

BUREAU OF SAFETY

REPORT NO. 1980

Railroad: Erie

Date: April 25, 1935.

Location: MQ Crossing, N. Y.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Extra 3374 : Extra 3213

Engine numbers: 3374 : 3213

Consist: 45 cars : 35 cars

Speed: 30 m.p.h. : Stopped

Track: 1° 30' curve

Grade: 0.20 percent ascending for  
east-bound trains

Weather: Clear

Time: 3:35 a.m.

Casualties: 3 injured

Cause: Failure of dispatcher to annul  
train order to superior train  
and failure of an operator to  
hold that train as directed.

1980

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN  
ACCIDENT ON THE ERIE RAILROAD NEAR MQ CROSSING, N. Y.,  
ON APRIL 25, 1935.

June 25, 1935.

To the Commission:

On April 25, 1935, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Erie Railroad near MQ Crossing, N. Y., which resulted in the injury of three employees.

Location and method of operation

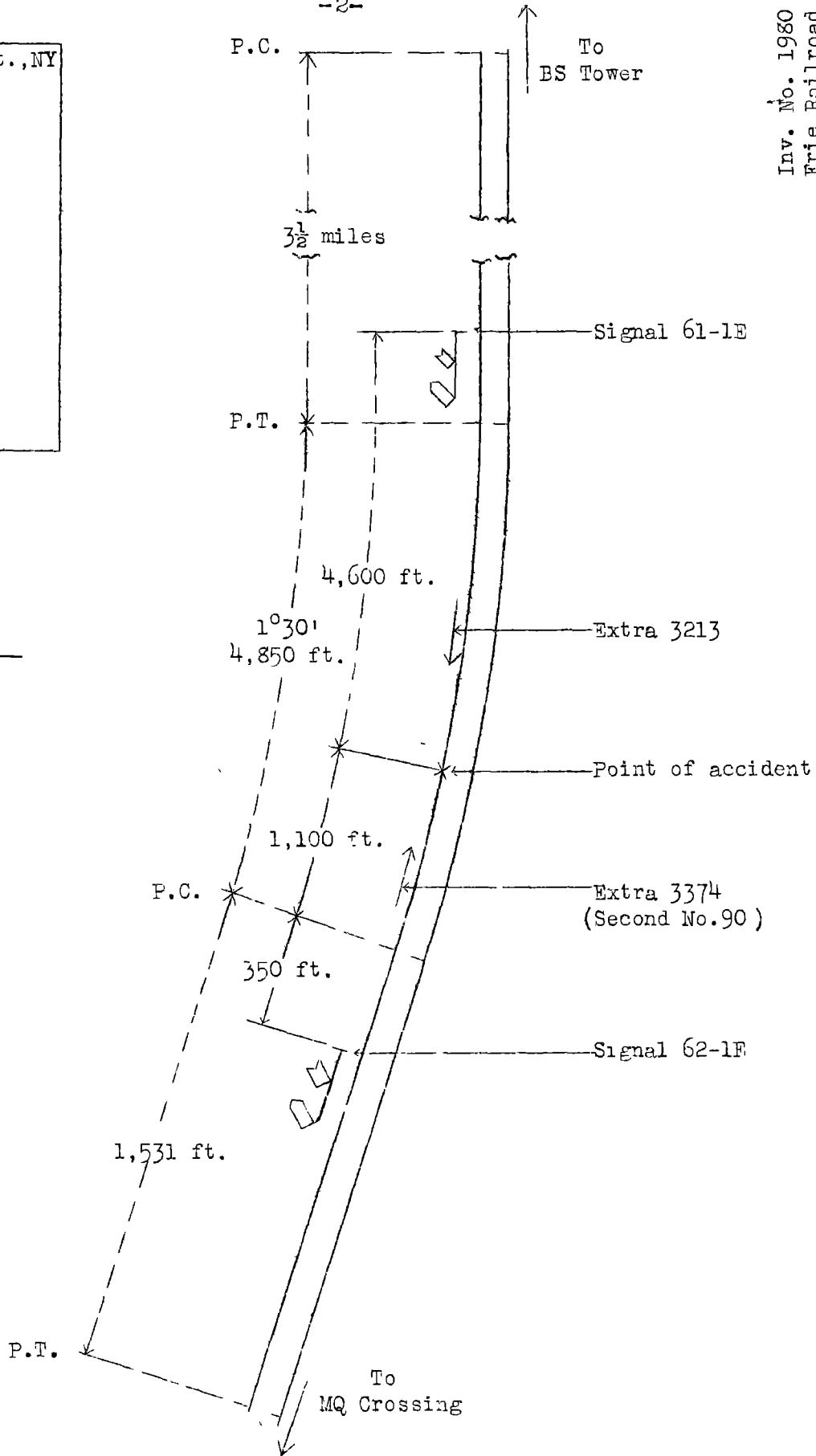
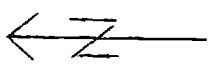
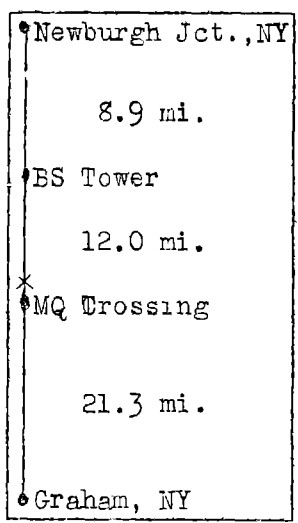
The accident occurred on that part of the New York Division designated as the Graham Line, which extends between Graham and Newburgh Junction, N. Y., a distance of 42.2 miles. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system; one of the trains involved in this accident was being operated against the current of traffic, this movement being authorized by a train order. The accident occurred on the west-bound main track approximately 4 miles east of MQ Crossing; approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for a distance of 1,531 feet, followed by a  $1^{\circ} 30'$  curve to the left 4,850 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point approximately 1,100 feet from its western end. Approaching from the east, the track is tangent for more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles leading to the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade at the point of accident is 0.20 percent ascending for east-bound trains. The only signal involved is automatic signal 61-1E, located about 4,600 feet east of the point of accident.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:35 a.m.

