INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD AT SOUTH LOUISVILLE, KY., ON MARCH 3, 1932.

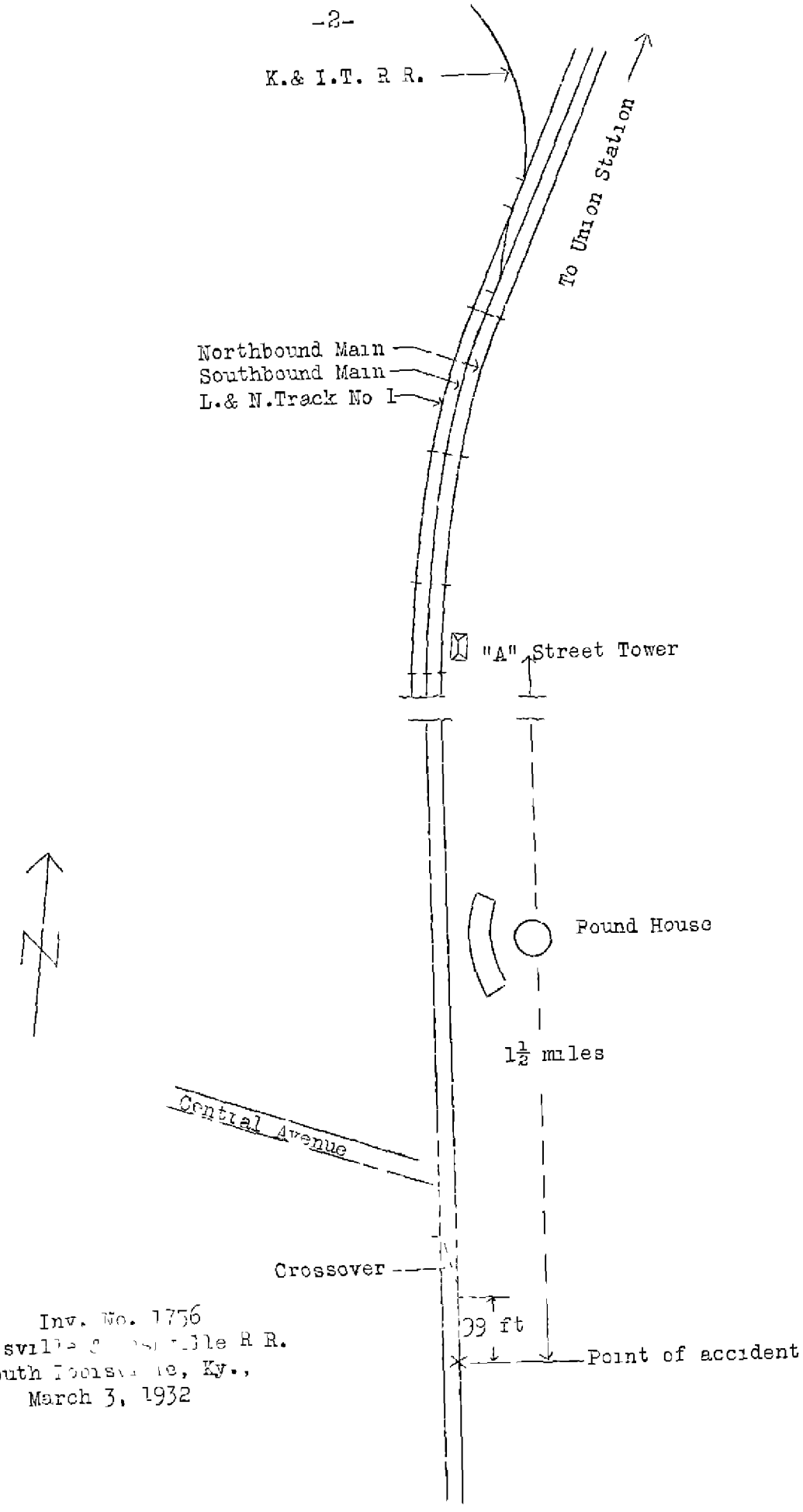
May 2, 1932.

