

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3257

MINNEAPOLIS, ST. PAUL & SAULT STE. MARIE
RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT CADOTT, WIS., ON

MAY 26, 1949

SUMMARY

Date: May 26, 1949

Railroad: Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault
Ste. Marie

Location: Cadott, Wis.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Freight train : Motor-truck

Train number: 21

Engine number: 4012

Consist: 58 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 45 m. p. h. : 15 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 1°30' curve; 0.5 percent
descending grade westward

Street: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 71°36'; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 5:40 p. m.

Casualties: 3 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Motor-truck occupying rail-highway
grade-crossing immediately in
front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3257

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

MINNEAPOLIS, ST. PAUL & SAULT STE. MARIE
RAILROAD COMPANY

July 25, 1949

Accident at Cadott, Wis., on May 26, 1949, caused by a
motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade-crossing
immediately in front of an approaching train.

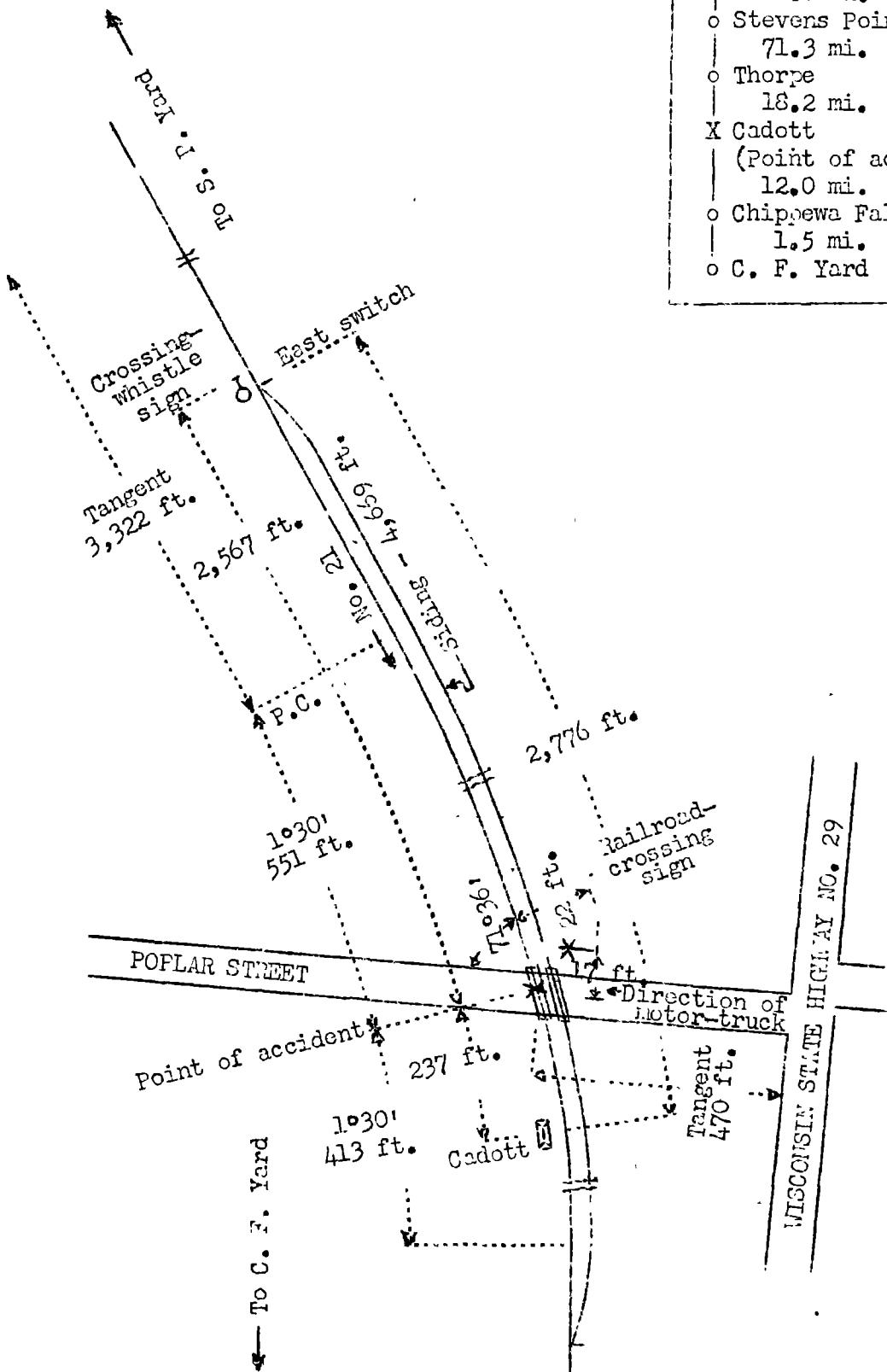
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 26, 1949, there was a collision between a freight train on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade-crossing at Cadott, Wis., which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck and two train-service employees, and the injury of one train-service employee.

¹Under 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.

