

**In re Investigation of an accident which
occurred on the New York, Chicago &
St. Louis Railroad at Fort Wayne,
Ind., February 23, 1916.**

April 25, 1916.

On February 23, 1916, there was a side collision between a freight train and a locomotive attached to a baggage car, on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad at Fort Wayne, Ind., which resulted in the death of two engineers. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety submits the following report:

The line in the vicinity of the accident extends east and west, is single track, and trains are operated by time-table, train order and an automatic block signal system. Beginning at Van Buren Street, about 3,000 feet west of the passenger station at Fort Wayne, and extending eastward to Oliver House switch, about 1,200 feet east of the station, a track known as the "south track" parallels the main track on the south. This track is used by all east-bound passenger trains; it is a main track for those trains only, and is not equipped with block signals.

On the day of the accident, locomotive 152, to which was attached one baggage car, was in charge of Yard Conductor Murphy who is regularly employed as a pilot for light engines

between West Fort Wayne yard and Fort Wayne station and Engine-
man Bottger; it left West Fort Wayne, a yard about 1 mile west
of Fort Wayne passenger station, at about 7.25 p. m. This
locomotive and car were to go to Fort Wayne station and await
the arrival of train No. 4 from the west, due at 8.00 p. m.,
the baggage car to be placed in that train and the locomotive
to haul the train from that point, being scheduled to leave
at 8.05 p. m. At Van Buren Street, locomotive 152 took the
south track and stopped at the passenger station at about 7.35
p. m., the enginemen and conductor going to the telegraph of-
fice, the engineman registering his watch and getting his clear-
ance card for train No. 4. After about 10 minutes they re-
turned to their engine and proceeded to the east end of the
south track. At this point it was the practice to pull out
of the south track back the baggage car westward on the main
track to clear the switch, then out off the locomotive and
pull down east of the switch, and there await the arrival of
train No. 4. Upon the arrival of that train, its locomotive,
with the baggage car, is detached brought out onto the main
track, and coupled onto the baggage car standing west of the
switch; the locomotive and two baggage cars then pull into
clear of the switch and back in on the south track against
the remainder of the train. This locomotive then returns to
the main track, goes back to West Fort Wayne, and the locomo-
tive which has been standing on the main track east of the

switch backs onto the train and hauls it eastward. Locomotive 152 and the car proceeded to the east switch and stopped with the gangway of the engine over the switch frog, for the conductor to get off and open the switch, and was in this position when it was struck by train 2nd No. 44 running eastward on the main track, at 7.53 p. m.

Eastbound freight train 2nd No. 44 consisted of locomotive 327, 27 loaded and 2 empty cars, and a caboose. It was in charge of Conductor Miller and Engineman Hasselbach and left West Fort Wayne, its initial station, at 7.40 p. m. Leaving West Fort Wayne, a yard engine acted as helper behind the caboose to Ewing Street Crossing, a point about 2,600 feet west of the point of accident. After leaving West Fort Wayne no stop was made, the train passing Fort Wayne station at 7.57 p. m., and while running at a speed estimated to have been 10 or 15 miles per hour collided with locomotive 152 where it stood on the frog at the east end of the south track.

Approaching the scene of the accident from Fort Wayne station, the track is tangent for 400 feet, followed by a 6-degree curve to the right. The collision occurred 342 feet east of the western end of this curve. The weather at the time was clear.

As a result of the collision, the right side of locomotive 327 received slight damage; locomotive 152 was tipped over at an angle of about 60 degrees against a box car on an

adjoining track, and its cab was torn off.

Yard Conductor Murphy, in charge of locomotive 152, stated that it is his exclusive duty to conduct passenger engines from West Fort Wayne to Fort Wayne passenger station. He stated that when locomotive 152 reached the station, on its way to the east end of the south track to await train No. 4, he and the engineman went to the telegraph office and he asked whether there were any westbound trains coming, and was told that there were none. He neglected, however, to ask whether any eastbound trains were coming, as he was not expecting any such trains and because, from that point, all eastbound trains could usually be seen leaving the yards at West Fort Wayne; although on this occasion he did not look for any. When leaving the telegraph office, the engineman remarked to him that the signal at Lafayette Street, about 1,200 feet east of the station, was in the clear position, and he replied that that was because the dispatcher had said there was no train coming against train No. 4. He stated that when he was on the platform between the station and the engine he looked at the signal at Harrison Street, about 500 feet west of the station, and saw that it was in the stop position, indicating that something was occupying the track between that signal and Van Buren Street, and might have been going either east or west. He then told the engineman that everything was all right and they got on the locomotive and proceeded to the east switch of the south track. When his locomotive, with the

