

July 8, 1912

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COLLISION ON THE CHESAPEAKE & OHIO RAILWAY AT
SILVER GROVE, KENTUCKY, JUNE 8, 1912.

On June 8, 1912, there was a rear-end collision between two light engines in the freight yard of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway at Silver Grove, which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of five other employees. This accident was reported by telegraph on the date of its occurrence, and after investigation the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

The Silver Grove yard is a new one. It is about two miles long and is the terminal for all freight trains. The roundhouse is located about three-quarters of a mile from the eastern end of the yard. On the date in question engine No. 195 was standing outside of the roundhouse headed east on the track known as the east-bound ready track. Nearly a half mile from the roundhouse this track unites with the track leading from the east-bound freight yard, which in turn joins the regular east-bound main line at a point about 2,000 feet beyond.

On the day in question Machinists Houston and Pope together with their helpers quit work at 5 a. m., and took possession of engine No. 195, and started for the eastern

end of the yard. At this time a second light engine, No. 552, was standing on the other end of this track, at its junction with the track leading from the east-bound freight yard. This second light engine had backed in on this track in order to allow an east-bound freight train to pull out. After being started by Machinist Houston, engine No. 195 increased its speed until it collided with the tender of engine No. 552. Neither engine was derailed.

At the time the machinists and their helpers mounted the engine, Russell Belaw, employed as a steam keeper, was attending to the fire. He stated that Machinists Houston and Pope together with Helper Burges, mounted the engine, while Helper Kershaw mounted the rear foot-board of the tank. Without saying anything to him, Machinist Houston took the engineman's seat, while Machinist Pope mounted the fireman's seat. Houston at once started the engine forward and made no attempt to check its speed until within a short distance of engine No. 552. He then made an emergency application of the air brakes but did not shut off steam, the throttle remaining open until closed after the collision. Steam Keeper Belaw estimated the speed to have been 30 miles per hour at the time of collision. He stated that he said nothing to the men about taking the engine on account of the position held by Machinist Houston, who occasionally acted as Assistant Roundhouse Foreman. He further stated that none

of the employees was drunk, and that he heard them say nothing as to where they intended to go.

Helper Berges stated that he saw the two machinists boarding the engine and thought they were going to take a "joy ride." He concluded to go along, and after mounting the engine found that they were going to the east end of the yard in order to get some daisies growing in a neighboring field. He did not see engine No. 552 until very close to it, and at once jumped. He stated that the men were off duty at the time and had no orders or duties to perform which necessitated the use of this engine. He did not know whether or not the speed had been checked when he jumped.

Helper Kershaw stated that it had often been the custom to go to the east end of the yard after stopping work in order to get flowers. Usually the men walked, but on one previous occasion they had ridden an engine. He saw the engine starting out and was invited to join the party. He mounted the rear of the tank, where he remained until after the collision. He corroborated the statement of Helper Berges that the men had no duties to perform. He did not think that the speed, which had been about 30 miles per hour, was checked before the collision.

The engineman of another engine on an adjoining track stated that he saw engine No. 195, but paid no attention to it until it was close enough for him to see that it was running at an unusually high rate of speed. Thinking that it would collide with engine No. 552 he whistled them down twice, but

no attention was paid to his signals. He stated that the driving wheels of engine No. 195 were still revolving after the collision and that he sent his fireman down to close the throttle.

After the collision the brake valve of engine No. 195 was found to be in the emergency position. The fact that the driving wheels were revolving with the brake valve in this position indicates that there was no air, due either to the pump not having been started or not having been started in time to charge the reservoirs to their full capacity.

Machinists Pope and Houston were killed as a result of the collision.

This accident was due to Machinists Houston and Pope taking possession of engine No. 195 and running it to the eastern end of the yard without authority. It appears, however, that it is not an uncommon thing for engines to be operated in and about this yard by persons who have no authority to do so. If the general foreman and night round-house foreman have no knowledge whatever of the occurrences, then the supervision exercised by them over their subordinates is very lax. On the other hand, if they were aware of these practices, they should have taken such steps in the matter as would have prevented the occurrence of an accident of this character.