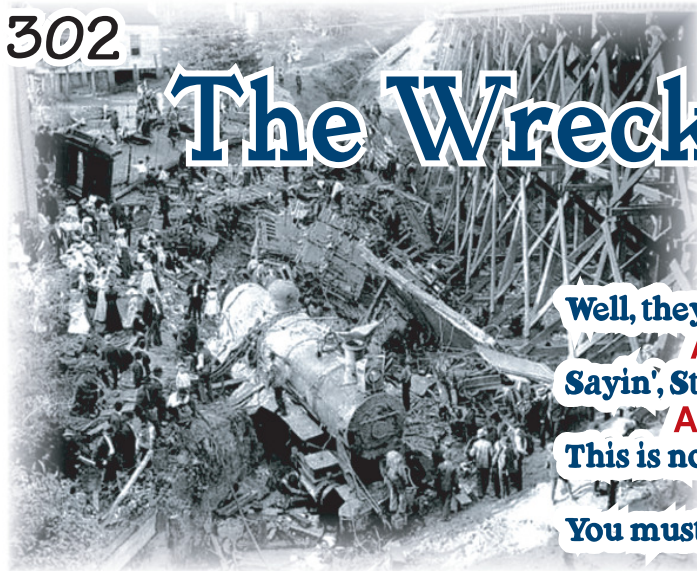


The Wreck of The Old 97

Ukulele Club of Santa Cruz July 2006 Train Songs

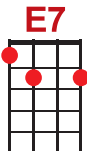
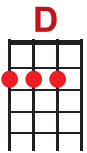
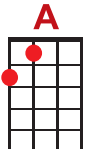


Well, they gave him his orders at Monroe, Virginia

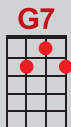
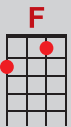
Sayin', Steve, you're way behind time

This is not 38, it is old 97

You must put her into Spencer on time



or
you
can
try it
with



The Old 97, a Southern Railway train enroute to Spencer, N.C., derailed at Stillhouse Trestle near Danville, Virginia, on September 27, 1903. It occurred when the train's engineer forced the train to go to breakneck speeds to make its stop at Spencer on time (Old 97 had a perfect reputation for never being late). Joseph "Steve" Broady had been with the Southern Railroad as an engineer for only a short time on that fateful Sunday in 1903. The train was going down a three-mile grade, approaching the curved Stillhouse trestle. Speed of the train was actually about 35mph, which increased as the train neared the trestle. Engineer Broady could not slow the train due to the speed and sudden loss of braking power. He reversed the engine, locking the wheels. The flange on the engine wheel broke, projected over the rails and struck railroad ties as the train vaulted to its demise, and into the annals of history forever. The 500-foot long trestle was severely damaged as the locomotive pulling two mail cars, one baggage car, and an express car vaulted off the trestle. The train plunged 75 feet to the rocky creek bed. Eleven people were killed including the engine crew and a number of Railway Post Office clerks in the mail car right behind the engine, but seven survived "the wreck of old 97." About 100 yellow canaries fluttered in and around the wreckage. They gained freedom from six cages that had been in the baggage car. The train wreck served as an inspiration for songwriters and balladeers. A 1920s recording of the song, "Wreck of the Old 97" by Vernon Dalhart, is sometimes cited as the first million-seller in the American record industry, as well as the first song to inspire a major copyright lawsuit.

Well the engineer said to his black, greasy fireman

Shovel on a little more coal

And when we cross that White Oak Mountain

You can watch Old 97 roll

It's a mighty hard road from Lynchburg to Danville

A line with a three-mile grade

It was on that grade that he lost his airbrake

You can see what a jump she made

He was goin' down the grade making 90 miles an hour

When his whistle broke into a scream

He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle

He was scalded to death by the steam

Now listen ladies, you must take a warning

From this time and now on,

Never speak harsh words to your true lovin' husband

He may leave you and never return