



This view of Market Street looking east from what is now 25th Street (it was Willow Avenue then), probably dates from about 1920. The photograph appears to have been taken to record flooding of Market Street where Willow Run passes under the street in a culvert. It also shows the bend in Market Street and the street car track which was contributory to a head-on collision of two cars of the Harrisburg & Mechanicsburg Electric Railway Co. on July 26, 1903, Camp Hill's worst trolley accident in over 36 years operation. (There was a fatal accident at Eichelberger's Curve some years later, but that isn't Camp Hill!)

Car No. 22, in charge of Motorman Frank Keffer and Conductor J. O. Senseman, left Mechanicsburg on time at 10 a.m. No. 23 with Motorman G. H. Buser and Conductor W. J. Ott was scheduled to leave Harrisburg at the same time, but was considerably delayed, reaching No. 1 siding at the east end of Camp Hill, at the same time that the eastbound car reached No. 2 siding, on Oyster Point Road (now 32nd Street), apparently the normal passing point.

Manual signals were in use at that time, the rule being that when a car reached a siding and no signal was displayed against him, the motorman actuated a switch which caused a red signal to be displayed at the siding ahead of him, then proceeded to that siding. What apparently happened was that both motormen turned the respective switches at the same time. The circuit, like in three-way house wiring, was such that the two operations cancelled each other and no red signal was displayed against either car. The motormen of the two cars preceded, each thinking he had a clear track.

The curve at what is now 25th Street obstructed visibility. The cars came into view of each other when both were descending grades toward the low spot at Willow Run. Keffer braked the eastbound car and got it almost stopped. On Buser's car, however, the air compressor motor was burned out, and hand brakes were insufficient to stop the car in time. The crash of the crowded cars threw passengers from their seats, cut several passengers by flying glass, and caused several women to faint. Buser jumped, receiving cuts and bruises, while Keffer stayed at the controls of his car and was also severely cut and bruised by flying splinters and glass. The front ends of both of the wooden cars were demolished and many windows broken. The cars were new at the time, having been in service only six months.

By Chick Siebert

People, Places & Things: Reminiscence

How a Song Cost Me My Recess!