INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3292

MAINE CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

AT CLINTON, MAINE, ON

OCTOBER 26, 1949

SUMMARY

Date:	October 26, 1949	
Railroad:	Maine Central	
Location:	Clinton, Maine	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 518 East	: Extra 684 West
Engine numbers:	518	: Diesel-electric units 684A, 671B and 671A
Consists:	19 cars, caboose	: 125 cars, caboose
Estimated speeds:	Standing	: 25 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system	
Track:	Double; tangent; level	
Weather:	Cloudy	
Time:	11:10 a. m.	
Casualties:	3 injured	
Cause:	Switch being opened immediately in front of approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3292

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

MAINE CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

December 30, 1949

Accident at Clinton, Maine, on October 26, 1949, caused by a switch being opened immediately in front of an approaching train.

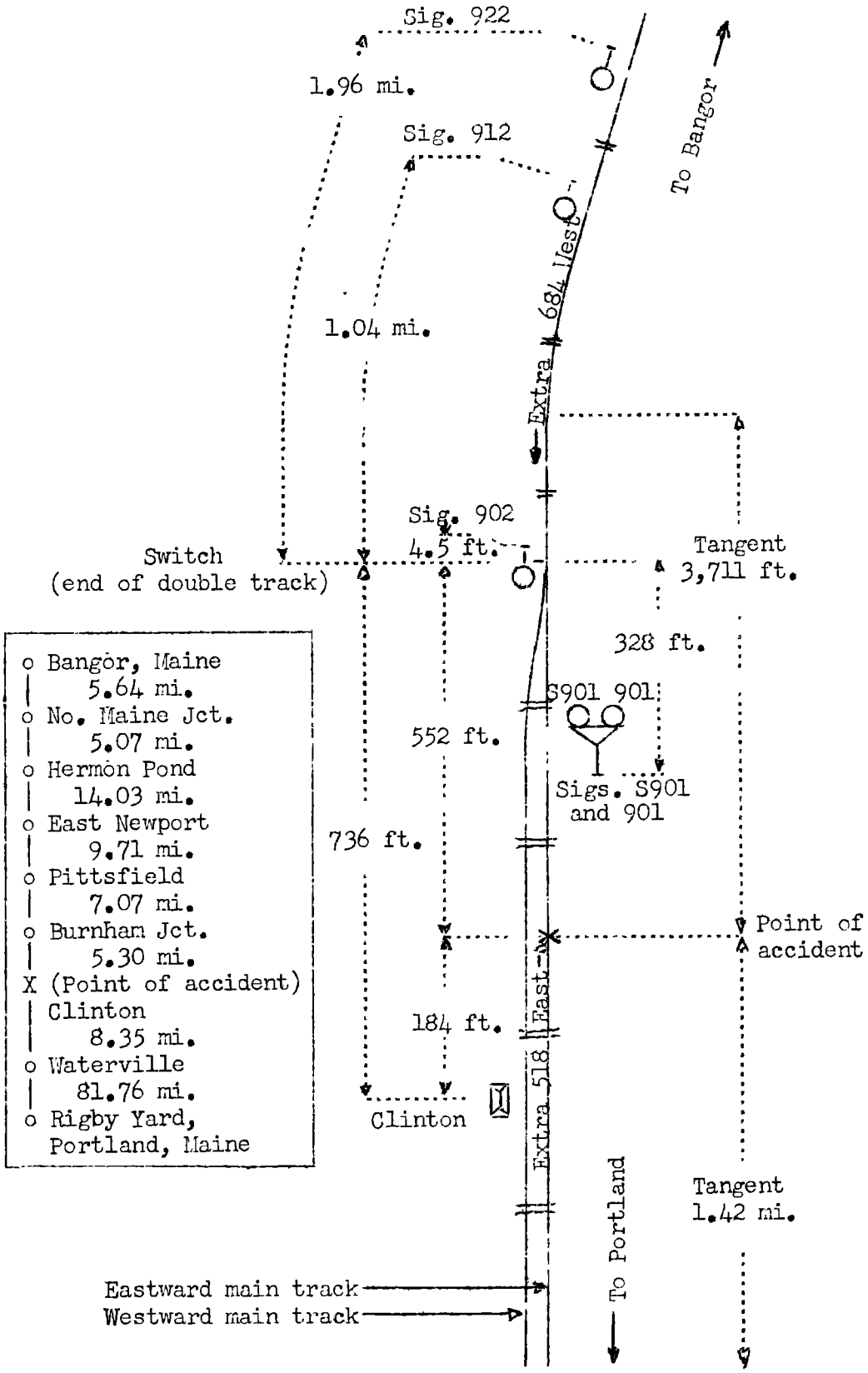
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 26, 1949, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Maine Central Railroad at Clinton, Maine, which resulted in the injury of three employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Maine Public Utilities 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. 3292
Maine Central Railroad
Clinton, Maine
October 26, 1949

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Portland Division extending between Rigby Yard, Portland, and Bangor, Maine, 136.93 miles. Between Waterville, 81.76 miles east of Rigby Yard, and Clinton, a distance of 8.35 miles, this is a double-track line, and the tracks are designated, from south to north, as the eastward main track and the westward main track. On the double-track line the current of traffic is to the right. Between Clinton and Pittsfield, 12.37 miles, this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The switch at the end of double track at Clinton is located 736 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the eastward main track 184 feet east of the station at Clinton and 552 feet west of the switch at the end of double track. From the west there is a tangent 1.42 miles to the point of accident and 3,711 feet eastward. The grade is practically level.

