

**In re investigation of an accident which
occurred on the Atlantic Coast Line
Railroad at Robins Neck, S. C.,
on May 19, 1917.**

July 6, 1917.

On May 19, 1917, there was a head-end collision between passenger and freight trains on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad at Robins Neck, S. C., which resulted in the death of the engineer of the passenger train and the injury of 7 passengers and 3 employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

This accident occurred on the Bennettsville Branch, a single-track line extending from Sumter to Parkton, S. C., a distance of 108.7 miles. With the exception of points protected by interlocking plants, no block signals are in use, the movement of trains being handled by time-table and train orders. The passenger landing at Robins Neck is located about opposite the center of a 1,400-foot curve of 2 degrees, this curve extending to the right for northbound trains. Approaching this curve the track is tangent in both directions for several miles.

Southbound passenger train No. 69 consisted of 1 mail car and 2 coaches, hauled by locomotive 66, and was in charge of Conductor Harker and Engineer Gayle. It left Bennettsville, the last open telegraph office, at 2:28 p. m., on time, and when within about 300 feet of the passenger landing at Robins Neck collided with northbound freight train No. 214.

Northbound freight train No. 214 consisted of 4 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 341, and was in charge of Conductor Carnes and Engineer Dugg. It passed Lumber, the last open telegraph office, 3 miles south of Robins Neck, at 2:46 p. m., 1 hour and 26 minutes late, and at about 2:52 p. m. collided with train No. 69 at Robins Neck.

Considerable damage was sustained by the locomotive hauling the passenger train, while only slight damage was sustained by the equipment in that train. The locomotive of the freight train was only slightly damaged, while no damage was sustained by the cars in that train.

Fireman Williams, of train No. 69, stated that Engineman Gayle shut off steam preparatory to stopping at Robins Hook, which was a flag stop for that train. As the train rounded the curve approaching the station he saw the freight train about 30 car lengths away and thought it was pulling into the side track. When he saw it was on the main line he notified the engineman, who was on the outside of the curve. The latter made an emergency application of the brakes, reversed the locomotive and started to get off, but was caught between the engine and tender when the collision occurred.

Conductor Barker, of train No. 69, stated that the station whistle had been sounded and the speed reduced to about 12 or 15 miles an hour when the collision occurred, the emergency application of the brakes having been made just previously. After the accident he talked with Engineman Bugg of the freight train, and the engineman took out his watch and said that it was one hour slow. Conductor Barker then compared the two watches and found that Engineman Bugg's watch was exactly 1 hour slow. The statements of several other persons indicated that shortly after the accident Engineman Bugg showed them his watch and called attention to the fact that it was 1 hour slow.

Conductor Carnes, of train No. 214, stated that he had figured on taking the siding at Robins Hook for train No. 69, and he had the brakeman start ahead over the train in order to open the south switch when the siding was reached. After the station whistle was sounded he gave a stop signal out of the caboose window, and he said that he saw the brakeman, who was riding on the side ladder of the second car from the locomotive, giving stop signals to the engineman. When he saw that the train was not going to stop, Conductor Carnes ran to the emergency valve in the caboose and applied the brakes, at which time the speed was about 25 miles an hour. The brakeman jumped from the side of the car when about opposite the station platform, at which time the speed had been reduced to about 10 miles an hour, and at this time he saw Engineman Bugg looking back. After the accident he asked the engineman where he was going to go for train No. 69, and he told him that he had intended going to Bennettsville. He then asked the engineman why he did not feel the brakes being applied, and he said that he did, but thought an air hose had broken, and he said that if he had not been looking back to see what had caused the brakes to apply he would have seen train No. 69 earlier than he did. Engineman Bugg also showed him his watch about an hour after the accident, and at that time the engineman's watch was exactly 1 hour slow.

Brakeman Sherman stated that after leaving Lumber he went over the top of the train toward the head end, in order

to open the switch and head in on the siding at Robins Neck. When the engineman sounded the station whistle for Robins Neck, brakeman Sherman placed himself on the second car from the locomotive, at the top of the right-hand side ladder, and began to signal the engineman to stop. The engineman sounded two blasts on the whistle and kept on going. Brakeman Sherman said that he then got back on top of the train and started to go forward, but the brakes were applied in emergency and he was knocked down. He said that he continued to give stop signals, but the engineman was looking ahead and did not see them.

Flagman Wilson stated that he heard the conductor tell brakeman Sherman to go forward and head the train in on the siding at Robins Neck. When the station whistle was sounded he saw the conductor give stop signals from the caboose window; the engineman then sounded the road-crossing signal, while the speed had not been decreased, and he remarked that the engineman was not going to stop and the conductor applied the air brakes in emergency.

Fireman Johnson, of train No. 214, stated that when opposite the signal board, approaching Robins Neck, Engineman Dugg sounded the station signal, then looked back toward the rear of the train and sounded two blasts on the whistle, and he thought the engineman was going to take the siding at Robins Neck for train No. 69. He started to ask the engineman where he was going to go for that train, as the engineman had said nothing to him about having orders against it, and at about that time the emergency air brakes were applied from the rear of the train, at which time the speed was about 20 miles an hour. He then heard some one call out, and looked forward toward the station, and then the engineman three times told him to look out. On again looking out of the cab window he saw train No. 69 approaching, and jumped. He was unable to say whether or not the engineman shut off steam when the emergency application of the brakes was made, but said that the speed had been reduced to some extent. After the accident, Engineman Dugg told him that his watch was 35 minutes behind the conductor's watch.

Engineman Dugg stated that his train passed Lumber at 1:45 or 1:48 p. m., according to his watch, and he figured that his train was about on time and that it would be able to reach Bennettsville for train No. 69. Approaching Robins Neck he sounded the station signal, and looked back for a proceed signal from the rear of the train but failed to see any. By this time his locomotive had reached the south switch and he felt the air brakes apply from the rear, and thought an air hose had burst or that the train had broken in two. He again looked back, but could not see anything but the brakeman on top of the train. On again looking ahead he saw train No.

69 and immediately applied the emergency air brakes, reversing the locomotive before jumping. He thought the speed of his train had been 25 or 30 miles an hour and that it had been brought nearly to a stop when the collision occurred. Engineman Bugg insisted that he had not overlooked train No. 69, claiming that he had misread his watch by one hour. He did not remember telling any one after the accident that his watch was one hour slow. After his examination was completed, Engineman Bugg was allowed to remain in the hearing room and listen to the statements of Conductors Barker and Carnes concerning the fact that his watch was 1 hour slow when he showed it to them immediately after the accident. He was then given an opportunity to clear up the discrepancy, which he did by signing a statement to the effect that he did not overlook train No. 69, but misread the time indicated by his watch; that he realized this after the accident occurred, and not knowing what the penal laws were he was frightened and set his watch back one hour, as under these circumstances no one else would have been blamed and his responsibility would possibly have been decreased; that he did not think the accident would be investigated to such an extent and that the only reason he had for setting his watch back one hour was as a matter of self-protection.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Bugg of train No. 214 to read his watch correctly, resulting in his train occupying the main track on the time of train No. 69, a superior train. According to his signed statement he did not overlook train No. 69, neither was his watch one hour slow, as he had previously stated, but he misread his watch and then said that it was slow in order to avoid any possible punishment which might have been meted out to him under the law.

Engineman Bugg was employed in February, 1912, and had a good record, with the exception of a suspension of 30 days for fast running. At the time of the accident he had been on duty about 5 hours, after a period off duty of about 16 hours.