

1941

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT ON THE CHICAGO, INDIANAPOLIS & LOUISVILLE RAILWAY
NEAR JORDAN, IND., ON NOVEMBER 1, 1934.

December 17, 1934.

To the Commission:

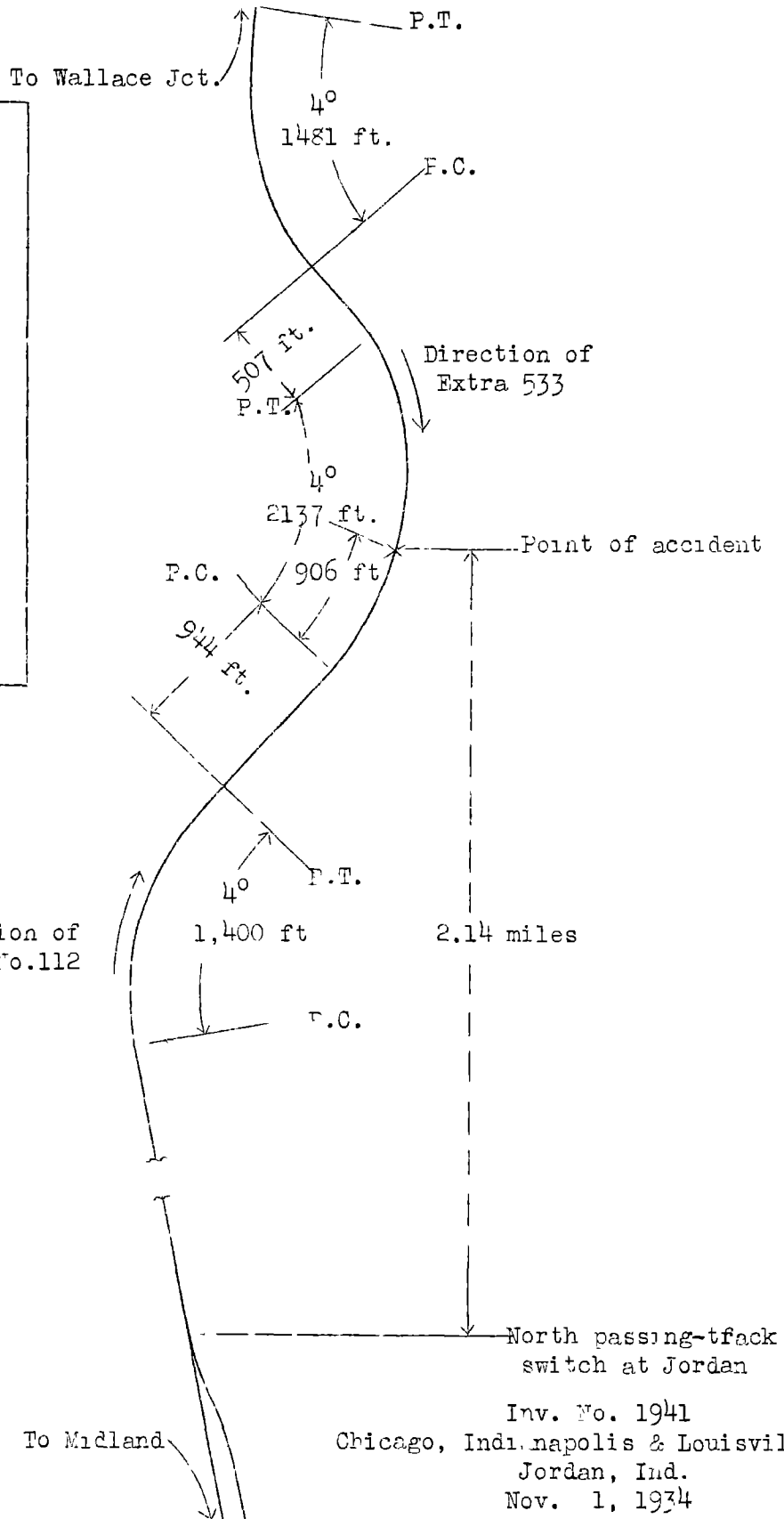
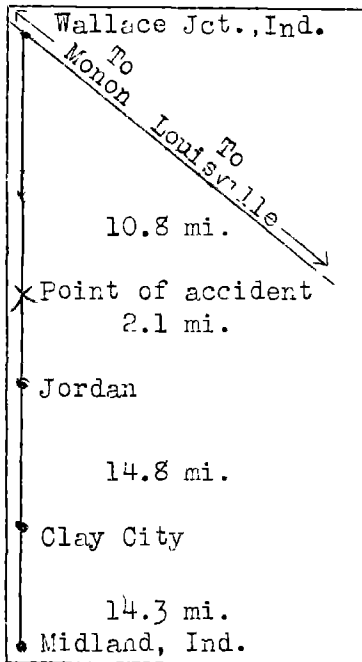
On November 1, 1934, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Chicago, Indianapolis & Louisville Railway near Jordan, Ind., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 6 employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Sixth Subdivision of the Southern Division known as the I. & L. Branch, which extends between Wallace Junction and Midland, Ind., a distance of 42 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point 2.14 miles north of the north switch of the passing track at Jordan; approaching this point from the south, the track is tangent for a distance of 3,925 feet, followed by a 4° curve to the right 1,400 feet in length, tangent track for a distance of 944 feet, and a 4° curve to the left 2,137 feet in length, the accident occurring on this last-mentioned curve at a point 906 feet from its southern end. Approaching from the north, the track is tangent for more than 1 mile, followed by a 4° curve to the left 1,481 feet in length, tangent track for a distance of 507 feet, and then the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is generally ascending for north-bound trains, and is 0.70 percent at the point of accident.