The switch at the end of double track at Clinton is a hand-operated switch and is under the charge of the agent-operator at that station. The switch stand is located 8 feet 8-1/2 inches north of the center-line of the track. It is equipped with a rectangular red target 12 inches long and 8 inches wide. It also is equipped with a reflector-type switch lamp. The top of the target is 3 feet 10 inches above the level of the top of the rail. When the switch is lined for movement from the single track to the westward main track the switch target is at right angles to the track. When the switch is lined for movement from the single track to the eastward main track the target is parallel to the track. The switch normally is locked in position by a padlock.

Automatic signals S901 and 901, governing east-bound movements, respectively, from the westward main track and the eastward main track, are mounted on a bracket mast located 328 feet west of the switch at the end of double track. Signals 902 and 912, governing west-bound movement on the single-track line, are located, respectively, 4.5 feet and 1.04 miles east of the end of double track. These signals are of the single-unit, color-light type, and display three aspects. They are approach lighted. The controlling circuits are arranged on the overlap principle. When the switch at the end of double track is lined for west-bound movement and the block in advance on the westward main track is clear,

signal 902 indicates Proceed and signal 901 indicates Stop. When the switch is lined for east-bound movement signal 902 indicates Stop and Proceed. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals are as follows:

Signal	Aspect	Indication	Name
902) 912) S901)	Green	Proceed at Normal Speed.	Clear.
901) 902)	Red	Stop; Then Proceed in Accordance with Rule 509 (A) or (B)	Stop and Proceed.

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

104b. Employes handling switches must stand at least twenty feet from main track switches while trains are approaching and passing over them. When practicable they should stand on the opposite side of track from switch.

509. When a train is stopped by a Stop signal it must stay until authorized to proceed, or in case of failure of means of communication it may proceed--

509.(A). On single track, preceded by a flagman to the next Clear Signal. * * *

The maximum authorized speed for Diesel-operated freight trains is 40 miles per hour, but all west-bound trains are restricted to 30 miles per hour through the turnout at the end of double track at Clinton.

Description of Accident

At Waterville, the crew of Extra 518 East, an east-bound freight train, consisting of engine 518, 19 cars and a caboose, received copies of train order No. 514, reading as follows:

> Eng 518 run extra Waterville to East Newport clears East of Clinton extra 684 West which left Herman Pond at 9 57 nine fifty seven A.M.

This train departed from Waterville at 10:35 a. m., and stopped on the eastward main track at Clinton at 10:55 a. m., with the front of the engine 552 feet west of the switch at the end of double track. About 15 minutes later it was struck by Extra 684 West.

Extra 684 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 684A, 671B and 671A, coupled in multiple-unit control, 125 cars and a caboose. This train departed from No. Maine Jct., 41.18 miles east of Clinton, at 9:45 a. m., passed Burnham Jct., the last open office, 5.3 miles east of Clinton, at 11:01 a. m., and while moving at a speed of 25 miles per hour it entered the eastward main track and struck Extra 518 East.

The engine and the first three cars of Extra 518 East and the three Diesel-electric units and the first eight cars of Extra 684 West were derailed and damaged. The engines of both trains stopped upright and in line with the track, and the cars stopped in various positions across and along both tracks. Ten other cars of Extra 684 West were damaged but were not derailed.

The engineer and the front brakeman of Extra 684 West and the conductor of Extra 518 East were injured.

It was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 11:10 a. 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 22.3 trains.

Discussion

Extra 518 East stopped on the eastward main track at Clinton to meet Extra 684 West. The front end of the engine was 552 feet west of the switch at the end of double track. About 15 minutes later it was struck by Extra 684 West.

As Extra 684 West was approaching Clinton the speed was 35 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed recording device. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the first Diesel-electric unit. Signal 902, located 4.5 feet east of the switch at the end of double track,

indicated Proceed. This indicated to the enginemen that the switch at the end of double track was lined for entry to the westward main track. The engineer said that he had controlled the speed of the train by use of the dynamic brakes until the train approached the end of double track, then he initiated a service application of the brakes. He then observed a person hurriedly line the switch at the end of double track for movement to the eastward main track. This action caused signal 902 to indicate Stop and Proceed. He immediately initiated an emergency brake application, and the speed of the train had been reduced to about 25 miles per hour when it struck Extra 518 East.

Soon after Extra 518 East arrived at Clinton, the agent-operator, who had been engaged in duties outside the station, entered the office. A student-operator, who had been under his instruction during a period of about six weeks, handed him waybills for express shipments received from a west-bound passenger train a short time before. He said that he was engaged with these waybills when he heard by telegraph Extra 684 West reported by Burnham Jct. He then instructed the student-operator to proceed to the switch at the end of double track and, after Extra 684 West had passed, to line the switch for eastward movement for Extra 518 East. The student-operator then obtained the switch key that was assigned to that station and proceeded to the switch, which then was lined for entry to the westward main track. He arrived at the switch as Extra 684 West was closely approaching it. He did not observe the position of the switch points or of the switch target before he operated the switch.

The student-operator said that the agent-operator instructed him to operate the switch and, after Extra 684 West had passed, to line it back for movement of Extra 518 East. The student-operator had lined the switch for movement of No. 1, a west-bound passenger train, a short time previously. He said that he asked the agent-operator if the switch was lined for west-bound movement, and that the agent-operator informed him that it was not. He said he then assumed that the agent-operator had operated the switch for east-bound movement, and for that reason he did not observe the position of the points or of the target before operating the switch. He said he had been instructed by the agent-operator as to how to unlock and to operate the switch, but he had not been instructed in the use of the switch target, or the position of the switch points with respect to the position of the operating lever.

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 thirtieth day of December, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.