

# THE ASHTABULA DISASTER.

A REPORT THAT ENGINEER COLLINS WAS  
MURDERED.

*From the Cincinnati Commercial.*

CLEVELAND, Ohio, Nov. 16.

The Ashtabula disaster and the subsequent death of Charles Collins, Chief Engineer of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway, are still well remembered. The death of Mr. Collins was almost as great a shock to this community as was the accident itself. Relative to his demise a terrible story has just got in circulation here. It is that Mr. Collins never committed suicide, as was supposed at the time, but that he was murdered and his lifeless body placed in the bed where it was found. It was thought that on account of his being Engineer of the road, and therefore responsible for the condition of the bridge, he had become insane by brooding over the terrible catastrophe and taken his own life. But it is said the gentleman who found the body has never believed it a case of suicide, and that J. N. Brewer, Assistant Engineer of the road, is especially firm in that opinion.

Hon. George L. Converse, Chairman of the joint committee of the General Assembly to investigate the accident, is also reported as being of the belief that it was murder. Mrs. Collins, who was in Ashtabula at the time, also believes there was foul play.

There is no denying the fact that several of the intimate friends of Mr. Collins have made up their minds that he was murdered, and this, too, at the instigation of persons who feared what he might give before the Legislative Committee, which was in Cleveland taking testimony at the time. It is claimed that for a case of suicide the body lay too naturally, and that the covering of the bed was in the best of order, and that on the forehead there was an indentation, going to show the deceased was knocked senseless, and then murdered by shooting through the head. It is further asserted that the blow on the head was inflicted by a roller, on which a towel was hung. The frame to which this roller was attached was found broken, and the roller itself was not discovered for a month.

The theory is that a party of roughs were hired to make away with the engineer, and entering his residence at the dead of night, accomplished the terrible deed without disturbing any one, Mr. Collins being alone at that time.

Detectives are now working on the case, and possibly may be able to throw some light on the question, Was Charles Collins murdered?

**The New York Times**

Published: November 24, 1878

Copyright © The New York Times