

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2845
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR CORFU, N. Y., ON
NOVEMBER 15, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: New York Central
Date: November 15, 1944
Location: Corfu, N. Y.
Kind of accident: Collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Front and rear : Extra 1601 West
portions of Extra
5284 East
Engine numbers: Front portion: : 1601
5284, 5331
Rear portion:
8511
Consist: Front portion: : 96 cars,
59 cars : 2 cabooses
Rear portion:
44 cars, 2
cabooses
Speed: Rear portion: : 15 m. p. h.
standing
Front portion:
10 m. p. h.
Operation: Signal indications and automatic
train-stop system
Track: Four; tangent; 0.16 percent
ascending grade eastward
Weather: Misting
Time: 8:45 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured
Cause: Failure to provide adequate protec-
tion for movement of front and rear
portions of train which had parted

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2845

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

January 3, 1945.

Accident near Corfu, N. Y., on November 15, 1944, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
movement of the front and rear portions of a train
which had parted.

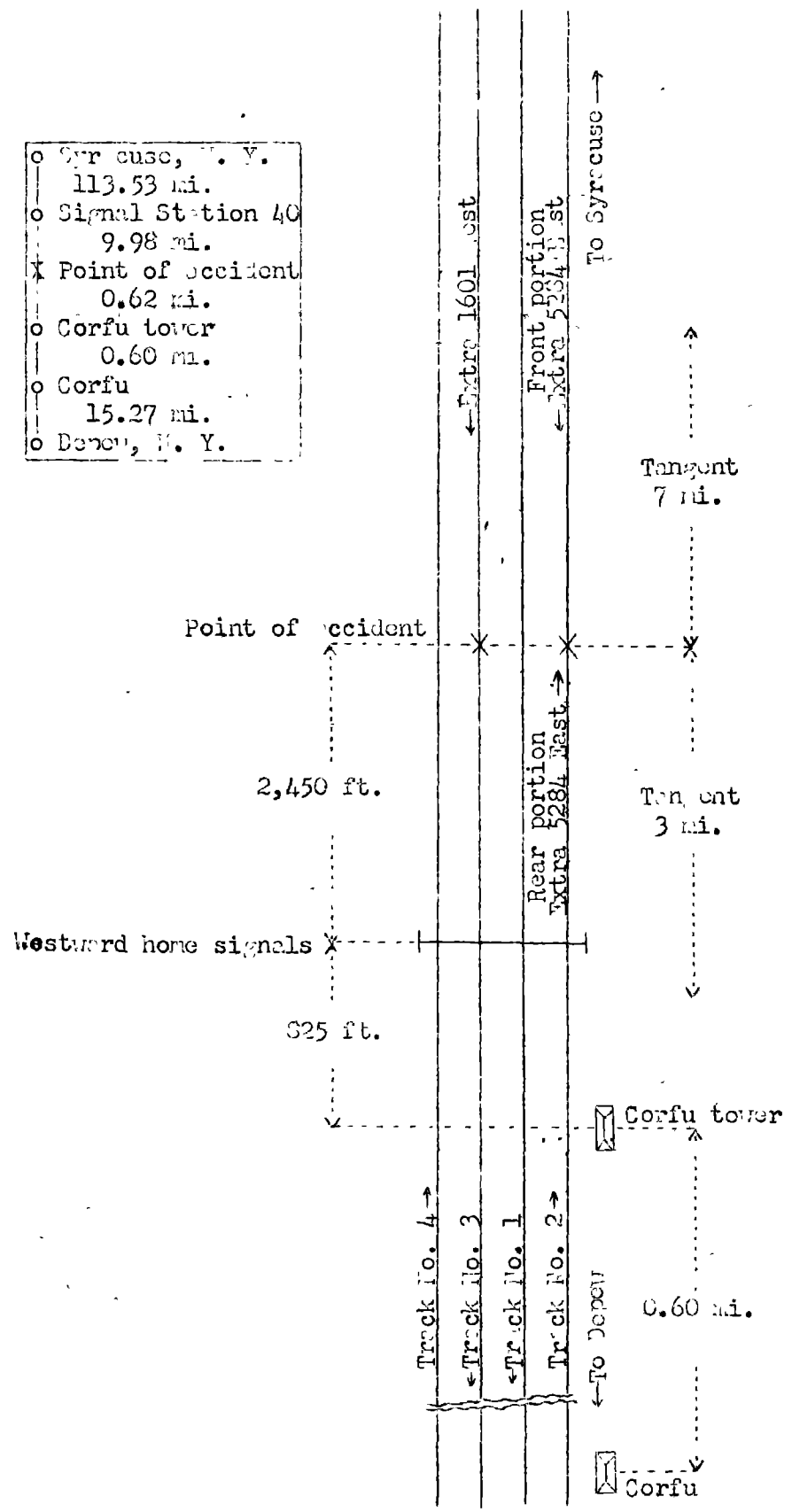
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 15, 1944, there was a collision between
two portions of a freight train on the New York Central
Railroad near Corfu, N. Y., which resulted in the death
of one employee and the injury of one employee.

