INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN ACCIDENT ON THE WHEELING & LAKE ERIE RAILWAY AT CLEVELAND, OHIO, ON JULY 12, 1933.

September 1, 1933.

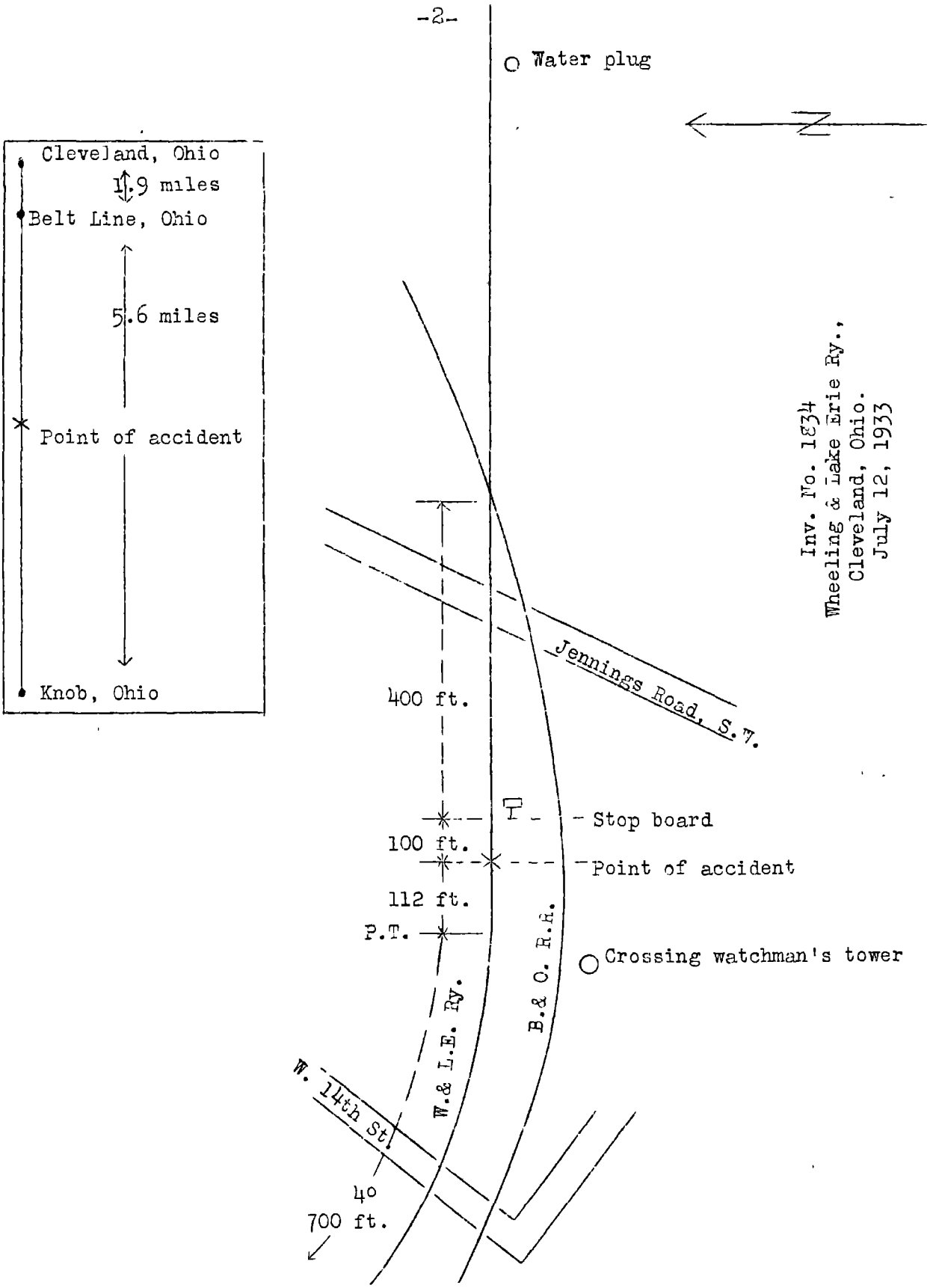
To the Commission:

On July 12, 1933, there was a rear-end collision between a W&LE yard drag and a CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train on the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway at Cleveland, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 2 employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with the Ohio Commission of Public Utilities.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Cleveland Division known as the Cleveland Belt Line, extending between Knob and Belt Line, Ohio, a distance of 5.6 miles; in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred within yard limits, between W. 14th St. and Jennings Road, S.W. at a point about 100 feet west of the stop board for the B&O crossing. Approaching this point from the west there is a 4° curve to the left about 700 feet in length, followed by more than 2,500 feet of tangent; the accident occurred on this tangent at a point about 112 feet east of its western end. The grade is generally descending for east-bound trains varying from level to 1.13 per cent and being 0.5 per cent at the point of accident.

The Cleveland Belt Line serves a number of industries and cars are interchanged between the CCC&StLRy, the NYCRR and the W&LERy. Rule 2 under Special Instructions contained in Time Table No. 14 requires that "when within yard limits, all trains must be run with great care and under control of the engineman so that he may at all times be able to stop within the range of his vision." Between Ridge Road, W. 73rd St., and the B&O crossing, a distance of 2.8 miles, within which territory this accident occurred, whenever the view of the rear end of a train is obstructed, either by a curve or other cause, the flagman is required to go back a sufficient distance to signal the engineman of an approaching train. A maximum speed limit of 30 miles per hour is prescribed.



Inv. No. 1834
Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry.,
Cleveland, Ohio.
July 12, 1933

Owing to an embankment and shrubbery on the north side of the track around the curve involved the view of the rear end of the W&LE yard drag at the point of accident was restricted to a distance of about 500 feet from the cab of the approaching CCC&StL engine involved.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:57 p.m.

Description

East-bound W&LE yard drag consisted of 31 empty and 2 loaded cars, hauled by W&LE engine 5110, and was in charge of Conductor Best and Engineman Treesh. This train left Knob at 2:35 p.m., according to the train sheet, stopped for the B&O crossing, and stopped again to take water, with the tender opposite a stand pipe located about 900 feet east of the crossing. The engine was not uncoupled from the train and the air brakes were not coupled up and in use on the cars; the rear end of the train stood about 500 feet west of the crossing or about 100 feet west of the B&O stop board. After standing at this point from 3 to 5 minutes and while difficulty was being experienced in removing the water spout of the stand pipe from the man hole of the tender the rear end of the train was struck by the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train.

East-bound CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train consisted of 10 empty and 62 loaded cars, hauled by CCC&StL engine 6065, and was in charge of Conductor Fox and Engineman Springer. This train left Knob at 2:36 p.m., according to the train sheet, 1 minute behind the W&LE yard drag, and on reaching a point just west of the stop board for the B&O crossing it collided with the rear end of that train while traveling at a speed variously estimated at from 4 to 30 miles per hour.

The twenty seventh to the thirty first cars in the W&LE yard drag were derailed; CCC&StL engine 6065 stopped with its tender opposite the B&O stop board and was only slightly damaged. The engineman of W&LE engine 5110, who was assisting the fireman in removing the water spout from the man hole of the tender when the collision occurred, was knocked backward off the tender and fell to the track between the tender and the first car, where he was run over and killed; the employees injured were the W&LE fireman and conductor.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Best, of the W&LE yard drag, stated that he told the head brakeman and the flagman that the CCC&StL puller would follow their train down the hill, but that he did not give this information to the engine crew. Before leaving Knob the air brakes were not coupled up on the 33 cars in the train as he said it was not the practice to couple them when the engine was ahead

