

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
YAZOO & MISSISSIPPI VALLEY RAILROAD
ILLINOIS CENTRAL SYSTEM

LAKE CORMORANT, MISS.

DECEMBER 6, 1937.

INVESTIGATION NO. 2232

SUMMARY

Inv-2232

Railroad: Yazoo & Mississippi Valley
Date: December 6, 1937.
Location: Lake Cormorant, Miss.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : freight
Train numbers: Extra 665 North : Extra 2007 South
Engine numbers: 665 : 2007
Consist: 26 cars, caboose : 78 cars, caboose
Speed: Backing up at
6 m.p.h. : 10 m.p.h.
Track: Tangent; slightly descending grade
for south-bound trains
Weather: Clear
Time: 7:35 p.m.
Casualties: 1 killed and 1 injured
Cause: Failure of Extra 2007 to be operated
under proper control within yard
limits.

January 11, 1938.

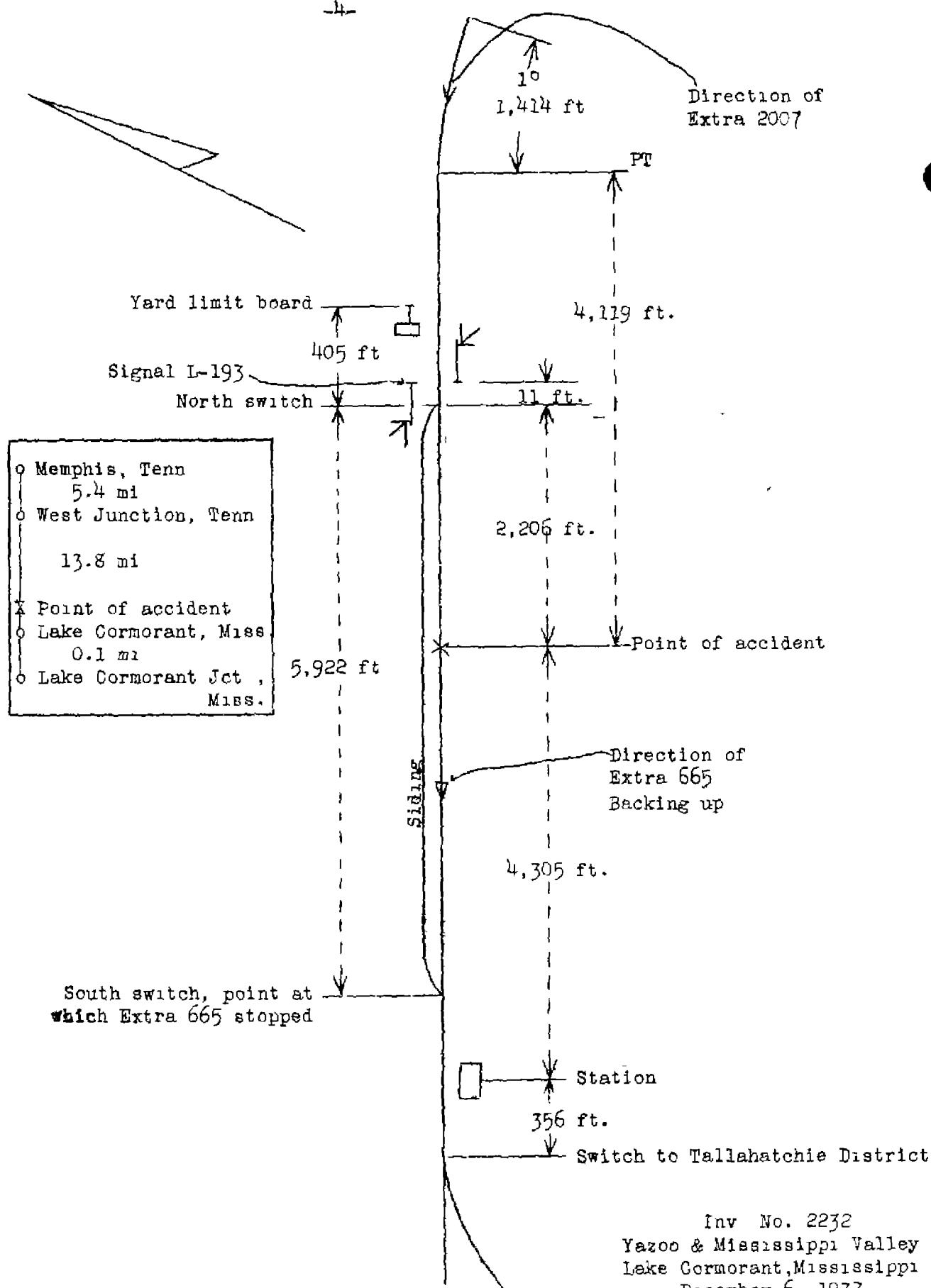
To the Commission:

