

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD AT GOULDING, FLA.,  
ON MARCH 9, 1923.

April 5, 1923.

To the Commission

On March 9, 1923, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a yard engine on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Goulding, Fla., resulting in the death of two employees and the injury of five employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on a subdivision of the Pensacola Division extending between Flomaton, Ala., and Pensacola, Fla., a distance of 43.75 miles; at the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The rules require trains in the same direction to keep at least 10 minutes apart. The accident occurred within yard limits at Goulding at a switch leading from the main track to an industry track. This is a facing-point switch, with the switch stand located on the engine-man's side of a southbound train, and leads off the main track to the right. Approaching from the north the track is tangent for several miles. The grade for southbound trains is descending for 3,958 feet, varying from 0.33 to 0.02 per cent. It was dark, and the weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 6.40 p.m.

Description.

Yard engine 663, in charge of Foreman Goulding and Engineman McMillan, coupled to six cars, was pulling out on the main track and had reached a point between the frog and switch points when it was struck by train No. 17.

Southbound second-class train No. 17 consisted of one combination baggage and mail car, and two coaches, all deadhead equipment, hauled by engine 383, and was in charge of Conductor Edge and Engineman McMillan. This train left Flomaton, its initial station, at 5.30 p.m., 6 hours and 30 minutes late, headed in at the open switch at Goulding, and collided with engine 663 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 20 and 25 miles an hour.

Both engines were derailed and badly damaged. The tender of engine 383 was considerably damaged, the cistern being torn from the frame. The combination mail and baggage car was partly derailed and one end crushed in for several feet. The tender of engine 663 was derailed to the right and, together with the car next to it, was destroyed by fire. The employees killed were the engine-man and fireman of engine 383.

#### Summary of evidence.

Conductor H. F. Edge stated that his train left Flomaton 10 minutes after the departure of train No. 7, a local passenger train in the same direction, previous to which he reminded Enginman McMillion that they were following train No. 7 and to look out for it, and he said he gave the engineman a stop signal for Cantonment, 22.43 miles north of Goulding, on account of getting too close to the time of train No. 7; his train was at this station five minutes, but he did not leave the coach in which he was riding. He did not know whether or not the headlight on the engine was burning; the engine whistle had been sounded frequently, so much in fact that he and the flagman had remarked about it. He further stated that south of Cantonment the speed of the train had been about 45 miles an hour, but as the air brakes were applied approaching Goulding he was satisfied the enginman had the train under proper control. He then heard the whistle sounded, followed by the shock of the collision.

Flagman S. Edge corroborated the statements of Conductor Edge as to the movement of their train between Flomaton and Cantonment, and said that while at Cantonment he was busy fixing the marker lights and did not know whether the headlight on the engine was burning. He stated that the speed of the train between Cantonment and Goulding was between 30 and 35 miles an hour; he heard a road-crossing whistle sounded when approaching the yard at Goulding, while the speed was reduced to about 25 miles an hour. He said he then felt the air brakes applied and heard the whistle sounded, apparently a stop signal, just prior to the collision. On leaving the train after the accident he noted that the switch light displayed a red indication. Baggage-man Burton also stated that when he alighted from the rear coach he noted the switch light was burning and showing a red indication.

According to the testimony of Train Porter Lewis, who corroborated the statements of the conductor, flagman and baggage-man as to movement of their train to Cantonment, when the train stopped at Cantonment he went to the engine

and saw the engineman on the top of the boiler working on the generator that supplied power for the lights on the engine, including the headlight, and none of them was burning at that time, and he said that when the train departed the headlight was not burning. After the accident he noted that the switch light was burning and showing a red indication.

The crew in charge of yard engine 663 went on duty at about 2.30 p.m., and after switching at other points proceeded to Goulding at about 5 p.m. Engine Foreman Goulding, of yard engine 663, stated that he had made up train second No. 4 to go to Flomaton and he knew that the equipment used in that train would be returned although he had not received information as to the return movement from the dispatcher or yardmaster. He apparently expected that this equipment would be returned as a section of train No. 7, and when train No. 7, passed Goulding without displaying signals indicating a following section, he asked the night yardmaster for information concerning that equipment, the night yardmaster had received no notice from the dispatcher, and the engine foreman then called the dispatcher on the telephone, but the dispatcher had not answered at the time the collision occurred.

