

## FAHP News, May 18, 2015

**Severe Train Wrecks in the United States:** It took more than two days to find out through the media where the Amtrak wreck that killed eight people really took place. Part of this is that because of modern technology, no one really knows where they are, and therefore a geographical location doesn't mean much. The news first said "in Philadelphia," and later "north of Philadelphia." I learned on Friday it was on the main line curve at Frankford Junction, about three miles north of North Philadelphia Station. The fact that it took five days to get the railroad open again would have been inexcusable years ago when rail travel was essential to the wellbeing of this country.

Any loss of life is devastating, but the 2015 accident is miniscule compared to railroad deaths in my earlier years. It is ironic that on this very same curve (or very close to it), the Pennsylvania Railroad's crack "Congressional Limited," with 15 cars or more, left the tracks on September 6, 1943, killing 79 and injuring 117. This was an advance section of the better known "Congressional" and had no scheduled stops between Baltimore and Newark, New Jersey. Coaches in those days had journal boxes stuffed with oily wool waste for lubrication, and it was not uncommon for a box to run hot if the waste got tangled in the journal. At periodic station stops, railroad men would inspect these boxes, and excessive heat could be detected by smoke from the hot oil or by manual contact. A man in a control tower saw the smoke just before the 1943 wreck, and he called the next tower ahead to stop the train, but it was too late. Coaches and parlor cars were strewn all over the place, but during wartime the railroad was opened again within hours.

During the summer of 1943, I rode this section of the "Pennsy" about once a month, when I would get a weekend pass from Brown University in Providence and come home to spend less than 20 hours. If my memory serves me correctly, I had passed Frankford Junction northbound the day before the horrific accident. Leaving Wilmington at 4:42 Sunday afternoon, I could arrive in Providence about 11 P.M. with no change in New York. A steam locomotive would replace the electric at New Haven, so the last 114 miles was the best part.

Rail accidents in the U.S. were prevalent in the wartime years of 1943 and 1944. The death tolls sound staggering, but the number of rail passengers, including the military, was probably 500 times what it is today. On August 30, 1943, the "Lackawanna Limited," the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western's crack train from New York to Buffalo, sideswiped a train that had not cleared a siding switch at Wayland, New York, killing 28 and injuring 110. The "Limited" was the successor to the "Phoebe Snow" of earlier years. On December 16 that year, a few cars of the southbound Atlantic Coast Line's "Tamiami Champion" had derailed and partially blocked the northbound track when the northbound train of the same name crashed into them at Rennert, North Carolina, killing 74 passengers and crew. On August 4, 1944, 47 were killed when a train derailed at Stockton, Georgia.

Despite the above, the United States had a very good safety record when compared to other countries. But railroad travel was always dangerous, just as air travel was considered dangerous

during the early years of commercial aviation. The only mode of transportation that is more dangerous is traveling by automobile -- over 100 times more dangerous!

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, May 12, 16 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Jerry Lucas (in charge), Ted Kamen, Brent McDougall, Dave Leon, Rose Ann Hoover, Tom Marshall, Steve Bryce, Bill Schwoebel, Edwin Paschall, Mike Ciosek, Kelly Williams, Steve Glazier, Emil Christofano, Lou Mandich, Jerry Novak, and Tim Ward.

Seven worked on replacing six sections of new track, including Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Brent McDougall, Rose Ann Hoover, Steve Glazier, Mike Ciosek, and Ed Paschall. There was also an Events and Scheduling Committee meeting in the office. The new Stanley boilers were moved upstairs in the museum for storage.

The rear wheels from the Model 607 were completely disassembled, as new wheels are planned. One of the hubs needs significant work, as the threads are bad and will not accommodate a hub cap or a wheel puller. The water tank was flushed out on the Model 725, but washing soda and hot water did little to remove oil deposits. The boiler was drained. The steering mechanism was completely reassembled on the Rauch & Lang electric, and front alignment was begun. Railroad splice bars were cleaned for graphited coating on the wire brush wheel.

On Wednesday, May 13, five members of the driving course took part with Tom Marshall as overseeing instructor. Richard Bernard and Tim Ward operated the Model 71, and Mark Russell, John Bacino, and Paul Kratunis did the same with the Model 740. Both cars and their operators performed almost flawlessly.

On Thursday, May 14, again 16 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Dave Leon (in charge), Bill Schwoebel, Rose Ann Hoover, Ted Kamen, Tim Ward, Jared Schoenly, Bob Jordan, Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Emil Christofano, Bob Stransky, Paul Kratunis, Jeff Kennard, John Hopkins, Robert Hopkins, and a new volunteer Jeff Morrison. The quarterly Board of Directors meeting took place simultaneously in the FAHP office (Bill Schwoebel attended both).

Track work continued with Dave Leon, Rose Ann Hoover, Jeff Morrison, and Bill Schwoebel taking part. On the Model 725, the boiler was washed with kerosene, and a new absorbent sock was installed in the water tank. The adjustment on the cylinder oil pump was cut way back. The top was also put down for the season.

Having made a new crankshaft and fit new main bearings, Jim Personti installed these back in the engine frame of the Model H-5. The museum was cleaned up for the Overland antique car tour scheduled for Friday 5/15. Another attempt was made to seal the float valve in the AVRR water tank, but it's still not 100%. Jeff Kennard took the defective Model 607 hub to his shop for repair. The front wheels of the Model 87 are resting on friction-free blocks for the king pins to be adjusted. The small Overland car tour had a pleasant visit on Friday. On Saturday 5/16, Dave Leon and others attached more sections of track. Steve Bryce and Jerry Novak took our unrestored Model 750 to Winterthur for last Saturday's event featuring unrestored cars. They reported that the 750 was the "hardest-looking" car there, which attracted a lot of interest.