

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3421

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS  
RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

AT MIDDLE BRANCH, OHIO, ON

AUGUST 11, 1951

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SUMMARY

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Date: August 11, 1951

Railroad: New York, Chicago and St. Louis

Location: Middle Branch, Ohio

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 161 : 170

Engine numbers: 527 : 6428

Consists: Caboose, 35 cars, : 38 cars, caboose  
caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.27 percent  
descending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 10 a. m.

Casualties: 5 injured

Cause: Failure to obey meet order

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3421

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

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

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October 25, 1951

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Accident at Middle Branch, Ohio, on August 11, 1951, caused  
by failure to obey a meet order.

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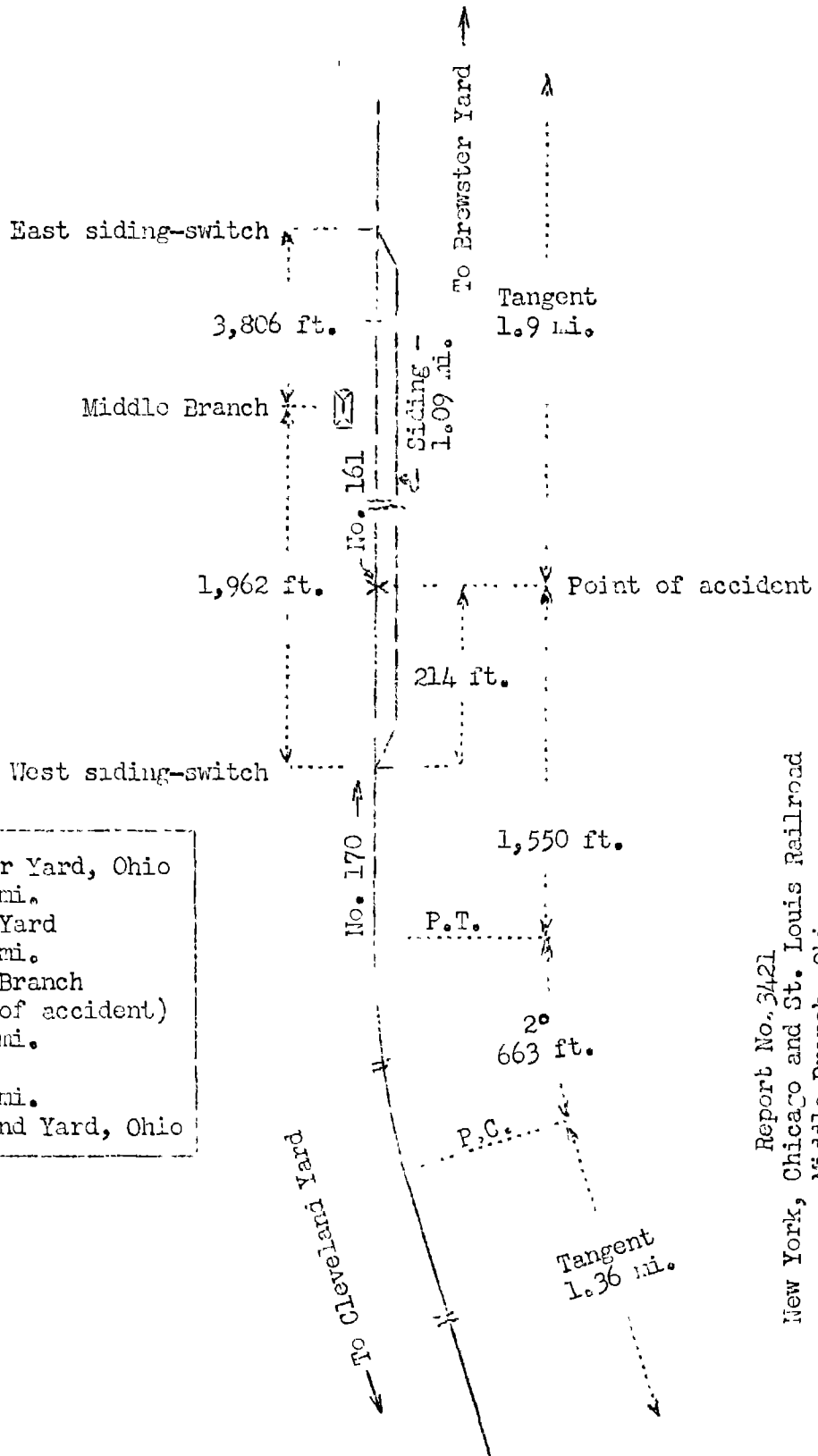
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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 11, 1951, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad at Middle Branch, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of five employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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1  
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.



- o Brewster Yard, Ohio
- | 11.6 mi.
- o Canton Yard
- | 7.4 mi.
- X Middle Branch
- | (Point of accident)
- | 20.4 mi.
- o Kent
- | 31.3 mi.
- o Cleveland Yard, Ohio

Report No. 3421  
 New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad  
 Middle Branch, Ohio  
 August 11, 1951

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Cleveland Division extending between Brewster Yard and Cleveland Yard, Ohio, 70.7 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Middle Branch, 19 miles west of Brewster Yard, a siding 1.09 miles in length parallels the main track on the south. The east and the west switches of the siding are located, respectively, 3,006 feet east and 1,962 feet west of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 214 feet east of the west siding-switch. From the east the track is tangent throughout a distance of 1.9 miles to the point of accident and 1,550 feet westward. From the west there are, in succession, a tangent 1.36 miles in length, a 2° curve to the right 663 feet and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade at the point of accident is 0.27 percent descending eastward.

