

INV. 298  
October 28, 1915.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC RAILWAY, AT  
ROME, ILL., OCTOBER 3, 1915.

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On October 3, 1915, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and an extra freight train on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway at Rome, Ill., which resulted in the injury of 14 passengers and 2 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows

The Bureau Branch, upon which this accident occurred, is a single-track line extending from Peoria, Ill. to Bureau, Ill., a distance of 47 miles. No block signal system is in use, trains being operated by time-table and train orders, following movements being spaced 10 minutes at open telegraph offices. The point of collision was about 730 feet west of the station at Rome, on a curve of 1 degree, more than 3,000 feet in length, this curve leading to the right for westbound trains. The collision occurred 250 feet west of the eastern end of the curve. The maximum range of vision on this curve is about 900 feet. The weather was clear.

Eastbound passenger train No. 202 consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car, 1 smoking car, 1 coach and 2 parlor cars, hauled by locomotive 1044, and was in charge of Conductor Murray and Engineman Thompson. It left Peoria at 1:00 p.m., on time, and at about 1:35 p.m. collided with westbound extra 2019 west of the station at Rome, while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 15 miles an hour.

Extra 2019 left Bureau at 12:17 p.m., with a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Horne and Engineman Huntington. At Putnam, 7.9 miles west of Bureau, 13 cars were picked up. The train left Putnam at 12:35 p.m., passed Chillisnothe, 2.9 miles from Rome, at 1:19 p.m., passed Rome between 1:34 and 1:35 p.m., and had just been brought to a stop when train No. 202 collided with it.

Slight damage was sustained by both locomotives and by the combination car of the passenger train. Four of the freight cars were also more or less damaged.

Engineman Thompson of train No. 202 stated that approaching Rome he had made a slight application of the brakes preparatory to stopping at the station when the fireman, who was on the inside of the curve, said that there was something ahead. Engineman Thompson at once placed the brake valve in the emergency position, jumping from the engine when he saw that a collision was unavoidable. When he made the emergency application of the brakes, the speed of the train was about 25 miles an hour. He stated that he did not hear any whistle signals sounded by the engineman of the freight train.

Fireman Kerrigan stated that he heard three short blasts of a whistle and in a few seconds saw the freight train and notified the engineman, who at once applied the emergency air brakes. He thought the speed of his train when he jumped from the engine, within a few car lengths of the point of collision, was 15 miles an hour.

Engineman Huntington of extra 2019 stated that he

had been on this run two days. He stated that he was thoroughly familiar with the branch and with the operating conditions existing upon it, although he had not run an engine over it for about 1½ years. At Bureau he received an order to run as an extra to Peoria, together with a message to pick up the 13 cars at Putnam. He did not look at his time-table, and did not have any conversation with the conductor as to where they were to go for train No. 302, and he did not think of that train at any time; he stated that when passing through Chillicothe at a speed of from 22 to 25 miles an hour, he received a proceed signal from the rear of the train. When approaching the station at Rome at a speed of about 30 miles an hour he saw passengers standing on the platform, and for the first time thought of train No. 302. As he was about to apply the brakes and reverse the engine the brakes were applied from the rear of the train, at which time the locomotive was nearly opposite the station. Just as the train came to a stop he saw the passenger train come around the curve and sounded one long blast of the whistle. He then sounded a back-up signal, and placing the brake valve in the release position, tried to back his train, but was unable to do so, as the brakes were still applied.

Fireman Fletcher stated that the engineman answered a proceed signal given from the rear of the train at Chillicothe. He did not see the signal himself. He stated that he did not look at his time-table at any time and did not know

that the freight train was on the time of the passenger train until the brakes were applied and the engineman and head brakeman jumped from the engine.

Head Brakeman Miller stated that when the application of the air brakes was made the engine was opposite the station. Coming through Chillicothe he did not see the proceed signal given from the rear of the train, as he was on the steps of the engine to pick up a message held out by the operator. The engineman, however, said that he received a proceed signal. Head Brakeman Miller further stated that he had not consulted his time-table, as he had been busy watching some cars in the train which he thought might develop hot boxes.

