

Inv-2084

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE LINE OF THE

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY

WATSONVILLE JUNCTION, CALIF.

JULY 20, 1936

INVESTIGATION NO. 2084

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern Pacific

Date: July 20, 1936

Location: Watsonville Junction, Calif.

Kind of accident: Side collision

Equipment involved: Yard engine : Switch movement

Engine numbers: 1253 : 2644

Consist: : 5 cars

Speed: Had just : About 3 m.p.h.
started to
back up

Track: Slight ascending grade

Weather: Clear

Time: 2:55 a.m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure of engine 1253 to be stopped
clear of fouling point of switch
lined for a conflicting movement.

August 27, 1936.

To the Commission:

On July 20, 1936, there was a side collision between a yard engine and a cut of cars on the line of the Southern Pacific Company at Watsonville Junction, Calif., which resulted in the death of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred within yard limits of the Watsonville Junction terminal on the San Francisco Subdivision; movements within this terminal are governed by yard limit rules. Garden yard lies east of the train yard. The lead track of Garden yard connects with lead track 101, from which movements are made into and out of the train yard. Track 302 converges, through switch 302, with the Garden lead track at a point about 25 feet east of the switch leading to track 101; the accident occurred at the fouling point of switch 302. The grade for west-bound movements is slightly ascending at the point of accident.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:55 a.m.

Description

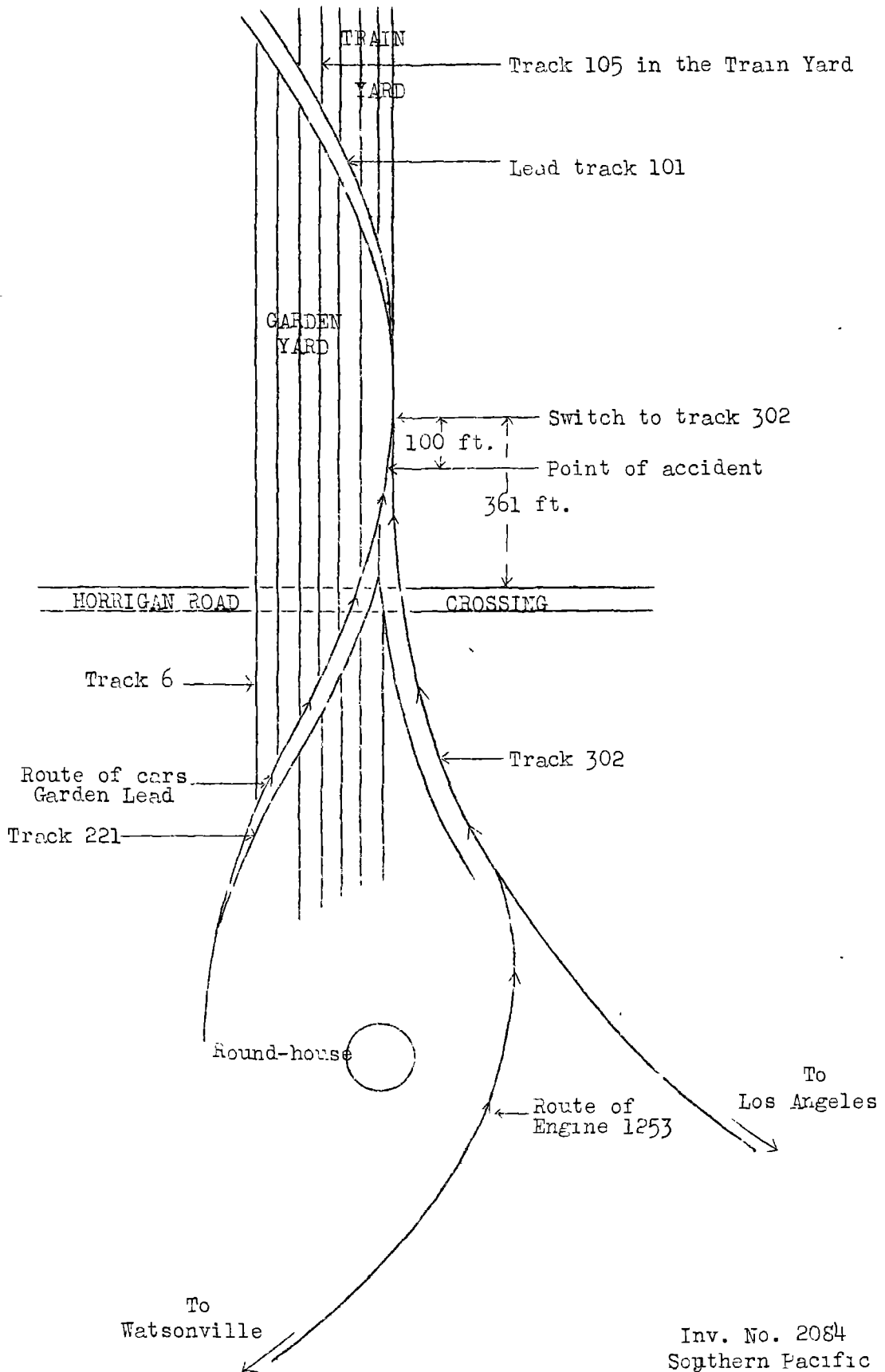
Yard engine 1253, in charge of Engineman Greaves and Fireman Richardson, had been engaged in switching at Watsonville, 1.4 miles from Watsonville Junction, and left that point about 2:30 a.m. to return to Watsonville Junction. The engine, headed west, entered track 302 from the west leg of the wye, continued westward to within a few feet of the switch points of switch 302 where it stopped, fouling the Garden lead track; it then backed up 40 feet and the engine cab was struck by a cut of cars being shunted westward on the Garden lead.

