

[Gifford, Thomas]

ANOTHER SHOCKING RAILROAD DISASTER!

A Train Thrown from the Central Road—A Number Reported Killed and Wounded!
Conductor Thomas S. Gifford Among the Killed!

This community were shocked again this forenoon by the announcement of a terrible accident on the Rochester & Syracuse Division of the New York Central Railroad, at a place one and a half miles west of Jordan station, by which a number of lives were lost. The unfortunate train was the Buffalo and New York Express, which left this city at 7:55 this morning for Albany, and which stops only at Lyons and Jordan on its way to Syracuse, and was due at the latter station—17 miles from Syracuse—at 9:50. The train consisted of four passenger coaches tolerably well filled, and containing at least one hundred and fifty passengers. The locomotive was the “Wm. R. Gifford,” Hezekiah G. Glen, engineer, and the train was conducted by Thomas S. Gifford, who, we are sorry to say, is no longer among the living.

...The train passed Lyons on time and was approaching Jordan when the engine came in contact with a cow upon the track, throwing the cars into a heap of ruins. Conductor Gifford was instantly killed, and it was something like half an hour before his body was found... No ladies in the train were killed. The engineer, Mr. Glen, is reported safe and unhurt.

Mr. Gifford was a man esteemed and beloved by all who knew him, whether among his Railroad associates or in the public at large. He had been some fifteen years on the Central Road, and was among the most popular conductors in the employ of the Company. He was a brother of Wm. R. Gifford, of this city, in charge of this station, and of James E. and Jesse Gifford, Conductors on the Central, and Frank Gifford, Conductor on the Lake Shore Road. He leaves a wife and two children, residing at Syracuse... Mr. G. resided in this city for a number of years, but when he assumed the post of a Through Conductor from Buffalo to Syracuse, he removed his family to the latter city. The intelligence of this disaster threw a gloom over the Railroad men here—such as we never observed before. Mr. Gifford was a favorite with all. He left the station about eight this morning in good spirits, and he or his companions little thought that he was so soon to be in eternity.

Union and Advertiser, Rochester NY, Wed. 18 May 1859

[abridged]

Transcribed on 25 Oct 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY

[Gifford, Thomas]

Sermon on the Death of Conductor Gifford

On our first page will be found a sermon delivered in the Universalist Church in Rochester, N.Y., on Sunday the 22d ult., by Br. [Rev. George W.] Montgomery, on the death of Mr. Thomas Gifford, the Conductor on the Central Railroad, who was killed by the running of the cars from the track, near Jordan, N.Y., on the 18th ult. The funeral was attended by a large body of Free Masons from every part of the State, by a great number of Railroad employees, and an immense body of citizens. It was probably the largest funeral that ever took place in Rochester. We need not ask a perusal of this admirable discourse, which we copy from the *Rochester Union & Advertiser*, the editor of which journal calls attention to it in the following paragraph:—

The discourse delivered by the Rev. Mr. Montgomery at the funeral of the late Conductor Gifford will be found in this paper. It will be read with profit by all who will spare half an hour for the purpose. It is an excellent discourse, and merits all that has been said of it by those who were fortunate enough to hear it delivered. The thousands who gathered without the church on Sunday, will thank us for the opportunity of its perusal now afforded.

We had long been acquainted with Mr. Gifford, he having originated in the town (Danvers, Mass.) where we were located for about ten years. He was a high minded, estimable and faithful man, and richly deserved the encomiums which have been bestowed upon him since his sudden death.

“Sentinel,” the correspondent of the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, writes that journal as follows on the death of Conductor Gifford:—

...Had he been a soldier, and died at the head of his company, had he been a mariner and gone down with his wreck, the men who catch the sunbeam of popular judgment on their pen before they use it, would have composed the chapter of his eulogy. And yet, what did he do each day but expose to all, the dangers he knew so well in all their power, his life in the quiet, earnest, methodised [sic] duty of watching over and conducting over the iron way of the tens of thousands of human beings who found their way to all the peaceable pursuits of life.

Gifford was a name so well known on the great highway of travel that it had almost ceased to represent a mortal, it was a part of the road. In all the vicissitudes of these journeys,...men forgot to ask for him, they expected the name of Gifford as associated with their journey....The conductor of a railway train has responsibilities which are to be met with the judgment that is born of the instant. The danger gives faint warning...These are brave men...and for this man dying under the wheels of his car, the funeral word deserves to be as well that of gratitude as eulogy.

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 11 Jun 1859
[abridged]

Transcribed on 27 Dec 2010 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY