No. 120

March 11, 1913.

In re Investigation of Accident on the Grand Trunk Railway at New Haven, Mich., on January 16, 1913.

On January 16, 1913, there was a head-end collision on the Grand Truck Railway at New Haven, Mich., resulting in the death of 2 employees, and the injury of 20 passengers and 4 employees.

Westbound freight train extra 1426 consisted of 11 loaded cars, 33 empty cars and a caboose, hauled by engine No. 1426, and was in charge of Conductor Hazen and Engineman Britton. It left Port Huron, Mich., at 1:05 p.m. for Detroit, Mich. Extra 1426 arrived at New Haven, 55.19 miles from Port Huron, at 3:06 p.m., and after meeting several trains, left there at 4:33 p.m., with 39 minutes to reach Chesterfield, a distance of 5.61 miles, in order to clear passenger train No. 10 five minutes as required by the rules. It proceeded only a short distance when it stalled. It was then backed into the passing track at New Haven, and Engineman Britton informed the conductor that he would have to return to Richmond for water. Conductor Hazen went for orders and received an order to flag on train No. 10 to Richmond. He gave it to the rear brakeman to deliver to the engineman, telling him to say to the engineman that he (the conductor) would do the flagging. Engine No. 1426 was then cut off from the train, being at this time about one-half mile east of the west passing track switch, and engineman Britton proceeded west with his engine intending to stop on the passing track near the switch, clear of the main track. Estimates as to the speed of engine No. 1426 on its half-mile run to the switch varied from 4 to 12 miles per hour. The first intimation the engineman had that he was nearing the end of the passing track was when the engine struck the curve of the switch leading to the main track. Before the engine could be stopped the lead trucks and forward driving wheels had run through the switch points, fouling the main track. Brakeman Allen got off the engine, unlocked the switch and tried to pull the switch points over so that the engine could back into clear, but was unable to do so. He started to go around the front end of the engine and as he did so saw the headlight of train No. 10. He ran toward it, signalling the engineman of that train with his white light. He stated that he had gone a distance of one telegraph pole when the engine of train No. 10 passed him, colliding with engine No. 1426.

Eastbound passenger train No. 10 consisted of 1 baggage car and 1 coach, hauled by engine No. 2285, and was in charge of Conductor Harris and Engineman Cochrane. This train left Detroit, Mich., at 4:30 p.m. for Port Huron, Mich., and passed Chesterfield, Mich., the last telegraph station east of the point of accident, at 5:22 p.m., and over the distance of nearly 5 miles between Chesterfield and the point of collision in about 9 minutes, colliding with engine No.

1426 at about 5:30 p.m., while running at a speed of about 40 miles per hour.

Both engines, as well as the two cars in train No. 10 were derailed, but remained upright on the roadbed. The force of the collision pushed the tender of engine No. 3265 into the cab, crushing it against the boiler-head and firebox, badly damaging both engine and tender. Engine No. 1426 was considerably damaged, while the baggage car and coach of train No. 10 were slightly damaged.

This division of the Grand Trunk Railway is a single-track line, straight for several miles in each direction, and nearly level. No block signals are in use, trains being operated by train orders and time-card schedules. At the time of the accident it was nearly dark, and the weather was foggy and misty.

Engineman Britton of engine No. 1426 had been in the employ of this railroad about 5 years and had been an engineman since November 3, 1913. He stated that he had been over this line but once before as an engineman and a very few times as a fireman, and was not familiar with it. The brakes were working properly, but the engine was leaking badly. Water was taken at Richmond, yet when the train stalled near New Haven about two hours later, it was necessary to go for water, although the train had only run a distance of about 7 miles. He stated that he intended to wait on the passing track near the switch until train No. 10 passed. The switch light was burning very dimly and on account of being unfamiliar with that part of the line he did not realize that he was so near the main track. When he reached the curve leading to the main track he made a service application of the brakes, and later an emergency application which caused the drivers to slide, the lead trucks passing through the switch points.

Fireman Elkington stated that when his engine reached the curve leading to the main track he had just returned to the cab from covering the headlight. He then looked out and saw the headlight of train No. 10. He got off on the engineman's side lighted a fusee and started to flag the approaching train. The engineman of train No. 10 observed his signals, but it was too late to avoid the collision. He stated that after the accident Engineman Britton told him that he could not see the switch light until too late to stop his engine.

Head Brakeman Allen states that he cut the engine off from the train at New Haven and rode on the rear of the tender as the engine proceeded to the passing track switch. When it stopped he walked around in front of the engine and then saw the headlight of train No. 10 approaching. He flagged the train with his white lantern and his signal was observed by the engineman. He did not think a minute elapsed between the time his engine went through the switch and the time when train No. 10 came into view. The

switch light could be seen only a distance of about two car lengths.

Conductor Harris of train No. 10 stated that he felt the brakes being applied in emergency and heard his engineman sound two short blasts on the whistle immediately before the collision. After the accident he asked the engineman of engine No. 1426 what he was doing on the main line and he replied that he got out there before he knew it.

Brakeman Hanson of train No. 10 stated that when the train stopped the fireman of engine No. 1426 with a burning fusee was on the right side of the track just opposite the baggage car door.

The records of all the employees involved were good and they are considered reliable men.

Engineman Bilton was 24 years of age. He had been employed nearly 5 years with his company and had been an engineman since November 7, 1912. This trip was his second trip on this division since his promotion, the remainder of the time having been spent in yard service.

Fireman Elkington had been employed on the Grand Trunk Railway as a fireman since October 30, 1912, previous to which he had worked one year and eight months on another railway. While he had not made all of his trips over this division, he considered that he was very well acquainted with the road.

Head Brakeman Allen had been employed on the Grand Trunk Railway since about October 10, 1912. This was his first trip over this division. He had had several years' previous experience on other railroads.

The crew of extra 1426 had been on duty 7 hours and 10 minutes at the time of the accident, and had had more than 12 hours' rest prior to going on duty.

This accident was caused by engine No. 1426 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train, for which the engineman is directly responsible. On account of his unfamiliarity with the road and especially in view of the slippery condition of the rails, and of the fog which obscured his vision, any proper regard for safety would have required that he use extreme caution in order to avoid running through the switch.

On many railroads where passing track switches connect such passing tracks with main line tracks, derailing devices are installed for the prevention of such accidents as the one here under consideration, and had such a derailing device been installed and in operation on this passing track, the engine would have been derailed but the collision would have been averted.