

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3103
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT VALDOSTA, GA., ON
MAY 9, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line
Date: May 9, 1947
Location: Valdosta, Ga.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger
Train numbers: 215 : 57
Engine numbers: 1751 : 1519
Consists: 59 cars, caboose : 11 cars
Estimated speeds: 7 m. p. h. : 25 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Single; tangent; 0.34 percent
ascending grade westward
Weather: Clear
Time: 11:47 p. m.
Casualties: 44 injured
Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
for preceding train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3103

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

June 30, 1947

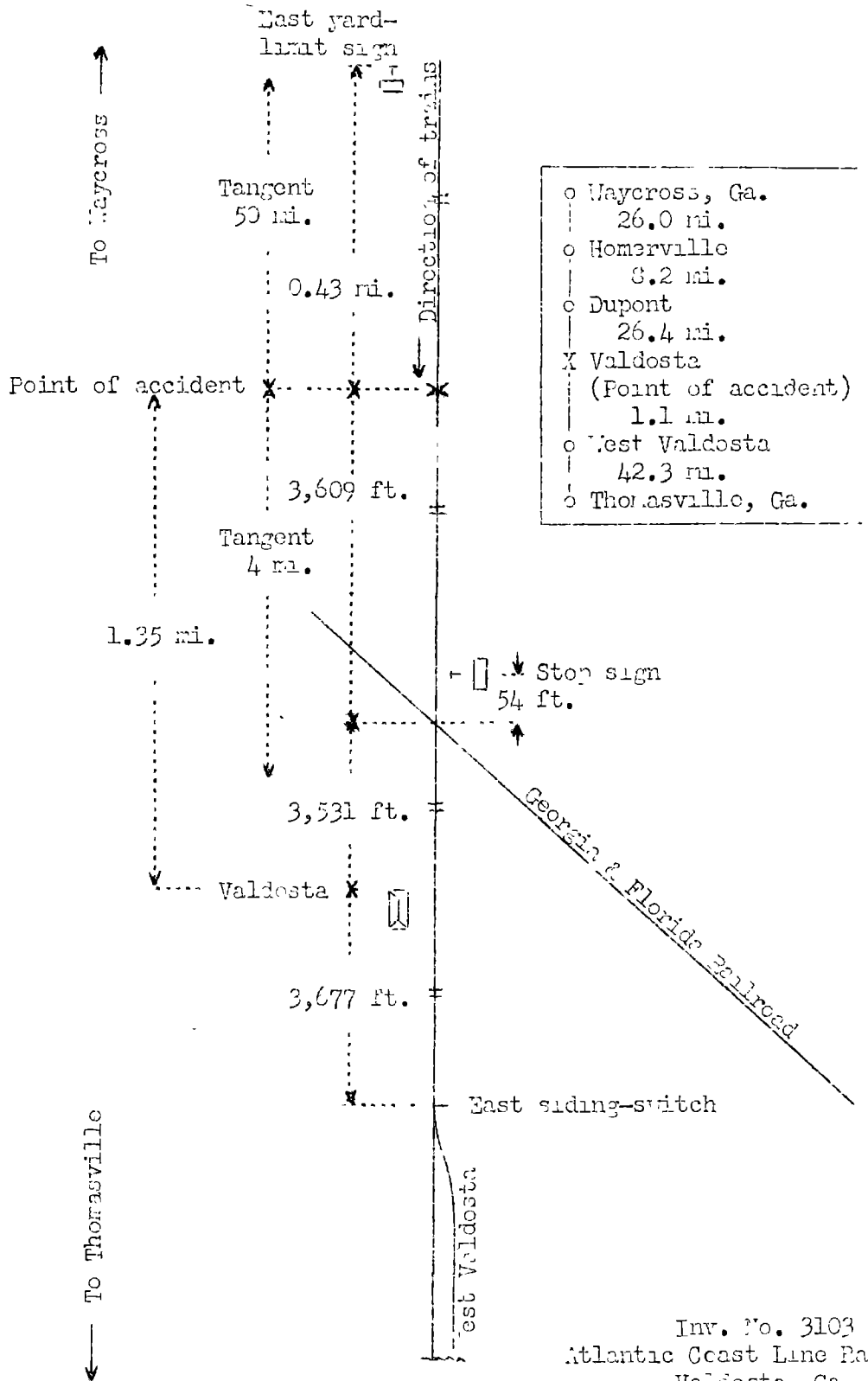
Accident at Valdosta, Ga., on May 9, 1947, caused by
failure to provide adequate protection for the
preceding train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner.

