

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
CHICAGO & EASTERN ILLINOIS RAILWAY AT SIDELL JUNCTION,
ILL., ON JANUARY 7, 1930.

March 14, 1930.

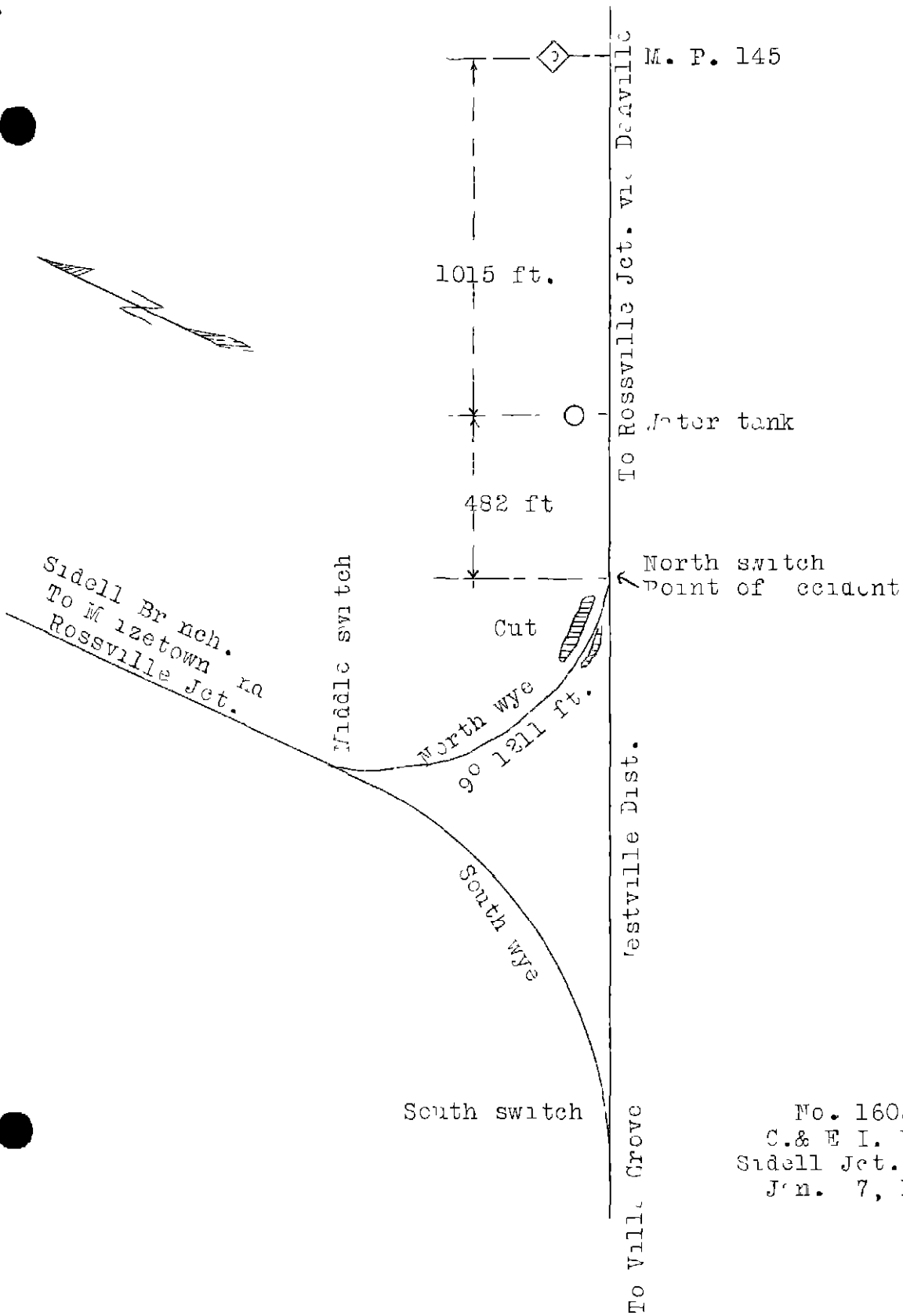
To the Commission:

On January 7, 1930, there was a collision between a freight train of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway and a freight train of the Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railway on the tracks of the latter road at Sidell Junction, Ill., which resulted in the death of one employee and injury to three employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Location and method of operation

The Danville District of the Chicago Division extends between Yard Center, near Chicago, and Danville, via Rossville Junction, which is 13.1 miles north of Danville. At the latter point, what is known as the Westville District extends in a southwesterly direction from North Yard, near Danville, to Villa Grove, a distance of 42 miles, the accident occurring on the Westville District at Sidell Junction, 22.5 miles south of North Yard. What is known as the Sidell Branch is practically a cut-off, and extends between Sidell Junction and Rossville Junction, on the Danville District, a distance of 34.3 miles. On both the Westville District and the Sidell Branch, which are single-track lines, trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The connection between the Sidell Branch and the Westville District at Sidell Junction is made by means of a wye, one leg of which leads from the north on the Westville District main line and is known as the North Wye and the other leading from the south, known as the South Wye.

