

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN  
ACCIDENT ON THE CAMAS PRAIRIE RAILROAD NEAR LEWISTON,  
IDAHO, ON AUGUST 1, 1935.

September 28, 1935.

To the Commission:

On August 1, 1935, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a gasoline motor car on the Camas Prairie Railroad near Lewiston, Idaho, which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 1 employee.

## Location and method of operation

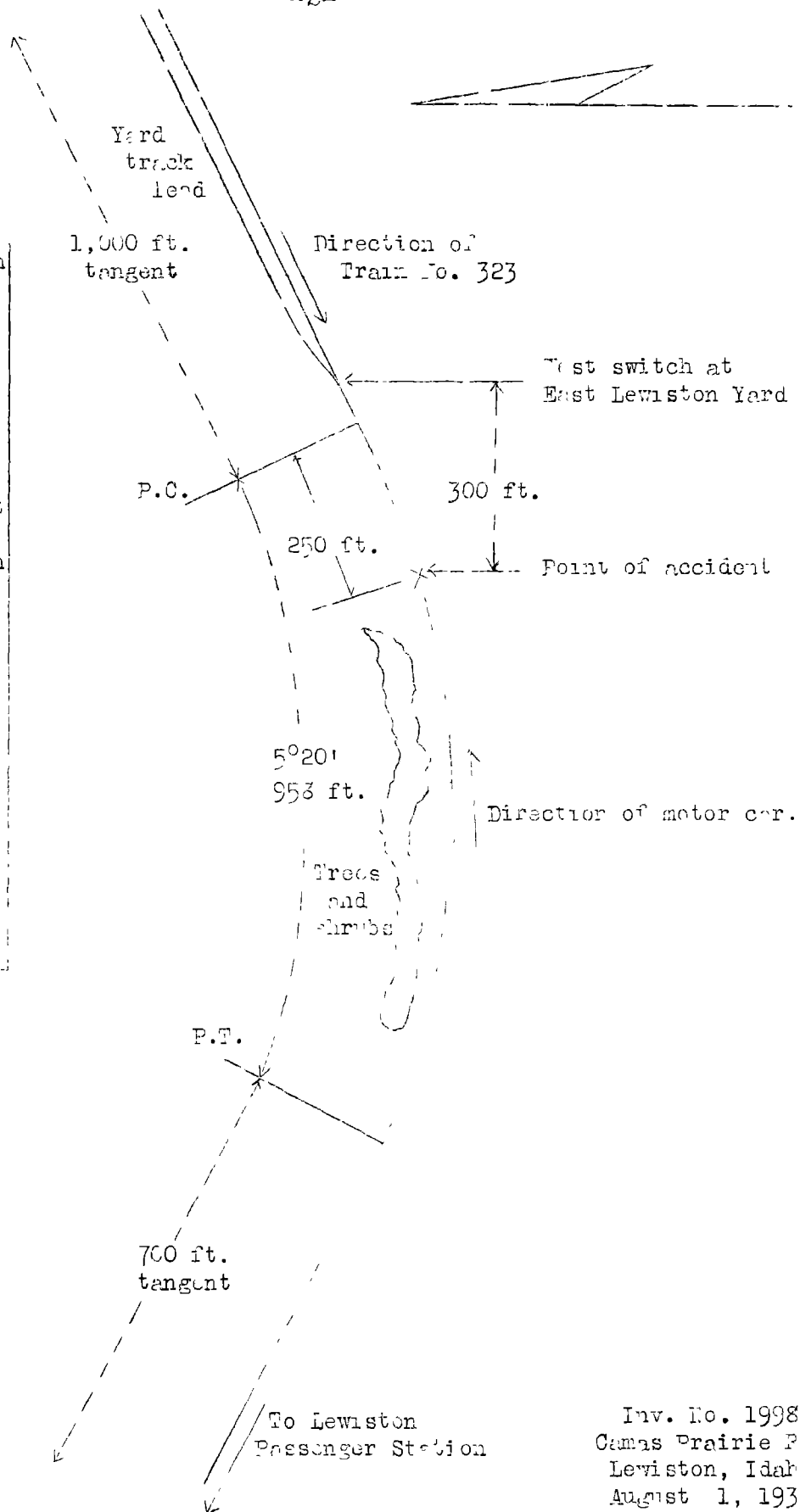
The Camas Prairie Railroad is owned jointly by the Northern Pacific Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad and is operated under the supervision of a manager and in accordance with the Northern Pacific transportation rules. This accident occurred on the First Subdivision, which extends between Lewiston and Stites, Idaho, a distance of 76.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, no form of block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point approximately 300 feet west of the west switch at East Lewiston yard and approximately 3/4 mile east of the passenger station at Lewiston. Approaching this point from the east, the track is tangent for a distance of 1,000 feet, followed by a 5020' curve to the right 958 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 250 feet from its eastern end. Approaching from the west, the track is tangent for 700 feet, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for east-bound trains is 0.13 percent descending at the point of accident.

