

Historical Feature of the Week - Explosive Train



On the morning of Tuesday June 29, 1880, the through freight train pulled out of the Wilmington station and headed north. All appeared to be going as normal that morning. Just a few miles outside of Burgaw, smoke was seen coming from the roof of the box car just behind the tender. The brakes were applied and the train brought to a stop just a mile and a half from the Burgaw station. The engineer, fireman, conductor and rail hands all went to work to put the fire out. During the course of extinguishing the fire, it was discovered that a spark from the locomotive started a fire in the tender and then traveled to the roof of the adjoining box car. Once all rail officials were confident that the fire had been put out, the train continued to Burgaw. They decided that they should stop and check the contents of the box car to make sure that no items had been damaged in the blaze. The door of the box car was opened, and to the astonishment of everyone, it was discovered that the box car contained twenty thousand pounds of powder.