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

14. ENGINE AND MOTOR CAR WHISTLE SIGNALS.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "--" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

SOUND. INDICATION,

\* \* \*

(n) -- -- o

Approaching meeting or waiting points. See Rule S-90.

\* \* \*

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

\* \* \*

S-72. \* \* \* trains of the second class are superior to those of the third \* \* \*

\* \* \*

S-89. At meeting points the inferior train must take the siding \* \* \*

\* \* \* The inferior train must pull into the siding when practicable.\* \* \*

S-90. The engineman of each train will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting \* \* \* point.

204. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Enginemen must show train orders to firemen and when practicable to forward trainmen. Conductors must show train orders when practicable to trainmen.

#### FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

##### S-A

#### Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains.

(1) No. 1 one Eng. 177 meet No. 2 two Eng. 168 at A.

\* \* \*

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

The maximum authorized speed for the trains involved was 49 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 161, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engine 527, a rider caboose, 35 cars and a caboose, in the order named. At Canton Yard, 7.4 miles east of Middle Branch, the crew received copies of train order No. 211 reading in part as follows:

No 161 one six one Eng 527 meet No 170  
one seven naught Eng 6428 at Middle Branch.  
\* \* \*

This train departed from Canton Yard at 9:36 a. m., 1 hour 26 minutes late, passed the east siding-switch at Middle Branch, where it was required to enter the siding to meet No. 170, and stopped on the main track about 10 a. m., with the front end of the engine 214 feet east of the west siding-switch. A few seconds later it was struck by No. 170.

No. 170, an east-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 6428, 38 cars and a caboose. At Kent, the last open office, 20.4 miles west of Middle Branch, the crew received copies of train order No. 211. This train departed from Kent at 9:30 a. m., 3 hours 15 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with No. 161.

Engine 527, the tender, the rider caboose and the first car of No. 161 were derailed. The engine remained upright and in line with the track. The tender was derailed to the north. The cistern was torn from the tender frame and it stopped at right angles to the track. The rider caboose and the first car were derailed to the north and stopped on or near the track. Engine 6428 was derailed and stopped upright and in line with the track, with its front end against the front end of the engine of No. 161. No other equipment of either train was derailed. Both engines were badly damaged. The rider caboose was demolished, and the first car of No. 161 was somewhat damaged.

The engineer, the fireman, the front brakeman, the conductor and the flagman of No. 170 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 8.2 trains.

#### Discussion

The rules of this carrier provide that trains of the second class are superior to those of the third class. At meeting points the inferior train must take the siding, and must pull into the siding when practicable. The engineer must sound a meeting-point signal at least 1 mile before the train reaches a meeting point. Engineers must show train orders to firemen and, when practicable, to forward trainmen. Conductors must show train orders when practicable to trainmen. The meet order held by the crews of Nos. 161 and 170 required No. 161 to enter the siding at Middle Branch.

As No. 161 was approaching Middle Branch the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the cab of the engine. The front brakeman was in the cupola of the rider caboose immediately behind the engine. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose at the rear of the train. All members of the crew, except the front brakeman, had read the train order which established Middle Branch as the meeting point with No. 170. The engineer said that he had been assigned to No. 161 for more than a year. During that time he frequently had received a train order to meet No. 170 at Middle Branch, and it usually contained the instruction that No. 170 take siding. He said he did not notice that this instruction was not contained in train order No. 211. He did not sound the engine-whistle signal for the meeting point. No. 161 proceeded past the east siding-switch and stopped on the main track at Middle Branch, with the front end of the engine 214 feet east of the west siding-switch. A few seconds later the engineer observed No. 170 approaching and called a warning. The fireman said that he had read and understood train order No. 211 and, as the train was approaching Middle Branch, he reminded the engineer that their train was to meet the opposing train at that station. He said that when the train proceeded on the main track west of the east siding-switch he thought he had misread the train order and consulted the timetable to ascertain if No. 161 was superior to No. 170. Soon afterward, the engineer called a warning and the fireman alighted from the engine. The front brakeman said that he did not see the train order. When the train was approaching Middle Branch he proceeded to the rear platform of the rider caboose to prepare to perform station work. He observed No. 170 approaching and alighted from the train a few seconds before the collision occurred. The conductor and the flagman were in the cupola of the caboose at the rear of the train. They had discussed the provisions of train order No. 211. As the train approached the east switch of the siding the conductor asked the flagman if No. 170 had arrived at the meeting point. The conductor then observed that his train had passed the east siding-switch, and he descended from the cupola and reread train order No. 211. When the train stopped, the conductor alighted from the caboose and gave back-up signals to the engineer before the collision occurred. The flagman said that when his train proceeded without stopping at the east siding-switch, he assumed that the opposing train had arrived at the meeting point and that the east siding-switch had been lined for the movement of No. 161 into the siding.



As No. 170 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 45 miles per hour. The engine-men and the front brakeman were in their respective positions in the cab of the engine. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. All members of the crew had read and understood train order No. 211. The engineer said that he sounded the engine-whistle signal for the meeting point and, a few seconds later, made a service application of the brakes. He said that when he observed No. 161 occupying the main track near the west end of the siding, he immediately placed the brake valve in emergency position and warned the fireman and the front brakeman. The enginemen and the front brakeman alighted from the engine before the accident occurred. The engineer thought the speed had been reduced to about 30 miles per hour at the time of the collision.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of October, 1961.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.