The speed of passenger trains is restricted by special time-table instructions between Lewiston and Orofino, within which territory this accident occurred, to 35 miles per hour on tangents, 25 miles per hour on curves of more than 30°, and 4 miles per hour over 18th Street crossing at Lewiston.

Due to trees and shrubbery on the inside of the curve the engineman of a west-bound train could not see an east-bound motor car for a distance greater than 570 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:53 or 3:54 p.m.

First Subdivision	
Stites, Idaho	
74.7 mi.	
East Lewiston	
1.5 mi.	
*Point of accident	
Lewiston, Idaho	
Third Subdivision	
17.1 mi.	
Indian, Wash.	
12.0 mi.	
Wawawai, Wash.	
42.9 mi.	
Riparia, Wash.	



Inv. No. 1998  
 Camas Prairie P.A.  
 Lewiston, Idaho  
 August 1, 1935

### Description

Train No. 323, a west-bound passenger train, consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car and 1 coach, both of steel construction, hauled by engine 1715, and was in charge of Conductor Harris and Engineman Leath. This train departed from Arrow, the last open office, 13.5 miles from Lewiston, at 3:28 p.m., according to the train sheet, 6 minutes late, and on approaching Lewiston collided with a motor car while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 20 miles per hour.

The motor car involved was a Fairmont model MM 19, type PHMA, equipped with a 4-horse power gasoline engine. This car was in charge of Carpenter Rudfelt, of the Bridges and Buildings Department, and had been used west of Lewiston on the Third Sub-division for the purpose of transporting a carman to various points for the purpose of inspecting cars for grain loading. This man had completed his assignment and the motor car was returning east-bound to East Lewiston when it collided with Train No. 323 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 25 miles per hour.

Train No. 323 stopped with the front end of the engine 210 feet west of the point of accident with the wreckage of the motor car jammed into the framework of the pilot. The engine was not derailed nor damaged but the motor car was practically destroyed. The employee killed was the carpenter who was operating the motor car and the employee injured was the carman riding on the motor car.

### Summary of evidence

Engineman Leath, of Train No. 323, stated that he left Forebay, 3.1 miles from Lewiston, about 2 minutes late, and that his train was traveling at a speed of between 20 and 25 miles per hour in the vicinity of the west switch at East Lewiston when he saw the motor car about 400 feet away; he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, but thought the speed was about 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident. He estimated the speed of the motor car to have been higher than the speed of his own train - probably 30 miles per hour, and said he did not think the men on that car had seen the train. He had sounded the whistle signal on entering the yard about 1 mile east of the point of accident, the engine bell was ringing, and he was in the act of reaching for the whistle when the collision occurred. A terminal air-brake test had been made at Stites and the brakes functioned properly en route.