After train No. 7 passed Goulding, engine 663 pulled out on the main track from a siding known as the Union Switch, proceeded northward about 500 feet and left one car on the main track just south of a switch leading off from the main line at the point at which the accident occurred. The engine then backed in on the siding coupled to six cars and was returning to the main track when the collision occurred.

Engine Foreman Goulding stated that after train No. 7 passed without displaying signals he thought the equipment which had gone north in train second No. 4 would be operated back as a freight train. He said it was customary when freight trains were expected, to continue working until the headlight of the approaching train appeared, the view being clear for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles in one direction and 3 miles in the other; a man is left at the switch for protection. He stated that in this case the man who was left at the switch was an experienced man and it was not necessary to give him special instructions.

Engineman McMillan, of yard engine 663, stated that on account of the curve to the left he could not see north on the main track, and that his first indication of the approaching train was when the whistle of train No. 17 sounded, at which time it was about 20 feet distant from his

engine. The headlight on engine 383 was not burning, and he had not seen any reflection of an approaching headlight when moving out of the industry track. He also said that both headlights on his own engine were burning. Fireman Heffendun, of yard engine 663, said that just after passing a small building located about 225 feet from the main-track switch, while heading out on the main track, he saw the switch light burning and showing a red indication. He said he had just finished putting in a fire when the engineer called to him to "look out", and about that time he saw the engine of train No. 17, and noticed that its headlight was not burning, just before the collision occurred. He had not heard or seen train No. 17 approaching, nor had he seen the reflection of any headlight from that direction.

Switchman Smith, of yard engine 663, had remained at the main-track switch to watch for approaching trains, he said he had kept a sharp lookout to the north but had not seen or heard train No. 17 approaching until it was less than 100 yards distant, at which time he heard it whistle; engine 663 had then reached a point about 20 feet from the switch, and although he gave stop signals it was too late to prevent the collision.

Watchman Raines employed by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, said he reached Goulding on train No. 7, and then walked north from the station, and noted that all the switch lights were displaying green indications except the one at the switch leading to the track where yard engine 663 was working. When he had nearly reached the switch stand he noticed train No. 17 appear in the darkness, about 100 yards distant, with no headlight burning, and he said he called to Switchman Smith, who at once began to give stop signals, which were acknowledged with two short blasts on the whistle just before the accident occurred.

The engineer who handled engine 383 on the day previous to the accident stated that the headlight was burning properly, while the electrician who examined the lights on the engine on the day of the accident said they were in good order. Apparently the trouble which resulted in the failure of the headlight to burn properly developed while on the return trip to Pensacola.

#### Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineer McMillon, of train No. 17, properly to observe and be governed by the stop indication displayed by a switch light, and by his failure to have his train under proper control within yard limits.

As both members of the engine crew of train No. 17 were killed, it is not known why the stop indication of the switch light was not observed. It is clear that the switch light was burning, and was displaying a stop indication, it is also evident that Engineman McMillion had been awake and apparently was in full possession of his faculties approaching the point of accident.

Rule 93, of the Rules for the Government of the Operating Department, reads in part as follows

"Trains must approach yard limits under control, and run carefully through the limits, expecting to find the main track occupied. Yardmen must, however, use all possible precautions to protect themselves. They must know what trains are expected, and let them pass without delay."

Train No. 17 was not being operated in accordance with this rule, and in view of the fact that the headlight was not burning, it was incumbent on Engineman McMillion to exercise even greater care in order that he might bring his train to a stop in time to avert an accident.

While rule 93 does not require yard crews to protect themselves within yard limits, they are required to use all possible precautions and to know what trains are expected. The dispatcher gives the yardmaster a copy of the train order when a passenger train is to run late, while the yardmaster also gets a line-up of expected trains and transmits such information to engine foremen when they request it. In this case, Engine Foreman Goulding knew that the deadhead equipment being returned as train No. 17 had gone north several hours previously, and that it might return at any time, and under these circumstances he exercised poor judgment in continuing switching operations requiring the use of the main track and leaving a car standing on the main track without first having ascertained when the deadhead equipment was expected to arrive. While train No. 17 was being operated without the engine headlight burning, it is believed that Switchman Smith could have discovered the approaching train earlier than he did, and he was in position to flag not only the approaching train but also the switch engine. Had he been fully attentive to his duty in this instance he might have been able to prevent the accident or at least to reduce its severity.

None of the employees involved in this accident had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,  
W. P. BORLAND  
Director.