INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD NEAR MONTAUK, N. Y., ON OCTOBER 35, 1932.

December 19, 1932.

To the Commission:

On October 25, 1932, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Long Island Railroad near Montauk, N. Y., which resulted in the death of two employees, and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

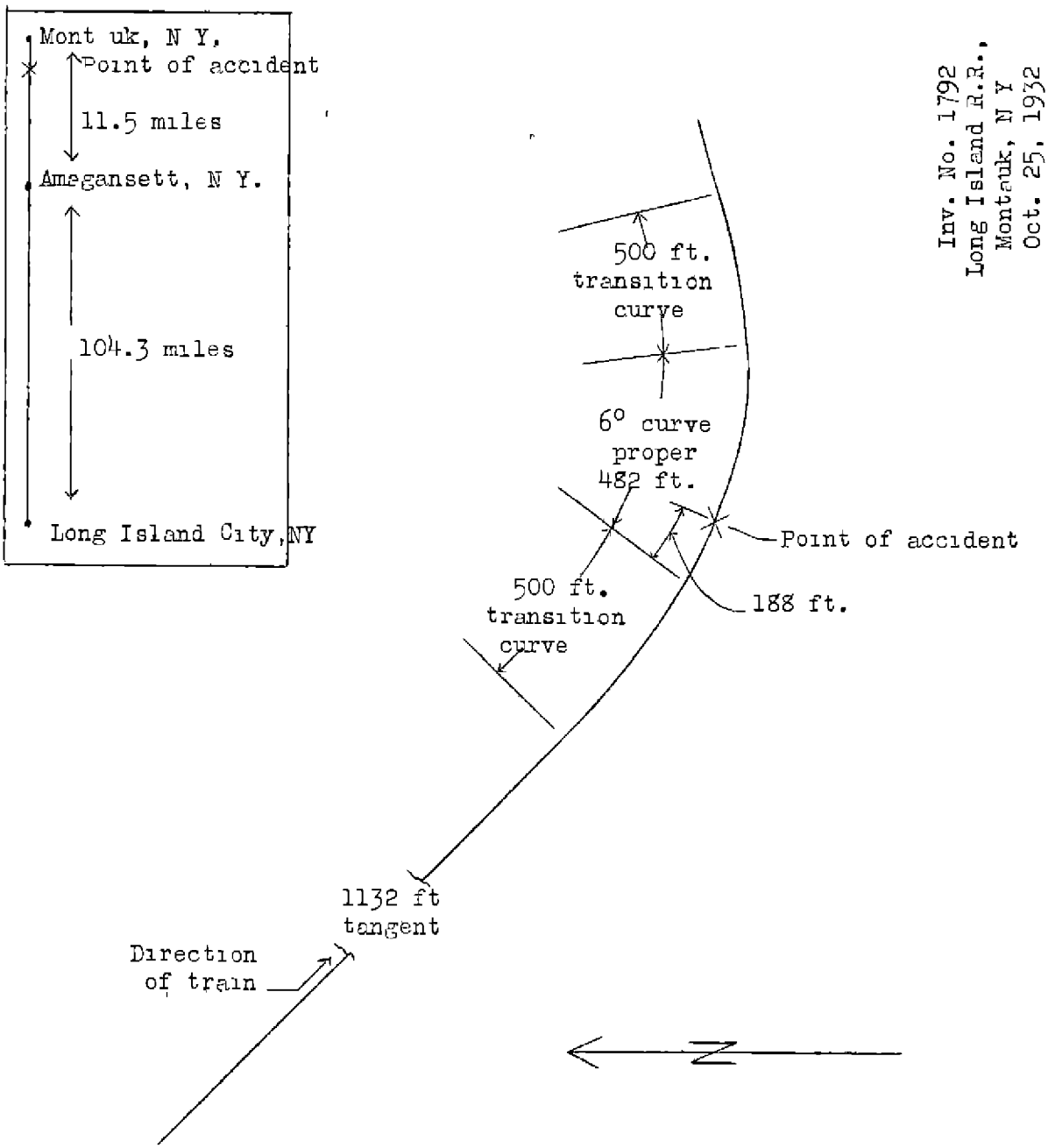
This accident occurred on the Montauk Branch, which extends between Long Island City and Montauk, N. Y., a distance of 115.8 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred about 1¼ miles west of Montauk, approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for a distance of 1,132 feet, followed by a 6° curve to the left 1,482 feet in length, including spirals, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 688 feet from its western end. The grade for eastbound trains is descending for more than 1 mile to the point of accident, varying from 0.2 to 0.8 per cent, and it is 0.7 per cent at the point of accident.

