

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT ON THE YOUNGSTOWN & SUBURBAN RAILWAY NEAR
WOODWORTH, OHIO, ON MAY 20, 1933.

July 27, 1933.

To the Commission:

On May 20, 1933, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Youngstown & Suburban Railway near Woodworth, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 5 passengers and 1 employec.

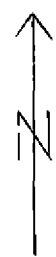
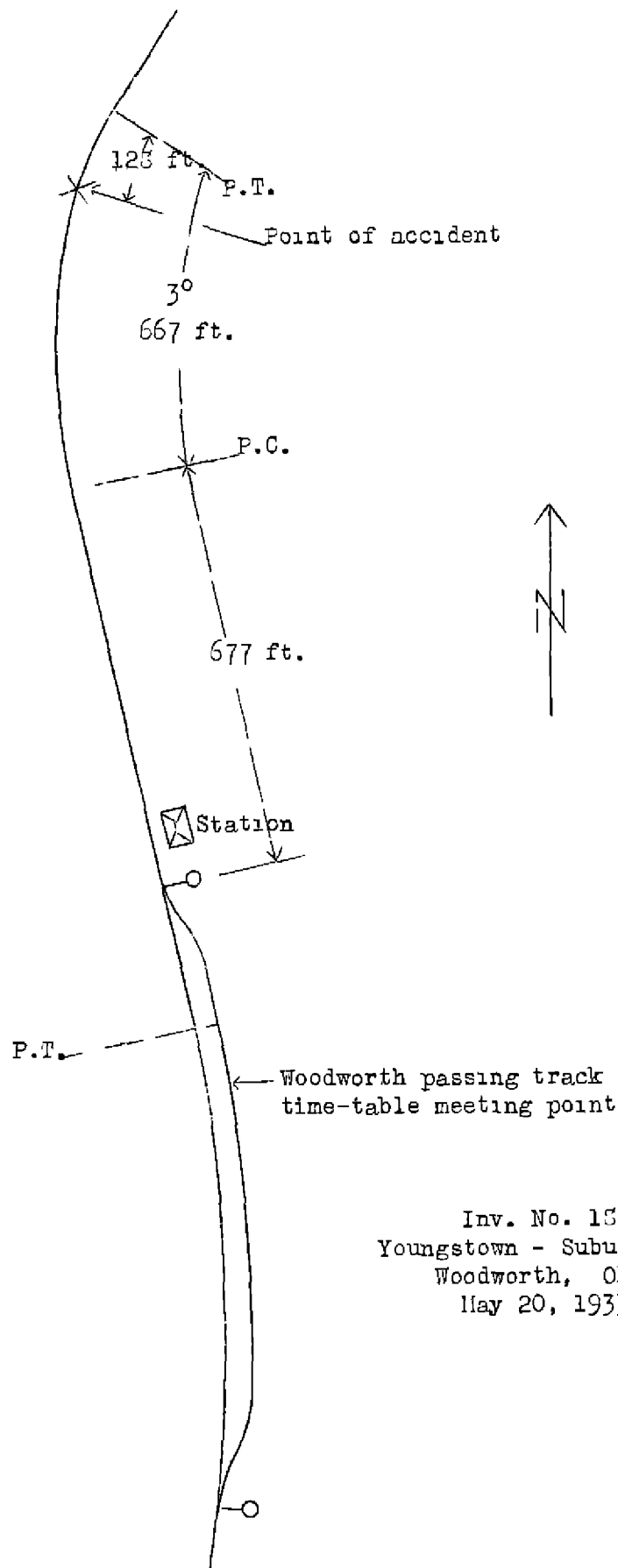
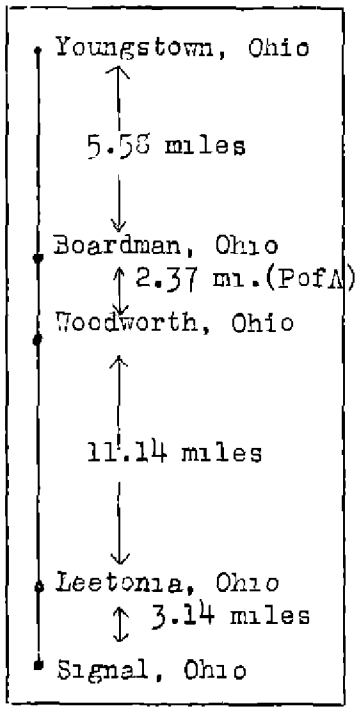
Location and method of operation

