industrial Welfare and Efficiency Conference, at Harrisburg, Pa., October 29, 1913, by Mr. R. H. Newbern, Superintendent of the Insurance Department of the Pennsylvania Railroad System, is of timely interest.

"A railroad manager frequently finds on his desk telegrams reporting two or three persons killed or injured the previous day trespassing, oftentimes women and children, and he would be a strange person indeed if he did not feel that to eliminate such tragedies was a subject that might well occupy the attention of every man with an element of human sympathy in his make-up.

"In bringing to you, therefore, some features concerning the problem of trespassing on railroad property, I wish to emphasize the thought that this is not a problem of the elimination of a nuisance. It is a problem that concerns every one of us as members of Society.

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"During last year there were 10,541 people killed on the railroads of this country. Of

this number, 5504, or over 50 per cent., were trespassers, an average of 15 killed every day.

"If the newspapers reported a wreck every day with 15 fatalities, the Commissions and lawmakers would soon enact and enforce laws to control this appalling waste of human energy.

"It has been estimated that the average productive value of a human life should be capitalized at about \$15,000. If in the matter of trespassers one makes allowance for those who are tramps, those who are old, and we reduce the value of each trespasser killed to a capitalized value of \$10,000, it means that we are each year destroying \$55,000,000 of economic wealth, to say nothing of homes which are wrecked or of the indirect burdens which are thrust upon Society. And this estimate makes no allow-

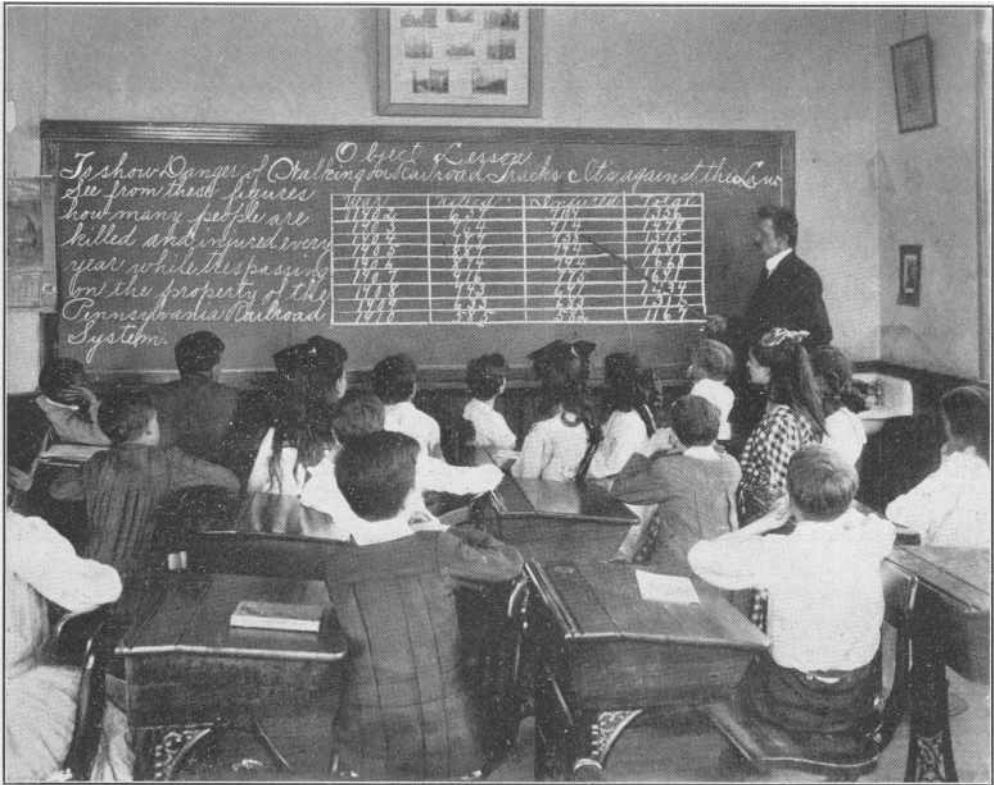
ance of the economic loss due to the very large number of injuries which are regularly if unwittingly inflicted upon those trespassing upon railroad property.

"There has been a great deal of legislation to safeguard the lives of industrial workers in hazardous occupations, but the subject of trespassing seems to have received almost no consideration from either the public or the public officials. Bills have been drafted

laborers, professional and business men, of which 15 per cent. are women and children, and not over 25 per cent. can be classed as "hoboes;" and most of the accidents occur at points adjacent to the communities in which the victims reside.

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"Lawmakers and Commissions are imposing on the railroads regulations to promote



TEACHING CHILDREN NOT TO TRESPASS

One of the many methods adopted by the Pennsylvania Railroad to discourage trespassing is to have school teachers talk to their pupils on the dangers of the practice.

and submitted to legislatures, but they have received little consideration.

