

No. 220

October 26, 1940.

**IN RE INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
ST. LOUIS & SAN FRANCISCO RAILROAD NEAR LEBANON, MO.,
ON SEPTEMBER 15, 1914.**

On September 15, 1914, there was a derailment on the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad near Lebanon, Mo., which resulted in the death of 27 passengers and 1 employee, and the injury of 25 passengers, 1 employee and 1 mail clerk. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

The train involved in the derailment was westbound passenger train No. 5, known as the "Texas Limited," and at the time of the accident it consisted of 2 mail cars, 1 baggage car, 1 combination car, 1 chair car and 4 Pullman sleeping cars, all of all-steel construction, hauled by locomotive No. 1050 and was in charge of Conductor Laughlin and Engineer O'Brien. Train No. 5 left Lebanon at 2:48 a.m., 1 hour and 4 minutes late, and at 3:57 a.m. was derailed at a washout at a point about 2 miles west of Lebanon. It is probable that the train had been brought to a stop before it turned over on its side.

The locomotive and the first five cars were derailed, the locomotive turning over to the left into the creek which parallels the track at this point for a distance of about 600 feet. The forward end of the first mail car went into the creek while the rear end remained on the fill. The second mail car did not turn over and remained on the side of the fill. The baggage and combination cars turned over partly to the left while the chair car came to rest on its left side, in the bottom of the creek, the large number of fatalities being due to the fact that it was entirely submerged and many of its 22 occupants drowned.

This part of the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad is a single track line, train movements being protected by the automatic block signal system. The track is laid with 75 pound rails, 33 feet in length, with about 21 ties under each rail. The ballast consists of 8 inches of what underneath which there is about 6 inches of crushed stone. The track at the point of accident is straight and perfectly level, and is laid on a fill of about 5 feet, although on the creek side it is 12 feet from the top of the rails to the bed of the creek.

The track formerly crossed the creek at two different points in this vicinity, trestles being used for this purpose. In 1904, however, on account of danger from fire, these trestles were filled in and a water way cut parallel with the track on the south side. This resulted in the water in the creek striking the fill almost at a right angle, and 100 feet of rip-rap were therefore put in for the purpose of protecting the fill. This water way is 25 feet in width and excepting after rains, has but very little water in it and is entirely dry several months of the year. The washout occurred beyond the rip-rap, the unprotected part of the fill being the part carried away.

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From the statements of persons living in the vicinity of the point of accident, it appeared that starting at about 11:00 p.m. there had been unusually heavy showers. The operator on duty at Lebanon during the night testified that there was a heavy shower about midnight which lasted three-quarters of an hour. The rain then nearly stopped, and later on there was another heavy shower. The section foreman in charge of the section in which the accident occurred stated that on account of the heavy rain fall he started from the section house, which is $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of Lebanon, at about 1:00 a.m. to inspect the track in order to see if any damage had been done. He had never had any trouble in the vicinity of the point of derailment, which is located east of the section house and not thinking there would be any danger at that point did not go there until after the accident had occurred. The testimony of employees who had had many years' experience on this division of this railroad indicated that there had never been any trouble at the point where the accident occurred since 1876, at which time the two trestles were in place, while the engine crew of eastbound train No. 8, which passed the point of derailment about 1 hour and 45 minutes prior to the occurrence of the accident, testified that at that time there was no unusual condition existing, there being but very little water in the creek.

Engineman O'Brien, of train No. 8, stated that the speed of his train when approaching the point of derailment was about forty-five miles per hour. He saw an excessive amount of water on both sides of the track and, although the rails and ties were not submerged, he considered it to be such an unusual occurrence that he at once applied the emergency air brakes. When he first saw this water, the locomotive was about 700 feet distant. Engineman O'Brien further stated that the train had been brought to a stop before the cars were turned over. Approaching the point where the derailment occurred, all block signals were clear, indicating that the track itself was intact prior to the derailment.

This accident was caused by the track sliding into the water, under the weight of the train, it evidently having been undermined by high water resulting from heavy rains.

The cars in the train were not greatly damaged, and had the water not been high enough entirely to submerge one of the cars, it is very doubtful whether there would have been any fatalities among the passengers.