On May 9, 1947, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad at Valdosta, Ga., which resulted in the injury of 17 passengers, 4 railway-mail clerks, 20 employees not on duty and 3 train-service employees.

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.



- o Waycross, Ga. 26.0 mi.
- o Homerville 8.2 mi.
- o Dupont 26.4 mi.
- X Valdosta (Point of accident) 1.1 mi.
- o West Valdosta 42.3 mi.
- o Thomasville, Ga.

Inv. No. 3103
 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
 Valdosta, Ga.
 May 9, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division extending between Waycross and Thomasville, Ga., 104 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Valdosta, 60.6 miles west of Waycross, a single-track line of the Georgia & Florida Railroad intersects the main track of the Atlantic Coast Line at an angle of 48°, at a point 3,531 feet east of the station. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point 0.43 mile west of the east yard-limit sign, 1.35 miles east of the station and 3,609 feet east of the crossing. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 50 miles immediately east of the point of accident, and 4 miles westward. The grade for west-bound trains is 0.77 percent descending 1,200 feet, practically level 1,000 feet, then it is 0.34 percent ascending 310 feet to the point of accident and 1,090 feet westward.

A stop sign governing movement of west-bound A.C.L. trains over the G.& F. crossing is located immediately south of the south rail of the main track and 54 feet east of the crossing. At West Valdosta, 1.1 miles west of Valdosta, a siding parallels the main track on the south. The east switch of this siding is 3,677 feet west of the station at Valdosta.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

11. A fussee on or near the track burning red must not be passed until burned out, * * *

19. The following signals will be displayed * * *, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train:

* * *

Lights * * *, showing yellow to the front and side and red to the rear.

* * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

Night signals--A red light.
 A white light.
 Torpedoes and
 Fusescs.

72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; and so on.

* * *

86. An inferior train * * * must be clear at the time a first-class train, in the same direction, is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown.

91. Unless some form of block signals is used, trains in the same direction must keep at least ten minutes apart, except in closing up at stations.

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing the time of first-class trains five minutes.

* * *

98 (a). Trains must stop within three hundred (300) feet of all * * * railroad crossings at grade, * * *

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.

* * *

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals.

* * *

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

Trains must stop at unprotected railroad crossings within:

50 feet in Georgia * * *. If the way is clear, they may then proceed.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

B

DIRECTING A TRAIN TO PASS OR RUN
AHEAD OF ANOTHER TRAIN

* * *

- (3.) Extra 594 east run ahead of No 6 M to B.
The first-named train will run ahead of
the second-named train between the points
designated.

* * *

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are
60 miles per hour for passenger trains and 50 miles per
hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

No. 215, a west-bound third-class freight train, con-
sisted of engine 1751, 59 cars and a caboose. At Homerville,
34.6 miles east of Valdosta, the crew received copies of train
order No. 93 reading as follows:

No 215 run ahead of No 57 Homerville
to West Valdosta.

No. 215 departed from Homerville at 10:47 p. m., 1 hour 7
minutes late, passed Dupont, the last open office, 26.4 miles
east of Valdosta, at 11:04 p. m., 1 hour 4 minutes late, and
while it was moving at an estimated speed of 7 miles per hour
and preparing to stop in compliance with the stop sign, located
immediately east of the G.& F. crossing at Valdosta, the rear
end was struck by No. 57.

