

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2793
THE UNION RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
THE ST. LOUIS - SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT MEMPHIS, TENN., ON
APRIL 21, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroads: Union : St. Louis - San Francisco
Date: April 21, 1944
Location: Memphis, Tenn.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: M. P. freight : S. L. - S. F. passenger
Train numbers: Extra 1413 West : Extra 976 East
Engine numbers: 1413 : 976
Consist: Auxiliary water : 8 cars
car, 54 cars,
caboose
Estimated speed: 6 m. p. h. : 12 m. p. h.
Operation: Yard rules : Timetable and train
orders; yard limits
Track: Single; tangent; : Double; tangent;
0.909 percent 0.909 percent
descending grade ascending grade
westward eastward
Weather: Clear
Time: 5:15 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 9 injured
Cause: Failure properly to control speed of
S. L. - S. F. train moving within
yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2793

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

THE UNION RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
THE ST. LOUIS - SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY

June 3, 1944.

Accident at Memphis, Tenn., on April 21, 1944, caused by
failure properly to control the speed of the S. L.-
S. F. train moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On April 21, 1944, there was a side collision between a freight train of the Missouri Pacific Railroad being operated on the line of the Union Railway and a St. Louis - San Francisco Railway passenger train at Memphis, Tenn., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of seven passengers and two employees.

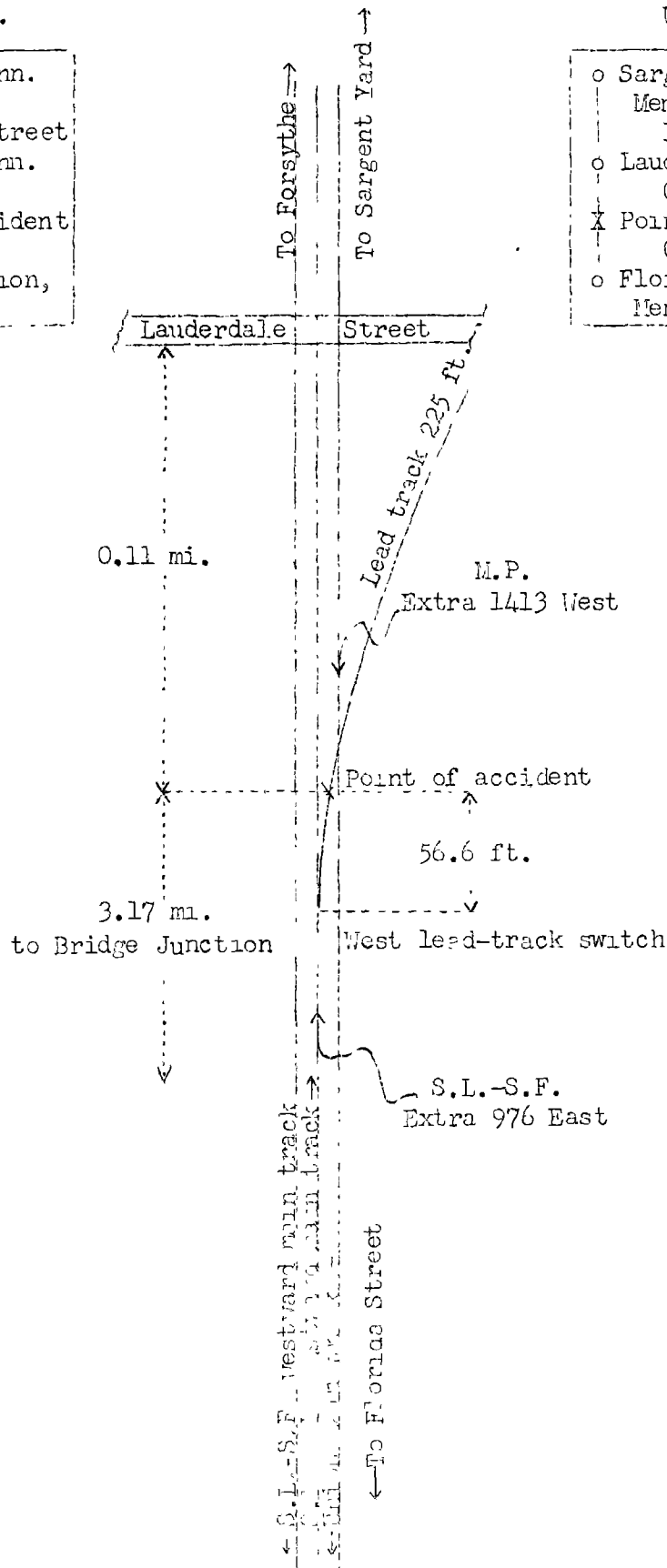
¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

S.L.-S.F.

Union

- o Forsythe, Tenn. 7.52 mi.
- o Lauderdale Street Memphis, Tenn. 0.11 mi.
- X Point of accident 3.17 mi.
- o Bridge Junction, Ark.

- o Sargent Yard, Memphis, Tenn. 1.53 mi.
- o Lauderdale Street 0.11 mi.
- X Point of accident 0.86 mi.
- o Florida Street, Memphis, Tenn.



