

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3033

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT ST. GABRIEL, LA., ON

NOVEMBER 3, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Illinois Central
Date: November 3, 1946
Location: St. Gabriel, La.
Kind of accident: Derailment
Train involved: Passenger
Train number: 38
Engine number: 1014
Consist: 7 cars
Estimated speed: 60 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system
Track: Single; tangent; 0.057 percent ascending grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: 11:05 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured
Cause: Obstruction on track

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3033

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

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

December 12, 1946.

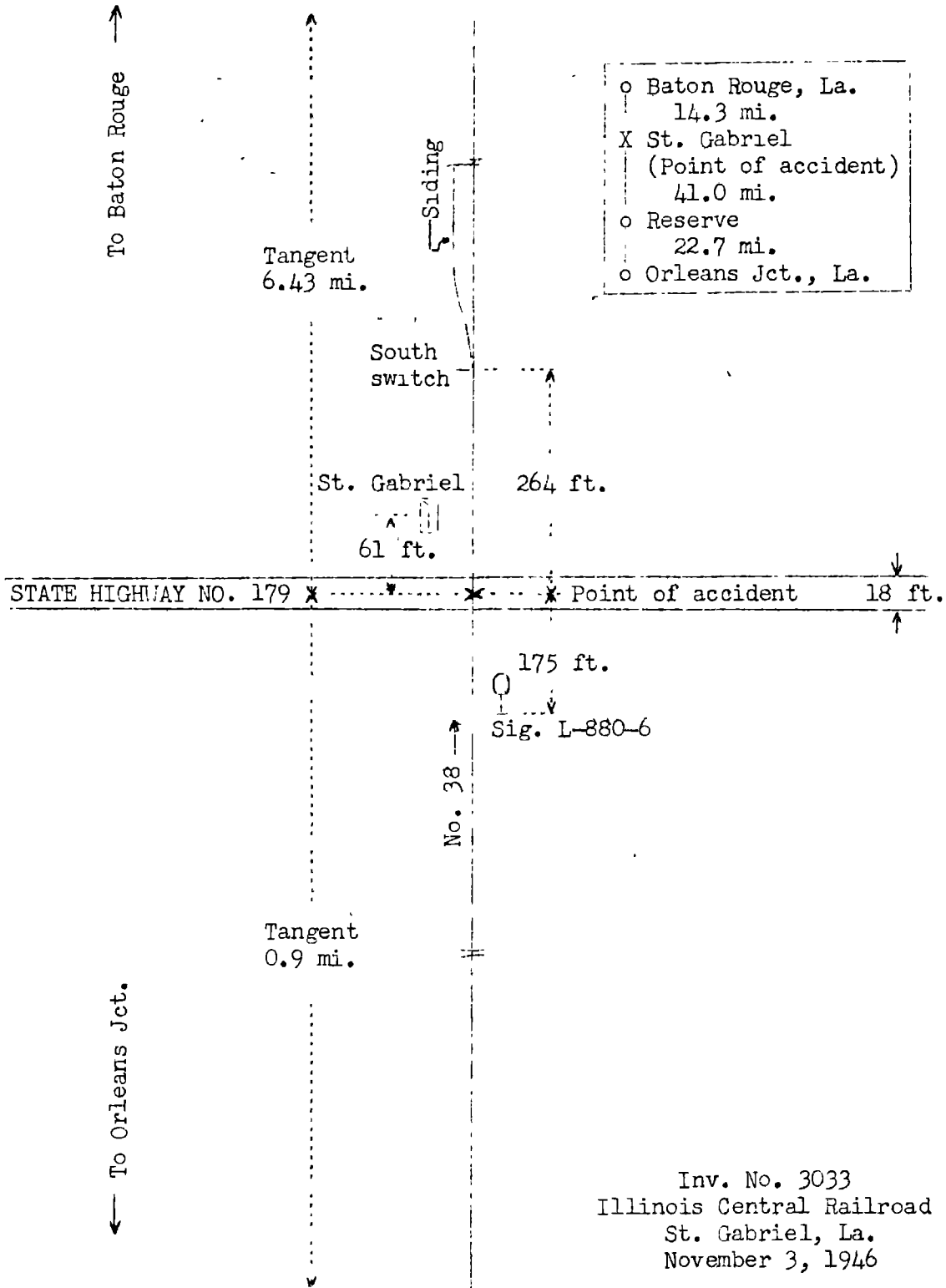
Accident at St. Gabriel, La., on November 3, 1946, caused
by an obstruction on the track.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 3, 1946, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Illinois Central Railroad at St. Gabriel, La., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of two passengers.

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.



- o Baton Rouge, La. 14.3 mi.
- X St. Gabriel (Point of accident) 41.0 mi.
- o Reserve 22.7 mi.
- o Orleans Jct., La. 18 ft.

