

Inv-2219

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

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ACCIDENT ON THE  
CENTRAL OF GEORGIA RAILWAY

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LOVEJOY, GA.

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NOVEMBER 6, 1937

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2219

SUMMARY

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Railway: Central of Georgia  
Date: November 6, 1937.  
Location: Lovejoy, Ga.  
Kind of accident: Collision and Derailment  
Train involved: Passenger  
Train number: No. 33  
Engine number: 473  
Consist: 11 cars  
Speed: 50-60 m.p.h.  
Track: 2° right curve 1,790 feet, then 34 feet of tangent to crossing; view restricted from both sides of engine cab; no form of automatic protection at crossing.  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 7:24 a.m.  
Casualties: 4 killed; 4 injured  
Cause: Motor truck driven upon highway crossing at grade directly in front of approaching train.

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December 8, 1937.

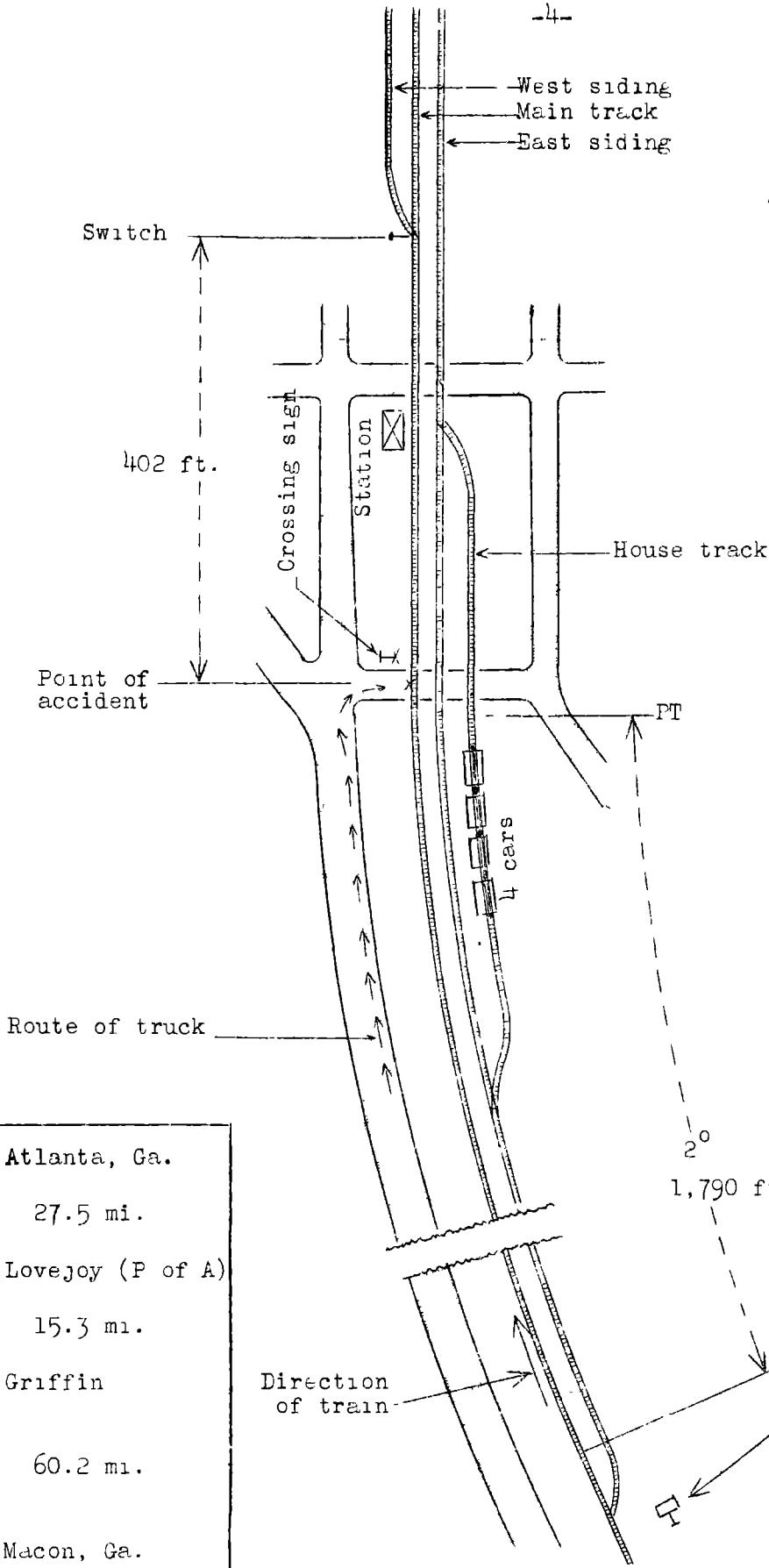
To the Commission:

