

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2593
THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR WHIGHAM, GA., ON
JULY 1, 1942

- 2 -

SUMMARY

Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line

Date: July 1, 1942

Location: Whigham, Ga.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Passenger : Passenger

Train numbers: 12 : Third 57

Engine numbers: 1514 : 1627

Consist: 8 cars : 7 cars

Speed: Standing : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 1.3 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: About 6:45 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 110 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure to
obey meet order

Recommendation: That the Atlantic Coast Line
Railroad Company establish an
adequate block-signal system
on the line involved in this
accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2598

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 8, 1910.

THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

August 19, 1942.

Accident near Whigham, Ga., on July 1, 1942, caused by
failure to obey a meet order.

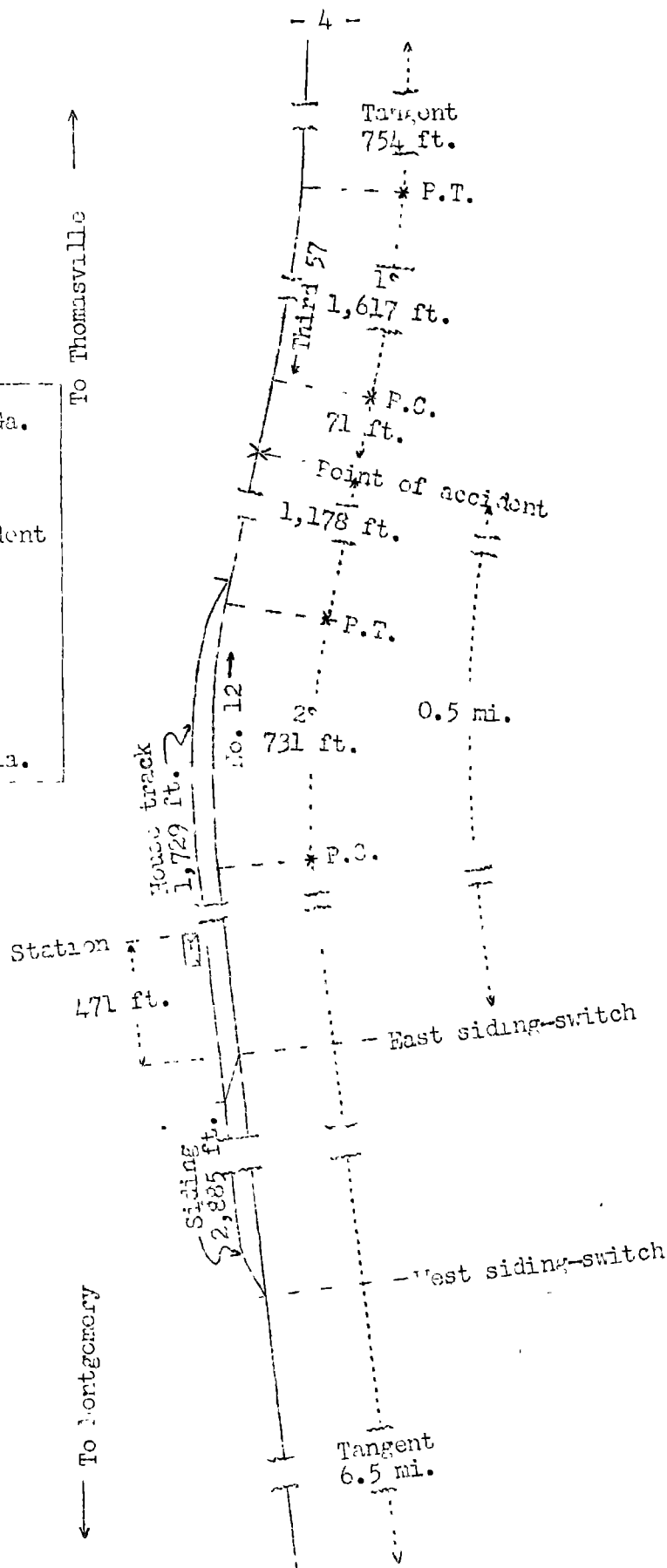
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 1, 1942, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Whigham, Ga., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 90 passengers, 7 Pullman employees, 8 dining-car employees, 1 coach attendant and 4 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.