Inv. No. 2793
 Union Railway
 and
 St. Louis - San Francisco Railway
 Memphis, Tenn.
 April 21, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the St. Louis - San Francisco Railway, hereinafter referred to as the S. L. - S. F., designated as the Memphis Terminal and extending eastward from Bridge Junction, Ark., to Forsythe, Tenn., 10.8 miles, and on that part of the Union Railway, hereinafter referred to as the Union, extending westward from Sargent Yard to Florida Street, Memphis, Tenn., 2.5 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident the S. L. - S. F. was a double-track line, within yard limits, over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. The Union was a single-track line, within yard limits, over which trains of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, hereinafter referred to as the M. P., were operated by yard rules. There was no block system in use on either line. In this vicinity the line of the Union paralleled the line of the S. L. - S. F. on the south. On the line of the S. L. - S. F., at a point 3.17 miles east of Bridge Junction and 0.11 mile west of Lauderdale Street, Memphis, a lead track 225 feet long connected the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track and several industry tracks. The west switch of the lead track was facing-point for east-bound movements from the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track to the industry tracks. The lead track intersected the line of the Union at an angle of $90^{\circ}32'$. The accident occurred on the turnout of the lead track 56.6 feet east of the west switch, at the fouling point of the lead track and the Union main track. The M. P. train was moving westward on the Union main track, and the S. L. - S. F. train was moving eastward on the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track. From the west the S. L. - S. F. main tracks were tangent throughout a considerable distance to the lead-track switch. From the east the Union main track was tangent throughout a considerable distance to the crossing. The grade on these tracks was 0.909 percent ascending eastward.

The switch-stand for the west switch of the lead track was on the north side of the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track, and was of the hand-throw, low-stand type. The switch-stand was provided with an oil lamp. No target was provided. When the switch was lined for movement on the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track, a green light was displayed, and when lined for movement on the lead track, a red light was displayed. The centers of the lenses were $14\text{-}\frac{3}{8}$ inches above the ties.

Operating rules of the S. L. - S. F. read in part as follows:

93. * * * Within yard limits the main track or tracks may be used, protecting against first-class trains. Second and inferior class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

104. * * *

When practicable, the engineman must see that the switches nearest the engine are properly set.

* * *

Description of Accident

Extra 1413 West, a west-bound M. P. freight train, consisting of engine 1413, 1 auxiliary water car, 54 cars and a caboose, was moving westward on the Union main track in the vicinity of the crossing at an estimated speed of 6 miles per hour when the twentieth car was struck by Extra 976 East.

Extra 976 East, an east-bound S. L. - S. F. passenger train, consisted of engine 976, headed westward, seven coaches and one baggage car, in the order named. The fifth, sixth and seventh cars were of all-steel construction and the remainder were of steel-underframe construction. While this train was moving eastward on the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track at an estimated speed of 12 miles per hour the engine entered the turnout of the lead track and struck Extra 1413 West.

The twentieth to twenty-second cars, inclusive, of Extra 1413 were slightly damaged. The twenty-third to twenty-fifth cars, inclusive, of Extra 1413 and the engine of Extra 976 were derailed and considerably damaged. The first car of Extra 976 was slightly damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:15 p. m.

The fireman of Extra 976 was killed. The engineer and the front brakeman of Extra 976 were injured.

Discussion

The rules of the S. L. - S. F. governing operation within yard limits provide that second-class and inferior-class trains and extra trains must be operated in such manner that they can be stopped short of a train, an obstruction or a switch not properly lined. All surviving employees concerned who attended the investigation so understood.

About 5:15 p. m., while M. P. Extra 1413 West was moving westward on the Union main track in the vicinity of the crossing, S. L. - S. F. Extra 976 East moved eastward from the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track to the lead track and struck the twentieth car of M. P. Extra 1413 West at the fouling point of the lead track and the Union main track.

The investigation disclosed that about 10 minutes prior to the occurrence of the accident the west switch of the lead track was used by a yard crew to move their engine eastward from the S. L. - S. F. eastward main track to the lead track and across the Union main track to an industry track. At the time of the accident, the west lead-track switch was lined for entry to the lead track, a switchman of the crew of the yard engine was stationed at the switch, and the yard engine was standing on the industry track a considerable distance east of the switch. The switchman said he was looking to the east and was not aware that Extra 976 East was approaching the switch until the accident occurred.

As Extra 976 East was approaching the west lead-track switch the speed was about 12 miles per hour. The fireman was tending the fire, and the front brakeman was occupying the seat on the left side of the engine. It could not be determined when these employees first became aware of anything being wrong, as the fireman was killed in the accident, and the front brakeman was injured to the extent that it was not possible to obtain a statement from him at the time of the investigation. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead. There was no condition of the engine that distracted his attention or obscured his view of the track ahead. He first saw the switchman in the vicinity of the switch about 2,800 feet distant. The switchman was in such position that the engineer of Extra 976 could not see the switch-stand. When his engine was about 40 feet west of the switch, the engineer observed that the switch was lined for entry to the lead track. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the engine entered the lead track and struck Extra 1413 before the brakes became effective. Under the rules, the speed of Extra 976 was required to be so controlled that it could be stopped short of the switch involved.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the S. L. - S. F. train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this third day of June, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.