

May 2, 1914.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE MISSOURI, KANSAS
& TEXAS RAILWAY OF TEXAS, AT HILLSBORO, TEXAS, ON
FEBRUARY 24, 1914.

On February 24, 1914, there was a rear-end collision between two passenger trains on the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway of Texas, at Hillsboro, Texas, which resulted in the death of a Pullman porter, and injury of 4 passengers and 3 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

Northbound passenger train No. 3 was bound from San Antonio, Texas, to Dallas, Texas, and consisted of one baggage car, one coach, two chair cars, and six Pullman sleeping cars, hauled by locomotive No. 564, and was in charge of Conductor Harris and Engineer Smith. The baggage car and the second chair car had steel underframes, all of the other cars being of wooden construction. This train reached Hillsboro at 5.55 a.m., coming to a stop on the main track of the Dallas Division, located on the east side of the station. It was customary to cut the train in two at this point for the purpose of switching some of the cars to the main track of the Fort Worth Division, on the west side of the station. In accordance with this practice, switching locomotive No. 14 coupled to the rear end of the train and hauled the rear seven

cars to a point south of the switch connecting the main tracks of the two divisions. The switch was then lined up for the movement to the Fort Worth Division and the switching locomotive had shoved the cars forward about one and a half car lengths when it was struck from the rear by northbound train No. 6.

Northbound passenger train No. 6 was en route from San Antonio to St. Louis, Mo. It consisted of two baggage cars, one mail car, one coach, one chair car, two Pullman sleeping cars, one private car, one chair car, and two Pullman sleeping cars, hauled by locomotive No. 363, and was in charge of Conductor Tabor and Engineman Gumpert. The first baggage car, the mail car and the second chair car were of all-steel construction, while the second baggage car had a steel underframe. All of the other cars were of wooden construction. Train No. 6 passed west, the last open telegraph office south of Millsboro Yard, at 5.35 p. m., and collided with switching locomotive No. 14 at about 6.25 p. m., while traveling at a speed believed to have been between 20 and 25 miles per hour.

The Pullman sleeping car immediately ahead of switching locomotive No. 14 was telescoped about two-thirds of its length by that locomotive, which was also badly damaged. None of the other cars from train No. 6 was

damaged. Train No. 6 became separated in two places; first between the tender of the locomotive and the first baggage car, while the other break occurred between the sleeping car Enderlin, the seventh car in the train, and the private car immediately behind it. The locomotive and baggage car sustained slight damage. The rear end of the sleeping car Enderlin was damaged to some extent, while the forward end of the private car was badly damaged and telescoped a distance of several feet. The weather at the time of the collision was clear.

The Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway of Texas is a single-track line from Waco up to a point about one and one-half miles south of the passenger station at Hillsboro. From this point the line is double-tracked through the yard and up to a point about 1,400 feet south of the station. At a point about 600 feet north of the end of this double track the single-track main line of the Dallas Division branches off to the right and passes the station on the right hand or east side, the single track of the Fort Worth Division being on the opposite side of the station. Train movements from Waco up to the beginning of the double track at the south end of Hillsboro Yard are handled under the train-order system, protected by automatic block signals. Movements over the double track section are governed by special instructions in the time-card reading as follows:

"Double track between Hillsboro and South Yard, all trains use left hand track. Normal position of switch at south end for southbound trains, and north end for northbound trains. All trains and yard engines must move under control thru this double track limit expecting to find main line and cross-overs occupied."

The point of collision was just south of the northern end of the double track, on an ascending grade of one per cent for northbound trains, and at about the end of a curve of 3° leading to the right about 1800 feet in length.

From the statements of all the employees involved it is apparent that the switching movement being made on this day was a daily occurrence and that all employees understood that the main track could be occupied by switching movements without flagging protection. Approaching trains were flagged occasionally, but usually this was done in order to prevent them from coming too close, thus giving the switching crew more room in which to work.

Foreman English of the switching crew stated that the speed of train No. 6 at the time of the collision was from 30 to 35 miles per hour, and that the engineer of the switching locomotive signaled the approaching train to stop. Engineer Melroyen of the switching locomotive stated that when he saw train No. 6 approaching he sounded one long blast on the whistle and when he saw that that train was not going to stop he jumped. He thought the speed of train No. 6 was between 30 and 35

miles per hour when it was about 20 car lengths away.

Switchman Watson stated that he made the cut in train No. 8 at the station and then rode on the last car of the seven cars being handled by the switching locomotive. As these cars were being hauled south for the purpose of switching them to the Fort Worth Division main line, he saw the headlight of train No. 6 coming through the yard. He then told Switchman Welch, who was standing at the switch leading to the Fort Worth Division, that train No. 6 was approaching and to go back and flag it, his idea being to give the switching crew room in which to work. Switchman Welch started back, but had gone only two or three car lengths when train No. 6 came around the curve, the collision occurred just as the switching locomotive had started to push the cars ahead on the Fort Worth Division. Switchman Watson further stated that he thought the speed of train No. 6 was from 25 to 30 miles per hour.

Engineman Gumpert of train No. 6 stated that when approaching Hillsboro the switch light at the switch connecting the two main line tracks was green, indicating that it was lined up for the Fort Worth Division main line, the proper movement for his train. He also saw the headlight on the tender of the switching locomotive, and at the time thought it was standing on the Fort Worth Division passing track, west of the main line of that division.

He did not see the switching locomotive again until within about three or four car lengths of it, his view having been obstructed by smoke trailing down behind the locomotive, due to the north wind which was blowing at the time. He did not know whether or not he applied the air brakes before the collision, which occurred before he had time to jump. He further stated that the speed of his train was from 12 to 15 miles per hour and that if he had had any warning of the location of the switching locomotive he easily could have stopped his train. He was working steam at the time, on account of the ascending grade. He thought the switching locomotive was farther south than usual, and stated that he did not hear the whistle signal sounded by the engineman of the switcher as a warning.

Conductor Taber stated that he did not think there was any application of the air brakes. The speed of his train at the time of the collision he thought was about 15 miles per hour.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Gumpert of train No. 6 properly to control the speed of his train, in violation of the time-card instructions requiring all trains to move under control expecting to find the main line and cross-overs occupied.

The distance traveled by train No. 6 after the collision, 213 feet, as well as the manner in which the

sleeping car Enderlin telescoped, makes it appear that the speed of that train was considerably in excess of the speed at which Engineman Gumpert claimed it to have been traveling. This seems to be the more apparent when it is considered that it traveled the distance of 212 feet on an ascending grade 1 per cent, and with the brakes applied on both train No. 6 and the cars being handled by the switching locomotive, these brakes having been applied as a result of the collision. That more deaths did not occur is doubtless due to the fact that the telescoped sleeping car carried no passengers, the Pullman porter who was killed being the only occupant.

Engineman Gumpert was employed as a fireman in October, 1881, and in September, 1884, was promoted to engineman. He was discharged September, 1903, for running by a meeting point, resulting in a collision. He was reinstated in July, 1907. Since this reinstatement his record had been practically clear. At the time of collision he had been on duty one hour and twenty-five minutes, after a period off duty of twelve hours and twenty-five minutes.