

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN & HARTFORD RAILROAD AT EAST
TAUNTON, MASS , ON NOVEMBER 11, 1931.

December 8, 1931.

To the Commission:

On November 11, 1931, there was a derailment of a freight train on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at East Taunton, Mass., which resulted in the injury of three employees.

Location and method of operation

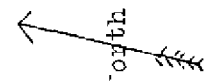
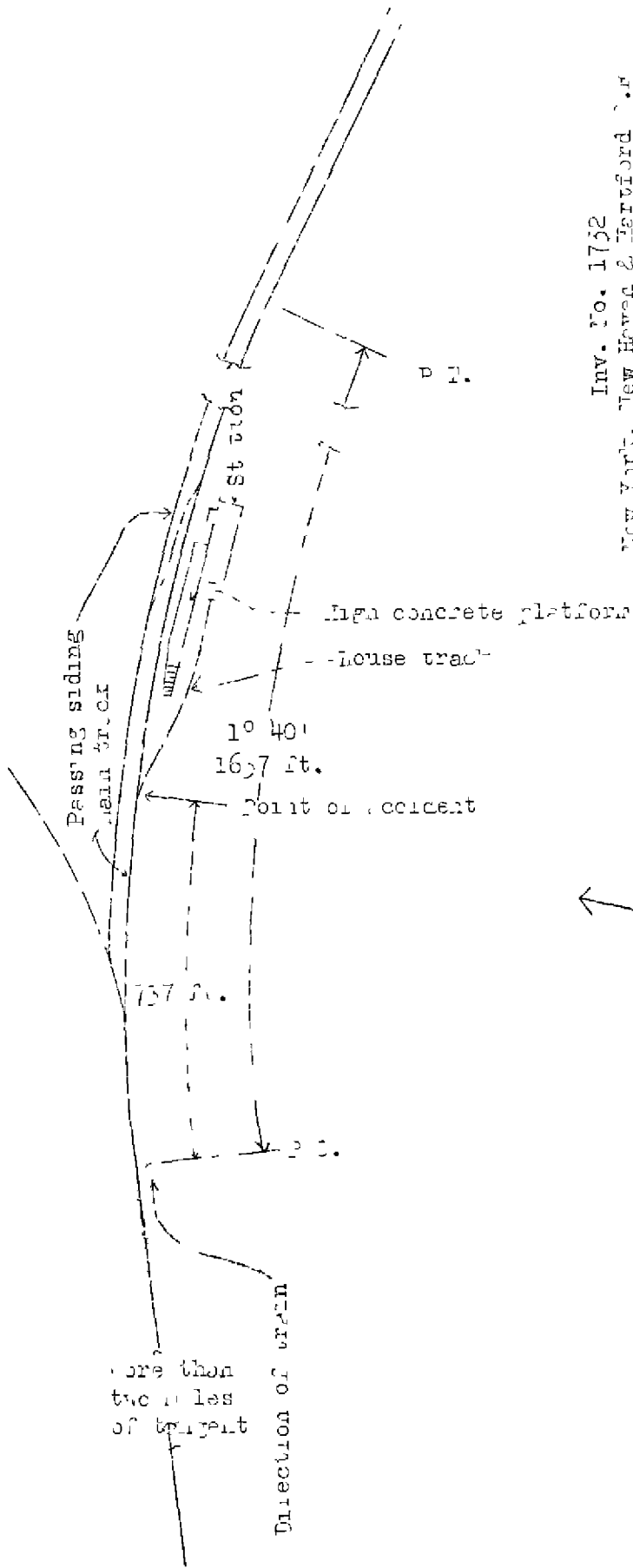
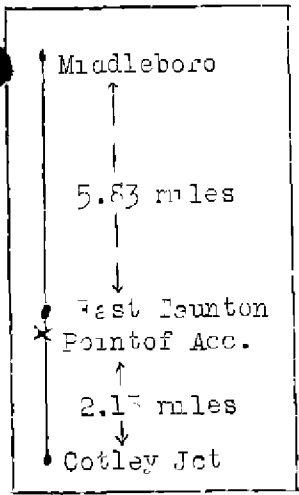
This accident occurred on the Middleboro Branch of the Boston Division, extending between Cotley Junction and Middleboro, Mass , a distance of 7.98 miles; this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred at the switch leading to the house or team track at East Taunton; approaching this point from the north, the track is tangent for more than 2 miles, followed by a 1° 40' curve to the right, 1,657 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 737 feet from its northern end. The grade at the switch is 0.23 per cent ascending for southbound trains.

The switch involved is a facing-point switch for southbound trains, with a No. 10 turnout, and leads off the main track to the right or west to the house track, which is 392 feet in length. The high switch stand, Ramapo No. 17 type, is located on the west side of the track and is equipped with a switch lamp, the normal night indications being red when the switch is open and green when it is closed. The track is laid with 78-pound rails, fully tie-plated, and well maintained.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11.50 p.m.

Description

Southbound extra freight train symbol Z-1, en route from Providence, R.I , to Hyannis, Mass., consisted of 26 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3002, of the 2-8-2 type, and was in charge of Conductor Dawson and Engineman MacGregor. This train passed Cotley Junction,



Inv. No. 1752
 New York, New Haven & Hartford R.R.
 East Taunton, Mass.
 Nov. 11, 1931

the last open office, 2 15 miles from East Taunton, at 11.35 p m , and was derailed at the switch leading to the house track at East Taunton while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 10 and 20 miles per hour.

