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August 21, 1911.

Interstate Commerce Commission,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs:

I quote the following letters from Honorable H. H. Baker, Mayor of Winchester, Virginia, lodging complaint against the Valley Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad because of alleged insecure condition of the roadbed causing an accident on July 14, 1911:

July 18th, 1911.

Secretary of the
Interstate Commerce Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:-

A derailment of a passenger train occurred on Friday afternoon, July 14th last, on the Valley Branch of the B. & O. R. R. near Harper's Ferry, W. Va. I can produce evidence of several passengers that this wreck was due to rotten ties, which caused the track to spread. West Virginia has no official or official body which has jurisdiction over the physical condition of railroad beds and equipment within her lines and, of course, the Virginia Corporation Commission, which has forced the B. & O. to put into good order that portion of the track of the Valley Branch lying in Va., has no jurisdiction in this matter. We are at a loss how to proceed unless your Commission can take hold and I am, therefore, appealing to you, asking that you send an inspector to examine that part of road bed lying in W. Va., between Harpers Ferry and the Virginia State line. If this cannot be done, can you not advise me how to proceed to insure the safety of passengers coming into our city and State and prevent their being killed and injured on an interstate road.

Hoping that something can be done, I am,

Very truly yours,
(Signed) H. H. Baker, Mayor.

July 27th, 1911.

Hon. H. W. Selnap,
Chief Inspector
of Safety Appliances,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I have yours of 22nd inst., and am glad to know that your office has jurisdiction of Rail Road accidents, and that you will have an inspector investigate the recent wreck at or near Harpers Ferry, W. Va. A wreck occurred at the bridge on this branch near Wadesville, Va., last fall, and many people were injured, and, I hope, it will be in your power to have the inspector inspect the track from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, with a view of preventing such accidents. It is certainly about as poor a road-bed as it is possible to operate at all. If I can be of service to you or your in this matter, I am willing to show what I know from two personal inspections of that part of the track that lies from here to the State line.

Very respectfully,
(Signed) H. H. Baker, Mayor.

On account of the standing of the complainant, I had inspectors Cash and Helton, who were in that immediate vicinity, make an investigation of this accident as well as the track conditions of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

In the accident complained of, which occurred to Baltimore & Ohio passenger train No. 1, consisting of B. & O. locomotive No. 531, mail and express car No. 107, combination baggage and passenger coach No. 1900, and day coaches Nos. 4904 and 4909, no one was killed or injured.

This accident was caused by the forward tender truck leaving the rail on a 4-degree curve, having a super-elevation of 5½ inches at the place of accident, and an average super-elevation of about the same the full length of the curve, with a suitable run-off leading to the tangent, which was about 300 feet from the point of derailment. The train ran about 890 feet after the forward tender truck left the rails. The air brakes were in good condition, and the reason assigned by the engineer for not stopping train sooner was that he did not apply the air brakes in the emergency for fear he might cause shock which would de-

rail the cars behind the tender.

Eighteen new ties were found to have been placed in the track in place of those damaged by the derailment. At two points three new ties were placed under the track together, while at other points one or two new ties were occasionally used, and only eighteen new ties were required for the entire distance of 890 feet. The cost of labor and material to make said repairs was \$10.75.

Just prior to the accident the engineer shut off steam to drift around a sharp curve, which was about one-half mile south of place where accident occurred. Neither the engineer nor the conductor of the train could assign any reason for the truck's leaving the track. The forward tender truck was the only part of engine or train derailed.

The crew had come from Brunswick, Md., a distance of about eight miles, having been on duty one hour at the time accident occurred, which was about 5:56 P. M. Engineer L. P. Stickley has been in the employ of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company on this division about fifteen years; Fireman H. P. Fahrney about two years, and Conductor Jos. McLane about twenty-five years. The reputation and ability of each was good.

J. E. Spurrier, Superintendent of this division, says that he made an examination of the track at the place of derailment, and the forward tender truck of the locomotive in question, but found nothing wrong with either. He could assign no reason for the tender truck's leaving the rails, but was inclined to believe the accident was caused by the rigidity of the spiral springs of said truck, and possibly too little clearance of the

side bearings, and reported to the General Superintendent accordingly.

Our inspectors carefully examined that portion of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad between Winchester, Virginia, and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, walking over a portion of it, and with the Superintendent of the division on a motor car over the remainder of it. They found a few decayed ties; but at no place were they sufficient in number to render the track unsafe for the speed maintained over this division with the light equipment that is used. The maximum speed allowed on this division for a passenger train is forty-five miles an hour; the schedule speed for this train, and the speed used at the time of the accident, being thirty miles an hour.

It was found that about six or eight miles of track is laid with 85 lb. second-hand steel rails, and the remainder with 67 lb. steel rails. The track force was laying 85 lb. rails, and the Superintendent advised our inspectors that the 85 lb. rail would be laid on all this track by Fall or Winter of this year, and that as soon as the 85 lb. rail was laid, new ties would be put under the track wherever needed.

Our inspectors interviewed Mr. Baker, Mayor of Winchester, the complainant, and found his information relative to this accident was all hearsay. They also interviewed Mr. Barry, who was on the train at the time of the accident. He exhibited two or three pieces of decayed timber, alleged to have been part of the cross-ties that were broken by the derailed tender truck, but he frankly stated that there was no indication that the ac-

cident was caused by spreading of the rails.

Our inspectors are of the opinion, after carefully investigating the matter and observing the roadbed and track between Harpers Ferry and Winchester, that the derailment was not caused by unsafe conditions of the track, and while finding quite a few decayed ties, at no place were they sufficient in number to render the track unsafe for the light traffic and power used. They observed that many new ties are now being placed in the track, and that there are many new ties placed along the track to be put in as rapidly as the section force can reach them.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of
Safety Appliances.