The Youngstown & Suburban Railway extends between Youngstown and Signal, Ohio, a distance of 22.23 miles, and is a single-track electric line over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point 1,216 feet north of the north switch of the passing track at Woodworth, approaching the point of accident from the south, beginning at the north switch, the track is tangent for a distance of 677 feet, and then there is a 3° curve to the right 667 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 539 feet from its southern end. Approaching from the north, the track is tangent for more than $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for north-bound trains is 0.86 percent descending.

The passing track at Woodworth is about 440 feet in length and parallels the main track on the east. Both switches are spring switches, the north switch is normally set for the movement of south-bound trains over the main track, while the south switch is normally set for the movement of north-bound trains through the passing track, and when in these positions the target on each switch stand displays a yellow indication, and when the switches are not set in normal position a red indication is displayed. The speed of trains is restricted to 5 miles per hour through spring switches.

The time-table provides that south-bound trains are superior to north-bound trains of the same class, meeting points are positive, and trains have no right to proceed until the opposing train has arrived, unless orders to that effect are received from the dispatcher.

On account of poles and shrubbery, the view across the inside of the curve is limited to about 450 feet.



Inv. No. 1327
 Youngstown - Suburban Ry.
 Woodworth, Ohio.
 May 20, 1933.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:59 p.m.

Description

North-bound passenger train no. 73 consisted of motor 302, of steel construction, and was in charge of Motorman-Conductor Irons. This train left Leetonia, the last open office, 11.14 miles south of Woodworth, at 6:30 p.m., according to the train sheet, on time, entered and proceeded through the passing track at Woodworth, the time-table meeting point with train no. 64, without stopping, both switches being in normal position, and on reaching a point 1,216 feet north of the north switch it collided with train no. 64 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 20 miles per hour.

South-bound passenger train no. 64 consisted of motor 300, of steel construction, and was in charge of Motorman-Conductor Heinbaugh. This train left Boardman, the last open office, 2.37 miles north of Woodworth, at 6:50 p.m., according to the train sheet, on time, made a stop at McClurg, 0.52 mile north of Woodworth, to discharge a passenger, and had proceeded about 1,600 feet when it collided with train no. 73 while traveling at a speed variously estimated by passengers to have been from 20 to 45 miles per hour.

Both cars had their vestibules crushed in for a distance of about 5 feet, but only the second pair of wheels in the forward truck of train no. 64 was derailed. The employee who died as a result of his injuries was the motorman-conductor of train no. 64.

Summary of evidence

Motorman-Conductor Irons, of train no. 73, stated that he was fully aware his train was scheduled to meet train no. 64 at Woodworth at 6:58 p.m., according to the time-table, but that on this particular trip he did not remember a thing that happened on arrival at that point about on schedule time. He could not recall his car having entered the passing track, and then heading out at the north switch, saying that he must have been in a daze, and that he did not realize there was anything wrong until a passenger shouted a warning of danger, when he saw the opposing train rounding the curve, from 20 to 40 feet distant; he thought he applied the air brakes in emergency and reversed the motor before the collision occurred, at which time he estimated the speed of his train to have been about 20 miles per hour. He did not know whether he had the power on, or if his car was coasting down grade just prior to the accident. Motorman-Conductor Irons further stated that he remembered the arrival of his car at Willowcrest, 1.01 miles south of Woodworth, having looked at his watch at this point and noticed that the train was on time, but he said that after leaving Willowcrest everything was a blank and that he must have dropped off temporarily, although he did not think that he went to sleep or that he had forgotten about the meet with train

no. 64. On previous occasions he had had dizzy spells, but he had never fainted as a result of them, and he attributed this condition to trouble with his back, saying that he was at present undergoing chiropractic treatment. He also stated that he was 37 years of age, had no particular trouble on his mind, had obtained a good rest at home with his family the night before the accident, and had not had anything intoxicating to drink. During the morning, prior to going on duty at 12 05 p.m., he and his two sons hauled two trailer loads of dirt with his automobile from a nearby dump to his garden, and although he had not been feeling well for 2 or 3 days prior to the accident, yet he felt that he was able to go to work.