No. 57, a west-bound first-class passenger train, con-
sisted of engine 1519, four express cars, one baggage-mail
car, one passenger-baggage car, four coaches and one sleeping
car, in the order named. The seventh and eighth cars were of
steel-underframe construction and the remainder of the cars
were of all-steel construction. At Waycross the crew received
copies of train order No. 93. This train departed from
Waycross at 10:28 p. m., 23 minutes late, departed from Dupont
at 11:18 p. m., 24 minutes late, and while moving at an esti-
mated speed of 25 miles per hour it struck No. 215.

The caboose and the rear car of No. 215 were demolished. The forty-third, the forty-fourth cars, and the front truck of the forty-fifth car were derailed. These cars and the fifty-eighth car were considerably damaged. The engine, the first and second cars, and the front truck of the third car of No. 57 were derailed. The first car was demolished, and the remainder of the derailed equipment of this train was considerably damaged.

The engineer, the fireman and the flagman of No. 57 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:47 p. m.

Discussion

The crews of No. 57 and No. 215 held copies of a train order authorizing No. 215, a third-class train, to run ahead of No. 57, a first-class passenger train, from Homerville to West Valdosta. No. 215 was moving within yard limits on the main track at an estimated speed of 7 miles per hour and was preparing to stop short of the stop sign immediately east of the G. & F. crossing at Valdosta when the rear end was struck by No. 57.

As No. 57 was approaching Valdosta the speed was about 60 miles per hour. The air brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer was seriously injured in the accident, and he was unable to make a statement before the investigation was completed. The fireman said that when the engine reached a point about 3,800 feet east of the point where the accident occurred the engineer made a light service brake-pipe reduction. No warning signal was seen or heard until the engine was a few hundred feet east of the point where the accident occurred, when the fireman saw the lighted red marker lamps of the preceding train and called a warning to the engineer. Then the fireman jumped from the engine, and he thought the brakes had been applied in emergency at the time he left the engine. He estimated the speed of his train as about 25 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The baggageman was in the fifth car and he said the brakes were applied in emergency just before the impact occurred. The other members of the train crew were not aware of anything being wrong until the collision occurred.

As No. 215 was approaching the crossing at Valdosta the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The flagman said that when the speed of the train was being reduced he dropped a lighted red 10-minute fusee at a point about 2-1/2

miles east of the point where the accident occurred. When he saw the reflection of the headlight of the following train he lighted another fusee and attached it to the end sill at the rear of the caboose. When the speed was reduced to about 8 miles per hour he alighted from the caboose, and was giving stop signals with a lighted fusee from a point about 500 feet east of the caboose when the engine of No. 57 passed his location. After the accident the residue of a freshly burned fusee was found in a depression in the center of the track and against the west side of a tie, at a point 2.71 miles east of the point where the collision occurred. The position of this residue indicated that the reflection of the fusee might have been somewhat obscured from the view of the enginemen of No. 57. A witness who was in the vicinity of the caboose of No. 215 said that just prior to the collision he saw two persons jump from the caboose. He did not see any lighted fusee on the rear of the caboose or in the possession of the persons who jumped from the caboose.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. The only provision for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and flagmen's signals. The rules required that the following train be spaced at least 10 minutes behind the preceding train. The train order which authorized the third-class train to run ahead of the first-class train modified the provisions of the rules which require that, outside of yard-limit territory, an inferior train must be clear of the main track at the time a following first-class train is due to leave the last station in the rear where time is shown, and that within yard limits an inferior train must clear the time of a following first-class train not less than 5 minutes, but it did not restrict the movement of the following train. The preceding train departed from Dupont, the last open office, 26.4 miles east of Valdosta, 14 minutes before the following train departed from Dupont. Unless adequate flag protection was furnished by the crew of the preceding train, there was no provision that prevented the following train from moving at the maximum authorized speed of 60 miles per hour until it reached a point where the speed was required to be reduced in order that it could be stopped short of the G. & F. crossing at Valdosta. If an adequate block system had been in use, the passenger train would have been required to stop at the signal at the entrance to the occupied block, and the accident might have been prevented.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of June, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.