

COMMISSIONER *May*

588

CIRCULATED *2/16/19*

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
LOUISIANA WESTERN RAILROAD NEAR EDGERLY, LA.,
ON FEBRUARY 16, 1919.

March 5, 1919.

On February 16, 1919, there was a derailment on the Louisiana Western Railroad near Edgerly, La., which resulted in the death of 2 employees and injury of 1 employee. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The division on which this accident occurred is a single-track line extending from Lafayette, La., to Echo, La., a distance of 106 miles. Trains are operated by time table and train orders, and movements are protected by automatic block signals. The derailment occurred on tangent track at a point about 2 miles east of Edgerly. The track was laid with 90-pound rails, 33 feet in length, with 18 untreated cypress ties to the rail. It is tie-plated, double-spiked at joints, well ballasted with coarse gravel, and maintained in good alignment, surface and gauge. In the vicinity of the point of accident the track is level. The weather was clear.

Eastbound freight train extra 501 consisted of 80 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 501, and was in charge of Conductor Garnett and Engineman Hillerbrandt. It left Echo at 10.15 a.m., stopped at Edgerly for water, and left there at 12.01 p.m. It was derailed at about 12.10 p.m. while running at a speed estimated to have been about

15 miles an hour. The engine and tender turned over and came to rest on their left sides at the bottom of a 10-foot embankment, 170 feet east of the point of derailment on the left side of the track. Six cars were derailed, the first five rolling down the embankment on the right side of the track. The sixth car remained upright on the roadbed, while of the seventh car only the forward trucks were derailed.

Examination of engine 501 showed that the throttle was open, the reverse lever in the fourth notch forward from the center, and brake valve in the running position. The engineman was found under the second car on the right side of the track, and it is apparent that he either jumped or was thrown from the engine at the time of derailment without having any opportunity of shutting off steam or applying the brakes. Careful examination failed to show anything in connection with the engine and tender which could have contributed to the derailment. There were many broken parts, but all were a result of and not the cause of the accident.

Examination of the track showed the derailment to have occurred at a point where a rail had been torn from the south or right hand side of the track, this rail being found at the foot of the embankment, 10 feet east of its original location in the track, without angle bars or bolts in either end. The western end of this rail, as well as the eastern end of the rail immediately adjacent to it on the west, was quite badly battered, apparently due to a train or trains having passed over it while it was in the track with the

angle bars removed, thus resulting in the ends of the rails working up and down and receiving blows from the wheels passing over them. The angle bar which had been on the eastern end of the rail which was torn from the track was not found, but the angle bar which belonged to the western end, on the outside, was found directly opposite the point of derailment with the four spikes still in the slots. The inside angle bar and two of the bolts were missing. The bolts were afterwards found in the weeds and water at the foot of the embankment. There were no nuts on the bolts, while the threads were bright, indicating that the nuts had been recently removed. The angle bar was found at a point 28 feet from the track and 33 feet west of the point of derailment, indicating that it was not thrown there by the derailment, as otherwise it would have been found east of the point of derailment instead of west of it. Near this angle bar in about a foot of water was found a track wrench. The bond wires showed that they had apparently been left intact at the time the angle bars were removed and that they had probably been torn loose when the rail was actually thrown from the track by the derailed train. This accounts for the fact that the automatic signals worked properly up to the time of derailment.

Eastbound passenger train No. 10, the last train to pass the point of accident previous to its occurrence, passed about 55 minutes previous thereto. Engineman Barkwell

stated that the train was traveling at a speed of about 35 miles an hour and that he noticed nothing unusual in regard to track conditions. The automatic signals worked properly at that time and he did not notice anyone on or near the track.

This accident was caused by some unknown person removing rail connections, bolts and spikes from the track with malicious intent. No information could be obtained as to when or by whom the track was tampered with.

All the employees on the derailed train were experienced men and at the time of accident had been on duty less than 3 hours, after over 14 hours off duty.

G.V.L.