

The Story of Casey Jones



CASEY JONES

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

HEROIC railroad engineer who died at his post of duty and a negro engine wiper who wrote a simple song about his death—these two gave to the world one of the most famous of all native American ballads which you will still hear sung in almost any part of the country, even though 31 years have elapsed since "Casey Jones mounted to the cabin with his orders in his hand and took his farewell trip to that promised land."

In 1900 John Luther Jones was the engineer on the Memphis, Tenn.-Canton, Miss., run of the Illinois Central's crack train, "the Cannonball." He was a husky Irishman, six feet four inches tall, dark-haired, gray-eyed, a good-natured, big-hearted Celt, well-liked by all the railroaders in that section. If you had asked one of them about John Luther Jones, he probably would have answered "Oh, you mean Casey Jones—"For Casey Jones he was to the railroad men, a nickname that was fastened on him because he was born near Cayce, Ky., and down there they pronounced it in two syllables—Cay-ce. So "Casey" Jones soon became "Casey" Jones.

Casey started his railroad on the Mobile & Ohio late in the eighties. He put in several years as a freight and passenger engineer on the Illinois Central between Jackson and Water Valley, Miss., and then, at the age of thirty-seven, he was put at the throttle of "the Cannonball." Already he was locally famous for his peculiar skill with a locomotive whistle. His method of blowing it was a sort of a personal trade-mark. It was a long-drawn-out note, beginning softly, then rising to a shrill moaning blast, finally dying away almost to a whisper. To people living along the right-of-way of the Central in Mississippi and Tennessee it was a familiar sound. At night they would lie in their beds and listen for a sound of one locomotive whistle, and when they heard it they would say "There goes Casey Jones!" as the train roared by and Casey whistled for the next crossing.

Not only was Casey well-liked by the other railroad men but he was the idol of Wallace Sanders, a negro coal-heaver at Canton, Miss., who became an engine wiper in the round house there about the time Casey first "mounted to the cabin" of "the Cannonball." Wallace was accustomed to brag mightily about the prowess of "Mistah Casey," and caring for his engine was a labor of love for the colored man.

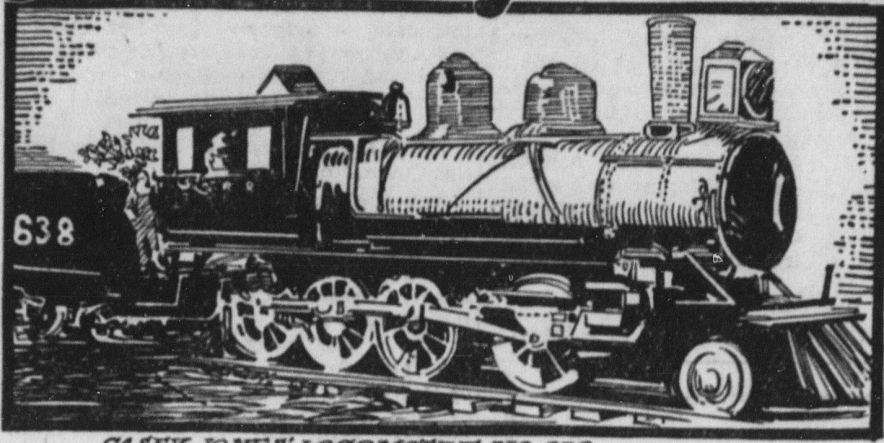
About ten o'clock one Sunday night, April 23, 1900, Casey and his fireman, Sim Webb, rolled into Memphis from Canton and, going into the checking-in office, were preparing to go to their homes when somebody said "Joe Lewis has just been taken with the cramps and can't take his train out tonight." "All right, I'll double back and pull old 638," said Jones. No. 638 was Lewis' locomotive.

It was a rainy night as No. 638 with Casey and Sim Webb in the cabin rolled out of the station and rumbled through the South Memphis yards. "Wonder what's the matter with Lewis," remarked one of the yardmen to another, for the switchmen "knew by the engine's moan that the man at the throttle was Casey Jones." Through the sleeping countryside of Tennessee and Mississippi roared the train, and more than one farmer said to himself, "There goes Casey Jones," as he listened sleepily to the long moaning whistle of old No. 638.

