

Atchison
June 23/20

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IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED
ON THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY NEAR ADAM'S PARK, GA.,
MARCH 26, 1920.

June 9, 1920.

On March 26, 1920, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Southern railway near Adam's Park, Ga., which resulted in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 7 passengers. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The accident occurred on that part of the Atlanta Division between Macon, Ga., and Lumber City, Ga., a distance of 94.1 miles. This is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders.

The point of accident was at the switch leading to Ettrick's Spur, which is on the west side of the main track at a point 2.1 miles south of Adam's Park. Approaching this point from the south the track is straight for more than 1 mile, and practically level. It is laid with 85-pound rails, 33 feet in length, single-spiked, with about 20 pine and cypress ties to the rail length; the ballast is of sand and cinders. The alignment, gauge, and surface of the track were good. The switch is a facing-point switch for northbound movements; it is a No. 10 switch, equipped with a high switch stand; night indications are a green light when the switch is lined for the main track and a red light when lined for the spur track. The weather was cloudy.

The train involved was the first section of northbound passenger train no. 12, known as "The Royal Palm," en route from Jacksonville, Fla., to Cincinnati, Ohio. It consisted of 8 Pullman cars, the first 7 of which were of all-steel construction, hauled by engine 1909, and was in charge of Conductor Bendley and Engineman Bond. It left Jacksonville at 8.10 p. m., March 25, passed Cochran, Ga., the last open telegraph station, 16.6 miles south of the point of accident, at 2.00 a. m., March 26, on time, and about 2.30 a. m. was derailed while running at a speed variously estimated at from 30 to 48 miles an hour.

The engine came to rest on its left side, to the left of and clear of the main track, with its head end 264 feet north of the switch points. The tender remained coupled to the engine, with its rear end turned around to the left or west and resting on the spur track. The first car was derailed, its head end coming to rest on the spur track against the tender, while its rear end rested on the main track, uncoupled from the second car. The second car was also derailed, but remained on the main track coupled to the third car, the forward trucks of which were derailed. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman.

The first knowledge the train crew had of anything wrong was when they felt an emergency application of the air brakes, followed almost immediately by the shock of the derailment. Inspection by the train crew immediately after the accident occurred, as well as by various officials a few hours later, showed that the switch lever was thrown and latched for the spur,

while the lock was missing and the light extinguished. The road supervisor stated that there was an impression on the latch indicating that it had been struck by a piece of metal, apparently in an attempt to detach the lock. One of the switch points was overturned while the other was in a cocked position, and the switch target was turned around about half way. This condition of the switch points and target was believed to have been due to the bending of the bridle bars by one of the derailed cars. There was nothing to indicate that the switch had been split or run through. The first wheel marks on the ties were about 20 feet north of the switch points. It was the opinion of several that the engine was derailed at the derail on the spur.

After the accident the oil container of the switch light was found to be about 1/3 full. The light was equipped with a long-time burner and was supposed to be kept burning continually, being inspected, cleaned and filled every Saturday. The switch was last inspected by the section foreman on March 23, at which time it was in good condition, with the light burning. The switch was last used by a train on March 12, and it was also in good condition at that time.

The last northbound train to pass this switch was freight train No. 96, at about 8.00 p. m. March 25, while the last train to pass in either direction was southbound freight train extra 525, which passed about 2 hours previous to the accident. The crews of these trains did not notice anything wrong with the switch, or the track in the vicinity, neither did they notice

whether or not the switch light was burning. Their statements also indicated that they had no knowledge of anything dragging or falling from their trains.

Engine 1909 was received from the shops on March 21, at which time inspection by the general foreman showed it to be in good condition. This was its second round trip since leaving the shops. Careful examination of the engine and other derailed equipment failed to disclose anything which could have caused the accident.

This accident was caused by the opening of a switch by some unknown person, apparently with malicious intent.

The employees in charge of train 1st No. 12 were experienced men. At the time of the accident they had been on duty nearly 7 hours, previous to which they had been off duty approximately 20 hours.