

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE TEXAS
& PACIFIC RAILWAY NEAR RANGER, TEXAS, ON FEBRUARY 8, 1920.

March 3, 1920.

On February 8, 1920, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Texas & Pacific Railway at Ranger, Texas, which resulted in the death of 1 trespasser and injury to 8 passengers, 3 employees and 1 trespasser. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows.

The Fort Worth Subdivision of the Fort Worth Division of the Texas & Pacific Railway, on which this accident occurred, is a single-track line extending from Fort Worth, Texas, to Baird, Texas, a distance of 140 miles. Trains are operated over this line by timetable and train orders, no form of block system being in use.

The accident occurred at the switch leading to Jack's Spur, which is located at the extreme eastern end of Ranger yards, about 2 miles east of Ranger station and slightly less than a mile west of the station at Tiffin. This spur is on the south side of the main line and is entered through a facing point switch by east-bound trains. The switch is controlled by an Elliott switchstand of the high circle type, the night indications of which are green for the main line and red for the spur. The spur is used as a storage track for bad order cars and is protected by a derail operated independently of the switch. At the time of the derailment a cut of cars was standing on the spur, the western end of the cut being about 300 feet east of the switch. Approaching the switch from Ranger the track is straight for the entire distance. The grade, beginning at a point about 2,900 feet west of the switch, is level for 300 feet, followed by 1,600 feet of descending grade varying from .1 percent to 1.3 percent, the track is then level for 600 feet, which in turn is followed by 400 feet of .1 percent ascending grade to the point of accident. The track in the vicinity of the point of accident is laid with 75-pound rails, 33 feet in length, on about 20 oak and pine ties to the rail. The ballast consists of rock and the track is fairly well maintained. The weather at the time of the accident was clear and it was moonlight.

Eastbound passenger train No. 12 was in charge of Conductor Ferguson and Engineer Smith, and consisted of 1 baggage car, 1 coach, 2 chair cars, 7 Pullman sleeping cars and a private car, hauled by engine 419. It left Ranger at 1.40 a.m., 2 hours and 5 minutes late, and at about 1.50 a.m., while running at a speed estimated at about 30 or 35 miles an hour, the train was derailed by running into an open switch at the west end of Jack's Spur.

The engine entered the spur and collided with a wooden box car standing about 300 feet east of the switch. The engine was not derailed, but its front end was badly damaged. The first car remained coupled to the engine, but turned over on its left side. The second car came to rest leaning slightly to the left

and coupled to the first car; both of these cars were considerably damaged. The third and fourth cars were derailed to the left, coming to rest in an upright position and being only slightly damaged, while the remainder of the train was not derailed or damaged. All four of the derailed cars came to a stop astride the north rail of the spur. The trespasser who was killed was found under the rear end of the first car.

The first indication of the derailment appeared about 20 feet east of the switch, where wheel marks were found on the inside of the north rail of the main line and inside of the spur stock rail, indicating that the trucks had split the switch. As all of the trucks of the first four cars in the train stopped astride the north rail of the spur track, it is evident that some or all of them split the switch and then followed the spur track until the train stopped.

Engineman Smith stated that leaving Ranger he made a running test of the air brakes and that they were in good working order, the headlight was also in good order. Approaching Jack's Spur he was able to see the switch light when about three-fourths of a mile from it and it was displaying a green indication at that time. When within about 800 or 1,000 feet of the switch he noticed a man walking on the track near the switch and when the engine reached a point about 150 or 200 feet of the switch, the indication on the switchstand was changed from green to red. He did not actually see anyone throw the switch but after the signal indication was changed he saw a man run across the track in front of the engine. He applied the air brakes in emergency immediately, cut out the fire, the engine being an oil burner, and jumped to the ground just before the engine reached the derailer on the spur track. He estimated the speed of the train at the time the switch was thrown to have been about 30 or 35 miles an hour and he thought this had been reduced to about 15 miles an hour at the time the engine struck the box car on the spur. After the accident the switch lamp was displaying about half red and half green, approaching it on the main line, and the lever of the switchstand was not in the socket. He found the lock lying on the ground nearby, it was covered with powdered rock and showed indications of having been forced open with a rock.

Fireman Cannon stated that approaching Jack's Spur he was opening the water raw. He therefore did not see the position of the switch or the indication of the switch lamp, and knew nothing of the impending accident until the engineman shouted to him to jump and applied the brakes in emergency. He estimated the speed at the time the brakes were applied at 28 or 30 miles an hour and he thought the speed had been reduced to about 18 miles an hour at the time he jumped from the engine. As he was injured in the accident he was unable to examine the switch and switchstand.

Conductor Ferguson stated that he was riding in the front end of the second car and the first intimation he had of the accident was a jar similar to that caused by entering a switch or running over some object. He immediately reached for the emergency valve and almost at the same time he felt the brakes applied

in emergency, followed closely by the crash of the derailment and collision. He estimated the speed at the time the brakes were applied at 20 or 25 miles an hour. After the derailment he examined the switchstand and found powdered rock or gravel around the lock staple the staple being bent downward at an angle of about 45 degrees. He also examined the switch points and found them both in normal condition.

Engine Foreman Gollner stated that on the afternoon preceding the night on which the accident occurred, he supervised the placing of a number of bad order cars on Jack's Spur. He was sure that the switch was closed and locked afterwards as he stood by the switch and saw Switchman Hyatt perform this duty.

Switchman Hyatt stated that there was absolutely no question but that he closed and locked the switch for the main line after the bad order cars had been placed on Jack's Spur on the afternoon of February 7th.

T. W. Pigg, who was a passenger on train No. 12 at the time of its derailment, stated that he was with Engineer Smith when he picked up the lock after the derailment. He said the lock had been hammered, apparently with a rock.

Douglass Richardson an employee of the Haggaman Refining Company located a short distance east of Jack's Spur, stated that his working hours were from 8.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. and at about 2.00 a.m. he heard three or four dogs barking around the boiler house. This prompted him to open the door of the boiler house, upon doing which he saw a man running past, looking back over his shoulder toward Ranger. About 10 minutes prior to this he had heard the noise of the derailment, but did not know at that time what caused the noise.

C. P. Giller and Miss Inez Goes stated that on the night of the accident they attended the theater at Ranger and afterwards walked the railroad track to their homes at Tiffin, as the train was late. They especially noticed that the switch at Jack's Spur was set for the main line and remarked that the green light which the switchstand was displaying was the last green light they would have to pass before turning off the main line track. Their route more carried them down the spur track and when they were approximately half way down the spur they heard a pounding noise as if some one were pounding on iron. Mr. Giller stated that he stopped and started to walk back to ascertain the cause of the noise and it ceased. After proceeding a short distance farther toward Tiffin they heard train No. 12 approach and heard the crash of the derailment.

This accident was caused by a switch being opened by an unknown person, apparently with malicious intent.

The crew of train No. 12 were experienced men, and at the time of the accident had been on duty nearly 6 hours, previous to which they had been off duty over 16 hours.