Description

Extra 3374, (Symbol Second No. 90), an east-bound freight train, consisted of 46 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3374, and was in charge of Conductor Bond and Engineman McLain. At 3:08 a.m. this train arrived on the east-bound main track at MQ Crossing, where the crew received train order 2, form 19, which read as follows:

Inv. No. 1980  
 Erie Railroad  
 MQ Crossing, NY  
 April 25, 1935



Extra 3374 east has right of way over opposing trains on the westward track MQ Crossing, to west end of Moodna viaduct.

Moodna viaduct is near BS Tower, 12 miles east of MQ Crossing. Extra 3374 entered the west-bound main track and departed from MQ Crossing at 3:28 a.m., and was traveling at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour when it collided with Extra 3213.

Extra 3213, a west-bound freight train, consisted of 65 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3213, and was in charge of Conductor Duryeau and Engineman Ryder. This train passed BS Tower, 12 miles from MQ Crossing, at 3:22 a.m., found signal 61-1E displaying an approach indication, and was stopped west of that signal just before being struck by Extra 3374.

The engine of the east-bound train was entirely derailed with the exception of the trailer wheels, and the fifth to the eleventh cars, inclusive, were derailed and scattered in various positions on both sides of the tracks. The engine of the west-bound train was derailed but remained upright; the second to the eighth cars, inclusive, in this train were derailed and scattered across both main tracks. The employees injured were the fireman and head brakeman of Extra 3374 and the fireman of Extra 3213.

#### Summary of evidence

Engineman McLain, of Extra 3374, stated that when his train arrived at MQ Crossing the signals were in stop position and he received a copy of train order 2, together with a clearance card. His train then crossed over to the west-bound track and while it was rounding a curve to the left the head brakeman, who was riding on the fireman's side of the engine, called to him that he saw what appeared to be the headlight of an approaching train. Engineman McLain immediately made a brake-pipe reduction of about 30 pounds and very shortly afterwards the fireman told him that the approaching train was on the west-bound track and he then moved the brake-valve to emergency position, a few seconds before the collision occurred; he estimated the speed at the time of the accident at 30 miles per hour. No statements were obtained from the injured fireman or the head brakeman of this train, and the statements of the members of the crew in the caboose brought out nothing additional of importance.

Engineman Ryder, of Extra 3213, stated that after passing BS Tower his train passed three automatic signals which were displaying clear indications, but when the train reached a point about 200 feet from signal 61-1E, it changed from clear to caution position. At that time the train was traveling about 40 miles per hour and he made a 10-pound brake-pipe reduction

and left the brakes applied. Upon emerging from a small cut he saw the headlight of an east-bound train approaching on the west-bound track about 1,200 feet distant and immediately moved the brake-valve to emergency position, the train being brought to a stop just before the collision occurred. Immediately after the accident he talked with Engineman McLain, of Extra 3374, and found he had an order authorizing that train to use the west-bound track.

Train Dispatcher Beers stated that Train First No. 90 departed from MQ Crossing at 2:21 a.m., and when it failed to arrive at BS Tower at 2:45 a.m. he called the operator at that point and inquired if he had heard it approaching; the operator replied in the negative. Dispatcher Beers then remarked that Train Second No. 90 was closing up and he would probably run it around First No. 90, and instructed the operator to get ready for a form 31 order. He then called the operator at MQ Crossing and told him to copy a form 19 order, after which he issued the following order:

"BS 31 - C&E all westward trains  
MQ 19 - C&E Extra 3374 east  
Extra 3374 east has right over opposing trains  
on westward track MQ Crossing to west end of  
Moodna viaduct."

