

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF ACCIDENT ON
THE NEW ORLEANS & NORTHEASTERN
RAILROAD NEAR EASTABUCHIE,
MISS , MAY 6, 1912

BY THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF
SAFETY APPLIANCES

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REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SAFETY
APPLIANCES COVERING HIS INVESTIGATION
OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
NEW ORLEANS & NORTHEASTERN RAILROAD
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TO THE COMMISSION

On May 6 1912 there was a derailment on the New Orleans & Northeastern Railroad near Eastabuchie Miss which caused the death of 6 passengers the engineman fireman and a third party who was riding upon the engine. Injuries were received by 53 passengers 2 Pullman porters and 1 dining car porter. This accident was reported by telegraph on the date of its occurrence and, after investigation I beg to submit the following report:

A reunion of United Confederate Veterans was being held at Macon Ga. A special passenger train was run to this reunion from points in Texas. Between New Orleans La and Meridian Miss this train ran over the tracks of the New Orleans & Northeastern Railroad. From Hattiesburg, Miss to Meridian this train was scheduled to run as extra No 293. It consisted of 1 combination baggage and passenger coach 2 passenger coaches 2 tourist sleeping cars 1 dining car and 5 additional sleeping cars and was drawn by engine No 293. The train was in charge of Conductor White and Engineman Woods. At 8:16 a. m. this train reached Hattiesburg, at which point the crew in charge received train orders Nos 11 and 26. Order No 11 gave extra No 293 a scheduled time for leaving all stations between Hattiesburg and Meridian and provided that it should leave Hattiesburg at 7:08 a. m. arriving at Meridian at 9:30 a. m. Order No 26 provided that extra No 293 should run 1 hour and 20 minutes late Hattiesburg to Meridian. Under these orders therefore this train was to leave Hattiesburg at 8:28 a. m. arriving at Meridian at 10:15 a. m. The train left Hattiesburg at 8:28 a. m. and was derailed at about 8:40 a. m. at a point 67 feet south of a small trestle located about 1 mile south of Eastabuchie or 7 miles north of Hattiesburg. The speed at the time of derailment was probably about 35 miles per hour.

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As will be seen by reference to illustration No 1 the engine and tender passed over the trestle before turning over, at a point about 180 feet north of the same. The combination baggage and passenger car turned over on its side. The second and third cars remained practically upright. No passengers were killed in any of the first three cars. The next two cars tourist sleeping cars Nos 1302 and 1161, crushed through the trestle and telescoped each other being practically destroyed. It was in these two cars that the six passengers were killed. The sixth car in the train the dining car had the forward set of trucks derailed, but escaped other damage as did the remaining five cars in the train, all of which remained on the rails.

This division of the New Orleans & Northeastern Railroad is a single track line. The track is straight for a mile or more in each direction from the point of derailment and there is practically no grade. The track is laid with 75-pound steel rails 30 feet long. Pine ties are used, being laid about 16 to each rail. The rails are single spiked on both sides, angle plates with Abbott rail joints being used. No tie plates are used. The metal tags on the ties indicate that the majority of them have been in use since 1904. The ballast ordinarily used consists of about 12 inches of sandy gravel the alignment and surface of which are poorly maintained. Inspection of the track for a distance of 21 rail lengths south of the point of derailment and 26 rail lengths north of the trestle showed decayed ties to be located as follows:

South of derailment		North of bridge	
Rail number	Decayed ties	Rail number	Decayed ties
1	0	1	0
2	0	2	0
3	0	3	0
4	0	4	0
5	0	5	2
6	1	6	2
7	1	7	1
8	1	8	1
9	2	9	1
10	0	10	0
11	0	11	2
12	0	12	0
13	0	13	0
14	3	14	0
15	4	15	2
16	4	16	0
17	1	17	3
18	1	18	1
19	2	19	0
20	2	20	0
21	2	21	0
		22	1
		23	3
		24	3
		25	1
		26	0

The condition of the ties from the trestle north to Eastabuchie is similar to that found to exist in the 26 rail lengths north of the

bridge The surface of the track covered by the above inspection was irregular and in many instances varied as much as $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches above or below the proper surface level

