



Big Four Flyer No. 19 comes to a halt near Clintonville. Photo from Shirley Hyatt Collection

WRECK OF BIG FOUR FLYER NO. 19, CHARGED TO GANG OF BOYS

TRAIN SPEEDING AT 70 MILES AN HOUR,
RUNS INTO AN OPEN SWITCH

Engineer W.T. Smith Sticks to his Post and Escapes Without Injury
TRAIN IS DITCHED IN NORTH COLUMBUS.

Officials Report That Switch Had Been Tampered With by Boys.
(Columbus Evening Dispatch, June 18, 1907)

THE INJURED.

JOSEPH MAHAFFEY, fireman, of Cleveland, out and bruised by jumping, may be internally injured. In Protestant hospital.

MRS HYNDMAN, aged wife of Dr. Hyndman, of 517 W. 114th street, New York, bruised and badly shaken up.

H.L. REED, of Mansfield, out about head and face and badly bruised.

J.G. CREEGAN, of 92 Taylor Street, Cleveland, left shoulder wrenched and bruised.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOWRIE, of 2287 East 96th Street, Cleveland, hurt about hips, internally injured. In Protestant hospital.

The New York Central Limited known as Big Four No. 19, ran into an open switch in North Columbus, shortly after 10 a.m. Tuesday, while running at 70 miles an hour and the entire train is in the ditch.

FIREMAN JUMPED.

Fireman Mahaffey jumped, sustaining a broken nose and a bad cut on the forehead, and a number of passengers were more or less badly hurt by being thrown from their seats. The engineer, W.T. Smith, stuck to his engine and in his efforts to save his train he also saved himself from injury for the engine did not leave the track. This probably saved the lives of a number of passengers, for the engine continued to pull the cars behind it until the couplings broke, stretching them out along the track and preventing them from piling into each other and possibly telescoping or being bashed to pieces against each other.

WORK OF BOY WRECKERS (?)

Officials of the New York Central railroad in New York have advices from Columbus which they say indicates that the open switch which wrecked No. 19 was thrown open by a gang of boys. The superintendent of the Big Four, telegraphing to officials of the railroad, stated that another train passed over the road 20 minutes before No. 19 came along, and the engineer noticed a crowd of boys near the switch which controlled the spur of track into the sewer pipe works, where the wreck occurred.

VERY FAST TRAIN.

No. 19, the train which was wrecked is the companion train to the Twenty Century Limited, it running west while the Limited runs east. It is the fastest train on the Big Four between Cleveland and Cincinnati, and leaving Cleveland at 7:25 a.m. makes only one stop between Cleveland and Columbus. It is due in Columbus at a.m., leaving for Cincinnati five minutes later.

STUCK TO HIS POST.

The switch at which the wreck occurred is just north of North Columbus and from it leads a spur to the Sewer Pipe Co.'s plant. It is that the switch was unlocked and that an eastbound train bounced it half open just far enough to allow the flange of the wheels of the engine on No. 19 to open it the rest of the way. Engineer Smith saw something was wrong before reaching the switch, and applied the air and reversed his engine, then stuck to his post to do everything else possible to avert a calamity.

TORE UP THE TRACK.

About 50 yards down the spur, one of the cars jumped the track, and the heavy coaches bumping along on the ties tore the track up completely, broke and twisted rails and dug deep ditches in the soft earth. When the engine finally came to a stop it was 500 yards down the spur. It was still on the track; the tender was attached to it, but had been turned over on its side and dragged a number of feet, scattering coal all over the field. A number of yards behind the engine was the combination baggage coach. It was standing upright only a few feet from the track and length wise of it. It had suffered less than any of the other cars.

NONE ON THE CARS SMASHED.

The day coach and sleeper had stayed together. The day coach was lying partly on its side, with its floor inclined in the air at an angle of about 45 degrees. The sleeping car was in about the same position, though not quite so badly tilted as the day coach. None of the cars were smashed up, though a number of seats were broken.

Heroism of Engineer Smith Was All Matter of Course to Him – He “Just stayed On.”

Calm and collected as though he just come in off an uneventful run, W.T. Smith, the engineer, climbed down off the relief coach at the Union Station. As the ambulance men carried his injured fireman to the ambulance, he followed along after taking with him his own and the firemen’s grips.

“How did it happen?” he was asked by one of the excited by-standers.

“We just ran through an open switch.” He remarked as he hurried along.

“But you are not injured, Mr. Smith; didn’t you jump?” At the question the engineer halt, stopped as if in amazement at such a foolish inquiry.

“Why no, I didn’t jump, I stayed with the engine.” It was all a matter of course with him – just his line of duty and he could see nothing at all out of the ordinary in the fact that he had followed out this life’s training – “stick with your engine.”

Columbus, OH Train Wreck, June 1907

BIG FOUR TRAIN WRECK. ONE OF THE FASTEST TRAINS ON NEW YORK CENTRAL WENT THRU OPEN SWITCH AT COLUMBUS, O. MANY PASSENGERS ARE INJURED.

(Winona Republican Herald Minnesota, June 18, 1907)

Columbus, O., June 18 -- Big Four passenger train No. 19, one of the fastest trains on the New York Central lines, went thru an open switch today in the northern part of the city and is now lying on its side along the tracks. Several passengers were injured. Several of them are wondering how they escaped being instantly killed.

The train was rushing along according to one of the passengers at fifty miles an hour when it struck the switch throwing the passengers in every direction.

The tender of the engine ran along the side of the track for some distance and then plunged into the ground about twenty-five feet. The engine continued along the side of the track for 200 yards and then turned over as did the rest of the train.

Engineer WILLIAM T. SMITH remained at his post and was uninjured. His fireman, JOSEPH MAHAFFEY of Cleveland, jumped and was probably fatally injured.

Sleepers Were Wrecked.

The train, which is a mate of the Twentieth Century limited, carried thru sleepers from New York. These sleepers were wrecked. The wreck did not catch fire.

The seriously injured are:

MRS. ELIZABETH LOWRIE, aged 60, Cleveland, hip injured.

J. G. KEEGAN, Cleveland, back sprained.

H. L. LEED, Mansfield, O., face cut.

MRS. DR. HYNDMAN, New York, back hurt and body bruised.

Ambulances Sent To Wreck.

The wreck occurred in a portion of the city which is almost inaccessible and it was some time before aid reached the passengers. All the ambulances in the city were rushed to a point near the scene as soon as possible and the seriously injured hurried to the hospital.

Many of the injured in the sleepers were only scratched and slightly bruised and were able to walk to a street car or other conveyance and came into the city, refused to give their names. It is believed that any of the injured, except the fireman, will die. The wrecked train carries a thru sleeper from the Lake Shore limited and leaves Cleveland at 7:25 a.m. daily. No. 19 is known among railroad men as the Lake Shore limited.

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