CORONER'S INQUEST INTO CAUSE OF DISASTER NOW IN PROGRESS

(Continued from Page One.)

Q. State whether in case of heavy rains this arroya is liable to wash badly?

A. Yes. Whenever it rains hard enough to be any possibility of damaging the track, I generally go to the bridge and make an examination of the piling.

Q. Is that a part of your duties, or merely complimentary?

A. No, sir. It is not connected with my duties.

Q. What did you do after the train disappeared and did not come into view again?

A. I took a lantern and started out along the track. I soon discovered that something was wrong. I met a fireman who told me that an accident had occurred. I started to the house, hitched up and started to drive to the scene. I could not get to the opposite side of the stream because the county bridge was gone. I drove back to the office and reported to Pueblo the conditions.

Q. How long was it raining before you saw the headlight?

A. It began to drizzle about 6 o'clock. About 7:10 or 7:15 it began to rain harder and gradually got worse until possibly 7:25. The hard downpour continued about thirty minutes.

Q. When should the train reach Eden?

A. At 7:57 if on time.

Q. Are you able to state whether it was on time?

A. It was not. It was possibly ten or fifteen minutes late because of slow orders. I heard slow orders for it out at Colorado Springs, it having rained hard there and in Pueblo.

Q. Where were the orders sent from?

A. From the dispatcher's office in Pueblo.

Q. What time did it rain the hardest?

A. About 7:10 or a little after. Just about the time No. 7 passed Eden.

Q. What is the difference of the running time of the two trains?

A. They run about one hour apart.

Q. No. 7 had crossed the bridge about one hour before, then?

A. Yes.

Q. Does No. 7 stop at Eden?

A. No, sir.

Q. When was it raining the hardest?

A. I cannot state definitely, but about No. 7's time.

Q. How long have you been at Eden?

A. About seven months.

Q. Have there been any other cloudbursts since you have been there?

A. There have been several hard rains, having apparently the same effect at the office and vicinity.

Q. Did you observe heavy clouds north and northwest of Eden?

A. No. I did not think there was a very heavy rain coming. Rain was reported on the Fountain, but it did not look as though we would have any especially hard rain.

Q. Did you see any trackman?

A. Yes.

Q. How did he happen along the track?

A. He was sent out by the section foreman.

Q. Does the company keep track walkers out at nights?

A. No.

Q. Is there an attempt made by the company to inspect the track before these evening trains come down during the rainy season?

A. The section bosses have notice to inspect the track after rains, but there is no order to keep men out.

Q. Are there no track walkers?

A. Not at night.

Q. When do rains generally come at Eden, forenoon or afternoon?

A. In the afternoons.

Q. About a prior to the time these trains come along?

A. About one or two hours earlier.

Q. With your knowledge of conditions do you think it would be wise to take the precaution of having a trackman?

A. I think it would be wise to have trackmen at all times at night.

Q. Is the fact that rains occur late in the afternoon a special reason why track walkers should be employed?

A. No more reason at that time than later at night. Rains are liable to occur at any time.

Q. Was any bulletin sent out regarding rains and ordering speed?

A. Word was sent out to crews to look out for washouts.

Q. What did you see of the bridge?

A. Only the outside timbers hanging down into the stream.

Q. Were the piling gone?

A. Yes.

Q. What time did you see this?

A. After the water went down, about 10:30.

Q. How deep was the water when you first reached the wreck?

A. It was running about 20 feet. It appeared as it had been to the top of the banks. A piece of the coach seemed to have been washed to the surface on the south bank of the stream.

Q. Is this the only evidence that the water was over the banks?

A. Yes. It seemed that sort of a dam had been formed probably by the country bridge, which was out.

Q. Did you go to the county bridge?

A. Yes, and it was out.

Q. Did you talk with Mayfield?

A. Just exchanged a few words. Asked him to make report while I hitched up.

Q. You say you observed the stream after the water went down. Were the piling then gone?

A. Some were totally gone. I could see some stubs, but they looked as though they had been sawed off.

Q. Had the water run over the track?

A. If it had not a wave was sent over the bank as the water went down.

Q. Is it your best judgment that the marks of water were caused by waves thrown up?

A. It is a stand-off either way; but from conditions it is my opinion that the water was up there.

Q. Do you think the water was over the bridge as the train approached?

A. I do not know.

Q. What evidence was there that the engine got over the bridge?

A. There was a mark on the bank where it had sled down.

Q. Is it your theory that the county bridge went out and struck the railroad bridge?

A. Yes.

Q. Were not the stringers in place?

A. The stringers were hanging next to the bank were in place.

Considerable time was then spent in trying to determine whether there were three bents to the bridge. According to the witness it appeared that there were two sets of stringers, and three series of pilings.

