

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3324
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT ALBANY, OHIO, ON
APRIL 16, 1950

SUMMARY

Date: April 16, 1950
Railroad: New York Central
Location: Albany, Ohio
Kind of accident: Derailment
Train involved: Freight
Train number: Second 37
Engine numbers: 1779 and 1860
Consist: 76 cars, caboose
Estimated speed: 18 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable, train orders and
manual-block system
Track: Single; spiral; 0.59 percent
ascending grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: 1:58 p. m.
Casualties: 2 injured
Cause: Defective switch

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3324

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

June 23, 1950

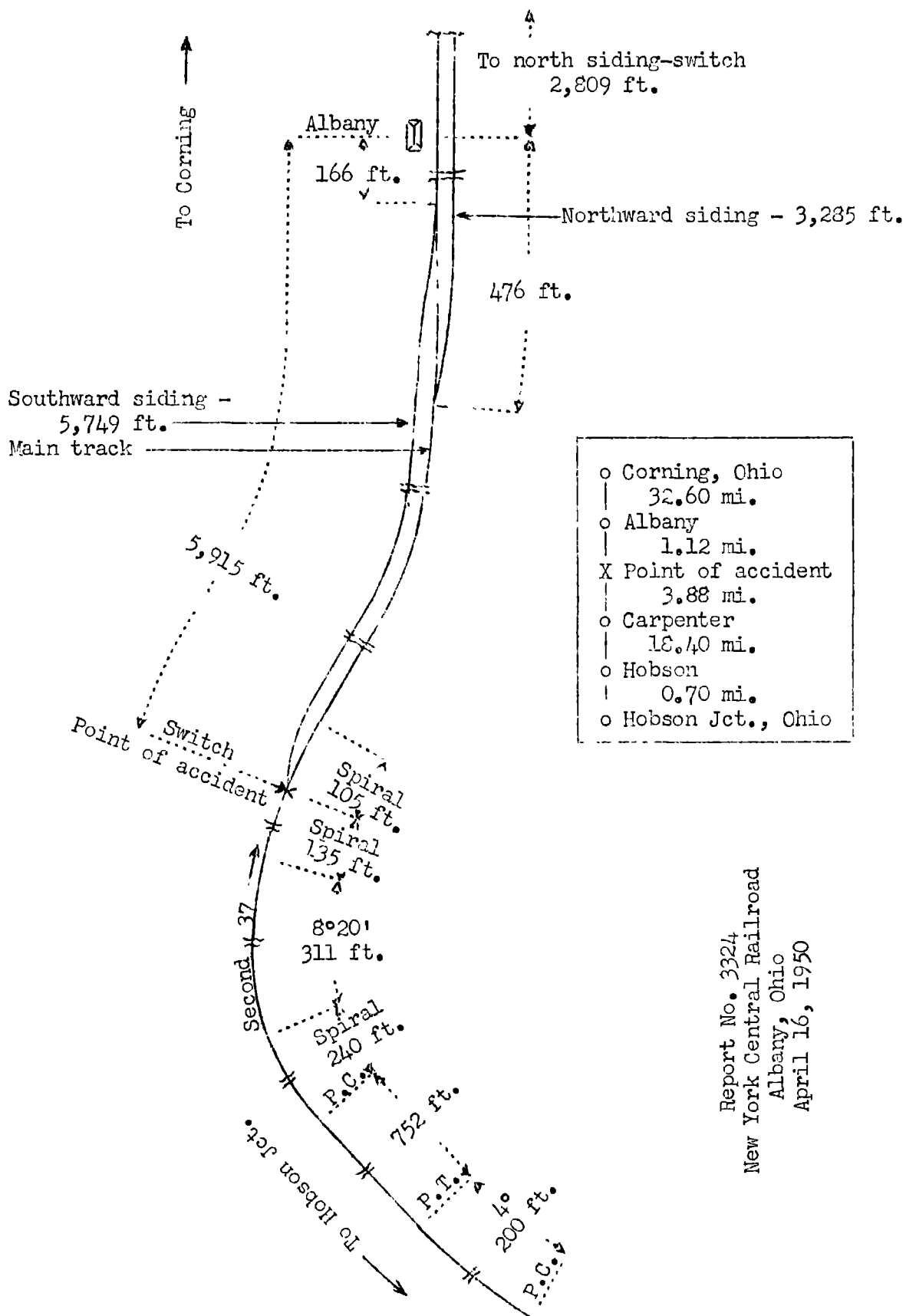
Accident at Albany, Ohio, on April 16, 1950, caused by
a defective switch.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On April 16, 1950, there was a derailment of a freight train on the New York Central Railroad at Albany, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of two train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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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.



