

INV. No. 332

Feb. 18, 1916.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD NEAR  
MASCOT, NEBR., JANUARY 24, 1916.

On January 24, 1916, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad near Mascot, Nebr., which resulted in the death of five employees and the injury of six passengers, one person carried under contract, and four employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Westbound passenger train No. 7 consisted of one combination mail and baggage car and two coaches, all of wooden construction, hauled by locomotive 2539, and was in charge of Conductor Bell and Engineman Duffy. This train left Lincoln, Nebr., en route to Oxford, Nebr., at 7:00 a.m., on time, passed Atlanta, the last open telegraph station, 4.9 miles east of the point of accident, at 12:45 p.m., two minutes late, and at 12:53 p.m. collided with eastbound local extra No. 2043, while running at a speed of about 45 miles an hour.

Eastbound extra No. 2043, a local freight train, consisted of four loaded cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 2043, and was in charge of Conductor Brooks and Engineman Eckman. It left McCook, Nebr., at 7:00 a.m., en route to Hastings, Nebr., passed Mascot, the last open telegraph station west of the point of accident, at 12:45 p.m., and collided with train No. 7 while running at a speed of about 35 miles an hour.

The McCook Division of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, on which this accident occurred, is a single track line extending from McCook, Nebr., to Hastings, Nebr., a distance of 131 miles. Train movements are governed by train orders and timetable rights. Certain parts of this division are equipped with automatic block signals, but there are none between Mascot and Atlanta, where this accident occurred. In this territory a telegraphic block system is in operation, which provides protection for following movements only.

A proaching the point of accident from the east, the track is tangent for a distance of 4,200 feet, followed by a two-degree curve to the left approximately 2,500 feet in length, then a tangent of about 2,200 feet. The eastern end of the curve is in a cut about 1,500 feet in length, varying in depth from 10 to 25 feet, the depth being the greater on the inside of the curve. The range of vision of engineers in this cut is approximately 600 feet. The collision occurred on the curve at a point about 930 feet from the eastern end of the cut, at which point there is a descending grade of .3 percent for westbound trains. The weather at the time of the accident was cloudy.

The engineer and fireman of train No. 7, and the engineer, fireman and head brakeman of extra 3043, were killed in the collision.

Conductor Bell, of train No. 7, stated that at Holdrege, the first station east of Atlanta, he had received a message that the telegraph office at Atlanta would be closed until 1:00 p.m. However, when his train reached that point at about 12:46 p.m.

he noticed that the operator was on duty and that the signal board at the station was in the clear position. When his train was leaving Atlanta, at 12:48 p.m., he asked the operator whether everything was all right, the latter replying that it was. He stated that he was in the front coach of the train when the collision occurred, without warning, at about 12:55 p.m. Conductor Bell further stated that after the collision he asked the two rear brakemen of extra 2043 whether they had any orders against his train, and was told that they did not, and that the collision was due entirely to the fact that they and the remainder of the crew of their train had completely forgotten train No. 7.

Conductor Brooks, of extra 2043, stated that, according to his watch, his train left Oxford at about 12:15 p.m., and on approaching Mascot the engineman whistled for the station, received a clear signal, and he instructed one of the two brakemen who were with him in the caboose to give the engineman a proceed signal, his train passing Mascot at a speed estimated by him to have been about 20 miles an hour, increasing after leaving that point to about 35 miles an hour at the time of collision, this being the maximum speed allowed second-class trains. He stated that at the time of the accident he was at his desk working on his reports, and after he had gotten out of the caboose to go back and protect his train he looked at his watch and it was 12:42 or 12:43 p.m. He stated that when he compared his watch with that of the Superintendent after the accident, he discovered that his watch had lost ten minutes since leaving McCoek at 7:00 a.m. on the day of the accident, at which time he compared watches with his engineman, there being at that time a difference of 3 or 4

seconds between their watches. He further stated that he could not understand the loss of time by his watch, that it had been examined two weeks before the accident, and that he had had it registered on the prescribed form in the dispatcher's office at 6:30 a.m. on the day of the accident, but that on this trip he had not compared watches with any of the crew who were with him in the caboose. Conductor Brooks stated that he did not at any time consult with his crew relative to meeting train No. 7, although it had been customary to meet that train every day, usually at Oxford. He stated that he did not refer to the time-table or think of a meeting point with train No. 7, although he knew that train was scheduled to leave Atlanta at 12:45 p.m., and despite the fact that he was familiar with the rule requiring inferior trains to clear superior trains at meeting points by five minutes. He stated that he did not know why he had not done so, and that the accident was due entirely to the fact that he and the remainder of his crew completely overlooked train No. 7. Conductor Brooks stated that the fact that his watch was ten minutes slow had not, however, contributed in any way to the accident.

Rear Brakemen Neubauer and Sentence, who, together with Conductor Brooks, were the only survivors of the crew of extra 2043, both of whom were qualified conductors, and who were riding in the caboose with Conductor Brooks at the time of the accident, corroborated the latter's statements, both saying that they had entirely forgotten train No. 7.

Train Dispatcher Gaseh, for the district between McCook and Hastings, stated that he expected extra 2043 to take the

siding at Mascot, and for that reason, just prior to the time the operator at Mascot reported extra 2043 as having passed that place, he gave the operator at Atlanta the block for train No. 7. When at 12:45 p.m. the operator at Mascot reported to him that extra 2043 had passed that station he at once realized that that train would be unable to reach Atlanta in time to clear train No. 7. He stated that he immediately began to call the operator at Atlanta in an effort to have him hold train No. 7 at that place until the arrival of extra 2043, but that the operator was evidently busy with train No. 7, which was then at Atlanta, and did not reply until 12:50 p.m., at which time he started to report the departure of train No. 7. Dispatcher Gaseh stated that he immediately interrupted him and asked him whether he could stop train No. 7, but was informed that that train had gone. He further stated that there was no rule providing for a block for opposing trains, and that the movement of extra 2043 was governed by time-table rights and train schedules, that train, under the operating rules, being required to clear train No. 7 by 5 minutes.

Rule 86, of the operating rules of this railroad reads as follows:

"An inferior train must keep out of the way of a superior train."

Rule 89 reads in part as follows:

"At meeting points between trains of different classes the inferior train must take the siding and clear the superior train at least five minutes, and must pull into the siding when practicable."

This accident was caused by extra 2043 occupying the main track on the time of train No. 7, a superior train, for

which Conductor Brooks and Engineman Eekman, of extra 2043, were directly responsible, both evidently having overlooked train No. 7, the former admitting that he had done so.

Rear Brakemen Neubauser and Sentance, both qualified conductors, also entirely overlooked train No. 7. In view of the fact that these employees were promoted men, qualified to take charge of trains, it seems unexplainable that they should have been so neglectful of the safety of their train as to have failed to consult their watches and the time-card in order to know definitely that their train had a right to the track it was occupying, and both are at fault for this neglect of duty.

Engineman Eekman was employed by this company as helper, July 7, 1900, and was promoted to engineman November 11, 1903. Conductor Brooks was employed August 30, 1897, as brakeman, being promoted to conductor December 3, 1903. Rear Brakeman Sentance entered the service of this company September 17, 1902, as brakeman, and was promoted to conductor June 20, 1909. Rear Brakeman Neubauser entered the service August 15, 1900, as brakeman, and was promoted to conductor June 5, 1909.

At the time of the accident the employees involved had been on duty 6 hours 23 minutes.