

INV. 513

December 30, 1915.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD, AT LENSBURG, ILL.,
DECEMBER 5, 1915.

On December 5, 1915, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Illinois Central Railroad at Lensburg, Ill., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 5 employees and 55 passenger. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Northbound train No. 224 consisted of one combination car and three coaches, hauled by locomotive 1024, en route from Carbondale, Ill., to St. Louis, Mo., and was in charge of Conductor Wilder and Engineman Krewson. At Pinckneyville the crew in charge received an order to meet southbound train No. 205 at Lensburg. On arrival at Lensburg the crew received a telephone message from the dispatcher authorizing them to pull ahead and back in on the passing track, thus allowing train No. 205, which was a few minutes late, to hold the main line. After completing the station work, the train pulled ahead to clear the north passing track switch, which was unlocked and opened by Train Porter Clarkson. The train then backed in on the passing track, cleared the main track and stopped about 150 feet from the switch at about 8:57 a.m. The train porter then closed the switch, but did not lock it, and walked back to locomotive 1024 while waiting for train No. 205 to arrive. The train had been standing for a few minutes when train No. 205 approached, and the train porter returned to the switch, opening it just before the locomotive hauling train No.

205 reached it, allowing train No. 205 to enter the passing track and collide with train No. 224, the collision occurring at about 9:03 a.m.

Southbound train No. 205, en route from St. Louis, Mo. to Memphis, Tenn., consisted of one baggage car, one mail car and three coaches, hauled by locomotive 1044, and was in charge of Conductor Blaney and Engineman Pope. At Belleville the crew received the order directing them to meet train No. 224 at Lenzburg. The train left New Athens, 4.5 miles from Lenzburg, at 8:56 a.m., and collided with train No. 224 at Lenzburg while running at a speed estimated to have been about 30 or 35 miles per hour.

Train No. 224 was driven backwards a distance of about 150 feet by the force of the collision, locomotive 1024 and the combination car being partially derailed. Locomotive 1044, of train No. 205, was derailed, the tender being badly damaged and the fireman killed. The mail and baggage cars remained on the track, while the third and fourth cars were derailed, together with the forward trucks of the last car.

This part of the Illinois Central Railroad is a single track line, and train movements are protected by an automatic block signal system. Train orders are handled by telephone. Approaching Lenzburg from the north there is an automatic signal within a few feet of the switch stand at the north passing track switch, with another automatic signal located 2004 feet north thereof. The track is straight in each direction for more than one mile, and approaching the station there is a slight ascending grade for southbound trains. The weather was clear.

Engineman Pope, of train No. 205, stated that approaching Lenzburg, the automatic block signals were in the clear position. He first noticed Train Porter Clarkson walking toward the switch when this locomotive was about 40 or 50 feet from it, and he stated that suddenly the porter ran to the switch and opened it. He thought he reversed his locomotive, but was not sure, and then started for the gangway in order to get off, but did not have time to do so before the collision occurred. He stated that he did not apply the brakes, saying that he did not think that he could accomplish anything by doing so.

Conductor Blaney, of train No. 205, stated that the switch was half open when he passed it on getting out of the train after the accident, while flagman Trammell stated that when he got off the forward end of the rear car when going back to flag following trains he noticed that the switch was partially open, and saw Train Porter Clarkson running away from the switch. He stated, however, that he looked at the switch target, but did not look at the switch lever to see whether or not it was down over the hump, neither did he look at the switch points. When he returned to the switch shortly afterwards he found it lined for the passing track.

Engineman Krawson, of train No. 224, stated that after backing his train in on the passing track he saw that the switch was closed by the porter, who then walked back to the locomotive. He stated that he and the fireman were standing on the left side of the locomotive when he saw train No. 205 approaching. He then started to board the locomotive and had climbed about three steps when he heard the fireman call. He did not know what he said, and

the collision occurred as he looked around to see what the fireman wanted. He did not see any one open the switch.