"Perhaps this indifference is due to the general misconception that all trespassers are of the tramp class or some other type of social delinquent. Investigation, however, shows that upward of 75 per cent. of the trespassers are useful members of society, artisans,

the safety of the public and its employes, but should not there be some regulation of the public in the indiscriminate use of railroad premises? Laws are enacted to protect farms from trespass, and there are laws against trespassing on State lands, and wardens are authorized to arrest violators without warrants. If protection for crops, timber, fish and game

The renewed and diligent efforts the Pennsylvania Railroad is making to stop trespassing will be measurably influential, the management believes, in arousing the public to a realization that in accidents to trespassers it is the individual who loses his life, than which there can be no greater sacrifice. Society loses the individual.

is important, how much more so is the saving of human lives.

“Public opinion when aroused is quick to respond in demanding reform where broad questions of humanity are involved; therefore, it would seem necessary to arouse public sentiment by a country-wide campaign of education which should reach the children as well as adults, and also that class which is only influenced by fear of the law. There must be a public demand for trespass law, as experience has shown that the laws are unavailing unless their enforcement is supported by public sentiment.

“The railroads throughout the country are making diligent efforts to reduce the hazards to their passengers, employes, and to the public, but they are necessarily dependent upon constituted authority finally to eliminate trespassing, which is the greatest source of death and injury in this country.

“Following the year 1907, when 572 trespassers were killed on the Pennsylvania Railroad, the management inaugurated a campaign of education and co-operation with the City and County authorities, and wide publicity was given to the efforts made to put an end to the evil which was causing the loss of so many lives. The management also posted the right-of-way with warning signs against trespassing, the Division Officers co-operating with their local newspapers in giving publicity to the results of trespassing, and the General Manager has unceasingly called the attention of the Staff Officers to the necessity of keep-

ing before the public the fact that thousands were maimed for life or lost their lives while trespassing on the railroad.

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“These efforts have been rewarded with a great deal of success, as shown by the following statement of trespassers killed on the Lines East of Pittsburgh and Erie for the years 1907 to 1912 inclusive:

1907	572
1908	475
1909	410
1910	336
1911	338
1912	255

—or a decrease of 317, over 50 per cent., in six (6) years.

“Last year the Police Department made 4275 arrests for trespassing and 2775 for illegal train riding, and over 5000 persons were warned against trespassing. The number of police engaged in this work is over 700, with an annual expenditure of \$113,000, chargeable to the efforts of the Police Department to reduce trespassing.

“There are also expenses and claims in connection with injuries to trespassers which average \$35,000 a year. The 50 per cent. decrease shows what can be accomplished, but much better results can be obtained if public opinion is further aroused and proper laws are passed and enforced.

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“In the State of Pennsylvania the Act of 1905 provides a maximum penalty of a fine

The loss to the nation in the money value of human lives sacrificed in trespassing is most serious. It is a constant and continuing drain—one which the railroad, unsupported by active public sentiment is powerless to stop.

of \$10 for trespassing, the alternative being a day in jail for each dollar of fine, but when a trespasser or illegal train rider is arrested, it is usually the custom to impose a fine consistent with the amount of money found on the prisoner, *i. e.*, if he has a dollar he is fined a dollar, but if he is without money many Aldermen will lose interest and discharge the case.

"If the possibility of getting killed does not make the person cautious, the likelihood of a small fine is not apt to deter him. Railroads are doing all in their power to instruct trainmen, shopmen and trackmen how to avoid accidents, and it would seem well worth while also to keep constantly hammering at the public concerning the dangers from trespassing.

"It is found that accident frequency due to trespassing is more or less related to certain conditions involving traffic density, number of tracks operated, and where the right-of-way is a direct line of travel between two centers of population. Local conditions also have an important bearing, particularly where country roads are bad, the railroad affording a more direct and better pathway for foot travelers. The proximity of schools must also be considered as well as industrial and mining districts where trespassing is so common.

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"The statistics of the Interstate Commerce Commission for the present year indicate no

decrease in the number of trespassing accidents, and the Pennsylvania Railroad is preparing to conduct a more aggressive campaign. The tracks will be re-posted with warning notices, enactment of stringent laws will be requested, and every officer and employe will be asked to lend his assistance to decrease still further the number of deaths and injuries to trespassers.

"It is also proposed to get out a daily bulletin summarizing the reports of trespass received from various points and send these reports to the members of the Legislature, Governors, Mayors and Railroad Commissioners and others having to do with this subject. Everything possible will be done in the direction of publicity. Previous efforts in this direction have been rewarded, with a great deal of success, and it will be a continuation of the same kind of effort with which we hope to obtain greater results in the future.

"A notable feature in connection with trespassing is that this is the only class of railroad accidents where the number of deaths exceeds the number of injuries; the injuries are usually in the nature of the loss of limb or limbs, which is almost as distressing as death.

"Through this active campaign of publicity with the co-operation of the Press, it is hoped that members of the various Legislatures, guided by public opinion, will find an effective remedy that will reduce and eventually prevent the use of railroad tracks as highways."

"It is horrible to me to think of the number of trespassers that are killed or injured on the lines of the railroads, simply because they pay no attention to the laws on the subject. On the Pennsylvania System alone in the last ten years there were 8523 trespassers killed, and 8285 injured.

—Statement by the late President James McCrea, of the Pennsylvania Railroad.