

In re investigation of an accident which occurred on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway at Milwaukee, Wis., August 5, 1917.

August 28, 1917.

On August 5, 1917, there was a head-end collision on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway at Milwaukee, Wis., which resulted in the death of one employee and five trespassers. After investigation the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

The division upon which this accident occurred extends from Chicago to Milwaukee, a distance of 85 miles, and at the point of accident consists of four parallel tracks. The two northerly tracks, Nos. 1 and 2, are used for passenger traffic - No. 1 for westbound and No. 2 for eastbound traffic - and the two southerly tracks, Nos. 3 and 4, are used for freight traffic. The division is equipped with automatic block signals, but on account of track elevation work being done, they were not in operation between Stowell and the passenger station at Milwaukee, a distance of 2.1 miles, which includes the point of accident. On account of this track work, track No. 2 had been used as a single track since June 11th for eastbound and westbound passenger traffic from a point 300 feet east of point of accident to the passenger station, movements over this track being controlled by a train director or towerman located at Clinton Street tower, 3,250 feet east of the passenger station, assisted by switchtenders located at each end of the single track. The speed of trains between Clinton tower and the passenger station was restricted by time table rule to six miles an hour, and in addition to this the speed over the track that was being elevated was restricted by bulletin to ten miles an hour.

Westbound passenger train No. 3 consisted of locomotive 6519, 1 express car, 1 baggage car, 2 coaches and 3 sleeping cars, and was en route from Chicago to Milwaukee. This train passed Washington Street tower, located a little over a mile east of the passenger station, at 11:19 p. m. and collided with train No. 53 at a point about a half mile west thereof, or 900 feet east of Clinton tower, at about 11:22 p. m., after having come almost to a stop.

Eastbound passenger train No. 58 consisted of locomotive 6648, 7 baggage cars, 3 mail cars and 1 coach, and was en route from Milwaukee to Chicago. This train left the passenger station at Milwaukee at 11:18 p. m. and collided with train No. 3 while running at a speed of about 18 miles an hour.

The engineer of train No. 3 and five trespassers riding on the front end of the head car of train No. 58 were killed by the collision, while the pilots and front ends of both locomotives were considerably damaged. Both locomotives were equipped with electric headlights in good condition at the time of the accident. The weather at the time was clear.

The first half mile of track immediately east of the point of accident is straight and practically level. From point of accident westward there is a curve to the left of $9^{\circ} 33'$, 405 feet in length, then a tangent 165 feet long, then a curve to the right of $9^{\circ} 41'$, 450 feet in length, and from there to the passenger station the track runs around and between tall buildings and is on a .75% descending grade. The view of engineers of opposing trains approaching point of accident is about 500 feet, but on account of freight tracks paralleling passenger tracks at this point it was difficult to distinguish between freight and passenger trains or determine upon what track they were until within a few yards of each other.

Towerman Demencki, on duty at Clinton Street tower at the time of the accident and directing train movements over that portion of track, stated that he called the passenger station by telephone and asked about train No. 58 and was informed that it was on time; he then called the dispatcher and asked about trains Nos. 3 and 57 and was told that No. 3 would be a little late and No. 57 would be about 40 minutes late. After receiving this information he called the switchtender at Fowler Street and told him to let No. 58 come and he would hold No. 3; he said to Switchtender Urich, who was sitting outside the tower at Clinton Street at the time, "No. 58 is right on time and No. 3 is a little late; No. 57 is about 40 minutes late; so you go down there and hold No. 3 for 58," to which the switchtender replied: "All right." Switchtender Urich did not immediately start to comply with these instructions and about two minutes later Towerman Demencki repeated these instructions and Switchtender Urich started to comply with them. He started off without a

red lantern and Toverman Demanski called him back and gave it to him and said: "Now you understand that you are to hold No. 3 for 58?" and he replied: "Yes, I understand I am to hold No. 3 for 58," and started down the track toward the crossover switch about two blocks away at about 11:10 p. m., for the purpose of carrying out these instructions. Toverman Demanski stated that westbound trains always came to a stop at that crossover and came ahead when signaled by the switchtender to do so. He was positive in his statements that he told Switchtender Urich to hold No. 3 for No. 58 and, at the time he gave him these instructions, he thought they were thoroughly understood.

Switchtender Urich stated that he had been handling the switches at this point for almost two months and shortly after 11 p. m. on the day of the accident he received instructions from the towerman at Clinton tower to "let No. 3 come and hold 57," the towerman stating that in case he wanted to change these instructions he would come down and let him know. He stated that upon receipt of these instructions he left Clinton tower about 11:11 p. m. and went to the crossover switch east of the tower, taking a red lantern with him to signal train No. 57, threw the switch and signaled train No. 3 to proceed. He stated that when he had reached a point about a block from the tower it occurred to him to go back and ask the towerman if he was sure he wanted to let No. 3 come and hold No. 57, but was positive he was to hold No. 57 and let No. 3 by. He stated that just as train No. 3 came onto track No. 2, he saw a train approaching and thought it was the silk train which is frequently run from this yard on Sunday nights, but it was impossible to tell at night time whether it was on track No. 4 or on No. 2. About this time he called to the engineer of train No. 3 and said it might be No. 58, his reason for thinking so was because it was working steam too fast for a freight train.

Engineer Foley of train No. 58 stated that his train left the station on time after receiving a signal to proceed, passed Clinton Street at a speed of about 12 miles an hour, and had reached the curve there when he saw train No. 3, but thought it was on the westbound track as usual, waiting for his train to pass. When his train reached the straight track it was about three car lengths away from train No. 3 and then he realized that both trains were on the same track and a collision was imminent. He then shut off steam and applied the air brakes in emergency just before the collision occurred. He stated that on account of the light from train

No. 3, he did not see a light on the crossover switch, nor did he see the switchtender on duty there.

Fireman Frohl of train No. 3 stated that his train was brought to a stop at Allis station, and after receiving a signal from the switchtender, who was standing at the switch on the eastbound track, it started ahead and when about three car lengths over the crossover switch he saw train No. 58 approaching. The air brakes were applied in emergency and he barely had time to jump before the collision occurred.

This accident was caused by the failure to keep train No. 3 clear of train No. 58, for which Switchtender Urich is responsible.

While there is conflict between the statements of Towerman Seneski and Switchtender Urich as to the instructions given relative to the handling of these trains, it is believed that the towerman's statement should be accepted in preference to that of the switchtender, as the switchtender admitted that he was not entirely certain about his instructions but neglected to return to the tower and verify his understanding, assuming that it was correct.

Switchtender Urich was employed as a switchtender in 1892, had resigned and been re-employed several times, and was last employed on May 30, 1917. He was considered to be a competent switchtender.

J. O. T.