

BEWARE OF SELF-GUARDING FROGS!

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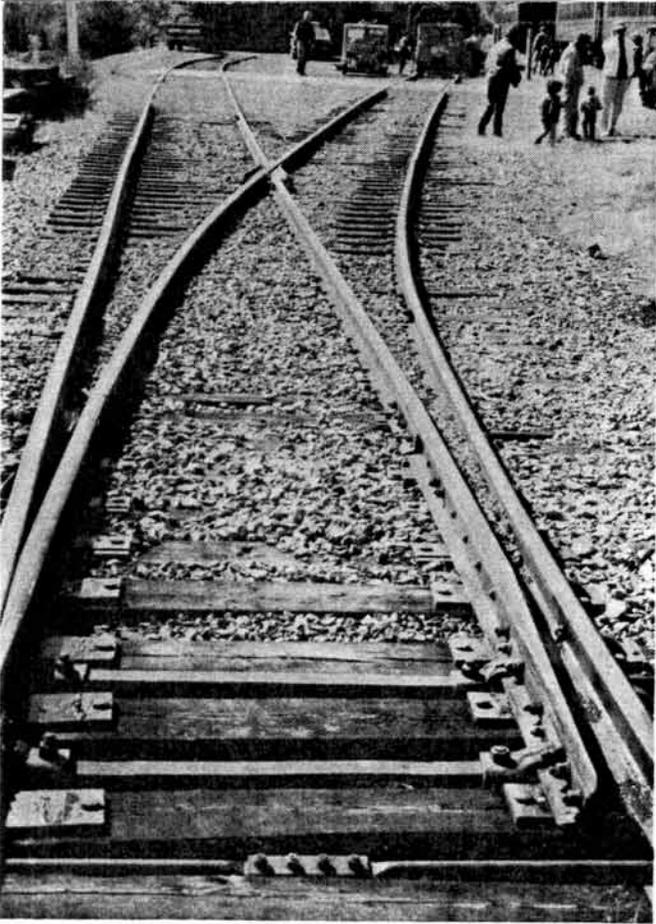
It is possible that more than a few railcar owners do not realize the hazard presented by self-guarding frogs. The accompanying photo shows that a self-guarding frog has no guard rail alongside the outside rail to guide the back of a wheel. Instead, it guides by having bosses cast into the frog which guide the outside face of a wheel. The problem is that our wheels are too narrow to ever touch this guide.

Following the straight route in either direction through this frog seldom causes any problem. Following the curved route through a trailing point switch is also reasonably safe at the low speed recommended by the NARCOA Rulebook, because the wheel flange is presumably near the outside rail.

However, at a recent meet, two cars derailed at low speed while taking a diverging route through a facing point switch with a self-guarding frog. You can see from the photo that there is nothing to prevent the left front wheel from taking the straight route through the frog and letting the right front wheel fall between the rails.

A low speed derailment at a switch can shatter a rear pulley or bend a rear sprocket when the car falls on the rail. You can bend an axle when the wheel falls between the ties of a typically lightly ballasted switch. Of course, the opportunity for personal injury exists, and we want to prevent that, most of all.

The moral is obvious: Go slow through all switches and beware the self-guarding frog!



The self-guarding frog, like the one pictured above, must be approached with caution.

Photo by Dick Ray