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Bridgeport, Conn., June 16, 1911.

Mr. J. W. Watson,
Chief Inspector,
Interstate Commerce Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

In compliance with your instructions of June 9th we proceeded to Fairfield, Conn., and at once began a thorough investigation as to the cause of the freight wreck which happened on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at this place on the evening of June 6th, and herewith submit the following as our report:

On our arrival at Fairfield we were informed that the Coroner's investigation would take place at Bridgeport, Conn., the following day. We proceeded to this point and interviewed Coroner Wilson, who very cheerfully permitted us to listen to the testimony under oath of the survivors of the wreck and others and those at the hospital on the following Monday.

There were a great many rumors afloat by employees and others as to what may have caused the wreck, as it was alleged that Mr. E. P. Beach, the engineer of the freight train known as "H-Y-2" bound east, must have been dead when he ran into extra freight "538" as it stood in the block about three-fourths of a mile east of the tower at Fairfield.

After hearing all the evidence at hand we then interviewed Superintendent Woodward at New Haven, who stated that Mr. Beach was considered by him to be a very competent engineer. He discredited all the rumors as to any physical ailment of the man, and said that, as far as he knew, he was

a strong, healthy man, and had been in the employ of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad about eighteen years as an engineer. He stated that he knew that on that and the preceding day Engineer Beach had had sufficient time for rest, which statement was borne out by the train sheets.

We interviewed engineers and fireman that had fired for him, and also conductors and trainmen at New Haven where he lived. All spoke of him in the highest terms regarding his competency, morals and good reputation as a locomotive engineer.

As near as we can ascertain Mr. Beach was a man about 48 or 50 years of age, and, as testified by his conductor, F. G. Woon, was a very careful man, without any bad habits whatever.

After listening to the testimony of men who were associated with him daily, and having knowledge as to the general good health he seemed to enjoy at the time of the accident, we could not believe that, with the high standing he had in the community, it could be possible for him to neglect his duty at this particular time. However, being unacquainted with the situation surrounding the wreck, we proceeded to Fairfield and went carefully over the ground where the wreck had occurred.

Interlocking block signals are installed there governing the movement of all trains on the four tracks. The whole distance in this block from the distant signal west of the tower to the point east where the wreck occurred is approxi-

mately one mile and all on the long curve leaning towards the north, and with a view very unfavorable for the engine men to see the signal on tower of the interlocking plant; the view being partially obscured by the depot roof projecting over track No. 4 and an overhead bridge close by, both of which are between the distant and home signals.

The testimony of Mr. Brown, the towerman, shows that, on the night of June 6th, extra freight train No. 338 passed the block station at Fairfield going east on track No. 2, at 11:16 P. M., and stopped about one-half mile east of the depot. Engineer F. R. Brace and conductor Oliver Huff stated their reason for stopping the train was on account of air brakes applying, discrediting the rumor of hot boxes. The conductor further states he ordered his flagman, Michael R. Walsh, to go back and protect the train, and Mr. Huff immediately started ahead, looking for the cause of the stop, as it seems from the testimony they had some trouble with air leaks on first starting from Harlem River Yard which had applied the brakes. They experienced no further trouble until they reached this point, when again the brakes applied, stopping the train. They released the brakes and called in the flagman, all of which consumed about fourteen minutes, and had started their train, which, in the short space of about the minute that they were under way before they were struck, indicated a speed of about 10 to 12 miles per hour. They had both just climbed into the cupola of the caboose when a crash came from the rear from train "H-Y-2", throwing them out in different directions and the wreckage piling around them.

