

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3532
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT WHITESBORO, N. Y., ON
AUGUST 14, 1953

SUMMARY

Date: August 14, 1953

Railroad: New York Central

Location: Whitesboro, N. Y.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck
and trailer

Train number: 40 :

Engine number: Diesel-electric :
units 4209 and
4304

Consist: 12 cars :

Speeds: 70 m. p. h. : Standing

Operation: Signal indications

Tracks: Four; tangent; 0.028 percent
ascending grade eastward

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of
85°33'; 13 percent ascending
grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 12:55 p. m.

Casualties: 11 injured

Cause: Motor-truck and trailer becoming
stalled on private-road grade
crossing

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3532

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

September 18, 1953

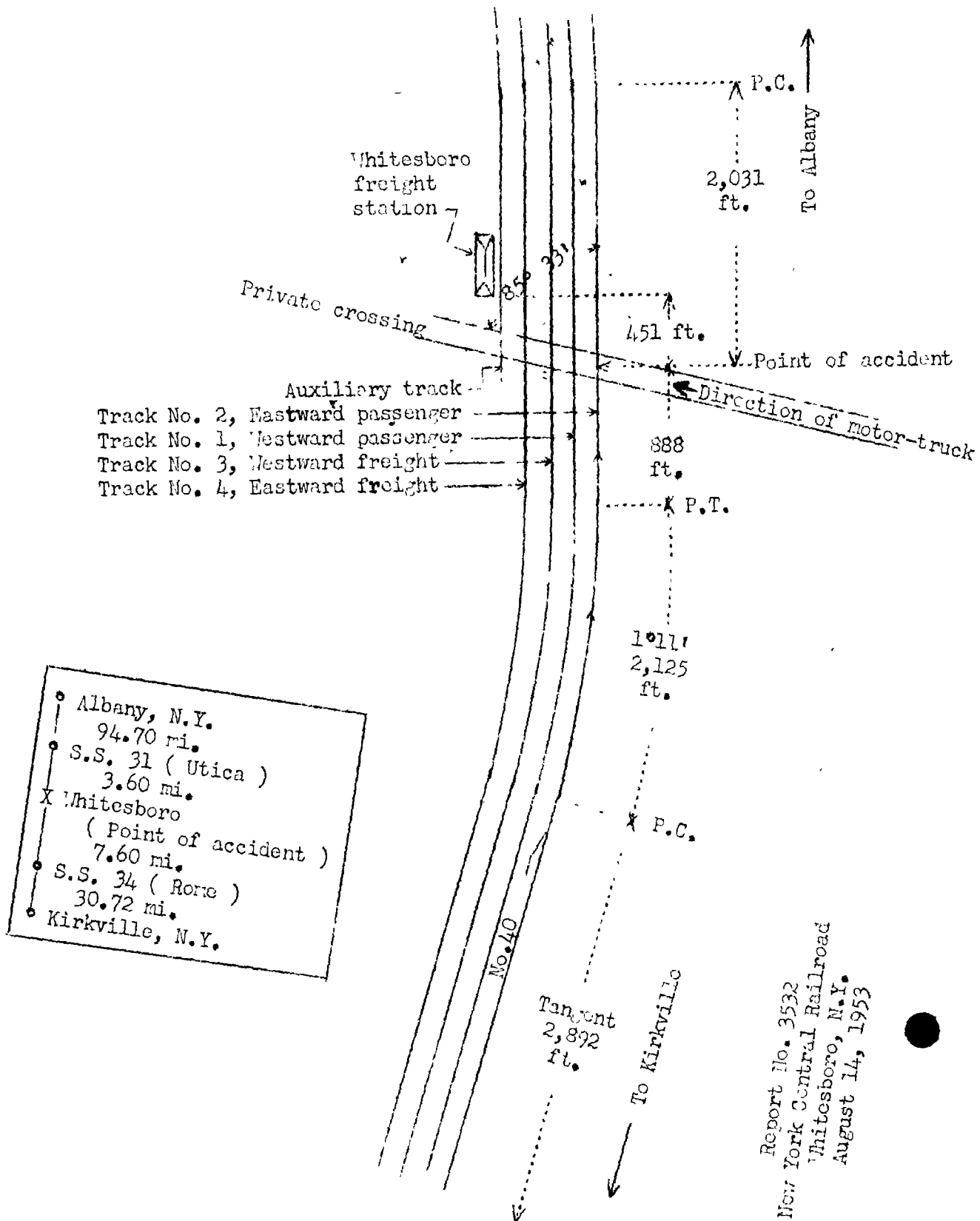
Accident at Whitesboro, N. Y., on August 14, 1953, caused
by a motor-truck and trailer becoming stalled on a
private-road grade crossing.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On August 14, 1953, there was a collision between a passenger train on the New York Central Railroad and a motor-truck and trailer at a private-road grade crossing at Whitesboro, N. Y., which resulted in the injury of nine passengers, one dining-car employee, and one car department employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the New York Public Service Commission.