Engine 3002, its tender, and the first four cars were derailed; the engine struck the end of the high concrete platform at the station, between the main track and house track, and then turned over on its left side on the main track with its head end 227 feet south of the point of switch, while the tender was behind the engine and extended diagonally across from the main track to the house track. The first car came to rest to the right of the house track and opposite the tender, while the other three derailed cars came to rest across the house track in zig-zag fashion, behind the tender. The employees injured were the engineman, fireman and head brakeman.

Summary of evidence

Engineman MacGregor stated that he had shut off steam as usual and that the train was drifting while approaching East Taunton. On reaching the curve he observed that the switch lamp for the house track was displaying a green indication but when the engine got to the house-track switch, at which time the speed of the train was about 20 miles per hour, it headed toward the house track. He at once applied the air brakes in emergency, but did not think that the brakes had time to take proper effect. Shortly after the accident the engineman went back to the switch and at that time he observed that the lock was lying on a switch tie against the switch stand; the switch lever was fully up and partly turned, but in such position as to indicate that the switch was set for the main track, and it could not then be moved, as a tank car stood on the switch points. Engineman MacGregor left everything as he had found it and went to summon Conductor Dawson to verify his findings. On returning to the switch again with the conductor, it was also observed that the switch lamp was not burning, although at the time the train had approached the switch the lamp had been burning and then displayed a green indication. The conductor picked up the lock and it was found to be open, so the conductor tried to close it, but it would not stay closed, and the conductor then put his switch key in the hole and it was found that the lock was broken inside; they also noticed several dents on the lock, as though it had been forced open. Engineman MacGregor further stated that prior to departing from Taunton, located 4 77 miles from East Taunton, a thorough test was made of the air brakes and that they worked properly. Statements of Conductor Dawson

corroborated those of Engineman MacGregor; both of these employees were of the opinion that the accident was the result of malicious tampering

Fireman Filiziani and Head Brakeman Legace, who were riding on their respective seat boxes on the left side of the engine, on the outside of the curve, were unaware of anything wrong prior to the accident; the fireman estimated the speed of the train to have been between 10 and 15 miles per hour when the engineman applied the air brakes in emergency. Flagman Blanchette went back to flag after the accident.

Section Foreman Sullivan stated that around noon of the day of the accident he walked by the switch involved, and that at that time he placed one foot on the first switch rod and observed that the switch was in proper condition, with the lock in place and the switch lamp burning. He did not learn of the accident until about 40 minutes after its occurrence, whereupon he proceeded to the station at East Taunton, arriving there about 1.05 a. m., November 12. At that time he saw the damaged switch lock, which was then lying on the desk in the agent's office. He then went to the switch and observed that the east switch point was chipped slightly, apparently caused by a wheel flange. The cars had been pulled away from the switch at this time. The switch lever was half cocked and the switch point opposite the stock rail was open about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, while the point on the opposite side was open about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. The switch lamp was not burning. Section Foreman Sullivan stated that the last time he adjusted the switch prior to the accident was during the latter part of September, since which time he had not had any occasion to use the switch. The switch lamp is cleaned and filled on Wednesday and Saturday of each week, at which time the track walker is required to pull on the chain of the switch lock, to make sure that the lock is locked, and also be sure that the lamp is burning and notice whether any repairs are needed to the switch.

Track Walker Rebeiro stated that he filled the switch lamp with oil about 3 15 p.m. on the afternoon of the day of the accident, and saw to it that the slide door was closed tightly and the lamp burning properly; he also tried the switch lock and it was all right.

Track Supervisor Richmond arrived at the scene of the accident about 1 hour and 50 minutes after its occurrence, while Assistant Superintendent Hurley arrived almost one hour later. Each of them examined the switch and found conditions to be practically the same as previously described; both points were chipped. All other parts of the switch were in good condition, including the switch stand, and the switch operated properly on being thrown

in both positions at this time. The switch lock was broken, a new break, the indications being that it had been forced open by a small bar or lever, and there were deep marks on each side of the hook. The switch lamp was not burning. Assistant Superintendent Hurley stated that the switch lever had been turned just enough so that the switch lamp would still display a green or proceed indication to the engineman of a southbound train, indicating that the switch was lined for the main track. Examination of the track north of the switch disclosed it to be in good condition as to alignment, surface, and gauge, there was no indication of dragging equipment.

Master Mechanic Sederquest arrived at the scene of the accident about two and one-half hours after its occurrence. The engine truck was partially buried in the ground and he was only able to see one wheel at this time, the flange of which was in good condition. Later the engine was brought to Roadville and inspection at that point disclosed both truck flanges to be in good condition, as were the flanges on all of the other wheels of the engine. Nothing was found about the condition of the engine that would have caused or contributed to the accident.

According to the record the last time the switch was used was about 1 p.m., November 7. Examination of the track, and also the equipment, as made by the Commission's inspectors, failed to develop any defective condition which could have contributed to the occurrence of the accident.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by a cocked or partly-opened switch, due to malicious tampering.

The indications are that the switch lock was forced open and the switch lever turned, but only enough so that the switch lamp would continue to display a green or proceed indication to the engineman of a southbound train, as though the switch was lined for the main track, but instead the switch points had been actually opened far enough to permit a wheel flange to split the switch and derail the train. No defective condition was found about the track or equipment which would have caused the accident. The last time the switch had been used was on November 7, four days prior to the accident; the section foreman walked by the switch around noon of the day of the accident and at that time he observed that the switch was in proper condition, while the track walker filled the

switch lamp with oil during the afternoon of the day of the accident and at that time he also tried the switch lock and it was all right. At the time of the investigation, however, it had not been determined when or by whom the tampering was done.

All of the employees involved were experienced men, and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.