

# Train Derails 15 Miles from Columbus

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## 8 Passengers Slightly Hurt

By Jay Gibian and Carolyn Focht

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Forty-one passengers and 13 crewmen and postal workers on the Pennsylvania Railroad's "*Cincinnati Limited*" escaped serious injury when the 14 car train derailed near West Jefferson, about 15 miles west of Columbus early Friday.

Eight passengers were treated in Columbus for minor injuries but none was admitted.

**SLIGHT** injured and released after treatment at Doctor's Hospital West were:

Mrs. Elizabeth Adick, 55, of Cincinnati, Mrs Lulu Hall, 74, of North Braddock, Pa., Robert R McCleave, 72, and his wife, Laura, 54, of Westbury, Long Island, NY, Mrs, Alice Davis, 28, of Louisville, Ky., Zack Chisem of New York City, Anna Miller, 83, of Sharon Hill, Pa. and Norbert Adick, 54, of Cincinnati.

**THE NEW YORK** to Cincinnati train derailed at 6:30a.m. about a quarter mile west of Rt. 40 along Rt. 142 when a mail car apparently jumped the tracks plunging down a steep embankment unto Rt. 142.

Highway traffic was blocked on Rt. 142, London Rd. For several hours and railroad officials said it would be at least eight to 12 hour before the east west artery track would be open to traffic.

Buses were sent to the small southwest Ohio community to take passengers to Cincinnati to continue their travel.

**BERNARD RAMEY**, a fire chief in the state Fire Marshal's office, was driving on Rt. 40 nearing the railroad underpass when he saw the train coming at me shooting fire, smoke and making a horrible noise.

The diesel engine, one Pullman, a coach and eight boxcars cleared the over pass before the mail car leaped off the tracks and skidded down an embankment.

Passengers were tossed from bunks in the Pullman and thrown around in the coach but neither of the cars in which people were riding overturned.

**A PASSENGER**, Byron Stefferud, 20, of Tomah, Wis., said it happened so quickly there was nothing to do "but grab on for dear life and pray."

Some people were screaming as they were wildly thrown about cars, but were orderly when helped out.

Officials said the west bound train No. 77 which had stopped in Columbus and was scheduled to pick up more passengers in Xenia was traveling about 70 miles per hour.



Rough track and poor truck maintenance on the box car preceding this one started the trouble. The box car rocked off the track and one of its trucks turned 90 deg pulling up the track spikes as it went along. That spread the track causing all the following cars to derail. The box car following the offending car ended up in the middle of Rt. 142. The Pullman car that was following it was left on the embankment as shown above. Photo by Dave Bunge.

**THE DERAILED** cars bumped and scraped along the siding more than a quarter mile from where the mail car went off until finally stopping.

Cars were disconnected from the diesel which stopped more than a mile up the tracks from the wreckage.

Three Columbus youths, children of Marine Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Foster of 525 Northview Dr. taking their first train ride a trip to visit their grandmother in Cincinnati were among passengers.

**DENISE** Foster, 10, and her brother Richard, 12, and Fred, 6, had boarded the train in Columbus.

“The train started bumping and sparks started flying all over.” Denise recalled. “The other people began screaming and the man sitting across the aisle shot straight up in the air out of his chair.”

Among tilted cars was strewn baggage and luggage and piles of mail sacks. Many people including passengers and residents who rushed to their aid were barefooted while picking up belongings.

**A SET OF STRAY** wheels from the overturned mail car was buried in the mud. One passenger had used a speed limit highway sign on Rt. 142 as a clothes rack for his suit.

Railroad officials feared the worst from first reports of the high speed wreck, but were relieved when they saw most of the cars still upright.

It can't be too bad one official said. “Look at all the passengers taking pictures of their first train wreck.”

**W.C. HALE**, 245 W. Cooke Rd. the conductor, has been a railroader 45 years and it was his first mishap.

He was in an empty Pullman bedroom car and knew immediately from the sound “something horrible” was going to happen.

The noise when the train was grinding off the tracks was described as “deafening”. Another witness told of seeing “railroad spikes fly like bullets through the sky.”

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