Yard engine 2644, in charge of Engineman Kennedy and Fireman Stobing, was engaged in switching cars from the Garden yard to the train yard. It had just shunted 5 cars on the Garden lead toward track 105 in the train yard when these cars struck the cab of engine 1253.

The left side of the cab of engine 1253 was crushed and badly damaged, and the rear driving wheels were derailed. The employee killed was the fireman of engine 1253.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Greaves, of engine 1253, stated that the engine foreman had told him they were to pick up a car in the terminal, but he was unable to say on what track the car was located. He proceeded westward on track 302 at a speed of



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possibly 6 miles per hour; after passing Horrigan road crossing and when about 100 feet from switch 302 he saw that the switch points were lined against him. He stopped the engine within a few feet of the switch points and waited for his yardman to throw the switch; the yardman left the engine on the engineman's side and walked around to the front of the engine and that was the last he saw of him. Engine Foreman Gill also left the engine, but Engineman Greaves did not know when he got off. After the yardman disappeared from view the fireman said to back up, and Engineman Greaves immediately released the brakes, reversed the engine and opened the throttle and the engine had moved only a short distance when the fireman said to stop, the accident occurring immediately and before he was able to act on this warning. Engineman Greaves stated that the last time he observed the fireman he was on his seatbox looking ahead; this was at the time he stopped the engine at the switch. He said Fireman Richardson was alert and performed his duties as an experienced fireman, and when they first started working a few signals were given on the fireman's side, but after that the signals were given direct to the engineman. After stopping at the switch he did not receive any signals other than when the fireman told him to back up and then to stop; he did not see the yardman give any signals and did not know there were any cars on the Garden lead at the time he started to make the back-up movement.

Engine Foreman Gill, of engine 1253, stated that he and Yardman Leeman rode in the cab on the return trip from Watsonville and Yardman Lofton rode on the rear footboard. He had told the men what work was to be done and how it was to be done, it being his intention to have the engine pass over switch 302 and back in upon track 221 via the Garden lead, to pick up a car. He knew that the engineman and yardman understood the movement that was to be made, but did not know whether the fireman understood it. Foreman Gill dropped off the engine at Horrigan road crossing and started toward track 221 to locate the car they were to pick up. He saw several cars go by on the Garden yard lead towards the train yard, and the herder asked him if his engine was into clear. He looked back but was unable to see on account of the rear headlight blinding him; his engine then started backing up and the collision occurred. He stated that he did not see any member of the switch crew working on the Garden lead, in the vicinity of his engine, nor did he see any signals given in the vicinity of switch 302 nor did he give any signals at any time. When he first saw the cars they were traveling about 6 miles per hour and were about 3 car lengths from his engine; he did not see anyone on the cars. Foreman Gill stated that although Fireman Richardson was an experienced fireman, he was not familiar with this terminal.

Yardman Leeman, of engine 1253, stated he got off the

engine just before it stopped at the switch; he walked toward the front of the engine, saw that the switch was lined against his engine and he gave the engineman a stop signal, the engine stopped about 6 or 7 feet from the switch. He intended to throw the switch and had just started across the track when Yardman Jennings, of engine 2644, came up and threw it, and from the expression on his face he knew that something was wrong. Yardman Leeman said he then stepped back on the engineman's side, expecting his engine to proceed through the switch, but instead it backed up. He did not give a back-up signal at any time, nor did he see Yardman Jennings give a back-up signal; neither did he see anyone else in the vicinity, and after his engine had backed a short distance he was able to see the cars just before the collision. Yardman Leeman stated the last thing Foreman Gill said to him was that they would back in on the rip track lead to pick up the car, and he figured that the fireman would not let them proceed to the switch if it were lined against them.