To the Commission:

On March 3, 1932, there was a rear-end collision between a Louisville & Nashville passenger train and a Kentucky and Indiana Terminal Railroad transfer train on the tracks of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at South Louisville, Ky., which resulted in the injury of one passenger and one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred within the yard limits of the Louisville Terminal on that part of the Southern Sub-Division of the Louisville Division which extends between Union Station and mile post 8 and is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and special instructions, all movements in this territory are controlled by a yard dispatcher, orders and instructions being issued verbally. Two sections of this part of the terminal main tracks are controlled by automatic block signals, but there is a section of track between these two sections which is not controlled by automatic signals and the accident occurred within this territory. "A" Street tower is located approximately 1½ miles south of Union Station and the point of accident was about 1½ miles south of this tower, approaching this point, beginning at "A" Street tower, the track is tangent to the point of accident and for a considerable distance beyond that point, while the grade is level. At a point about 1,400 feet north of the tower there is a connection of the K&IT tracks with L&N track 1, which parallels the main tracks on the west, and there is a crossover between this track and the southbound main track a short distance south of the connection. There is also a facing-point crossover between the main tracks about 7,800 feet south of "A" Street tower and just south of Central Avenue, and the accident occurred on the northbound main track at a point 99 feet south of the south switch of this crossover. The switch stands of this crossover are of the low type and are equipped with switch lamps, the centers of the lenses being 18 inches above the rails, night indications are green for main track movements and red for diverging movements. There are other crossovers in



Inv. No. 1756
Louisville & Nashville R R.
South Louisville, Ky.,
March 3, 1932

the vicinity of Central Avenue handled by switch tenders, and under special time-table instructions, trains and engines are required to approach under control, expecting to find trains and yard cuts crossing over, and see that track is clear and switches right before proceeding.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10.30 p. m.

Description

The K&IT transfer train consisted of 44 cars, hauled by engine 28, which was backing up, and was in charge of Conductor Welsh and Engineman Scannell. This train entered L&N track 1 from the K&IT tracks at 10.14 p. m., crossed over to the southbound main track and proceeded southward to the crossovers south of Central Avenue, where it entered the northbound main track, and it was moving over this latter track at an estimated speed of 15 or 18 miles per hour when the rear of the train was struck by L&N train No. 1.

Southbound L&N passenger train No. 1 consisted of 1 baggage car, 1 mail car, 1 baggage car, 1 express car, 1 baggage car, 2 coaches, 4 Pullman sleeping cars and 1 chair car, all of steel construction and in the order named, hauled by engine 413, and was in charge of Conductor Fletcher and Engineman Johnson. This train departed from Union Station at 10.03 p. m., six minutes late, passed "A" Street tower at 10.26 p. m., 25 minutes late, headed through the crossover south of Central Avenue, and collided with the K&IT transfer train while traveling at a speed thought to have been about 30 or 35 miles per hour

The rear car in the transfer train was telescoped and the second car from the rear was derailed and thrown to one side. The third car, a tank car loaded with kerosene, had one pair of wheels of the rear truck derailed, the contents of this car caught fire and caused the destruction of a caboose standing on an adjacent track. None of the equipment of train No. 1 was derailed, but the front end of the engine was quite badly damaged and the coupler on the rear end of the first car was broken. The employee injured was the flagman of the transfer train.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Scannell, of the transfer train, stated that the north crossover switch at Central Avenue was opened when he was about 20 car-lengths from it, with the switch lamp displaying a red indication, and when about 12 car-lengths from the crossover he received a back-up signal from the switch tender. The train started through the

crossover at a speed of about 12 miles per hour, but after the engine entered the northbound track speed was increased to about 15 miles per hour and the train was traveling at about this rate of speed when he felt a lurch, followed by an emergency application of the brakes which brought the train to a stop.

