

October 26, 1914.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE ST. LOUIS, IRON  
MOUNTAIN & SOUTHERN RAILWAY NEAR RIXEY, ARK., ON  
SEPTEMBER 22, 1914.

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On September 22, 1914, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway near Rixey, Ark., resulting in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 3 employees, 11 mail clerks and 2 passengers.

The Arkansas Division on which this derailment occurred is a double track line extending from Argenta, Ark., to Bald Knob, Ark., and is operated by the manual block system. The track is laid with 100-pound rails which were placed in service in 1911; there are 20 oak ties to the rail length, and the ballast is gravel about 12 inches deep. At the time and in the vicinity of the accident the track was maintained in good condition.

The derailed train, northbound No. 6, consisted of an engine and 10 cars, Engineer William Williams and Conductor Ross being in charge of this train. On the date of the accident northbound train No. 6 left Little Rock, Ark., at 9:26 p.m., an hour and 6 minutes late, and was derailed at about 9:50 p.m., at mile post 334, approximately 11 miles north of Little Rock and 2 miles north of Rixey. The night was dark, and at the time of the derailment rain was falling.

The derailment occurred on straight track, with an ascending grade of about .3%, on a 12-foot fill. The statements of the train employees and the condition of the wrecked equipment indicate that at the time of derailment the train was run-

ning at the rate of 45 or 50 miles per hour. The engine ran a distance of about 300 feet beyond the point of derailment and then turned turtle and came to rest at the bottom of the fill. The first two cars in the train were all-steel mail cars; the third and fifth cars in the train were of the steel underframe type, and the fourth car was of wooden construction. The first 4 cars in the train were stripped of their trucks, partly turned over and thrown at different angles to the track, these cars extending some distance beyond the east line of the right-of-way, and an end of one of the mail cars fouling the southbound track. The leading trucks of the fifth car were derailed, the rear trucks coming to rest just clear of the point of derailment. The other cars in the train were not derailed.

Examination of the track at the point of derailment by railroad employees immediately after the derailment occurred indicated that the track had been tampered with. The first marks of derailment were found near a rail joint. The outside angle bar of this joint remained intact in its original position, being held by the outside spikes. On the north or leaving end of this angle bar wheel marks appeared, and flange marks were found on the ties at this joint. The inside angle-bar, together with the bolts, lock washers, nuts and spikes which had been used at this joint were found lying on the track at the point of derailment; the threads of the bolts and nuts were in good condition; examination indicated that the nuts had been removed with a wrench and the bolts driven out. Examination also indicated that the inside spikes had been pulled and the first

rail north of the point of derailment moved toward the center of the track. This rail was broken into 3 pieces, the condition of the south or receiving end indicating that it had been struck by some part of the engine, which undoubtedly caused it to break. An ash pan dump lever was found near the point of derailment, and it is considered probable that this device was used as a wrench for the purpose of removing the nuts from the track bolts.

While train No. 3 was late on the night of the accident, it appears that it was not running at excessive or unsafe speed. The maximum speed limit fixed by time-card rule for trains using this track was 50 miles per hour, and the investigation disclosed that the track was in good condition and safe for speeds higher than that limit. The investigation also developed that no repair work had been done at the point of derailment for some time previous to the derailment, that the track had been inspected during the day and had been used by another train less than 2 hours before the derailment occurred.

This accident was caused by malicious tampering with the track, a joint having been opened and a rail having been moved out of its proper position, apparently with the deliberate intention of wrecking the train.

A greater number of fatalities in this wreck was undoubtedly averted due to the substantial construction of the 3 leading cars in this train.