

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD
AT WEST LIBERTY, OHIO, ON NOVEMBER 25, 1920.

February 23, 1921.

On November 25, 1920, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad at West Liberty, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of 5 employees, 1 express messenger, and 20 passengers. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

This accident occurred on that part of the Cincinnati-Sandusky Division which extends between Cincinnati and Bellefontaine, Ohio, a distance of 156.8 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. Approaching the point of accident from the west there is a tangent 4,200 feet in length, followed by a curve to the left 2,000 feet in length, the maximum curvature of which is $2^{\circ} 50'$; this curve extends about 50 feet beyond the point of accident, at which point the curvature is $1^{\circ} 5'$. The grade is approximately 24 per cent ascending for eastbound trains. Beginning 400 feet east of the western end of this curve, and extending eastward for approximately 4,100 feet, there is a passing track located to the left of the main track, known as the westward passing track. There is a crossover located about 1,200 feet east of its western end and west-

bound trains using this as a passing track are required to return to the main track through this crossover inasmuch as the western end of the passing track is used for station and team-track work. The view of the west crossover switch from an eastbound train was limited to about 450 feet by a building on the inside of the curve and by cars standing on the passing track west of the crossover. The accident occurred on this passing track, about 300 feet east of the west crossover switch, or about 600 feet east of the station. At the time of the accident the weather was cloudy.

Westbound freight train extra 6147, consisting of engine 6147, 47 cars and a caboose, in charge of Conductor Weber and Engineman Drake, left Gest Yard, Bellefontaine, at 2.45 p.m., with several train orders, one of which provided for meeting train No. 10 at West Liberty. Extra 6147 entered the passing track at West Liberty and was clear of the main track at about 3.04 p.m.; at about 3.21 p.m., while standing at this point, with its engine approximately 300 feet east of the west crossover switch, it was struck by train No. 10, that train having entered the passing track at the crossover switch which was open.

Eastbound passenger train No. 10, known as the Ohio Special, en route from Cincinnati to Toledo, Ohio, consisted of engine 6469, 1 wooden express car, 1 steel-underframe combination car, 3 steel coaches, 1 steel-underframe chair car, and 1 wooden dining car, in the order named, and was in charge of Conductor Costello and Engineman Collins. At

Springfield, Ohio, the crew of this train received a copy of the train order providing for a meet with extra 6147 at West Liberty. Train No. 10 passed Lippencotts, the last open telegraph office, 4.1 miles west of the point of accident, at 3.16 p.m., 9 minutes late, and at about 3.21 p.m., while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 40 miles an hour, ran into the open switch at the west end of the crossover at West Liberty and collided with extra 6147.

Engine 6147 was derailed but remained upright, its tender being pushed through the first box car in its train. Engine 6469 turned over on its left side against the bank on the inside of the curve. The first car in the passenger train was destroyed the wreckage coming to rest on the outside of the curve, about 300 feet beyond the engine, with the second car directly behind it; the third car remained upright, across the main track, with its rear end resting against the front ends of the engines. The fourth car was partly derailed and its forward truck damaged.

After extra 6147 had gotten into clear, this fact was reported to the operator from the telephone booth at the eastern end of the siding and Operator Newcomb obtained the block for train No. 10 from the next block station to the east. Conductor Weber and Head Brakeman Johnson went to the office at the station, and after they had reached there the operator reported train No. 10 as having passed Lippencotts; the head brakeman did not hear this, but he afterwards said he understood it to be the case. Conductor Weber then

told Head Brakeman Johnson that they would take the engine to the eastward siding, which is west of the station and see that work could be done prior to the arrival of trains Nos. 3 and 126; according to Head Brakeman Johnson the instructions were that they would be there for trains Nos. 10 and 126 and for him to get ready to go to the eastward siding. He assumed that the conductor meant he should throw the crossover switch and cut off the engine immediately, and therefore left the office, without asking any questions, opened the switch, and was on his way to cut off the engines when he heard the whistle sounded by the engineer of train No. 10. Head Brakeman Johnson said he then called to the men on engine 6147 and ran toward the open switch, getting to within 4 or 5 feet of it when the engine of train No. 10 started through it. Head Brakeman Johnson had seen the order for his train to meet train No. 10 at West Liberty and knew it was in the siding for that purpose. He said he was not thinking about anything outside of his work and that he had misunderstood the conductor's instructions.

The statements of Conductor Weber and Operator Newcomb indicate that Head Brakeman Johnson was in the office when train No. 10 was reported as passing Lippencotts and the operator said he was sure that Head Brakeman Johnson heard all that was said. According to the operator, when he reported train No. 10, Conductor Weber said that after it had passed they would go to the eastward siding and do their

work ahead of trains Nos. 3 and 126. After Head Brakeman Johnson left the office Conductor Weber straightened out his bills, then went into the waiting room and looked out of the window, at which time he saw that the switch had been opened; he at once called to the operator, who said he saw Head Brakeman Johnson running toward the switch. The statements of both the conductor and operator indicate that the engine of train No. 10 was passing the office at about this time and the operator said that although he immediately displayed the stop indication of the block signal he thought it was too late for the engineman to see it. Both of these employees thought the brakes on train No 10 were applied at about the time the engine passed the station.

The engine crew of extra 6147 were making some repairs on the engine at the time of the accident; the fireman heard the head brakeman call out, but did not hear what he said, and neither he nor the engineman knew that the switch had been opened.

Engineman Collins of train No. 10 said that before reaching the curve he reduced the speed from about 65 miles an hour to about 40 miles an hour. He received clear signal indications but had a new fireman, and said that in view of the order he held to meet extra 6147 at West Liberty he stepped across to the left side of the cab in order to see the switch. On seeing that it was open he immediately returned to the right side of the engine and

applied the air brakes in emergency. He thought the engine had entered the crossover switch by the time the brakes took hold.

This accident was caused by the west crossover switch being opened as train No. 10 was approaching, for which Head Brakeman Johnson of extra 6147 is responsible.

Head Brakeman Johnson knew that his train was on the passing track for the purpose of meeting train No. 10, as required by train order, but thought the instructions he had received from the conductor meant that he should open the switch and cut off the engine immediately. He acknowledged his responsibility for the accident.

Head Brakeman Johnson entered the service of this railroad as brakeman in 1918 and had a clear record, he had had several years previous experience as a brakeman and fireman. At the time of the accident he had been on duty about 2 hours after having been off duty about 13 hours.