

October 26, 1911.

Interstate Commerce Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs,

On September 5th the Pennsylvania Railroad reported by telegraph, a collision occurring at Dock Junction, Pa., about 8 P. M. September 4th, 1911, between two trains of the Erie & Pittsburg Railroad. This accident occurred while both trains were running over the tracks of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway, and caused the death of three persons and injuries to twenty-four others. Inspectors Duffy and Gibbons were assigned to investigate this accident. They also attended the inquest held at Erie, Pa., October 13th, and assisted the coroner in the taking of testimony. A synopsis of their report is herewith submitted.

Between Girard Junction, Pa., and Erie, Pa., the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway operates a four track road. Track No. 1 is used for slow east-bound trains and track No. 2 for the fast east-bound trains, while tracks Nos. 3 and 4 are for west-bound traffic. These tracks are used jointly by the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and the Erie & Pittsburg Railroads,

trains of the latter road coming on to the Lake Shore tracks at Girard Junction.

On September 4th an east-bound Erie & Pittsburg freight train, hauled by engines 9952 and 9922, and consisting of 54 loaded cars and a caboose, was using track No. 1. The terminal of this train was the freight train yard at Dock Junction, which is on the north side of the main line tracks, and it was necessary for it to cross tracks Nos. 2, 3, and 4 to reach this yard. On approaching Dock Junction the freight train found signals set indicating that it had the right to cross over to this yard. It did not come to a stop, therefore, but started across, moving at a speed of about 8 miles per hour. Just after passing the home signal the towerman at Dock Junction handed to the engineer on the head engine a message as to the track in the yard on which his train was to be placed.

East-bound Erie & Pittsburg passenger train No. 201, composed of two baggage and mail cars, four coaches, and a parlor car, came on-to the tracks of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway at Girard Junction at 7.40 P. M. Girard Junction is 13.9 miles west of Dock Junction and on the night of the accident No. 201 made this run in seventeen minutes, using track No. 2. On approaching Dock Junction, No. 201 found the distant signal at caution, indicating that it should pass through the block, prepared to stop at the home signal. The home signal

was found to be at danger, indicating that all trains on track No. 2 should come to a stop, and all signal indications were that the freight train on track No. 1 had the right to cross over to the freight yard. The engine crew on train No. 201 disregarded the signals entirely and struck the freight train on the cross-over at about the twelfth car of the train, resulting in the death of the engineer of the passenger train and two passengers, while twenty-four persons were more or less seriously injured. The engine of the passenger train was demolished, as well as the two baggage and mail cars, and one of the coaches. The other three coaches were quite badly damaged and the parlor car slightly damaged. The weather was clear and all signals could be plainly seen. The track at this point is straight and the home signal can be seen before passing the distant signal. This latter signal is located about 4,000 feet west of the home signal, which is 135 feet west of the place of accident.

The fireman of No. 201 states that between Girard Junction and Dock Junction he was calling the signals as required by the rules, and that the engineer answered as usual. On approaching Dock Junction he stood in the gangway on the right side of the engine and called the caution signal and was answered by the engineer, who, he said, shut

off steam and made a slight application of the air brake. On approaching the home signal he states he called it "red" three times in succession. Finally the engineman reached for the brake valve and he (the fireman) also started for it for the purpose of stopping the train, but before he could reach it the accident occurred. He further stated that he did not think the freight train was using the cross-over.

It also appears from the statement of the fireman that at Wampum, Pa., on this same trip, the engineman had disregarded both distant and home signals set against him and had run into a side switch the length of the engine, and that he (the fireman) was compelled to stop the train when within a short distance of the derail. At that time when the engineman was asked why he ran by these signals, he said he forgot.

The train crew of No. 201 testified that no application of the air brake was made coming in to Dock Junction, and that no warning of any kind was given of the approaching collision. It also appears from the testimony of other witnesses that the engineman was working steam up to the time of the collision, notwithstanding the statement of the fireman to the contrary, and that the speed of the train was about 50 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

No. 201, on track No. 2, ran parallel to the freight train, on track No. 1, for about 40 car lengths before colliding with it. When it passed the caboose of the freight train, the rear brakeman was on the back platform while the conductor was in the cupola, and both stated that they could see nothing of the engineman of No. 201, and that the engine was using steam and continued to do so until the collision occurred.

The dispatcher handling the trains on this division testified that no orders are required by freight trains in crossing over to the freight yard, but that they are governed entirely by the interlocking signals. He knew train No. 201 was approaching Dock Junction and said he crossed the freight train over on the time of the delayed passenger train in order to prevent delay to other trains on tracks Nos. 3 and 4, west-bound, and thought the freight train would clear No. 201 by about two minutes, although he did not have any knowledge as to the length of the freight train.

The towerman at Dock Junction states that when he reported to the dispatcher that the freight train was coming on track No. 1, he received permission to cross the train over. He then set the proper signals and lined up the cross-over switches. He says that the dispatcher gave him a message for the freight train indicating on what track in the

Dock Junction yard the train should be placed. He delivered this message to the engineman of the head engine of the freight train without bringing the train to a stop. He then noticed No. 201 coming on track No. 2.

The engineman in charge of train No. 201 was 63 years of age, and left home that morning apparently enjoying the best of health. He was a man of high character and good habits. He was regularly employed on this division and was familiar with the signals and rules. No reasons have been advanced, however, as to why he ran by the signals at Wampum, Pa., on this same trip. When this is taken into consideration with the fact that at Dock Junction he ran by both distant and home signals, which were set against him, without shutting off steam or applying the air brakes, running alongside of the freight train for 40 car lengths before striking the same, the conclusion must be reached that he was so afflicted as to be unable to properly perform his duties.

The fireman had been employed on this division about seven years, six months of which time he had been on this run. He is a promoted engineman and is familiar with the rules and signals governing train operation on this division.

This accident was caused by the disregard on the part of the engine crew on train No. 201 of signals provided by the railroad to prevent the occurrence of such accidents. It seems apparent, however, that the engineman in charge of this train

was not in possession of all his faculties. The fireman must have known this, as once before on this trip the engineman had run by a stop signal and it had been necessary for the fireman to take charge of the engine and bring the train to a stop, a most unusual proceeding. He should, therefore, have been prepared to take charge of the engine whenever the engineman failed to be governed by signals displayed.

As a preventative of such accidents it is recommended that:

1. In all situations where accidents are likely to occur through the non-observance by enginemen of signals or rules calculated to insure safety, automatic train control apparatus should be provided to insure that trains will be brought to a stop in case the signals or rules are not properly observed.

2. Cross-over movements should not be permitted when passenger trains are known to be approaching.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of
Safety Appliances.