Fireman Sanman, of Train No. 323, stated that due to the curve he was unable to see the motor car and the first intimation he had of anything wrong was when the engineman applied the air brakes in emergency.

Carman Gibford who was on the motor car, stated that on the morning of the accident he was sent to Wawawai, 29.1 miles from Lewiston, on the Third Subdivision, to inspect some box cars, Carpenter Rudfelt operating the motor car. They arrived at Wawawai about noon, departing about 1:30 p.m. and proceeded to Bishop, 22.5 miles from Lewiston, where he inspected cars while Rudfelt remained on the motor car. Carman Gibford stated that they stopped at another point where Rudfelt talked with someone, and on arriving at the passenger station at Lewiston they removed the motor car from the rails and he thought Rudfelt went to the dispatcher's office; on his return they replaced the car on the rails and started for the east yard, after a delay of 10 or 12 minutes. No mention was made of Train No. 323 and Carman Gibford did not give it a thought, stating that he figured Rudfelt had obtained information which would permit him to proceed. Carman Gibford stated that he had been watching out for rocks all day and on nearing home he relaxed and was on the right side, sitting sideways, watching the traffic on Main Street which paralleled the track on the south. The speed of the motor car was about 25 miles per hour, after having been reduced to 12 or 15 miles per hour for 18th Street crossing, and his first knowledge of anything wrong was when he saw Train No. 323 right in front of them, the collision occurring about the time he started to jump off, and the last he remembered of Rudfelt was that the latter had his hand on the brake. Carman Gibford stated that while he had never before ridden with Carpenter Rudfelt, he had confidence in him and thought he was capable of operating the motor car, and therefore did not concern himself as to the movement being made.

Dispatcher Wilson, on duty at the station at Lewiston on the afternoon of the accident, stated that he did not see Carpenter Rudfelt check the register nor did Rudfelt ask him for information concerning trains; it is Rudfelt's practice to ask for information rather than check the register himself, and as far as he knew, Rudfelt had never failed to get a check of the trains in the past. It is possible, however, for a motor car to be operated past the passenger station without his knowledge.

Chief Dispatcher Smith stated that when on the out-bound or westward trip, Carpenter Rudfelt obtained over the telephone at East Lewiston a line-up of trains between that point and Lewiston and on arriving at Lewiston asked for further information and was informed that there would be no trains in either direction on the Third Subdivision. There is no record made in the train-order book relative to such line-ups when given to operators of motor cars.

Supervisor of Maintenance Baldwin stated that on the day of the accident he was unable to go with the carman to inspect the cars and assigned Rudfelt to operate the motor car. Carpenter

Rudfelt had been operating motor cars from time to time during the past 2 or 3 years and he considered him a safe man to place in charge of the car; Rudfelt understood the flagging rules and had been instructed to check the register or obtain a line-up on train movements. Supervisor Baldwin did not know of any infractions of rules or other irregularities on Rudfelt's part while operating motor cars.

Several days after the occurrence of the accident, in the presence of the manager, assistant supervisor and the Commission's inspectors, a test was made, using the same train with the same crew, to determine the distance within which the train would stop after an emergency application of the car brakes, duplicating the conditions which existed on the day of the accident. It was found that with the train traveling at a speed of about 25 miles per hour and the emergency application being made on passing the west switch of the East Lewiston yard, the train could be stopped within a distance of 350 feet, or beyond the point of collision, but 144 feet east of the point where it stopped at the time of the accident.

#### Discussion

The evidence indicates that Carpenter Rudfelt did not obtain a line-up of trains on arriving at Lewiston on his return trip eastward and that he then operated the motor car without authority against an over-due first-class train, proceeding toward East Lewiston at a speed of 25 miles per hour, and in doing so undertook to pass around a curve where the view was very much restricted without taking any precaution to protect the movement.

#### Conclusion

This accident was caused by the operation of a motor car on the time of an opposing over-due first-class train without authority or protection.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.