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



Albany, N.Y. 94.70 mi.
S.S. 31 (Utica) 3.60 mi.
X Whitesboro (Point of accident) 7.60 mi.
S.S. 34 (Rome) 30.72 mi.
Kirkville, N.Y.

Report No. 3532
New York Central Railroad
Whitesboro, N.Y.
August 14, 1953

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Mohawk Division extending between Kirkville and Albany, N. Y., 136.62 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a four-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The main tracks from south to north are designated as No. 2, eastward passenger; No. 1, westward passenger; No. 3, westward freight; and No. 4, eastward freight. In the vicinity of the point of accident an auxiliary track parallels track No. 4 on the north. The accident occurred on track No. 2 at a point 38.22 miles east of Kirkville and 451 feet west of the freight station at Whitesboro, where the railroad is crossed at grade by a private road. From the west on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 2,892 feet in length, a compound curve to the left, having a maximum curvature of $1^{\circ}11'$, 2,125 feet, and a tangent 888 feet to the point of accident and 2,039 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound trains varies between 0.116 percent descending and 0.028 percent ascending throughout a distance of 1.19 miles immediately west of the point of accident, and it is 0.028 percent ascending at that point. The north-east angle of the intersection between the railroad and the private road is $85^{\circ}33'$. The private road is an unimproved dirt roadway varying between 10 and 11 feet in width. It provides access to cultivated farm lands on the north side of the tracks and extends southward from the railroad a distance of 576 feet to Main Street, a paved thoroughfare, which parallels the tracks at this point. On the private road there are several short curves and tangents between Main Street and the railroad. The road is tangent throughout a distance of 52 feet immediately south of the south rail of track No. 2. The grade for north-bound vehicles on this tangent is, successively, practically level a distance of 31 feet, 13 percent ascending 18 feet to a point 2 feet south of the south rail of track No. 2, and level over the crossing.

The crossing is 16 feet wide. Planking about 20 inches in width extends along the outer side of each rail of each main track. Flangeways 2-1/2 inches wide are provided, and the remaining area between the rails is surfaced with planking. The space between the main tracks at the crossing is surfaced with crushed stone to the level of the planking.

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

12. Hand, Flag and Lamp Signals.

* * *

(h)

Any object waved violently by anyone on or near the track is a signal to stop.

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and by night. * * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 80 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 40, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 4209 and 4304, coupled in multiple-unit control, one mail car, one baggage car, two coaches, one dining car, one dining-lounge car, five coaches, and one observation car, in the order named. The first four cars and the seventh to the ninth cars, inclusive, were of conventional all-steel construction, and the other cars were of lightweight steel construction. The Diesel-electric units and the fifth, sixth, and tenth to twelfth cars, inclusive, were equipped with tightlock couplers. This train passed Signal Station 34, 7.6 miles west of the point of accident and the last open office, at 12:45 p. m., 15 minutes late, and while moving on track No. 2 at a speed of 70 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck the trailer of a motor-truck on a private-road grade crossing at a point 451 feet west of the freight station at Whitesboro.

The vehicles involved were a motor-truck and a trailer. The motor-truck was owned by the driver, Nicholas Macri, of Herkimer, N. Y., who was the sole occupant. He held New York operator's license No. 6847202. The motor-truck was a 1946 model six-cylinder International, equipped with a dump body. Dual tires were provided on the rear wheels, and it was equipped with air brakes. It bore New York license No. 255-188. The trailer was a low bed 1936 Bay City model C-45, owned by D. W. Winkleman Company, Inc., of Syracuse, N. Y. Dual wheels were provided on the front axle and four dual wheel assemblies were provided on the rear axle. All wheels were equipped with

pneumatic tires. The wheelbase was 21 feet 6 inches long, and the total length of the trailer over the drawbar was approximately 26 feet. It was equipped with air brakes. When the trailer was not under load, the clearance between the bottom of the trailer bed and the top of the road was approximately 9 inches. The trailer weighed 11,380 pounds, and its capacity was 52,380 pounds. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of a LeTourneau Tournapacker, Model 120, a two-unit tandem sheepsfoot roller, weighing, with ballast, 20,900 pounds. These vehicles entered the crossing from the south and became stalled on the tracks. The motor-truck stopped with the rear end immediately north of track No. 2. The trailer stopped with the front wheels over the north rail of track No. 2 and the bottom of the trailer bed lodged on the crossing structure on the south side of that track. About 5 minutes later the trailer was struck by No. 40.

