

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3117
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT CANISTEO, MINN., ON
JULY 16, 1947

SUMMARY

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Railroad: Great Northern
Date: July 16, 1947
Location: Canisteo, Minn.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Engine and caboose : Freight
Train numbers: : Extra 2014 West
Engine numbers: 3206 : 2014
Consists: Caboose : 180 cars,
caboose
Speeds: Standing : 12 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Single; 3° curve; 0.32 percent
descending grade westward
Weather: Cloudy
Time: 11:24 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 4 injured
Cause: Failure properly to control speed
of train moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3117

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

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

August 18, 1947

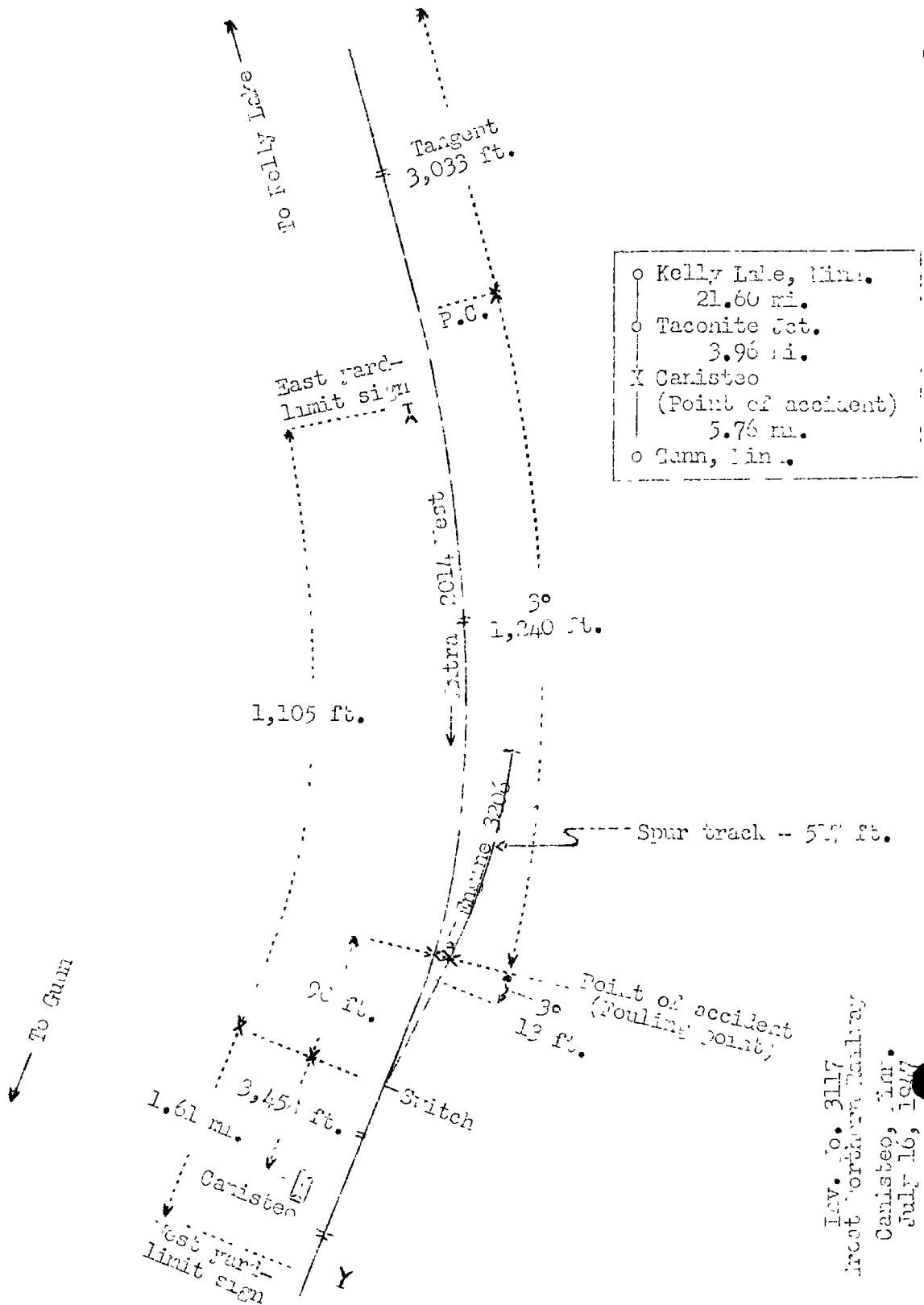
Accident at Canisteo, Minn., on July 16, 1947, caused
by failure properly to control the speed of a
train moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 16, 1947, there was a side collision between
an engine and a freight train on the Great Northern Railway
at Canisteo, Minn., which resulted in the death of one
employee, and the injury of four employees.

