

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2718

THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR OAKS, FLA., ON

AUGUST 5, 1943

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line  
Date: August 5, 1943  
Location: Oaks, Fla.  
Kind of accident: Derailment  
Train involved: Passenger  
Train number: 276  
Engine number: 426  
Consist: 9 cars  
Estimated speed: 45 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; tangent; 0.067 percent  
descending grade northward  
Weather: Clear; daylight  
Time: About 8:25 p. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 18 injured  
Cause: Obstruction on rail

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2718

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

THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

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August 28, 1943

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Accident near Oaks, Fla., on August 5, 1943, caused by  
an obstruction on rail.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

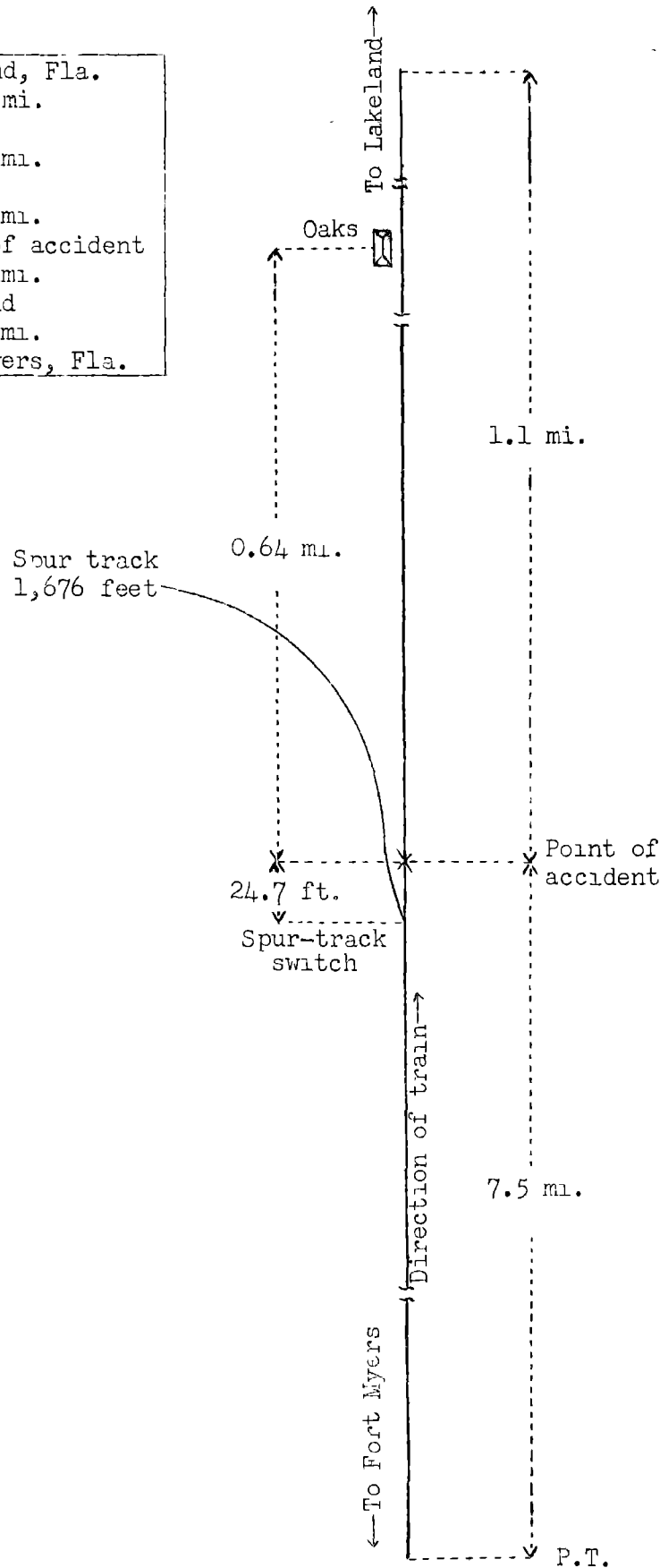
On August 5, 1943, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Oaks, Fla., which resulted in the death of 2 train-service employees, and the injury of 13 passengers, 2 Pullman employees, 2 railway-express employees and 1 train-service employee.

