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INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD AT WYANET, ILL.,
ON AUGUST 22, 1926.

September 27, 1926.

To the Commission:

On August 22, 1926, there was a derailment of a freight train on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad at Wyanet, Ill., resulting in the death of seven trespassers and the injury of four trespassers.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Aurora Division, Illinois District, extending between Aurora and Galesburg, Ill., a distance of 124.6 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred near the west switch of the eastbound passing track at Wyanet, approaching the point of accident from the west the track is tangent for nearly 1 mile, while the grade is undulating, being practically level at the point of derailment. The track is laid with 100-pound rails, 33 feet in length, tie-plated, and ballasted with crushed gravel, the track is well-maintained.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 10.57 a.m.

Description

Eastbound freight train No. 70 consisted of 55 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 4953, and was in charge of Conductor Weidenhamer and Engineman Mohlenhoff. This train passed Buda, the last open office, 5.9 miles west

of Wyandot, at 10.44 a.m., according to the train sheet, and while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 30 miles an hour the 35th car in the train, a tank car, GATX 20072, was derailed near the west switch of the eastbound passing track.

Thirteen cars in all were derailed, four of them being demolished, only one car ahead of GATX 20072 was derailed and it was not badly damaged. The trespassers killed and injured were riding on the tank car.

Summary of evidence

Examination of the track disclosed the first marks to be on the crossing planks of Locust Street, located just west of the switch, these marks being on the outside of the south rail near the switch, continuing for a short distance beyond the switch to the point at which the derailment occurred, the marks apparently were made by column bolts striking the crossing planks and ties. Inspection of tank car GATX 20072 disclosed that the bottom arch bar on the right side of the forward truck was broken just back of the journal box. An old flaw, which covered about one-fifth of the cross-sectional area of the arch bar, was plainly visible from the under side, but could not have been detected by ordinary inspection with the truck in normal position. The column bolts bore evidence of having scraped the ties and crossing planks.

None of the members of the crew was aware of anything wrong prior to the accident, at which time the air brakes applied in emergency, due to the derailment; they estimated the speed of their train to have been about 30 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Car Foreman Gustafson and Derrick Foreman Johnson inspected the derailed cars after the accident and they were of the opinion that the accident was caused by the broken arch bar on the tank car; also, that the arch bar broke as a result of the old flaw in the metal. Car Foreman Gustafson further stated that he found no evidence of hot boxes, hot wheels, or other defects that could have caused or contributed to the accident, and

Derrick Foreman Johnson was of the opinion that when the arch bar broke the body strap sagged and permitted the column bolts to strike the tics.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by a broken arch bar.

All of the employees involved were experienced men. At the time of the accident they had been on duty less than 3 hours, prior to which they had been off duty more than 24 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.