

BROKEN CLUTCH ON A SWITCH ROD THE CAUSE OF WRECK

Investigation Discloses Why Hocking Valley
Train Left Track at Winchester

SIDE-SWIPPED ANOTHER TRAIN

Nine Passengers and Carman Are Injured,
But None of Them Seriously So.

Cars and Engine Badly Damaged in
Collision Late Friday Afternoon

Columbus Dispatch, February 27, 1909

THE INJURED

Seth Gibson, Marysville, passenger three ribs broken and body bruised. Condition not serious.

Fireman Arthur Stamper, 282 West State street, right foot bruised.

Engineer George Whipple, 443 Vermont Place, right shoulder sprained.

Baggagemaster H.E. Neal, Athens, face and nose cut by flying glass.

Baggagemaster E.T. Roundsavell, 192 East First Avenue, sprained and lacerated wrist, scalp wound.

E.C. Horten, Jackson, passenger, back sprained.

Joseph Slater, Nelsonville, passenger, scratched and bruised.

Conductor John Elder, Athens, face and scalp wounds.

John Davis, Fairfield County, finger lacerated.

Investigation by the Hocking Valley officials to determine the cause of the side-swiping collision at Canal Winchester, Friday afternoon, has resulted in the discovery of a broken clutch on the switch rod holding the switch in place. When the northbound train hit the switch, the engine, tender and baggage car passing over jarred the point out

of place and the smoking car split the switch and was derailed, likewise derailing the baggage car and tender, causing the accident.



Northbound locomotive No. 69 tangled with a wooden coach after the southbound train split a switch and jumping the track. Photo from the Edward H. Miller Collection

With a sudden check, a crash and a grinding noise, southbound Hocking Valley passenger train No. 34, in passing northbound passenger train No. 39 at a siding about a mile north of Canal Winchester, split a switch and went bounding over the ties, side-swiping this standing train, damaging engines and cars and slightly injuring nine persons. The accident occurred about 4 o'clock, Friday afternoon, and the remarkable escape of the large number of passengers aboard both trains is a matter of amazement.

Pinioned beneath wreckage, caught in the cars, cut by flying glass and thrown about in every way, only nine people were injured, five of these being members of the train crew. The southbound train split the switch while going 30 miles an hour and crashed alongside of the waiting train the engine of which stuck its nose into the side of one of the cars. The fact that nearly all of the 130 passengers in the southbound train had sought the shady side was the reason for the remarkable escapes.

SOON EXTRICATED

News Agent McLaughlin, of Columbus, was seated in a front seat on the right side of the smoking car when he heard a crash and stepped aside just as the iron front of an engine ploughed its way through where he had been sitting. The lad got out of the train and helped to rescue Baggage man Roundsavell who had been buried beneath an iron safe and some beer kegs. Mail Clerk Downey was pulled out from beneath a load of baggage by Conductor John Elder and Baggage master Neal who had been previously injured themselves



The camera is looking south toward the Canal Winchester Station and grain storage facilities in the far distance. A wrecker can also be seen in the distance. The baggage car of the southbound train is in the ditch.



No. 69 the northbound locomotive and the severely damaged southbound smoker have been pulled back to a siding. The wooden coach's interior was peeled open by its collision with No. 69.

COACH RIPPED OPEN.

Half of the right side of the smoking car was ripped open by the engine of the train on the siding.

Twenty men were seated in the car but most of them on the left hand side. Men jumped from their seats and ran to the rear of the train escaping the engine which ploughed its way into the cars. The baggage car struck the engine and turned turtle in a ditch. The smoking car was demolished and the engine of the northbound train partly wrecked. The damage is estimated at about \$35,000.

Walter Fogg, an insurance adjuster of Columbus, had arisen a few minutes before the crash occurred to talk to a friend in another coach and thereby escaped. He had been sitting on the right side of the smoking car.

ONE IN HOSPITAL

Physicians were called from Canal Winchester immediately and four responded, including Dr. W.W. Shook, Drs. Brickley and Carlton. The injuries of the passengers and train crew were dressed. Seth Gibson, of Marysville, a passenger, who was found

on the tracks with a trunk across one of his legs, was hauled to Dr. Brickley's office in a farm wagon. Later he was brought to Columbus and taken to Grant Hospital, where it was stated Saturday morning that his injuries are not serious.

A train which departed for Columbus at 9:10 brought the injured back and only Mr. Gibson was compelled to go to the hospital.

General Superintendent M.S. Connors stated, Friday night, that Engineer Whipple, fireman A. Stamper, Conductor J.R. Elder and Baggage man E. T. Roundvelt were injured slightly, but no passengers were injured, except Mr. Gibson and a few who were cut by flying glass.

Wrecking trains were soon at the scene and within a few hours the track was cleared.



Editor's note – There are a few confusing inconsistencies in the Columbus Dispatch article such as the headline "Nine Passengers Injured" and later in the article "Five members of the crew injured" which seems to be the correct account.

The Columbus Citizen article which follows is clearer. However, the Railroad's position that there were no serious injuries seems self-serving and inaccurate.