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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.

o	Lakeland, Fla.
	13.00 mi.
o	Bartow
	0.80 mi.
o	Oaks
	0.64 mi.
X	Point of accident
	4.76 mi.
o	Homeland
	94.80 mi.
o	Fort Myers, Fla.



Inv. No. 2718  
Atlantic Coast Line Railroad  
Oaks, Fla.  
August 5, 1943

### Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Tampa District extending between Lakeland and Fort Myers, Fla., 114 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred 0.64 mile south of Oaks. The track was tangent throughout a distance of 7.5 miles south of the point of accident and 1.1 miles north of it. The grade for north-bound trains was, successively, 0.07 percent ascending 1,600 feet, level 400 feet, 0.05 percent descending 200 feet, 0.15 percent ascending 400 feet, 0.17 percent ascending 600 feet and 0.067 percent descending 123 feet to the point of accident and 677 feet beyond.

The track structure consisted of 85-pound rail, 33 feet in length, on 19 ties to the rail length. It was single-spiked, fully tieplated and laid on 8 to 10 inches of limestone ballast. At a point 24.7 feet south of the point of accident there was a spur track 1,676 feet in length on the west side of the main track. The switch was facing-point for north-bound movements. Entry to this track was made through a No. 10 turnout, beyond which the track curved sharply to the left at an angle of about 90 degrees to the main track.

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 60 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

No. 276, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 426, of the 4-6-2 type, two express cars, one mail-baggage car, two coaches and four Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. After an air-brake test was made this train departed from Fort Myers, 100.2 miles south of Oaks, at 5:15 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, on time, passed Homeland, 5.4 miles south of Oaks, at 8:16 p. m., according to the statement of the conductor, on time, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour the engine and the first five cars were derailed.

The front wheels of the engine truck were derailed to the left at a point 24.7 feet north of the spur-track switch and continued in line with the main track a distance of about 60 feet to the frog of the switch, where the general derailment occurred. The engine stopped on its right side at right angles to the track, with the front end about 410 feet north of the point of derailment and about 50 feet west of the track. The engine truck was detached, the cab was demolished, steam and water connections were broken, and the engine was otherwise badly damaged. The tender became detached from the engine and stopped on its right side, badly damaged, across the track and at right angles to it. The first car became separated from the tender and the second car, and stopped upright, south of the tender, across the track and at right angles to it. The second, third, fourth and fifth cars were derailed to the west and stopped practically

upright and in various positions on the roadbed. The first and second cars were badly damaged, and the third, fourth and fifth cars were slightly damaged.

It was clear and daylight at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8:25 p. m.

The engineer and the fireman were killed, and the train porter was injured.

### Discussion

No. 276 was moving on tangent track at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 60 miles per hour, when the engine and the first five cars became derailed. As the train was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the members of the train crew were making preparation to handle traffic at Bartow, 0.8 mile north of Oaks. The cars had been riding smoothly and the crew were not aware of anything being wrong until the derailment occurred. It could not be determined when the enginemen first became aware of anything being wrong, as they were killed in the accident.

After the accident, examination disclosed that the spur-track switch was locked in position for movement on the main track. Prior to the accident there was no defective condition of the switch or the engine, and there was no indication of dragging equipment or defective track. Beginning at a point about 16 feet north of the switch-point, a flange mark appeared on the top of the head of the west rail. It extended diagonally from the inner corner to the outer corner and was about 8 feet long. Extending from the north end of this mark a distance of about 60 feet to the frog of the switch, the ties bore wheel marks outside the west rail and inside the east rail. Immediately north of the frog, the east rail of the turnout was torn loose from the ties. North of the frog the main track was torn up a distance of about 327 feet to the point where the engine stopped. A sliver of metal 1 1/16-inch wide was found imbedded transversely on the tread of the left front engine-truck wheel. An unsuccessful search was made to locate any obstruction that might have been on the rail. However, because of swampland on each side of the track, an object knocked from the rail into the swamp would be difficult to find. Officials of the carrier were of the opinion that the sliver indicated there was an obstruction on the west rail immediately south of the point where the flange mark appeared on the rail, and that the left front engine-truck wheel was raised high enough for its flange to be in contact with the top surface of the head of the rail.

### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an obstruction on rail.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-eighth day of August, 1943,

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.