Conductor Horne, of extra 2019, stated that he had figured on his train going to Chillicothe for train No. 202. Approaching that station the flagman remarked that they were not going to head in on the siding and Conductor Horne then thought they would back in. On looking out of the window, however, he saw that the train was traveling at a rapid rate of speed and that it was not going to stop. The train passed the station at 1:19 p.m. without any proceed signal having been given from the rear of the train. He said that two or three times he thought he would apply the air brakes and stop the train, but from the speed at which the train was traveling, however, he thought they would be able to reach Rome. He went to the forward platform of the caboose with the intention of going to the head end of the train as it slowed down for the

switch at Rome, but he did not start to go over the cars to the head end on account of the speed, which he estimated to have been about 30 miles an hour. He soon realized that the train was not going to stop at Rome and returned inside the caboose to apply the air brakes. The flagman, then in the cupola, said that he saw the smoke of the approaching train, and Conductor Horne then ran to the rear of the caboose and applied the air-brakes by opening the rear angle cock, jumping from the caboose just before the train came to a stop. After the accident he talked with Engineman Huntington and the latter told him that he had forgotten train No. 202. He further stated that at no time did he talk with Engineman Huntington as to where they would meet train No. 202. Conductor Horne further stated that he knew the rule required enginements to sound two short blasts and one long blast of the whistle when going to take a siding, and that in the absence of this signal at Chillicothe he should have stopped the train at that point. He also knew that he was violating the rules in allowing his train to pass Chillicothe without sufficient time to clear train No. 202 at Rome by at least five minutes. He thought, however, that they could reach Rome and be clear of the main track before train No. 202 arrived at Rome.

Flagman Frymier stated that after picking up the cars at Putnam he consulted his time-table and thought they would go to Chillicothe for train No. 202. Approaching Chillicothe he saw that the engineman was not going to head in on the siding, and on calling the conductor's attention to the fact the latter

replied that he thought the engineman intended to back in. Flagman Frymier then went out on the platform to be in readiness to handle the switch, riding on the left side when passing the station. When he saw that the train was not going to stop he went inside and talked with the conductor, who said that he thought they would be able to reach Rome. Approaching Rome the conductor went out the forward end of the caboose and soon returned running back toward the rear to apply the brakes. He further stated that he did not give any proceed signal when passing Chillicothe. He saw someone at the station giving a signal and waved his hand in reply; he did not know definitely, but thought possibly that this hand signal might have been mistaken by the engineman for a proceed signal.

This accident was caused by extra 2019 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train, for which Conductor Horne and Engineman Huntington are responsible. Engineman Huntington admitted that he overlooked train No. 202, not thinking about it until he saw passengers standing on the station platform at Rome. Conductor Horne had not overlooked this train, and is especially at fault for his failure to stop his train at Chillicothe. Rule No. 87 provides in part as follows:

"Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains five minutes, unless otherwise provided, and will be governed by train orders with respect to opposing extra trains."

Train No. 202 was due to leave Rome at 1:26 p.m., and under this rule, therefore, extra 2019 had to be into clear at Rome at 1:21 p.m. Conductor Horne allowed his train to pass Chillicothe at

1:19 p.m., knowing that it did not have sufficient time to go to Rome, a distance of 2.9 miles, and clear train No. 302 as required by the rule referred to above.

Rule 14-s requires two short blasts and one long blast of the whistle

"to be given by engineman after the station whistle to indicate to the train crew that time-table restrictions to be observed on train orders to be executed at that station have not been forgotten."

Rule 14 also requires that

"Should an engineman fail to sound the signal 14 (s) approaching a station where time-table restrictions are to be observed or a train order executed, the train crew must, at once, stop the train."

Conductor Horne also admitted that he failed to obey this rule. Had either of these rules been observed this accident would not have occurred.

All of the employees involved were experienced men with good records, and none had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.