Fireman Thompson, of the transfer train, said that when his train reached a point about 20 car-lengths from the north crossover switch he noticed that the lamp was displaying a green indication and upon reaching a point about 12 car-lengths from the switch he saw the indication change to red, he did not see any signals given by the switch tender.

Conductor Welsh, of the transfer train, stated that his train arrived at the K&IT connection at 10.04 p m, but was delayed until 10.14 p m. before a signal was received from the switch-tender to enter the L&N tracks. He rode on the engine while the movement was being made, and the train passed "A" Street tower under a yellow signal indication. The train continued southward to the crossover at Central Ave., where it entered the northbound main track, and was moving at a speed of from 15 to 18 miles per hour when something struck the rear end of the train, causing it to stop suddenly, up to this time no stops had been made after entering the L&N tracks. Conductor Welsh further stated that although it was raining, he could distinguish the red indication of the switch lamp at the north crossover switch for a distance of about 15 car-lengths before the engine reached it. He held no conversation with the switch tender at the K&IT connection before entering on the L&N tracks, but accepted his back-up signal and the yellow signal at "A" Street tower as authority to proceed on the southbound track, while the red indication of the switch lamp at the north switch of the crossover south of Central Avenue together with signals given by the switch tender at that point, indicated that the train was to enter the northbound track. The statements of Head Brakeman Willis, of the transfer train, added no additional facts of importance.

Flagman Pope, of the transfer train, stated that he did not know what time the train left K&IT Junction, neither did he know that train No. 1 was behind his train. There was a red lantern hanging from a handhold on the rear end of the last car, a gondola, and he was riding on this car holding a white lantern while the train was moving over the L&N tracks, but he did not see the headlight of an approaching engine until his attention was attracted to it by a switch tender coming from the direction of the shanty near the crossover, who appeared to be giving stop signals with

a yellow lantern. At first he had thought it was a switch engine which followed his train from the K&IT tracks, but he at once realized that it was a train approaching at a rapid rate of speed and attempted to get off, but was unable to do so before the collision occurred. He had torpedoes and a fusee in his possession, as well as red and white lanterns. He estimated that his train moved through the crossover at a speed of 15 miles per hour and that train No. 1 approached the point of accident at a speed of 50 or 60 miles per hour. Flagman Pope further stated that he had not been examined on the L&N rules but had been instructed to comply with rule 99 while operating over that railroad.

Engineman Johnson, of train No. 1, stated that the train left the station 6 minutes late and was delayed 18 or 20 minutes at K&IT Junction. His train departed from that point at 10.22 p. m. and was traveling at a speed of 12 or 14 miles per hour as it approached the crossover at Central Avenue. When the engine reached a point about one car-length from the north switch he observed that the switch lamp was displaying a red indication, at about which time the fireman called a warning, and Engineman Johnson immediately applied the brakes in emergency, this reduced the speed of the train and he said it was running very slowly when the collision occurred. When asked how he could have overtaken the transfer train had his own train been traveling at a speed of only 12 or 14 miles per hour, he said it was his opinion the transfer was standing. The headlight of his engine was burning brightly and he had maintained a constant lookout in the direction in which the train was moving after leaving K&IT Junction but had not seen any lights or signals of any kind except fixed signals, prior to the accident. Engineman Johnson further stated that it was raining, the night was very dark, and smoke was blowing across the tracks in the vicinity of Central Avenue, restricting the view ahead. He knew the rules required him to use extra precaution under certain weather conditions and was familiar with the time-table rule which required trains to approach the Central Avenue crossovers under control expecting to find trains and yard cuts crossing over, but it was also his understanding that trains are supposed to make their scheduled running time through the terminal and he considered that his train was under control at the speed at which it was traveling, although he said that when weather conditions are bad it is difficult to locate the switches at Central Avenue, in this particular case he did not know the transfer train was ahead of him and did not see the red lantern said to have been hanging on the rear of the last car.

