

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2935
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR CLUSTEE, ALA., ON
SEPTEMBER 24, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line
Date: September 24, 1945
Location: Olustee, Ala.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger-equipment : Freight
Train numbers: Second 180 : Extra 452 West
Engine numbers: 1686 : 452
Consist: 6 cars : Caboose
Estimated speed: 20 m. p. h. : 40 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; 2°45' curve; 2.30 percent
ascending grade eastward
Weather: Clear
Time: 2:05 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 16 injured
Cause: Inferior train occupying main
track on time of opposing
superior train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2935

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

November 8, 1945.

Accident near Olustee, Ala., on September 24, 1945, caused
by an inferior train occupying the main track on the
time of an opposing superior train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

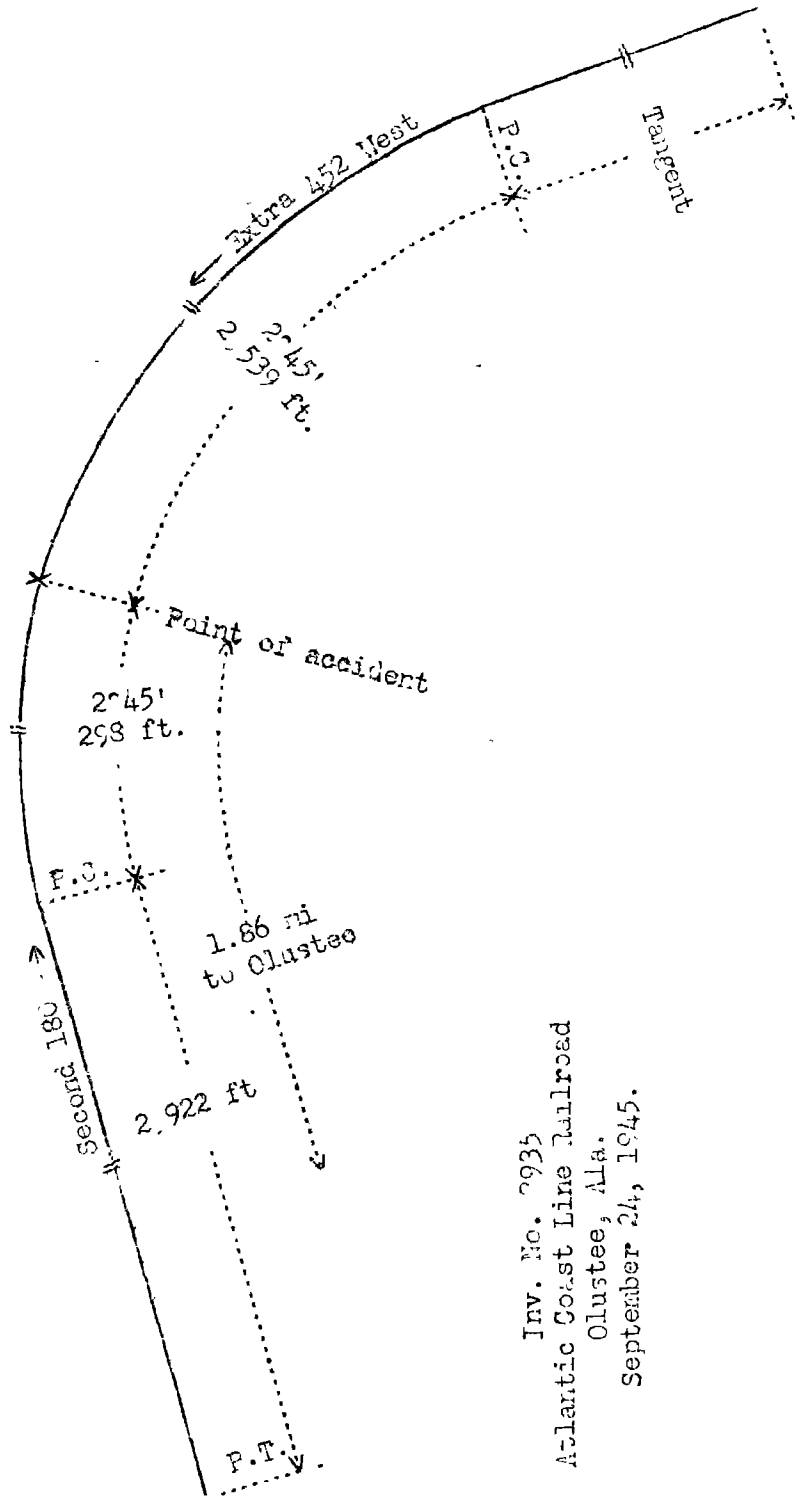
On September 24, 1945, there was a head-end collision between a passenger-equipment train and a freight train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Olustee, Ala., which resulted in the death of one train-service employee, and the injury of seven Pullman employees and nine train-service employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.