Commencing at a point about 60 feet south of the trestle the track is undermined by a sipe or soft place for a distance of about 12 rail lengths This piece of track has to be given special attention at all times in order to maintain its surface and alignment This is especially true in rainy weather On account of conditions prevailing here the track is ballasted with 15 inches of cinders On April 30, 1912 the section foreman in charge of this section raised several joints and adjusted and lined up the track On May 2 he again surfaced the track at this point for a distance of about seven rail lengths Two days after the accident the foreman of an extra gang raised a low center just south of the point of derailment, about 2 inches The foreman of the section south of that in which the accident occurred frequently had been instructed to proceed north in order to attend to this piece of track More or less trouble had always been had with this track in order to maintain its surface and alignment and on one occasion it had been necessary to place cribbing under it in order to hold it That this track was regarded as dangerous is shown by slow orders issued at various times this year, the most recent of which was dated April 30 1912 calling attention to bad track just south of bridge No 160, which is the trestle concerned in this accident None of these slow orders was in effect on the day of this accident At the present time this track, beginning at a point 21 rail lengths south of the point of derailment is being reconstructed

Bridge No 160 is 140 feet in length The distance from the top of the rail to the bed of the creek at the highest point is about 15 feet This bridge is a frame bent structure The creek spanned by it is ordinarily dry, but owing to recent rains had some water in it at the time of the derailment It was built in 1904 green pine piles being used four piles to the bent In July, 1905 new ties and stringers were placed Since this time repairs have been made at four different intervals The bridge was in good condition at the time of the accident, nearly all of the timber having been renewed at one time or another since the bridge was built With the exception of 37 feet at the southern end this bridge was destroyed

Engine No 293 was built in March, 1912 It is of the 4-6-0 type The combined weight of the engine and tender is 162 tons Examination of the tires and flanges of both engine and tender showed them to be in excellent condition and perfectly gauged The entire train was equipped with high-speed brakes and had been last inspected at Hattiesburg, Miss at which time it was found to be in good condition

The fourth and fifth cars in which the majority of the passengers were killed or injured, were formerly standard sleeping cars. Tourist car No 1302 the fourth car, was built in 1880, and in 1906 was rebuilt as a tourist car. This car was 65 feet 9 inches long over the end sills and weighed 102,000 pounds. Tourist car No 1161 the fifth car in the train, was built in 1886 and was converted into a tourist car in 1902. Both of these cars were of wooden construction.

Conductor White stated that he was in the second car from the engine at the time of the derailment. He climbed out of a window after the derailment and went forward to the engine. He then went back to the rear of the train to see that the flagman was protecting the train. After finding that the flagman had gone back he looked at his watch and found that it was 8:42 a. m. From this he judged that the accident happened at about 8:40 a. m. He again went to the head end of the train and saw Mr. Stollenweirk the trainmaster who had been riding upon the engine going forward toward Eastabuchie. He then started to assist the injured passengers. He stated that the front trucks of the car he was in seemed to leave the rails first. He estimated the speed to have been about 30 miles per hour possibly a little more.

Flagman Ellison stated that at the first jai he looked out of the window of the rear car in which he was riding and saw some of the cars turning over on their sides. The train then came to a sudden stop and he at once went back to flag an approaching train. He estimated the speed to have been between 25 and 30 miles per hour and stated that he had been wondering at the low speed as it was much lower than was customary over this part of the road.

The statements of other employees brought out no additional facts of importance.

Examination of the truck after the derailment showed that the wheels of the forward tender truck were first derailed. The marks on the ties led sharply to the west and then parallel to the rails the rest of the way toward the bridge. The west wheels of the derailed truck continued on the ends of the ties evidently held in line by the coupling bar and safety chains between the engine and the tender and the safety chains on the tender trucks. As the tender approached the bridge the derailed truck bunched and broke the ties leaving the rails without any support. This truck also bunched and broke the cross ties of the trestle in such a manner as to allow the trucks and ends of the following cars to strike head-on against the bents of the bridge causing it to collapse. In this connection the statement of an eyewitness, Mr. F. J. Lees as to the manner of derailment is of interest. His statement is given below in full.