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

- o Syracuse, N. Y. 113.53 mi.
- o Signal Station 40 9.98 mi.
- x Point of accident 0.62 mi.
- o Corfu tower 0.60 mi.
- o Corfu 15.27 mi.
- o Berou, N. Y.



Inv. No. 2845
 New York Central Railroad
 Corfu, N. Y.
 November 15, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Syracuse Division extending eastward from Depew to Syracuse, N. Y., 140 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a four-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by signal indications and an automatic train-stop system. The main tracks from south to north were designated as No. 2, eastward passenger, No. 1, westward passenger, No. 3 westward freight, and No. 4, eastward freight. The accident occurred 16.49 miles east of Depew, at a point 1.22 miles east of the station and 0.62 mile east of the tower at Corfu. The main tracks were tangent throughout a distance of 3 miles west of the point of accident and 7 miles eastward. The grade was 0.16 percent ascending eastward.

Westward home signals governing the use of routes of the interlocking at Corfu were located 825 feet east of the tower.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

101a. When a portion of a train is left on the main track, it must be protected against the return movement. At night, or when weather conditions require, torpedoes must be used, and, in addition, on single track, a red light, and on two or more tracks, a white light must be displayed on the front of the head car. This does not relieve the engineer from using necessary caution to avoid accident in returning.

102. If a train should part while in motion, trainmen must, if possible, prevent damage to the detached portions. * * *

The detached portion must not be moved or passed until the front portion comes back, except under full protection.

* * *. A train * * * notified that a train on an adjacent track has parted, must immediately reduce speed and prepare to stop short of obstruction until the separated train is passed.

102a. When a train is disabled or stopped suddenly by an emergency application of the brakes, or by other causes, adjacent tracks as well as tracks of other railroads that are liable to be obstructed must at once be protected until it is ascertained they are safe and clear for the movement of trains.

103. When cars are pushed by an engine, * * *
a trainman must take a conspicuous position on
the leading car, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains on track No. 2 was 55 miles per hour and on track No. 3, 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 5284 East, an east-bound freight train, consisting of engines 5284 and 5331, 103 cars and 2 cabooses, in the order named, stopped on track No. 2 about 6:55 p. m., with the rear end standing about 2 miles east of the tower at Corfu. Because of a broken coupler on the west end of the fifty-ninth car, engine 8511, a light engine, was coupled to the rear of the rear caboose, and this engine was used to move the cabooses and the rear 44 cars westward on track No. 2 to Corfu interlocking. The rear portion of this train stopped about 8:20 p. m., with the east end of the forty-fourth car standing about 2,450 feet east of the westward home signals at Corfu tower. About 25 minutes later, while the front portion of this train was moving westward on track No. 2 at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck the east end of the rear portion. The forty-fourth car of the rear portion and the fifty-sixth to the fifty-ninth cars, inclusive, of the front portion were derailed. The fifty-ninth car obstructed tracks Nos. 1 and 3.