Mr. Louis Mosko and Mr. Joseph Gallo were the only passengers on train no. 73 at the time of the accident, they boarded the car at Leetonia, 11.14 miles south of Woodworth, and rode in about the third or fourth seat from the front end of the car, on the left side. Mr. Gallo, who used the cars frequently, had known Motorman-Conductor Irons for the past 7 or 8 years, and said that when he boarded the car at Leetonia he noticed that the motorman-conductor was not in his usual good humor. Mr. Gallo knew where Woodworth was located and that the cars usually met there, on this occasion, however, the car only slowed down at that point and then kept on going, no stop being made. Shortly afterwards both Mr. Gallo and Mr. Mosko saw the opposing car, when only a short distance away, but it was then too late to avert the accident, Mr. Mosko also said that the motorman-conductor called out once just before the accident occurred.

Miss Lena Wittenauer, Miss Florence Lipp, and Mr. Dunver Speaker were the only passengers on train no. 64 at the time of the accident, they were seated at different locations in the car. Mr. Speaker estimated the speed of train no. 64 to have been about 45 miles per hour approaching Woodworth, none of these passengers was aware of anything wrong until the opposing car was seen rounding the curve, only a short distance away, and then the collision occurred. Miss Wittenauer and Miss Lipp estimated the speed of their car to have been about 20 miles per hour before the accident, and they thought that the motorman-conductor applied the air brakes just prior to the collision.

Dr. R. M. Gaver, chiropractor, stated that he treated Motorman-Conductor Irons on May 18, 1933, principally for a sprain in the sacroiliac region, due to a strain several weeks previously from lifting something; the entire back was in bad condition, although he did not think that it was causing any serious trouble. There was a little digestive disturbance, apparently due as much to what the motorman ate as to the condition of his stomach. Dr. Gaver made no blood-pressure record, because there was nothing to indicate that it was bad nor were there any heart symptoms or any epileptic condition. Mr. Irons had complained while in the office of drowsiness, but Dr. Gaver attributed this condition more to a slight stomach upset than to anything else and did not consider it to be serious. Dr. Gaver did not think that the back condition for which he was treating Mr. Irons would have caused him to lose

consciousness suddenly, nor did he think that the work of hauling dirt would have affected the back condition.

Dispatcher Mauch talked personally with Motorman-Conductor Irons in the office when the motorman-conductor came on duty at 12 05 p.m., and also talked with him several times over the telephone between that time and the time the dispatcher went off duty at 2:30 p.m., and at no time did he notice anything unusual, saying that the motorman-conductor appeared to be perfectly normal in every respect. Dispatcher Goteraba, who relieved Dispatcher Mauch, also talked with Motorman-Conductor Irons over the telephone prior to the accident, without noticing anything wrong with him, saying that he talked in his usual manner and that he did not say anything about not feeling well or being unable to work.

Both of the cars involved in this accident were equipped with a dead-man control, and it requires more pressure than just the weight of the hand and arm on the controller lever, or strict attention in keeping one foot on a slippery lever near the floor, in order to prevent the dead-man control from going into quick action, unless the car is standing and has the service brake fully applied.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Motorman-Conductor Irons, of train no. 73, to stop at the time-table meeting point with train no 64.

Motorman-Conductor Irons maintained that his mind was a total blank from the time his train left Willowcrest, 1.01 miles south of Woodworth, saying that he could not account for what happened, but that in some way he must have dropped off temporarily, he did not think he was asleep or that he was thinking of something else. Motorman-Conductor Irons had been taking treatment for a sprained back, but aside from this there was nothing to indicate that he was not in condition for duty, and apparently he operated his train through the switches at Woodworth in a reasonable manner and without any swaying of the car sufficient to attract the attention of his two passengers, and it would also appear that he was paying sufficient attention to his duties, perhaps unconsciously, to prevent the dead-man control from functioning so as to apply the brakes. Under all of these circumstances, no definite reason for his failure can be assigned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director.