

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD AT MILLFIELD, OHIO, ON  
AUGUST 27, 1924.

October 3, 1924.

To the Commission:

On August 27, 1924, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the New York Central Railroad at Millfield, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one employee, and injury of four passengers and three employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division extending between Corning, Ohio, and Swiss, W.Va., a distance of 172.7 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. The accident occurred at a point about 1,500 feet north of the station at Millfield, approaching this point from the north there is a  $20^{\circ}$  curve to the left 297 feet in length and then 609 feet of tangent, following which is a compound curve to the right 1,872 feet in length, the derailment occurring on the curve at a point 500 feet from its northern end, where the curvature is  $8^{\circ} 13'$ . The grade for southbound trains is 0.65 per cent ascending for 1,600 feet and is then 0.42 per cent descending to the point of accident, about 300 feet distant. An embankment on the inside of the curve restricts the range of vision to about 300 feet. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 5.15 p.m.

Description

Southbound passenger train No. 6 consisted of one baggage car, one coach, one combination coach and cafe car, and one parlor car, hauled by engine 4751. The baggage car was of all-steel construction, the other three cars were of steel-underframe construction. This train, in charge of Conductor Carruthers and Engineman Sargent, left Corning, Ohio, at 4.48 p.m., eight minutes late, made one stop en route and was derailed at Millfield at 5.15 p.m. while traveling at a speed estimated to have been 35 miles an hour.

Engine 4751 came to rest on its right side badly damaged, to the left of the track and at a point about 450 feet south of the first mark of derailment, the tender came to rest on its side, partly on the roadbed, just back of the engine. The first two cars were derailed, the baggage car coming to rest on the left or east side of the track about opposite the engine, while the second car remained upright on the roadbed. The employee killed was the engineman.

#### Summary of evidence.

From the first mark of derailment southward a distance of 320 feet there were flange marks on the ties to where the derailed pony truck wheels came in contact with a trailing-point switch, tearing it out and overturning the east or outside rail of the main track and resulting in the subsequent derailment of the engine and the following three cars.

Fireman Klein said Engineman Sargent applied the air brakes in a service application to steady the train around the curve and had just released them when the leading engine truck wheels were seen to be off the rails and the engineman applied the brakes in emergency. Fireman Klein estimated the speed of his train at the time of the derailment to have been about 35 or 38 miles an hour. He said the brakes were tested before leaving Corning and had worked properly en route.

Conductor Carruthers said he made an examination of the track and vicinity immediately after the occurrence of the accident in an effort to discover a probable cause of the derailment but was unsuccessful. About an hour later he was shown a piece of oak board about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet long,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide and about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 inches thick, one end of which was beveled and scarred and showed wheel marks along its entire length, there was an imprint on it as though a wire had been wrapped around it twice.

Baggageman Deardorff said he found a piece of board at a point 10 or 12 feet south of the first mark of derailment on the west side of the west or inside rail of the curve and a little farther south he found another piece of board on the east side of the rail. These two pieces matched and fit so perfectly that it was obvious that the board had been split. The pieces were later shown to a local inhabitant who identified them as parts of a board he had removed from the track earlier in the day.

A small boy, aged 9 years, was seen in the vicinity of the point of accident a short time before its occurrence. Upon being questioned he admitted that he had wired the board to the rail to see what the train would do.

Careful inspection of the track, engine and other equipment after the accident failed to disclose any defective condition which would have contributed to the cause of the derailment.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by an obstruction in the shape of a board, which was secured lengthwise on top of the outside rail of the curve.

The confession of a small boy, aged 9 years, that he placed the board on the rail and secured it in that position by the use of wire, leaves no doubt as to the cause of this accident. No reason was given for this action other than a curiosity to see what the train would do.

At the time of the occurrence of this accident the train crew had been on duty 3 hours, and the engine crew had been on duty 8 hours and 25 minutes, previous to which all of these employees had been off duty 14 hours or more.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director.