On December 6, 1937, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad, Illinois Central System, at Lake Cormorant, Miss., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Clarksdale District of the Memphis Division which extends between West Junction, Tenn., and Lake Cormorant Jet., Miss., a distance of 13.9 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 an automatic block-signal system. A siding, 5,922 feet in length, parallels the main track on the west, the north switch being 6,511 feet north of the station at Lake Cormorant. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point 2,206 feet south of the north switch of the siding. Approaching this point from the north there is a 1° curve to the left 1,414 feet in length, followed by tangent track extending 4,119 feet to the point of accident, and 4,661 feet beyond, to Lake Cormorant Junction, located 356 feet south of the station at Lake Cormorant, where the Tallahatchie District converges with the Clarksdale District. The grade for south-bound trains is ascending from 0.105 to 0.265 percent for a distance of 1,500 feet, followed by descending grade ranging from 0.01 to 0.85 percent which extends 2,100 feet to the point of accident. From Lake Cormorant Junction the grade for north-bound trains is 0.0568 percent ascending to the point of accident.

The automatic block signals involved are signals L-175 and L-193, located 2.03 miles and 2,217 feet, respectively, north of the point of accident. These signals are of the 3-position, upper-quadrant, semaphore type, night indications being green, yellow and red, for "proceed", "proceed at medium speed prepared to stop at the next signal", and "stop; then proceed", respectively. Special instructions contained in the timetable provide that on single track between West Junction and Lake Cormorant Junction trains may pass "stop and proceed" signals without stopping, proceeding at restricted speed, not exceeding 15 miles per hour. The maximum authorized speed for freight trains of the character of Extras 685 and 2007 is 35 miles per hour.



- o Memphis, Tenn
5.4 mi
- o West Junction, Tenn
13.8 mi
- o Point of accident
- o Lake Cormorant, Miss
0.1 mi
- o Lake Cormorant Jct ,
Miss.

Inv No. 2232
 Yazoo & Mississippi Valley
 Lake Cormorant, Mississippi
 December 6, 1937

Rule 93 of the Transportation Rules provides in part that within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing the time of first class trains; second and third class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. In case of accident the responsibility rests with the approaching train. Under timetable rules, northward trains are superior by direction.

The yard-limit board is located 405 feet north of the north siding switch.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:35 p.m.

Description

North-bound freight train Extra 665 consisted of 26 cars and a caboose, hauled by I. C. engine 665, and was in charge of Conductor Bostwright and Engineman Roach. This train arrived at Lake Cormorant from the Tallahatchie District at 6:35 p.m., according to the train sheet, and when it was ready to depart from that place the crew received a copy of train order 94, Form 19, reading as follows:

Eng 2007 run extra West Jct to Gwin
via Tutwiler and has right over Ex
665 north Hulet to Lake Cormorant but
wait at Walls until 620 p.m. for Ex
665 north.

Between 7:10 and 7:17 p.m. this train started to move northward on the main track and was proceeding at a speed estimated to have been between 3 and 10 miles per hour when south-bound Extra 2007 was seen passing the north siding switch. Engine 665 was reversed and the train was moving backward at a speed estimated to have been about 6 miles per hour when it was struck by Extra 2007.

