Inv-2112

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE

CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RY.

LONDON, IND.

NOVEMBER 11, 1936

INVESTIGATION NO. 2112

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis
Date:	November 11, 1936
Location:	London, Ind.
Kind of accident:	Derailment
Train involved:	Passenger
Train number:	No. 34
Engine number:	5378
Consist:	12 cars
Speed:	60-70 miles per hour
Track:	Tangent, slight grade
Weather:	Clear
Time:	2:50 a.m.
Casualties:	2 killed and 29 injured
Cause:	Broken rail, dispatcher having failed to warn crew after having been notified that preceding train had passed over something unusual in the vicinity.

To the Commission:

On November 11, 1936, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway near London, Ind., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and 1 express messenger, and the injury of 18 passengers, 6 mail clerks and 5 employees. The investigation of this accident was held in conjunction with a representative of the Public Service Commission of Indiana.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Indiana Division extending between Indianapolis, Ind., and Cincinnati, Ohio, a distance of 108.9 miles; in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The point of accident was 1,959 feet west of the station; approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for several miles, and the grade is slightly undulating; at the point of accident it is 0.306 percent ascending for eastbound trains. The track is laid with 105-pound rails, 33 feet in length, with 20 treated ties to the rail length, and is single-spiked and fully tieplated, ballasted with washed gravel, and well maintained.

About 1,500 feet west of the point of accident is the beginning of a fill which gradually increases in height until it is about 18 feet high, and it then continues at that height as far as the west abutment of bridge 442, which carries the track over Sugar Creek. This bridge is a 3-span steel-girder structure, 201.5 feet in length, and is 22.5 feet above the bed of the creek at its highest point; at the time of the accident there was about 2.5 feet of water in the creek. The west abutment of this bridge was 377 feet east of the point of accident.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:50 a.m.

Description

Train No. 34, an east-bound passenger train, consisted of 3 express cars, 1 baggage car, 3 mail cars, 1 coach, 1 Pullman sleeping car, 1 Pullman parlor car, 1 coach and 1 Pullman parlor car, in the order given, hauled by engine 5378,

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C., C. & St. L. Ry.,
London, Indiana
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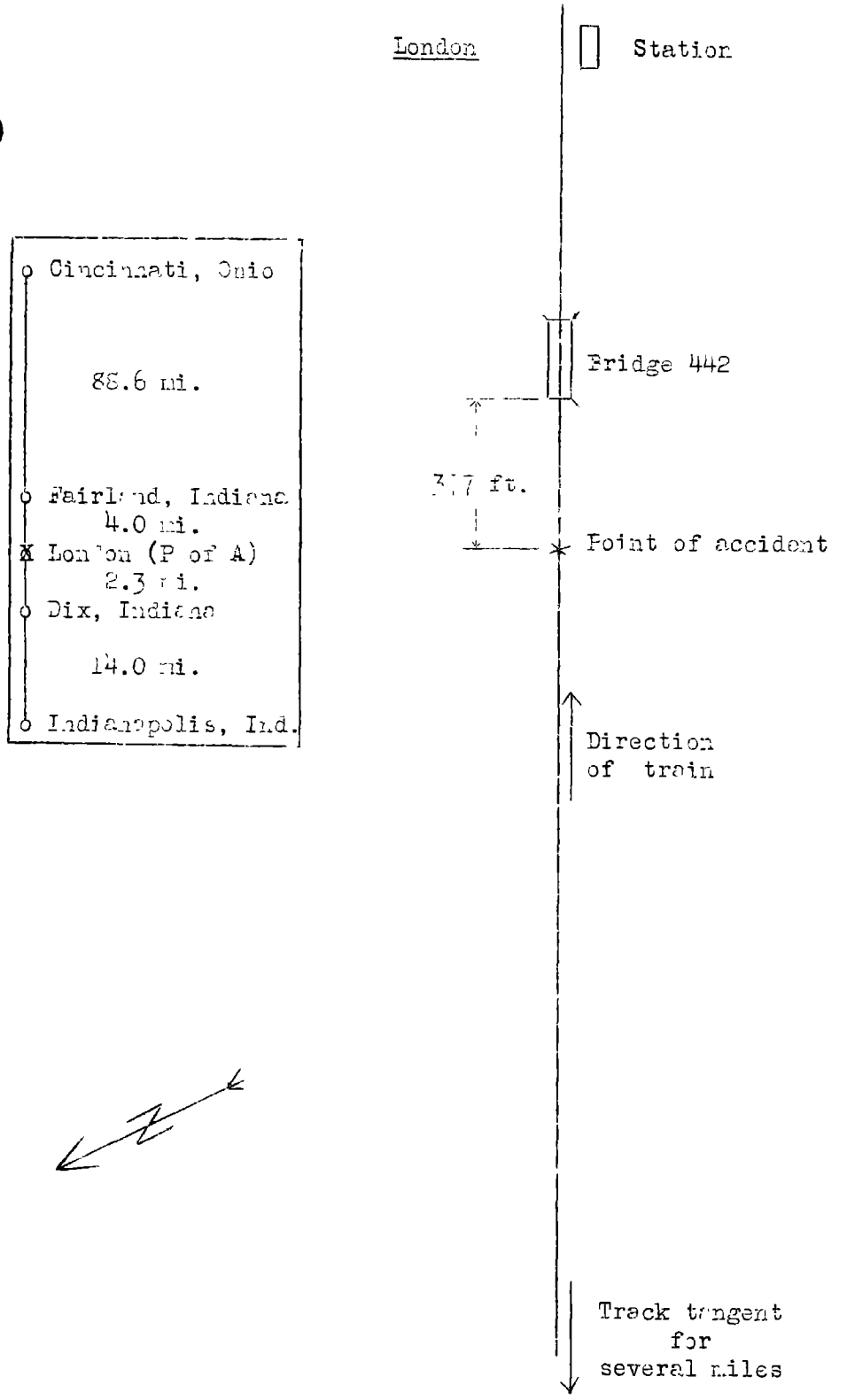