Fireman Hawk stated that the train porter closed the switch after the train had backed in on the passing track. He and the engineman then got off the locomotive and the engineman started to oil it, the train porter returning to the locomotive at about this time. The fireman stated that he first saw train No. 205 when it was about two miles distant, and the train porter started to walk toward the switch, and then commenced to run. Fireman Hawk stated that in the meantime he and the engineman had boarded the locomotive, and on looking ahead he saw the train porter open the switch, train No. 205 at this time being about two car lengths from the switch. He called to the engineman to jump, at the same time getting off and running to a place of safety.

Conductor Wilder stated that he saw the train porter close the switch after the train had backed in on the passing track. He did not know whether or not the porter locked the switch, but stated that he had frequently questioned the porter about locking switches after using them, and that he had last talked with him about this subject three or four days prior to the occurrence of the accident. After the accident he was talking with the train porter, and the latter stated that he heard something rattle, and then ran for the switch, but denied that he opened it. He stated that he was not the first person to examine the switch, but said that when he did examine it, it seemed to be in good order in every way. The switch was open at this time, and the lever out of the socket and pulled part way around. He further stated that the track

in the vicinity of the switch was not torn up, and there was no indication that locomotive 1044 had been derailed prior to colliding with his train.

Train Porter Clarkson stated that after the train backed in on the passing track he closed the switch, and noticed that the switch point fitted tight against the rail, but stated that he did not lock the switch. He then walked back to the locomotive of his train and listened to the conversation between the engine-man and fireman. Shortly after train No. 205 came in sight he started for the switch, and when about 10 feet from it the locomotive of train No. 205 passed the switch and entered the passing track. He then knew that something was wrong and ran down the embankment out of the way. He denied that he ran toward the switch at any time, or that he opened it just before train No. 205 passed it, stating that he had not even reached the switch when train No. 205 passed it. About 10 minutes after the accident he went back to the switch, and at this time several people were examining it and the switch target was turned partially around.

N. G. Chrisman, agent at Lenzburg, stated that the switch was closed after train No. 224 was clear of the main line. As train No. 205 approached he went out on the station platform, and on seeing the fireman of train No. 224 jump from the locomotive and run away from it, he looked toward train No. 205 and saw it enter the switch and collide with train No. 224. At this time the switch was open, and the switch target was red, indicating that the switch was open.

Roadmaster Bond stated that, in company with five other

officials of the railroad, he made a careful examination of the switch and found that the throat measured $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. When the switch was closed the switch point was about one-fourth inch from the rail. He stated that the signal maintainer said that he had examined the switch the preceding day, and that an opening of one-quarter of an inch would operate the automatic signals. The roadmaster stated, however, that a coach had been derailed on the switch ties and dragged back through the switch, causing slight damage to it, and making the switch point stand open. If a man stood on the bridle rods the switch point would close tight against the rail.

This accident was caused by Train Porter Clarkson opening the north passing track switch when train No. 205 was within a very short distance of the switch, allowing that train to enter the passing track and to collide with train No. 224. He admits that he did not lock the switch when he closed it after his train had backed in on the passing track, and although he denied having opened it as train No. 205 approached, the engineman of that train, and the fireman of train No. 224, state that they saw him run to the switch and open it. The evidence further indicated that train No. 205 was not derailed until the collision occurred, and the switch therefore must have been opened in order to allow the train to enter the passing track.

Lenzburg is the regular meeting point of these two trains, it being the custom, when both are on time, for train No. 224 to hold the main line and for Train Porter Clarkson to open the switch for the purpose of allowing train No. 205 to enter the passing

track. He had been doing this for some time, and it is possible that when nearly to the switch he momentarily forgot that his own train was on the passing track and ran to the switch and opened it to allow train No. 205 to enter the passing track, as it was the custom for it to do under ordinary conditions.

Train Porter Clarkson had been employed as such since July, 1909, and had a clear record. He was thoroughly familiar with his duties, which embraced the giving of assistance in connection with the handling of the train, such as the picking up or setting out of cars, the handling of switches, etc., and he was considered by the other members of the crew of train No. 204 to be a reliable man.