

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT ON THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD
NEAR EAST LYNN, ILL., ON MAY 11, 1933.

July 20, 1933.

To the Commission:

On May 11, 1933, there was a derailment of a freight train on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad near East Lynn, Ill., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 1 employee.

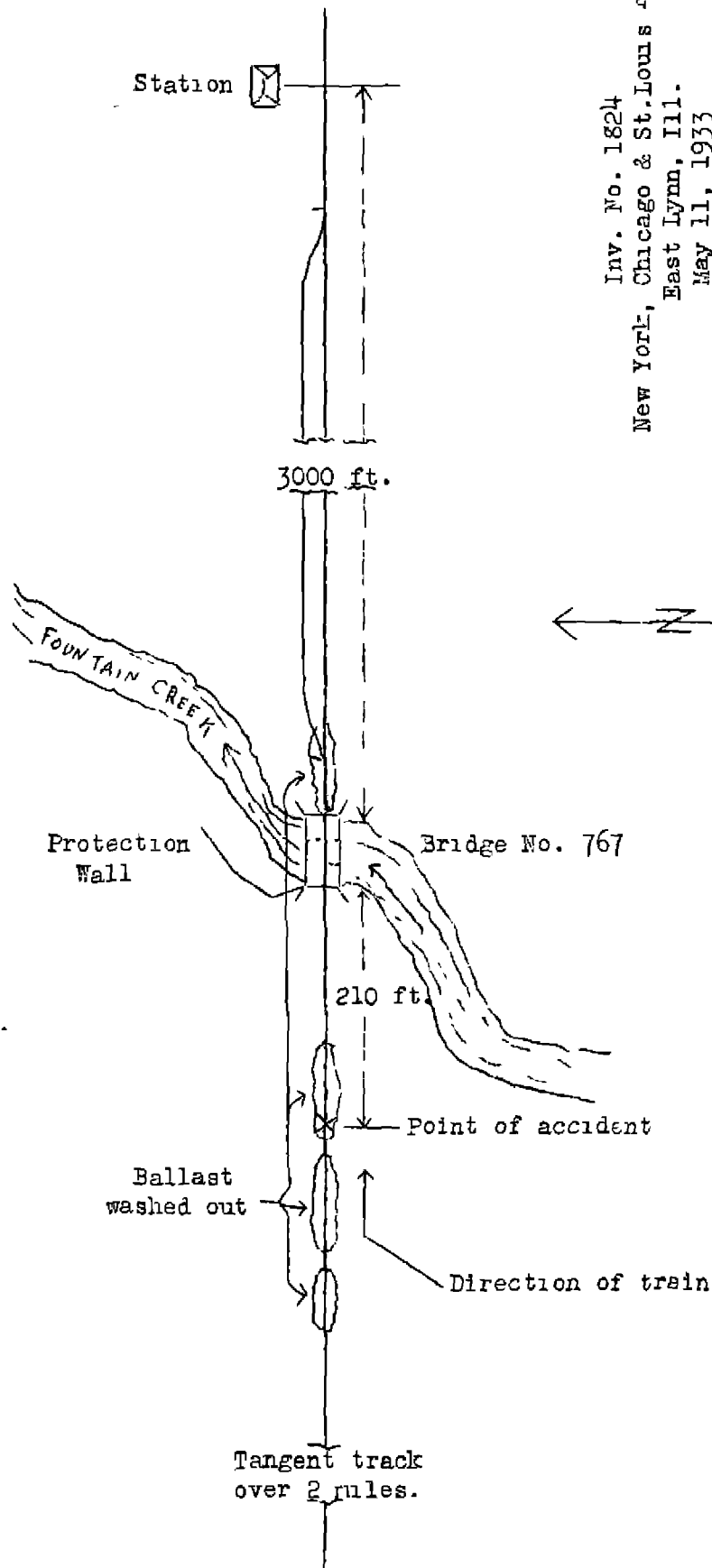
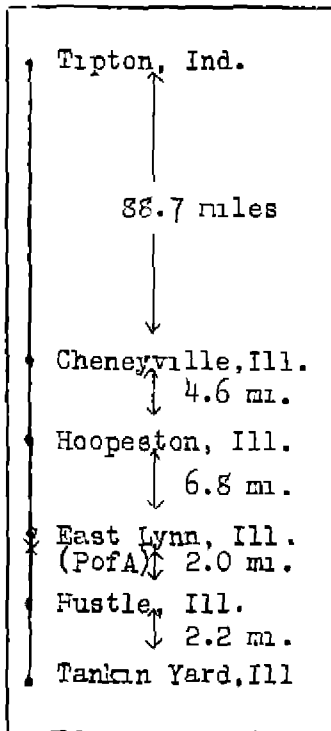
Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Peoria Division of the Lake Erie & Western District, extending between Rankin Yard, Ill., and Tipton, Ind., a distance of 104.3 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 a point about 210 feet west of bridge no. 767, which is located a few feet west of the west switch of the passing track at East Lynn; approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for more than 2 miles. The grade for east-bound trains is descending with a maximum of 0.6 percent for more than 4,000 feet to within about 225 feet of bridge no. 767; it is level across the bridge and then is slightly ascending.

