

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
NEW YORK, ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILROAD AT MAY WOOD,  
N. Y., ON MARCH 24, 1923

May 9, 1923

To the Commission

On March 24, 1923, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad at Maywood, N. Y., resulting in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 37 passengers, 1 mail clerk, and 3 employees

#### Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division extending between Cadonia and Sidney, N. Y., a distance of 40.65 miles, this being a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred just north of the station at Maywood; approaching this point from the north there are 2,980 feet of tangent, followed by a compound curve to the right 1,723 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point about 95 feet from its southern end where the curvature is 5-degrees. Approaching from the south there is a compound curve to the right 3,410 feet in length, with a maximum curvature of 6-degrees, then 190 feet of tangent, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 1.25 per cent ascending for southbound trains for a considerable distance, to within 250 feet of the point of accident, from which point it is 0.4 per cent ascending.

Disk banner signal 123.4, which governs southbound movements, is located 183 feet south of the south switch of the passing track at Miles, and 1,485 feet north of the point of accident, its indications are clear and caution. The control circuits extend from a short distance north of the signal to a point about one mile south thereof, and a caution indication is displayed when there is a train within this section, or in case of a broken rail or equipment within fouling distance of the main track. Under the rule, when an engineman finds this signal displaying a caution indication before the track section is entered, or a clear indication failing to change to caution position after the

track section is entered, he must immediately reduce speed, blow one long blast of the whistle and proceed with caution to end of track section which is indicated by a sign. Owing to a bluff located north of the station, neither engine crew could see the engine of the opposing train until they were within 335 feet of each other. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8.05 p.m.

#### Description.

Southbound passenger train No. 56 consisted of one combination mail and baggage car, and two coaches, hauled by engine 28, and was in charge of Conductor Duccolon and Engineman Obenauer. At Sidney, 7.47 miles north of Maywood, the crew received copy of train order No. 59, Form 31, reading as follows:

"No fifty Six 56 will meet  
extra 161 north at Niles."

Train No. 56 departed from Sidney at 7.44 p.m., passed Niles without complying with train order No. 59, passed signal 193.4, which was displaying a caution indication before the block was entered, and shortly afterwards collided with extra 161 while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 10 and 30 miles an hour.

Northbound freight train extra 161 consisted of 14 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 161, and was in charge of Conductor Titus and Engineman Robinson. At Franklin, 3.37 miles south of Maywood, the crew received copy of train order No. 59, Form 31, previously quoted, and departed at 7.45 p. m. At Maywood the train was brought to a stop with its head end just north of the station, after which the engine was detached, picked up two cars, coupled to the train, and as the air hose was being connected the head end of the train was struck by train No. 56.

The force of the impact moved extra 161 backward about 20 feet, and partly derailed and considerably damaged both engines. The employee killed was a trainman of extra 161, who was connecting the air hose at the time of the accident.

#### Summary of evidence.

On arrival of train No. 56 at Sidney, Conductor Duccolon went into the office and registered, after which he received among others train order No. 59, Form 31, previous

