

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT
WHICH OCCURRED ON THE ATLANTIC COAST
LINE RAILROAD AT ALBANY, GA., ON
DECEMBER 1, 1920.

March 3, 1921

On December 1, 1920, there was a side collision between a passenger train and a light engine on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad at Albany, Ga., which resulted in the death of 1 employe, and the injury of 4 passengers and 3 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

LOCATION.

This accident occurred on that part of the Waycross District extending between Waycross and Albany, Ga., a distance of 111.7 miles. Between Albany Junction, 1.8 miles south of Albany, and East Albany freight yard office, a distance of about 3,000 feet, trains are operated by a manual block-signal system. At Albany Junction the lines from Waycross and from Thomasville, Ga., converge. Near this point a telephone booth is located and the crews of all northbound trains are required to call up and get permission from the operator at the yard office before entering the block. Between the yard office and Albany passenger station, a distance of about 6,500 feet, within which territory this accident occurred, trains are operated by time-table and instructions covering the movements

of trains within yard limits. All northbound freight trains are put away in the East Albany Yard, the conductor and flagman are relieved of duty, the engine is cut off and the entire crew rides on the engine across the river to Albany.

From the North end of the East Albany freight yard there is a lead track on the left side of the main track, extending northward a distance of about 1,400 feet to a switch connecting it with the main line. The accident occurred in the vicinity of this switch, or about 2,250 feet south of the station at Albany. Approaching the point of accident from the south there is a tangent about 2,300 feet long, followed by a $1^{\circ} 57'$ curve to the right, 1,256 feet in length, and 650 feet of tangent to the point of accident. The grade is slightly descending for about 1 mile, at the point of accident it is about .6 per cent descending. The weather at the time was clear.

DESCRIPTION.

Northbound freight train extra 441, in charge of Conductor Joiner and Engineman Stanfield, entered the block at Albany Junction at 9.30 p. m. and cleared the block at the yard office at 9.40 p. m. The engine was detached from the train, and after picking up the train crew, proceeded on the lead track as far as the main line switch, fouled the main track, and was struck by northbound passenger train No. 74 at about 9.48 p. m.

Northbound passenger train No 74, enroute from Thomasville to Albany , consisted of a baggage car and two coaches, all of wooden construction, hauled by engine 213, and was in charge of Conductor Lewis and Engineman Wyche. This train left Thomasville at 7.30 p m., on time, entered the block at Albany Junction at 9.42 p. m., cleared the block at 9.47 p.m., and while running at a speed estimated to have been between 12 and 15 miles an hour collided with the side of engine 441 at the lead-track switch

Engine 441 was turned over to the left and engine 213 to the right, both engines being considerably damaged; the head end of the baggage car in train No. 74 was also derailed. The employee killed was a brakeman who had been riding on engine 441.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE.

Engineman Stanfield, in charge of engine 441, said that as his engine approached the switch, moving at a speed of about 4 miles an hour, he applied the independent brake with the intention of stopping at the usual point, but that the wheels skidded, allowing the engine to foul the main track before coming to a stop. He said he then released the brakes and reversed the engine but was unable to back the engine in time to avert the accident. Engineman Stanfield said that the brakes had been leaking and that although he had worked on them at two different points between Waycross and East Albany he had

not been able to make them operate satisfactorily, it being necessary for him to keep his hand on the brake valve all the time in order to keep the brakes from leaking on. Although Engineman Stanfield knew that train No. 74 was due, he had not looked back to see if it was coming, neither had he heard the whistle sounded by the engineman of that train. There was no conversation on the engine concerning train No. 74, but Engineman Stanfield said he had not forgotten it and that he did not have any intention of occupying the main track. He attributed the accident to wet rails, skidding wheels and the slow release of the brakes after he had brought the engine to a stop, being then unable to back the engine in time to prevent the accident.

In addition to the brakeman who was killed, there were five employees on the engine besides the engineman, these employees being the fireman, conductor, flagman, a machinist who was making a trip as a student fireman, and another fireman who was learning the road. Their statements indicated that the engineman had brought the engine to a stop and that he also had reversed it. The flagman verified the engineman's statement that the engine skidded after the brakes were applied, while the conductor and student fireman did not notice it. The conductor and student fireman also said that work had been done on the brakes, while the regular fireman said he had not noticed it but that it might have been done without

his knowledge. The statements of all of these employees indicated that stops or slow downs had been made after the engine was cut off from its train, the flagman said that the brakes seemed to be slow in releasing, but none of the other employees noticed anything out of the ordinary. All of them said they did not hear the engineman of train No. 74 sound any whistle signals, neither did they notice the approach of that train until just before the accident occurred.

While extra 441 was en route from Waycross to Albany, Student Fireman Barbre, who said he was an experienced machinist, assisted Engineman Stanfield in looking for leaks in the train line. A slight leak was found between the equalizing reservoir and the brake valve, and after repairing this the brakes seemed to work better. When another stop was made Student Fireman Barbre oiled the brake valve and as the brakes did not give full satisfaction he advised the engineman to have the brake valve and feed valve cleaned on arrival at Albany.

Engineman Wyche, of train No. 74, said that approaching the point of accident he sounded a road crossing whistle and reduced speed for a road crossing; after passing this crossing he noticed engine 441 about 1,000 feet distant and saw the brakeman get off the pilot and start toward the switch. Engineman Wyche continued to work steam, supposing that engine 441, which was still moving when he last looked at it, would stop clear of the main track. Fireman Leggings was sitting on

his seat box ringing the bell and at first thought engine 441 was standing. When he saw it begin to foul the main track he called to the engineman, who at that time had shut off steam, and the engineman at once applied the air brakes in emergency, the collision occurring almost immediately afterwards. Fireman Leggings thought engine 441 was still moving when the accident occurred. He verified the engineman's statement about reducing speed and sounding the whistle for the road crossing. Conductor Lewis and Baggage-master Folsom, of train No. 74, as well as Trainmaster Calhoun, who was riding in the baggage car, stated that they heard Engineman Wyche sound road crossing and station whistle signals.

CONCLUSIONS.

This accident was caused by the Failure of Engineman Stanfield, in charge of engine 441, to bring his engine to a stop before it fouled the main track.

While the evidence indicated that the air brakes on engine 441 were slow in releasing, there was nothing to indicate that there was any difficulty when applying them for the purpose of bringing the engine to a stop; in fact, the statements of the employees indicate that they worked properly under such conditions.

Engineman Stanfield had had 3 years' experience as an engineman, previous to which he had had 5 years' experience as a fireman on this and other railroads; his record was good. At the time of the accident the crew of engine 441 had been on duty about 7 hours, after about 15 hours off duty.