

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2795  
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR ARDARA, PA., ON  
MAY 1, 1944

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Pennsylvania  
Date: May 1, 1944  
Location: Ardara, Pa.  
Kind of accident: Side collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger  
Train numbers: Extra 26 West : 65  
Engine numbers: 26 : 2761-5339  
Consist: 60 cars, caboose : 15 cars  
Estimated speed: Standing : 30 m. p. h.  
Operation: Automatic block and cab-  
signal system  
Track: Four; tangent; 0.52 percent  
descending grade westward  
Weather: Clear  
Time: About 2:11 a. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed  
Cause: Derailed cars obstructing adjacent  
main track immediately in front  
of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2795

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

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY

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May 22, 1944.

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Accident near Ardara, Pa., on May 1, 1944, caused by  
derailed cars obstructing an adjacent main track  
immediately in front of an approaching train.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

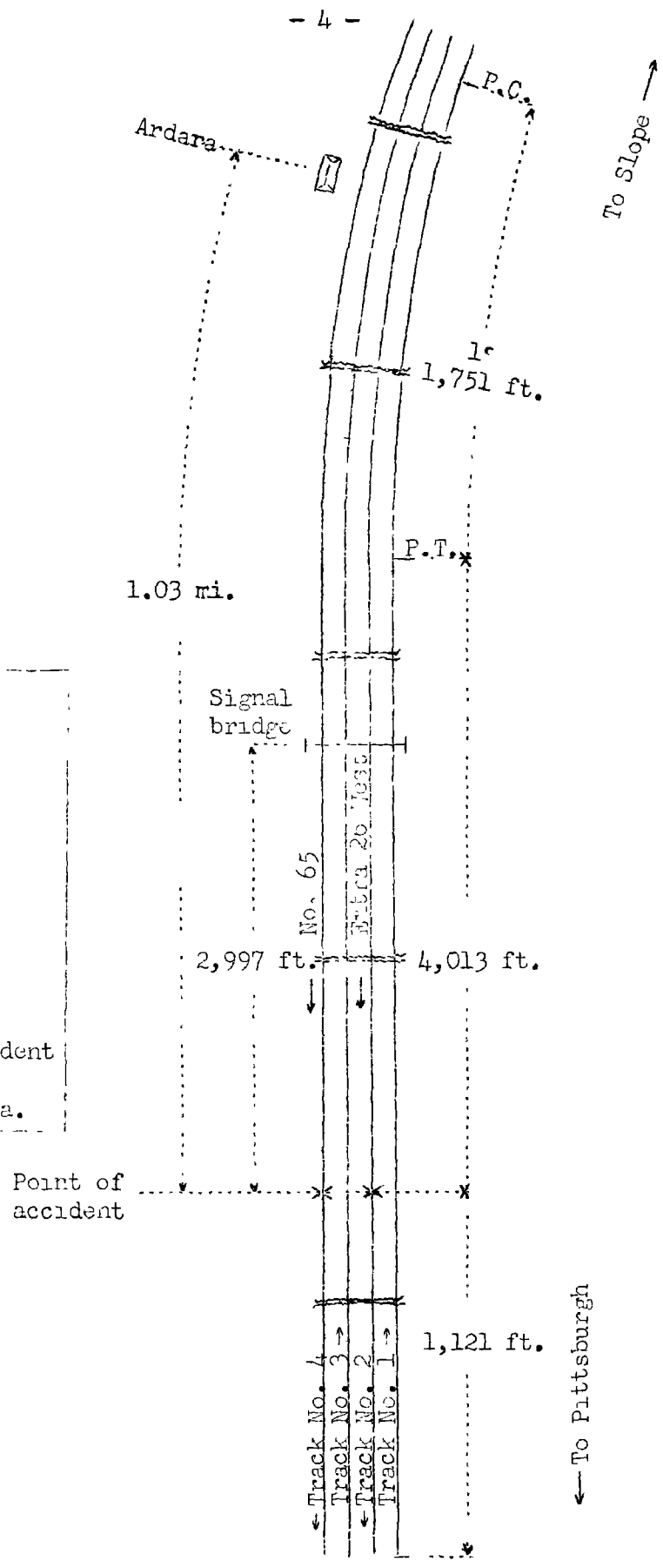
PATTERSON, Chairman:

On May 1, 1944, there was a side collision between derailed cars of a freight train and a passenger train on the Pennsylvania Railroad near Ardara, Pa., which resulted in the death of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

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<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

- o Slope, Pa. 34.10 mi.
- o Conemaugh 50.90 mi.
- o RG Tower 4.30 mi.
- o Manor 3.20 mi.
- o CP Tower 1.40 mi.
- o Ardara 1.03 mi.
- X Point of accident 17.97 mi.
- o Pittsburgh, Pa.



Inv-2795  
 Pennsylvania Railroad  
 Ardara, Pa.  
 May 1, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Pittsburgh Division extending westward from Slope, near Altoona, to Pittsburgh, Pa., 112.9 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a four-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by an automatic block and cab-signal system, the indications of which superseded time-table superiority. The main tracks from south to north were No. 1, eastward freight, No. 2, westward freight, No. 3, eastward passenger, and No. 4, westward passenger. The accident occurred 94.93 miles west of Slope, at a point 1.03 miles west of the station at Ardara. The freight train was being operated westward on track No. 2, and the passenger train, westward on track No. 4. From the east there was a 1° curve to the left 1,751 feet in length, which was followed by a tangent 4,013 feet to the point of accident and 1,121 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains was 0.52 percent descending.