On November 6, 1937, there was a collision between a motor truck and a passenger train on the Central of Georgia Railway at Lovejoy, Ga., which caused the derailment of the passenger train and resulted in the death of one railway employee and three occupants of the motor truck, including the driver, and the injury of three passengers on the train and one railroad employee.

#### Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Atlanta District of the Macon Division, which extends between Macon and Atlanta, Ga., a distance of 102.8 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. Timetable directions are used in this report. The accident occurred at a highway crossing located 233 feet east of the depot at Lovejoy. Approaching this point from the east on the railroad, there is a 2° curve to the right 1,790 feet in length, followed by a tangent which extends 34 feet to the crossing, and about 1 mile beyond. The grade is 0.681 percent ascending westward at the point of accident. The eastward siding and an auxiliary track, known as the house track, parallel the main track on the north at this point and the crossing extends over all three tracks. The westward siding parallels the main track on the south and its east switch is 402 feet west of the crossing. At the time of the accident four freight cars stood on the house track with the west end of the west car 71 feet east of the center line of the crossing. The road crossing whistle post is located 2,012 feet east of the crossing.

The crossing is part of a branch road leading northward from a public road which parallels the railroad on the south. This latter road is unimproved and is depressed about 4½ feet below the top of the rails for a considerable distance east of the branch road but at the junction between the two roads this depression is decreased to 2 feet 7 inches. The junction is made at an angle of 90° and is approximately 30 feet south of the railroad. In the construction of the crossing, which is 20 feet wide, a crossing plank is located on each side of each rail and the space between filled with loose slag. A Central of Georgia Railway standard highway cross-bar warning sign is located 20 feet west of the crossing and 14 feet south of the



o	Atlanta, Ga.
	27.5 mi.
o	Lovejoy (P of A)
	15.3 mi.
o	Griffin
	60.2 mi.
o	Macon, Ga.

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 Central of Georgia Ry.  
 Lovejoy, Ga.  
 Nov. 6, 1937

main track; the sign is 11 feet 8 inches in height and reads "RAILROAD CROSSING."

The cars on the house track restricted the view of the crossing from the engineman's side of the cab of a west-bound engine to a distance of 360 feet across the inside of the curve. The view of the crossing from the fireman's side of the cab around the outside of the curve was materially restricted. At a point on the south approach of the highway to the crossing 30 feet from the center line of the main track the driver of a westward vehicle, making the right-hand turn necessary to move northward over the tracks, can see an approaching west-bound train for a distance of 1,092 feet; at a point 16 feet from the tracks the view toward the east is restricted to 858 feet.

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

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:24 a.m.

#### Description

No. 33, a west-bound passenger train, consisting of 1 Pullman car, 3 express cars, 2 coaches, 1 diner, and 4 Pullman cars, in the order named, all of steel construction, hauled by engine 473, of the 4-8-2 type, was in charge of Conductor Howell and Engineman Wall. This train left Griffin, the last open office, 15.3 miles east of Lovejoy, at 7:04 a.m., and was derailed when it struck a motor truck at Lovejoy crossing while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 50 and 60 miles per hour.

The motor truck involved was a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton Ford truck, 1929 model, equipped with a light stake-body and an enclosed steel cab, and was operated under Georgia license 3052. It was owned by J. R. Brown of Hampton, Ga. At the time of the accident it was being driven by James Allen of Rex, Ga., accompanied by his wife and infant son. This truck proceeded westward along the public road lying south of the railroad, made the right turn into the branch road described above, moved upon the crossing and was struck by No. 33.

The truck was thrown 150 feet west of the crossing and stopped parallel to and 14 feet south of the track, and was totally demolished. Engine 473, with its engine truck derailed, continued westward a distance of 402 feet to the facing-point switch of the westward siding where it was entirely derailed.

