

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
YAZOO & MISSISSIPPI VALLEY RAILROAD AT MONEY, MISS.
ON NOVEMBER 14, 1930

December 17, 1930

To the Commission:

On November 14, 1930, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad at Money, Miss., which resulted in the death of one fireman, and the injury of two employees.

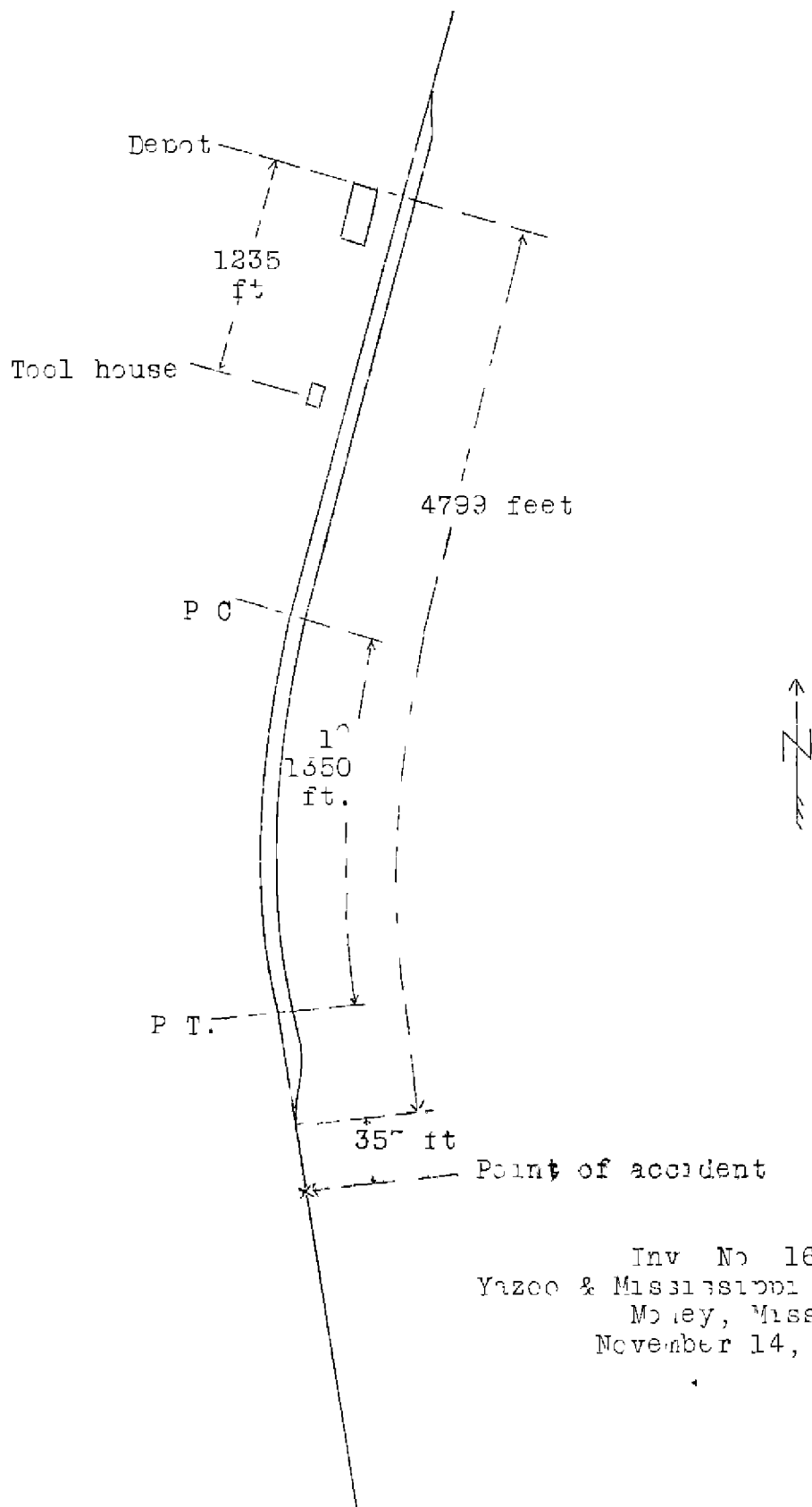
Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Tallahatchie District of the Memphis Division, which extends between Lake Cormorant and Grin, Miss., a distance of 138.9 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, following movements are required to keep 10 minutes apart. The accident occurred at a point 357 feet south of the south passing-track switch at Money, this switch being located 4,799 feet south of the station. Approaching the point of accident from the north, the track is tangent for approximately 1 mile, followed by a 10° curve to the left 1,350 feet in length, from which point the track is tangent for a distance of more than 1 mile, the accident occurring on this latter tangent at a point 588 feet from its northern end. The grade is practically level.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:38 a.m.

