

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2565  
THE INDIANA HARBOR BELT RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT ARGO, ILL., ON  
JANUARY 28, 1942

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Indiana Harbor Belt  
Date: January 28, 1942  
Location: Arzo, Ill.  
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Freight  
Train numbers: Extra 1473 West : Extra 401 West  
Engine numbers: 1473 : 401  
Consist: 29 cars, cabooses : 61 cars, cabooses  
Speed: Standing : 3-7 m. p. h.  
Operation: Operating rules without  
train orders  
Track: Double; 2° left curve; 0.35  
percent descending grade westward  
Weather: Clear  
Time: About 3:25 p. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 2 injured  
Cause: Accident caused by failure properly  
to control speed of following  
train moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2565

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

THE INDIANA HARBOR BELT RAILROAD COMPANY

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February 25, 1942

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Accident at Argo, Ill., on January 28, 1942, caused by failure properly to control speed of following train moving within yard limits.

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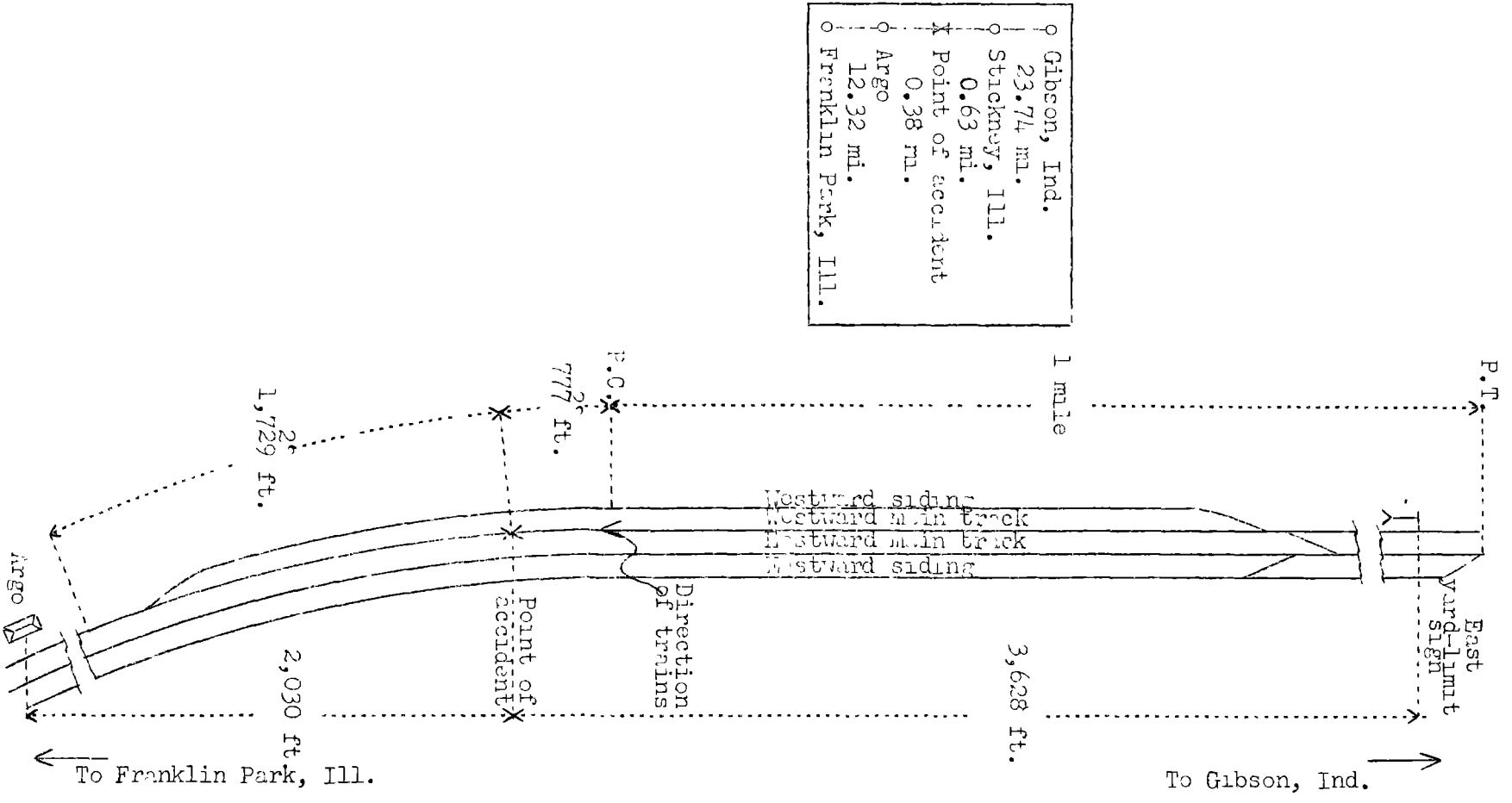
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 28, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad at Argo, Ill., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of two employees.