South-bound freight train Extra 2007 consisted of 78 cars and a caboose, hauled by I.C. engine 2007, and was in charge of Conductor Millsap and Engineman Lynch. The crew of this train had in its possession train order 94, Form 19, reading as follows:

Engine 2007 run extra West Jct to Gwin via
Tutwiler and has right over Extra 665 north Hulet
to Lake Cormorant but wait at Walls until 620 pm
for Extra 665 north. Extra 665 north gets this
order at Lake Cormorant. At 420 p.m. all over due
trains except No. 72 have arrived and departed at
West Jct. Hulet Lake Cormorant. Nos 33 and 312
have no signals through.

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appreciably at the time of the collision. However, it was apparent that an effort had been made to stop as he heard a warning sounded by the whistle of engine 2007, and the brakes on Extra 2007 were applied when that train stopped.

Head Brakeman Faust, of Extra 665, stated that he saw train order 94 and understood that Extra 2007 was to enter the siding. When the block-signal indication changed to red, the engineman closed the throttle and allowed the engine to drift. In a few minutes the fireman called a warning to get off, that the extra had passed the switch. Extra 2007 was not traveling at a high rate of speed; it stopped within two car lengths after striking his train. The headlight on engine 665 was burning brightly leaving the station and also at the time of the accident, but he was unable to say whether it had been dimmed in the interim; the headlight on engine 2007 was burning brightly. He had been operating on this local for two or three months and on previous occasions had received train orders similar to the one received on the day of the accident.

Conductor Boatwright, Middle Brakeman King and Flagman Bryant stated that they were not aware of the occurrence of the accident until after their train stopped; the back-up movement was made in the usual manner and they did not feel any impact. Train order 94 was not unusual, and similar orders wherein they had the right to proceed northward on the main track to the north siding switch had been received on previous occasions. Brakeman King further stated that an air-brake test was made before leaving Lambert, their initial terminal, and that the brake pipe of their train was intact after the accident. He thought that under Rule 93 Extra 2007 had authority to use the main track south of the north-siding-switch at Lake Cormorant.

Engineman Lynch, of Extra 2007, stated that the air brakes were tested before leaving their initial terminal and the brakes functioned satisfactorily when he made the brake application on approaching Lake Cormorant. He understood train order 94 clearly, and said that under its provisions he should have entered the north siding switch. He was operating his train at a speed of about 30 miles per hour approaching Lake Cormorant and rounding the curve north thereof, approximately 50 or 65 car lengths north of the switch, he made a 12-pound brake-pipe reduction but released the brakes when he did not see a train near the switch. He saw the red indication of the block signal, but inasmuch as he did not see the extra train he figured that it was down at the station, and passed the north siding switch at a speed of about 15 miles per hour. He did not see the opposing train until the headlight of that train was turned on, at which time it was about 150 feet distant. He immediately applied the air brakes in emergency and opened the sanders. He estimated the speed of his

train to have been about 10 miles per hour at the time of the collision, and thought that it stopped within 60 or 65 feet after striking the other train. The headlight on his engine was burning brightly and there was nothing to obstruct his view. He stated that he did not remember of having previously received an order giving him right to Lake Cormorant; usually right was conferred to Lake Cormorant Junction. He stated that he had sounded the meeting point whistle signal on approaching Lake Cormorant. The classification lamps on Extra 665 were not burning at the time of the collision.

Fireman Kinney, of Extra 2007, stated that he read the train orders and understood that their train should take the siding at Lake Cormorant for Extra 665. Although the order was discussed nothing was said about entering the siding, but on previous occasions with similar orders they had headed in at that point. Approaching Lake Cormorant his train was traveling at a speed of 23 or 25 miles per hour, and as they entered the tangent track and the red indication of the block-signal came into view the engineman made a service application of the air brakes. Fireman Kinney then started to work on the fire and when he thought they were close to the switch he looked out ahead; several seconds elapsed before he was able to ascertain his location and he then realized that they had passed the switch. The next instant he saw a headlight ahead and after he had called a warning, he stepped down to the deck and jumped off. As he did so he heard the air brakes being applied in emergency. At that time he thought the opposing train was about 10 or 12 car lengths distant and his own train was 30 or 35 car lengths south of the switch. Extra 665 was not displaying classification lights.

