

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2619  
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR PROSPECT, N. Y., ON  
AUGUST 22, 1942

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SUMMARY

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Railroad:	Pennsylvania
Date:	August 22, 1942
Location:	Prospect, N. Y.
Kind of accident:	Derailment
Train involved:	Passenger
Train number:	914
Engine number:	3669
Consist:	6 cars
Speed:	15-20 m. p. n.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and manual block system
Track:	Single; tangent; 1.48 percent descending grade northward
Weather:	Raining
Time:	About 6:38 a. m. .
Casualties:	1 killed; 5 injured
Cause:	Accident caused by wasnout

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2619

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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October 17, 1942.

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Accident near Prospect, N. Y., on August 22, 1942, caused  
by washout.

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

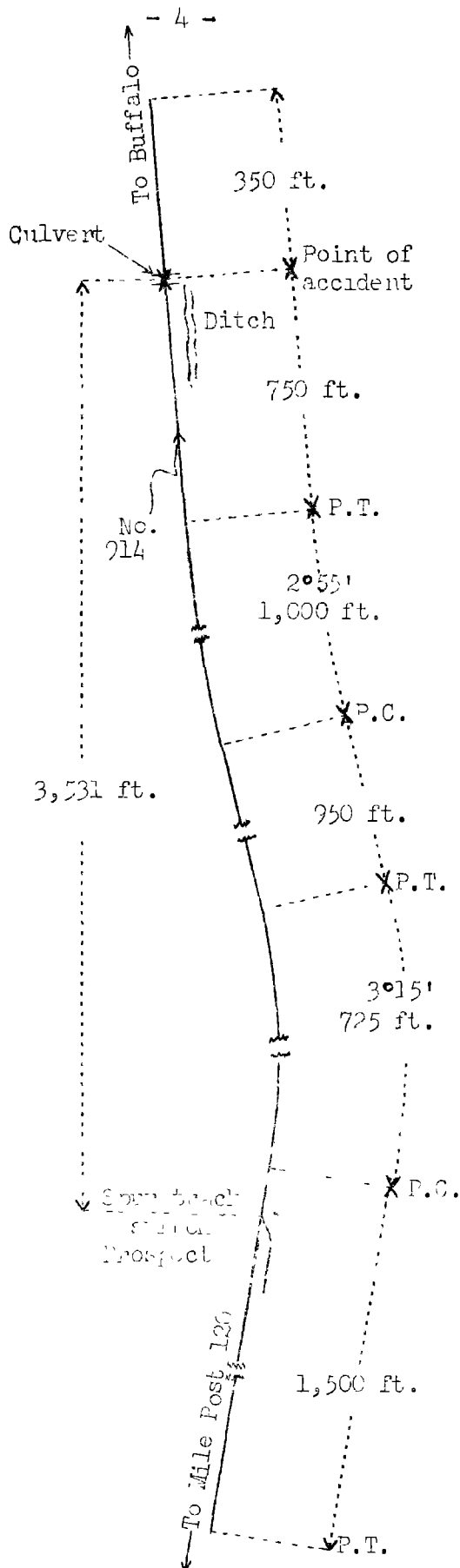
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 22, 1942, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Pennsylvania Railroad near Prospect, N. Y., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of three passengers, one railway-mail clerk and one express-messenger.

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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 Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.

○	Buffalo, N. Y.	50.20 mi.
○	BM	0.60 mi.
○	Brocton	7.10 mi.
×	Point of accident	0.67 mi.
○	Prospect	6.53 mi.
○	Mayville, N. Y.	73.60 mi.
○	Oil City, Pa.	13.20 mi.
○	Mile Post 120, E. Sandy, Pa.	



Inv. No. 2619  
 Pennsylvania Railroad  
 Prospect, N. Y.  
 August 22, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Buffalo Division designated as the Chautauqua Branch and extending between East Sandy, Pa., and Buffalo, N. Y., a distance of 151.9 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual block system. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 0.67 mile north of Prospect. As the point of accident is approached from the south there are, in succession, a tangent 1,500 feet in length, a 3°15' curve to the left 750 feet, a tangent 950 feet, a 2°55' curve to the right 1,000 feet and a tangent 750 feet to the point of derailment and 350 feet beyond. The grade for north-bound trains is 1.48 percent descending a distance of 5,500 feet to the point of accident.