- Thomasville, Ga. 14.1 mi.
- Cairo 6.4 mi.
- X Point of accident 0.5 mi.
- Whigham 6.5 mi.
- Climax, Ga. 40.9 mi.
- Alaga, Ala. 141.6 mi.
- Montgomery, Ala.



Inv-2598
 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
 Whigham, Ga.
 July 1, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery District which extends between Montgomery, Ala., and Thomasville, Ga., a distance of 210 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Whigham a siding 2,885 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The east switch of this siding is 471 feet west of the station. The accident occurred at a point 0.5 mile east of the east siding-switch. As the point of accident is approached from the west there are, in succession, a tangent 6.5 miles in length, a 2° curve to the right 731 feet, and a tangent 1,178 feet to the point of accident and 71 feet beyond. As the point of accident is approached from the east there are, in succession, a tangent 754 feet in length, a 1° curve to the right 1,617 feet and the tangent on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 1.3 percent descending westward. Starting at a point 257 feet east of the point where the accident occurred and extending 1,100 feet eastward the track is laid in a cut, the walls of which rise to a maximum height of 25 feet.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals

Note: The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds.
* * *

* * *

(n) ___ o Approaching meeting or waiting points.
See Rule 90.

* * *

16. Communicating Signals

* * *

(1) ___ o Approaching waiting or meeting points.
(See Rule 90).

* * *

90.

* * *

Train must stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on the siding.

The engineman of each train will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point. Should the engineman fail to give signal 14 (n) as herein prescribed, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

204 (a). When trains of any class have orders to meet, the train which holds the main line at the meeting point will pass the entire train on the siding at a speed not to exceed fifteen miles per hour, and the * * * enginemen and conductors, * * * will call to each other the numbers of their respective trains. Each party must hear distinctly the number called by the other. * * *

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

North or east bound trains are superior to trains of the same class in opposite direction, * * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the trains involved is 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 12, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1514, one dormitory car, three coaches, one dining car, two coaches and one club-observation car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. At Montgomery, 189 miles west of Whigham, a terminal air-brake test was made and this train departed at 2:50 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 2 hours 30 minutes late. At Alaga, 47.4 miles west of Whigham, the crew received a clearance card and copies of train order No. 63, Form 19, which read in part as follows:

No. 12 meet Third 57 at
Whigham * * *

No. 12 departed from Alaga at 5:53 a. m., 2 hours 37 minutes late, passed Climax, 6.5 miles west of Whigham and the last open office, at 6:37 a. m., 2 hours 32 minutes late, passed the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Whigham, where it was required to wait unless Third 57 was on the siding, stopped on the main track at a point 2,641 feet east of the east siding-switch, and almost immediately afterward it was struck by Third 57.

Third 57, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1627, one Pullman sleeping car, two tourist cars, one baggage car, one Pullman sleeping car and two tourist cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. At Thomasville, 21 miles east of Whigham, the crew received a clearance card together with copies of six train orders, of which one was train order No. 63, Form 19, previously quoted. A terminal air-brake test was made and this train departed from Thomasville at 6:18 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 5 hours 3 minutes late, passed Cairo, 6.9 miles east of Whigham and the last open office, at 6:36

a. m., 4 hours 53 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with No. 12.

The brakes of both trains had functioned properly at all points where used en route. There was no condition of either engine that obscured the view or distracted the attention of the employees who were on the engines. From the right side of the cab of a west-bound engine the view of an engine standing at the point of accident is restricted because of track curvature and the banks of a cut to a distance of about 950 feet.

The force of the impact moved No. 12 backward a distance of about 125 feet. Engine 1514 and its tender overturned to the right and stopped south of the track and parallel to it, with the front end of the engine about 15 feet north of the track and 100 feet west of the point of collision. The front end of the engine and the cab and the tender were badly damaged. The engine frame was broken off at the cylinders and bent under the boiler. The front end of the first car of No. 12 stopped on the ties at a point 25 feet west of the rear end of the tender. The first three cars were slightly damaged. The boiler and the cab of engine 1627 were torn from the frame and stopped, badly damaged, on their left sides, south of the track and parallel to it, with the front end of the boiler against engine 1514. The engine-truck wheels and the trailer-truck wheels were derailed. The driving wheel assembly and the tender remained on the track. The cylinders were demolished and the frame was broken off at the cylinders. The first, second, third and seventh cars of Third 57 were slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:45 a. m.