↑ To Dothan ↑

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| ○ Dothan, Ala. | 17.30 mi. |
| ○ Waterford | 56.90 mi. |
| ○ Youngblood | 5.04 mi. |
| X Point of accident | 1.86 mi. |
| ○ Olustee | 11.30 mi. |
| ○ Ramer | 24.60 mi. |
| ○ Day St. Yard | 1.50 mi. |
| ○ Montgomery, Ala. | |

← To Montgomery ←



Inv. No. 2935
 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
 Olustee, Ala.
 September 24, 1945.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery District which extends between Montgomery and Dothan, Ala., 118.5 miles, a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 39.26 miles east of Montgomery, at a point 1.36 miles east of the station at Olustee. From the west there is a tangent 2,922 feet in length, which is followed by a 2°45' curve to the right 298 feet to the point of accident and 2,539 feet eastward. From the east there is a tangent about 800 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 2.30 percent ascending eastward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Section.--One of two or more trains running on the same schedule displaying signals or for which signals are displayed.

* * *

Schedule.--That part of a time-table which prescribes class, direction, number and movement for a regular train.

* * *

5. * * *

The time applies to the switch where an inferior train enters the siding; * * *

* * *

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than five minutes unless otherwise provided, * * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees.

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by the Fireman.

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

* * *

E

TIME ORDERS

(1.) No 1 run 50 mins late A to G.

This makes the schedule time of the train named, between the stations mentioned, as much later as stated in the order, and any other train receiving the order is required to run with respect to this later time, as before required to run with respect to the regular schedule time. * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger-equipment train was 50 miles per hour, and for the freight train 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Day St. Yard, 35.9 miles west of Olustee, the crew of Second 180, an east-bound first-class passenger-equipment train, received copies of train order No. 50 reading as follows:

Second 180 run 4 hours and 30 mins late
Day St Yard to cross-over at Waterford.

Waterford is 63.8 miles east of Olustee. Second 180 consisted of engine 1686, two Pullman sleeping cars, two tourist sleeping cars and two troop sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train passed Ramer, the last open office, 11.3 miles west of Olustee, at 1:42 p. m., 4 hours 30 minutes late, passed Olustee at 2:01 p. m., 4 hours 30 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with Extra 452 West at a point 1.86 miles east of Olustee.

At Waterford the crew of Extra 452 West, a west-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 50. This train, consisting of engine 452 and a caboose, departed from Youngblood, the last open office, 5.04 miles east of the point of accident, at 1:58 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it collided with Second 180.

The engine of Second 180 was derailed to the south and stopped on its right side, at an angle of about 45 degrees to

the track. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped on its right side, practically parallel to the track and 14 feet to the rear of the engine. The front truck of the first car was derailed. The engine of Extra 452 West was derailed to the south and stopped upside down, at an angle of about 45 degrees to the track. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped against the rear of the boiler and at right angles to it. Both engines were badly damaged, and the caboose of Extra 452 was demolished.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:05 p. m.

The engineer of Extra 452 West was killed. The engineer, the fireman, the conductor, the front brakeman and the flagman of Second 180, and the fireman, the conductor, the front brakeman and the flagman of Extra 452 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 18.6 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that an inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains, and extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than 5 minutes.

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 50, which required Second 180, an east-bound first-class train, to run 4 hours 30 minutes late on its schedule from Day St. Yard to Waterford. Under the provisions of this train order, Second 180 was due to leave Olustee at 2:01 p. m. and Youngblood, 6.9 miles east of Olustee, at 2:13 p. m. There is a siding at each of these stations. Extra 452 West was inferior to Second 180 and, under the rules, Extra 452 West was required to be into clear at Olustee not later than 1:56 p. m. if it proceeded to that station for Second 180. Second 180 passed Olustee at 2:01 p. m. and, about 2:05 p. m., when it was 1.86 miles east of Olustee, it collided with Extra 452 West.

As Second 180 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of an embankment and vegetation on the inside of the curve, the view had by the enginemen of the track ahead was materially restricted. The first these employees knew of anything being wrong was when the engineer saw the approaching train about 400 feet distant. Then he moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of Second 180 was about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The members of the crew of Extra 452 West had compared time, and there was a variation of only a few seconds in their watches. They received copies of train order No. 50 at

Waterford, 61.94 miles east of the point of accident, about 2 hours 15 minutes prior to the time the accident occurred. At that time each of these employees read the train order. They understood that their train was inferior to Second 180, that Second 180 was required to run 4 hours 30 minutes late on its schedule between the points designated in the train order and that their train was required to clear the times specified not less than 5 minutes. However, Extra 452 West departed from Youngblood, the last siding east of Olustee, at 1:58 p. m., which was 2 minutes later than the time this train was required to be into clear on the siding at Olustee if it proceeded to that station to meet Second 180. The engineer of Extra 452 was killed in the accident, therefore, it could not be determined why he failed to take action to clear the time of Second 180. The fireman said that before his train departed from Waterford he asked the engineer where it would meet Second 180, and the engineer replied that they would decide that question later. The fireman did not again question the engineer as to the authority of their train to proceed. He was not aware of anything being wrong until he saw the approaching train about 400 feet distant, and he called a warning to the engineer. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of Extra 452 was about 40 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The other members of the crew said they did not realize that their train was proceeding without authority with respect to Second 180 until the collision occurred.

Trains are operated in this territory by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously. As a result of other accidents occurring on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad prior to the present accident, the Commission issued an order calling upon this carrier to show cause, if any, why it should not be required to install an adequate block signal system on certain specified lines of its system, one of which is the line on which the accident near Olustee occurred. This order is now being given consideration.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighth day of November, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.