The point at which the accident occurred is at the north switch of the North Wye. The switch stand at this point is located on the west side of the track; it is a standard main line stand surmounted by an oil burning lamp, the lens of which is 7 feet 4 inches above the rail. The lamp burns continuously and displays a green indication when set for the Westville District main line and red when set for the Wye leading to the Sidell Branch. The stand is also equipped with a metal banner 11 x 24 inches, which displays



No. 1605
 C. & E. I. R.R.
 Sidell Jct., Ill.
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red when the switch is set for the north wye. The center of this banner is 6 feet above the rail. On the opposite side of the track from the switch stand is a telephone booth where employees may communicate with the train dispatcher.

Located 482 feet north of the switch, on the west side of the track and $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the rail, is a water tank resting on upright timbers, the bottom of the tank being 13 feet above the rail. This tank, however, does not obstruct the view of the switch stand from an approaching southbound train, and the target can be seen for about half a mile. About 1,020 feet farther north of the water tank is mile post 145.

Approaching the point of accident from the north the track is tangent for over 1 mile, the grade is undulating, for southbound trains, varying from 0.45 per cent descending to 0.43 per cent ascending. In the immediate vicinity of the north wye switch it is 0.1 per cent descending. The north leg of the wye is 1,211 feet in length, on a 90° curve, and is practically level. At its southern end, it passes through a cut having a maximum depth of 10 feet. This cut restricts the range of vision of a train approaching from the north on the Westville branch to about 100 feet. Standing timber between the Westville District main track and the Sidell Branch also obscures vision between the two lines farther north.

Yard limits extend from mile post 144 on the Westville District, located over 1 mile north of the point of accident, to mile post 148, nearly 3 miles south thereof. Rules governing yard limits follow:

"93. Yard limits are indicated by yard limits signs and by district instructions in time table. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing first class trains as per rule 86. Second class, third class and extra trains, road engines, yard engines and motors must move within yard limits under such control as will prevent accident, and must not exceed five miles per hour unless the main track is seen and known to be clear and switches right, and such movements will be made without clearing or protecting against each other, except that movements on double track against the current of traffic will be made only under protection.

* * * * *

"93B. When a train or engine is moving from auxiliary track to main track, the crews must look in both directions before fouling main track to observe approaching trains or engines, and exercise care to avoid accident."

The weather was slightly cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 4.30 p.m.; although it was dusk, hand signals could be seen without difficulty.

Description

Elgin, Joliet & Eastern freight train extra 759, in charge of Conductor Songer and Engineman Lock, left Ross-ville Junction via the Danville and Westville Districts, at 10 a.m., at Westville, 13.2 miles north of Sidell Junction, empties were set out and loads picked up, and the train departed at 2 p.m. At the time of departure the train consisted of EJ&E engine 759, 57 loaded coal cars, and a caboose. It arrived at Sidell Junction at 3 p.m. and stopped north of the water tank, the engine was cut off, moved down to the water tank, and after taking water returned and coupled to the train and started at 3.10 p.m., when starting the train the coupler on the rear of the 18th car from the engine pulled out, the engine with 16 cars then pulled around the north leg of the wye to the Sidell Branch and backed the car with the defective coupler onto the south leg of the wye; the engine and 15 cars then returned and recoupled to the train, the train was again started and after moving a short distance it was discovered that the coupler on the 7th car ahead of the caboose had pulled out, leaving the caboose and 6 cars standing on the Westville District main line, the engine and 50 cars were then pulled forward through the north leg of the wye and the defective car backed in on the south leg of the wye, while setting off this car the coupler on the fifth car from the engine pulled out; there being no other place to set out this car the engine with 5 cars proceeded northward on the Sidell Branch to Maizetown, 2.8 miles, and set out the defective car. While engine 759 had gone to Maizetown, northbound C&EI passenger train 122 arrived and was flagged by Conductor Songer; after discussing the situation with the engineman of train No. 122, the engine of that train was cut off and proceeded northward to where the rear of extra 759 was standing, coupled to the 6 cars and caboose, pulled them southward to clear the south switch of the south wye, and pushed them in on the south wye, the engine of train No. 122 then recoupled to its train and the train departed at 4.10 p.m., after a delay of about 31 minutes. In the meantime engine 759 had returned from Maizetown and coupled to all of the cars as they stood on the south leg of the wye, and pulled up on the Sidell Branch to clear the middle switch. In order to dispose of the defective cars and to get the 6 cars which were now in rear of the caboose into the proper position, it was decided to back out through the north leg of the wye to the Westville District main line again. Conductor Songer opened the north switch of the wye about 4.25 p.m. and shortly thereafter the train started to back

northward, the leading car had reached a point about 90 feet from the switch point of the north switch and the train was moving at a speed of 3 or 4 miles per hour, when it was struck by southbound C&EI extra 1917.