¹
Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce 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 Mesabi Division extending between Kelly Lake and Gunn, Minn., 31.32 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Within yard limits at Canisteo, 25.56 miles west of Kelly Lake, there is a spur track 517 feet in length on the south of the main track. The switch is trailing-point for west-bound movements, and is 1,105 feet west of the east yard-limit sign, 3,458 feet east of the station, and 1.61 miles east of the west yard-limit sign. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the spur-track switch, at a point 90 feet east of the switch points and about 10 feet west of the clearance point. From the east on the main track there is a tangent 3,033 feet in length, and then a 3° curve to the right 1,240 feet to the point of accident and 13 feet westward. The grade is 0.32 percent descending westward.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

Fixed Signal.--A signal of fixed location indicating a condition affecting the movement of a train or engine.

Note.--The definition of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as * * * yard limit signs, * * * and other means for displaying indications that govern the movement of a train or engine.

* * *

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

93. * * *

Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.

Within yard limits second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move at restricted speed.

* * *

Description of Accident

Engine 3206, headed west and pushing a caboose eastward, entered the spur-track at Canisteo and stopped about 11:22 p. m., with the engine fouling the main track on the turnout of the spur-track switch. About 2 minutes later engine 3206 was struck by Extra 2014 West.

Extra 2014 West, consisting of engine 2014, 180 cars loaded with iron ore, and a caboose, passed Taconite Jct., the last open office, 3.96 miles east of Canisteo, at 11:16 p. m., passed the east yard-limit sign at Canisteo, and while moving at an estimated speed of 12 miles per hour it struck engine 3206 at a point 1,105 feet west of the east yard-limit sign.

Engine 3206 and the caboose were overturned and stopped on their left sides about 15 feet south of the turnout of the spur-track switch and practically parallel to it. The right side of engine 3206 was badly damaged. The engine and the first twenty-one cars of Extra 2014 West were derailed. The engine stopped upright, with the front end 93 feet west of the point of collision and 30 feet north of the main track. The front end of the engine, and the derailed cars were badly damaged.

The engineer of engine 3206 was killed. The fireman and a brakeman of engine 3206, and the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 2014 West were injured.

It was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:24 p. m.

Discussion

About 11:22 p. m. engine 3206, headed westward but moving eastward and pushing a caboose, entered the spur track at Canisteo and stopped on the turnout of the switch, with the engine fouling the main track. About 2 minutes later the engine was struck by Extra 2014 West.

Immediately before the collision occurred the conductor of engine 3206 and one brakeman were on the east platform of the caboose, the enginemen were on their respective sides of the cab of the engine, and the second brakeman was in the vicinity of the spur-track switch. The conductor and the brakeman said that when they saw the reflection of the headlight of Extra 2014 West they alighted from the caboose, proceeded toward their engine and gave lantern signals to

the enginemen for the engine to be backed into clear. The engineer was making an attempt to back the engine clear of the main track, but the collision occurred before this was accomplished. The engineer was killed.

As Extra 2014 West was approaching Canistota the speed was about 12 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The pressure retaining valves on the first 40 cars were set for use. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. There was no condition of the engine that obscured the vision of the employees on the engine or distracted their attention. The engineer said that when his engine was a short distance east of the spur-track switch he saw lantern signals being given in the vicinity of the switch, but he was not aware that engine 3206 was fouling the main track until his engine was about 200 feet east of the point where the collision occurred. Then he moved the brake valve to emergency position, but there was no appreciable reduction in speed at the time the collision occurred.

Because of an embankment on the inside of the curve, the view of the point of accident from a west-bound engine was restricted to a distance of 362 feet.

The accident occurred within yard limits, and, under the rules, Extra 2014 West was required to be operated in such manner that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.

Cause

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

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighteenth day of August, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.