It was four o'clock in the morning on April 30 as No. 638 swept around a long winding curve just above the little town of Vaughn, Miss. Where the curve ended a long sidetrack began and Casey Jones, peering out of his cab window to see if the lights ahead were green or red, yelled across to Sim Webb, "There's a freight train on the siding." Sim nodded and kept on with his coal shoveling.

Knowing that the siding was a long one and having passed many other freights on it, Casey didn't reduce his speed. He didn't know that there were two separate sections of a very long train on the sidetrack that night, and that the rear one was too long to get all of its cars off the main line on to the siding. The freight train crews had figured on "sawing by"—as soon as the passenger train passed the front part of the train it would move forward and the rear part would move up, thus going off of the main track. But they hadn't figured on Casey's speed—it was more than 50 miles an hour.

Within a hundred feet of the end of the siding, the startled gaze of



CASEY JONES' LOCOMOTIVE, NO. 638

Casey Jones and Sim Webb was met by the sight of several box cars looming up through the gloom—box cars which were still on the main track and rolling too slowly on to the sidetrack to escape the thundering rush of old No. 638. "Jump, Sim, and save yourself!" shouted Casey Jones and Sim Webb jumped, fell into some bushes and rolled over and over on the ground—uninjured.

As for Casey Jones, there was just one thing he could do. He threw his engine into reverse and applied the airbrakes. But it was too late. Old No. 638 plowed into those lumbering box cars, smashed them into matchwood, crashed into the caboose and then tumbled over on her side a short distance beyond. When the freight crews reached her and looked into the cab, they saw that her dead engineer still had one hand on the air-brake lever and the other on the whistle cord. Later Sim Webb told Casey's widow the explanation: "I remember that as I jumped Casey held down the whistle in a long, piercing scream. I think he must have had in mind to warn the freight conductor in the caboose so he could jump."

They took Casey Jones to Canton where a committee of three of his fellow workers, Edward O'Malley, a round-house machinist, William Bosma and Homer English, two locomotive engineers, took charge of the arrangements for sending the body of the dead hero back to his home in Jackson, Tenn., where his widow, the two sons and a daughter awaited his last homecoming.

Scarcely less touching than their sorrow was the grief of Wallace Sanders at the news that his idol would take "the Cannonball" out no more. Several days after Casey's funeral, Sanders' fellow workers noticed him going about his duties singing a song about the deeds and the death of Casey Jones. It was a simple melody, but there was something about it which caught the fancy of those who heard it and the words of it—there were only six verses in the original—were easy to remember. Soon they were all singing the negro engine wiper's tribute to his friend.

One day a year or two later a professional song writer passed through Jackson, Miss., and heard the song sung. He saw the possibilities and rewrote the song, retaining, however, the name Casey Jones and some of the incidents of the original story, although changing the locale considerably. In changing the original song, some verses were injected into it which friends of the heroic engineer resented bitterly and they forbade its being sung at all. Their protests, however, did not prevent the song from being published and the song writer who rewrote it is said to have made a fortune from it, more than ten million copies having been sold, not to mention innumerable records and piano rolls.

"The term rounders used in some of the verses and also other terms applied in various parodies would create the impression that he was unstable and reckless," wrote Edward O'Malley, Casey's friend, in a letter to Adventure Magazine several years ago. "Such was not the case. Sober, reliable, loyal and friendly with everybody and of a smiling, pleasant disposition, which won him friends wherever he went—such was my friend, Casey Jones, gentleman." An interesting aftermath of the song was a lawsuit brought by Casey's widow within recent years against a Hollywood picture company for alleged exploitation of photographs of her and her children in connection with a movie that had been built around the famous exploit of the engineer, immortalized by a song.

