

In re investigation of an accident which occurred on the  
St. Louis--San Francisco Railroad near Waleetka,  
Okla., on December 8, 1917.

January 19, 1918.

On December 8, 1917, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the St. Louis--San Francisco Railroad near Waleetka, Okla., which resulted in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 7 employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Creek sub-division of the Southwestern division, on which this accident occurred, is a single-track line extending from Sapulpa to Francis, a distance of 101.9 miles. Train movements are governed by time table and train orders transmitted by telegraph and telephone, no block signal system being in use. By time card rule northbound trains are superior to southbound trains of the same class.

The trains involved in this accident were northbound freight train No. 532 and southbound freight train No. 543.

Train No. 532, en route from Francis to Sapulpa, consisted of locomotive 796, 1 empty horse car and a caboose, in charge of Conductor Morris and Engineman Colvin. It left Francis at 2.38 p.m., 3 hours and 22 minutes late, arrived at Spaulding, 14.1 miles north of Francis, at about 2.58 p.m., and left there after the crew had received a copy of train order No. 45 reading as follows:

"No. 543 has right over No. 532  
Henryetta to Waleetka."

At Waleetka, 30.3 miles north of Spaulding, the crew received a copy of train order No. 69 reading as follows:

"No. 543 get this train and meet No. 532 at  
Henryetta."

This train left Waleetka at 4.20 p.m. and collided with train No. 543 2-1/2 miles north of there at 4.27 p.m., while running at a speed of about 25 miles an hour.

Train No. 543, en route from Okmulgee to Francis, consisted of locomotive 829, 25 cars and a caboose, in charge of Conductor Hileman and Engineman Phillips. It left Okmulgee at 11.50 a.m., 4 hours and 20 minutes late, and arrived at Henryetta, 15.5 miles south of there, at 12.38 p.m. After doing switching and station work Conductor Hileman went to the telegraph office at 2.10 p. m., received train order No. 45 and other orders and the train left there at 2.55 p.m., and collided with train No. 532 about 10 miles south of Henryetta while running at a speed of about 25 miles an hour.

The engineman and head brakeman of train No. 543 and the fireman of train No. 532 were killed.

Approaching the point of accident from the south there is 4,500 feet of tangent, then a 2-degree curve to the right 945 feet long, then 997 feet of tangent, then a 4-degree curve to the left 1, 893 feet long, the collision occurring 540 feet in on this curve. Approaching the point of accident from the north there is a 1-degree curve to the right, 1,706 feet in length, then 3,367 feet of tangent, then a 4-degree curve to the right, 1,893 feet in length, the collision occurring 1,363 feet in on this curve. The accident occurred on a 10-foot fill and the track was practically level. On account of a dense growth of trees and brush on either side of the track and the curve on which the track was laid, the range of vision of both enginemen was restricted to about 500 feet. The weather at the time was cloudy.

Conductor Morris of train No. 532 stated that his train left Francis at 2.36 p.m., and at Spaulding he received train order No. 46, giving train No. 543 rights over his train from Henryetta to Waleetka. He arrived at Waleetka at 4:12 p.m. asked the operator if he could give him some time on train 543, and the operator gave him a copy of train order No. 69, directing train 543 to meet his train at Henryetta, and he left there at 4:20 p.m. When his train had reached mile post 492 north of Waleetka he felt the air brakes being applied in emergency and the collision followed almost immediately. He got out of the caboose and when he met Conductor Hileman the latter asked him the number of his train, and was told it was 532. Conductor Hileman said: "I have right over you to Waleetka," to which Conductor Morris replied, "Yes, but I had a meet with you at Henryetta." Conductor Hileman replied, "I never did get the order."

Engineman Golvin of train 532 stated that he received a copy of train order No. 69 at Waleetka and left there at 4:20 p. m., expecting to meet train No. 543 at Henryetta. On account of the curve and timber along the track, he could see the approaching train a distance of only about 3 car lengths.