Q Where were you standing, Mr. Lees?

A When the accident happened I was standing at the gate in front of the little house just north of the trestle on the east side of the track. As I got on

my horse just south of the trestle, I noticed the train coming way down the track and then I went on up to the house and was standing at the gate facing the track watching the train coming. Just before the engine got to the trestle I noticed a streak of fire, apparently about 3 or 4 feet long, between the engine and tender. It was either at the hind wheels of the engine or the front trucks of the tender. When the engine struck the trestle the trestle gave down about a foot and a half.

Q Did the trestle give down or was the engine on the rail and then jumped off that made it look like the trestle gave down?

A No sir, the engine stuck to the rails, I could swear to that.

Q Did you think the tender was off the track?

A No sir to the best of my knowledge the engine and tender did not leave the rails until after they crossed the trestle. I am sure about the engine. I could swear it stayed on the rails, but am not so certain about the tender. The next thing I saw, the third car from the engine, just before it got to the trestle I thought jumped the track. What made me think that it was off of the track was that it came jumping along, and when it struck the trestle the trestle seemed to give forward to the north or the way the engine was going about a foot and a half or 2 feet.

Q Then the engine did not get off the track until after it passed the trestle?

A No, sir. Then the next thing that happened, when the fourth and fifth cars from the engine hit the trestle the trestle all went in, and the first second and third cars in the train were thrown off of the track and that was what pulled the engine and tender off.

Q What would you say was the speed of the train at the time of the accident?

A Well, I couldn't say just exactly. I don't know anything about speed of trains but they were not running near as fast as the local trains pass here every day.

Q Was it raining at the time?

A No sir it was not raining then but a heavy downpour came right after the accident happened.

Q What was the streak of fire you saw between the engine and tender?

A I thought it was something scraping on the wheel. I have seen the fire fly from the rails on the log road when the engine got off of the track and the wheels ran against the rail. I saw the streak of fire when they were about 25 or 30 feet south of the trestle or before the engine hit the trestle. I don't think there were any cars off the track then.

Examination made after the derailment failed to disclose any burnt marks on the inside of the rails. The streak of fire seen by Mr. Lees apparently was due to friction between the rail and some portion of the derailed tender truck.

This derailment was caused by the soft and uneven condition of the track. It is clearly shown that this track was, and had been for some time, in bad condition. It had even been necessary to repair the track twice within 10 days preceding the date of the accident while at the time of derailment the track was being reconstructed.