Extra 1601 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric engine 1601, of the four-unit type, 96 cars and 2 cabooses, in the order named. This train passed Signal Station 40, 10.6 miles east of Corfu tower and the last open office, at 7:59 p. m., and while moving on track No. 3 at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour it struck the fifty-ninth car of Extra 5284. The Diesel-electric units and the first two cars of Extra 1601 were derailed and damaged.

It was misting at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8:45 p. m.

The swing brakeman of Extra 5284 East was killed, and the flagman of that train was injured.

Discussion

While Extra 5284 East was proceeding on track No. 2, the crew received flagging signals given by a member of the crew of an east-bound freight train, which was standing on track No. 4. In response to these signals, Extra 5284 was stopped about 6:55 p. m., with the rear end about 2 miles east of the tower at Corfu. About 30 minutes later, after an inspection disclosed that the coupler at the west end of the fifty-ninth car was

broken, the conductor communicated with the train dispatcher to arrange for disposition of this car. The dispatcher informed the conductor that engine 8511, which was a few miles west of Corfu, would proceed eastward against the current of traffic on track No. 3 to Corfu tower, thence eastward on track No. 2 to the point where the rear portion of Extra 5284 East was standing. The dispatcher instructed the conductor to use engine 8511 to move the rear portion westward to track No. 4 at Corfu, and to arrange for the engines at the front of the train to move the front portion westward to Corfu, where the fifty-ninth car would be placed on an auxiliary track. The dispatcher said that he instructed the conductor to arrange for a member of the crew of Extra 5284 East to stop Extra 1601 West, a west-bound train on track No. 3, and to hold it east of the interlocking at Corfu until engine 8511 had arrived at Corfu on its trip eastward on track No. 3, and was clear of that track. However, the conductor of Extra 5284 East said he understood that Extra 1601 West was to be held east of the interlocking at Corfu until both portions of his train had moved westward to Corfu and had crossed over to track No. 4. In accordance with this understanding he instructed the front brakeman to hold Extra 1601 West on track No. 3 in the vicinity of the front end of the front portion of Extra 5284 East until the front portion started to move westward, and then to permit Extra 1601 to proceed but not to pass the front end of the front portion while the movement was being made. The front brakeman of Extra 5284 instructed the engineer of Extra 1601 accordingly, and the engineer understood the instruction. Later, the front brakeman of Extra 1601 West communicated with the train dispatcher, who informed him that Extra 1601 West could proceed. A road foreman of engines, who was on engine 1601, and the engineer understood that this information superseded the instructions given by the front brakeman of Extra 5284, and Extra 1601 West proceeded.

Just before the back-up movement of the rear portion of Extra 5284 was started, the conductor instructed the swing brakeman and the flagman to supervise the movement of the front portion of the train. The conductor took up a position on the west end of the rear portion, but no member of the crew was instructed to provide protection for the east end of this portion, and no protection was provided. About 8:20 p. m. the rear portion was stopped east of the interlocking at Corfu, because of conflicting movements of other trains through the interlocking which prevented the movement of the rear portion from track No. 2, through the crossovers, and thence to track No. 4. The back-up movement of the front portion was started about 20 minutes after the rear portion had departed. The flagman and the swing brakeman were on the west end. The front brakeman was on about the sixth car from the engines and was relaying signals from the flagman and the swing brakeman to the

enginemen. About 25 minutes after the rear portion had stopped just east of the interlocking, the front portion, moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour, struck the rear portion. Stop signals were given by the flagman and the swing brakeman immediately before the collision occurred, and the brake valve was moved immediately to emergency position, but the accident occurred before the brakes became applied. No light was displayed from the east end of the rear portion, and no warning signal was given to the members of the crew on the front portion as to the location of the rear portion. If protection as required by the rules had been furnished for the east end of the rear portion, this accident would have been averted. The swing brakeman was killed in the collision.

Wreckage of the two portions which fouled tracks Nos. 1 and 3 was struck by Extra 1601 West almost immediately after the collision between the two portions of Extra 5284 East had occurred, and there was insufficient time for any protection to be provided. The flagman of Extra 5284 was injured when the wreckage was struck by engine 1601.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of the front and rear portions of a train which had parted.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this third
day of January, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.