Chicago & Eastern Illinois freight train extra 1917, in charge of Conductor Gibbons and Engineman Pittaway, consisting of C&EI engine 1917, one loaded car, one empty car, and caboose, left North Yard at 3.15 p.m., at Indianola, 3.5 miles north of Sidell Junction, it met northbound passenger train No. 122, and according to the train sheet departed from that point at 4.26 p.m., proceeded to Sidell Junction, and collided with the leading car being pushed northward by EJ&E engine 759.

As a result of the collision, the two rear cars of extra 759 were derailed and badly damaged, and three other cars in the same train were somewhat damaged. The forward end of engine 1917 was raised and rested on the truck of the rear car of extra 759; both trucks of the tender were derailed; the first car in extra 1917 had one truck derailed and one end damaged, the south end of the second car was resting on the car ahead and its rear truck was jammed between the tender of engine 1917 and the first car. The employee killed was the fireman of engine 1917, who jumped just before the collision occurred.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Songer, of EJ&E extra 759, stated that a few minutes after train No. 122 departed, probably about 4.20 or 4.25 p.m., he opened the switch leading from the main track to the north leg of the wye; he looked in both directions, and at the time saw there was nothing approaching, he instructed Brakeman Stewart to ride the leading car while the train was backing out, he then proceeded toward the head end of the train and had reached a point about 20 cars from the rear when looking across he saw a train approaching at a speed of 35 or 40 miles per hour, it then being 10 or 12 car-lengths north of the north switch, he immediately gave the engineman of his train a stop signal; after his train had moved about a car-length further the collision occurred, he then looked at his watch and it was then 4.30 p.m. At the time of the collision his train was moving 3 or 4 miles per hour. His reason for not calling the dispatcher on the telephone when trouble first developed was that he was anxious to avoid delay to train No. 122 and thought there was nothing the dispatcher could do to assist him. At the time of the accident, it was dusk but there was no difficulty in seeing signals; he estimated that the banner on the switch could be seen 75 or 80 car lengths; the open switch with its banner and light was the only

protection his train had when backing out upon the Westville main line.

Engineman Pittaway, of C&EI extra 1917, stated that approaching Sidell Junction his train was running at a speed of about 25 miles per hour, when his engine was about opposite the water tank he discovered that the switch to the north leg of the wye was open and he applied his automatic brake, the locomotive wheels began to skid, and to avoid flattening them he released the engine brake, at that time he saw cars approaching on the wye track, he then applied his engine brakes, reversed his engine, opened the throttle and the sand pipes, he estimates that he had reduced the speed of his train about one half when the collision occurred, he estimates the time to have been 4.37 p. m., in his opinion the switch can be seen from a point about 1,600 feet distant and he did not believe there was anything to prevent his seeing the switch before he did if he had been looking for it. At the time he released his engine brake he did not see the cars approaching and expected to run in on the wye and stop rather than to slide the locomotive wheels in an effort to stop clear of the switch. He believes that if he had left his engine brake applied his train would have stopped before the collision occurred. Engineman Pittaway stated that under the rules, as he understands them, an extra train moving through yard limits should run at a speed of about 5 miles per hour unless the way is seen and known to be clear and switches set right.

Engineman Lockwood, of EJ&E extra 759, stated that he thought the drawbar trouble which his train experienced was due to the brakes not releasing properly on a car or two ahead of the caboose, when his train was standing on the Sidell Branch he received a signal to back up from the head brakeman, who was standing on the ground about 20 car-lengths behind the engine; shortly after starting to back he received a stop signal, whereupon he made a service application of the brakes and felt a jar to his train, when his train stopped he went back on the tank of his engine and looking back saw that an accident had occurred; immediately after the accident he looked at his watch and it was 4.30 p.m., he could not see the C&EI train approaching on account of trees obstructing his vision, he estimates the speed of his train to have been about 3 miles per hour and it had not been reduced materially when the collision occurred. At the time of the accident it was dusk, but he could still see signals clearly.