Fireman Stivers, of train No. 1, was riding on his seat box, and when the train reached a point about 20 car-lengths from the crossover at Central Avenue he saw stop

signals being given with a yellow lamp from a point about 50 feet east of the southbound main track and a few car-lengths north of the crossover. At first he thought these signals were intended for a yard crew, but upon raising up he noticed they were emergency stop signals and at once shouted a warning to the engineman, who in turn applied the brakes in emergency; at this time the engine was about two car-lengths from the north crossover switch, traveling at a speed of 15 or 18 miles per hour, and he thought the speed had been reduced to 7 or 8 miles per hour when the collision occurred. He did not see the crossover switch lamps, although when the engine was about three or four car-lengths from the north switch, after he had warned the engineman, he noticed cars moving through the crossover, he did not see anyone on the rear of these cars. Fireman Stivers described the weather conditions as rainy, and steam and smoke from engines standing at the roundhouse located a short distance north of the crossover was blowing across the tracks, interfering with the view.

Conductor Fletcher, of train No. 1, stated that the train departed from the station at 10.02 p. m. and was brought to a stop at 10.05 p. m. with the rear car standing on Oak Street crossing approximately 2,200 feet north of the K&IT Junction, where it remained until 10.24 p. m. before the train proceeded. He was riding in the sixth car of the train while approaching the crossovers at Central Avenue, and was looking at his watch, which indicated the time as 10.30 p. m., when he felt the slack run in as though the brakes had been applied in emergency, followed by another shock just before the train came to a stop. He went through the train to learn if the flagman had gone back and whether any passengers were injured, and then proceeded to the head end of the train to ascertain what had occurred, he did not know that another train was preceding his own train. He noticed considerable smoke in the vicinity but as there was a tank car on fire some of this smoke may have been caused by the fire. He could not estimate the speed of the train at the time of the accident, although judging from the time the train passed "A" Street Junction, about 10.25 p. m., and the time at which the collision occurred, he estimated that the speed averaged 24 or 25 miles per hour between these two points.

Flagman Haynes, of train No. 1, stated that he rode in the rear car after leaving Oak Street and estimated that the train traveled at a speed of about 15 miles per hour between that point and Central Avenue. His first knowledge of anything wrong was when he felt a heavy application of the brakes, which was followed by the impact of the collision. He got off as soon as the train came to a stop and started back to flag but due to weather conditions he could see for a distance of only about 600 feet.

Switch Tender Vittitoe, on duty at Central Avenue, at the time of the accident, had been informed by the yard dispatcher that the X&IT transfer would precede train No. 1 and was instructed to cross the transfer over to the northbound track. He repeated these instructions to another switch tender, who handled the switches for the movement, and then began lining switches near the roundhouse for other trains and engines, and it was while so engaged that he observed the transfer train moving through the crossover at a speed of 12 or 15 miles per hour. He was about 10 car-lengths north of the crossover and east of the main tracks when he heard train No. 1 approaching, and he attempted to cross to the west side of the tracks to signal the engineman but was unable to do so as the train was then too close, he did, however, give stop signals on the fireman's side with a yellow lantern, although he did not see the fireman when the engine passed him, working steam, he heard an application of the brakes just before the collision occurred. The speed of train No. 1 at the time the engine passed him was 25 or 30 miles per hour and it was then only about seven or eight car-lengths from the rear end of the transfer train. The headlight of the passenger engine was burning, and he saw a red lamp hanging on the rear end of the transfer, as well as the flagman riding on the rear car, the switch lamps at the crossover switches were burning and displaying red indications.

