INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3006

THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT FORT CUSTER, MICH., ON

JULY 22, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Michigan Central	
Date:	July 22, 1946	
Location:	Fort Custer, Mich.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Equipment involved:	Engine and cars	: Engine and cars
Engine numbers:	7514	: 6898
Consists:	12 cars	: 36 cars
Estimated speeds:	15 m. p. h.	: 8 m. p. h.
Operation:	Operating rules	
Track:	Yard track; 3° curve; 2.3 percent descending grade eastward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	2:06 p. m.	
Casualties:	3 killed; 3 injured	
Cause:	Failure properly to control speed of both movements on yard track	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3006

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

THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

October 10, 1946.

Accident at Fort Custer, near Battle Creek, Mich., on July 22, 1946, caused by failure properly to control the speed of both movements on a yard track.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 22, 1946, there was a head-end collision between two yard engines on the Michigan Central Railroad at Fort Custer, near Battle Creek, Mich., which resulted in the death of three employees, and the injury of three employees.

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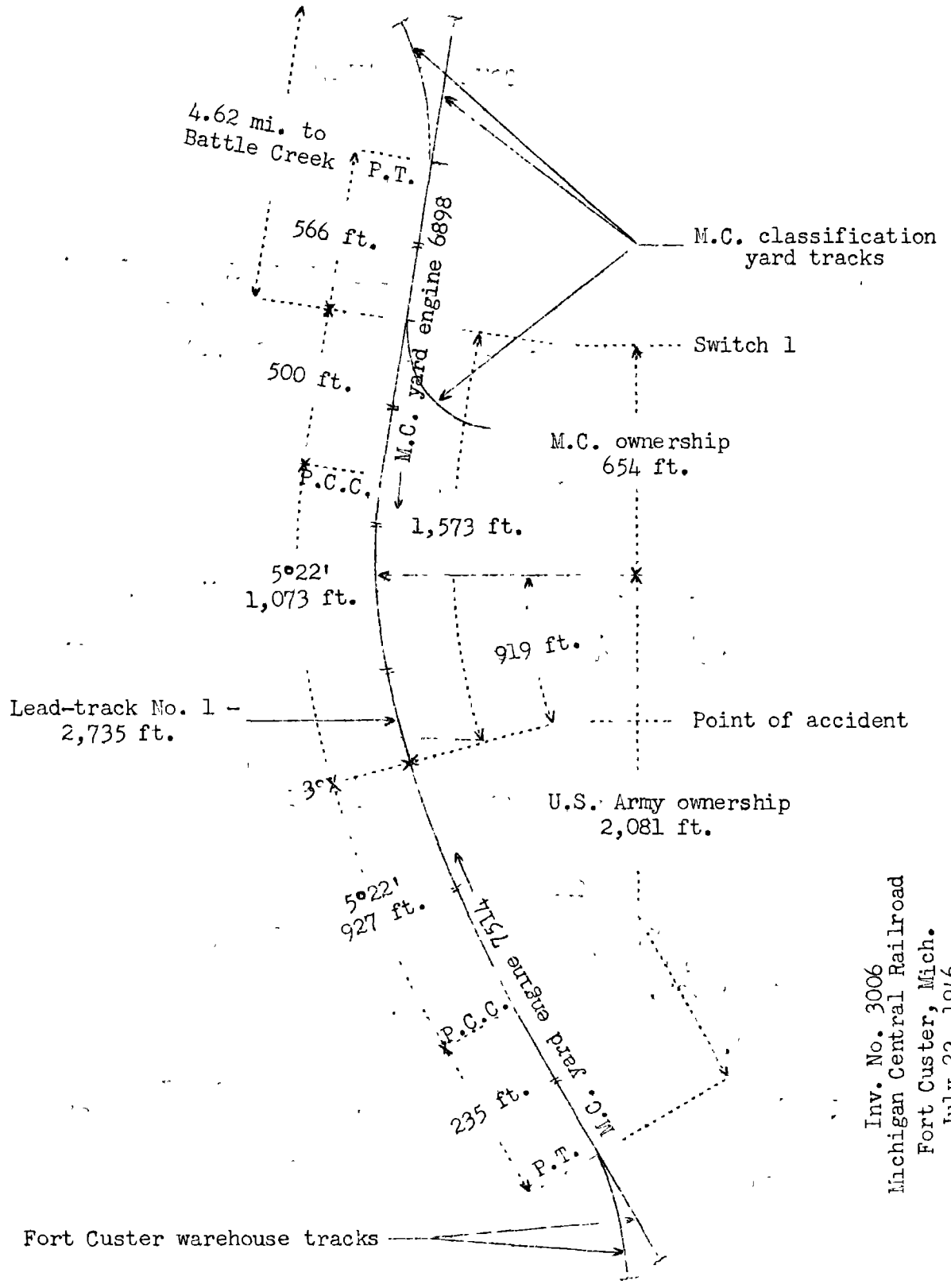
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 3006
Michigan Central Railroad
Fort Custer, Mich.
July 22, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on a lead track at Fort Custer, Mich., which connects tracks of a classification yard of the Michigan Central Railroad and warehouse tracks of the United States Army. The lead track is 2,735 feet in length, and is hereinafter referred to as track No. 1. Movement of engines of the Michigan Central Railroad on track No. 1 are governed by operating rules of that railroad. The switch which connects the M.C. classification yard tracks and track No. 1, hereinafter referred to as switch 1, is 4.62 miles west of the M.C. station at Battle Creek, Mich. That part of track No. 1 extending 654 feet west of switch 1 is owned by the M.C., and the westward 2,081 feet of this track is owned by the United States Army. The accident occurred on track No. 1 at a point 1,573 feet west of switch 1 and 919 feet west of the west end of the portion owned by the M.C. From the west on track No. 1, there is a tangent 235 feet in length, which is followed by a compound curve to the right, the maximum curvature of which is $5^{\circ}22'$, 927 feet to the point of accident and 1,073 feet eastward. At the point of accident the curvature is 3°. From the east on the M.C. classification yard track to switch 1 thence on track No. 1 there is a tangent 1,066 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 2.3 percent descending eastward.

