

Meyer
June 11/20
IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OC-
CURRED ON THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD AT
CYPRESS JUNCTION, ARK., ON MARCH 23, 1920.

P. 1
June 8, 1920.

On March 23, 1920, there was a head-end collision be-
tween an equipment train and a freight train at Cypress Junction,
Ark., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury
of 4 employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief
of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

This accident occurred on the Little Rock District of
the Arkansas Division, extending between North Little Rock and
Texarkana, a distance of 145.6 miles, the greater portion of
which is a single-track line. From Little Rock to Cypress Junc-
tion, a distance of 7.42 miles, the line is double-track; trains
are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-
signal system. The accident occurred at the end of double track
at Cypress Junction. Approaching this point from the south the
track is tangent for about 4,600 feet; the grade is 0.6 per
cent descending to within about 600 feet of the point of accident,
beyond which point it is level.

At the end of the double track there is a combination
switchstand handled by the operator; it is located near the
south door of the telegraph office. Signal indications are dis-
played by this switchstand for trains in either direction, the
night indications being a green light for proceed and a red light
for stop. Normally the switch is set and locked in position for

northbound trains, a clear indication being displayed for northbound and a stop indication for southbound trains, and the operator lines up the switch for through movements in both directions. The weather at the time of the accident was cloudy.

Southbound freight train extra 2343, in charge of Conductor Davis and Engineman Martin, consisted of engine 2343 and a caboose. This train left Little Rock at 8.10 p. m. and upon arrival at Cypress Junction at 8.31 p. m., was brought to a stop on the southbound track at a point about 100 feet north of the end of double track. It had been standing at this point about 7 minutes when it was struck by train No. 38.

Northbound equipment train No. 38, in charge of Conductor Baldwin and Engineman Harding, consisted of engine 5530, 2 refrigerator express cars, 4 baggage cars, 1 mail car, 1 coach, and 1 chair car; this train carried no passengers. It left Texarkana at 4.30 p. m., 20 minutes late, left Alexander, the last telegraph office south of the point of accident, at 8.29 p. m., 19 minutes late, and at about 8.38 p. m., while traveling at a speed variously estimated between 20 and 40 miles an hour, it was diverted to the southbound track at Cypress Junction and collided with extra 2343.

The force of the collision drove engine 2343 back a distance of about 300 feet and one pair of driving wheels was derailed. The caboose became separated from the engine and was driven back a distance of about 900 feet but was not derailed. The engine of train No. 38 turned over to the left, coming to rest at an angle with the track of about 45°, about 220 feet

north of the point of collision. The refrigerator car next to the engine was the only car of train No. 38 which was derailed or damaged to any extent. The employee killed was the engine-man of train No. 38.

Operator Holland stated that southbound passenger train No. 3 passed Cypress Junction at 8.10 p. m., and on his way out to pick up the register slip thrown off by the crew of that train, he lined and locked the switch in its normal position for northbound movements. Extra 2343 arrived at about 8.31 p. m., and after copying an order for that train the operator went to the door, saw that the switch was still lined for northbound movements, and then placed the northbound train-order board in the clear position. According to Operator Holland, the conductor of extra 2343 came into the office at about 8.34 p. m., checked the register, received his orders and went out, returning afterwards to inquire about a train which he had overlooked on the register. When train No. 38 approached, the operator went to the door for the purpose of noting the engine number, and when the engine was close to the switch he noticed that it was set for a southbound movement. Operator Holland had not noticed any unauthorized persons in the vicinity. Recently two other northbound trains had taken the wrong track at Cypress Junction when the operators on duty supposedly had lined the switch in the proper position.

When going to the office Conductor Davis, of extra 2343, did not notice the position of the switch although he

passed within 6 feet of it and he denied the statement of the operator that he went into the office a second time. After leaving the office he returned to his train and was talking with the engineman when his attention was called by one of his brakemen to the position of the switch, at which time train No. 38 had nearly reached it. After the accident he saw that the switchlight was displaying a green light to the north and that the switch was lined for a southbound movement, but not locked.

