No. 133

April 30, 1913.

In re investigation of accident on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad at Wakeley, Wyo., on April 2, 1913.

On April 2, 1913, there was an accident on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad at Wakeley, Wyo., which resulted in the death of 1 passenger and 1 express agent, and the injury of 17 passengers, 5 employees, and 1 express messenger.

After investigation of this accident the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

The division of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad on which this accident occurred is a single-track line, operated under the manual block system. Train orders are issued both by telegraph and telephone. Approaching the east switch at Wakeley from the east the track is straight for about 1,300 feet, and approaching enginemen cannot see the switch until this straight track is reached. When near the switch the track curves to the left. This is a two-degree curve, about one-half mile long, reaching nearly to the east switch. The track is then straight for about one and one-half miles. The bank on the inside of this two-degree curve is about 18 feet high at the highest point. Just beyond Wakeley is the beginning of a slight grade about three miles in length, ascending for westbound trains.

Eastbound train No. 42 consisted of 1 baggage car, 1 mail car, 2 chair cars, 3 tourist sleeping cars, 1 dining car, 2 standard Pullman sleeping cars, and 1 deadhead chair car, all of wooden construction and hauled by engine No. 2913. This train was enroute from Seattle, Wash., to St. Louis, Mo., and was in charge of Conductor Fay and Engineman M. E. Miller. At Sheridan, Wyo., 5.19 miles east of Wakeley, the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 30, reading as follows:

"No. 41 will meet No. 42 at Wakeley."

On account of being inferior by time-card right to train No. 41, train No. 42 should have entered the siding at Wakeley at the west switch for the purpose of allowing train No. 41 to pass. As Engineman Miller sounded the station whistle for Wakeley, his fireman, F. L. Miller, called his attention to the fact that they were to meet train No. 41 at Wakeley. The engineman at once replied in the negative and named Arno, a station 6.4 miles beyond Wakeley, as the meeting point. He then took out his orders and upon examination found that the fireman was correct. Engineman Miller then applied the air brakes in emergency, bringing his train to a stop at a point about 600 feet west of the east switch. He then saw train No. 41 coming, sounded the whistle signal for the train to stop, reversed his engine, and tried to release the brakes for the purpose of backing the train, but was unable to release the brakes as the conductor, when the latter

noticed the train passing the west switch, where it should have taken the siding, had opened the conductor's emergency valve in the smoking car. It was while Engineman Miller was trying to back his train that it was struck by train No. 41, the accident occurring at about 2:43 p.m.

Eastbound train No. 41 consisted of 2 baggage cars, 1 mail car, 1 coach, 2 chair cars, 2 tourist sleeping cars, 1 dining car, and 2 standard sleeping cars, all of wooden construction, hauled by engine No. 2918. The train was enroute from St. Louis, Mo., to Seattle, Wash., and was in charge of Conductor Hammond and Engineman Holden. At Verona, the last telegraph station east of Wakeley and 13.62 miles distant therefrom, the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 30, requiring them to meet train No. 42 at Wakeley. Train No. 41 passed Verona at 2:29 p.m., and on nearing Wakeley Engineman Holden sounded the station whistle. According to Fireman Miley the engineman said, "They are not here", and shut off steam, allowing the train to drift along, expecting train No. 42 to head in at the west switch. The fireman mounted his seatbox and looking over the bank on the inside of the curve saw the tops of the engine and cars of train No. 42 near the east end of the passing track. He thought the train was on the passing track and said to the engineman "they are just coming to a stop over by the telephone booth", and this apparently led the engineman also to think that the train was into clear. The telephone booth in question is located about 1,400 feet west of the east switch on the outside of the curve. After being told by the fireman that train No. 42 was just coming to a stop, Engineman Holden began working steam and when near the east switch they heard the engineman of train No. 42 sound the whistle signal to stop. Fireman Miley, who was putting coal in the firebox, then looked out, saw train No. 42 on the main track and called to the engineman to stop, at the same time jumping from the engine. The air brakes were applied in the emergency, a few seconds after which the collision occurred, while the train was running at a speed of about 25 miles per hour.

Both engines were badly damaged. In train No. 41 the first baggage car and the mail car were slightly damaged, while the second baggage car was practically destroyed, having been telescoped nearly its full length by the mail car. Of the cars composing train No. 42, the baggage car, the second chair car, and one of the tourist sleeping cars were slightly damaged, while the first chair car was telescoped by the mail car a distance of about 40 feet, the end vestibules being nearly destroyed. The mail car of this train was also badly damaged. At the time of the accident a light snow was falling and a little wind was blowing, but these weather conditions did not seriously interfere with the view.

Engineman Miller of train No. 42 stated that when his train was approaching the west switch at Wakeley the fireman said something about as follows: "Meeting No. 41 here, are you?" and he said no, that they would meet it at Arno. He then had a feeling that something was wrong and at once looked at his orders. On seeing that the meeting point was in fact Wakeley instead of Arno, he at once applied the brakes, at which time the engine had probably passed the west switch one or two car lengths. The air-whistle signal from the conductor did not come until after he applied the brakes. Before leaving Sheridan he had it fixed in his mind that his train would meet train No. 41 at Arno, and he stated that he never thought of Wakeley at any time.

Conductor Fry of train No. 42 stated that after working a part of his train he started forward so as to be at the head end when the stop was made at Wakeley for the purpose of taking the siding. On reaching the smoking car, the third car from the engine, he noticed that it had already passed the west switch, where it should have entered the siding, and he at once signaled the engineman by means of the air-whistle signal to stop, then he ran for the emergency cord and applied the air brakes.

Rule No. 88 provides in part that at meeting points of trains of the same class, the inferior train must pull into the siding when practicable, while rule No. 90 provides in part that trains shall stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met when that train enters the siding. Under these rules train No. 41 had the right of track as far as the clearance point at the west switch.

This accident was caused by Engineman Miller failing to observe and be governed by train order No. 30. No reason can be assigned for his idea that Arno was the meeting point named in the order, as a result of which misunderstanding he ran his train past the west switch instead of taking the siding at that point to allow train No. 41 to pass.

While this accident is due solely to the failure of the engineman to obey train order No. 30, yet, had the rules of this railroad required the conductor and engineman to read their orders to each other, thus making sure that each had the same understanding as to their contents, this accident would probably have been averted, as before leaving Sheridan the engineman was under the impression that Arno was the meeting point named in the train order, and had he compared the order with that held by the conductor the error which caused this accident would probably have been discovered.

The records of the employees involved were good; they were considered to be competent and reliable, and none had been on duty in violation of the provisions of the hours of service law.