The view was materially restricted by trees and steep bluffs on both sides of the track, the range of vision on the inside of the curve where the accident occurred being restricted to about 400 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8:25 p.m.



Description

Train No. 112, a north-bound second-class freight, consisted of 23 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 501, and was in charge of Conductor Savage and Engineman Peyton. This train left Midland, 29.1 miles south of Jordan, at 6:30 p.m., 2 hours and 30 minutes late, with an order to run 2 hours and 30 minutes late to Wallace Junction. At Clay City, 14.8 miles south of Jordan, the crew received a copy of train order 95, form 31, directing them to meet Extra 533 at Jordan. Train No. 112 departed from Clay City at 7:33 p.m., 2 hours and 43 minutes late, passed Jordan, where Extra 527 was on the passing track, without stopping, and collided with Extra 533 north of Jordan while traveling at a speed estimated to have been 4 or 5 miles per hour.

Extra 533, a south-bound freight train, consisted of 11 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 533, and was in charge of Conductor Driscoll and Engineman Drake. At Wallace Junction, 12.9 miles north of Jordan, the crew received, among others, a copy of train order 95, above referred to, on form 19. This train left Wallace Junction at 8 p.m., according to the train sheet, and was approaching Jordan when it collided with Train No. 112 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 8 and 15 miles per hour.

Both engines were badly damaged but only the engine trucks were derailed; the cistern and tender frame of the tender of engine 501 were forced ahead against the boiler of the engine, while the tenth car in this train was buckled and derailed. The first car in Extra 533 was partly derailed and the fourth to the eighth cars, inclusive, were derailed and slightly damaged. The employee killed was the head brakeman of Train No. 112 and those injured were the engineman, fireman and rear brakeman of Train No. 112 and the engineman, fireman, and head brakeman of Extra 533.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Peyton, of Train No. 112, stated that he understood train order 95, requiring his train to meet Extra 533 at Jordan, and on approaching the station he sounded the meeting-point whistle signal. He saw a train on the passing track with its headlight turned off; the white classification lights were burning and there was an illuminated background for the engine number which appeared on each side of the headlight, but for some reason he failed properly to check the number, although there was nothing to obstruct his view; he thought this train was Extra 533 and had no idea that he had made a mistake in

identifying it until after the accident. His first intimation of anything wrong was when the fireman saw the reflection of the headlight of an approaching train and warned him; he immediately jumped up and looked out, the fireman called to him again, and he shut off steam and applied the air brakes in emergency, and he thought the train had moved only a few car lengths before it was struck by Extra 533. Engineman Peyton stated that on passing through Jordan the speed of his train was between 15 and 20 miles per hour; he then reduced speed in compliance with time-table restriction of 6 miles per hour over the bridge just north of Jordan, and he estimated the speed to have been about 12 miles per hour on the ascending grade when he applied the air brakes in emergency, reducing the speed to 4 or 5 miles per hour at the time of the impact. Engineman Peyton further stated that there are two regular pool crews and some times an extra crew operating on this branch line, and he knew that there were two trains ahead of him out of Midland, and he expected that Extra 527, having left Midland before Extra 533 would be ahead of it on the return trip to Midland.

Fireman Brazier, of Train No. 112, stated that on approaching Jordan he was putting in a fire; he saw the marker lights but did not see the number of the engine on the passing track. On approaching the curve on which the accident occurred he was again putting in a fire and when he looked out he saw the reflection of the headlight of an approaching train, followed almost immediately by the appearance of the train, at which time he thought it was about 12 or 15 car lengths distant. The head brakeman was on the seat in front of him and should have been the first to see the headlight; the brakeman gave no evidence of having seen the train, however, nor did he make any effort to leave the engine up to the time the fireman jumped off.