Although "Casey Jones" is the most famous of all railroad ballads, there are others which are not far behind it in widespread popularity. For instance there is "Old Ninety-Seven." There are numerous versions of this song, but the following, according to R. W. Gordon, an authority on American folk songs, is a composite of three different versions and a representative text:

I was standing on a mountain one cold frosty morning,
I was watching the smoke from below;
It was curling from a long straight smoke-stack
Way down on the Southern Railroad.
It was Old Ninety-seven, the fastest mail-train
The South had ever seen,
And it ran so fast on that fatal Sunday
That the death list numbered thirteen.
It was Old Ninety-seven, the fastest mail-train
Ever run over the Southern Line,
And when arrived at Monroe, Virginia,
She was forty-seven minutes behind.
Steve Branniel was the engineer,
The fastest on the line;
He ran into Monroe to get his orders,
And he got them on the fly.

They gave him his orders at Monroe, Virginia.
Saying: "Steve, you are 'way behind!
This is not Thirty-eight, but it's Old Ninety-seven;
You must put her in Spencer on time!"

Steve Branniel climbed up into his cabin,
Saying, "Pal, it's do or die!"
He reversed his lever, threw his throttle wide open,
Saying "Watch Old Ninety-seven fly."

Steve Branniel climbed up into his cabin,
At his throttle he made a grab,
And when he pulled over Johnson's Junction
He was leaning 'way out of the cab.

Steve Branniel turned to his brave little fireman
Saying "Shovel in a little more coal,
There's a three-mile grade round Whitlow Mountain,
You may watch my drivers roll."

Steve Branniel turned to his brave little fireman,
Said, "Jack, throw in some more coal,
And put your head out the window, boy,
And watch my drive-wheels roll!"

It's a mighty bad road from Lynchburg to Danville;
It is a three-mile grade.
'Twas on the grade Steve lost control of his air-brakes,
So you see what a jump he made.

He was falling down grade at ninety miles an hour,
The whistle began to scream,
He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle
And his body all scarred by steam.

Did he ever pull in? No; he never pulled in,
Though his train was due at ten,
And for hours and hours the switchmen lay waiting
For the mail-train that never pulled in.

The news ran over the telegraph wires
And this is what it said—
That the brave engineer that left Monroe this morning
Is lying at North Danville dead.

Come, all you young ladies, and take warning;
Take warning from this time,
Never speak rash words to your sweet-heart—
He may go and never return.

The song also has an aftermath of a lawsuit, as shown by the following dispatch to the New York World last year:

"Camden, N. J.—An effort to establish the right of the author of a folk song to collect royalties, even though he never put the song on paper, has been made here by attorneys for David Graves George, picturesque self-styled hill-billy, and former railroad brakeman.
"George is suing the Victor Talking Machine company, which sold 5,000,000 phonograph records of the song, 'The Wreck of Old 97.' Through his attorneys, Robert S. Nase of Flushing, L. I., and Minotree J. Fulton of Richmond, Va., George declared he had derived his inspiration for the song on September 27, 1903, when the crack mail train, No. 97, of the Southern railway, sped past Franklin Junction, Va., and jumped off a 200-foot trestle.
"Numerous fellow hill-billies, the attorneys stated, are ready to testify that George originated the song, which later became a favorite.
"Nathan Burkan of New York and Louis Le Duc of Camden, attorneys for the company, asserted the Victor company already has paid royalties to one other company, and to three other persons who have represented themselves as authors of the song.
"The trouble, it appears, began in 1927, when the company announced in a Richmond paper, according to George, that it was looking for the author of the song in order to pay him royalties. From far and wide in the hills, the authors appeared.
"In 1922, the company sets forth, Prof. R. W. Gordon of Harvard set out to collect American folk songs, and found that both Frederick Lewey of Lynchburg and Carl Noel of Danville, Va., claimed authorship of 'The Wreck.' The company compensated both, and also Henry Whittier of Lynchburg, and the General Phonograph company, which had gotten out records of the song before the first Victor records appeared on August 13, 1924.
"Burkan asserted the plaintiff hill billy had copied the song from phonograph records between 1924 and 1927, when he read of the offer.
"George's suit is not brought under the copyright law, since he never wrote down the song, but under the common law dealing with property rights.
"Almost as famous as the foregoing is the combination hobo-railroad ballad: 'The Wabash Cannon-Ball,' which has the following chorus:
We hear the merry jingle,
The rattle and the roar,
As she dashes through the woodland
And comes creeping on the shore,
We hear the engine's whistle
And the merry hoboes' call
As we ride the rods and brake-beam
Oa that Wabash Cannon-Ball.