The track at the point of accident is on a fill about 8 feet in height; it is laid with 90-pound rails 39 feet in length, with an average of 24 ties to the rail length, single-spiked, ballasted with washed gravel to a depth of 10 inches, and is well maintained.

Bridge no. 767 is a triple-arch concrete bridge about 40 feet in length, spanning Fountain Creek; it was built in 1896. The water flows under the bridge from south to north and the shallow stream is about 25 feet in width; the opening under the arches is 7 or 8 feet in height.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:40 a.m.



Description

East-bound freight train no. 66 consisted of a steel-underframe rider caboose coupled next to the engine, 33 cars, and another caboose at the rear of the train, hauled by engine 596, and was in charge of Conductor Pore and Engineman Perry. This train left Rankin Yard, the last open office, 4.2 miles west of East Lynn, at 3:30 a.m., according to the train sheet, 2 hours late, and was derailed by a washout just west of bridge no. 767 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 8 and 15 miles per hour.

Engine 596, its tender, the rider caboose, and the first six cars in the train were derailed. The engine and tender stopped on their right sides at the base of the fill and south of the track, the front end of the engine being about 115 feet west of the bridge; the rider caboose was across and at right angles to the track, opposite the tender, with its superstructure practically demolished, all six of the derailed freight cars were overturned and badly damaged. The employee killed was the head brakeman, who was in the rider caboose; the employee injured was the engineman.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Perry stated that a message was received at Rankin Yard instructing him to run carefully at all water ways where high water might be expected account of hard rain. After departing from that point he saw a great deal of water, not close to the track, but out in the field, and it was raining hard. Two brake applications had been made en route, and he had just released a third application when the track seemed to give way on his side and the engine went down and over. Engineman Perry said that at no time was the speed of his train more than 20 miles per hour and he estimated it to have been about 12 or 15 miles per hour when the accident occurred. The headlight was burning brightly, and when approaching bridge no. 767 he was looking ahead and had seen a lighted red lantern apparently on a motor car standing on the track near the station at East Lynn; he did not see any water running over the track at the point where the washout occurred and was not expecting to find high water there, saying that he had been running over this territory for the past 33 years and never before had trouble been experienced at this location from washouts, although trouble had previously occurred east of the station.

Fireman Goar had been keeping a sharp lookout from the left side but had not seen any water over the rails, and he did not know there was anything wrong until the accident occurred.

Conductor Pore and Flagman Ellis were riding in the caboose at the rear of the train; they had looked out en route, but had not seen any water over the track and were unaware of anything wrong until the accident occurred. Conductor Pore went forward on the north side of the track and did not find any water near the ties on that side. The first car that was not derailed was a car of stock and the water was between the derailed cars and the stock cars, with the roadbed still being washed out. On returning to that point shortly afterward he found the roadbed washed out under the trucks of the stock car and the car was settling. Conductor Pore had been in the service for 26 years, and had never experienced trouble from washouts at this location, although he was expecting to find trouble east of East Lynn.

Dispatcher Brown stated that he came on duty at midnight and was informed by Dispatcher Scott, whom he relieved, that there had been heavy rains over the entire division and that the night chief dispatcher had ordered section crews to patrol the track. At 2:30 a.m. Dispatcher Brown issued the message to the crew of train no. 66 as previously mentioned. The office at East Lynn was closed, it being only a day office; however, at about 3:17 or 3:18 a.m. the dispatcher received a report from Section Foreman Sills at East Lynn to the effect that there was high water east of East Lynn, the water being over the ties but not running over the track; the section foreman had instructions to patrol the track from Hoopeston to Rankin Yard, a distance of 11.2 miles, and the dispatcher told him that train no. 66 would depart from Rankin Yard in about 12 or 15 minutes.