Switch Tender Wright, who also was on duty at Central Avenue, stated that he operated the switches for the movement of the transfer, first lining the south crossover switch and then the north switch. After opening the latter switch he noted the time to be 10.20 p. m., and at 10.23 or 10.24 p. m. he observed the transfer approaching, about 20 car-lengths distant. He was on the east side of the main tracks and gave a signal for that train to proceed and as it neared the crossover he gave another proceed signal, knowing that it was on the time of train No. 1. He then boarded a caboose standing on an adjacent track and when the engine passed he shouted to the engineman to hurry in order to clear the track for train No. 1. After the engine passed him he got off the caboose and went to the south crossover switch, where he was located when he observed the headlight of train No. 1 approaching. He saw Switch Tender Vittitoe run across the yard tracks and give stop signals, and he also gave stop signals from his own position on the east side of the tracks, but by the time the rear end of the transfer train cleared the southbound main track it was too late for him to cross over to the west side of the tracks and give further signals. When the rear of the transfer passed him he called to the flagman to get off, and when the engine of train No. 1 passed him he shouted to the fireman to stop, but the brakes were not applied until the engine was between one-half and one car-length from the rear end of the other train. He esti-

mated the speed of the transfer train at the time the rear end passed him at 10 or 12 miles per hour and the speed of train No. 1 between 25 and 30 miles per hour, and further stated that the engine of train No. 1 had entered the north crossover switch before the rear of the transfer train had cleared the crossover.

Yard Dispatcher Beets stated that Monon train No. 204 left Union station at 10 p. m. and L&N train No. 1 at 10.03 p. m. The engine of the Monon train was derailed at K&IT Junction, causing train No. 1 to be delayed. In the meantime the switch tender at that point reported a K&IT transfer moving from the tracks of that company, and as he did not know how long train No. 1 would be delayed he made arrangements to permit the K&IT transfer to proceed, and then called the switch tender at Central Avenue and instructed him to cross the K&IT transfer over to the northbound track, as arrangements had been made for it to move to that point ahead of train No. 1

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Johnson, of train No. 1, to operate his train under control as required by special instructions.

Under special instructions contained in the time-table, all trains and engines were required to approach the crossovers at Central Avenue under control, expecting to find trains and yard cuts crossing over, and to see that the track was clear and the switches right before proceeding. According to Engineman Johnson, his train was traveling at a speed of 12 or 14 miles per hour when he observed that the switch lamp at the north crossover switch at Central Avenue was displaying a red indication, he immediately applied the brakes in emergency but it was then too late to prevent colliding with the transfer train, which he thought was standing still. Other evidence, however, indicated that the speed of the transfer train was not far from 15 miles per hour, and under these circumstances it is apparent that train No. 1 was traveling at a speed of at least 30 miles per hour when the accident occurred. Such an estimate is in line with the conductor's statement that he thought the train averaged 24 or 25 miles per hour between "A" Street Junction and the point of accident, in other words, Engineman Johnson was maintaining approximately schedule speed, which is about 33 miles per hour through this part of the terminal. It was raining at the time of the accident, with smoke and steam blowing across the tracks from engines standing at the roundhouse north of Central Avenue, and under these unfavorable conditions it was particularly necessary for Engineman Johnson to have his train under full control.

Flagman Poore was riding on the rear car of the transfer train and had a white lantern, while a red lantern was hanging on the rear of the car. He failed to give any stop signals, however, when he saw an approaching headlight as he thought it was a switch engine, not knowing that train No. 1 was following his train. Had he given stop signals, however, it is of course problematical whether they would have been seen in time to have been acted upon by the engine crew of train No. 1, as they did not see the stop signals being given by one of the switch tenders at the crossover, nor did they discover the transfer train moving through the crossover until their train had almost reached that point.

An agreement between the two railroads involved in this accident permits employees of either railroad to work on the line of the other company without an examination on the rules other than those of the road that employs them, time-tables to be supplied to crews of both companies. The investigation developed, however, that none of the K&IT employees involved had a L&N time-table, nor did they know that train No. 1 was following them, although under bulletin instructions of long standing, yard crews are supposed to be informed concerning overdue passenger trains.

The employees involved were experienced men and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P BORLAND

Director.