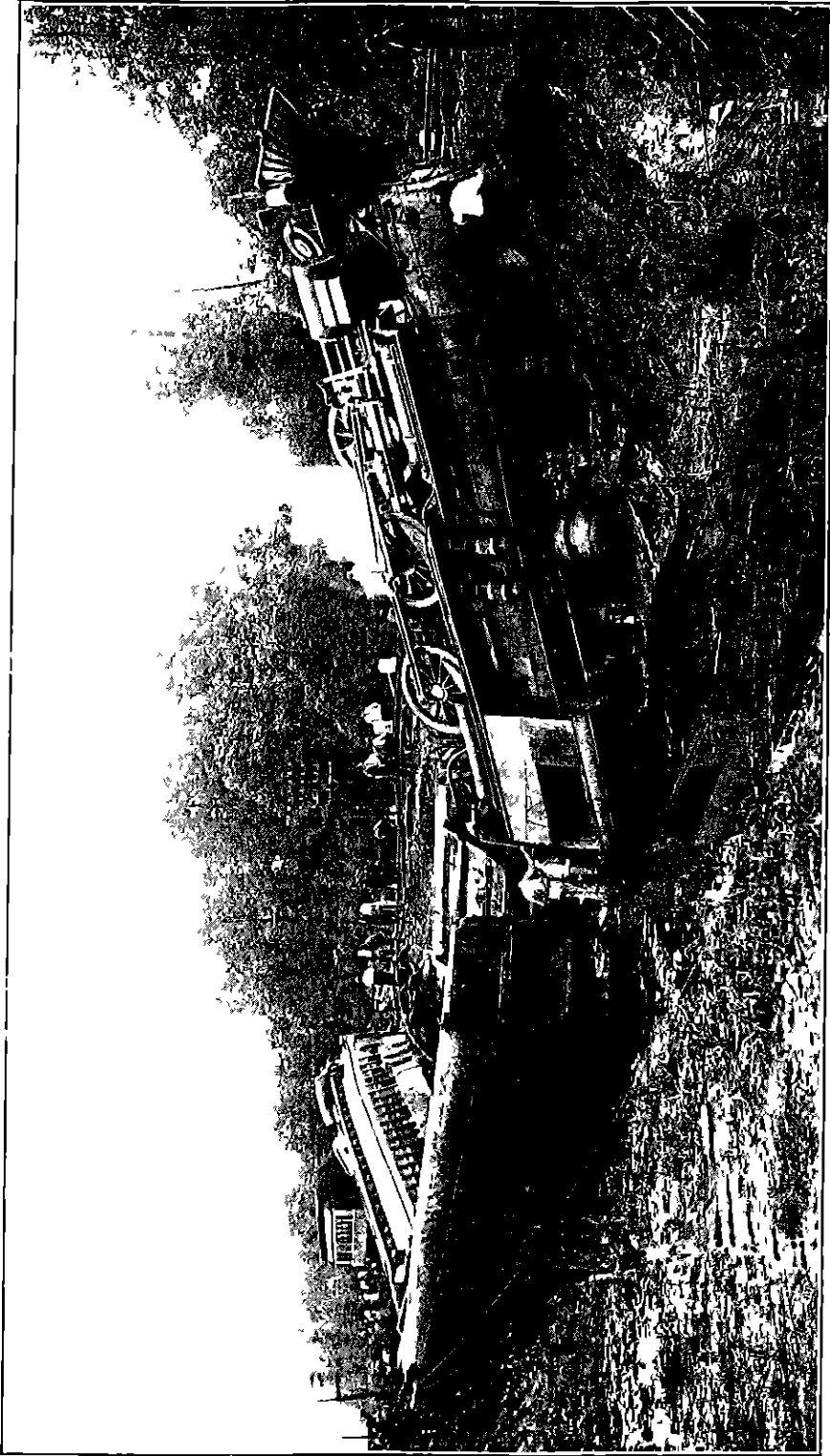
The first three cars of this train were of steel underframe construction and none of them was materially damaged as is shown by illustration No. 1. In illustration No. 2 the dining car is seen at the left standing on the southern end of the trestle. On the right is seen the third car of the train, the body of it being practically undam-

aged. Between these two cars can be seen the remnants of the two wooden tourist cars, one of which was built 26 years ago, the other 32 years ago. What happened to these two cars can not but lend emphasis to the recommendation contained in the Commission's last report to Congress that the adoption of steel cars be required. The bridge through which these cars plunged although in good condition and well maintained was not of sufficient strength to withstand the pressure to which it was subjected. Had these cars been of modern steel underframe or all-steel construction, or had the bridge been of stronger construction, the long list of casualties would undoubtedly have been greatly reduced.

The schedule of this train between Hattiesburg and Meridian as provided by train order No. 11 called for a speed but two minutes slower than that of the fastest train on the division. The speed however, at the time of derailment appears not to have been excessive for roadbed of good construction and maintenance. But with the track in the condition in which it was, and had been for some time it would seem that a slow board materially limiting the speed of all trains should have been installed. This is especially true when one considers the prolonged rains which had prevailed throughout the South, which could not have failed to weaken a piece of track naturally in a soft condition, and thus to increase the necessity for careful track maintenance and protection.

Respectfully submitted

H. W. BELNAP
Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances



1 GENERAL VIEW OF DERAILMENT LOOKING SOUTH



2. VIEW SHOWING FRAGMENTS OF TOURIST SLEEPING CARS NOS. 1102 AND 1161