(© 1931, Western Newspaper Union.)

Community Building

Simple Measures for Reducing Fire Waste

Fire waste is inexcusable, and it can be prevented. The simple logic of the matter is to build so that fire cannot possibly harm our various structures. Firesafe materials are the only true safeguard against human carelessness. And carelessness, after all, is the underlying cause for practically all destructive fires. If the human mind is so constituted that it will not observe the necessary daily precautions against fire, then, as a matter of self-preservation, fire-safe construction must be resorted to.

Just how this operates to help the public is best illustrated by example. Many home fires are caused by defective flues, chimneys, stoves and furnaces. Logically, in most homes the heating apparatus is located in the basement. At this point a concrete basement floor and walls, augmented by a fire-stopping concrete first floor, will furnish ample protection. Walls of concrete masonry, faced with cement stucco and plaster, give further assurance that fires will not cause great structural damage. Walls of this type are also protection against the hazards of defective wiring, another frequent cause of home fires. The roof can best be protected by concrete tile or cement asbestos shingles.

Right-minded building can reduce the national fire toll to a very small portion of its present magnitude.—Detroit Free Press.

Positive Detriment in Unwise Town Expansion

Housing is more of a problem of town planning than one of financing purchasers of homes, although the latter question is not to be overlooked. In the opinion of Henry Wright, architect and city plan expert.

Writing from the point of view of his profession, in an article in the Architectural Record, Mr. Wright declares:

"No one will deny the importance of credit in stimulating home building, but if credit is merely to add more rows of flimsy, monotonous houses to those unfortunate border communities which remain to us from the great land booms of the past we could almost wish that such credit might be suppressed.
"Only one worse fate could be imagined—that new home-owning agitation may again be used as a cloak to open up more miles of unused vacant lots or sparsely populated wastes of cement sidewalks and rusting pipes, of which we have acquired enough to satisfy even the most ardent expansionist."

Brick in Varied Effects
Taste decrees that homes and buildings today must be something more than beautiful in color tone, in surface effects.
The great call today is for style; unique surfaces. Unusual wall handling. New wrinkles in bricklaying that bricklayers have learned from architects. For example, bricks laid to form a Flemish bond, or laid in skintone formation, or walls with the very distinctive "squeezed joint" treatment—old effects, new effects, in scores of molish variations.
There are no fetters and restrictions, no real limitations, to what an architect can do with brick—in planning anything from a six-room cottage to a cloud-piercing office building.

Whatever the architect sets down in a blueprint the bricklayer can set up in the wall—line for line, color for color, brick for brick—to endure as a permanent example of the architect's genius.

Study Home Ownership
The new machinery which is being set up by the federal government specifically to investigate the problems of home ownership is to be built up as an organization within the Department of Commerce. The conference is being so named as to draw facts and ideas from the various existing business organizations and groups whose work is related to or concerned with home production.
Twenty committees will be set up within the conference, according to the program formulated at a recent Washington meeting. The co-ordination of their work is to be made possible through a new organization formed for that purpose within the United States Department of Commerce.

Looking to the Future
City planning had its origin in a remote past when some potentate issued decrees setting forth the specifications of his capital and commanding his underlings to build accordingly. In Europe, where centralized government has always been stronger than in individualistic America, many of the cities have been systematically laid out. It is comparatively rare in Europe to find a municipal water front not arranged to advantage with much consideration both for the requirements of commerce and the needs of recreation. Over here "down by the docks" is likely to be squalid. But we are doing better.—Boston Globe.

Southern City's Wisdom
Two thousand young shade trees will be planted along streets of Richmond, Va.