Inv. No. 3033
Illinois Central Railroad
St. Gabriel, La.
November 3, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Vicksburg Division extending between Orleans Jct. and Baton Rouge, La., 78 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred 63.7 miles north of Orleans Jct. and 61 feet south of the station at St. Gabriel, where the railroad is crossed at grade by State Highway No. 179. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 0.9 mile immediately south of the crossing and 6.43 miles northward. The grade is 0.057 percent ascending northward.

The track structure consists of 90-pound rail, 39 feet in length, laid on an average of 22 ties to the rail length. It is fully tieplated, single-spiked, provided with 4-hole angle bars and an average of 8 rail anchors per rail length. Ballast which had been spread in the immediate vicinity several days prior to November 3 was still on the track structure at the time the accident occurred. State Highway No. 179 intersects the railroad at right angles. The highway and the crossing are about 18 feet wide. The highway is practically level throughout a considerable distance on each side of the crossing. At the time of the accident, the surface of the crossing consisted of loose slag between the rails and throughout a distance of several feet outside each rail. Flangeways were not provided. Between the rails the surface of the slag was practically level with the tops of the rails, and outside the rails it sloped upward to about 5 inches above the level of the tops of the rails. The south switch of a siding, which parallels the main track on the west, is 234 feet north of the centerline of the crossing. Entry to this siding is made through a No. 10 turnout.

Automatic signal L-880-6, governing north-bound movements, is 175 feet south of the centerline of the crossing. This signal is of the color-light type.

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 38, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1014, a 4-6-2 type, one baggage car, one express car, one passenger-mail car, one coach, one buffet car, one Pullman sleeping car and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Reserve, the last open office, 41 miles south of St. Gabriel, at 10:10 p. m., on time, passed signal L-880-6, which displayed proceed, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 60 miles per hour the front engine-truck wheels were derailed to

the left at the highway crossing at St. Gabriel. These wheels continued in line with the track 264 feet to the south siding-switch, where the general derailment occurred.

The engine stopped on its right side west of the tracks and at an angle of 45 degrees to them, with the front end 340 feet north of the south siding-switch and 39 feet west of the main track. The engine was badly damaged and the cab was demolished. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped upright, off its trucks, 232 feet north of the engine and across the main track. The first car stopped upright, off its trucks, east of the main track and at right angles to it, at a point 61 feet north of the engine. The second and third cars, remaining coupled, stopped practically upright, with the front end of the second car 230 feet north of the engine and 20 feet east of the main track, and the rear end of the third car 80 feet north of the engine and on the roadbed. The fourth, fifth and sixth cars, remaining coupled, stopped upright on the roadbed and immediately south of the third car. The seventh car was not derailed. The first to fourth cars, inclusive, were badly damaged and the fifth and sixth cars were slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:05 p. m.

The engineer was killed.

Discussion

No. 38 was moving on tangent track at a speed of about 60 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 60 miles per hour, when it was derailed. There was no defective condition of the engine prior to the derailment, and there was no indication of dragging equipment.

As No. 38 was approaching the point where the derailment occurred the headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Signal L-880-6, located 175 feet south of the crossing, displayed proceed. The first the fireman knew of anything being wrong was immediately after the engine entered upon the crossing when he saw sparks flying from the left side near the front of the engine, but the general derailment occurred before he could call a warning to the engineer. The engineer was killed in the accident. The members of the train crew did not observe any application of the brakes immediately prior to the derailment. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

The first mark of derailment was a flange mark on top of the west rail at a point 11 feet north of the centerline of the crossing. This mark continued diagonally outward across the top of the head of the rail a distance of 14 feet. At a point

5 feet northward wheel marks appeared inside the east rail, and from this point northward a distance of 234 feet to the south siding-switch wheel marks appeared in the loose slag inside the east rail and outside the west rail. There were scraping marks on the inner surface of the left front engine-truck wheel and on the outer surface of the right front wheel. The marks on the rail, in the slag and on the front engine-truck wheels indicate that this pair of wheels was the first to become derailed.

During a period of several days prior to the day the accident occurred track forces had been engaged in raising and reballasting the track in this vicinity. Throughout a considerable distance immediately south and north of the crossing and over the crossing slag ballast had been deposited between the rails and outside the rails. The track forces ceased working on the afternoon of November 2, and no inspection of the track in the vicinity of the crossing was made for a period of about 34 hours prior to the time the accident occurred. The foreman in charge of the track thought conditions at the crossing were safe for normal service. Several trains passed over the crossing during this period. Examination after the accident disclosed that the slag between the rails at the crossing was practically level with the tops of the rails, and outside the rails it sloped upward to about 5 inches above the rails. There was a considerable amount of crushed slag on the tops of the rails. Apparently, vehicular traffic over the crossing had resulted in lodging a sufficient amount of slag on the tops and against the gage sides of the rails for the left front engine-truck wheel to be raised high enough for the flange to mount the rail, and then the engine-truck wheel continued on top of the rail to the point where it dropped outside the rail.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an obstruction on the track.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twelfth day of December, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. PARTEL,
Secretary.