

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2567
THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS
RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT WEST STEECA, N. Y., ON
FEBRUARY 6, 1942

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SUMMARY

Railroad: New York, Chicago & St. Louis
Date: February 6, 1942
Location: West Seneca, N. Y.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Out of freight cars : Passenger
Train numbers: : 23
Engine numbers : 8165
Consist: 4 cars : 6 cars
Speed: Standing : 45-50 m. p. h.
Operation: Manual block system
Track: Double; tangent; 0.21 percent
descending grade westward
Weather: Rain and snow
Time: 11:38 p. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 6 injured
Cause: Accident caused by runaway
cars fouling main track

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2567

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

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

March 30, 1942.

Accident at West Seneca, N. Y., on February 6, 1942,
caused by runaway cars fouling main track.

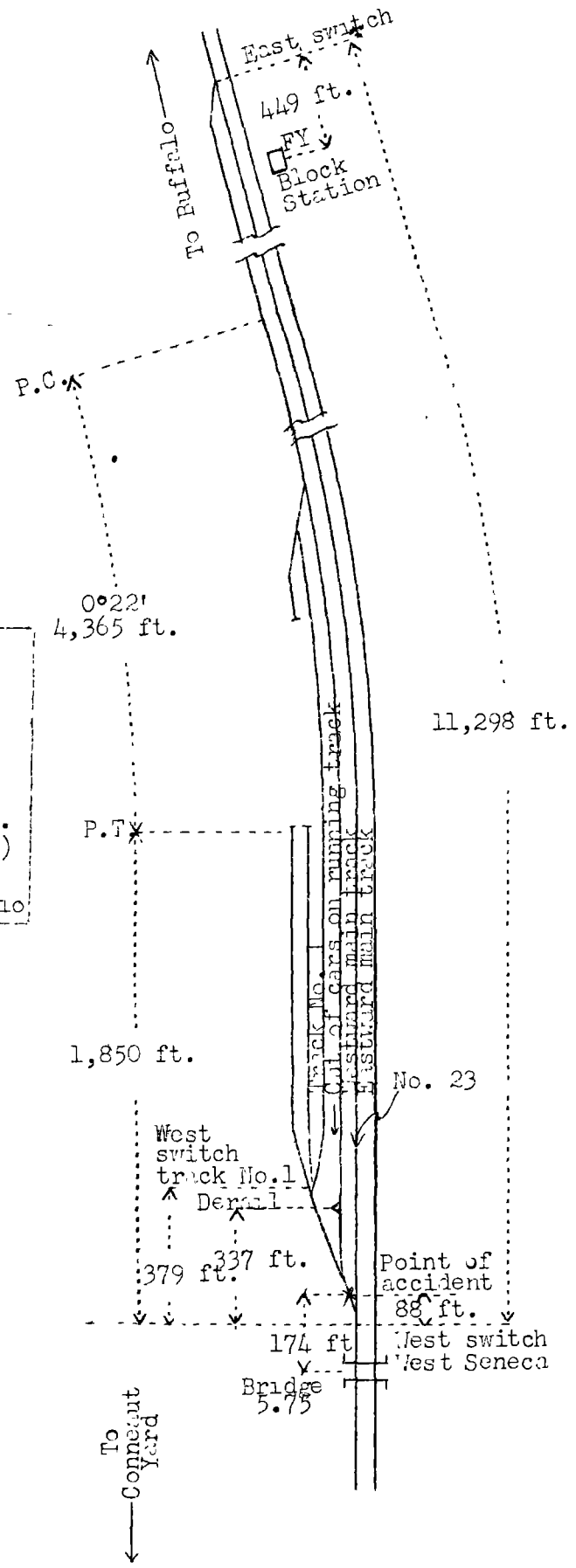
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 6, 1942, there was a side collision between runaway cars and a passenger train on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad at West Seneca, N. Y., which resulted in the death of two train-service employees and the injury of two passengers, one railway mail clerk, one express messenger, one Pullman employee and one train-service employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Service Commission of New York.

¹Under 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 Buffalo, N. Y. 2.4 mi.
- o Tift Yard 0.6 mi.
- o FY Block Station 2.1 mi.
- x West Seneca, N. Y. (Point of accident) 110.3 mi.
- o Conneaut Yard, Ohio



Inv. No. 2567
 New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad
 West Seneca, N. Y.
 February 6, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Buffalo Division, which extends between Buffalo, N. Y., and Conneaut Yard, Ohio, a distance of 115.4 miles. Between points 3 miles and 49 miles west of Buffalo, trains of the Pennsylvania Railroad are operated over the tracks of the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated with the current of traffic by a manual block signal system, the indications of which supersede time-table superiority. Within the limits of Buffalo yard, between Tiffit Yard and West Seneca, respectively, 2.4 and 5.1 miles west of Buffalo, a yard running track parallels the main tracks on the north. The accident occurred on the westward main track at the fouling point of the turnout at a point 88 feet east of the west switch of the running track. As the point of accident is approached from the east on the westward main track there is a 0°22' curve to the right 4,365 feet in length, which is followed by a tangent 1,950 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. The grade for west-bound trains on the westward main track varies between 0.21 percent and 0.345 percent descending a distance of about 4,100 feet to the point of accident, and is 0.21 percent at the point of accident. The grade for west-bound movements on the running track varies between 0.235 and 0.262 percent descending a distance of 3,500 feet, then there is a vertical curve 350 feet, which is followed by a slightly ascending grade a distance of 250 feet to the point of accident. The elevation of the running track is slightly lower than that of the main tracks.

