

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3349
THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT HUNTINGTON, N. Y., ON
AUGUST 5, 1950

SUMMARY

Date: August 5, 1950

Railroad: Long Island

Location: Huntington, N. Y.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: Extra 101 West : 642

Engine numbers: 101 : 29

Consists: 20 cars, caboose : 6 cars

Estimated speeds: Standing : 40 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and manual-block system

Track: Single; tangent; 0.5 percent descending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 4:11 p. m.

Casualties: 121 injured

Cause: Switch being opened immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3349

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

THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD COMPANY

October 4, 1950

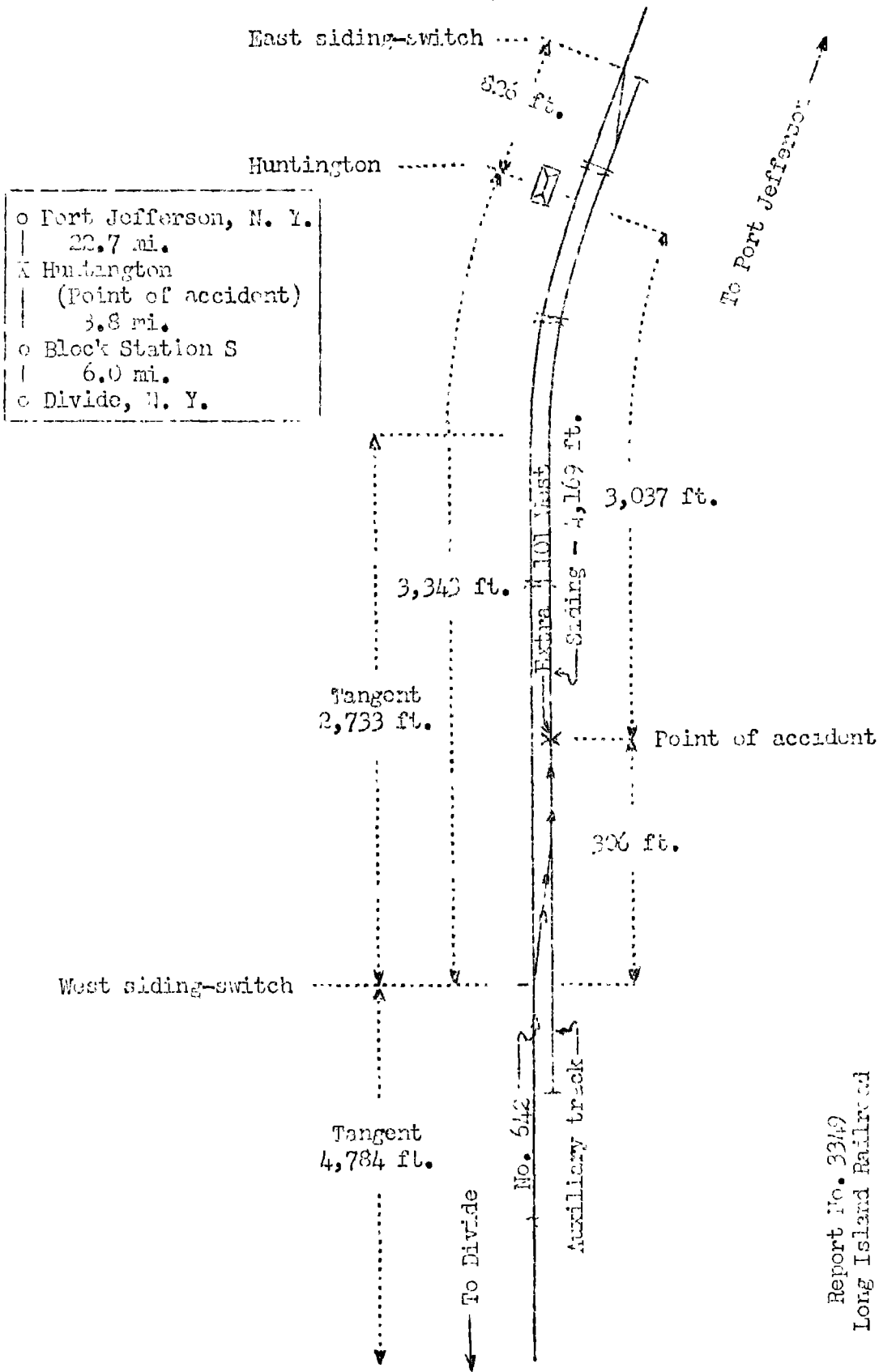
Accident at Huntington, N. Y., on August 5, 1950, caused
by a switch being opened immediately in front of
an approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 5, 1950, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Long Island Railroad at Huntington, N. Y., which resulted in the injury of 114 passengers, 2 employees not on duty, and 5 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the New York Public Service Commission.

¹ 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.



Report No. 3349
 Long Island Railroad
 Huntington, N. Y.
 August 5, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Divide and Port Jefferson, N. Y., 32.5 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 system. At Huntington, 9.8 miles east of Divide, a siding 4,169 feet in length parallels the main track on the south. The west and east switches of this siding are, respectively, 3,343 feet west and 826 feet east of the station. An auxiliary track connects with the west end of the siding in the vicinity of the clearance point and parallels the main track westward. The accident occurred on the siding at a point 306 feet east of the west switch and 3,037 feet west of the station. Entry to the siding from the west is made through a No. 10 turnout, 180 feet in length. From the west the main track is tangent throughout a distance of 4,784 feet to the west switch of the siding and 2,733 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound trains is, successively, 0.4 percent descending 1,600 feet, level 600 feet, 0.3 percent ascending 2,800 feet, level 300 feet, and 0.5 percent descending 500 feet to the point of accident and 300 feet eastward.