The train-service employee killed was the engineer of No. 12. The train-service employees injured were the engineer, the fireman, the brakeman and the flagman of Third 57.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 15.66 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that at meeting points the superior train must stop clear of the switch to be used by the train that enters the siding. The engineer of each train must sound the meeting-point whistle signal not less than one mile in advance of the meeting point. If an engineer fails to sound the proper signal, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train. In addition, the

train holding the main track is required to reduce speed to 15 miles per hour as it approaches the meeting point and not to exceed that speed until the train to be met is identified.

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 63, which established Whigham as the meeting point between No. 12, an east-bound first-class passenger train, and Third 57, a west-bound first-class passenger train. No. 12 was superior by direction and was required to stop short of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Whigham unless Third 57 was into clear on the siding. These requirements were understood by all surviving members of both crews involved.

As Third 57 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. At a point about 1 mile east of Whigham the engineer sounded the meeting-point whistle signal and made a service brake-pipe reduction to reduce speed in preparation for his train to enter the siding at the east switch. The enginemen's view of the track ahead was restricted because of track curvature and the banks of the cut. When the engine reached a point about 500 feet west of the point where the accident occurred the engineer observed simultaneously the engine of No. 12, and a member of the crew of that train giving stop signals from a point near the engine. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, placed the reverse lever in position for backward motion and opened the sander valve. The speed of Third 57 was about 30 miles per hour when the enginemen and the front brakeman jumped off just before the collision occurred.

Train order No. 63 was received by the crew of No. 12 at Alaga, 47.4 miles west of Whigham, and the enginemen read the order. The fireman understood that his train was required to be stopped short of the fouling point of the east siding-switch if Third 57 was not into clear on the siding. As No. 12 was approaching Whigham the speed was about 60 miles per hour. When the engine reached a point about 3/4 mile west of the east siding-switch, as a meeting-point signal had not been sounded and no action was being taken by the engineer to reduce the speed of their train, the fireman called the engineer's attention to the provisions of the meet order and the engineer replied that the fireman was in error. The order was in the possession of the engineer, but he did not re-read it at that time. When the engine passed the west siding-switch, a meeting-point signal was sounded on the train air-signal system, but no action was taken by the engineer. When the engine passed the east siding-switch the brakes became applied in emergency and the engineer moved the brake valve to release position. The fireman again called the engineer's attention to the order and the engineer then instructed the fireman to flag Third 57. No. 12 was stopped by the emergency application of the brakes and the

fireman had reached a point near the front end of the engine when it was struck by Third 57. Why the engineer failed to take action to stop his train short of the fouling point of the east siding-switch could not be determined as he was killed in the accident. If proper action had been taken by either of the enginemen when the fireman first warned the engineer, it is probable this accident would have been averted. The conductor, the baggageman and the flagman read order No. 63 and understood that their train was required not to pass the fouling point of the east siding-switch unless Third 57 was into clear on the siding. The conductor was in the fourth car as No. 12 was approaching Whigham. Because no meeting-point whistle signal had been sounded and the speed had not been reduced, the conductor sounded the meeting-point signal on the train air-signal system. Although the signal was not acknowledged by the engineer nor was the speed reduced the conductor took no further action until his train reached a point about 1,400 feet west of the east siding-switch. He then observed that Third 57 was not on the siding, and he opened the conductor's emergency valve. The train had been stopped on the main track at a point 2,641 feet east of the east siding-switch about 40 seconds when the collision occurred. The flagman and the baggageman knew that their train was not being operated prepared to stop short of the meeting point, but they depended upon the other members of the crew to comply with the rules. If, as required by the rules, some member of the train crew had taken immediate action to stop the train when the meeting-point signal should have been sounded by the engineer, this accident could have been averted. The rules of this carrier provide for the sounding of a meeting-point signal on the train air-signal system, but do not specify when it will be sounded. If the rules had required the conductor to sound the meeting-point signal soon after No. 12 passed the last station in the rear of Whigham, undoubtedly the attention of the engineer would have been directed to the meeting point in ample time for him to re-read his orders and to take necessary action to stop the train short of the east siding-switch at Whigham.

On the line involved in this accident, trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use on this line, this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Recommendation

That the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this nineteenth day of August, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.