

## The Train Wreck



August 30, 1956 was a day which the citizens of Theodore at that time will never forget. A way freight was standing on the track in front of the Station. At 4:10 P.M., an eastbound through freight smashed into it. The engineer first sighted the train at a distance of six hundred yards and applied emergency brakes, but the momentum of 38 box cars carrying 2,700 tons held the moving freight at a speed of about two miles an hour at the time of the collision.

There was a bridge building crew in Theodore at the time. The work train was standing on the second track. Amazingly no one was seriously injured. The engineer of the through freight and his crew leaped from the freight when they realized a collision was inevitable.

The engine plowed into the caboose of the way freight, completely demolishing it, smashed four box cars as they jack-knifed into the air, tipping two of the cars on the B. & B. Work train, plunged through the wall of the Station and nose-dived about six feet into the ground. The cars were thrown into the air and piled up in a heap of rubble.

Station Agent Valentine A. James was standing on the platform before the crash occurred. When he saw what was going to happen he rushed inside to warn his wife. She was lying down in an upstairs bedroom when she heard a rumbling crash and saw box cars piling up beside her window. She rushed downstairs and found the living room full of black smoke. She was helped from the house by two men.

The Station was pushed six feet off its foundation, a china cabinet was sandwiched between two living room walls, and a thick layer of smoke and coal dust covered all the furniture. The rails were split in two at the point of impact and over 100 ties were destroyed.

The pressure valve on the engine was immediately opened to allow the steam to escape, and the electricity in the Station was cut off to minimize the danger of fire.

Crews were set to work almost immediately to clear away the debris. Incoming trains were routed through the town on side tracks. The B. & B. Gang of twenty men assisted in the clean-up.

Needless to say, this was the subject of conversation among Theodore residents for some time.

*Taken from the Theodore & District History Book*