

Ottawa Central Railway, Spareboard, January 2008.

The Rear End Collision on the Bridge at Casselman A Follow Up

As so often happens with historical research, another piece of information came to light just after the last Spareboard was put to bed. This had a picture of steam locomotive No. 6218 in a rear end collision with another freight train (Extra 2609 East) on the bridge over the South Nation River at Casselman on 21st December 1944.

I received from Carl Riff a copy of the statement from engineer Findley of No. 6218.

This gives a good account of winter railroading at a time when there were no roller bearing axleboxes, before Walkley yard and before the installation of Centralized Traffic Control (CTC):

"Our train was ordered at Ottawa for 12:45 P.M. I reported for duty at 12noon. Engine was off the shop track on time. Engine was moved to Bank St. for train, and we left the yard at 1:23 P.M. and passed the outer switch, located just east of Bank St. yard office at 1:50 P.M. Account train being frozen up we were assisted out of yard by yard engine as far as Main St. At Bank St. I received a terminal clearance and running order, and at Riverside a terminal clearance along with a form "W". The order at Riverside was delivered on a hoop and our train passed Riverside No additional train orders were delivered, we proceeded at a speed of about 25 M.P.H. – the train having been frozen up in the yard, was pulling hard. I had planned going to Alexandria for water, and when about one mile west of Casselman and running at a speed of 37 or 38 M.P.H. I made a service application of the brakes in order to bring the train under control rounding the curve, and to permit a good view of the train order signal. There is a down grade towards the bridge. Immediately I made the service application of the brake I heard the sound of two torpedoes exploding and saw Flagman about 3 poles east of where the torpedoes exploded. The Flagman had a red flag and was giving me a stop signal. The flagman was located 7 poles west of the bridge and standing on a farm crossing. Immediately the torpedoes exploded and I saw the Flagman, I threw my brake valve into emergency and train slowed down to a point where I thought my train would stop before reaching caboose, which I saw when my engine was about west end of the bridge. My train was not moving more than 5 M.P.H. at time of impact, but it seemed to me the weight of the train kept shoving ahead." about 1:40 P.M.



A view of Ottawa, Bank Street, station and yard in August 1948 four years after the collision described here. The view is looking east along the present alignment of the Queensway, the Bank Street underpass is just behind the photographer. On the right is the station and yard office with an engine in the stub. The main line is the clear track with the main part of the yard to the north or left. The train in question would have travelled away from the camera, past the Mann Avenue roundhouse, crossed the Rideau River and would have joined the present Alexandria subdivision at Hawthorne. Canada Science and Technology Museum, Matt-0746.

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