

Dateline: March 22, 1913  
Source: New York Tribune

## BIG TRAIN MURDER, OR WHO HID THE CORPSE?

Many Jersey Police Chiefs Get Alleged Slayer, but No Trace of Victim  
Negro Hobo Really Shot Wounded by Honest and Truly Bullet Fired by  
Fearless Station Agent, a la Santa Fe. Hackensack, N. J.,

March 21. - The moving picture scenario writers and the photograph operators missed a rare chance this morning. A negro youth stopped one of the Erie's Chicago limited trains near Ridgewood by pulling the rope that applied the air brake. After alighting from the train he was chased and shot by the depot agent, L. F. Springer, who misunderstood the engineer's cries as he passed the depot. Springer believed the engineer said that the youth had murdered the fireman.

The hero – but who wants it understood that the affair is no joking matter – is Harry Quackenbush, eighteen years old, a negro, living at No. 183 Twelfth avenue, Paterson. Harry is really no good, according to the Paterson police, and they were not surprised when word first reached them that he had attempted to wreck an Erie express train and had shot the fireman through the body.

The negro youth, though always shy of money, delights in travelling first class, and he decided the best and quickest way for him to reach home from Middletown was to catch the Erie Chicago express, which he boarded at Middletown at about 6:30 o'clock this morning. Of course, Quackenbush got on the front of the train and lay down on the platform just behind the tender.

Paterson was the next stop, and Harry, fearful that the Paterson police might see him on the limited and thus have their suspicion aroused, decided to leave the train at Glen Rock, a quiet Bergen County spot just south of Ridgewood.

"Stop the train; I want to get off!" yelled the negro lad to the fireman.

"The next stop is Paterson," yelled back the fireman.

“I guess the limited will stop at Glen Rock and surprise the commuters,” hissed Quackenbush, and he reached up and pulled the rope that instantly applied the air brakes.

Robert Skinner, the engineer, got a fright when he felt the sudden application of the air and wondered what had happened.

“A hobo just jumped off,” said the fireman, and the train started up again. As the locomotive passed the depot Skinner yelled to Springer that a hobo had stopped the train. The agent thought the engineer said a robber had shot the fireman, and when the negro was seen coming down the track after the train had passed the brave agent, revolver in hand, went out to make a capture.

Quackenbush was surprised when he beheld the agent and the revolver, and when told to throw up his hands he ran behind the depot. Springer then believed more than ever that he was a murderer, and he made up his mind to shoot him if necessary, just as an occasional brave agent on the Santa Fe is supposed to kill a train robber.

“Bang!” went Springer’s revolver, and down fell the innocent negro.

Chief of Police Pulis, of Ridgewood, and Chief Bimson, of Paterson, were soon apprised of the awful affair, and Dr. H. A. Bonyng, of Ridgewood, was sent to the Erie depot at Ridgewood to attend the wounded fireman, who, however, did not arrive, as the engineer had decided to take his train to Jersey City.

Quackenbush was taken to the Paterson General Hospital, and it was said he should be released to-morrow. The Erie detectives, who had been told of the fireman’s wounds, said they would be at the hospital and take the negro to the Hackensack jail, the shooting having occurred in Bergen County.

All afternoon the Paterson and Ridgewood police tried to locate the wounded fireman, but to-night the Erie officials announced that the fireman had not been shot, that no shots were fired and that the negro ride-stealer had not carried or displayed a revolver. No weapon was found on Quackenbush when he was shot.

Prosecutor Wright, of Hackensack, was notified of the bold “hold-up”, and Detectives Blauvelt and Courter were sent to Paterson to see Quackenbush

and investigate the story. Unless the Erie prefers charges against Quackenbush for stealing a ride and applying the airbrake, the wounded youth will be taken to his home.

Springer is thinking of sending an apology and Easter greetings to Quackenbush, and the latter told the nurse in the hospital that Good Friday was certainly a bad one for him.