Conductor Savage, of Train No. 112, stated that when he received train order 95 at Clay City he gave the engineman's copy to the head brakeman and showed his own copy to the flagman. Approaching Jordan he heard the engineman sound the meeting-point whistle signal and on rounding the curve he saw a train on the passing track. He was riding on the right side of the cupola in the caboose, with the flagman on the left side, and the flagman got down and went to the rear platform while the conductor tried to open his window; it became stuck halfway open, and in passing the engine of the train on the passing track he placed his face against the window but was unable to see its number and he did not ask the flagman when he returned to the cupola if it was Extra 533. Conductor Savage further stated that he knew they would have to meet Extra 527 but figured that it would be at Wallace Junction.

Flagman Beaman, of Train No. 112, stated that he read and understood the train orders governing the operation of his train. In passing through Jordan he was on the rear platform of the caboose, looking over the train, and saw the train on the passing track with the headlight turned out. He thought he smelled a hot box and stepped over to the other side of the platform just as his caboose passed the head end of the engine; he then held his lantern up toward the side of the engine cab but failed to see the engine number and assumed that some member of the crew had seen it.

Engineman Drake, of Extra 533, stated that he was approaching Jordan at a speed of about 15 miles per hour with the throttle practically closed when he saw the reflection of a headlight and immediately afterwards saw an engine four or five car lengths distant; he closed the throttle entirely and applied the air brakes in emergency. Fireman Ferree did not see the reflection of the headlight of Train No. 112 until after the engineman had applied the air brakes; he estimated the speed of his train to have been 20 miles per hour at the time the emergency application was made, the speed being reduced to 12 or 15 miles per hour at the time of the collision. Head Brakeman Gasoway, who was on the engine, estimated the speed to have been 15 or 18 miles per hour at the time of the emergency application and about 8 or 10 miles per hour at the time of the accident. The statements of Conductor Driscoll and Flagman Robertson added nothing of importance.

The terminal for the subdivision on which this accident occurred is at Midland and the crews involved in this accident were on turn-around runs between Midland and Wallace Junction. The statements of the members of both crews clearly indicated that it was not their practice to make terminal air-brake tests of trains on this subdivision, the only test made consisting of an application-and-release test with the members of the train crew observing whether the brakes applied on the first and last cars in the train; the conductor of Train No. 112 said they had never had any instructions to make tests in that manner but that was the way it was done. This conductor also stated that he did not know a great deal about air other than to cut it out or something of that kind, and when asked if he would know when the air was working properly on his train he replied, "Well, when the air is applied the first time, when we slow up or something, I can tell." One of the employees said he did not understand the instructions concerning the testing of air brakes and another said that in the absence of a car inspector train crews were required to see that the air was working through the train but not to examine every car; if a car inspector were present and some cars were found with the brakes cut out, the

procedure would be to find out why the brakes were cut out and then either set the cars out or let them go, placing them anywhere in the train provided no two of them were together and also provided that none of them was next to the engine. It also developed that when the conductor of Train No. 112 received train order 95 on Form 31, he turned it over to the head brakeman to deliver to the engineman instead of personally delivering it as required by the rules.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of the crew of Train No. 112 properly to identify a train on a siding, resulting in failure to obey a meet order governing another train.

The evidence indicates that the crew of Train No. 112 received and understood train order 95 requiring them to meet Extra 533 at Jordan. On approaching Jordan the engineman sounded the meeting-point whistle signal; he saw a train on the passing track but failed to properly check the number, in some way identifying it as extra 533 when as a matter of fact it was extra 527. The fireman was occupied with the fire and made no attempt to identify the train. The conductor, who was riding in the cupola of the caboose on the right side, adjoining the passing track, tried to open the window on approaching Jordan, but it became stuck and on passing the engine he was unable to see its number, while the flagman, who had gone out on the rear platform of the caboose, also failed to check the number, giving as a reason for his failure the fact that his attention was diverted to the other side of his own train. The net result was that no member of this train crew properly identified the train on the siding with the result that this train passed the meeting point before the opposing train had arrived.

It was stated that the air brakes on the trains involved were working properly; in fact, the engineman of Train No. 112 said he had a good-braking train. However, according to the evidence it is not the practice on this subdivision to make terminal air-brake tests when a car inspector is not on duty. The evidence further indicated that employees were not properly instructed on the air-brake rules and that some employees did not understand these rules; in fact the situation with respect to the observance of rules as developed in this investigation is a reflection on the instruction and supervision provided by this railway. Responsible officers of this railway should promptly take such measures as may be required to insure that employees first have the benefit of proper instruction on the rules, and then see to it that the rules are enforced.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,
DIRECTOR.