and was in charge of Conductor Kennedy and Engineman Maloney. All the cars were of steel construction with the exception of the first express car, which was of steel-underframe construction. This train left Indianapolis, 16.3 miles west of London, at 2:27 a.m., according to the train sheet, 7 minutes late, passed Dix, 2.3 miles from London, at 2:48 a.m., 4 minutes late, and was approaching London when it was derailed while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 60 and 70 miles per hour.

The engine and first two cars were not derailed and were stopped about half a mile east of the point of accident. All of the other cars were derailed; the third and fourth cars stopped in the water of Sugar Creek, the fifth and sixth cars going over them and stopping near the east bank of the creek, while the seventh car stopped on its side on the west bank, at right angles to the track and partly submerged in the water. The eighth, ninth and tenth cars stopped on their right sides, while the remaining two cars stopped in an upright position. The fatalities occurred in the third and fourth cars; the employee killed was a baggage master, while the employees injured were the conductor, brakeman, flagman, and two dining-car employees who were deadheading.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Maloney said he passed Dix under a clear block-signal indication, running at a speed which he estimated to have been between 60 and 70 miles per hour; he noticed nothing unusual until he heard a short blast of the air whistle, followed immediately by a lunge in the train and the loss of air pressure. The statements of Fireman Hill added nothing of importance.

Conductor Kennedy was in the eighth car; his first knowledge of anything wrong was when there was a crash and the car in which he was riding turned over and stopped on the west bank of the creek. Shortly afterwards, he began an examination of the train and also of the track, and at a point about 25 feet back of the rear end of the last car he discovered a broken rail; the receiving end of the rail was still attached to the preceding rail and several pieces of the broken rail were lying nearby. There were no marks on the ties west of this point, and his examination indicated that the broken rail was the cause of the accident.

The crew of Train No. 35, a passenger train which was the last westbound train prior to the accident, passing Dix

at 1:18 a.m., said they noticed nothing unusual in the movement of the train or in track conditions in the vicinity of Sugar Creek bridge. Engineman Welsh, however, of Train No. 84, an eastbound freight train which passed Dix at 2:22 a.m., said that when within about 100 yards of the bridge he heard a slight noise under the right side of the engine and thought his engine had run over an animal or a blistered rail; the speed of his train at the time was about 35 or 40 miles per hour, and having no idea that the track condition was serious enough to justify a stop, he proceeded to Fairland, the first open office, 4 miles east of London; after taking siding, he notified the operator concerning what he had noticed, this being about 2:37 a.m., and asked the operator to notify the dispatcher immediately so that the crew of Train No. 34 could receive proper warning, and shortly afterward the operator told him he had reported the matter to the dispatcher. Conductor Russell and Flagman Roberts were in the caboose of Train No. 84 and did not notice anything irregular about the movement of their train or the condition of the track.

Operator Paramore, on duty at Fairland, said that at 2:39 a.m., he notified Dispatcher Gaugh concerning what Engineman Welsh had told him, and Dispatcher Gaugh then asked him if the engineman had given him a message, to which he replied in the negative; shortly afterwards he informed the engineman that the dispatcher had been notified. Operator Paramore had not noticed anything to indicate that the dispatcher was unusually busy at the time, and also stated that he had worked with the dispatcher earlier in the night and that he had seemed to be about as usual in his conversation.