of the cars coming down the hill. On departing from Knob, Conductor Best rode on the front end of the engine; the stop at the B&O crossing was of about 3 minutes duration, then the train pulled ahead and stopped again a short distance beyond with the tender opposite the water plug, to take water. Conductor Best got off the engine and Head Brakeman Smith, who had been riding on top of the tender, also got off; shortly afterwards they both got on the front end of the engine and they were there when the accident occurred. Conductor Best estimated that his train had been standing at this point about 6 or 7 minutes when the accident occurred, and Head Brakeman Smith estimated that it had been standing about 3 or 4 minutes. Conductor Best said that after the accident the straight air brake on his engine was found to be applied; the conductor had full confidence in Flagman West and depended upon him to afford proper rear end protection.

Fireman Moore stated that his engine stopped at the water plug as usual to take water and estimated that it had been standing there about 3 or 4 minutes when the accident occurred. After water was taken he could not get the water spout out of the manhole on the tender; a man he assumed to be the water man got up on the tank to help him remove the spout and then Engineman Treesh came back with the shaker bar to assist; while they were trying to remove the spout the accident occurred, the spout striking the engineman and the waterman and the engineman being knocked backward off the tender.

Flagman West, of the W&LE yard drag, stated that when his train made the second stop at the water plug he was on the rear car; he sat there about one minute, assuming that his train was going right out, but as it did not do so he started back to flag. He heard the CCC&StL puller engine sound the whistle as it was coming down the hill, and started running toward that train; he flagged it when it was around the curve about 15 to 18 car lengths distant but the train passed him at a speed he estimated to have been about 20 miles per hour, at which time he said he was about 50 feet east of W. 14th St., on the south side of the track. Flagman West said he did not know his engine was going to take water until he saw a man climbing upon the tank; his train had been standing at the water plug about 2½ or 3 minutes before the accident occurred. He did not remember whether the conductor had told him that the CCC&StL puller would follow them down the hill, but he knew that train had not gone down ahead of his own train. He fully understood the requirements of the flagging rules. He admitted that he did not go back a sufficient distance to insure full protection, giving as his reason that he expected the CCC&StL puller to stop for the B&O crossing and as the rear end of his own train was somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the stop board he thought the following train would be approaching at low speed.

Engineman Springer, of the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train, stated that the air brakes on his train had been tested and worked properly. At W. 73rd St. he reduced speed in order to give his flagman time to close the switches and get back on; he then released and permitted the train to attain a speed of about 10 miles per hour down the hill. He again reduced speed before passing the B&O depot, located about 4,800 feet west of the B&O stop board. Approaching W. 14th St. he sounded the whistle for the crossing and made a brake pipe reduction of 10 or 12 pounds and followed this by a second reduction making a total of 25 or 30 pounds for the regular stop at the crossing. When the engine rounded the curve, the fireman and head brakeman called a warning and when the engine got around the curve he saw the rear end of the train ahead and at about the same time he also saw the flagman of that train standing up against the cars; he immediately placed the brake valve in emergency position and jumped; at the time the accident occurred he estimated the speed to have been 4 or 5 miles per hour. Engineman Springer was thoroughly familiar with the location of the B&O crossing and said he had figured on stopping about 1 or 2 car lengths east of the B&O stop board, which is located about 400 feet west of the crossing; the State law requires trains to stop within 200 to 800 feet of crossings. Engineman Springer stated that he never had a time table covering this territory, and he did not think it necessary to have one for this short run. Engineman Springer thought he was operating under control and thought that had proper flag protection been afforded, which he expected to receive under the circumstances, the accident would have been averted. He said he had a heavy train and he did not remember of ever having been flagged at this point before. He had not received any information about the train on the hill ahead of him.

Fireman Cooper and Head Brakeman McComas practically corroborated the statements of Engineman Springer; they both thought proper flag protection was not afforded. Fireman Cooper estimated the speed of his train to have been about 5 or 6 miles per hour when he gave warning of the flag and the rear end of the train ahead. Head Brakeman McComas first saw the rear end of the train ahead when his own engine was about 7 car lengths from it, and at that time the flagman of that train was standing right at the rear of it; the speed of his train was between 5 and 10 miles per hour. He got off when about 4 car lengths from the train ahead, at which time the flagman of that train was still east of him.