baggage car, was crossing Barr Street, about 750 feet east of the station, he looked back but saw nothing approaching, although the signal was still in the stop position. He stated that his locomotive came to a stop beyond the fouling point of the east switch of the south track and so near the main track that in getting off the locomotive to open the switch he stepped on the guard rail of that track. He stated that it was contrary to the operating practice to go beyond the fouling point before stopping, but that it was frequently done. As he stepped off the locomotive he heard train 2nd No. 44 approaching in the vicinity of Barr Street, and he immediately gave a stop signal to that train and a back-up signal to his engineer. He stated that the latter immediately sounded a long blast of the whistle and attempted to back his locomotive, but that it slipped and the engineer shut off steam. He further stated that when he first saw locomotive of the approaching train it was 7 or 8 car lengths distant and was working steam and that its headlight was burning. Conductor Murphy stated that it is customary to move out onto the main track with the baggage car at this place at about 7.55 p. m., and that in this instance his locomotive reached the switch at about 7.52 p. m., the collision occurring at 7.51 p. m. He stated that although he twice saw the signal at Harrison Street to be in the stop position, he did not think there was an eastbound train in the block, but thought the signal was being held in the stop position by a westbound train which they had passed at Fulton

Street, about 2,300 feet west of the station, and which had not yet cleared the block. He further stated that the west-bound signal would be set in the stop position by his locomotive going beyond the fouling point of the south track, but that no effect would be had on the eastbound signal until his locomotive reached the main track. He stated that he usually asked the dispatcher as to whether or not train No. 4 was on time, but did not remember having done so on this occasion, although he stated that he knew that that train would be on time because no time orders had been issued for it.

Fireman Andrews, of locomotive 152, stated that his engine was usually brought to a stop within a safe clearing distance of the main track at the east end of the south track, and did not know why it was allowed to go beyond the fouling point in this instance. He stated that between the station and the east end of the south track he was sitting on his seatbox and saw the signal at LaFayette Street in the clear position. He further stated that the enginemen sounded one sharp blast of the whistle when train 2nd No. 44 was approaching, that he himself first saw it when it was about five car lengths distant, that the whistle signal was not answered, that he heard no application of the brakes on the approaching train, that he got off the engine and was at the side of the tender of his locomotive when the collision occurred. He stated that he did not know whether or not there was a red light

on the rear of the baggage car, but that at West Fort Wayne an inspector came to the engine and got his red lights to put on the rear of the baggage car, as was customary.

Fireman Zerull, of train 2nd No. 44, stated that his locomotive left the round house at West Fort Wayne at 6.45 p. m. to go into the yard for its train, and was ready to proceed at 7.00 p. m., but waited for several westbound trains to pass before starting east on the main track at 7.40 a. m. He stated that while his train was waiting for the westbound trains to arrive, he saw locomotive 152 and the baggage car leaving the yard; at that time the headlight and rear lights on that locomotive were burning, but he did not notice any light on the rear of the baggage car. He stated that before leaving the yard the engineman of his train did not say how far he expected to go ahead of train No. 4, which was due there at 7.55 p. m. Fireman Zerull further stated that near the station he looked ahead and saw that the signal at LaFayette Street was in the clear position, that he then began to put coal on the fire, and when he was about to put in the second scoop of coal he felt the brakes being applied in emergency, heard the crash, and jumped from his locomotive. He stated that he knew that his train had not passed locomotive 152, but supposed it to be entirely into clear on the south track. After the accident he went around the wreckage and found the headlight of his locomotive burning. He estimated the speed of his train to have been 8 or 9 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

Both enginemen involved were killed in the accident.

Head Brakeman Bender, of train 2nd No. 44, stated that when his train left West Fort Wayne the crew had no orders other than a clearance card. He stated that he was riding on top of the second car from the engine, that he was standing with his back toward the engine and knew nothing of the impending collision until he heard the sound of the whistle of locomotive 152 and felt the emergency application of the brakes about one car length distant from the point of collision. Head Brakeman Bender stated that after the accident he got off and walked around the rear of the baggage car and found a lantern lying on the ground but it was extinguished and broken; he did not notice whether it was a red or white lantern. He thought the speed of his train at the time of the collision was 9 or 10 miles per hour.

