

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2994
CHICAGO, SAINT PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS AND OMAHA
RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT ST. JAMES, MINN., ON

MAY 18, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis
and Omaha

Date: May 18, 1946

Location: St. James, Minn.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 23 : 17

Engine numbers: 425 : 435

Consists: 58 cars, caboose : 40 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 4 m. p. h. : 14 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits

Track: Single; tangent; 0.417 percent
ascending grade westward

Weather: Foggy

Time: 4:34 a. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed
of following train moving within
yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2994

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

CHICAGO, SAINT PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS AND OMAHA
RAILWAY COMPANY

June 27, 1946.

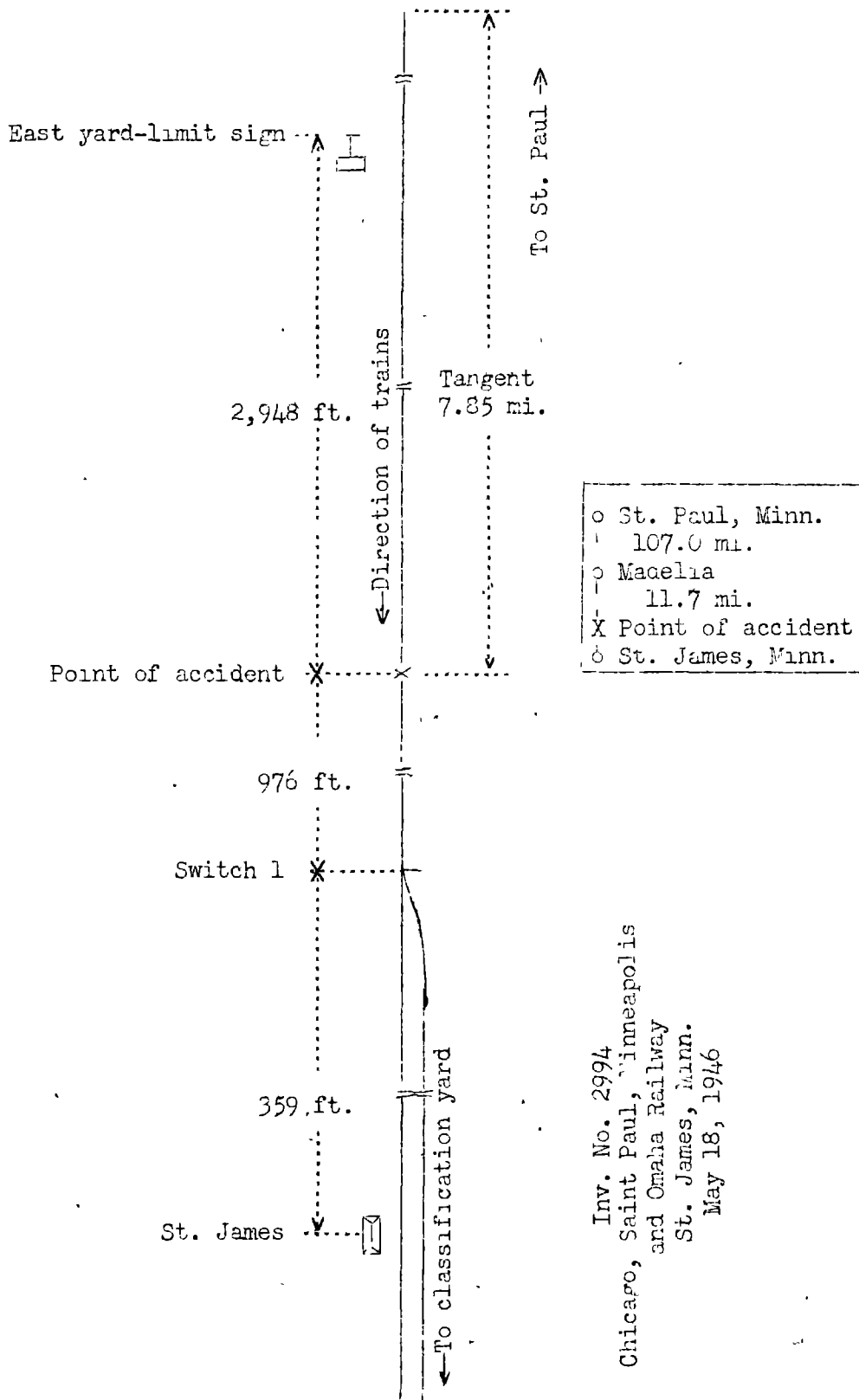
Accident at St. James, Minn., on May 18, 1946, caused by
failure properly to control the speed of the fol-
lowing train moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 18, 1946, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway at St. James, Minn., which resulted in the death of two employees, and the injury of three employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Western Division extending between St. Paul and St. James, Minn., 118.7 miles, a single-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At St. James, the east switch of a classification yard located south of the main track is 1,335 feet east of the station, and is designated as switch 1. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at St. James, at a point 2,948 feet west of the east yard-limit sign and 976 feet east of switch 1. From the east the main track is tangent 7.85 miles to the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. The grade for west-bound trains is 0.417 percent ascending.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