Head Brakeman Keller, of Extra 2007, stated that he read the train orders and understood that his train was required to enter the siding at Lake Cormorant for Extra 665. He observed the yellow indication of the signal north of Lake Cormorant. His train was traveling at a speed of 25 or 30 miles per hour when he saw the red indication of the block signal at the north siding-switch about 40 car lengths distant, and after its indication had been called by the fireman and himself, the engineman made a service application of the air brakes. He then got down from the brakeman's seat and went to the deck preparatory to getting off to open the switch. The speed was being reduced and he thought it was about 15 miles per hour when the fireman called a warning. He looked ahead from the gangway, and seeing the headlight of a train about 10 car lengths distant, he jumped off. At that time the speed was between 10 and 15 miles per hour.

Conductor Millsap, of Extra 2007, stated that he heard Engineman Lynch read train order 94 before leaving their initial terminal, and the engineman then remarked that they had right over Extra 665 to Lake Cormorant. Approaching Cormorant he felt an application of the air brakes, and after the train had traveled

about 15 or 20 car lengths and the speed had been reduced to about 15 miles per hour, they were released. This operation of the train brakes indicated to him that the engineman was going to head in on the siding. He knew that they were close to the switch, but from his location in the caboose he was unable to tell whether the engineman was heading in or not. He then felt an emergency application of the air brakes and the train stopped within a distance of four or five car lengths.

Train Dispatcher Page, who issued train order 94 to Extras 665 and 2007, stated that under this order Extra 2007 should have entered the north end of the siding at Lake Cormorant, inasmuch as there was a train on the main track at that point, but Rule 93 gave Extra 2007 authority to use the main track at that place provided the main track was clear.

Discussion

The evidence is to the effect that the engineman of Extra 2007 observed the red indication of the block signal located near the north siding-switch and reduced the speed of his train to about 15 miles per hour, but continued on the main track south of the switch when he did not see any obstruction. He did not see the opposing train until the headlight of that train was turned on only a short distance ahead of him. He then applied the air brakes in emergency and opened the sanders, and had reduced the speed of his train to about 10 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Under train order 94, Extra 2007 had right over Extra 665 to the north siding-switch at Lake Cormorant; the terms of this order were clearly understood by the crews of both trains. In view of the fact that Extra 665 was occupying the main track south of the north siding-switch, northbound trains being superior by direction, ~~Extra 2007 should have entered the siding at the north switch.~~ However, as the engineman of Extra 2007 did not see the opposing train he proceeded on the main track under authority of rule 93 and when he saw the opposing train he was unable to stop in time to prevent the accident.

Rule 17 provides that by night the headlight will be displayed to the front of every train occupying the main track; nevertheless the engineman of Extra 665 either turned off or dimmed his headlight after Extra 2007 was seen approaching, and the only explanation advanced of this action was that it was intended to afford the engineman of the south-bound train a better range of vision in approaching the switch; as the engineman of Extra 665 was killed in the accident his reason for dimming the headlight could not be definitely determined. After Extra 2007 had passed the north switch, the headlight was again turned on, the engine reversed and the train had started a back-up movement when it was

struck by Extra 2007. There is but little doubt that observance of Rule 17 would have enabled the engineman of Extra 2007 to see Extra 665 in time to prevent the accident. The engineman and fireman of Extra 2007 stated that the classification lamps on engine 665 were also unlighted. Had the classification lamps been lighted, the engineman of the opposing train might have seen them in time to avoid the accident.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of Extra 2007 to be operated under proper control within yard limits.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.