The track is laid with 100-pound rails, 33 feet in length, with 18 ties to the rail-length, fully tie-plated, and on curves the rails are double-spiked on the inside and single-spiked on the outside, the track is ballasted with cinders and well maintained. The superelevation of the outside rail of the curve is 4½ inches, and the speed of passenger trains on this curve is restricted to 40 miles per hour.

The weather was clear and it was dark at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6.49 p.m.

Description

Eastbound passenger train No. 30 consisted of two coaches, one combination car, and two Pullman parlor cars, all of steel construction, hauled by engine 50, of the 4-6 [illegible], and was in charge of Conductor Knason and Engineman Obrei[illegible]. This train left Amagansett, 1½ miles west of Montauk, [illegible] p.m., according to members of the train crew three minutes late, and on reaching a point approximately 1¼ miles west of Montauk was derailed while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 40 and 65 miles per hour.



Inv. No. 1792
Long Island R.R.,
Montauk, N Y
Oct. 25, 1932

The entire train was derailed, with the exception of the rear truck of the last car. The engine, tender and first car were derailed to the south and stopped on their right sides, the front end of the engine being 325 feet east of the initial point of derailment, the first car was resting diagonally across the tender. The second car was to the north and alongside the first car, while the third car was upright, with its head end wedged against the rear of the first and second cars. The engine, tender, and first three cars were badly damaged, while the last two cars were upright and only slightly damaged. The engine had been forced ahead some distance after it overturned and the open throttle kept the driving wheels revolving until the steam pressure was exhausted. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman, while the employee injured was a coach cleaner, no revenue passengers were on the train at the time of the accident.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Hudson stated that approaching the curve he was riding in the fourth car and felt the air brakes apply in service, at which time he estimated the speed to have been between 60 and 65 miles per hour, following which the train traveled about 500 or 600 feet and then the accident occurred, and he estimated that at this time the speed had been reduced to about 40 miles per hour, or possibly a little higher rate. At Westhampton, 41.5 miles west of Montauk, the air brakes had applied in emergency and the train stopped short of the station; he inquired as to the trouble and was informed by the engineman it was the result of undesired quick action, but that everything was then all right. The air brakes had been tested and worked properly at all the other 11 stops made en route. Conductor Hudson further stated that he had in mind the fact that the train was running fast, but not at an excessive rate of speed, saying that had the speed been excessive when approaching the curve he would have given the engineman a slow-down signal. He had talked to Engineman Obremski at several points en route and the engineman appeared to be normal in every respect, and the train was handled in the usual manner at all times, except for the short station stop at Westhampton. Conductor Hudson further stated that three days prior to the accident, on a westbound trip, he had cautioned Engineman Obremski about speed on the curves in the vicinity of Manorville, 40.8 miles west of Montauk, and since that time he had had no further occasion to criticise the speed, saying that the prescribed speed restrictions were observed.

Head Brakeman Hantz, who also was riding in the fourth car, estimated the maximum speed to have been between 60 and 65 miles per hour after leaving Amagansett, judging from the time which elapsed, and thought the speed was about 55 to 60 miles per hour when the brake application was made as the train

approached the curve involved, 500 feet or more before the accident occurred, but he could give no estimate as to the speed when the train was actually derailed.

Flagman Payne, who was riding in the last car, estimated the speed en route to have been as usual, about 60 or 65 miles per hour, and about 60 miles per hour when the brake application was made. He thought the speed had been reduced to about 40 or 45 miles per hour when the derailment occurred, saying that he felt no concern about the speed of the train prior to the accident. Flagman Payne also said that Pullman Porter Smith remarked about how a train keeps on the track while rounding curves, but he regarded this merely as conversation and not as having been inspired by fear due to excessive speed.

Pullman Porter Hyth, who was riding in the fourth car, cleaning and checking silverware in the buffet, stated that after leaving Amagansett the train picked up speed and that coming down the hill the glassware started sliding, cans fell off the shelf, and a boiler of hot water tipped over as a result of the train zig-zagging around the curve before the derailment occurred. In his opinion the train was traveling faster than usual, not less than 60 miles per hour just prior to the accident; he did not notice any application of the brakes, and he said it seemed as if the train were picking up speed all the time.

