

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3139

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

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR GLOSTER, MINN., ON

OCTOBER 22, 1947

SUMMARY

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

Date: October 22, 1947

Location: Gloster, Minn.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: M.St.P.& S.S.M. : N. P. freight
passenger

Train numbers: 5 : 716

Engine numbers: 2712 : Diesel-electric
157

Consists: 4 cars : 13 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 40 m. p. h. : 9 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders, and
manual-block system for following
movements only

Track: Single; 2°01' curve; 0.96 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:58 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 40 injured

Cause: Inferior train occupying main track
on time of opposing superior train

Recommendation: That the Minneapolis, St. Paul &
Sault Ste. Marie Railroad Company
establish an adequate block system
on the line on which this accident
occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3139

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

December 23, 1947

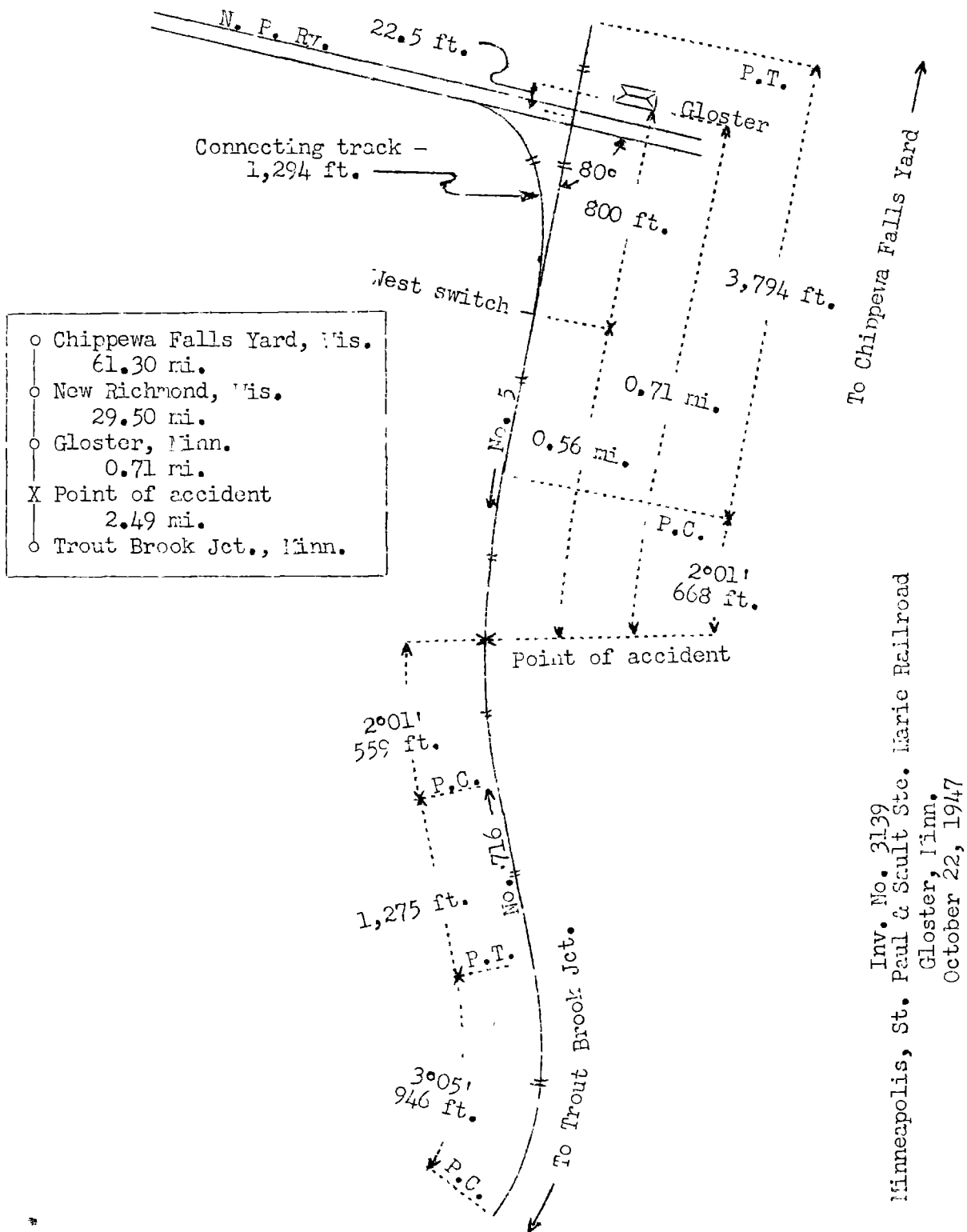
Accident near Gloster, Minn., on October 22, 1947,
caused by an inferior train occupying the main
track on the time of an opposing superior
train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 22, 1947, there was a head-end collision between a Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad passenger train and a Northern Pacific Railway freight train on the line of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad near Gloster, Minn., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 29 passengers, 2 railway-mail clerks, 2 Pullman employees and 7 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse 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.



