INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD AT CANTON, OHIO, ON MARCH 20, 1925.

August 13, 1925.

To the Commission:

On March 20, 1925, there was a rear-end collision between a work train and a yard engine on the Pennsylvania Railroad at Canton, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Eastern Division extending between WY-Block Station, near Lucas, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pa., a distance of 172.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a four-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system; the main tracks are numbered consecutively from north to south, track No. 4 being the eastbound freight track. The accident occurred on an industrial spur, known as the Canton Stamping and Enameling Company's No. 3 track; this spur leads off from main track No. 4 to the south about 1 mile east of WY tower at Third Street, Canton. The switch is a facing-point switch for eastbound trains; the switchstand is on the south side of the main tracks and the switch targets are 9 inches in diameter, with centers of the disks 18½ inches above the ties. One target is painted red around a red lense 4 inches in diameter, and the other is painted white around a green lense of similar size. The indication displayed by the switch target can be seen for a distance of 800 feet. There is a derail located on the south rail of the industrial siding about 140 feet from the switch. Automatic block signal 1010 is located on an overhead signal bridge, about 1,600 feet east of WY tower. The main tracks are tangent from WY tower to and for a considerable distance beyond the switch leading to the siding, while the grade is slightly ascending for eastbound trains. In making yard movements from WY block station to the Canton Stamping and Enameling Company's spur, it is the practice

to obtain permission from the train dispatcher through the signalman at WY tower to use main track No. 4 to the plant and return under protection of the flagman of the yard crew.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 9.10 a.m.

Description

Yard engine 7300, headed east, pushing five cars, was in charge of Conductor Shipp and Engineman Wise. At WY tower permission was obtained to proceed to the Canton Stamping and Enameling Company's plant over main track No. 4 and return, the flagman of the yard crew was left at WY block station to protect the movement. Yard engine 7300 departed from the tower at 9.02 a.m., eastbound, entered upon the industrial siding and was brought to a stop a short distance from the switch. After standing at this point about two or three minutes the tender of the yard engine was struck by extra 7102.

Eastbound work train extra 7102, en route from Massillon to Canton, consisted of engine 7102, headed west, hauling six cars and a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Gannon and Engineman Bookenmyer. On arrival at WY block station it was flagged by the flagman of the yard crew, came to a stop at the home signal at this point, at about 9.01 a.m. , then proceeded to the tower at a low rate of speed. This train departed from WY block station at 9.07 a.m., made a stop at automatic block signal 1010, which was displaying a stop indication, then proceeded, and shortly afterwards entered the switch leading to the industrial siding and collided with the yard engine while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 10 and 18 miles an hour.

The yard engine and the cars attached to it were driven forward between 35 and 40 feet by the force of the impact. The tender of engine 7102 was derailed to the south but remained on the roadbed, leaning to the right at an angle of about 30°. The employee killed was the fireman of the work train.

About 15 minutes after the accident it was decided to move the cars attached to the yard engine as they were blocking a street crossing. In attempting to make this movement the yard engine backed into the derailed tender of the work engine, on account of not being under

the engineman's control due to damage to the brake system sustained at the time of the initial collision. The tenders of both engines were separated only a very short distance at the time this contemplated movement was undertaken and it did not appear that there was any additional damage of consequence as a result of this impact.

Summary of evidence.

At WY tower, Conductor Shipp, of yard engine 7300, obtained permission from the operator to use main track No.4 for forty minutes, in order to proceed to the Canton Stamping and Enameling Company's track No. 3, and return. Work extra 7102 was approaching WY block station from the west on main track No. 4 at this time, and it was understood that the yard engine would get into clear on the industrial siding and let the work train by at that point. Accordingly, Flagman Gross was stationed at WY block station to protect the contemplated movement, with instructions from Conductor Shipp to notify the crew of the work train that the yard engine would get into clear at the industrial spur and let them by at that point. Yard engine 7300 then departed. On arrival at the industrial spur Brakeman Swain opened the main track switch, Brakeman McKeand opened the derail, the yard engine shoved the five cars in upon the spur and was then brought to a stop, the main track switch being left open. Brakeman McKeand, after opening the derail, continued walking ahead of the cars and opened a gate leading to the Canton Stamping and Enameling Company's plant, and also raised a platform so that the cars could be moved into the plant. The accident occurred immediately afterwards.

Conductor Shipp stated that he intended to close the main track switch as soon as the yard engine was into clear, and that in his opinion it was fouling the main track when it was struck by the work train; however, he was near the movable platform at the plant when the accident occurred.

Engineman Wise stated that the first intimation he had of anything wrong was when he saw the work train head in at the switch. He immediately released the air brakes on the engine and endeavored to start ahead, but the accident occurred before the yard engine moved. Engineman Wise said that the yard engine was standing

in the clear on the siding about three to five minutes prior to the accident, at a point about 10 feet east of the derail located on the south rail of the spur. He knew his train was protected by flag but stated he knew nothing of the arrangement for the work train to pass his engine at that point.