Description

Southbound second-class freight train No. 71 consisted of 89 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2009, and was in charge of Conductor Godbold and Engineman Wright. This train departed from Philipp, 7.6 miles north of Money, at 10.45 a.m., 1 hour and 10 minutes late, and upon arrival at Money it entered the passing track to permit two northbound trains to pass. As soon as these two trains had passed, train No. 71 pulled out on the main track at the south passing-track switch at 11:22 a.m., but shortly afterwards it came to a stop due to the train parting, the train was still standing at this point when it was struck by train No. 77.



Inv No 1676
Yazoo & Mississippi Valley R R
Money, Miss ,
November 14, 1930

Southbound second-class freight train No. 77 consisted of 35 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1507, and was in charge of Conductor Richardson and Engineman Ryan. This train left Philipp at 10 55 a.m., 5 hours and 10 minutes late, passed the station at Money at 11 36 a.m., 5 hours and 36 minutes late, and collided with train No. 71 while traveling at an estimated speed of 18 miles per hour.

The caboose and two rear cars of train No. 71 were demolished and then consumed by fire, while the rear truck of the third car was derailed. The engine truck and two pairs of drivers of engine 1507 were derailed, as was the case with the first eight cars in train No. 77, these cars being overturned and several of them destroyed.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Wright, of train No. 71, stated that his train passed train No. 77 at Philipp and proceeded to Money, where it entered the passing track to clear two northbound trains. After these trains passed, he headed out onto the main track, reduced speed to enable the flagman to close the switch, and then attempted to resume speed, but while taking up the slack the brakes applied in emergency. After assuring himself that the train had parted, and while the head brakeman was going back to locate the trouble, he whistled for flag protection. Upon receiving a back-up signal from the brakeman, he backed the forward part of the train until the train was recoupled, waited about one minute, and then attempted to proceed, but due to the brakes still sticking on the rear of the train he was unable to move it. In the meantime a signal was given to call in the flagman, but he did not do so as the fireman had informed him that train No. 77 was then approaching, and upon crossing over to the fireman's side of the cab he observed that train approaching at a rapid rate of speed. He did not hear the explosion of torpedoes while that train was approaching, neither did he hear its whistle sounded, although it might have been sounded without his being able to hear it on account of the length of his own train. He estimated that his train had been standing 12 or 13 minutes, and thought that was sufficient time for the flagman to have afforded protection. The statements of Fireman Covington, of train No. 71, added no additional facts of importance.

Head Brakeman Dandridge, of train No. 71, stated that as soon as the train stopped after leaving the passing track, he went back and found the train uncoupled between the 38th and 39th cars. He examined the coupler and noticed that the lever was raised, but nothing else was wrong with it. As soon as the train was recoupled, the conductor, who was about 15 or 16 car-lengths towards the rear end of the train from him, gave a signal to call in the flagman, the engine whistle was not sounded for this purpose, however.

Conductor Godbold, of train No. 71, stated that he was in the caboose when the train suddenly stopped a short distance south of the passing track. He immediately instructed his flagman to protect against train No. 77, then started ahead to learn what caused the train to part, and while going forward he looked back and saw the flagman running northward, with a flag unfurled, the flagman then being about 15 car-lengths to the rear of the train; this was the last he saw of the flagman until after the accident. Conductor Godbold said that before he reached the point where the train had parted, the head brakeman made the coupling, and in turn Conductor Godbold signalled the engineman to proceed, having in mind at the time that he would leave the flagman and that train No. 77 would pick him up. On account of the brakes sticking, the train could not be started, and while waiting for the brakes to release he observed train No. 77 approaching around the curve north of the point of accident. He then decided to wait and pick up the flagman, supposing that the flagman would become the engine of that train, he did not hear the whistle of that train sounded, acknowledging flagman's signals and did not hear a torpedo exploded, and he said he thought he would have heard a torpedo had one been exploded. He noted the time to be 11:25 a. m. when his train stopped, and also noted the time of the collision, which occurred at 11:38 a. m. He considered the flagman a competent employee and supposed that he had gone back a sufficient distance to have stopped train No. 77. After the accident he went back as far as the rear end of train No. 77, but was unable to locate his flagman, which led him to believe that he was still flagging, but the conductor of train No. 77 later informed him that the flagman was in the depot. When he asked the flagman how far back he went the flagman said he reached the house-track switch, which is about 80 car-lengths from the point of accident, and put down one torpedo.