Section Foreman Sills stated that he was called out to patrol the track about 1:30 a.m. and that his section crew was assembled at Hoopeston; he received instructions to patrol the track westward to Rankin Yard. About 2:15 a.m. he started westward from Hoopeston on the section motor car with three section men and patrolled the track to East Lynn; it was raining hard. On arrival at East Lynn he left the motor car standing in front of the station on the main track while he telephoned the dispatcher, about 3:15 or 3:18 a.m., and told him that there was high water about 1 mile east of East Lynn. The dispatcher informed him that train no. 66 would depart from Rankin Yard in about 12 or 15 minutes. Section Foreman Sills had already seen the reflection from the headlight of the engine of train no. 66, but he could not tell whether the train was moving or standing, and after talking with the dispatcher and then calling the section foreman at East Lynn in order to have him look out for the high water east of that point, he started walking west, in order to flag train no. 66, but after proceeding about 500 or 600 feet he saw the engine go into the washout west of bridge no. 767. When he reached the scene of the accident he saw that the roadbed was washed out from under the ties and the track was swinging; the water appeared to be

receding at this time. Section Foreman Sills, further stated that his own section extended from a point about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west of Hoopeston eastward to Cheneyville, 4.5 miles east of Hoopeston; he was not familiar with the east end of the section where the washout occurred and had intended to have the dispatcher hold train no. 66 until he could reach Rankin Yard, but the storm was bad and he could not understand the dispatcher very well on the telephone, so he got another man to listen and thereby understood a few words of what the dispatcher said. The section foreman said that if he had not seen the reflection from the headlight of train no. 66 he would have continued west of East Lynn, but he did not know where the motor car set-offs were located and did not want to run his men into danger.

Roadmaster Gard stated that he was home at Paxton, located 11 miles west of Rankin Yard, during the night of the storm and that about 11:15 p.m. he telephoned the operator at that point and inquired as to storm conditions; he was informed that there were reports of a severe storm, and section men were called out to patrol the track. Roadmaster Gard endeavored to telephone the section foreman at East Lynn, but the lightening was bad and he could not complete the call; he called the operator at Rankin Yard and told him to communicate with the section foreman at East Lynn, but that operator did not succeed in getting in touch with him either. Roadmaster Gard called the operator at Hoopeston about 1:20 a.m. and told him to notify Section Foreman Sills to patrol the track westward from that point to Rankin Yard. Roadmaster Gard arrived at the scene of the accident about 4 hours after its occurrence and found the roadbed had gone completely, while there was another washout on the east side of the bridge. He said that the storm was heavy and that considerable debris, including rubbish and corn stalks, had washed down and probably clogged the opening on the south side of the bridge, causing the water to rise 9 or 10 feet above normal and wash out the roadbed to a depth of 30 inches below the base of the rail. Roadmaster Gard said that he had not anticipated trouble from washouts at this location.

The last train which passed over the point where the accident occurred was west-bound freight train no. 63, which passed about 4 hours prior to the accident, but nothing unusual was reported by members of the crew of that train.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by a washout.

The indications were that an unusually heavy storm occurred a short time before the accident and washed down debris to such an extent that it clogged the opening on the south side of bridge no. 767, with the result that the water scoured out the roadbed west of the bridge and caused the derailment. Apparently the rails and ties were in place, with the roadbed washed out from under them, with the result that the engine crew had no warning of impending danger.

The roadmaster had not been able to communicate with the section foreman at East Lynn and had instructed the section foreman at Hoopston to patrol the track through East Lynn to Rankin Yard. This latter foreman had reached East Lynn, had talked with the dispatcher about a dangerous condition east of that point, had called the East Lynn foreman for the purpose of telling him what had been found, and could see the headlight of train no. 66. He did not know whether the train was standing or moving, and did not know the condition of the track between the East Lynn station and the train; he started walking toward the train, leaving his section motor car and men at East Lynn station, but had gone only a short distance when he saw the train go into the washout. Many of the employees involved were men of long experience in this territory, but none of them remembered having had any trouble due to high water at this point.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.