Brakeman Hutchins was the first member of the crew of extra 2343 to notice that the switch was lined for a southbound movement. He was in the cupola of the caboose together with another brakeman and on looking ahead as train No. 38 approached, it then being nearly at the road crossing just south of the telegraph office, he saw the position of the switch points as the headlight of the engine hauling train No. 38 shone upon them. He then left the caboose, called a warning to the other members of the crew, and began giving stop signals. The engineman and fireman were on the engine, the engineman leaning out of the cab window reading orders to the conductor. A warning to jump was their first intimation of danger. The engineman said that when his train arrived at Cypress Junction he thought the switchlight was displaying red to the north which would be its proper indication with the switch in position for the passage of a northbound train. With the possible exception of the engineman none of the members of the crew of extra 2343 had noticed the indication of the switchlight until just before the accident occurred.

At points about 1 mile and 1/2 mile south of Cypress Junction members of the train crew of train No. 38 had gone out on the steps on the rear portion of the train and observed that the train-order board was displaying a clear indication, but neither of them noticed the indication of the switchlight. Their first intimation of danger was when the brakes were applied in emergency, followed shortly by the shock of collision. After the accident they found the switchlight burning, showing red to the south, but the flagman stated that when going back to flag he looked back toward his train and could not clearly see the switchlight.

The fireman of train No. 38 saw the train-order board in the clear position when his train was some distance away. He then put in a fire after which he got up on his seat box, and on looking ahead, at which time the engine was within 300 feet of the switch, he saw that the switchlight was red and called to the engineman, who at once applied the air brakes in emergency.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Harding, of train No. 38, to approach the end of double track prepared to stop, as required by the rules.

Rule No. 98 reads in part as follows:

"Trains must approach the end of double track, junctions, railroad crossings at grade, and draw-bridges, prepared to stop, unless the switches and signals are right and the track is clear."

Special instructions in the current time-table provide that when approaching the ends of double track, trains must be under control and enginemen "must know positively" that the way is clear and

switches in proper position. The investigation disclosed that Engineman Harding did not see the indication of the switchlight until his attention was called to it by the fireman when about 300 feet distant. Inasmuch as Engineman Harding was fatally injured and was not conscious at any time after the accident it was impossible to ascertain his reason for not seeing the indication earlier and for not approaching the end of double track prepared to stop.

It was impossible to ascertain who was responsible for the switch being lined for the southbound track; the operator at Cypress Junction stated that he lined and locked the switch for the northbound track about 1 minute after a southbound passenger train had passed at 8.10 p. m., and that he did not again change its position prior to the accident; about 20 minutes later, before clearing the signal for train No. 38, he noted that the switch was set in position for a northbound movement, but about 7 minutes later, just before the accident occurred, he saw that it was then set for the southbound track. If the operator is mistaken about having lined the switch for the northbound track after the departure of the passenger train, then he is to this extent responsible for the accident; in this case, however, the crew of extra 2343 were also negligent in failing to notice the position of the switch before the arrival of train No. 38; it is inconceivable how Conductor Davis could have walked within 6 feet of the switch without noticing that it was in the wrong position. Conductor Davis denied having touched the switch, and

according to their statements all of the other members of the crew of the extra remained on or about their train. While it is possible that some unauthorized person threw the switch with malicious intent, this seems highly improbable, and if true, it would seem that some member of the crew of extra 2343, or the operator, would have seen either the act itself or the guilty person in the vicinity.

Engineman Harding entered the service of the Missouri Pacific Railway Company as fireman in August, 1900 and was made engineman in September, 1903. In May and September, 1912, and in December, 1916, he was suspended on account of responsibility in connection with accidents.

At the time of the accident the crew of train No. 38 had been on duty about 4 hours, prior to which the engine crew had been off duty about 40 hours, and the train crew nearly 24 hours. The crew of extra 2343 had been on duty about 6-1/2 hours, after off-duty periods ranging from 20 to 43 hours. Operator Holland had been on duty about 5 hours, prior to which he had been off duty 16 hours.