When You CAN'T QUIT



A headache is often the sign of fatigue. When temples throb it's time to rest. If you can't stop work, you can stop the pain. Bayer Aspirin will do it, every time. Take two or three tablets, a swallow of water, and carry-on—in comfort.

Don't work with nerves on edge or try all day to forget a nagging pain that aspirin could end in a jiffy! Genuine aspirin can't harm you; just be sure it's Bayer.

In every package of Bayer Aspirin are proven directions for headaches, colds, sore throat, neuralgia, neuritis, etc. Carry these tablets with you, and be prepared. To block a sudden cold on the street-car; quiet a grumbling tooth at the office; relieve a headache in the theatre; spare you a sleepless night when nerves are "jumping."

And no modern girl needs "time out" for the time of month! Bayer Aspirin is an absolute antidote for periodic pain.



Take Bayer Aspirin for any ache or pain, and take enough to end it. It can't depress the heart. That is medical opinion. That is why it is only sensible to insist on the genuine tablets that bear the Bayer cross. The pocket tin is a convenient size. The bottle of 100 tablets is most economical to buy.

Chickens Were Tough, but Sentence Tougher

There is a colored gentleman doing 90 days in the Knoxville (Tenn.) jail, evidently because the magistrate did not have a sense of humor. When asked by the magistrate if it were true he had stolen some chickens, as charged, the ducky answered seriously:

"Yo honah, mah parents done put me in a most disastrous spot. Mah name bein' George Washington, Ah simply cannot tell a lie. Yessuh, Ah done took dem chickens. Fo' de honah mah name Ah's done got to tell de truth."

"And what did you do with those three chickens?"
"Ah et them, suh, an' Ah's tellin' de truth when Ah mentions dat dey was discouragin'ly tough."
"Well, this will be tougher," growled the judge as he meted out 30 days for each chicken.

To keep clean and healthy take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. They regulate liver, bowels and stomach.—Adv.

Impetuous Youth

"How old is your son?" asked the visitor.
"Well," replied the father, "he's just reached that age when he thinks that the most important thing to pass isn't his examinations, but the car ahead."—Stray Stories.

Some men would get along much faster if they didn't lose so much time telling other people how smart they are.

HILL SIDE CHICKS

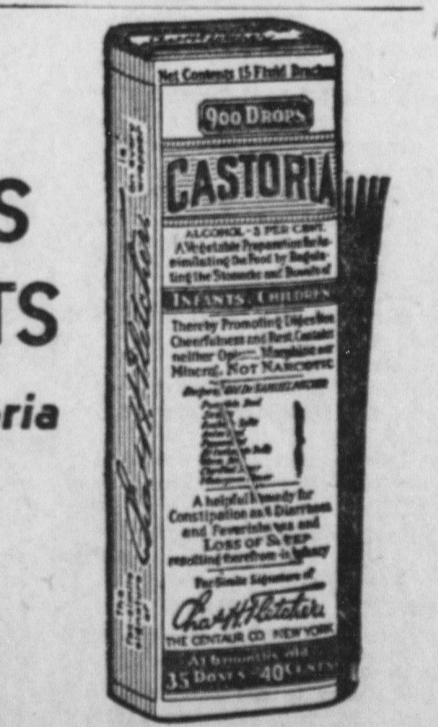
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Marriage is an eye salve that restores the sight of blind lovers.
When actors quarrel they can resort to the makeup box.



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FUSSY, fretful, can't sleep, won't eat... It isn't always easy to find just where the trouble is with a young child. It may be a stomach upset; it may be sluggish bowels.

But when little tongues are coated and there is even a slight suspicion of bad breath—it's time for Castoria!
Castoria, you know, is a pure vegetable preparation especially made for babies and children. When Baby cries with colic or is fretful because of constipation, Castoria brings quick comfort, and, with relief from pain, soothes him to restful sleep. For older children—up through all the school years, Castoria is equally effective in helping to right irregularities. Just give it in larger doses. What a

comfort Castoria is to mothers! Get the genuine, with Chas. H. Fletcher's signature on wrapper and the name Castoria that always appears like this:



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