Train "H-Y-2" left Harlem River Yard about 7:55 P. M., bound east on track No. 2, in charge of conductor Fred G. Moon and Engineer Elliot F. Beach, with 51 cars. At Portchester, which is about 25 miles west of Fairfield, some switching was done. They passed Greens Farms block station, about 3 miles west of Fairfield, at 11:25 P. M., and as towerman Brown at Fairfield claimed went past his station at 11:31 P. M., with the signal set at danger, and struck extra 338 at about 11:32 P. M.; although he admits the lights on the home signal were out, but the distant signals were burning and showed yellow, which is caution. About this time extra freight train 312 and "S-H-1", bound west on tracks Nos. 1 and 3, were caught in the wreckage in which engineer Lowry and brakeman Hannon were killed, and fireman Pctser badly injured. Towerman Brown states that when he saw "H-Y-2" entering the block with his signal set at danger, and realizing that extra 338 had not yet cleared, he grasped a red light, and Harry Stanford, an extra towerman who was in the tower with him, grasped a white light, and both swung the lamps frantically at engineer Beach, endeavoring to stop the train. Brown swung the red light from the tower window facing track No. 2, and Stanford swung the white light from the window on the west side of the tower, for neither man had time to get to the ground where a signal would be more apt to be seen; but with all their efforts to stop him the train rushed by and crashed into extra 338 that had just started on its way.

Mr. Woodward, superintendent of this division, admitted to us that he held the engineers alone strictly

responsible for all signals governing the movement of their trains. It was admitted in the testimony given that the home signal lights this particular night governing this movement were out. There is a foreign section man who has charge of these lights, who fills and lights them in the day-time, and if they go out during the night there is no one to care for them, although it is the duty of the tower and engine men to report them. Mr. Brown made no report whatever this particular night of the signal lights being out, which he knew, until after the wreck had occurred, when he reported the matter to section foreman Harrigan and had him light them. We learned that it is a common thing at Fairfield, Conn., for signal lights to be out, and Messrs. Gibbons and Weeks, Inspectors, ascertained this fact on the evening of the 9th, particularly as regards track No. 4, which is the next track to the one on which the wreck occurred.

We discussed this matter with a large number of engineers employed on this and other divisions of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, and they say they are tired of reporting this dangerous condition, for time seems to be the important factor. They are governed largely by the distant signal, and are permitted to run by the home signal if they can see the arm at clear on the east. The night of June 6th, as stated by all concerned, was dark and rainy, which we can readily appreciate could make it a hard matter to determine the true color of a distant signal. A white light by night can be seen a much longer distance, in our opinion, than any other-

color. Towerman Brown claims Mr. Stanford, who was in the tower with him, swung a white light from the tower window towards the train, which, owing to the defective condition of the signal lights and the common practice of running by them, undoubtedly induced the belief in engineer Beach's mind, in our opinion, that the white light meant for him to proceed, the red light probably not being observed by him.

Flagman Walsh of extra 338 admits in his testimony that he went back with the proper signals to flag with, but was not sure as to the distance, and when called in he placed two torpedoes on the rail on the engineer's side, about one rail length apart, but left no fusee. On his arrival at the caboose he signaled the engineer to proceed, and after the train had started he threw off a lighted fusee, but it failed to stick in a tie. There is no testimony whatever to show that there was any fusee burning. There is evidence, however, from two disinterested parties that they heard the explosion of torpedoes, but their stories conflict so that we do not attach much importance to them.

The distance from where extra 338 must have stopped its caboose to the tower, of which towerman Brown has charge, we do not believe is over one-fourth of a mile; so we cannot believe, under flagging rule No. 99, that flagman Walsh was back a sufficient distance to ensure full protection, for he said that he did not see the tower. Mr. Walsh has worked for this company only about one month and was not familiar with the road. Conductor Huff stated that he reported the fact, before leaving Harlem River Yard, that he had two green men, and Walsh was

was one of them, and he did not want to leave the Yard with them but was told to go.

After going over this matter carefully, and giving it due consideration, we are of one opinion that there were three contributing causes for this wreck, namely:

1. The New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company having full knowledge previous to this accident of the bad condition of lights, and the failure of enginemen to observe the rules governing them at this and other points, tacitly permitting their enginemen to violate these rules.

2. The lights on the home signal being out, and no effort made whatever on the part of towerman Brown to have them lighted until after the wreck occurred.

3. The failure of flagman Walsh to go back a sufficient distance to ensure full protection for his train extra 338, and his failure to place a lighted fusee between the tracks when called in.

We enclose herewith book of rules and rules governing interlocking signals, and call your attention to flagging rule No. 99 and rule No. 27, as well as to the abuse of them, which has previously been allowed.

Had these rules been enforced by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company, this wreck could have been averted.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) E. K. Swasey,

T. W. Gibbons,

W. E. Weeks,

Inspectors.