The locomotive and the first to the tenth cars, inclusive, and the front truck of the eleventh car of No. 40 were derailed. The locomotive stopped with the front end 1,269 feet east of the point of accident. A separation of 171 feet occurred between the second and third cars. There were no separations between the other units of the train. The derailed equipment stopped approximately in line with the track. The second and the fifth to the eighth cars, inclusive, leaned toward the south at angles varying between 20 and 30 degrees. The front end of the first Diesel-electric unit was considerably damaged as a result of the collision. The second Diesel-electric unit and the derailed cars were somewhat damaged. The rear car was slightly damaged.

The motor-truck and the trailer were separated by the force of the impact. The trailer stopped upright south of the track and 226 feet east of the crossing. The two roller units were displaced from the trailer and separated. They stopped on their sides at points 100 feet and 143 feet east of the crossing, and, respectively, 55 feet and 23 feet 6 inches south of the track. The motor-truck was slightly damaged. The trailer was destroyed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:55 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 104.06 trains, of which 34.43 trains moved on track No. 2. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., August 18, 1953, 2 automobiles and 11 trucks passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 40 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 80 miles per hour. The engineer and the fireman were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were at various locations in the cars of the train. The headlight was lighted. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The enginemen said that as their locomotive was moving on the curve immediately west of the point of accident they observed a person on the track east of the curve waving a white cloth. At the same time they observed that a motor-truck and trailer were occupying the private crossing in front of their train. The engineer immediately acknowledged the stop signals and made an emergency application of the brakes. At this time the locomotive was about 1,000 feet west of the crossing. The speed of the train had been reduced to about 70 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

At the time of the accident the motor-truck and the trailer were en route to a construction project located north of the railroad. The driver of the motor-truck said that he had received instructions from the assistant superintendent of the contractor in charge of the project to move the equipment across the tracks at the private crossing where the accident occurred. Two employees of the contractor were assigned to assist in the movement. The driver of the motor-truck said that the vehicles were stopped on the private road immediately south of the tracks. He looked in both directions and observed that no train was approaching. The northward movement then was resumed, and the motor-truck, pulling the trailer, entered the crossing. When the motor-truck had proceeded across tracks Nos. 2 and 1, it became stalled and stopped with the front end in the vicinity of track No. 3. When the driver alighted from the cab he found that the movement had stalled because the bottom of the bed of the trailer had become lodged on the crossing structure on the south side of track No. 2. He immediately instructed the two employees accompanying the equipment to provide protection against trains approaching from either direction. He then requested assistance from the driver of a motor-truck which was on the north side of the tracks. This motor-truck entered the crossing and was moved against the front end of the stalled motor-truck in an effort to push it and the trailer clear of the track. The collision occurred before the trailer could be freed from contact with the crossing structure. The driver thought the accident occurred about 5 or 6 minutes after the motor-truck became stalled.

Before the accident occurred a section force consisting of a foreman and five sectionmen was performing maintenance work at a rail-highway grade crossing located about 700 feet east of the point of accident. The section foreman said that when he saw that the construction equipment had stopped on the crossing he immediately instructed members of his force to provide flag protection against west-bound trains. He then ran westward and met two employees of the construction company, who informed him that their equipment was stalled and that protection against trains was required. The section foreman stopped at a telephone located about 250 feet west of the private crossing and notified the operators at Signal Station 34 and Signal Station 31, the nearest open offices, that the main tracks were obstructed. Signal Station 31 is 3.6 miles east of the point of accident. When the foreman was informed that No. 40 already had passed Signal Station 34, he proceeded westward and gave stop signals. He had reached a point about 400 feet west of the crossing when No. 40 passed,

The stop signals observed by the enginemen of No. 40 were given by a resident of the vicinity. This man was at his home, located about 527 feet west of the private crossing and 175 feet south of the tracks, when he saw that the construction equipment had stopped on the crossing and that a train was approaching. He proceeded to the railroad and gave stop signals with a white cloth from a point 784 feet west of the crossing.

The driver of the motor-truck was familiar with the crossing at which the accident occurred. He had made several trips over the crossing with his motor-truck and a trailer, but when the accident occurred he was making his first trip with a loaded trailer. He did not anticipate that the bottom of the bed of the loaded trailer would come in contact with the crossing structure.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck and trailer becoming stalled on a private-road grade crossing.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighteenth day of September, 1953.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Acting Secretary.