

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT ON THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD AT PLEASANTVILLE,
OHIO, ON DECEMBER 10, 1932.

January 19, 1933.

To the Commission:

On December 10, 1932, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the New York Central Railroad at Pleasantville, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of two employees and one trespasser.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ohio Division extending between Corning and Columbus, Ohio, a distance of 70.1 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the north switch of the passing track at Pleasantville, approaching this point from the south the track is tangent for a distance of 2,969 feet, while the grade is descending to within about 250 feet of the fouling point, varying from 0.15 to 0.55 per cent, following which there is a slight ascending grade.

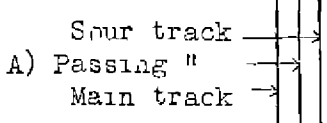
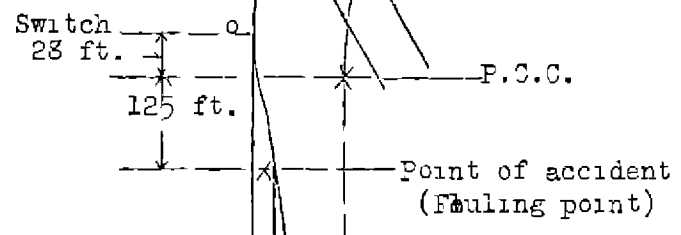
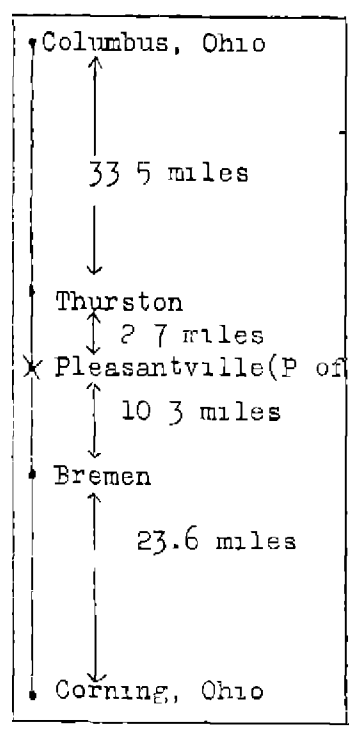
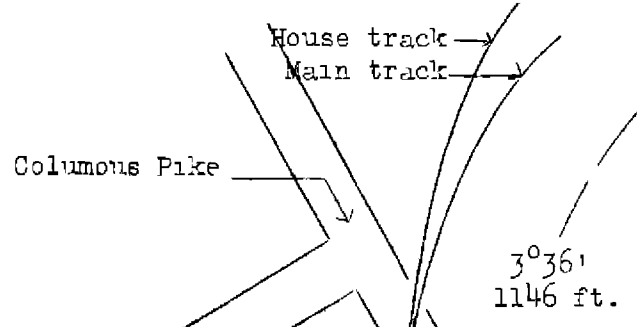
The passing track is 3,105 feet in length and parallels the main track on the east. The switch stand at the north switch is of the New Century intermediate type, located on the fireman's side of a northbound engine, it is equipped with a switch lamp mounted on top of a mast about 8 feet in height, night indications are red when the switch is open and green when it is closed.

The weather was cloudy and it was dark, but visibility was good at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11.45 p.m.

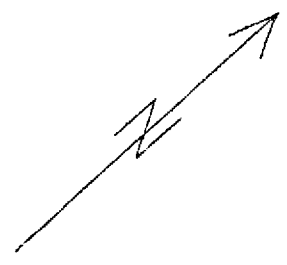
Description

Southbound light engine 7980 was in charge of Engineman Welling and Fireman Gatchell. At Thurston, 2.7 miles north of Pleasantville, the crew received train order No. 131, Form 19, providing, in part for a meet with train third No. 91 at Pleasantville. Engine 7980 departed from Thurston at 11.08 p.m., according to the train sheet, and on arrival at Pleasantville it entered the north switch of the passing track, stopping clear at the south switch, and extinguished the headlight.