Q. Were there any reports sent to Eden from Pueblo regarding the high water?

A. I do not know, as I had been relieved.

Q. Who was on duty?

A. W. F. Evans, the night operator.

Q. Were any special instructions sent to the section men?

A. No.

Q. Nothing to make them think that something unusual had happened?

A. No.

Q. When you met the fireman did he appear to be rational?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he tell you anything about the wreck?

A. He said they had passed nearly over the bridge when he heard a pipe break and thought he would be scalded, but just then he struck the cold water.

Q. Did you think that the rain was hard enough to make special precautions necessary?

A. The rain was no worse than often occurs after dark.

Q. Is this piece of track under the jurisdiction of the Eden foreman?

A. No. It is one-half mile from Eden.

Q. Do the section men from Pinon come that far?

A. I do not know.

At this point Mr. Jones was dismissed and John H. Eckholm, section foreman of the D. & R. G. at Eden was called to the stand. He testified that the track under his jurisdiction extended from post 111 about one half mile northeast of Eden to post 115 three and one-half miles southwest of that place. He has been in his present position for the past five years and stated that then he was promoted from the section comprising bridge 110-b, where he had been in charge for two years.

He said that at various times he had observed floods but none as large as this one. However, it had been his experience that it was impossible to tell just when they would come. Often, he said he had seen water come down when there had been no rain in that immediate vicinity and that they were liable to occur at any time.

Regarding the rainfall, this could be generally expected during the rainy period, he stated that they were most frequent between 2 o'clock this afternoon and 10 at night. His testimony regarding the employing of track walkers confirmed that of Mr. Jones. He stated that it was the practice of the section men to patrol the track after a severe storm to see that everything was in condition. The remainder of his testimony showed that the bridge had been put in a few years ago and that he had never heard any intimation of its being unsafe, also that the rain of Sunday afternoon was not out of the ordinary and gave no cause for expecting anything unusual. However, that he had his section patrolled.

The next witness called was W. E. King, foreman of the section extending from post 104 to 115, including the bridge 110-b where the disaster occurred. Previous to being sent to Pinon he stated that he had been employed as a section foreman on the Missouri Pacific road east of this city. Questioned as to the peculiarities of the country, floods, etc., he stated that there was no noticeable difference between the two places.

He stated that he had been over the bridge No. 110-b, which spans the arroya about half a mile north of Eden. That in a general way he had observed the structure and saw nothing wrong with it. When questioned more closely he stated that it was not the work of section men to make a minute inspection of bridges in their territory, but that they always watched them for any defects that might prove of a serious nature. That no such defect was discovered out of order and no repairs were made.

Regarding the rain of the afternoon he stated that he spent Sunday afternoon in the depot at Pinon and that shortly before 7 he noticed it was raining, though at that time the fall was very light. About the same time he spoke to the agent at Eden, the Colorado Springs, but that the amount of rain at Pinon did not give him any reason for thinking anything unusual would occur. He stated that about the time No. 11 passed Pinon he with four men started out to make an inspection of the section and not until he met a man returning with a lantern did he have any knowledge that there had been a wreck or that there was even any danger from the storm.

He stated that he had observed the arroya in a general way many times since he had been foreman and that after passing he noticed that it carried some water. That the bridge was at a point something more than a mile from the Fountain river and that it was impossible to see that it was carrying more water than usual. He stated that it was the policy to have men out after a storm and inspect the track to see if anything was out of order, but that it was not customary to make these tours during a storm for the reason that damage might be done to a piece of track after a man had passed over it and him not know anything about it.

As to the rate of speed at which the train was running when it passed Pinon it was Mr. King's judgment that it was making probably thirty miles an hour.

Regarding the construction of the bridge Mr. King stated that he did not know whether it was a bent bridge or built on piling.

It was his opinion that the engineer of the train could have had no knowledge that the arroya was a washing current immediately as the water was all within its banks.

The next witness called was R. Brunazzi of Denver, special agent for the Denver and Rio Grande, who was a passenger on the ill fated train, but escaped from the fact that he was in the sleeping car with his wife and daughter at the time of the wreck. They were on their way south and Mr. Brunazzi was accompanying them as far as Pueblo where he had a waiting current through