Brakeman Stewart, of EJ&E extra 759, stated that after opening the switch, Conductor Songer instructed him to ride the leading car when the train backed out, at that time the train was standing upon the Sidell Branch clear of the middle switch; someone gave the engineer a signal to back

and the train started to back, he got on the forward end of the leading car and rode on the steps on the inside of the curve; he had his lantern with him, when the car on which he was riding emerged from the cut he looked across and saw a train approaching near the water tank, he estimated its speed to have been 35 or 40 miles per hour; he immediately jumped off and tried to climb out of the cut but slipped back; about that time the collision occurred, he estimates the speed of his train to have been 2 or 3 miles per hour; he believes the time to have been about 4.30 p.m., but he did not look at his watch. He stated that if he had been in charge of the movement he believes he would have had a man stationed at the switch.

Brakeman Reynolds, of EJ&E extra 759, stated that when his train was standing on the Sidell Branch just north of the middle switch of the north wye he received a back-up signal from the rear of the train, which he repeated to the engineer, after the train started to back up he thought he heard the rumble of an approaching train then he saw a headlight pass the water tank, from the speed of the approaching train he thought that a collision was imminent and gave a stop signal and about that time the collision occurred. At the time of the accident Conductor Songer looked at his watch and said that it was 4.30 p.m.

Fireman Mullins, of EJ&E extra 759, stated that when his train was standing on Sidell Branch north of the north wye switch they received a signal to back up, after backing up 18 or 20 car-lengths, they received a stop signal; the engineman applied the brakes and about that time the train came to a sudden stop; both he and the engineer looked at their watches and it was 4.30 p.m.

Conductor Gibbons stated that extra 1917 headed in on the house track at Indianola and met No. 122, after No. 122 had passed it backed out and departed at 4.27 p.m.; when the caboose had reached a point about the middle of Sconce Lake the brakes applied suddenly, he estimated that the speed of the train at that time was 20 or 25 miles per hour; after the collision occurred he got straightened up, shoved his chair back to the desk and started out; the brakeman asked him what time it was and he looked at his watch and it was then 4.37, he then took care of the injured at the caboose, looked the situation over and went to the telephone and notified the dispatcher of the accident.

Brakeman Gray, of C&EI extra 1917, stated that from Indianola to Sidell Junction the speed of his train was about 20 or 25 miles per hour, just before the accident he felt the brakes applied and he braced himself; the train ran several car-lengths before the collision occurred; he

estimates that the speed of his train had been reduced to 19 or 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Fireman Murray, who was deadheading in the caboose of extra 1917, stated that as the train approached Sidell Junction he felt the brakes applied and braced himself, after running about 300 feet the collision occurred. After they got straightened up in the caboose and got the brakeman around he went to the fireman and found him unconscious; he then got on the engine, went to the engineer's side and put the injector on, he then looked at his watch and it was 4.40 p.m. this he estimates was six or seven minutes after the collision occurred.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Pittaway, of C&EI extra 1917, to observe Rule 93 in keeping a proper lookout to ascertain the position of switches and to have his train under proper control while moving within yard limits, and by the failure of Conductor Songer, of EJ&E extra 759, to properly observe Rule 93b requiring him to exercise proper care before attempting to back his train out on the Westville District main track.

Rule 93 required Engineman Pittaway to proceed through yard limits at a speed not to exceed 5 miles per hour unless the main track was seen and known to be clear. According to his own statement, the switch target could have been seen for at least 1,600 feet, but he did not discover it to be in the stop position until his engine was about 500 feet from it and at that time the speed of his train was about 25 miles per hour. There is some evidence that the speed might have been even greater than this.

Engineman Pittaway was not keeping a proper lookout. Apparently he took it for granted that the north wye switch was set for the main track and for that reason did not take the trouble to look at it until it was too late to avoid the accident.

Rule 93b required Conductor Songer, before opening the switch, to look in both directions for approaching trains; this he did, but after opening the switch he waited at least five minutes before backing his train out and then did so without again ascertaining whether any train was approaching. There is evidence that the time which elapsed between the opening of the switch and the backward movement of the train may have been greater than five minutes; it is certain that the view of the two trains was greatly restricted by the cut. Under these circumstances "the care to avoid accident" as set forth in the rule required Conductor Songer

to have a man placed at the switch or other available point where a good view of approaching trains could be had before fouling the main track.

Engineman Pittaway was first employed as fireman, December 25, 1903, promoted to engineer, December 30, 1911, and has been running as an engineer intermittently since that time, depending upon traffic conditions. Conductor Songer was employed as a brakeman, November 17, 1906, and promoted to conductor, February 1, 1909. At the time of the accident none of the employees had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.