Engineman Feraday, who was deadheading and was riding in the caboose of train No. 71, stated that after the train stopped on the main track he accompanied the conductor towards the head end to determine the cause of the trouble. At the time they departed, the flagman was attending the fire in the caboose and he did not see the flagman leave the caboose to provide protection. When they reached a point about 30 car-lengths from where the train had separated, it was recoupled and they waited at that point for the brakes to release. After standing there a few minutes he heard a station whistle signal sounded by train No. 77, which was followed by whistle signals for two road crossings, but he did not hear the whistle sounded to acknowledge flagman's signals. As the following train neared the point of accident, he could hear the exhaust of the engine, and realizing that a collision was inevitable he ran to the right of way fence, and just before the collision occurred he saw fire flying from

beneath the engine of the approaching train. He estimated train No. 71 had been standing at the point of accident from 12 to 14 minutes, he heard no torpedoes exploded while train No. 77 was approaching that point

Flagman Munson, of train No. 71, was aware train No. 77 was following his own train, because they had passed that train at Philipp. After his train pulled out of the passing track at Money, he closed the switch, boarded the caboose, and shortly afterwards the train stopped due to an emergency application of the brakes. He immediately procured a red flag and two torpedoes and ran back to flag the following train, and when he reached the tool house, located 1,235 feet south of the north end of the station, or 3,921 feet from the rear of his train, he placed one torpedo on the engineman's side of the track and continued running towards the station. He did not hear the whistle of train No. 77, but when he reached a point about eight car-lengths north of where he placed the torpedo he observed train No. 77 approaching around the curve north of the station, the train then being about forty car-lengths from the station. He did not put the other torpedo on the track as he said he did not have time, but stood in the center of the track holding the flag, which was open, above his head until the train almost reached him, when he stepped off the track on the fireman's side. He did not see anyone on the engine when it passed him, and estimated the speed of the train at that time at 35 or 40 miles per hour. After the train passed, he proceeded to the station and arrived there at about the same time as the conductor of train No. 77, which he thought was about 11:40 or 11:45 a.m. He did not hear the explosion of the torpedo that he had placed on the rail, which he attributed to the distance between his location and the location of the torpedo, but about 10 minutes after reaching the station he returned to the location of the torpedo and found fragments of it in a rail joint, which he thought had been caused by its having been exploded, although he was not certain of it. Flagman Munson was positive that he hurried back to flag as fast as possible after his train stopped, and that he did not remain in the caboose until he heard train No. 77 approaching, but rather that he was the first man to leave the caboose after the train parted. Attention is called to the fact that although the point said to have been reached by Flagman Munson eight car-lengths north of the tool house, was 900 feet or less from the station, yet he did not see the order board at stop, did not see the crew pick up an order, and did not hear any whistling, nor could he give any adequate explanation for putting down only one torpedo.

Engineman Ryan, of train No. 77, stated that while approaching Money he sounded three road-crossing whistle signals, as well as a station whistle signal and a signal acknowledging the train-order board. When the train passed the station, traveling at a speed of between 30 and 35 miles per hour, the operator handed a train order to the fireman,

which was noted as having no connection with train No. 71. The fireman then put in a fire and when he returned to his seat the train had almost reached the curve north of the point of accident, and as the train was rounding the curve the fireman shouted a warning that there was a caboose ahead. Engineman Ryan immediately applied the brakes in emergency, opened the sanders and closed the throttle, after which he got down on the steps and waited until the caboose was about three car-lengths distant, and then jumped off. He said the brake application had the proper effect, reducing the speed of his train considerably, but he could not estimate how fast it was traveling at the time of the accident on account of his haste in getting away from the wreckage. He further stated that the visibility was good, that the windows on his side of the cab were open, and that he was keeping a constant lookout after passing the station, but saw no one either on the track or alongside of it and felt certain that had a flagman been out he would have seen him, although it was possible that he passed the flagman while he was moving from his seatbox to the engine steps, preparatory to jumping when rounding the curve just before reaching the point of accident, if there were any torpedoes on the track they failed to explode.