- o S. P. Yard
0.6 mi.
- o Stevens Point, Wis.
71.3 mi.
- o Thorpe
18.2 mi.
- X Cadott
(Point of accident)
12.0 mi.
- o Chippewa Falls, Wis.
1.5 mi.
- o C. F. Yard



Inv. No. 3257
 Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad
 Cadott, Wis.
 May 26, 1949

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Stevens Point Division extending between S. P. Yard, Stevens Point, and C. F. Yard, Chippewa Falls, Wis., 103.6 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Cadott, 90.1 miles west of S. P. Yard, a siding 4,669 feet in length parallels the main track on the south. The distance between the center-lines of the main track and the siding is 13.3 feet. The east switch of the siding is 2,776 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 237 feet east of the station, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Poplar Street. From the east on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 3,322 feet in length and a 1°30' curve to the right 551 feet to the crossing and 413 feet westward. The grade is 0.5 percent descending westward. Poplar Street intersects the railroad at an angle of 71°36', and is an unimproved street. This street is tangent throughout a distance of 470 feet south of the crossing and several hundred feet northward. The grade for north-bound traffic is 3.09 percent descending throughout a distance of 100 feet immediately south of the crossing, and is level over the crossing. The crossing is 24 feet wide, and is of plank construction. Flangeways about 2-1/4 inches in width are provided. The surface of the crossing is approximately level with the tops of the rails.

A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located in the southeast angle of the intersection, 22 feet south of the center-line of the main track, and 17 feet east of the center-line of Poplar Street. This sign is mounted on a mast 8 feet 4 inches above the level of the street, and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background. There is no advance warning railroad-crossing sign. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located 2,567 feet east of the crossing.

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

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

* * *

The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds: "—" for longer sounds. * * *

In sounding signal 14 (1) for public crossings, the first of the long sounds must be started at such a point that the signal will be completed by ending the last sound immediately after passing over the crossing,
* * *

Sound.	Indication.
<p>* * *</p> <p>(1) — — o —</p> <p>* * *</p>	<p>Approaching public crossings at grade, * * *</p>

Chapters 85.92 and 194.01 of the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Laws read in part as follows:

85.92 * * * Any person operating any motor vehicle * * * who shall operate, run or drive any such vehicle on or across a grade crossing with the main line tracks of any railroad * * * unless such crossing is protected by crossing gates or by flagmen, without coming to a full stop at a distance from such tracks of at least twenty and at not more than forty feet, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor * * *

* * *

194.01 Definitions. * * *

(1) "Motor vehicle" means any automobile, truck, trailer, semitrailer, tractor, motor bus or any self-propelled or motor driven vehicle, * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 55 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 21, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisting of engine 4012, 58 cars and a caboose, departed from S. P. Yard at 3:02 p. m., 22 minutes late, passed Thorpe, the last open office, 18.2 miles east of Cadott, at 5:20 p. m., 15 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a rail-highway grade-crossing 237 feet east of the station at Cadott.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer operated by the Petroleum Carriers Co., Minneapolis, Minn. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Minnesota chauffeur's license No. 84446. The tractor was a 1948 Autocar and bore Minnesota license No. Y 25-427. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels and air brakes on all wheels, and was provided

with an enclosed steel cab. The semi-trailer was equipped with dual tires and air brakes on all wheels. It bore Minnesota license No. XZ 2024. It was equipped with a cylindrical steel tank divided into three compartments, and at the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 5,400 gallons of gasoline. The total length of the tractor and semi-trailer was 44 feet 7-1/2 inches. The total weight of the tractor, semi-trailer and cargo was 56,160 pounds. The cargo was loaded at Minneapolis, Minn., and was destined to Cadott, Wis. At Cadott, this motor-truck was diverted from Wisconsin State Highway No. 29 to Poplar Street. It was moving northward on Poplar Street at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 21.

The tractor was torn loose from the semi-trailer and became lodged on the front end of the engine of No. 21. The fuel tank was punctured, escaping gasoline became ignited and the tractor and the engine of No. 21 were badly damaged by fire. The semi-trailer stopped across the siding and at an angle of about 45 degrees to it, with the front end 75 feet west of the crossing and 5 feet 7 inches south of the center-line of the track. It was destroyed by fire. When No. 21 stopped, the front of the engine was 2,643 feet west of the crossing. None of the equipment of No. 21 was derailed, but 3 cars were badly damaged and 30 cars were more or less damaged by fire.

The engineer and the front brakeman were killed. The fireman was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 5:40 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 12.46 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., June 2, 1949, 279 automobiles and 76 trucks passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 21 approached Cadott, the speed was about 45 miles per hour. The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the cab of the engine. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The fireman, who was the only surviving member of the engine crew, and three witnesses, who were in the vicinity of the crossing at that time, heard the engine-whistle signal sounded for the crossing. The fireman first saw the motor-truck when it was about 100 feet south of the crossing and he thought

the vehicle would be stopped short of the crossing. When he realized that the motor-truck was about to enter upon the crossing he called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to the emergency position, but the collision occurred before the speed of the train had been materially reduced. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route.

The crossing was protected by a standard cross-buck crossing sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver and had made several trips over the crossing where the accident occurred. According to the records of the company operating the vehicle, the brakes of the motor-truck had been tested at Minneapolis on the day of the accident, and they had functioned properly. The driver had been on duty a period of 4 hours 50 minutes at the time of the accident, and had been off duty a period of 38 hours prior to his beginning the trip at Minneapolis.

Under the laws of the State of Wisconsin governing operation of motor vehicles the motor-truck involved was required to stop not less than 20 feet and not more than 40 feet from the grade crossing. Visibility was not impaired by weather conditions and the approaching train could have been seen by the driver of the motor-truck throughout a considerable distance immediately east of the crossing. The driver was killed in the accident. Two witnesses to the accident, located 220 feet north and 510 feet south of the crossing, said that the motor-truck entered upon the crossing without stopping.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of July, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.