Yardman Lofton, of engine 1253, stated that he got off the engine in the vicinity of the road crossing, went over to his automobile, which was parked near the yard office, and was not in a position to know what happened just prior to the accident.

Yardman Jennings, of engine 2644, stated that Engine Foreman Wilson told him he was going to kick some cars from the Garden lead into track 105, and for him to watch the line-up into track 105. Yardman Jennings was on the Garden lead a short distance east of the switch leading to track 302 when he saw engine 1253 approaching on track 302 approximately 10 car lengths east of the road crossing; as it reached the crossing he figured it was not going to stop and he gave stop signals. By that time engine 2644 had kicked the cars out on the lead, and as engine 1253 approached he gave more stop signals and when the engine was within 3 or 4 car lengths of him he started giving emergency stop signals but the engine continued. Just as the engine stopped, with the cab about opposite him, he yelled to the fireman that cars were coming down the lead. The cars were then quite close and the fireman turned around and saw the cars and then said something to the engineman. The switch was then lined for the movement of the cars; he ran to the switch and threw it so engine 1253 could go through it, but instead the engine backed up. He stated that at no time did he give any back-up signals, the only signals he gave were stop signals as the engine was approaching, and before he threw the switch. At the time he threw the switch he saw Yardman Leeman across the track at the front of the engine, but he did not see him give any signals.

Engine Foreman Wilson, of engine 2644, stated that in making up a train on track 105 he was picking up cars in the Garden Yard and had just kicked 5 cars down the Garden lead

and then entered Garden yard track 6 to pick up 4 more cars when he saw engine 1253 approaching on track 302. He saw the engine foul the lead track, but knew that he had a yardman there to protect the cars. It was not his intention to kick these cars all the way into track 105, but to move them far enough to make room for one or two more cars. After he had kicked the cars down the lead he was unable to see Yardman Jennings and was unable to say what signals were given by him. He stated, however, that the cars were traveling at a speed of not more than 3 miles per hour at the time of the collision.

Yardman Nickell, who was working in the yard as herder at the time of the accident, stated that he was standing at Horrigan road crossing, near the roundhouse lead, between the Garden lead and track 302, when he saw engine 1253 approaching. A road engine shoving a caboose was also approaching from the roundhouse on the roundhouse lead and he stopped that engine to allow engine 1253 to clear. As engine 1253 passed he saw the fireman looking out of the window and he waved to him, and after Foreman Gill got off that engine he came over and stood beside him. He saw Yardman Jennings near switch 302 and when engine 1253 was about 50 feet beyond the road crossing he saw the yardman giving violent stop signals, but the engine continued and did not stop until it fouled the lead track; it then backed up, and he was of the impression from the exhaust that it was backing up at high speed. At the time he first saw the yardman giving stop signals the cars on the Garden lead were coasting along under the street lights, making no noise. He did not see any back-up signals at any time; the signals given by Yardman Jennings were stop signals, and he did not see anyone else in that vicinity.

Discussion

The rules provide that within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first-class trains. Second and inferior class trains, extra trains and engines must move with caution within yard limits. "With caution" is defined: "To run at reduced speed, according to conditions, prepared to stop short of a train, engine, car, misplaced switch, derail, or other obstruction, or before reaching a stop signal. Where circumstances require, train must be preceded by a flagman".

When Engineman Greaves found switch 302 lined against him he should have stopped clear of the Garden lead until the switch had been properly lined for the movement of his engine and he had ascertained that the route was clear. Instead, however, he fouled the lead track and waited for his yardman to throw the switch, and then on being told by his fireman to back up, he did so and his engine was struck by the cut of cars. The evidence clearly indicates that Yardman Jennings, of engine

2644, gave stop signals to the crew of engine 1253 when he saw that the engine was not going to stop clear of the switch. He stood on the left side of the track and therefore could not be seen by the engineman; he was, however, in plain view of the fireman. The fireman was in his proper position in the cab, looking ahead. Yardman Jennings, in addition to giving stop signals, called to the fireman when the cab was about opposite him and told him that cars were coming and then ran ahead and threw the switch so the engine could proceed and get out of the way. The fireman apparently did not realize the situation and told the engineman to back up. This was the first time the fireman had worked in this yard and the fact that he was not familiar with this terminal may account for his failure properly to grasp the situation and warn the engineman in time to have prevented the accident.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of engine 1253 to be stopped clear of the fouling point of a switch which was lined for a conflicting movement.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.