

## **Fort Wayne Sentinel (Fort Wayne, Indiana) June 9, 1915**

### **ELECTROCUTED IN THROWING SWITCH**

#### **Conductor Rice, of Decatur Line, Receives Shock Causing Death**

In attempting to throw a switch at Rudisill avenue and Calhoun streets, Wednesday morning at 12:35 o'clock which changes the power from the Fort Wayne and Northern Traction company to the Fort Wayne and Springfield Traction company., Benjamin Rice, 27 years old, a conductor for the latter company, received a shock of electricity that caused his death at the Lutheran hospital a half hour later. He never regained consciousness.

Rice was the conductor on the special car run from Decatur to Fort Wayne for the member of camp No. 4167 Modern Woodmen of America, who had gone to Decatur earlier in the evening to assist in the initiation of a class of candidates. The car was making the return trip and when Rudisill avenue was reached Rice alighted from the car to change the current to the city. The switch was on a pole five feet from the ground and is operated by hand. When he touched it the electricity passed through his body and he fell at the side of the car with a groan. Rice's outcry attracted Motorman E.W. Lewton, who rushed to his side and started working on him. A physician was immediately called by the passengers, who also assisted the motorman. Rice was unconscious and lay apparently dead. The conductor was rushed to the Lutheran hospital in a police patrol, where he was attended by Dr. E. C. Singer. All efforts to revive him proved futile and he died about ten minutes after being carried into the hospital. A slight burn on the right hand was the only mark found by Coroner Kruse.

The amount of voltage that passed through Rice's body is not known. There are six thousand and six hundred volts of electricity on the Decatur line, which is much more than is required for the average interurban road. By carrying such a high voltage, however, the company is not required to put in substations, so many transformers and other electrical appliances that are necessary in operating with a lower voltage. Five hundred and fifty volts are carried by the city line.

It is only when a car is going sufficiently fast to carry it by one hundred feet of dead wire between the city line and the Decatur line that it is necessary for the conductor to operate the switch. This may have been the case early Wednesday morning. Nothing wrong could be found with the switch when it was examined Wednesday and it may have been that in the darkness Rice grabbed hold of the live part of the switch instead of the insulated handle.

At 11 o'clock Rice was handed a life insurance policy for \$2,000 in the Modern Woodman lodge and an hour and thirty five minutes later he was dead. The policy was found in his inside coat pocket. He was a member of the Modern Woodman lodge of Decatur.

Rice's body was taken to Chalfant & Egley's undertaking parlors on Washington boulevard, west and Wednesday morning was taken to the home in Decatur. He is survived by a widow and four small children, four brothers and three sisters and parents all residing at Decatur. Rice had been in the employ of the Fort Wayne and Springfield Traction company as a conductor for about eighteen months.

Rice is the third person to have been electrocuted in Fort Wayne in the last few weeks.

**Decatur Daily Democrat, Wednesday, June 9, 1915, recounts the same accident. There is a paragraph about his family.**

Benjamin E. Rice was born April 11, 1888, in Adams county, and was the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Rice. His entire life had been spent in this county and his education secured in the county schools. When about twenty years old he was united in marriage to Miss Bertha Bischoff, and to this union were born four children, Wilma, Bertha, Victor D. and Beatrice. The wife and children, together with the father and mother, four brothers, Clyde, Otto, Wilda and Robert, and three sisters, Mrs. M. J. Fuhrman, Edith and Florence, survive to mourn their loss.

He was a very efficient conductor, courteous and kind and well liked. Mrs. Rice was not at home at the time of the accident which befell her husband, having gone to the home of a sister northeast of the city to keep house for her while the sister was away on a visit.