INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2894

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT WALTHOURVILLE, GA., ON

JUNE 5, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Atlantic Coast Line
Date:	June 5, 1945
Location:	Walthourville, Ga.
Kind of accident:	Derailment
Train involved:	Passenger
Train number:	First 76
Engine number:	Diesel-electric units 520, 754 and 501
Consist:	17 cars
Speed:	64 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system
Track:	Double; tangent; 0.3 percent ascending grade northward
Weather:	Clear
Time:	About 10:14 a. m.
Casualties:	82 injured
Cause:	Train entering switch at high rate of speed
Recommendation:	That the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company install electric switch-locking at main-track hand-operated switches in high-speed automatic block-signal territory

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2894

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

July 3, 1945.

Accident at Walthourville, Ga., on June 5, 1945, caused by a train entering an open switch at a high rate of speed.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 5, 1945, there was a derailment of a passenger train at Walthourville, Ga., which resulted in the injury of 58 passengers, 6 railway-mail clerks, 4 Pullman employees, 13 dining-car employees and 1 train-service employee.

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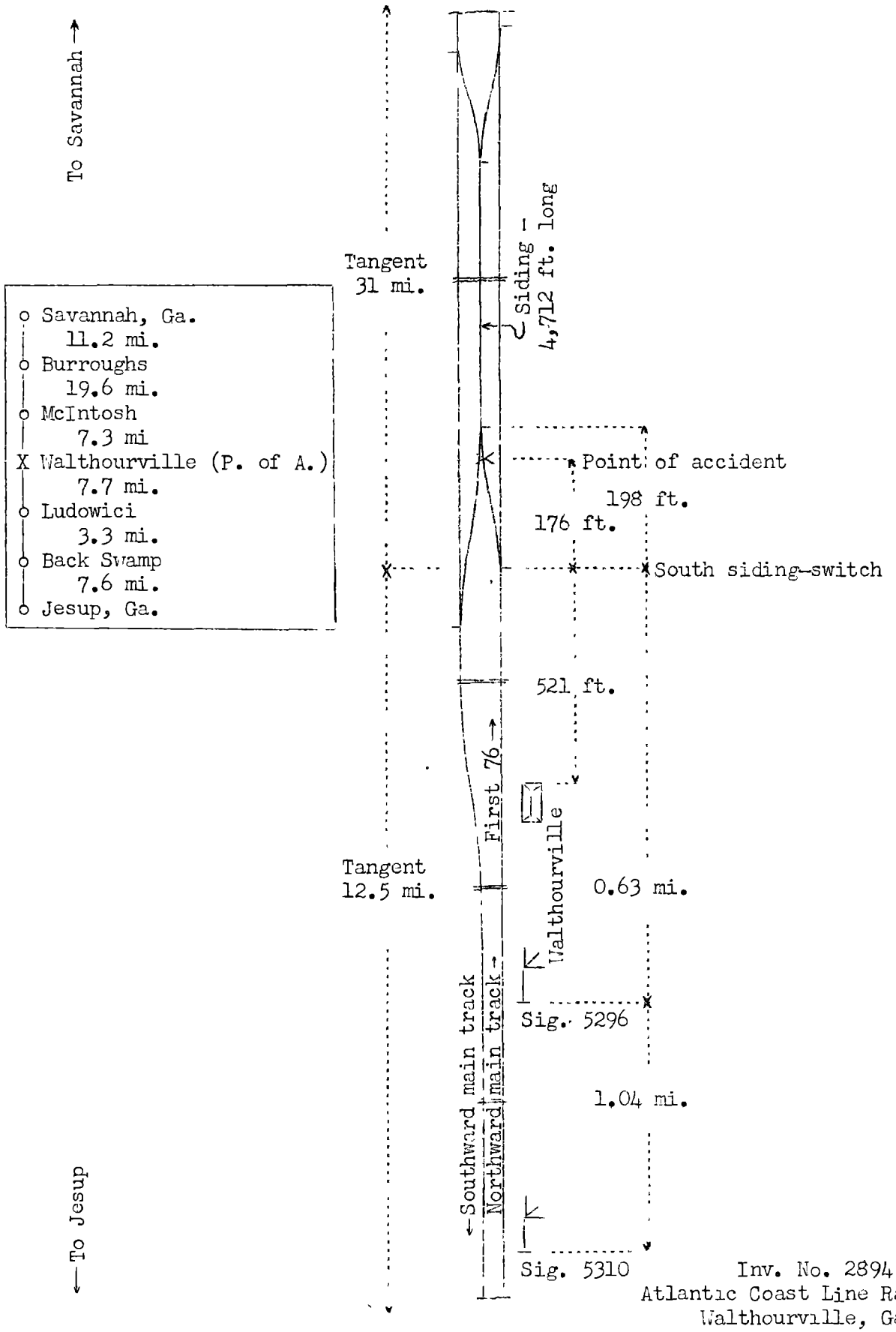
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 2894
Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
Walthourville, Ga.
June 5, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Waycross District extending northward from Jesup to Savannah, Ga., 56.7 miles, a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. At Walthourville, 18.6 miles north of Jesup, a siding 4,712 feet in length lies between the main tracks. The south siding-switch, which connects the siding and the northward main track, is located 521 feet north of the station. The turnout of this switch is 198 feet in length. The accident occurred on the turnout 176 feet north of the south siding-switch. From the south the northward main track is tangent 12.5 miles to the south siding-switch and 31 miles northward. The grade is 0.3 percent ascending northward.