Conductor Fox, of the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train, was riding on the fourteenth car in the train and was unaware of anything wrong until the accident occurred; approaching W. 14th St. he felt the air brakes apply, and estimated the speed to have been about 4 or 5 miles per hour just prior to the accident. He said that heretofore when an industrial engine preceded their

train down the hill it was customary for the dispatcher to inform him to be on the lookout for the train ahead, but that no such information was given to him by the dispatcher on this occasion.

Special Officer Collins, of the W&LERy, got off from the W&LE yard drag at W. 14th St. and waited about 7 or 8 minutes for the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train, it being his intention to board that train as it passed, but when it arrived it was traveling too fast for him to do so. He thought he could board a train at a speed of 30 miles per hour. When the train went by it did not seem to him that the air brakes were applied; the train seemed to be running freely, and the engineman was looking out of the window.

Crossing Watchman Ruskin, of the B&ORR, on duty in the tower located south of the B&O track and between W. 14th St. and Jennings Road, S.W., stated that when the W&LE yard drag stopped the second time with the rear car a short distance west of the B&O stop board he saw the flagman of that train sitting on top of the load of poles on the rear car. About 1 minute after the train stopped the flagman got down and started walking leisurely back along the path on the south side of the track and the crossing watchman paid no more attention to him until he heard the rumble of the approaching CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train, whereupon, he looked toward the west and saw that train about 12 car lengths west of the crossing and the flagman about opposite the first pole east of the crossing or about 7 rail lengths west of the rear end of the W&LE yard drag, in the act of pulling a flag from his hip pocket. When the transfer train passed over the crossing he noticed no grinding of the brakes and he estimated the speed to have been about 10 miles per hour when the accident occurred.

Subsequent to the accident a test was made of the air brakes of the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train and they were found to be in proper working order.

A vision test made after the accident disclosed that in order for the W&LE yard drag flagman to have offered proper rear end protection for his train as it stood with the rear car about 100 feet west of the B&O stop board, he should have gone back at least 200 feet west of W. 14th St. or approximately 550 feet west of the point where the accident occurred; the engine crew of the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train could then have obtained a view of him for a distance of more than 1,000 feet.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Springer, of the CCC&StL-NYC joint transfer train properly to control the speed of his train on the descending grade within yard limits, and by the failure of Flagman West, of the W&LE yard drag, to provide proper flag protection as required in this territory.

Under special instructions contained in the time table, trains in yard limits must be run with great care and under the control of the engineman so that he may at all times be able to stop within the range of vision, and whenever the view of the rear end of the train is obstructed the flagman is required to go back a sufficient distance to signal the engineman of an approaching train. Engineman Springer said that he had a heavy train and that he did not remember of ever having been flagged before at this point and that he had not received any information as to the train ahead. According to his statement, he intended to round the curve and then make a stop for the B&O crossing about 1 or 2 car lengths east of the B&O stop board; also, that he was expecting to be flagged and given a fair opportunity to stop his train if the occasion demanded it. When his fireman and head brakeman, who were on the inside of the curve, suddenly gave him warning of the flagman and the train ahead, he placed the brake valve in emergency position. The evidence is clear that he was approaching this point at a relatively high rate of speed and that although he had previously made a full-service application of the brakes he was unable to stop in time to avert the accident. Flagman West fully understood the flagging requirements in this territory, and there was ample time for him to have afforded proper protection but he apparently was expecting any following train to be running at low speed prepared to stop for the B&O stop board near which the rear end of his own train was standing.

The investigation also developed that the air brakes on the W&LE yard drag were not coupled up and in use, which was in violation of the Safety Appliance Acts. Engineman Springer was running in this territory without having a W&LE time table as required by the rules.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,
Director.