The track structure consists of 100-pound cropped rail, 31 feet in length, laid in 1935 on 16 treated ties to the rail length; it is fully tieplated, single-spiked, and provided with an average of 4 rail anchors to a rail length. The track is ballasted with cinders and slag to a depth of 24 inches.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the track is laid on a fill about 15 feet high, 66 feet wide at the bottom and 20 feet wide at the top. At the point of accident water from a hillside on the east side of the track is drained to the west side of the track through a stone box-culvert 2 feet wide and 2 feet high, and 15 feet below the surface of the track. Drainage water is directed to this culvert by a ditch which is 4 feet wide and parallels the roadbed on the east.

Rules of the maintenance-of-way department read in part as follows:

Foreman - Track

46. He has charge of the repairs of his section, and is responsible for the safety of the track, bridges, and culverts.

54. \* \* \* during heavy storms he must detail sufficient force to watch the railroad and take every precaution to prevent accident.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 45 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

No. 914, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 3669, one box car, one baggage-express 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 Oil City, Pa., 80.13 miles south of Prospect, at 3:40 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 25 minutes late, departed from Mayville, 6.53 miles south of Prospect and the last open office, at 6:24 a. m., 34 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 to 20 miles per hour it was derailed at a point 0.67 mile north of Prospect.

The engine and tender were derailed to the east and stopped, considerably damaged, on their right sides and parallel to the track, with the front end of the engine 150 feet north of the point of derailment. The first car was derailed and stopped, slightly damaged, with its front end against the rear of the tender and its rear end on the roadbed. The front truck of the second car was derailed and the car was slightly damaged.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:38 a. m.

The employee killed was the fireman.

### Data

According to data furnished by the railroad, there was a rainfall of 7.5 inches at Brocton, 7.1 miles north of the point of accident, between 4 a. m. and 7 a. m. on the day of the accident.

After the accident, it was found that the fill had washed out to a considerable depth throughout a distance of about 200 feet to the immediate vicinity of the point of accident. Wash-outs also occurred at points 2.6 and 5.1 miles north of the point of accident.

### Discussion

No. 914 was moving at a speed of about 30 miles per hour on tangent track when the engineer saw water flowing along the east side of the track. The speed of the train was reduced by a service application of the brakes to 10 or 15 miles per hour. When the engine reached the location of a stone box-culvert 3,531 feet north of Prospect it was derailed to the right and overturned. The engineer said that a moderate rain had been falling and just after his train departed from Mayville, 6.53

miles south of Prospect, a rain of cloudburst proportions began to fall. The headlight on the engine was lighted and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of the heavy rainfall and darkness, visibility was restricted to a distance of about 100 feet. The first indication of defective track was when the engine started to overturn.

After the accident, examination disclosed that about 200 feet of the fill in the vicinity of the culvert had been washed out. The section foreman in charge of the track where the accident occurred said that after he was awakened by thunder and lightning about 5 a. m. he observed that it was raining very hard. Soon afterward he departed from his home, about 2-1/2 miles north of Prospect, en route by automobile to Prospect. He intended to inspect the track northward from Prospect ahead of No. 914, but because of water flowing over the highway at several points between his home and the track he was delayed and arrived at the section tool house at Prospect as No. 914 was passing. A section laborer, who lived about 3-1/2 miles north of Prospect, became alarmed concerning flood conditions and inspected the track. At a point 2.6 miles north of the point where the accident occurred he found the track washed out. He immediately returned to his home and attempted to inform the operator at BM block station, 7.83 miles north of Prospect, of the washout, but was unable to do so in time for the operator to inform the crew of No. 914 of the condition of the track. Officers of the railroad stated that the drainage facilities in the vicinity of the point of accident had been adequate previously and that no track damage by water had occurred at this point during the past 25 years; however, these facilities were not adequate in this instance, and water in the ditch on the east side of the track rose high enough to cause the fill to be scoured.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a washout.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of October, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.