Southbound freight train extra 18 consisted of 69 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 18, and was in charge of Conductor Cullen and Engineman Mills. At Thurston, the crew received train order No. 129, Form 19, directing them to meet train third No. 91



3094 ft.



Inv No 1797
New York Central P R.
Pleasantville, Ohio
December 10, 1932

at Pleasantville. Extra 18 departed from Thurston at 11 16 p.m., according to the train sheet, and on arrival at Pleasantville it pulled in and stopped behind engine 7980, with the rear four cars and caboose extending out upon the main track, while standing in this position they were struck by train third No. 91.

Northbound second-class freight train third No. 91 consisted of 46 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 87, and was in charge of Conductor Hancock and Engineman Stewart. At Bremen, 10.3 miles south of Pleasantville, the crew received copies of train orders Nos. 129 and 131, Form 19, previously mentioned. Train third No. 91 departed from Bremen at 11 11 p.m., according to the train sheet, and collided with the rear portion of extra 18 at Pleasantville while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 20 miles per hour.

Engine 87 was not derailed, but it derailed and overturned the fourth, third and second cars ahead of the caboose in extra 18, and then coupled into the first car ahead of the caboose and shoved that car and the caboose backward about six car-lengths. The employees injured were the engineman and fireman of train third No. 91, who jumped just before the accident.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Welling, of light engine 7980, stated that when his engine entered the north switch the switch lamp was burning, and after the switch was closed behind his engine he saw the indication change from red to green. After pulling down to clear at the south switch he extinguished his headlight, and when extra 18 pulled in behind his engine he looked back and when that train stopped he saw the engineman extinguish the headlight. Engineman Welling did not know that the rear portion of extra 18 was not in the clear, he did see a marker light, however, and from its location he presumed that the train was clear of the main track. Northbound train third No. 91 passed his engine at a speed of about 20 miles per hour and he then departed southward, without knowing of the occurrence of the accident.

Engineman Mills, of extra 18, stated that he did not know how many cars there were in his train and when he stopped behind light engine 7980 he was not positive whether the rear end of his train was in the clear. He intended only to dim the headlight on his engine, but he thought it was possible he did not pull the switch over far enough to make contact, resulting in his headlight being extinguished, or else that his sleeve might have caught in the switch and shut off the headlight when he tried to open the cab window and call a warning to the engineman of train third No. 91 that he was not sure whether the rear of his train was into clear, he did not hear his head brakeman tell him to call to the crew of train third No. 91. Engineman Mills had not received any signal from the rear end of his train to indicate that it was clear, nor had he instructed his brakeman to take the precaution either to flag ahead or to tell the crew of the light engine to turn on their headlight as a warning to the approaching train. It further

appeared that Engineman Mills realized that the reflection from the headlight of his own engine would be obscured to some extent because of his having stopped close to the tender of engine 7980, but nevertheless he said the reason he did not whistle that train down was because he thought the engine crew would see that reflection. Engineman Mills further stated that the switch lamp was not burning when he headed in at the north switch, this statement being verified by Fireman McDowell and Head Brakeman Tobin. After their train stopped, the fireman looked back but could not see any marker light, so he figured that the rear end of his train was not in the clear, as did the head brakeman. Both of these employees saw the reflection from their headlight upon the tank of engine 7980, and presumed that it would serve as a warning to train third No. 91 that the rear of extra 18 was not in the clear. Head Brakeman Tobin further stated that his train stopped about one car-length back of engine 7980 and then pulled ahead. After this had been done he saw an automobile, which had been standing at the crossing, pass over it and then he knew that the rear of his train could not have moved ahead enough to be into clear, the crossing being several car-lengths from the switch, and consequently when train third No. 91 arrived he called to Engineman Mills that their train was not into clear. He then got off on the left side with the intention of running around the front end and signaling train third No. 91 but the engine of that train had passed before he could do so.