ly quoted, read his set of orders aloud to the operator, then went outside, and after delivering the orders to Engineman Obenauer called attention to the meet with extra 161 at Niles. Although these orders were not compared at this time, both of these members of this crew thoroughly understood their contents. Conductor Ducolon then went to the baggage car and handed his copies of the orders to Baggageman McCoy for his information. When Engineman Obenauer got back on the engine, Fireman Paden was busy putting in a fire, and instead of handing the orders to the fireman to read at this time, he verbally informed the fireman as to their contents, then placed them in his pocket, intending to show them to the fireman after the train departed. Stops were made enroute at the water tank at Sidney, also at South Unadilla, 4.48 miles north of Maywood, and at Youngs, 3.15 miles from Maywood. On passing the south switch of the passing track at Niles, approximately half a mile from Maywood, Engineman Obenauer shut off steam, as signal 193.4 was displaying a caution indication, sounded one long blast on the engine whistle, and when about three car lengths from extra 161 saw the headlight of that train and applied the air brakes in emergency, the accident occurring immediately afterwards. Engineman Obenauer stated the last time he thought of the meet at Niles with extra 161, prior to seeing the headlight of that train at Maywood, was at South Unadilla, and furthermore, that approaching Niles no communicating whistle signal was sounded by the conductor calling attention to the meeting point. He was fully aware that when a caution indication is displayed by signal 193.4 before the block is entered, as was the case on this occasion, speed should immediately be reduced and the train proceed with caution to the end of the block. Engineman Obenauer further stated that on numerous occasions he has found this signal displaying a caution indication which he attributed to car congestion at Maywood. He also stated that the headlight on his engine was burning brightly, and no trouble was experienced in the operation of train No. 56 on this trip, that he was traveling at a higher rate of speed than usual in this vicinity on this occasion owing to the good condition of engine 22, it having just recently come out of the shop, and he estimated speed at 30 miles an hour at the time he shut off steam, 17 miles an hour when he first saw the headlight of extra 161, and about 10 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Fireman Paden was busy putting in a fire between Sidney and the point of accident, and stated he did not understand where his train was to meet extra 161 when Engineman Obenauer informed him of the contents of train order No. 56 while at Sidney, as the blower was on.

Conductor Ducolon admitted that he forgot to sound the communicating whistle signal approaching Niles in accordance with the rules, and that he did not think of the meeting point until he was opposite the passing track, at which time he was riding in about the center of the rear car of the train, the speed was then about 35 miles an hour. He stated that before he could reach the conductor's emergency valve, located at the front end of this car, the accident occurred. He further stated that it was necessary for him to stand on a seat in order to reach either the conductor's emergency valve cord or the communicating whistle signal cord, and that he did not do this in this instance as all of the seats were occupied. Baggage man McCoy stated he did not think of the meeting point until the baggage car reached the south switch of the passing track at Niles. Flagman O'Brien stated he knew nothing whatever of the train orders received at Sidney.

The first intimation any of the members of the crew of extra 161 had of anything wrong was on seeing the headlight of train No. 56 just before the accident occurred, however, at this time it was too late to give warning of danger to the trainmen who were between the cars making the air hose connection. Engineman Robinson estimated the speed of train No. 56 at the time of the accident to have been about 30 miles an hour, and stated that at this time the air brakes were set on twelve cars in extra 161.

Signal 193.4 was given the usual test on the day prior to the accident, and a thorough test on the day after the accident, and on both of these occasions it was found to be in proper working order. The last time this signal was reported as being out of order was about a year ago, and inspection at that time disclosed that a caution indication was continuously displayed owing to a broken bond wire.

Measurements disclosed that the conductor's emergency valve cord, and the communicating whistle signal cord, were 7 feet 7 inches from the floor of the car in which Conductor Ducolon was riding at the time of the accident, while he could reach only seven feet from the floor.

#### Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Obenauer and Conductor Ducolon, of train No. 56, to comply with a train order fixing a meeting point for their train, and also the failure of Engineman Obenauer properly to obey signal indications.

Engineman Obenauer and Conductor Ducolon admitted that they entirely overlooked the meeting point with extra 181, established by train order No 59, approaching Miles, and Engineman Obenauer also admitted that he did not properly obey the indication of signal 193.4. These employees also failed to comply with rule 210-b of the current book of rules, which reads as follows:

"The conductor must see that his trainmen,  
and the engineman must see that his firemen, read  
and understand his orders."

Had they properly complied with this rule, or had Engineman Obenauer properly obeyed the caution indication displayed by signal 193.4, this accident probably would have been averted.

Baggageman McCoy was familiar with the contents of this train order, and he seen on the alert and acted when the train did not properly reduce speed approaching the meeting point, he probably could have prevented this accident.

Engineman Obenauer entered the service of this railroad as a fireman in 1888, and was promoted to engineman in 1891, his record was fair. Conductor Ducolon entered the service in 1893 as a brakeman, his record was also fair. None of the employees involved had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service laws.

Respectfully Submitted,

W. P. PORTLAND,

Director