

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
LINE OF THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON COMPANY NEAR HUDSON  
FALLS, N. Y., ON JULY 4, 1929

October 18, 1929.

To the Commission:

On July 4, 1929, there was a head-end collision between an extra passenger train and a freight train on the line of the Delaware and Hudson Company near Hudson Falls, N. Y., which resulted in the injury of two employees

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the main line of the Lake George Branch of the Saratoga Division, which extends between Lake George and Fort Edward, N. Y., a distance of 14.5 miles. This is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. The point of accident is 3,368.5 feet north of the station at Hudson Falls, which in turn is located 2.4 miles north of Fort Edward and within yard limits, which extend from a point  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Fort Edward to a point 7 miles north thereof. Approaching the point of accident from the south there is a series of short curves and tangents, followed by an  $8^{\circ}$  curve to the left 440 feet in length, tangent track for a distance of 545 feet, and then a  $5^{\circ} 30'$  curve to the left 502 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 259 feet from its southern end. Approaching from the north there is a series of curves and tangents, followed by a  $4^{\circ}$  curve to the left, 355 feet in length, tangent track for a distance of 65 feet, and then the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.25 per cent ascending for north-bound trains at the point of accident.

The signals involved are of the three-position, upper quadrant, normal-danger, semaphore type, signal indications being red, yellow and green. Signals 57.3 and 59.2 governing north and southbound movements respectively, are located 4,010 feet south and 3,765 feet north of the point of accident.

Due to the curvature of the track in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view had by crews of northbound trains is restricted to about 100 feet on the right or east side of the track, while on the left or west side the view is restricted by a house and trees on the inside of the curve to a distance of about 200 feet. The view had by crews of southbound trains is unobstructed for approximately 600 feet north of the house and trees mentioned above.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident which occurred at about 9:50 a. m.

#### Description

Southbound passenger extra 507 consisted of two coaches and a baggage car, hauled by engine 507, and was in charge of Conductor Jones and Engineman Root. This train departed from Lake George at 9 16 a.m. and after taking water at Glens Falls, 3.1 miles north of Hudson Falls, left that point at 9 45 a. m., stopped at signal 59.2, which was displaying a stop indication, and then proceeded at a speed estimated to have been from 6 to 8 miles per hour and had practically come to a stop when it was struck by the opposing freight train.

The northbound freight train was being operated as a yard movement and consisted of engine 751, 23 loaded freight cars, a caboose, engine 728, and 3 loaded freight cars, in the order named. Engine 751 was the helper engine on this run and was in charge of Engineman Wagstaff, Yard Conductor Stacavich, and Flagman H. J. Mercier. Engine 728 was in charge of the regular crew, Engineman Davis and Conductor Scott, the latter being in the caboose. This train departed from Fort Edward at 9 25 a. m. and arrived at an industrial siding known as Allen's Siding, near Hudson Falls, at about 9.35 a. m., where it met southbound passenger train No. 152, which passed at about 9.42 a. m. It then moved out of the siding, passed signal 57 3 in the caution position, and had attained a speed estimated to have been from 12 to 20 miles per hour when it collided with passenger extra 507.

The front ends and pilots of engines 507 and 751 were badly damaged, and the tender of engine 751 telescoped the first car in its train, resulting in both being damaged considerably. The employees injured were the brakeman of the freight train and the fireman of extra 507.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Root, of extra 507, stated that they had an order to run as extra from Lake George to Colonie, via Cohoes. They proceeded to Glens Falls, where they stopped for water, and then followed train No. 152 out of that point about five minutes later, receiving caution signal indications until they approached signal 59.2, which was in the stop position. He stated that he obeyed this indication and then proceeded slowly, and he thought his train was traveling at a speed of 7 or 8 miles per hour when he saw an approaching train about 500 feet distant, he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency and jumped. Engineman Root thought his train had come practically to a stop when the collision occurred.

The statements of Conductor Jones, Baggage man Huestis, and Flagman Mitchison, of extra 507, corroborated those of the engineman as to the operation of their train from Glens Falls to the point of accident. They also stated that the train had come practically to a stop when the collision occurred.

Engineman Wagstaff, of engine 751, stated that after meeting train No. 152 at Allen's Siding, his own train proceeded slowly in order to allow the brakeman to close the switch. Engineman Wagstaff said he observed signal 57.3 in the caution position, but as he figured everything moving around that territory was behind him he thought that when he got to the next block everything would be all right. He had attained a speed of about 15 miles per hour when the yard conductor and flagman, who were riding on the left side of the engine, called "stop", and he immediately closed the throttle and applied the air brakes in emergency. He stated that he did not see the approaching train at all as he was on the outside of the curve and the view is considerably restricted at that point, probably 100 feet. Engineman Wagstaff stated, however, that he thought he could stop his train at the speed it was traveling within a distance of 100 or 150 feet. He stated that he experienced no trouble with the air brakes, although no tests whatever had been made at Fort Edward. At Allen's Siding a cut had to be made for a crossing and he put the valve in lap position before they coupled up again, and then he released the brakes. He did not make a regular test of the brakes but he knew from their action that they were working properly, as when the coupling was made at the crossing the pressure went down 5 or 6 pounds. The statements of Fireman Baker, of engine 751, added nothing of importance.

Yard Conductor Stacavich stated that he was riding backwards on the left side of engine 751, with Flagman H J. Mercier facing the front. They moved slowly out of the siding after train No. 152 had passed, received a signal from the rear of the train which indicated to them that everything was all right and that air was through the train, and then proceeded. Yard Conductor Stacavich stated that he happened to be looking ahead when he saw an approaching train 75 or 100 feet distant and at once called to the engineman, who applied the air brakes immediately. He did not think his own train was traveling at a speed much over 12 miles per hour, and the passenger train was not traveling at any higher rate of speed.

Conductor Scott, in charge of the freight train, stated that he was working on his reports in the caboose after leaving the siding near Hudson Falls and did not observe signal 57.3, but he thought that the train had attained a speed of 18 or 20 miles per hour when the air brakes were applied in emergency and the accident occurred. He stated that he noticed the air gauge in the caboose showed 90 pounds pressure before leaving Fort Edward, and after the accident he examined the brakes and found that all the pistons were out. Conductor Scott also stated that he knew extra 507 was somewhere on the branch, as his own train pulled in at Allen's Siding on the previous trip when extra 507 went north.

Engineman Davis, of engine 728, which was being operated backing up, stated that he thought they were traveling at a speed of about 15 miles per hour when the accident occurred. He also stated that on their previous trip they pulled in at Allen's Siding for extra 507 when it was going north. The statements of Fireman J. J. Mercier of engine 728, and Brakemen Sheridan and Rozelle brought out nothing of additional of importance.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Wagstaff, of engine 751, to operate his train under proper control within yard limits.

Engineman Wagstaff was thoroughly familiar with the territory in which the accident occurred and the movement of trains over the branch. Thinking that he knew the location of all the engines assigned to the branch, he did not fully obey the yard-limit rule, as well as signal 57.3 in caution position, which should have been warning that there was something ahead, and operated his train at a rate of speed which was excessive in view of the very restricted

range of vision in the vicinity of the point of accident. The rule required him to operate prepared to stop unless the main track was seen or known to be clear, and he should have governed himself accordingly.

All of the employees involved were experienced men and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director