INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2913

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR GAMMAGE, GA., ON

JULY 8, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Atlantic Coast Line
Date:	July 8, 1945
Location:	Gammage, Ga.
Kind of accident:	Derailment
Train involved:	Freight
Train number:	210
Engine number:	1714
Consist:	24 cars, 2 cabooses
Estimated speed:	35 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders
Track:	Single; tangent; 0.30 percent descending grade northward
Weather:	Raining
Time:	11:03 p. m.
Casualties:	3 killed
Cause:	Washout

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2913

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

August 30, 1945.

Accident near Gammage, Ga., on July 8, 1945, caused by a washout.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 8, 1945, there was a derailment of a freight train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Gammage, Ga., which resulted in the death of three employees.

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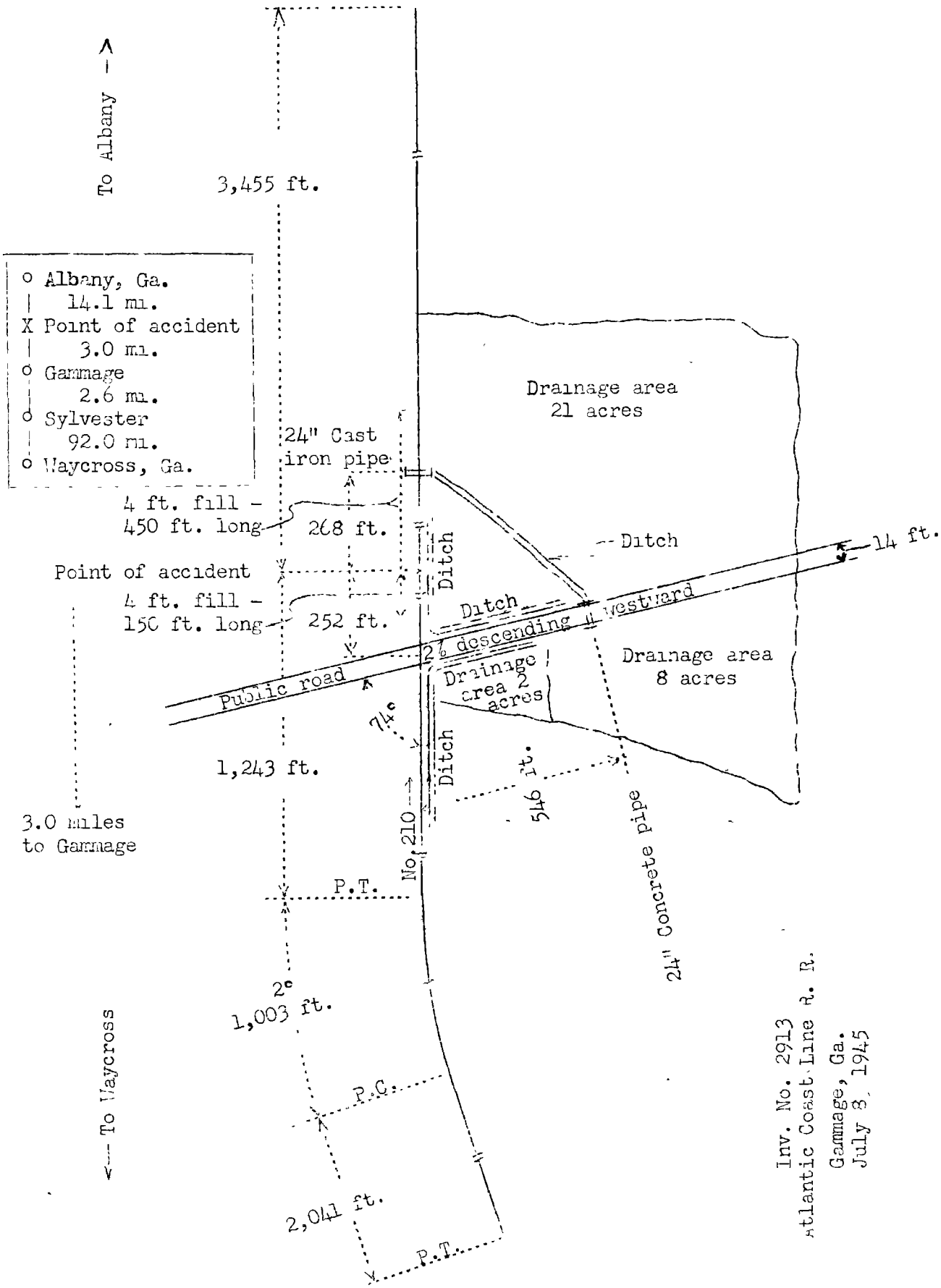
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.


To Albany
3,455 ft.
Albany, Ga.
14.1 mi.
Point of accident
3.0 mi.
Gammage
2.6 mi.
Sylvester
92.0 mi.
Waycross, Ga.
24" Cast iron pipe
4 ft. fill - 450 ft. long
268 ft.
Ditch
Drainage area 21 acres
Ditch
14 ft.
Point of accident
4 ft. fill - 150 ft. long
252 ft.
Ditch
2% descending westward
Public road
Drainage area 2 acres
Drainage area 8 acres
74°
Ditch
1,243 ft.
546 ft.
3.0 miles to Gammage
No. 210
24" Concrete pipe
P.T.
2°
1,003 ft.
To Waycross
P.C.
2,041 ft.
P.T.
Inv. No. 2913
Atlantic Coast Line R. R.
Gammage, Ga.
July 3, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Waycross District extending northward from Waycross to Albany, Ga., 111.7 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 97.6 miles north of Waycross, at a point 3 miles north of Gammage. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 2,041 feet in length, a 2° curve to the right 1,003 feet and a tangent 1,243 feet to the point of accident and 3,455 feet northward. The grade for north-bound trains varies between 0.15 and 1.28 percent ascending throughout a distance of 2,800 feet, then it is 0.30 percent descending 230 feet to the point of accident and 170 feet beyond.

