

**In Re Investigation of an Accident Which Occurred  
on the Southern Railway near Huntersville,  
N. C., on July 17, 1917.**

**August 7, 1917.**

On July 17, 1917, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Southern Railway near Huntersville, N. C., which resulted in the death of one passenger and one employee, and the injury of twenty passengers and four employees. After investigation the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

The Winston-Salem division of the Southern Railway, upon which this derailment occurred, is a single track line, extending from Charlotte to Winston-Salem, N. C., a distance of 83 miles, and train movements are governed by the time table and train orders, no block signal system being in use.

The derailed train was northbound passenger train No. 26, consisting of locomotive 3839, one baggage and mail car and two coaches, in charge of Conductor Frazier and Engineer Lanyoex. This train left Charlotte on the day of derailment at 4:25 A. M., passed Huntersville at 4:59 a. m., and was derailed at a point about one and three-fourths miles north of Huntersville at 5:02 a. m., while running at a speed of about 20 miles an hour.

Approaching the point of accident from the south the track is tangent for about one-half mile, followed by a 2½ degree curve to the left about 1,000 feet in length.

The derailment occurred about 750 feet from the south end of this curve on a fill of 8 or 10 feet and on a slightly ascending grade, the engine pilot coming to rest at the north end of the curve. The train came to rest with the locomotive and cars on their left sides on the west side of the track and clear of the track, except the pilot, which fouled the track. The tender broke loose from the locomotive and its trucks were torn from the frame, only the last two cars remaining coupled. The locomotive was badly damaged, while the cars were more or less damaged. The track where the accident occurred is laid with 75 pound steel rails, 30 feet in length, with 17 or 18 oak ties under each rail, and ballasted with cinders, all in good condition. The fireman was crushed between the boiler head and the cab floor and probably instantly killed, while the engineer was scalded. The weather was cloudy at the time.

Conductor Frazier of train No. 26 stated that his train left Charlotte at 4:25 a. m., left Huntersville at 4:59 a. m., and was derailed about 5:02 a. m. He was sitting in that end

of the coach reserved for white people reading the morning paper when the brakes were applied in emergency and he felt the car strike the ties and begin turning over. When the train came to a stop he climbed out of the car and went to the front end of the train, found the locomotive, tender and coaches turned over on their sides and learned that the fireman had been killed. He stated that he examined the track at point of derailment and found that the angle bars had been removed from one of the rail joints on the left hand side of the track, on the inside of the curve, and from that point north one rail length all the spikes on the outside of the rail had been pulled out except three, and those had been driven down flush with the tops of the ties. The end of one rail had been moved out of alignment with the rest of the track, and the marks on the ties indicated that the train was derailed at that point, the train running a distance equal to the length of the train after being derailed, coming to a stop with the rear of the train about opposite the point where the angle bars had been removed. He thought the speed of his train at the time of derailment was about 20 miles an hour.

Engineman Lennox of train No. 26 stated that his train passed Huntersville at about 4:09 a. m., and was running at a speed of about 20 miles an hour when it was derailed on a slightly ascending grade about two miles north of Huntersville. He had no intimation that anything was wrong with the track until he felt the engine trucks strike the ties, whereupon he applied the air brakes in emergency and tried to get out of the cab but could not do so before the locomotive turned over on its side. He stated that it was cloudy and the day was just breaking, but objects could be seen a reasonable distance, but on account of being on the outside of the curve he could not see the track very far in advance. After the derailment he went to the rear of the train and found that the angle bars had been removed from one of the rail joints on the inside of the curve, several spikes had been pulled out on either side of this joint, and one end of the rail moved out of alignment.

Section Foreman Glasgow in charge of the section of track where the derailment occurred stated that he had gone over this piece of track three days prior to the wreck and found it in good condition. He stated that he arrived on the scene of derailment about 7:30 a. m., and upon examining the track found that 11 spikes had been pulled out and the angle bars removed. In his opinion the track had been torn up by some one with track experience.

Section Foreman Jones in charge of the section of track adjoining the section where the derailment occurred stated that he arrived on the scene of wreck at about 6:45 a. m. and made an examination of the track. He found 11 spikes pulled out on the outside of the west or left hand rail and 12 or 15 spikes pulled from the inside of the next rail and both angle bars gone and

the bolts missing. The head of one spike had been partially pulled off in an unsuccessful attempt to pull it. He stated that two trains had passed over this track the night prior to the accident and had the track then been in the condition he found it the next morning, those trains would have been derailed, indicating to him that the track had been tampered with between the time the last of the two trains had passed there shortly after 8:00 p.m. and train No. 26. The morning of the accident he found the tool house unlocked and a track wrench and claw bar missing, and these tools were found later near the point of derailment.

This accident was caused by the malicious removal of one of the rails out of alignment on the left hand side of the track by unknown persons. The wheel marks on the ties at the point where the angle bars were missing indicate that the rail was out of place there when train No. 26 reached that point and was derailed, and the finding of a claw bar and track wrench in that vicinity indicates that those instruments were used in removing the angle bars and spikes from the track.