Inv. No. 3139
 Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad
 Gloster, Minn.
 October 22, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Stevens Point Division extending between Chippewa Falls Yard, Wis., and Trout Brook Jct., Minn., 94 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following movements only. At Gloster, 90.8 miles west of Chippewa Falls Yard, this line intersects a double-track line of the Northern Pacific Railway at an angle of about 80° at a point 22.5 feet west of the station. A connecting track 1,294 feet in length, which connects the M.St.P.& S.S.M. main track and the N.P. southward main track, is in the northwest angle of the crossing. The west connecting-track switch is 800 feet west of the station. Trains of the N.P. Ry. are regularly operated over that portion of the M.St.P.& S.S.M. R.R. extending between Trout Brook Jct. and the west connecting-track switch at Gloster, 3.2 miles. The accident occurred on the M.St.P.& S.S.M. main track at a point 0.56 mile west of the west connecting-track switch and 0.71 mile west of the station at Gloster. From the east on the M.St.P.& S.S.M. main track there are, in succession, a tangent 3,794 feet in length and a 2°01' curve to the left 668 feet to the point of accident and 559 feet westward. From the west there are, in succession, a 3°05' curve to the left 946 feet in length, a tangent 1,275 feet and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.96 percent descending westward.

Operating rules of the M.St.P.& S.S.M. R.R. read in part as follows:

3 (A). * * *

Conductors, * * * must compare time with their engineers before starting each trip * * * and at the first opportunity, other members of the crew must compare time with the conductor or engineer.
* * *

S-5. Unless otherwise specified, the time applies at the switch where an opposing train enters the siding; * * *

S-72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; * * *

S-87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

* * *

S-89. At meeting points, the inferior train must take the siding and clear the time of the superior train not less than five minutes, * * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fuses. * * *

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by the forward brakeman, fireman, or other competent employe.

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

E.

Time Orders.

* * *

(3.) No 1 * * * wait at N until 9 59 a m
* * *

The train, or trains, named must not pass the designated points before the times given. Other trains receiving the order are required to run with respect to the time specified at the designated points or any intermediate station where schedule time is earlier than the time specified in the order, as before required to run with respect to the schedule time of the train, or trains, named.

* * *

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 45 miles per hour for passenger trains and 40 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

At New Richmond, Wis., 29.5 miles east of Gloster, the crew of No. 5, a west-bound first-class M.St.P.& S.S. M. passenger train, received copies of train order No. 126 reading as follows:

No 5 wait at Gloster until
seven fifty five 755 A. M.

No. 5 consisted of engine 2712, one mail car, one baggage car, one coach and one sleeping car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Gloster, the last open office, at 7:56 a. m., 46 minutes late, passed the west connecting-track switch, and while moving on the main track at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it collided with No. 716 at 7:58 a. m., at a point 2,945 feet west of the west connecting-track switch.

At Trout Brook Jct., 3.2 miles west of Gloster, the crew of No. 716, an east-bound third-class N.P. freight train, received copies of train order No. 126. This train, consisting of Diesel-electric engine 157, headed westward, 13 cars and a caboose, in the order named, departed from Trout Brook Jct. at 7:45 a. m., 13 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 9 miles per hour it collided with No. 5.

The engines of both trains, the front truck of the first car of No. 5, and the first six cars of No. 716 were derailed and damaged. The rear three cars of No. 5 were slightly damaged.

The engineer of No. 716 was killed. The engineer, the fireman, the conductor, the baggageman, the front brakeman and the flagman of No. 5, and the fireman of No. 716 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 7:58 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 11.16 trains.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 126, which required No. 5, a west-bound first-class train, to wait at Gloster until 7:55 a. m. There is no siding at Gloster, and, under the rules, the time specified in the order

applied at the west connecting-track switch. No. 716, an east-bound third-class train, was required to be into clear on the connecting track at Gloster not later than 7:50 a. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 5. No. 5 departed from Gloster at 7:56 a. m. and No. 716 departed from Trout Brook Jct., 3.2 miles west of Gloster, at 7:45 a. m., and these trains collided at 7:58 a. m. at a point 2,945 feet west of the west connecting-track switch.

As No. 5 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The engine-men were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of an embankment and vegetation on the inside of the curve on which the collision occurred, the view had by the engine-men of the track ahead was materially restricted. The first these employees knew of anything being wrong was when the fireman saw the approaching train about 400 feet distant and called a warning to the engineer. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the speed was materially reduced. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

The surviving members of the crew of No. 716 understood that, under the provisions of train order No. 126, their train was required to be into clear on the connecting track at Gloster not later than 7:50 a. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 5. Each member of the crew had compared time, and there was a variation of only a few seconds in their watches. The fireman and the front brakeman of No. 716 said that soon after their train departed from Trout Brook Jct. they warned the engineer there was not sufficient time remaining for their train to proceed to Gloster for No. 5. However, no attempt was made by these employees to stop the train, or to provide flag protection against No. 5, until the fireman saw the approaching train and called a warning. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred immediately afterward. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The engineer was killed. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose, and these employees said they did not consult their watches to determine whether there was sufficient time remaining for their train to proceed to Gloster for No. 5. They expected the engineer to take action to provide flag protection against No. 5 if it became necessary.

This carrier's book of operating rules contains manual-block rules which provide for blocking of opposing and following movements, but the provision for blocking of opposing movements were not in effect in the territory involved. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-third day of December, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.