Operator Beard, on duty at Waleetka, stated that when train No. 532 arrived at Waleetka Conductor Morris came into the office and requested him to ask the dispatcher for time on train No. 543, which he did. Operator Beard said that the dispatcher called the operator at Henryetta and him at the same time to take train order 69, which he did, and gave it to Conductor Morris with a clearance, the order being made complete at 4:19 p.m. Before the dispatcher gave him the order he heard him ask the operator at Henryetta if train 543 was out and he heard the operator reply "No," whereupon the dispatcher told him to copy a train order on form 31 and to make three copies. He heard the operator repeat this order but did not hear complete given on train order 69.

Conductor Hileman of train 543 stated that his train left Okmulgee at 11.30 a.m., and upon arriving at Henryetta at 12.35 p.m. the necessary switching and station work was done, after which he went to the telegraph office at 2.10 or 2.15 p.m. and received two train orders. He then said to the operator, "32 is due out of McAlester now in a few minutes and I will have to have something on them," and the operator gave him train order No. 46 at about 2.27 p.m. and he told the operator he would be ready to go in about 20 minutes. He stated that he left Henryetta about 2.50 or 2.55 p.m., arrived at Bryant, 4.7 miles south of Henryetta, at 3.18 p.m. and after doing station work, waited for train No. 510, which arrived at 4 p.m., and his train left Bryant at about 4.10 p.m. Prior to the accident, he was riding in the cupola of the caboose but did not see train 532 until after the accident. Conductor Hileman said he did not receive a copy of train order No. 49.

Fireman Pool stated that his train left Bryant at about 4.10 p.m. and he was standing in front of the firebox door when the engineman applied the air brakes in emergency and called to him to look out, the collision occurring before he had time to get off the engine. He said the speed of his train at the time of collision was about 25 miles an hour and on account of his being on the outside of the curve he did not see the approaching train before the collision occurred.

First trick operator C. S. Goldsmith stated that he was on duty at Henryetta from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m., at which time he was relieved by his brother, Ralph Goldsmith. He stated that he copied train order No. 46 and delivered it and a clearance card to the conductor of train No. 543, but as he was busy making up his ticket report and switch engines were passing the office frequently he did not see train No. 543 leave, and said it was not unusual for trains to remain at Henryetta for some time after being cleared. He did not report the train as leaving to the dispatcher, as he did not see it leave and finally forgot it, but stated he could have ascertained whether or not it had departed had he gone out into the yards and looked for it. He stated that when he was relieved by his brother he did not make a transfer of the orders to him nor give him any information concerning them. He had entered only the number of train 543 in the office register book; after the accident he went to the station and entered the arriving time of train 543 and Conductor Hileman's name, but later erased the time. He admitted that had he reported to the dispatcher the time train 543 departed and made a proper transfer to the second trick operator the accident probably would have been averted. He stated it was his opinio<sup>n</sup>.

that the responsibility should be placed on the dispatcher, for the reason that he had asked the dispatcher to clear that train about two hours before train order No. 69 was issued, and he should have had the second trick operator investigate and find out whether train 543 was at Henryetta before issuing train order No. 69.