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|---|-------------------|-----------|
| o | Corning, Ohio | 32.60 mi. |
| o | Albany | 1.12 mi. |
| X | Point of accident | 3.88 mi. |
| o | Carpenter | 18.40 mi. |
| o | Hobson | 0.70 mi. |
| o | Hobson Jct., Ohio | |

Report No. 3324
 New York Central Railroad
 Albany, Ohio
 April 16, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ohio Central Division extending between Hobson Jct. and Corning, Ohio, 56.7 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system. At Albany, 24.1 miles north of Hobson Jct., a siding 5,749 feet in length, designated as the southward siding, parallels the main track on the west. The south and north switches of this siding are, respectively, 5,915 feet and 166 feet south of the station. A siding 3,225 feet in length, designated as the northward siding, parallels the main track on the east. The south and north switches of this siding are, respectively, 476 feet south and 2,809 feet north of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at the south switch of the southward siding. From the south there are, in succession, a 4° curve to the right 200 feet in length, a tangent 452 feet, a spiral 240 feet, an 8°20' curve to the right 311 feet, and a spiral 135 feet to the point of accident and 105 feet northward. The grade for north-bound trains varies between 0.14 percent and 1.31 percent . . . ascending throughout a distance of 1.55 miles immediately south of the point of accident, and is 0.59 percent ascending at that point.

The south switch of the southward siding is provided with a No. 10 turnout. The switch stand is of the hand-throw, intermediate-stand type, and is located 8 feet 9 inches west of the center-line of the main track. When the switch is in normal position, a green banner 8 inches wide and 59-1/2 inches long is displayed at right angles to the track. This banner is pointed at each end, is attached to the spindle in a diagonal position, and is 7 feet 8-1/2 inches above the tops of the ties. When the switch is lined for entry to the siding, a red banner 11-1/2 inches wide and 28 inches long is displayed at right angles to the track. This banner is rounded at each end and is attached to the spindle in a horizontal position at the same level as the green banner. The operating lever is of the horizontal-throw type.

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

104. * * * Switches must be properly lined after having been used.

A switch must not be left open for a following train unless in charge of a trainman of such train.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Second 37, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of helper engine 1779, engine 1860, 76 cars and a caboose, in the order named. This train departed from Carpenter, the last open office, 3.88 miles south of the point of accident, at 1:49 p. m., 7 hours 42 minutes late. While it was moving at an estimated speed of 18 miles per hour, both engines and their tenders and the front truck of the first car were derailed at the south switch of the southward siding at Albany.

Helper engine 1779 stopped between the main track and the siding, with the front of the engine 261 feet north of the point of accident. It leaned to the left at an angle of about 30 degrees. The tender remained coupled to the engine. Engine 1860 stopped at an angle of about 35 degrees to the main track, with the front of the engine between the main track and the siding. It leaned to the left at an angle of about 30 degrees. The tender remained coupled to the engine and stopped with the rear end west of the siding. The first car remained upright and in line with the siding. Both engines and tenders were somewhat damaged, and the first car was slightly damaged.

The flagman of helper engine 1779 and the fireman of engine 1860 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:58 p. m.

