

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY AT FLEET, N. C., ON  
FEBRUARY 8, 1916.

On February 8, 1916, there was a derailment on the Seaboard Air Line Railway at Fleet, N. C., which resulted in the death of the engineman and injury to the fireman. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

The division on which this accident occurred is a single-track line, over which the movement of trains is governed by time-table, train orders and a manual block signal system. At the point of accident there are lap passing tracks, one on east side of main track for the use of north bound trains and one on the west side for the use of south bound trains. It was at the south switch of the north bound passing track that the engine and cars began to turn over. The main track approaching the point of accident from the south is straight for about 2,200 feet and the grade is slightly descending for north bound trains. At the time of the accident the weather was clear.

The train involved was north bound passenger train No. 10, known as the Florida Limited, en route from Miami, Florida, to New York, New York. It consisted of locomotive 101, 1 club car, 1 dining car and 7 sleeping cars, and was in charge of Conductor Renn and Engineman Wright. This train passed Southern Pines, a station about four miles south of Fleet, at 2:19 a. m., 1 hour and 23 minutes late, and at 2:25 a. m. was derailed at Fleet, while running at a speed indicated by the speed re-

order to have been 45 miles an hour.

The engine, which was evidently the first part of the train to be derailed, came to rest on its right side, almost at right angles with the main track, 814 feet beyond the initial point of derailment. The tender was torn from its trucks and completely overturned, remaining coupled to the engine. The forward end of the club car was also torn from its trucks and followed the tender toward the right, coming to rest on top of the overturned tender, the rear end of this car remaining on the ground separated from the dining car. The dining car and the first sleeping car were also derailed, both remaining in an upright position in line with the main track. The six rear cars were not derailed. Examination of the engine, tender and derailed cars failed to reveal any defect that could in any way have caused the derailment.

The track in the vicinity of the accident is laid with 75-pound rails, 33 feet in length, with 18 to 21 pine and oak ties to the rail, the rails being single-spiked and no tie plates being used. The ballast consists of sand and gravel.

The first indication of derailment was found to be about 594 feet south of the switch leading to the passing track on the east side of the main track, this indication being marks five inches to the left of each rail which continued in an unswervingly straight line to the switch points. The marks on the ties and roadbed indicated that only one pair of wheels was derailed at the initial point of derailment and this pair is believed to have been the leading drivers, as no other pair of

wheels would be apt to maintain such a straight course, as was indicated by the marks on the roadbed, and no other pair of wheels would so completely shear off the boltheads as was done in this instance. When the left derailed wheel came in contact with the south switch of the north bound passing track, it is apparent that a depressed tie rod partly opened the switch point and the following wheels were diverted to the right, derailling the rear of the engine, the tender and the first three cars of the train.

Fireman Lowry stated that the first intimation he had of the impending accident was the bumping of the engine. The engineman immediately made a service application of the brakes and the bumping stopped for a very short time and when it started again, the engineman then applied the brakes in emergency. The fireman further stated that as the train came to a sudden stop, he was thrown out of the cab window on to the ground.

Conductor Renn stated that the first knowledge he had of the derailment was a light application of the brakes, followed a few seconds later by a heavier application, and then almost immediately by an application of the brakes in emergency. He also heard something under the car as though a brake beam was loose or had fallen, or as though some other heavy object had struck the bottom of the car. At the same time, the car commenced to rock from side to side and he was thrown to the floor. To the best of his judgment, the train was running at a speed of about 45 miles an hour. Conductor Renn further stated that the entire train was inspected at Hamlet and that the car in-

spectors had reported to him when they were through. He also stated that after the accident had occurred he made an examination of the track with a view of determining, if possible, the cause of the accident. He found an imprint of a flange on the ties, this imprint beginning at a point about 4 coach lengths from the rear of his train and continuing to the switch point. He stated that he found no indication of any bunching of ties, breaking down of trucks or anything of that nature. He further stated that he was unable to determine the cause of the derailment.

Baggage Master Blanton stated that the first indication he had of the impending accident was a light application of the brakes followed by another application and then the emergency application. He then felt the car go off the track. He stated that after the accident occurred he noticed a flange mark on the ties, which in his opinion began about six car lengths from the rear of the train, continuing to the switch point.

Headmaster Sowell stated that he arrived at the scene of the accident at about 8:00 a. m. and made an inspection of the track back from the switch point for a distance of about 700 feet, but was unable to determine why the derailment should have occurred. He stated that he noticed a mark on the ties which indicated that either a wheel had been running along on them or something had been dragging. He stated that he found a number of low joints and found the track to be one-eighth of an inch out of gauge at places, but it was his opinion that this condition was caused by the derailed wheels of train No. 10.

He further stated that he considered the track to be perfectly safe to operate trains at a speed of 30 miles an hour.

Section Foreman Wicker stated that he last inspected the track at the point of accident three days prior to the day of the accident and at that time leveled it up. He stated that he left this track in first-class condition in every respect and did not think it was unsafe for a speed of 45 or 50 miles an hour. He further stated that he arrived at the scene of the accident at about 4:00 a. m. and examined the track to ascertain the cause of the derailment. He found a wheel mark on the inside of the east rail which extended back about 800 feet from the point where the engine turned over. He stated that the derailment threw the track out of alignment about one inch, but that back of the point where the first wheel mark showed on the ties, the track was in very good condition.

Car Inspectors Cook and Payne stated that train No. 10 remained at Hamlet about eight minutes during which time the entire train was inspected by them, no defects being found and no repairs being necessary.

Careful inspection of the equipment failed to disclose anything that could have caused this derailment and as the track was thrown out of line from the initial point of derailment by the derailed wheels of the locomotive it was impossible to determine the cause of this accident.

Engineman Wright, who was killed in the accident,

had been employed as an engineman by the Seaboard Air Line Railway Company since March, 1894, while Fireman Lowry has been in the service as fireman for about eight years. Both had clear records.

The crew in charge of train No. 10 had been on duty about 5 hours and 20 minutes.