Fireman Yost stated that the yard engine was about one half car length into clear of the main track at the time of the accident. Brakemen McKeand and Swain did not know whether the yard engine was fouling the main track or not at the time of the accident.

On arrival at WY block station work extra 7102 was flagged by Flagman Gross of the yard crew, the work train was brought to a stop at the home signal at this point, and then proceeded at a low rate of speed. Conductor Gannon went over to the tower and obtained permission from the operator to proceed on main track No. 4. Flagman Gross climbed upon the step of the engine and informed Engineman Bookenmyer and Fireman Jenkins that the yard engine was working at the stamping plant and would go into clear on the siding but to look out for it, and then he got off the engine.

Engineman Bookenmyer stated that before departing from WY block station he instructed Fireman Jenkins, who was a qualified engineman, to keep a careful lookout for open switches, the work engine was making a back-up movement hauling the train and the engineman could not see the indications displayed by switch targets over the high coal boards on the sides of the tender. Conductor Gannon returned from the tower and boarded the rear of the train. On arrival at signal 1010, which was displaying a "stop then proceed" indication, the work train was brought to a stop, then proceeded. When in the vicinity of Eighth street, which is about 450 feet from the switch leading to the spur, it was overtaken by a train traveling in the same direction on the adjacent main track, No. 3, and Engineman Bookenmyer drew his head inside the cab as that train passed. When the engine of the work train had nearly reached the switch leading to the spur, Fireman Jenkins shouted a warning of danger; Engineman Bookenmyer looked out of the cab, got a glimpse of the tender heading in on the siding, and immediately made an emergency application of the air brakes, but the accident occurred just as he got the brake valve handle around to that position. He thought the speed of his train was 10 or 12 miles an hour at that time.

Engineman Bookenmyer stated that he was familiar with sidings, switches, and signals in this vicinity and was aware that yard engine 7300 was performing work on the siding but that he had implicit confidence in the ability of Fireman Jenkins and was depending solely upon him to give warning in the event of an open switch. After the accident he looked at the switch target and it was displaying a stop indication. He also stated that the yard engine was standing just about into clear at the time of the accident. The air brakes were tested and worked properly en route on this trip.

Road Foreman Herzog, of the work train, who was riding on the engine thought the speed was 15 or 18 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Conductor Gannon and two brakemen of the work train were on the caboose; the two brakemen thought the brakes were applied just before the collision occurred. Conductor Gannon stated that shortly after the accident Engineman Bookenmyer told him that the work train had been flagged and he understood the yard engine was to go into clear at the stamping works.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Bookenmyer and Fireman Jenkins, of work extra 7102, to maintain a proper lookout for open switches after being flagged and stopping for an automatic block signal.

The work train was making a back-up movement at the time of the accident and Engineman Bookenmyer could not see over the high coal boards on the side of the tender. However, Engineman Bookenmyer had definite information from Flagman Gross that the yard engine was working at the point where the accident occurred, and the fact that automatic block signal 1010 was in stop position was an indication either that the yard engine had not cleared the main track or that a switch was open. Under these circumstances he should have ascertained definitely that the track was clear and switches properly set. His statement that he had instructed the fireman and was depending upon him to watch out for an open switch does not relieve him of responsibility; he should have made certain that each switch was properly set before passing over it. The investigation indicated that after instructing the fireman to watch out for open

switches he did not obtain definite information, either from the fireman or by personal observation, of the condition of switches in this block before passing over them.

Fireman Jenkins could have seen the indication displayed by the switch target for a distance of 800 feet from his side of the cab, the weather was clear and it was broad daylight. Fireman Jenkins was a qualified engineman, familiar with the location of switch targets in this vicinity, not only was he required by the rules and instructed by the engineman to watch out for open switches, but he had been told by Flagman Gross to watch out for the yard engine at this point. Had he been maintaining a proper lookout this accident in all probability would not have occurred. According to the evidence, however, Fireman Jenkins gave no warning of the open switch until the tender had practically reached it and it was then too late to avert the accident. Why he did not maintain a proper lookout and give Engineman Bookenmyer proper warning of the open switch is not known as he was killed in the accident.

The investigation developed that in this instance the yard engine with five cars moved over main track for a distance of about one mile, within this distance passing over one railroad crossing, one street railway crossing and several other street crossings at grade, the air brakes on the cars not being in operation as required by law.

Engineman Bookenmyer entered the service of this railroad as fireman in 1890 and was promoted to engineman in 1899. Fireman Jenkins entered the service as a fireman on November 5, 1915, and qualified as engineman in June, 1920. The employees involved were experienced men with good records; at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND.
Director, Bureau of Safety.