Conductor Miller, of train 2nd No. 44, stated that some difficulty was experienced in getting his train started at West Fort Wayne and a yard engine then coupled to the rear end and helped his train out of the yard, the speed being about 10 miles an hour when the yard engine was detached. He stated that he saw locomotive 152 with the baggage car start eastward on the south track, and saw a red light on the rear platform of the baggage car. He was riding on the rear platform of his caboose when he felt the emergency application of the brakes about one car length distant from the point of collision, at 7.52 p. m. He stated that between West Fort Wayne

and the point of accident all signal and switch lights were very plainly visible, that after the accident he saw that the headlight on his locomotive was burning, but that the red light on the rear platform of the baggage car was missing.

Track Watchman Vaehon, stationed at Barr Street, about 400 feet west of the point of accident, stated that when locomotive 152 and the baggage car passed his watch tower on the evening of the accident, on its way to the east end of the south track to await train No. 4, he heard train 2nd No. 44 approaching rapidly just west of the station, looked toward it, then looked toward locomotive 152 and saw that it had gone further toward the main track than usual, although on account of the darkness he could not discern just how far they really had gone. He stated that train 2nd No. 44 passed about one minute after locomotive 152, and that the collision occurred at 7.53 p. m. He further stated that there was no light on the rear of the baggage car as it passed his tower, and that the headlight on locomotive 152 was burning. He thought the speed of train 2nd No. 44 was about 20 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Trainmaster Kirby stated that in movements such as that being made with locomotive 152 and the baggage car

in this instance, it is the practice to wait on the south track, just clear of the fouling point of the east switch, until train No. 4 arrives at the station at Fort Wayne. Under full protection by flag, the locomotive and baggage car then proceed onto the main track, the pilot being responsible for this movement, and that, if not made under protection, it is a violation of the rules. He said that in every instance in which he was present this practice had been properly followed, but that on the evening of the accident this was not done. Trainmaster Kirby further stated that the dispatcher at Fort Wayne informs pilots of engines regarding trains on the passenger track, but is not in a position to inform them regarding movements of trains starting from the yard at West Fort Wayne, because he does not know when such trains are going to leave. He stated that in this instance, when the engineman and pilot of locomotive 152 were in the telegraph office to inquire about westbound trains, the dispatcher knew that train 2nd No. 44 had been called, but, as that train was compelled to wait in the yards until three sections of a westbound train had arrived there, he was unable to tell when it would leave.

This accident was caused by locomotive 152 going beyond the fouling point of the east switch of the south track at Fort Wayne without proper protection; and as a result train 2nd No. 44 was permitted to approach, unwarned, and collided with the side of locomotive 152. This failure to have the

movement protected was in violation of rule 99 of the operating rules of this company, for which Yard Conductor Murphy and Enginemen Bottger are responsible. Rule 99 reads in part as follows:

"When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with danger signals." * * *

The investigation developed that Yard Conductor Murphy twice saw the signal at Harrison Street in the stop position while his locomotive and the baggage car were on their way to the east switch of the south track, and this fact in itself, in the interest of the safety of his train, should have prompted him to be particularly careful to have his train properly protected before allowing his locomotive to foul the main track.

A contributing cause of this accident is believed to have been the failure of Engineman Hasselbech to operate his train as required by the following time-table instructions:

"Second-class and inferior trains and yard engines, in either direction between West Fort Wayne yard and the east end of Oliver House switch, Fort Wayne, must move with great care, expecting to find passenger or switch engines occupying the main track, and will run at such speed that the train can be stopped when necessary. This does not relieve the persons in charge of such engines from properly protecting them."

Yard conductor Murphy entered the employ of this company September 9, 1889, as yard helper, was promoted to the position of yard foreman January 10, 1892, and had a good record. Engineman Bottger entered the service as enginemen January 16, 1890. At the time of the accident Yard Conductor Murphy had been on duty, in broken periods, since 11.20 a. m., a total of 3 hours 8 minutes; and Engineman Bottger had been on duty 12 hours.