

May 10, 1913.

In re Investigation of Accident on the New York,
New Haven and Hartford Railroad at Braintree,
Mass., on April 28, 1913.

On April 28, 1913, there was a head-end collision on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at Braintree, Mass., which resulted in the injury of 12 passengers, 8 train employees, and 14 laborers.

After investigation of this accident the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

Granite Branch of the Boston Division, on which this accident occurred, is a single-track line. It leaves the main line at a crossover, located about 900 feet north of Braintree station, and rejoins the main line at Atlantic, Mass., having a total length of 5.41 miles. No block signal system is in operation, trains being operated by time-card rights and train orders. Going north from the crossover the branch line track is straight for about 1,400 feet, then there is a two-degree curve to the left about 1,400 feet in length, and then the track is straight for about 1,900 feet. The accident occurred on this straight track just north of the end of the curve. At this point there is a slight fill, with a descending grade for northbound trains of 2.21%. Northbound engine crews can see ahead only about 600 feet, while for southbound engine crews the view is unobstructed for about 1,900 feet. Just north of the crossover a spur house track about 1,000 feet long leads

off of the Granite Branch in a southerly direction, running in behind the signal tower. This tower is on the west side of the main tracks at a point about 100 feet south of the passenger station.

Southbound passenger train No. 5037 consisted of 1 combination baggage and smoking car and 4 coaches, hauled by engine No. 1610. The train was in charge of Conductor Rogers and Engineman Glidden, and was en route from Boston, Mass., to South Braintree, Mass., via the Granite Branch. It left Boston, Mass., at 6:33 a. m., passed West Quincy, the last open telegraph office prior to the point of accident, at 6:57 a. m., 4 minutes late, and collided with northbound work extra 621 at a point .7 mile north of Braintree passenger station.

The work extra consisted of 1 coach, 1 tool car, 1 coach, and 6 ballast cars, in the order named, hauled by engine No. 621. It was in charge of Conductor Ross and Engineman Dutton. Before leaving South Braintree at 6:30 a. m., the crew received an order giving them the right to work on the Granite Branch until noon, keeping clear of regular trains. The work extra proceeded to Braintree, crossed over from track No. 6 to track No. 2 at a crossover located south of the station, proceeded on track No. 2 to the crossover located north of the station, and there crossed over to track No. 1, and thence onto the Granite Branch, intending to go to Braintree gravel pit, located about 1 mile north of Braintree, for the purpose of setting out the ballast cars. The work extra had nearly reached the gravel pit when the collision occurred.

The speed of the work extra was about 10 miles per hour, while that of the passenger train was about 30 miles per hour. The territory in the vicinity of the point of accident is very low and swampy, and the weather at the time was very foggy.

Under ordinary conditions the work extra would have reached the gravel pit in sufficient time to clear train No. 5037, but on this occasion it was delayed by a freight train ahead. According to the engineman's statement the work extra stopped at the tower at Braintree at about 6:57 a.m. Train No. 5037 was due at 6:58 a.m., and Engineman Dutton said it was the intention to go as soon as that train arrived. As previously stated, however, train No. 5037 was about 4 minutes late. A southbound main line passenger train, No. 5011, due at Braintree at 6:53 a.m., was a few minutes late and arrived at the station at about the same time as the work train, and the engineman thought it was Granite Branch train No. 5037. In the meantime the conductor left the work extra before it crossed over from track No. 6 to track No. 2, and went on ahead to the tower and had an understanding with the towerman that the work extra was to cross over onto the branch, back in on the house track, and await the arrival of train No. 5037. If that train was on time, the work extra could go as soon as the train arrived; if it was late, however, the work extra would have to remain on the siding until it arrived, and also await the passage of train No. 5024, a northbound Granite Branch passenger train due at 7:09 a.m. The conductor then went to the station

to examine the train register. In the meantime the work extra pulled ahead slowly and had just come to a stop when the conductor finished examining the register. According to the engineman the conductor gave a signal indicating that train No. 5037 had arrived, thus giving him the right to pull out on his way to the gravel pit. As the dwarf signal governing the crossover was cleared at about this time, Engineman Dutton stated that he at once started his train, supposing of course that the south-bound passenger train he had seen was train No. 5037, and that the conductor knew it to be that train. Engineman Dutton said he did not know anything about the conversation had between the conductor and towerman, or what trains the conductor found to have been registered.

Conductor Ross stated that when he checked the register all trains due or overdue had registered except train No. 5037. While he was at the register train No. 5011 arrived and on account of the fog he could not see whether it came from the branch or the main line. However, as it was almost 6:58 a.m., the time No. 5037 was due to leave, he supposed it to be that train. Conductor Ross said that when he left the register, which is on the outside of the station, and started toward his train, the engineman started to pull out, and he got aboard without making any attempt to ascertain the identity of the train which was standing at the station. He denied that he gave the engineman any signal to start. Conductor Ross further stated that when he saw his train was proceeding on its way to the gravel pit he

could have stopped it had he so desired by means of the conductor's valve, but supposed the engineman knew what he was doing.

The statements of the other employees involved failed to bring out any additional information.

This accident was caused by work extra 621 occupying the Granite Branch main track on the time of a superior train, due to the failure of Conductor Ross properly to identify main line train No. 5011, which he unwarrantably assumed to be Granite Branch Train No. 5037, this error resulting in his allowing the work extra to occupy the Granite Branch main track on the time of train No. 5037.

While enginemen are jointly responsible with conductors for the safe movement of their trains, yet on this railroad there is no rule under which enginemen are required to have any positive knowledge that all superior trains have arrived, as they are not required to check train registers; and in this case the engineman is further relieved of responsibility as he had no knowledge of the understanding reached between the conductor and towerman. There is of course the question of veracity between the engineman and conductor as to whether or not the latter gave the engineman a signal which would allow him to proceed; on the other hand, however, there is to be considered the statement of the conductor himself that had he so desired he could have stopped the train at any time by means of the conductor's valve.

All of the employees involved in this accident were experienced

men, and none had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law. The records of all the employees involved were good, with the possible exception of Conductor Ross, in whose case it was noted that on March 31, 1906, he was demerited for running without orders, while on August 30, 1912, he was disciplined for failure to have his train properly protected by flag, resulting in a collision. He had also been disciplined for minor offenses on different occasions.