After the two operators repeated the order he made it complete at 2:54 a.m. Just as he completed the order the operator at BS Tower called and said that he had heard Train First No. 90 call in the flagman and about the same time the operator at MQ Crossing reported that Train Second No. 90 (Extra 3374), had entered the circuit, whereupon he instructed the latter operator to hold this train until he learned what was delaying Train First No. 90, but did not say anything to the operator about not delivering the train order. The operator at BS Tower reported Train First No. 90 as passing at 3:15 a.m. and suggested that train order 2 be annulled if Train Second No. 90 had not left MQ Crossing, so that west-bound Extra 3213 could proceed. At 3:18 a.m. Dispatcher Beers annulled the order at BS Tower, issuing train order 3 for that purpose, but failed to annul the order at MQ Crossing, thinking that the operator at that point was holding Train Second No. 90. Extra 3213 passed BS Tower at 3:22 a.m. and the dispatcher then rang MQ Crossing with the intention of annulling the order to Extra 3374, but received no response and assumed the operator was outside spiking a derail which he had been unable to lock. The operator at MQ Crossing finally called and reported Train Second No. 90 as passing on the west-bound track at 3:28 a.m. The dispatcher's reason for annulling the order at BS Tower was to facilitate the movement of Extra 3213

in view of the fact that the crew of that train was required to go off duty at 6:15 a.m. He said that he thoroughly understood the rules regarding the handling of train orders, but at the time he annulled the order at BS Tower he was firmly of the opinion that Train Second No. 90 was being held at MQ Crossing, as he had directed, and that the operator would not deliver the order.

Operator Young, on duty at MQ Crossing, stated that after train order 2 was made complete, he was instructed by the dispatcher to hold Train Second No. 90. Trouble then developed with the interlocking whereby he could not lock a derail and he reported the matter to the dispatcher and the maintainer. As Train Second No. 90 arrived he started out to spike the derail, met the head brakeman, and, forgetting the dispatcher's instructions to hold Train Second No. 90, delivered the engineman's copy of train order 2 and a clearance card to the head brakeman; he then spiked the derail, returned to the tower and obtained the conductor's copy of the order, and went outside and gave it to the conductor as the rear end of the train was passing the tower. As soon as the train passed through the cross-over to the west-bound track, which was between 3:20 and 3:25 a.m., he notified the dispatcher that it would clear the switches about 3:28 a.m. and the dispatcher then told him that Extra 3213 already had passed BS Tower on the same track.

Operator Stevens, on duty at BS Tower, heard the dispatcher instruct the operator at MQ Crossing to hold Train Second No. 90 and also heard the operator inform the dispatcher of the difficulty with the derail. At 3:30 a.m. Operator Stevens heard the operator at MQ Crossing report Train Second No. 90 as having departed from that point on the west-bound track. Operator Stevens immediately called an assistant section foreman who resides near signal 61-1E; the foreman answered in about 2 minutes and he told the foreman to stop Extra 3213, but the foreman replied that this train had just passed that point.

Signal Maintainer Howe stated that he was called on the telephone by the operator at MQ Crossing, who advised that Train No. 90 was being delayed on account of the operator's inability to lock the derail on the east-bound track. He proceeded to MQ Crossing immediately, tested the lock on this derail and found it in proper working order, and no adjustment was made to the switch except to remove the spike which had been used by the operator in securing it.

The chief train dispatcher stated that the usual running time between MQ Crossing and BS Tower for a train similar to Train First No. 90 was about 20 minutes, but on the day of the accident this train was delayed about 35 minutes due to a loose brake hanger clamp on one of the cars.

#### Discussion

The rules provide that a train order to be sent to two or more offices must be transmitted simultaneously to as many of them as practicable, and when not sent simultaneously to all, the order must be sent first to the superior train. These provisions were not complied with by Dispatcher Beers; he had issued an order giving Train Second No. 90 (Extra 3374) rights over the west-bound track, but after making this order complete he told the operator at MQ Crossing to hold Train Second No. 90 and then, finding that the situation had cleared up so that there was no necessity for running this train on the west-bound track, he annulled the order to BS Tower so that Extra 3213 could proceed west-bound on that track but failed to annul the order to MQ Crossing, depending on the operator at that point to hold Train Second No. 90 in accordance with verbal instructions which he had issued after making the right-of-track order complete. This right-of-track order made Train Second No. 90 the superior train and it was necessary for Dispatcher Beers to make sure that this train received the annulment order, taking away its rights to proceed over the west-bound track, before Extra 3213 was allowed to pass BS Tower. Operator Young at MQ Crossing had been having difficulty with a derail which he was unable to lock and was hurrying in order to spike the derail and return to the tower; he delivered the right-of-track order to Train Second No. 90 but forgot his verbal instructions from the dispatcher to hold that train.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the action of the dispatcher in annulling a train order to the inferior train without first annulling it to the superior train; the operator at MQ Crossing failed to hold the superior train in accordance with verbal instructions received from the dispatcher.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.