

November 6, 1914

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE
DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN
RAILROAD ABOUT TWO MILES
SOUTH OF MILTON, N. Y.,
ON OCTOBER 17th,
1914.

On October 17, 1914, there was a derailment on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad at a point about two miles south of Milton, N. Y., which resulted in the death of the engineer and fireman, and the injury of nine passengers, five employees, one express messenger and one mail clerk. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Southbound passenger train No. 903 consisted of one mail car, one baggage car, three coaches and one parlor car, hauled by locomotive No. 1420, and was in charge of Conductor Doyle and Engineer Wilson. It left Buffalo, N. Y., about ten miles north of the point of derailment, at 8:11 a.m., and at about 8:45 a.m. was derailed at a side leading to a spur track, known as "Loc use Spine," while running at a speed estimated to have been between fifty and sixty miles per hour.

Locomotive No. 1420 entered the spur track and collided with and destroyed two partially loaded express cars standing on the spur. It finally came to rest at a point about fifty feet beyond the end of the spur track, at right angles to it, burying itself nearly out of sight in the muck land. The baggage car landed in an upright position against the side of the locomotive and was also at right angles to the track. Both this car and the mail car were practically destroyed. The first and third coaches were slightly damaged and the second coach and the parlor car escaped injury.

This part of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad is a single track line. Train movements are governed by train orders and time-card right, no block signal system being in use. The track is laid with 25-pound rails 33 feet in length, about 17 or 18 ties being used under each rail. Cinder ballast is used. The track is straight and the view unobstructed for

more than a mile in each direction. The grade is slightly descending for northbound trains. The weather was clear.

The switch at which the derailment occurred was known as a "Heapley Quarter-Thrown" switch, and is a facing point switch for northbound trains, equipped with a No. 10 frog. Examination of this switch revealed the fact that although the switch had been thrown for the siding, the signal indication of the switch lamp, which was found to be burning immediately after the accident, was green, indicating that the switch was closed. The switch lock was missing, while the safety bar attachment was in the released position, the lock having been broken and left hanging by its chain to the upright bar. This safety bar attachment is an additional factor of safety for the purpose of holding the switch points together when set for the main track, and the switch cannot be opened until the device is unlocked and released. The examination showed further that in order that the switch lamp might indicate green, instead of red, after the switch had been opened, the lamp socket was removed from the lamp. To do this it had been necessary to use the thumb screws and finally to remove the socket by means of a screw driver. The screw driver which was used for this purpose was afterwards found between the ties near the switch stand.

The last train to pass this switch was a southbound freight train, at about 4:00 p.m., nearly three hours prior to the occurrence of the accident. At that time the switch appeared to be in normal position. The length of the spur track was approximately 450 feet.

On account of the death or injury of all the employees of the train, little information could be obtained from them. Brakeman Gilmore, however, testified that he thought the speed of the train was between 25 and 30 miles per hour.

Investigation by the police department resulted in the arrest of a boy about twenty years of age who, together with another, had recently escaped from a state institution for the feeble-minded, located at Syracuse, N. Y. From the statement of this boy, it appeared that they had been stealing a ride on a freight train and had been put off the same by a brakeman. In order to secure revenge they had opened the switch for the purpose of wrecking the next train which might approach.

This accident occurred at a facing switch, this switch having been opened with malicious intent.