19. The following signals will be displayed to the rear of every train, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train:

* * *

Lights * * * as markers, showing * * * red to the rear.

* * *

93. * * *

Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first class trains.

Second and third class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

Description of Accident

No. 23, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 425, 58 cars and a caboose, was moving within yard limits at St. James at a speed of about 4 miles per hour when the rear end was struck by No. 17, at a point 2,948 feet west of the east yard-limit sign.

No. 17, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 435, 40 cars and a caboose, passed Madelia, the last open office, 11.7 miles east of St. James, at 4:15 a. m., 2 hours 18 minutes late, passed the east yard-limit sign at St. James and while moving at an estimated speed of 14 miles per hour it struck No. 23.

The caboose of No. 23 was demolished. The rear two cars were derailed and badly damaged. The engine of No. 17 was derailed to the north but remained practically upright, and stopped about 90 feet west of the point of collision and at an angle of 15 degrees to the main track. The front end was badly damaged. The front pair of wheels of the first car was derailed. A stock car, which was on an adjacent track immediately north of the main track, was overturned and badly damaged.

A dense fog prevailed at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:34 a. m.

The conductor and the flagman of No. 23 were killed. The conductor, the flagman and the front brakeman of No. 17 were injured.

The center-sills of the caboose of No. 23 were of steel and the remainder was of wood construction. The rear car of No. 23 telescoped the superstructure of the caboose its entire length. The employees killed were in this caboose.

Discussion

No. 23 was moving within yard limits at St. James at a speed of about 4 miles per hour when the rear end was struck by No. 17 at a point 2,948 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. Under the rules, the speed of No. 17, a second-class freight train, was required to be so controlled that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.

The conductor and the flagman of No. 23 were killed in the accident. The surviving members of the crew of this train said that dense fog prevailed within the yard limits at St. James, consequently the speed of their train did not exceed 4 miles per hour between the yard-limit sign and switch 1. Without stopping, this train was proceeding from the main track through switch 1 to the classification yard, and the caboose and 19 cars were on the main track east of switch 1 when the accident occurred. The first any surviving member of the crew of this train was aware of anything being wrong was when the brakes became applied in emergency as a result of the collision.

As No. 17 was approaching St. James, the speed was about 45 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly and the enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. A brake-pipe pressure of 70 pounds was being maintained. There was no condition of the engine which obscured the view or distracted attention. The engineer said that fog had prevailed throughout a distance of about 35 miles east of

St. James, but it was not so dense as the fog in the vicinity of St. James. When the engine was about 500 feet east of the east-yard-limit sign the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction of about 11 pounds, which was not released. The throttle was in position to maintain considerable valve-chamber pressure. The engineer of No. 17 thought the speed was reduced to about 35 miles per hour when his engine passed the yard-limit sign, and, since the speed was being gradually reduced, no further brake-pipe reduction was made until the members of the crew who were on the engine saw the lighted red marker lamps of No. 23 about 100 feet distant. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position in an attempt to avert the collision. The engineer said the speed was about 14 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The accident occurred within yard limits, and, under the rules, No. 17 was required to be operated in such manner that it could be stopped short of a preceding train. The engineer of No. 17 could assign no reason for failing to operate his train in accordance with the yard-limit rule.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of June, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.