Pullman Porter Smith, who was riding in the last car, said he was in the smoking room trying to wash and dry his hands; the water in the basin was splashing out as the train rounded one curve and on rounding another the car lurched and all the water splashed out, and then it appeared as though the air brakes applied in emergency and he was thrown across the car. In his opinion the speed was higher than usual, estimating it to have been about 60 miles per hour just before the accident occurred, and he did not notice any reduction in this rate of speed, in fact the speed was so high as to cause him to comment about it to Flagman Payne.

Coach Cleaner Dellapolla, who was riding in the first car, said the speed was about 55 or 60 miles per hour and that he felt a light application of the brakes, reducing the speed to about 40 to 45 miles per hour, the same as usual, and about a minute or two later the accident occurred. He did not feel any release made from this light application, nor did he notice any emergency application.

Track Foreman Jenkins, who arrived at the scene of the accident about two hours after its occurrence, said his inspection of the track disclosed a flange mark, in the vicinity of where the rear truck of the last car stood, 14 inches outside the high rail of the curve; there were other indications of

derailment between the rails at about the ninth tie east of that point. Eastward from the forward end of the last car in the train the track, including rails, ties, and roadbed, was completely torn up. Measurements taken of that part of the track that was not disturbed disclosed the gauge, curvature, and superelevation of the outside rail to be properly maintained. The track in this particular territory was in good condition; he had walked over and inspected it on October 19 and he last rode over it on the day of the accident, eastward on an engine about 12.40 p.m., and westward on the first car of a train about 2.47 p.m. Nothing wrong was noticed on either trip, and on the curve involved the engine rode smoothly. Track Foreman Jenkins was of the opinion that the curve was safe for a speed of more than 50 miles per hour and thought that the accident was due to excessive speed.

Division Engineer Fair thought that the accident was caused by excessive speed on the curve, basing his opinion on the damaged condition of the steel equipment and the manner in which it stopped, with the engine sliding a considerable distance on its side and the first coach having its entire right side torn away and being damaged beyond repair. He further thought that the air brakes were not applied at what he considered as the usual place, which is in the immediate vicinity of mile post 113 or about 3,000 feet west of the curve, in order properly to reduce speed to the required limit of 40 miles per hour, but instead that they were not applied until the engine was at or very close to the point of curve.

Road Foreman of Engines Cousins inspected the derailed engine at the point of accident, and found nothing missing from the working parts of the engine or anything dragging that in his opinion would have caused the accident. The reverse lever and quadrant were torn loose, and the throttle valve was wide open with the stem bent at the throttle lever connection. He thought the accident was due to excessive speed on the curve, from his experience he thought it would be impossible to wreck the equipment, as in this case, at a speed of 40 miles per hour.

Superintendent Henry shared the opinion of Division Engineer Fair and Road Foreman of Engines Cousins as to the accident having been caused by excessive speed, such opinion was fully supported by the condition of the wreckage and the manner in which it stopped.

Examination of the track failed to reveal the presence of any marks to indicate that any of the equipment had been dragging, or that any wheels had been derailed, west of the flange mark found by the section foreman on the outside of the high rail, 14 inches out from the rail; there was no corresponding flange mark on the inside of the low rail. On the ninth tie

east from this first mark there was another mark, on the inside of the low rail, but it could not be determined definitely how it was made. Beyond this point the track and roadbed were torn up for a considerable distance.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by excessive speed on a sharp curve.

The testimony is practically in accord that the speed of the train, down grade, was 60 to 65 miles per hour until immediately prior to the accident, and that the application of the air brakes was made when the engine was at or very close to the point of curve, although the speed limit at this point is 40 miles per hour. This evidence as to excessive speed was supported by the condition of the equipment after the accident, and also by the absence of wheel marks, approaching the point of accident, indicating that the engine probably turned over as a result of centrifugal force without first being derailed. While Engineman Ooremski was not the regular engineman on this run, he was qualified by previous experience to operate this train in the territory involved, in view of the fact that both the engineman and the fireman were killed as a result of the accident, the reason for failure to conform to speed restrictions on this curve cannot be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.