Conductor Cullen, of extra 18, stated that when his train stopped, the rear end blocked the highway crossing just north of the switch, and he gave a go-ahead signal to his engine man, whereupon the train pulled ahead enough to clear the road crossing. Conductor Cullen then went into the caboose to complete his reports and Flagman Kober remained out to flag. After about 10 minutes had elapsed the conductor heard train third No. 91 approaching, and he got out of the caboose when his flagman shouted a warning to him. Conductor Cullen stated that it is customary when pulling into a passing track to give a stop signal to the head end after the train is in the clear, but no such signal was given on this occasion, and he assumed that the headlight was burning and would be sufficient protection. Conductor Cullen did not see the switch lamp, but Flagman Kober stated that it was burning. The flagman saw train third No. 91 coming, and realizing that it was not going to stop he ran toward it and lighted a fusee as he passed his own caboose, at the same time warning his conductor, but it was then too late to avert the accident.

Engineman Stewart, of train third No. 91, stated that approaching the meeting point he eased off on the throttle, but continued to work steam. After observing that the headlights on both engines on the passing track were screened or extinguished, he felt positive that extra 18 was in the clear, at this time his speed was about 10 or 12 miles per hour and he then increased it, but when about 10 or 15 car-lengths from the north switch he saw the cars that extended out upon the main track and then saw some one light a fusee, so he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency and jumped just prior to the accident, estimating the

speed to have been about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred. Engineman Stewart further stated that he had seen the yellow indication displayed by the left marker on the caboose of extra 18, apparently having locked over the tops of the gondola cars just ahead of the caboose, which stood on the curve, and as the marker was in line with the main track this also led him to believe that extra 18 was in the clear. He did not see the switch lamp, but a few minutes after the accident he examined it and found it to be cold.

Fireman Schwartz, of train third No. 91, saw the engines on the siding, but he did not observe from his side whether or not their headlights were burning, on passing them, however, Engineman Stewart remarked that they must be in the clear as their headlights were not burning. Fireman Schwartz also saw the left marker of the caboose, in line with the west side of the train, and remarked that the train must be in the clear, whereupon the engineman increased speed to about 25 miles per hour. Fireman Schwartz was looking for the switch lamp when the engineman shut off steam and applied the brakes in emergency, the fireman did not see the switch lamp prior to the accident, saying that it was either extinguished or burning so dimly that it was not visible, and he did not call the engineman's attention to the absence of the switch lamp indication, as the caboose marker light had led him into believing that extra 18 was in the clear. Head Brakeman Howard, who was on the engine of train third No. 91, and Conductor Hancock and Flagman Foreman, who were in the caboose, said the headlights of both engines on the siding were out when their train passed them.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Mills of extra 18, to have the headlight of his engine displayed, and by his failure to provide such other flag protection as was necessary in view of the fact that he did not know whether the rear end of his train was into clear.

Engineman Mills did not know whether the rear of his train was into clear and had intended only to dim his headlight, but said he might have extinguished it accidentally, and the only other precaution taken by him was to attempt to call a warning to the engine crew of train third No. 91 as they passed him; the head brakeman knew the train was not into clear but was preparing to eat his lunch, the result being that when train third No. 91 approached, the brakeman got off on the left side of the engine with the intention of running around to the front of it and giving a signal to the approaching train but did not have time enough to do so. Engineman Mills was in charge of the head end of his train and should have known that the siding would not hold his train and that steps would have to be taken to give positive and definite information to the crew of the opposing train accordingly.

The weight of evidence tends to indicate that his headlight

was not burning, but had he arranged for the engineman of the light engine ahead of him on the siding to turn on the headlight of that engine, and in addition had he been prepared to display such flagging signals as the situation required, or instructed the brakeman to that effect, he would have given the crew of train third No. 91 ample opportunity to stop before colliding with his train, which the weight of evidence indicates had been standing about 10 minutes before train third No. 91 arrived.

Conductor Cullen, of extra 18, had a right to expect that some form of protection would be afforded by those at the head end of his train but at the same time he was not justified in remaining in his caboose while it was still occupying the main track and had to be protected against trains ^{moving} in both directions. He should have stationed himself where he could have observed what was transpiring, in which event he would at least have afforded himself a chance of preventing the accident. The evidence is conflicting as to whether the switch lamp was burning at the north switch.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.