The track structure consists of 100-pound rail, 39 feet in length, laid on 24 treated ties to the rail length. It is fully tieplated, single-spiked on tangents and double-spiked on curves, provided with 4-hole angle bars and an average of 2 rail anchors per rail length, and is ballasted with about 6 inches of slag. The cribs are filled with ballast to the tops of the ties, and the ballast extends about 54 inches outside each rail. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the track is laid on a fill about 4 feet high, about 30 feet wide at the bottom and 17 feet wide at the top. The fill extends about 150 feet south of the point of accident and about 450 feet northward.

At a point 252 feet south of the point of accident an unimproved road 14 feet wide intersects the railroad at an angle of 74°. Throughout a distance of about 1,200 feet east of the crossing the grade of the road descends westward an average of 2 percent. Drainage ditches are provided on either side of the road east of the crossing. The crossing is provided with four timbers, 6 inches by 8 inches by 16 feet, laid on either side of each rail, and the center is filled with ballast and dirt. At a point 546 feet east of the track, a culvert 2 feet in diameter and about 16 feet long extends under the road. At a point 268 feet north of the point of accident, a culvert 2 feet in diameter and about 32 feet long extends under the track. A ditch about 600 feet long extends diagonally from the north end of the culvert under the road to the east end of the culvert under the track. Normally, water from a 2-acre tract immediately east of the track and south of the road flows southward in a ditch on the east side of the track, and water from an 8-acre tract immediately east of the 2-acre tract and south of the road flows northward through the culvert under the road, thence northwestward in the ditch and through the culvert under the track. Water from a 21-acre tract immediately north of the road and east of the track flows northwestward in the ditch and thence through the culvert under the track. In addition, there is a ditch extending from the north side of the road and along the east side of the track.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

SECTION FOREMEN

1068. During heavy rains and storms they must take every precaution to prevent accident. Sufficient force must be placed on duty watching or repairing damage. Where safety of trains is involved additional force may be employed to put the track in safe condition. Men must be assigned to watching along those sections of track which seem likely to be washed out; they must be supplied with proper flags, lamps and torpedoes for stopping trains, and must be instructed how to use them.

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 210, a north-bound third-class freight train, consisting of engine 1714, 24 cars and 2 cabooses, passed Sylvester, the last open office and 2.6 miles south of Gammage, at 10:52 p. m., 1 hour 4 minutes late, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour the engine and the first 16 cars were derailed.

The engine stopped on its right side about 17 feet east of the track and 190 feet north of the point of derailment, and was badly damaged. The first to the sixteenth cars, inclusive, stopped in various positions, and were considerably damaged.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:03 p. m.

The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman were killed.

Discussion

No. 210 was moving on tangent track at a speed of about 35 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 45 miles per hour when the engine and first 16 cars were derailed. There was no defective condition of the engine prior to the derailment, and there was no indication of dragging equipment. It could not be determined when the enginemen and the front brakeman first became aware of anything being wrong as they were killed in the accident. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. They said there was no application of the brakes made immediately prior to the accident, and they were not aware of anything being wrong until the derailment occurred. The brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route.

After the accident, examination disclosed that throughout a distance of 123 feet in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the east side of the fill had been washed out to a maximum depth of about 4 feet. The erosion extended a maximum of 14 inches west of the east rail. There were marks which indicated that water had been from 12 to 18 inches above the tops of the rails near the point of derailment.

The section foreman who had charge of the track was located at Sylvester, 5.6 miles south of the point of accident. He said that several heavy showers occurred in that locality between 9:30 p. m. and 11:30 p. m., but he did not consider the rainfall to be of sufficient volume to require an inspection of the track. He was not aware of anything being wrong until he was notified of the accident. The driver of an automobile, which was moving southward on a highway located about 1/2 mile east of the railroad in the vicinity of the point where the accident occurred, said that a rain of cloudburst proportions had fallen in this vicinity about 10:30 p. m., and that water about 2 feet deep covered the highway. He informed the operator at Sylvester of the condition on his arrival at that point about 11:15 p. m. However, No. 210 had passed Sylvester, the last open office, at 10:52 p. m. Officers of the railroad said that the drainage facilities in the vicinity of the point of accident had been adequate previously, and that the track had not been damaged by water at this point during the past 22 years.

Investigation disclosed that water had flowed over the crossing, and a considerable amount of sand had been deposited in that vicinity. Prior to the rain in question, the ditch on the south side of the road had become filled with dirt at several places. This caused a considerable portion of the water to be diverted northward into the area which is drained through the culvert under the track, and thereby the volume of water in the area north of the road was further increased. Evidently, the erosion of the fill was caused by a current of water moving practically parallel to the track.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a washout.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of August, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.

(SEAL)