Second trick operator Ralph Goldsmith stated that he went on duty at Henryetta at 2 p.m., sold tickets until 4 p.m., and then assumed the duties of operator, relieving first trick operator. At about 4.18 p.m. Dispatcher Bean called him over the telephone and asked when train No. 543 would be ready and he replied that he did not know, as he had not seen the conductor, and the dispatcher then told him to copy train order 69, addressed to train 543 at Henryetta and to train 532 at Waleetka, and again asked him if he knew when train 543 would be ready, or if the conductor of that train had been around the office. Operator Goldsmith replied that he had not seen the conductor since he came on duty; the dispatcher then finished giving him the order. Operator Goldsmith repeated it, and he heard it completed at Waleetka at 4.19 p.m. When he executed train order 69 he did not know it changed any other order and he had no knowledge that train 543 had been cleared; neither did he make any inquiry as to where it was and did not know whether or not it had gone. When the dispatcher called him to take train order 69 he looked at the office register book and saw only the number of train 543 and it occurred to him that that train was either at the north end of the yard waiting for a passenger train or had not arrived at Henryetta, and he did not think it had passed the train order board, as he assumed from the dispatcher's asking him if it was ready to go that it had not been cleared. Operator Goldsmith said he saw Conductor Hileman at the register window about 2.20 p.m. when he was selling tickets but did not know what train he was on. He said that the rules require the operator going off duty to make a transfer to the operator that relieves him, showing all orders on hand and what trains are over-due and not by, and had there been a proper transfer to him it would have shown that train 543 had been given a clearance. The requirements of this rule had not been observed for some time, and when he went on duty as an operator no transfer was made to him, and he therefore did not know that train order No. 46 was in existence, it having been signed by the conductor and filed by the first trick operator. He said Operator C. S. Goldsmith came to the office after the accident and entered the time of arrival of train 543 in the office register book but later erased it. He thought the responsibility for this accident rested between the dispatcher and the first trick operator but admitted he should have required the latter to make a proper transfer to him.

Dispatcher Bean stated that he issued train order 46 at 2.17 p.m., it was made complete as to train 532 at Spaulding at 3 p.m. and as to train 543 at Henryetta at 2.25 p.m. When train 532 arrived at Waleetka he gave

that train time over train 507 to Bryant. After that order was completed somebody called on the telephone and it began popping and cracking but he heard Waleetka say something about train 543 and heard enough of it to understand that that train had not arrived there. He then called Henryetta and said "543" and understood the operator there to say "I have not cleared them," and he then instructed the operator to copy train order 69, fixing Henryetta as the meeting point for trains 538 and 543. This order was put out at 4.17 p.m., and made complete as to train 538 at 4.19 but was not received by train 543 at all. He said he did not receive a report showing the arrival and departure of train 543 at Henryetta and did not ask for one, as the operator said he had not cleared it; although it was the duty of the dispatcher to ask the operator for such a report when it was not given promptly, the telephone was working badly and he did not call the operator.

Rule 222 of the book of rules of the St. Louis--San Francisco Railroad provided that:

Operator will promptly record and report to the Train Dispatcher the time of arrival and departure of all trains and the direction of extra trains.

This accident was caused by failure of the first trick operator, C.S. Goldsmith, properly to record the time of arrival and departure of train 543, report the same to the dispatcher, and make a proper transfer to the second trick operator.

The evidence shows that Operator C. S. Goldsmith did not enter the time of arrival or departure of train 543 on the records, as required by this rule, nor did he make a transfer to the second trick operator, or give him any information that would indicate that train 543 had arrived or departed from Henryetta; neither did he inform the dispatcher when that train departed.

Second Trick Operator Ralph Goldsmith is at fault for not requiring the first trick operator to make a proper transfer to him, when he took charge of the office.

Dispatcher Bean issued train order 46 at 2.17 p.m., giving train 543 rights over train 538, Henryetta to Waleetka, and about two hours later he called the operator at Henryetta and received such vague information concerning train 543 that it should have made him doubtful as to whether it was there or not. Notwithstanding this he issued train order 69, making Henryetta a meeting point for these two trains, and made it complete as to train 538 at Waleetka without making sure that train 543 was at Henryetta, in violation of rule 300, governing train

dispatchers, which states that they:

"Under circumstances admitting of a doubt  
must not attempt to hold a train upon the Oper-  
ator's statement that it has not passed."

Operator C. S. Goldsmith had been employed for about 15 months prior to the accident but had had over six years experience as an operator; when relieved at 4 p.m. he had been on duty 9 hours. Operator Ralph Goldsmith was employed on May 5, 1916, and had been on duty about 2-1/2 hours at the time of the accident, after having been off duty 15 hours. Dispatcher Bean had been a dispatcher on this road for about 13 years. He had been on duty a little longer than 8 hours after having been off duty 16 hours.