

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 QUINCY, OMAHA & KANSAS CITY RAILROAD NEAR KIRKSVILLE, MO., ON MAY 22, 1925.

September 16, 1925.

To the Commission:

On May 22, 1925, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Quincy, Omaha & Kansas City Railroad near Kirksville, Mo., resulting in the death of one employee, and the injury of one passenger and two employees.

Location and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Quincy and Milan subdivision, extending between Quincy, Ill., and Milan, Mo., a distance of 104.6 miles; in the vicinity of the point of accident this is 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 about 4.8 miles west of Kirksville, at a switch which leads off the main track to the north to what is known as Moyer spur, approaching this point from the west the track is tangent for more than one-half mile, while the grade is 0.349 per cent ascending for eastbound trains.

The switch involved is a facing-point switch for eastbound trains, with the switch stand on the engineman's side. The view of the switch is unobstructed.

The weather was clear and the sun was shining at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8 56 a.m.

Description

Eastbound passenger train No. 6 consisted of one combination mail and baggage car, one coach, and one chair car, in the order named, all of wooden construction, hauled by engine 475, and was in charge of Conductor Wolfe and Engineman Kendall. This train left Novinger, the last open office, 7.6 miles from Kirksville, at 6:48 a.m., three minutes late, and was derailed at the switch leading to

Moyer spur while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 25 and 30 miles an hour.

Engine 475, together with its tender, came to rest on the spur on its left side, its head end being the length of the train from the point of the switch. The first two cars and the forward truck of the last car were also derailed, but they remained practically upright. The employee killed was the fireman.

Summary of Evidence

Engineman Kendall stated that he did not observe the indication displayed by the switch target approaching Moyer spur as he was working on the lubricator, and the first he knew of anything wrong was when the fireman shouted a warning of danger, upon reaching the switch, he immediately made an emergency application of the air brakes, after which he was thrown to the deck of the engine, and he then jumped from the fireman's side of the cab. Engineman Kendall admitted that there was nothing about the construction of the engine or on the right of way, to obstruct the view of the switch, and that it could have been seen for a considerable distance.

Conductor Wolfe and Brakeman Williams were riding in the second car at the time of the accident, the conductor did not notice any air-brake application having been made near the switch, the first unusual thing he noticed being the shock of derailment, while the brakeman said his first knowledge of anything wrong was when the air brakes were applied in emergency when the train was close to the switch. Shortly after the accident these employees examined the switch and found it set for the siding and locked, with the target displaying a red indication, there was no indication that the lock had been tampered with.

Trainmaster Cadagan arrived at the scene of the accident shortly after its occurrence. On the north switch point he found a mark which appeared to have been made by a westbound train in running through the switch, while both bridle rods were bent. The switch points were slightly damaged, and were about half open. The bottom part of the staff of the switch was bent, but the top half was intact, resulting in the red target being properly displayed.

During the afternoon of the day prior to the accident Section Foreman Hill and Section Laborer Sholley, proceeding westward with their motor car and push car, coupled, had placed these cars on this spur to await the arrival of train No. 2, eastbound, and scheduled to pass Kirksville at 3 29 p.m. After this train departed, it being the last east-

bound train scheduled to pass this point prior to the derailment, the section foreman and section laborer continued westward with their motor car and push car. During the investigation these employees testified that on arrival at the spur the motor car and push car were lifted from the main track and placed on the spur and that after train No. 2 passed these cars were lifted back on the main track, the switch not being used. Subsequently, however, Section Foreman Hill made a sworn statement that he gave Section Laborer Sholley his switch key and that the latter opened the switch, after which they moved the cars in on the spur, where they remained until eastbound train No. 2 passed, they then proceeded westward, and the section foreman said that if the switch was closed and locked at this time it was done by Sholley, as he was in possession of the switch key, and Section Foreman Hill depended on him to close and lock the switch, not personally ascertaining whether this was done. Section Laborer Sholley also made a sworn statement practically to the same effect, and he added that he was not positive whether he closed the switch after the cars were shoved out on the main track.

Chief Dispatcher Shrodes stated that the last westbound train to pass Moyer switch prior to the derailment was passenger train No. 5, which passed that point about 9:29 p.m., May 21, about 5½ hours prior to this time eastbound passenger train No. 2 passed over the switch. The last train to use the switch was westbound freight train No. 91, which picked up a car at this point three days prior to the accident.

Engineman Edenburn, of train No. 5, said that on account of the curvature of the track it is difficult for the engineman of a westbound train to observe the position of the switch until his engine nearly reaches it. On this occasion he did not notice the switch target or lamp, in fact, he said he had not noticed a lighted lamp at this point for several days. Engineman Edenburn did not think his train ran through the switch. It also appeared from his statements that although required to make a report in case he found a switch lamp not burning, he could not recall making such a report at any time during his years of experience as an engineman in this territory. Fireman Webb, of train No. 5, said the lamp was not burning, but that he did not call the engineman's attention to this fact inasmuch as the lamp had not been burning for several days previously.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by a split switch, for which Section Foreman Hill and Section Laborer Sholley are primarily responsible.

The evidence indicates that after eastbound passenger train No. 2 passed Moyer switch in the afternoon of the day prior to the accident, Section Foreman Hill and Section Laborer Sholley moved the motor car and push car out of the spur and proceeded westward without closing the switch, and that about 5½ hours later westbound passenger train No. 5 ran through it, damaging it to such an extent that eastbound passenger train No. 6 was derailed on encountering it.

Rule 64, of the Book of Rules of Maintenance of Way Department, reads as follows:

"Hand and motor cars and unloaded push cars must be passed from the main line to side track, or vice versa, by lifting ear. Switches must be opened for loaded cars only under the supervision of the foreman, who will be held responsible for the proper closing of the switches "

Had Section Foreman Hill and Section Laborer Sholley complied with this rule this accident would not have occurred.

The view of the switch was unobstructed, the weather was clear and the sun was shining, and there was nothing about the construction of the engine to interfere with vision; had Engineman Kendall been maintaining a proper lookout approaching Moyer switch this accident probably would have been prevented.

Had an adequate block-signal system been in use on this line this accident probably would not have occurred; an adequate automatic train stop or train control device would have prevented it.

Section Foreman Hill entered the service of this railroad as a section laborer October 12, 1915, and was promoted to section foreman May 10, 1922, while Section Laborer Sholley was reemployed in his present capacity May 6, 1925, he having worked on this section at various times for the past 12 years

Engineman Kendall entered the service as fireman August 4, 1885, and was promoted to Engineman November 19, 1888; his record was good

At the time of the accident 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. Borland,
Director.