On the turnout involved the track structure at the south end consists of a No. 10 turnout, 131-pound rails and switch points, a No. 10 spring-type frog, 16.5 feet in length, and an 11-foot guard rail having two clamps and four braces. The south-switch assembly is laid on 61 switch ties. The north end of the turnout is a No. 8 type and consists of 85-pound rail laid on 56 switch ties. The frog is a No. 8 rigid type and 13 feet long. The compromise joints between the 131-pound rail and the 85-pound rail are about 20 feet south of the No. 8 frog. The main-track switch is of the hand-throw intermediate-stand type, and is provided with two targets. The centers of the targets are 5 feet above the tops of the ties and about 6 feet east of gage side of the east rail of the northward track. When the switch is lined normally, a circular green target, 14 inches in diameter, is displayed. When the switch is lined for movement to the siding, a red arrow-shaped target is displayed.

Automatic signals 5310 and 5296, governing north-bound movements on the northward main track, are located, respectively, 1.67 miles and 0.63 mile south of the south siding-switch The track circuits are so arranged that when the south siding-switch at Walthourville is lined for movement to the siding, signal 5310 displays approach and signal 5296 displays stop.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

10. VISIBLE SIGNALS

Color Signals

Color	Indication
(a) Red.	Stop.
* * *	
(c) Green.	Proceed, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 75 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

First 76, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 520, 754 and 501, one baggage-express car, one mail car, two baggage-express cars, four coaches, one lounge-car, one dining-car, four Pullman sleeping cars and three troop-sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train passed Ludowici, 7.7 miles south of Walthourville, at 9:56 a. m., 31 minutes late, passed signals 5310 and 5296, which displayed proceed, passed the station at Walthourville at 10:14 a. m., 39 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of 64 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recorder, it entered the south siding-switch at Walthourville, and the engine and the first to eighth cars, inclusive, were derailed.

The three units of the engine stopped practically upright and in line with the siding, 371 feet north of the point of derailment. The first to sixth cars, inclusive, stopped in various positions across the tracks and at the rear of the engine. The seventh car remained upright and in line with the siding. The front truck of the eighth car was derailed. The third car was demolished. The Diesel units, the first and second cars, and the fourth to seventh cars, inclusive, were considerably damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:14 a. m.

The train-service employee injured was the flagman of First 76.

Discussion

First 76, a north-bound first-class passenger train, was moving on the northward main track at a speed of 64 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 75 miles per hour, when it entered the south siding-switch at Walthourville and was derailed. For northward movements the curvature on the first portion of the turnout was about 7°23' to the left and the curvature on the portion where the derailment occurred was about 12°12' to the right. The engine did not turn over.

As First 76 was approaching Walthourville the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Signals 5310 and 5296 displayed proceed for their train. When the front end of the engine was about 550 feet south of the south switch, the

engineer observed that the switch was lined for entry to the siding. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the derailment occurred before the speed was materially reduced.

The investigation disclosed that No. 503, a south-bound fourth-class freight train, moving on the southward main track, had stopped at Walthourville about 10:10 a. m., with the front end standing about 700 feet south of the south siding-switch. Soon afterward, the front brakeman of this train proceeded northward and lined the main track switch for movement from the northward main track to the siding. At that time First 76 was closely approaching the switch and the brakeman gave hand signals to that train to indicate that the switch was lined for entry to the siding.

The brakeman said that on several occasions previous to the day of the accident, during the process of relaying rail on the northward main track immediately north of Walthourville, he had been instructed by conductors to operate the south switch at Walthourville so that No. 76 could enter the siding, proceed to the north end and enter the southward main track for movement against the current of traffic. On the day of the accident, the crew of No. 503 received a train order at Burroughs and another train order at McIntosh, respectively, 26.9 and 7.5 miles north of Walthourville. These orders provided that Nos. 1 and 7, south-bound first-class trains, wait at McIntosh until 10:49 a. m. and at Walthourville until 10:57 a. m., and that all south-bound trains use the northward main track from Walthourville to Back Swamp, 11 miles south of Walthourville, between the hours of 9:10 a. m. and 7:01 p. m. Before No. 503 departed from McIntosh, the conductor was in communication with the train dispatcher by telephone, and the front brakeman overheard the conductor's part of the conversation, which he thought was to the effect that there were two sections of No. 76 and a north-bound extra coming, and that No. 503's crew would handle the switches at Walthourville. When No. 503 was approaching Walthourville, the speed was reduced at the north switch of the siding, and the flagman alighted. The front brakeman said that he assumed from the conductor's statement and the action of the flagman that No. 76 was to be operated through the siding as on previous occasions, and he handled the switches accordingly. No other member of the crew of No. 503 was aware of the front brakeman's action until after the accident occurred. The conductor said that in the conversation at McIntosh he had been instructed by the train dispatcher to handle the switches at Walthourville for Nos. 1 and 7 to use the northward main track between Walthourville and Back Swamp after First and Second 76 and a north-bound extra train had arrived at Walthourville on the northward main track. He did not instruct the brakeman to line the switches and could not

understand why the brakeman had assumed that First 76 would be operated through the siding to the southward main track.

At the time the brakeman operated the south siding-switch, First 76 had passed the last automatic signal to the rear of the switch. Regardless of the misunderstanding had by the brakeman, if electric switch-locking had been provided in this territory he would have been unable to operate the siding-switch after First 76 had entered the controlling circuits, and this accident would have been prevented.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a train entering an open switch at a high rate of speed.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company install electric switch-locking at main-track hand-operated switches in high-speed automatic block-signal territory.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this third day of July, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.