

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT WHICH
OCCURRED ON THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND
AND PACIFIC RAILWAY AT MICKLES,
ARK., ON JULY 29, 1915

On July 29, 1915, there was a rear-end collision on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway, at Mickles, Ark., which resulted in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 3 employees and 4 passengers. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Eastbound freight train extra 1776 consisted of 41 cars and a caboose and was in charge of Conductor Newhouse and Engineer Engster. At Blue Mountain, a copy of train order No. 144 was received, notifying the crew of extra 1776 that eastbound passenger train No. 44 was one hour and fifteen minutes late. At Waveland, 4.9 miles beyond Blue Mountain, Conductor Newhouse went forward to ride on the locomotive, instructing the flagman to watch out for train No. 44. At Danville, 15.1 miles beyond Waveland, the train stopped at the west switch of the passing track at 10:20 p.m., for the purpose of taking the siding for train No. 44. Another order was then received, notifying them that train No. 44 was running one hour and thirty minutes late. Flagman Spear went back to protect his train by flag, thinking that train No. 44 was due out of the last station, not knowing of this extension in time. After receiving the order giving them more time on train No. 44, the crew of extra 1776 proceeded, leaving Danville at 10. 26 p.m. No

whistle signal, however, was sounded, recalling the flagman, and he was left behind. Extra 1776 arrived at Mickles, 8.6 miles from Danville, at 10:40 p.m., and on account of the engine not steaming good decided to remain at that point for train No. 44.

Westbound extra 1775 was on the siding, and as it was not long enough to hold the two trains extra 1776 proceeded to the east switch, the intention being that, as soon as train No. 44 passed the west switch, extra 1775 should proceed and extra 1776 would back in and allow train No. 44 to pass. Extra 1776 stopped beyond the east switch, the switch was opened and the train backed until the caboose was standing on the frog. The whistle signal having been sounded for the flagman to go back to protect the rear of the train, extra 1776 remained at this point until 11:23 p.m., at which time it was struck by train No. 44.

Eastbound passenger train No. 44 consisted of 3 baggage cars, 3 coaches and 1 Pullman car, all except the Pullman car being of steel construction. The train was hauled by locomotive 1018, and was in charge of Conductor Landrum and Engineman Maloney. After having received a clearance card from "A" which informed the crew that extra 1776 had entered the block at 10:26 p.m., and that westbound extra 1775 had entered the block at 10:05 p.m., train No. 44 left Danville, at 11:13 p.m., and at 11:23 p.m., collided with the rear end of extra 1776, while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 45 miles

per hour.

Locomotive 1018 came to rest on its side, half way down the 12-foot embankment on the right side of the track at a point about 240 feet east of the switch. The caboose and ten cars of extra 1776 were derailed, some of the cars being demolished and the others more or less damaged. None of the cars in train No. 44 were damaged. The two employees killed were the engineman of the passenger train and the middle brakeman of the freight train.

This part of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway is a single track railway. A manual block signal system is in use, so operated as to allow superior trains to enter an occupied block when furnished by the operator with a clearance card form "A" containing the block restrictions. Approaching the point of collision from the west there is a tangent about one mile in length, extending to a point about 660 feet west of the point of the switch, then there is a curve of two degrees to the right, 620 feet in length, followed by a tangent about 1,500 feet in length. On account of the 2-degree curve, and cars standing on the track on the inside of the curve, the vision of the engine crew of the passenger train was limited to about 300 feet.

Flagman Spear, of extra 1776, stated that he read the order received at Blue Mountain, giving his train one hour and fifteen minutes time on train No. 44. He stated

that the conductor went to the head end of the train at Waveland, stating that he might not return before train No. 44 had passed. When the stop was made at Danville he did not hear any whistle signal to go back and flag, but immediately went back to protect his train. When about five telegraph poles from the rear of the train he heard an engine whistle a back-up signal and, thinking it was the engine hauling his train, he hurried back, but at about the same time his own engine sounded a proceed signal and started on its way east. When train No. 44 arrived at Danville he boarded the engine and told the engine man that he would ride until they overtook extra 1776. He also told him that extra 1776 was to meet a westbound extra at Nickles, and that he would probably find the train at that station, but that, if the westbound extra was in to clear, extra 1776 might proceed to Ola ahead of train No. 44. Approaching Nickles he saw a train on the side track, which he thought was extra 1775, and he supposed that his own train had proceeded to Ola. He estimated the speed of the passenger train to have been 40 or 45 miles per hour.