NINE ARE HURT IN STEAM LINE WRECK

Nine Are Injured When Hocking Valley Trains Collide Near Winchester

The most remarkable escapes were those of the 130 passengers on the southbound Hocking Valley train, which was going at 35 mile and hour. Men and women were tumbled around promiscuously, thrown under the debris of glass and broken lumber and generally shaken up – but all escaped serious injury.

Twenty passengers of the combination smoking baggage car probably owe their lives to the fact that the sun was shining through windows on the right side, which was struck, causing all of them to move across the aisle only a few minutes before the collision.

Columbus Citizen, February 27, 1909

LIST OF INJURED

Seth Gibson, Marysville, cuts and bruises.

Fireman Arthur Stamper, 282 West State street, right foot mashed.

Engineer George Whipple, 443 Vermont Place, right shoulder sprained.

Baggagemaster H.E. Neal, Athens, face, head and body cut by flying glass.

Baggagemaster E.T. Roundsavell, 192 East First Avenue, wrist sprained, head bruised.

E.C. Horten, Jackson, back sprained.

Joseph Slater, Nelsonville, rib broken, breast and leg wound.

Conductor John Elder, Athens, face and scalp wounds.

John Davis, Washington C.H., finger mashed and body bruises.

How death or serious injury was escaped by 150 or more passengers on two Hocking Valley trains that crashed together at Canal Winchester, at 4 o'clock Friday afternoon, is a mystery to those who have viewed the wreckage.

That only nine persons were injured, and but [none] of these at all seriously, is regarded as little short of remarkable.

A defective switch which caused southbound passenger train No. 34 to leave the tracks one mile north of Canal Winchester while passing northbound passenger No. 39, caused the latter to "side-swipe" the train from Columbus.

General Superintendent M.S. Connors, Saturday afternoon, said the wreck was due to a broken casting on the switch, which caused the points to open. The actual property loss of the wreck will not reach over \$6000, if it goes that high, said Superintendent Connors.

The baggage car and combination coach of the south bound train were wrecked. The engine of the northbound train was badly damaged.

SPLIT THE SWITCH

An investigation into the cause of the wreck showed that the trucks of the coal tender, in taking the siding, had split the switch.

The northbound train, as usual, was standing on the south side of the main track. The baggage car first crashed into the engine of the waiting train.

The engine was next struck by the rear compartment of the adjoining combination car. The entire side of the smoking compartment was ripped away.

The third coach struck the engine, but did not turn over. It swung at right angles on its trucks, giving the passengers a severe shakeup.

The last, a parlor car, was only slightly damaged. The engine of the northbound train was demolished.

THOUGHT DEATH WAS AT HAND.

"I thought my time had come when I saw that baggage car swinging into my cab," said Engineer George Whipple, 443 Vermont Place, of the northbound train.

Another instant and everything was black.

Whipple was found under the wreckage with a sprained right shoulder and body bruises.

B.C. Kelsey, passenger agent of the Big Four and E.E. Stoughton, traveling inspector for the Columbus Car Demurrage bureau, were on the northbound train returning from Lancaster. They were badly shaken up, both landing with the conductor in a heap in the center aisle when the crash came.

When Seth Gibson of Marysville, a passenger on the southbound train, was found he couldn't speak. He was identified through papers in his pockets. He was taken on a stretcher to a nearby farm house, and at 9:30 Friday night was brought to Columbus. Saturday morning, Dr. W.U. Cole, who is attending him at Grant Hospital, said he would be out in a few days. He suffered three fractured ribs and severer bruises.

TRAIN ESCAPE.

None of the trainmen were seriously hurt. Baggage master Roundsavell, who was found buried head downward beneath beer kegs and an iron safe, escaped with a

painful series of sprains and bruises. All of the train men were able to return to work Saturday.

Many passengers were congratulating themselves on similar narrow escapes. These escapes were the one remarkable feature of the wreck.

As soon as the news of the wreck spread, assistance commenced arriving from the surrounding farmers. The four doctors of Canal Winchester were hurriedly summoned and cared for the injured.

The scene of the wreck was picturesque, with one engine upturned, a car standing crosswise of the track and two others splintered.

Mail sack, personal baggage, splintered wreckage and various similar articles were strewn up and down the track for 150 feet. Guards were later stationed to protect the mail.

General Superintendent M.S. Connors issued a statement Friday night stating that the cause of the disaster would be investigated.

CANAL WINCHESTER TRAIN WRECK

Many in Wreck Escape

People on Hocking Valley Trains Get Off Easily in Smash Up.

SPECIAL TO THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER.

COLUMBUS, O., Feb. 26, 1909. -- Nine persons were hurt, one seriously, and fifteen others had narrow escapes late this afternoon when a southbound Hocking Valley passenger train split a switch one mile north of Canal Winchester and sideswiped an engine and three coaches of a northbound passenger train which was on the siding.

There were 150 passengers in the southbound car which jumped the track and twenty men in a smoker, one side of which was torn out. The crew of the wrecked engine was buried in the debris but in such a manner that the men were not crushed.