Operator Sterrett, on duty at Dix, said he was on the telephone when the operator at Fairland reported to the dispatcher concerning the track condition near Sugar Creek bridge. Operator Sterrett was in position to take a message or an order for Train No. 34 and to block the train at his station, but on failing to receive anything from the dispatcher, he gave Train No. 34 the block and allowed it to proceed, not being sufficiently alarmed concerning what he had heard to cause him to take independent action and stop the train on his own initiative. It further appeared from the statements of Operator Sterrett that he had talked on the telephone with Dispatcher Gaugh several times earlier in the night, and so far as he could observe the dispatcher was in normal condition.

Dispatcher Manley, who was handling another portion of this division, said he was on duty at the time of the accident, occupying a position on the side of the table opposite Dispatcher Gaugh. By means of the loud speaker he had heard the message to Dispatcher Gaugh from Operator Paramore, saying that the engineman of Train No. 84 had reported running over a broken rail or some object on the track, this being a few minutes prior to the time at which the wires went down, and he also heard Dispatcher Gaugh ask if the engineman had filed a message, to which the operator replied in the negative. Dispatcher Manley then asked Dispatcher Gaugh if he had automatic signals in the territory in question, and on being told that there were none, he remarked that Dispatcher Gaugh wanted to be careful about Train No. 34, to which Dispatcher Gaugh made no reply. Dispatcher Manley did not hear Dispatcher Gaugh call either Beech Grove or Dix, the two open offices west of where the trouble was located, or make any arrangements to stop Train No. 34. He also stated that Dispatcher Gaugh had appeared to be normal in his actions. No statement was obtained from Dispatcher Gaugh, who committed suicide a few hours after the occurrence of the accident.

Division Engineer Hodge said there were no marks on the ties or indications of dragging equipment for a considerable distance on either side of the scene of the accident. Examination of the broken rail showed that 5 feet 1/4 inch of the receiving end remained attached to the preceding rail, while on the fractured end of this section there was a transverse fissure which had not broken through the rail, so that it could not have been detected by observation. Altogether, 10 pieces of the broken rail were found, having a total length of 25 feet 8 inches, and transverse fissures were found at other points, although the largest fissure was at the first-mentioned break which apparently was the initial point of rupture of the rail. This rail had last been checked by a rail-detector car on March 5, 1935, but the track between Dix and Shelbyville, the latter being a station 10.5 miles east of London, had been examined by the section foreman during the past spring by means of mirrors; this latter inspection ended about the first of April, and no defective rails were found. About November 1 another mirror inspection was started, but up to the day of the accident no defective rails had been discovered. In a subsequent statement by Division Engineer Hodge it appeared that 57 pieces of the rail had been located.

Examination of the track by the Commission's inspectors disclosed conditions approximately as described by the division engineer. The broken rail was on the south side

of the track, and at the point of initial rupture, slightly over 5 feet from the receiving end of the rail, there was a transverse fissure which measured approximately 1 7/16 x 1 15/16 inches and extended to within 1/2 inch of the running surface of the rail. Several other fissures were observed, none of which was as large as the one just described.

Discussion

The evidence clearly indicated that the immediate cause of this accident was a broken rail in the south side of the track, this being the engineman's side of an eastbound train, and that the initial fracture of the rail occurred at a point where there was a large transverse fissure. Several other fissures were found, and during the course of the derailment the rail was broken into many pieces, 57 of which had been recovered at the time of the investigation.

The evidence further indicated that the engine crew of Train No. 84, an eastbound freight train passing Dix at 2:22 a.m., noticed something wrong at the approximate point where the accident afterwards occurred, and that on arrival at Fairland, the next open office to the eastward, the engineman instructed the operator to notify the dispatcher. The operator said he notified Dispatcher Gaugh at 2:39 a.m., and his statement is verified by that of another dispatcher working in the same office with Dispatcher Gaugh, who, by means of a loud speaker, heard the report, asked Dispatcher Gaugh if he had automatic signals in the territory in question, and then took occasion to warn him to be careful about Train No. 34. This dispatcher said Dispatcher Gaugh made no reply and that he did not hear Dispatcher Gaugh make any arrangements about stopping that train, but in view of the death of Dispatcher Gaugh a few hours after the occurrence of the accident, no statement can be made as to why he failed to take action. Dispatcher Gaugh was employed as an operator in February, 1908, and was promoted to dispatcher in December, 1911, since which time he had had a clear record.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by a broken rail, the dispatcher on duty having failed to warn the crew of the train involved of possible danger after having been notified that a preceding train had passed over something unusual in that immediate vicinity.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.