Fireman Scott, of train No. 77, stated that as soon as he received the train order from the operator at Money, he handed it to the engineman and then became engaged in fixing the fire, and by the time he had completed this task the train had almost reached the curve south of the station. Upon returning to his seatbox he looked ahead and noticed the caboose of train No. 71, immediately called it to the engineman's attention, and the engineman in turn applied the brakes in emergency, and they both prepared to get off. He thought his train was about 30 car-lengths north of a highway crossing located just north of the south passing-track switch when he first saw the caboose, and at that time his train was traveling not less than 35 miles per hour. He did not see the flagman of train No. 71 prior to the accident, neither did he hear any torpedoes explode.

Conductor Richardson, of train No. 77, stated that he was riding in the caboose approaching Money and heard the engine whistle sounded for a road crossing and also for the train order board. After receiving the train order from the operator, he read it and handed it to the flagman, and at about the same time the brakes were applied in emergency, the collision occurring shortly afterwards. He estimated the speed of his train at the time of the accident at 18 miles per hour. As soon as the train stopped he hurried to the point of accident, returned to the telephone booth at the south end of the passing track and informed the dispatcher as to what had occurred, and then returned to the station in an automobile, where he met the flagman of train No. 71. He fixed the time of the accident at 11:38 or 11:40 a.m., and the time he arrived at the station as 11:55 or 12 o'clock.

Flagman Manzelman, of train No. 77 stated that his first knowledge of anything wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency. After the train stopped and he discovered that a collision had occurred, he left the caboose and started back to protect, and when he reached the north end of the curve on which his train was standing he observed the flagman of train No. 71 five or six car-lengths ahead of him, running towards the station. He overtook Flagman Munson before reaching the station and Munson remarked that he had been back as far as he could go.

Operator Garrick, on duty at Money, stated that it is his practice to report southbound trains as having arrived when the train clears the main track at the north switch, and as departing when the caboose is clear at the south switch. Although the weather was cloudy on the day of the accident, he could plainly see train No. 71 enter upon the main track at the south switch, and he reported it as departing as soon as the caboose was clear of the switch. His view was obscured beyond that point by a building, and he did not know that his train later came to a stop. He heard train No. 77 whistle for the order board and as the engine passed the station he delivered a wait order to the fireman, and at the same time he noticed the engineman sitting in the cab, apparently looking straight ahead, he estimated that the train was traveling at a speed of between 30 and 35 miles per hour. Operator Garrick returned to the office and reported the train by at 11:30 a.m., and about two or three minutes later the janitor of a nearby school entered the office and informed him of the accident. He did not hear the explosion of a torpedo by train No. 77 and did not see the flagman of train No. 71 until about 25 minutes after the accident, when the flagman, together with the conductor of train No. 77, walked into the office.

Dispatcher Ward stated that train No. 77 was reported as passing the station at Money 14 minutes after train No. 71 had been reported clear of the south switch at that point. The first information he received of the accident was when the operator at Money called and reported that train No. 77 was derailed and that some of the cars were burning.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Flagman Munson, of train No. 71, properly to afford protection.

The rules provide that when a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, and place two torpedoes, and, when necessary in addition display lighted fuses. Flagman Munson maintained that just as soon as possible after

his train stopped he ran back with two torpedoes and a red flag and that he placed one torpedo on the track at a point approximately 3,800 feet to the rear of his train and then continued northward, but that train No. 77 was coming and did not give him time to put down the second torpedo, he then stood on the track with his flag unfurled until the train was close to him, at which time he stepped off the track on the fireman's side. The engine crew of train No. 77 stated they did not see a flagman at any time after passing the station, while none of the employees in that locality heard the explosion of a torpedo, Flagman Munson admitting that he was less than 10 car-lengths from where he put down the torpedo, yet he failed to hear it explode. Conductor Godbold said the flagman started back at once, but the engineer who was dead-heading said the flagman was still in the caboose when he and the conductor went ahead to see why the train had broken in two.

The evidence indicates that from 12 to 14 minutes elapsed from the time train No. 71 came to a stop before it was struck by train No. 77, and it is apparent that Flagman Munson either failed to go back at all until he heard train No. 77 in the distance, or else that he went back in such a leisurely manner that he was unable to provide the protection required by the rules.

The employees involved were experienced men, and 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.