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<sup>1</sup>  
Under 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.



○ Gibson, Ind.  
 23.74 mi.  
 ○ Stickney, Ill.  
 0.63 mi.  
 \* Point of accident  
 0.38 mi.  
 ○ Argo  
 12.32 mi.  
 ○ Franklin Park, Ill.

Inv. No. 2565  
 Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad  
 Argo, Ill.  
 January 28, 1942

### Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad designated as the Franklin Park Line, which extends between Gibson, Ind., and Franklin Park, Ill., a distance of 37.07 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by operating rules without the use of train orders except for movements against the current of traffic. There is no block system in use and there are no schedules in effect. Yard limits extend from a point 5,658 feet east of Argo to a point 3,115.2 feet west of Argo. The accident occurred within yard limits on the westward main track at a point 3,628 feet west of the east yard-limit sign and 2,030 feet east of the station at Argo. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident there are four parallel tracks designated from north to south as the westward siding, the westward main track, the eastward main track and the eastward siding. As the point of accident is approached from the east there is a tangent more than 1 mile in length, which is followed by a 2° curve to the left extending 777 feet to the point of accident and 1,729 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains is, successively, 0.045 percent ascending 1,400 feet, 0.03 percent ascending 1,000 feet, 0.216 percent descending 600 feet and 0.35 percent ascending 510 feet to the point of accident and 290 feet beyond.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

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

All other trains and engines must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

Note. - Yard limits will be indicated by yard limit boards.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

Extra 1473 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 1473, 24 loaded and 5 empty cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Gibson, 24.75 miles east of Argo, at 1:02 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed Stickney, 1.01 miles east of Argo, at 2:48 p. m., and stopped on the westward main track at Argo at 3 p. m., with the caboose standing at a point 2,030 feet east of the station. About 25 minutes later the caboose was struck by Extra 401 West.

Extra 401 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 401, 23 loaded and 38 empty cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Gibson at 2:06 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed Stickeny at 3:25 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 3 to 7 miles per hour it collided with the caboose of Extra 1473 West.

The caboose of Extra 1473 West was demolished and both trucks were forced under the rear car. The rear car was derailed and badly damaged, and leaned to the south at an angle of 25 degrees. The rear trucks of the second and third cars from the rear were derailed. Engine 401 was derailed to the north and stopped upright on the roadbed. The front end of the engine was slightly damaged. All wheels on the north side of the tender were derailed. The front truck of the first car was derailed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:25 p. m.

The employees killed were the foreman and the rear yardman of Extra 1473 West, and the employees injured were the foreman and the rear yardman of Extra 401 West.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation within yard limits on the line involved provide that trains may use the main track, protecting against first-class trains, and that all engines and all trains except first-class trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. About 25 minutes after Extra 1473 West had stopped at Argo to set out cars, its rear end was struck by Extra 401 West at a point 3,628 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. Since there was no first-class schedule in effect on this line, Extra 1473 was not required at any time to furnish flag protection within the yard limits. In addition, Extra 401 was required to stop short of any obstruction within the yard limits. All surviving members of the crews involved understood these provisions.

According to the statement of the engineer of Extra 401, his train was moving at a speed of 20 miles per hour at a point about 3,580 feet east of the point of accident. The fireman and the yardman were inexperienced, and since his train would soon enter a 2° curve to the left, the engineer cautioned these employees to inform him concerning track conditions on the curve. He made a 10 or 12-pound brake-pipe reduction, which was followed by a 5 or 6-pound brake-pipe reduction. The brakes were

held applied, and when his engine was about 450 feet east of the point where the accident occurred he asked about the condition of the track ahead. He understood the yardman to indicate that the track was clear. When his engine was about 350 feet east of the caboose of Extra 1473, his fireman called a warning that a train was a short distance ahead. He said he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position but was unable to stop his train short of the preceding train. The fireman of Extra 401 said that he observed the caboose of the preceding train at a distance of 1,000 feet, but he was not certain which track it was on until his engine was about 450 feet east of it, at which point he called a warning, and then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position. The yardman said that, after the fireman had warned the engineer that the caboose was a short distance ahead, the engineer made a service application of the brakes and when the engine was about 150 feet east of the caboose the fireman and he simultaneously warned the engineer.

The brakes of Extra 401 functioned properly. There was no steam leak to obscure the view ahead, and the weather was clear. Because of track curvature to the left, the engineer could not see the track ahead, and he depended upon the fireman and the yardman to keep him informed. If the speed of Extra 401 had been controlled so that this train could stop short of any obstruction, this accident would not have occurred.

#### 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-fifth day of February, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.

(SEAL)