A hand-operated derail is located on the north rail of the running track at a point 337 feet east of the west switch and 249 feet east of the point of accident. The normal position of this derail is for derailing. A yard track 2,903 feet in length, designated as yard track No. 1, parallels the running track on the north. The west switch of track No. 1 is located 379 feet east of the west running-track switch. Bridge 5.75 spans a creek at a point 174 feet west of the point where the accident occurred.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

104A. * * *

When not in use, Safety Switches and Derails, on sidings, must be set and locked for derailment.

* * *

Note. The proper position for all switches, including safety switches and de-rails, and crossover switches, is that which leaves the main track clear for the safe passage of trains, and protects them from being fouled by any train or engine moving on an adjacent track.

Time-table instructions read in part as follows:

Rule 17 is modified and amplified as follows:

* * *

Electric headlights on engines should be dimmed:

* * *

* * *passing through terminals or large yards.

365. * * *

Engines in yard limits must receive permission from signalman before occupying main track, and report to the signalman when clear of the main track * * *.

* * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 70 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Yard engine 303 had assembled 37 cars on the running track at West Seneca. About 11:04 p. m. a cut of 4 cars was placed on the west end of the running track and the engine then moved on track No. 1 to the east switch where it reentered the running track and coupled to the east end of the assembled cars. The cut of 4 cars rolled westward and fouled the westward main track. The east end of the third car was struck by No. 23 at 11:38 p. m.

No. 23, a west-bound first-class Pennsylvania Railroad passenger train, consisted of engine 8165, one box car, one baggage car, one baggage-mail car, one passenger-baggage car, one coach and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Buffalo at 11 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of

movement of trains, on time. Soon afterward a running test was made, and the brakes functioned properly at all points where used en route. At "F.Y." Block Station, the last open office and 2.1 miles east of West Seneca, a proceed signal was displayed for No. 23. This train passed "F.Y." Block Station at 11:34 p. m., 12 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 to 50 miles per hour it collided with the cars that fouled the main track.

No. 23 struck the east end of the third car of the runaway cut. The second and third cars were overturned and stopped, badly damaged, to the north of the running track. The rear truck of the first car was derailed and this car stopped, badly damaged, about 350 feet west of the point of accident. Engine 8165, of No. 23, stopped on its left side south of the eastward main track with its rear end on the west abutment of Bridge 5.75. The front end of the engine was badly damaged and the cab was demolished. The engine truck became detached and stopped on the bridge. The trailer truck became detached and stopped on the eastward main track 130 feet west of the bridge. The tender was detached from the engine and stopped in the creek south of the main tracks, badly damaged and bottom up. The first car stopped, badly damaged, on its side on top of the tender and at right angles to the track. The second car was derailed and stopped upright, badly damaged, in line with the eastward track, with its front end on the bridge. The third car was derailed and stopped upright, badly damaged, with its front end on the eastward track and its rear end between the main tracks. The fourth car was derailed and stopped upright, slightly damaged, with its front end fouling the eastward main track and its rear end on the westward main track. The front wheels of the front truck of the fifth car were derailed.

Inspection of engine 8165 after the accident disclosed that the throttle was fully open and the independent and the automatic brake valves were in running position.

It was raining and snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred at 11:38 p. m.

The employees killed were the engineer and the fireman of No. 23 and the employee injured was the baggageman of No. 23.

Discussion

Yard engine 303 had assembled 37 cars, in several cuts, on the running track, which was adjacent to the westward

main track. At 11:04 p. m. the last cut, which consisted of 4 cars, was placed on the west end of the running track. About 11:07 p. m. the engine foreman reported his engine clear of the block. Then the engine moved through track No. 1, entered the east end of the running track, coupled to the east end of the 37 cars, presumably pulled all the cars eastward a short distance, and the engine was detached. There was no member of the crew at the west end of the 37 cars during this movement. The engine then moved eastward on the running track, performed switching service, and returned to the location of the cars on the running track soon after the accident occurred. At 11:34 p. m. No. 23 entered the block at "F.Y." Block Station under a proceed indication, and about 4 minutes later while moving at a speed of about 50 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 70 miles per hour it struck a car of a cut of cars that fouled the westward main track at the west end of the running track. In compliance with the rules the headlight of the engine was dimmed as the train passed through the yard involved. Because of rain and snow falling as No. 23 approached the west switch of the running track, visibility was restricted to a distance of 200 feet. Apparently the trainmen did not see the obstruction on the track, as no action was taken to stop the train prior to the time of the collision.

According to the statement of the conductor of No. 23, soon after the accident occurred he found that the west 3 cars of a cut of 4 cars had fouled the westward main track and that the fourth car was separated some distance from the other cars on the running track. The engine foreman said that the last cut of cars placed on the west end of the running track consisted of 4 cars and that the west car of this cut was standing at a point about 500 feet east of the west switch of the running track and about 180 feet east of the derail. The hand brakes on these cars were not applied. The engine foreman understood that the rules required him to see that the derail was placed for derauling, but he said that when the last cut of cars was placed on the west end of the running track he did not take action to see that the derail was placed in proper position. He thought the east car of the last cut of cars had coupled to the west car of the cars which had previously been placed on the running track. Obviously the coupling between the east car of the last cut placed on the running track and the west car of the other cars on that track was not made when the last cut was placed on this track. It is probable that in coupling the engine to the east car on the running track the 4 cars at the

west end were moved sufficiently to set them in motion on the descending grade, and they moved westward far enough to foul the westward main track. If the derail had been set in normal position, which was for derailing, the cars would have been derailed to the north side of the running track, and this accident would have been averted. If an automatic block-signal system had been in use on this line the engine crew would have received warning signal indications that the main track was obstructed.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by runaway cars fouling a main track.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of March, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.