Discussion

On this portion of the railroad, north-bound freight trains with full tonnage require a helper engine between Carpenter and Albany. The terminal for helper engines in this district is Hobson, 23.4 miles south of Albany. When a helper engine is provided, it usually is coupled ahead of the road engine and assists the train to a point beyond the crest of the ascending grade at Albany. It is then detached from the train. If it is to help another train, it proceeds in backward motion to Carpenter and assists the following train from that point. Otherwise, it is turned on the wye at Albany. Prior to the time of the accident, when a helper engine was to follow a south-bound freight train departing from the siding at Albany, it had been a practice for the train dispatcher to issue a message instructing the crews of helper engines at Albany to restore the south switch of

the southward siding to normal position. These messages were issued over the signature of the superintendent and copies were delivered to members of the crew of the freight train. They were issued to expedite the movement of the freight train by permitting it to leave the siding without stopping for a member of the crew to restore the switch to normal position.

The investigation disclosed that on the day of the accident the south switch of the southward siding at Albany was lined for movement from the siding to the main track by the crew of Extra 2180 South, a south-bound freight train. This train arrived at Albany at 10:50 a. m. and entered the southward siding to meet First 37, a north-bound freight train. As the train passed the station, the crew received copies of a message containing the instruction that the crew of the helper engine on First 37 would restore the south siding-switch to normal position after Extra 2180 South had departed from the siding. After First 37 arrived, the crew of Extra 2180 South lined the south siding-switch for movement from the siding to the main track, and the train departed southward. The crew did not restore the switch to normal position.

First 37 arrived at Albany at 12:01 p. m. and stopped with the front end of the train north of the station. Helper engine 1779 was detached from the train, and it returned through the northward siding to a point near the station. The crew of the helper engine then entered the station. The operator had placed on the desk a copy of the message instructing this crew to restore the south siding-switch to normal position. He intended to deliver this message with a train order authorizing the movement of the helper engine from Albany to Carpenter. While the crew was waiting for the operator to obtain the train order, the flagman used the margin of the message to demonstrate the writing qualities of a new pen. He said he did not read the message. Soon afterward the crew of the helper engine received copies of the train order, and the helper engine departed southward. About 30 minutes later, the operator discovered the message on the desk. However, the operator assumed that the flagman had read the message before he left the office, and made no attempt to communicate with the crew at Carpenter.

Helper engine 1779, headed northward and in backward motion, entered the main track at the south switch of the northward siding and departed southward on the main track at 12:15 p. m. It passed the south switch of the southward siding, which was lined for movement from the siding to the main track, at a speed of about 15 miles per hour and arrived

at Carpenter at 12:34 p. m. The fireman was operating the engine, and the engineer and the flagman were seated on the left side of the cab. These employees said they did not observe the position of the south switch of the southward siding as the engine approached it, and they were not aware that the switch was not in proper position for the movement of their engine.

Second 37 arrived at Carpenter at 1:32 p. m. Helper engine 1779 was coupled ahead of the road engine, and the train departed at 1:49 p. m. As the train approached the south switch of the southward siding at Albany, the speed was about 18 miles per hour. The fireman was operating the helper engine, and the engineer and the front brakeman were seated on the left side of the cab. The engineer and the fireman of engine 1860 were in their respective positions on the engine, and the flagman of the helper engine was seated behind the fireman of engine 1860. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The employees on the engines did not observe the position of the switch, and were not aware of anything being wrong until the derailment occurred.

After the accident occurred, the south switch of the southward siding at Albany was found to be lined for entry to the siding. The operating lever was properly latched in that position. Examination of the switch disclosed that a south-bound train when moving on the main track had trailed through the switch while it was lined for entry to the siding. The switch rods were bent in such manner that the switch rail was held away from the stock rail a sufficient distance to permit a flange of a north-bound train to pass between the switch point and the stock rail. Flange marks on the ties indicated that a pair of wheels had dropped inside the stock rails at a point 15.3 feet north of the switch points. These marks continued northward and in line with the siding a distance of 94 feet. At this point the general derailment occurred and the siding was destroyed throughout a distance of 140 feet northward. It is evident that, while proceeding southward on the main track, helper engine 1779 trailed through the south switch when the points were lined for entry to the siding.

After this accident occurred, the practice of issuing messages instructing the crews of helper engines at Albany to line switches for the crews of freight trains was discontinued.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a defective switch.

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Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-third day of June, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.