Conductor Newhouse stated that he rode on the engine from Waveland to Nickles on account of the meeting points his train had with opposing trains. On arrival at Danville, he received an order saying that train No. 44 would run one hour and thirty minutes late and, as this order gave his train 15 minutes additional time on train No. 44, left Danville en route to Nickles. The flagman

did not know about his having received the order giving 15 minutes additional time on train No. 44. When they whistled off brakes a proceed signal was received about a minute afterwards from the middle of the train, and although the rear of the train was not in sight he supposed that the middle brakeman had received a proceed signal from the flagman. He did not know whether or not any signal was received from the rear end of the train leaving Darville, as required by the rules, as when the train passed the east switch he was busy talking with the engineer about their next orders. He stated further that passing through Belleville, a signal was received from the rear end of the train and was acknowledged by the engineer. At Mickles the siding was already occupied by westbound extra 1775, so it was decided to run to the east switch and back in. As the engineer slowed down at the east switch he dropped off and, when the caboose passed, opened the switch. The engineer then sounded the whistle for the flagman to go back and protect the rear of the train; and he himself started toward the caboose. At about this time the engineer sounded the back-up signal. He then went into the caboose and, when the engineer sounded the back-up signal again, climbed to the roof and signaled the engineer to back up, the caboose stopping on the point of the frog. The conductor of the train which was on the siding then came into the caboose and he told that conductor that the flagman had

gotten off when the train slowed down to let him get off at the east switch. He made no attempt, however, to ascertain whether or not the rear end of his train was protected, supposing that Flagman Spear was performing this duty. When the engine of train No. 44 whistled, approaching Mickles, as he did not hear the explosion of any torpedoes, it occurred to him that something was wrong and he went into the caboose to get a fusee. In the meantime the conductor of extra 1775 endeavored to flag train No. 44, but only had time to go two or three car lengths. Conductor Newhouse further stated that at Danville the engineman did not whistle out the flagman. He knew that the flagman could not have gone back very far, as he did not have time enough in which to do so before the engineman whistled off brakes. When the caboose passed him at Mickles, as he was standing at the east switch, he saw the middle brakeman standing on top of one of the cars about twelve or fifteen car lengths from the rear end.

Head Brakeman Emerson stated that when the engineman whistled off brakes before leaving Danville, he lined up the switch for the main track and gave the engineman a proceed signal. He did not see any signal given from the rear end of the train. Leaving Danville he was riding six or seven cars from the engine, and he stated that no signals were received from the rear end after the train passed the last switch.

Engineman Engster stated that when he stopped at Danville the conductor went into the telegraph office, while the switch was being opened for the train to enter the passing

track. When the conductor came out with the order giving them fifteen minutes more time on train No. 44 the switch was thrown back for a main line movement and he received a proceed signal. He then ran slowly toward the east switch, as he did not know whether or not a train which was then occupying the siding was in to clear. After passing the switch he read his orders and consulted his time-card. After stopping beyond the east switch at Nickles he backed up a few car lengths, and he stated that he whistled out the flagman either after stopping or after backing up; he did not remember which. He supposed that the flagman would be protecting the train at Danville but did not call him in, stating that he did not know exactly what was going to be done until the train had started, not having seen the orders received by the conductor, and, as a proceed signal had been received from the middle brakeman, he assumed that all the members of the crew were aboard. He did not receive any signals from the rear end when the train passed the last switch at Danville.

Fireman Raymond, of extra 1776, stated that at Danville there was some discussion as to whether or not they should go to Nickles or to Ola for train No. 44 and, after getting the order giving them an additional fifteen minutes on train No. 44, Conductor Newhouse boarded the engine and whistled off brakes himself, the engineman then being engaged in reading the order. The middle brakeman then gave a proceed signal and the train started. He did not see any signal given from the rear end of the train after leaving Danville.

Engineman Bartlow, of extra 1775, the train occupying the side track at Mickles when extra 1776 arrived at that point, stated that after extra 1776 had passed his train he heard the engineman whistle out a flag. After waiting a few minutes and not seeing a flagman appear, one of his brakemen walked back over the train to see whether or not extra 1776 had proceeded on its way. This brakeman returned to the engine and reported that he could see nothing of extra 1776 and thought the train had proceeded to Ola ahead of train No. 44.

William Robinson, mid le brakeman on extra 1776, stated that he heard the engineman of extra 1776 whistle out a flag, but did not see a flagman come back or hear any whistle signal for off brakes or calling in a flagman. After ten or fifteen minutes had elapsed he boarded his train to walk back over the cars to see what the trouble was. When he reached the second car from the engine he could just see the caboose of his own train and as he saw no lights from the caboose of extra 1776 he supposed that that train had proceeded.

The direct cause of this accident was the failure of Conductor Newhouse to know that his train was properly protected while occupying the main track on the time of a superior train. His train was standing on the main track at Mickles for 43 minutes while waiting for train No. 44, during which time he made no attempt to ascertain whether or not it was protected.

While not directly responsible for this accident, a proper regard for safety should have compelled Conductor Hutchins of extra 1775 to notify his engineman that the main track was not clear, the east switch having been opened to permit extra 1776 to back in. Had he notified the engineman to this effect, the headlight of the locomotive hauling extra 1775 would have been uncovered, and the engineman of train No. 44 would in this manner have been warned that the main track was not clear, and probably the accident would not have occurred. As it was, the headlight was covered, and the engineman of train No. 44 had every reason to believe that the main track was clear.

Conductor Newhouse was employed as a brakeman in December, 1908, and was promoted to conductor in July, 1909. He had had 10 or 12 years experience on other roads. His record was good. At the time of the accident he had been on duty less than 4 hours, after a period off duty of more than 28 hours.

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