The tracks were laid in a cut, the walls of which rose to a maximum height of approximately 120 feet. The track structure consisted of 130-pound rails, 39 feet in length, on 22 treated hardwood ties to the rail length. It was fully tieplated, single-spiked and was ballasted with crushed rock.

Signals governing west-bound movements on tracks No. 2 and No. 4 were mounted on a signal bridge 2,997 feet east of the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

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Speeds

\* \* \*

Reduced Speed--Prepared to stop short of train or obstruction.

\* \* \*

11. A train finding a fusee burning red on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee and then proceed at reduced speed.

76a. Engine and train crews as frequently as opportunity permits must observe engines and cars in their train, moving and standing, to detect any conditions that might interfere with the safe movement of trains.

77. So far as practicable and other duties permit, employes will observe passing trains for defects and should there be any indication of conditions endangering the train they must take necessary measures for its protection.

Train and engine crews on moving trains will be on the lookout for signals when passing other trains and while passing stations, highway crossings where watchmen are on duty and points where trackmen and other employes are working and when practicable exchange hand signals with them.

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fuseses.

\* \* \*

102. When a train is disabled or stopped suddenly by an emergency application of the air brakes or other causes, adjacent tracks as well as tracks of other railroads that are liable to be obstructed must be protected at once in both directions until it is ascertained they are safe and clear for the movement of trains.

The maximum authorized speed for the freight train was 50 miles per hour, and for the passenger train, 70 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Extra 26 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 26, 60 cars and a caboose, passed CP Tower, 1.4 miles east of Ardara and the last open office, at 2:02 a. m., passed Ardara, and about 2:10 a. m. while moving on track No. 2 at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour the eighteenth to the thirtieth cars, inclusive, were derailed and obstructed all adjacent main tracks.

No. 65, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engines 2761 and 5339, one baggage-mail car, one passenger-baggage car, five coaches, two dining cars, and six coaches, in the order named. The cars were of steel construction. This train passed CP Tower at 2:08 a. m., and about 2:11 a. m. while moving on track No. 4 at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck the derailed cars of Extra 26 West. The engines were derailed.

The derailed cars of Extra 26 were considerably damaged. Both engines of No. 65 were badly damaged. The first car of

No. 65 became separated from the second engine, because of a broken knuckle, and the cars stopped, undamaged, with the front end of the first car 675 feet east of the point of accident.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:11 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman of the first engine of No. 65 were killed.

### Discussion

Extra 26 West was moving on track No. 2 at a speed of about 25 miles per hour when the eighteenth to the thirtieth cars, inclusive, became derailed. Prior to the time of the accident the engine and the cars were riding smoothly and there was no indication of defective track. The first the crew knew of anything being wrong was about 2:10 a. m. when the air brakes became applied in emergency, and the train stopped abruptly. When the train stopped, the flagman immediately went back to provide flag protection and had reached a point about 400 feet east of the rear of his train when he saw a west-bound train approaching on track No. 4, about 2,500 feet distant. He displayed a lighted red fusee and was giving stop signals when the engines of No. 65 passed him.

As No. 65 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 70 miles per hour. The train air-brake system was in the charge of the engineer of the first engine. The brakes had been tested and functioned properly en route. It could not be determined when the enginemen of the first engine first became aware of anything being wrong, as they were killed in the accident. The enginemen of the second engine were maintaining a lookout, but their view of the track ahead was obscured by smoke trailing from the first engine. They said the brakes became applied in emergency when their engine was about 4,000 feet east of the point where the accident occurred. When the second engine of No. 65 was about opposite the caboose of Extra 26, the first car of No. 65 became separated from the second engine. The cars stopped with the front end of the first car about 1,350 feet west of the rear of Extra 26. The engines continued westward and struck the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh cars of Extra 26, which obstructed track No. 4. The speed of the engines of No. 65 was about 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred. After the accident, it was found that the knuckle of the front coupler of the first car of No. 65 was broken. Apparently it broke after the brakes of No. 65 were applied in emergency.

The investigation disclosed that the derailment of Extra 26 was caused by the left front journal of the rear truck of

P. R. R. 261862, the eighteenth car, becoming broken. The journal broke as a result of overheating. According to the stencilling on the car, the light weight was 48,700 pounds, the capacity was 140,000 pounds and the journal boxes were repacked by the Pennsylvania Railroad at GRS 11-3-43. The car was loaded to about 88 percent of its capacity. It was equipped with 6-x-11-inch journals. The car was last inspected by mechanical forces at Conemaugh, 59.8 miles east of Ardara, on April 27, and no defective condition was found. It was assembled in the train of Extra 26, and departed from Conemaugh at 11:05 p. m., April 30. The crew of Extra 26 inspected their train at several stations, and they observed the cars from the caboose and the engine as the train was moving on curves en route, but no defective condition was seen. About 1:50 a. m., the front brakeman of an east-bound passenger train, which passed Extra 26 West in the vicinity of the station at Manor, 4.6 miles east of Ardara, observed fire from the south side of Extra 26. He made an unsuccessful attempt to stop Extra 26, and, about 1:57 a. m., as his train was passing RG Tower, 8.9 miles east of Ardara, he dropped a message reading, "Train passing Manor 1:50 a. m., bad hot box." The operator at RG Tower obtained the message, and gave the information to the operator at CP Tower by telephone about 2:01 a. m. The operator at CP Tower observed the cars of Extra 26 as that train passed the tower, but he did not see any defective condition. The train had just passed the tower when he received the message.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by derailed cars obstructing an adjacent main track immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-second day of May, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.