Operating rules of the Michigan Central Railroad read in part as follows:

> 105. Trains or engines using * * * a yard track must proceed expecting to find it occupied.
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> * * *

Description of Accident

Engine 7514, a M.C. yard engine, headed westward and pulling 12 cars eastward, was moving on track No. 1 at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour when it collided with engine 6898.

Engine 6898, a M.C. yard engine, headed westward and pulling 36 cars westward, entered track No. 1 at switch 1 and was moving at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour when it collided with engine 7514.

Engine 7514 overturned and stopped on its right side, down an embankment and at an angle of 45 degrees to the track. The tender was torn loose, and stopped down the embankment and

north of the engine. The cab of the engine and the tender were badly damaged. Engine 6898 stopped in reverse direction, north of the track and on top of the tender of engine 7514. The front end of engine 6898 was demolished, the cab was torn off, and the tender was demolished. The front truck of the first car of engine 7514, and the first car and the front truck of the second car of engine 6898 were derailed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:06 p. m.

The engineer and the fireman of engine 7514 and the fireman of engine 6898 were killed. The conductor and a brakeman of engine 7514 and the engineer of engine 6898 were injured.

Discussion

As yard engine 7514 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour. The members of the train crew were in the cab of the engine. The engine was moving backward, and the fireman was the only member of the crew in position to observe the track ahead, because of the curve to the right. The engineer and the fireman were killed in the accident, and the conductor was so seriously injured that he could not be questioned during the investigation. The brakemen said that just before the collision occurred the fireman was manipulating the injector and appeared to be having difficulty in operating it so that it would supply feedwater to the boiler. The first the brakemen knew of the opposing movement was when the conductor looked eastward from the right side of the gangway and called a warning, and the conductor and the brakemen jumped from the engine immediately prior to the collision. The brakemen did not observe what action was taken by the engineer to stop the movement. In tests after the accident the brakes of the engine and cars functioned properly.

When the accident occurred the fireman of engine 6898 was operating the engine and the engineer was performing the fireman's duties. The engine was headed westward and was coupled to the west end of a cut of cars which was being moved westward from a track of the classification yard to track No. 1. When the collision occurred the conductor and the brakemen were in the vicinity of the east end of the cut of cars, and they did not see the opposing movement until the collision occurred. The fireman was killed in the accident, and the engineer was so seriously injured that he could not be questioned during the investigation.

The accident occurred on a yard track, and, under the rules, each movement was required to be operated in such manner

that it could be stopped short of a train or obstruction. An unobstructed view of the point of accident can be had from an engine moving in either direction throughout a distance of about 1,000 feet.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of both movements on a yard track.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this tenth day of October, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.

(SEAL)