The switch stand of the main-track switch is of the ground-throw, hand-operated, low-stand type. It is located 6 feet 4-1/4 inches south of the center-line of the main track. The switch target is attached to a separate stand of the intermediate type, located on the north side of the main track, directly opposite the switch stand and 7 feet 11-1/4 inches from the center-line of the track. The switch stand and the target stand are so connected that when the switch is lined for main-track movements a V-shape white target with pointed ends, each of which is 13 inches long and 9 inches wide, and a green light are displayed in the direction of an approaching train. When the switch is lined for entry to the siding a two-lobe red target, 24 inches in length and 12 inches in width, and a red light are displayed at right angles to the track. The center of the target is 6 feet 2-1/4 inches above the level of the tops of the rails. It is provided with an oil-burning switch lamp, the top of which is 7 feet 4-1/4 inches above the level of the tops of the rails.

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

104. * * *

* * *

* * * While a train or engine is waiting to cross from one track to another and during the approach or passage of a train or engine on tracks involved, all switches connected with the movement must be secured in normal position. * * *

* * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 65 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 101 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 101, 20 cars and a caboose. This train departed from Port Jefferson at 8:51 a. m., entered the siding at Huntington and reported clear of the main track at 3:25 p. m. The engine was detached and switching was performed. Engine 101, headed west, with a cut of three cars coupled to the front end, stopped about 4:01 p. m., with the west end of the most westerly car of the cut of cars at a point 306 feet east of the west siding-switch. About 10 minutes later the cut of cars was struck by No. 642.

No. 642, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 29 and six coaches. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Divide at 3:53 p. m., 2 minutes late, passed Block Station S, the last open office, 3.8 miles west of Huntington, at 4:03 p. m., 2 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it entered the siding at Huntington and struck the cars coupled to engine 101.

The three cars were derailed and engine 101 was moved eastward approximately 80 feet. The first and the third cars of the cut were demolished and the second car was badly damaged. Engine 101 was considerably damaged. No. 642 stopped with the front of the engine about 70 feet east of the point of accident. The engine was derailed and stopped on its right side south of the south rail of the siding. The tender was derailed but remained coupled to the engine and leaned to the south at an angle of about 20 degrees. The engine was considerably damaged and the tender was somewhat damaged. The first car was derailed and stopped in line with the siding. The first five cars were slightly damaged.

The swing brakeman of Extra 101 West, and the engineer, the fireman, the conductor and a ticket collector of No. 642 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 4:11 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 26.8 trains.

Discussion

Extra 101 West entered the siding at Huntington at 3:20 p. m. The engine was detached from the train and switching was performed. About 4:01 p. m. the engine, coupled to the east end of a cut of three cars, entered the siding from the auxiliary track and stopped with the west end of the most westerly car 306 feet east of the siding switch. The conductor had instructed the other members of the crew that the main track would be used to perform switching after No. 642 arrived. Immediately before the accident occurred the engineer was in the cab of the engine and the fireman was on the ground south of the siding and in the immediate vicinity of the engine. The conductor and the swing brakeman were on the ground between the siding and the main track and in the vicinity of the west end of the cut of cars. The flagman was stationed east of his engine at a rail-highway grade-crossing to protect the movement of the engine during switching operations. The front brakeman was standing south of the main track and about 15 feet from the west siding-switch. The conductor said that as No. 642 was approaching the crossing he signaled to the front brakeman to move away from the switch. He said that the main-track switch was lined in normal position when No. 642 was about 500 feet west of the switch. When No. 642 was about 250 feet west of the switch the front brakeman lined the switch for entry to the siding. No. 642 entered the siding and the collision occurred a few seconds later. None of the other members of the crew of Extra 101 West saw the front brakeman operate the switch.

As No. 642 was approaching the west siding-switch at Huntington the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead from his position in the cab of the engine and the fireman was attending the fire. The conductor was in the rear of the first car and other members of the train crew were at various locations in the cars of the train. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer observed the engine and the cut of cars on the siding. When No. 642 was about 750 feet west of the west siding-switch he closed the throttle preparatory to making the station stop

at Huntington. He said that when the train was closely approaching the switch he saw a person proceed from an adjacent track to the switch and apparently operate it. The engineer then observed that the switch points were lined for entry to the siding. He immediately initiated an emergency application of the brakes. The fireman said that when his engine was about 100 feet west of the switch he saw the red target indicating that the switch was lined for entry to the siding. The speed of the train had been reduced to about 40 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The front brakeman was an inexperienced employee, and because of his inexperience he had been instructed by the conductor to operate switches only when specifically instructed to do so. He was aware that his train was into clear on the siding to meet No. 642. He said that after his engine with the cut of cars had stopped on the siding the conductor told him to station himself near the siding switch and to operate it when so instructed. When No. 642 was closely approaching the switch he saw the conductor signal to him and he said he thought it was a signal for him to open the main track switch. He said No. 642 was about 200 feet from the switch when he opened it. He did not observe the position of either the switch points or the switch target.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a switch being opened immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourth day of October, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.