The engine stopped with the wheels upturned, south of the tracks and 780 feet west of the crossing; the tender, too, was bottom up. The first 7 cars were derailed and stopped in various positions across and along the tracks, but remained upright. The employee killed was the engineman, and the employee injured was the fireman.

#### Summary of evidence

Fireman Henry stated that approaching Lovejoy the speed was about 55 or 60 miles per hour and he was putting in a fire. When the engineman sounded the station whistle signal at the station board, the fireman got on the seatbox and gave the bell cord a pull and the engineman started the mechanical bell ringer. The engineman then made a service brake application as is customary in order to slow down while passing through Lovejoy, and on reaching the whistle post he sounded the road crossing whistle signal. Both the engineman and the fireman were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective sides of the cab, but as the fireman's view of the crossing around the outside of the curve was materially restricted he did not see the truck at any time prior to the accident. Shortly after completing the road crossing signal, the engineman applied the brakes in emergency and sounded a succession of short blasts of the whistle. At the time of derailment the speed was about 50 miles per hour.

Conductor Howell was in the vestibule of the diner when the accident occurred, at which time he estimated the speed to have been about 55 or 60 miles per hour. He could not recall definitely whether he felt the air brakes applied in emergency just prior to the accident; however, he heard the station and road crossing signals sounded on the engine whistle. The air brakes had been tested and worked properly.

Baggagemaster Puckett, Flagman Weathers and Train Porter James gave testimony similar to that of the conductor regarding the speed of the train, test of air brakes and sounding of whistle signals approaching Lovejoy. Their statements indicated that the engineman made the emergency air brake application at the time the truck was struck.

Bobby Henderson, age 12, and Johannie Fullerton, age 13, residents of this locality and eyewitnesses to the accident, made statements to the effect that as the train approached the crossing the whistle was being sounded. The truck was loaded with household goods and was moving slowly westward along the public road that parallels the tracks on the south, moving in the same direction as the train; it then made a right turn in order to pass northward over the crossing. Bobby Henderson was

standing near the crossing, and Johnnie Fullerton was walking along the public road toward Lovejoy. Bobby shouted and waved to the truck driver to warn him of the approach of the train, but the driver kept going slowly and ran upon the track directly in front of the train where he stopped; at this time the locomotive was about 25 or 30 feet away, and the whistle was still being sounded. Johnnie said that the truck was moving slowly over the crossing when the locomotive struck it. Bobby said that the lady in the truck apparently saw the train about the time the truck reached the track and told the driver, but there was not then enough time for them to get out before the accident occurred. Neither could say whether or not the engine bell was ringing.

Division Engineer Golsan stated that he had been in charge of this district for the past 15 years. This was the first accident at this crossing during that time. There are three highway grade crossings in this immediate vicinity. The elimination of any or all of these crossings by means of an underpass or overpass could be accomplished only at an enormous expense. The elimination of two of these crossings combined with the installation of automatic highway grade protection, such as wig-wag signals, at the other, would be very desirable; but his experience has been that it is very hard to get the support of city or county authorities in proposed elimination of grade crossings.

General Claim Agent Gaillard stated that the truck was loaded with household goods, and apparently the family was moving from the vicinity of Clayton to Rex, Ga. He did not know whether the truck driver was a licensed operator or whether he was qualified to drive a truck. He said that the Georgia State law requires vehicles to stop before proceeding over a railroad track.

Assistant Master Mechanic Cox examined the locomotive at the point of accident and found its general condition good; he found nothing that would have caused the derailment.

#### Discussion

The investigation developed that as the west-bound train approached Lovejoy crossing at a speed of 55 to 60 miles per hour, station and road crossing signals were sounded on the engine whistle and the mechanical bell ringer was in operation. A boy standing near the crossing shouted and waved to the truck driver in order to warn him of the approach of the train, and as the truck moved slowly upon the crossing directly in front of the passenger train additional warning was given by the sounding of several short blasts of the locomotive whistle. The fireman

did not see the truck at any time prior to the accident but stated that the engineman applied the brakes in emergency a short time before the crossing was reached. The evidence indicates that the driver failed to comply with the Georgia State law which requires vehicles to be stopped before proceeding over a railroad track, but since the truck driver was killed it was impossible to learn the reason for his failure to do so.

#### Conclusion

This accident was caused by a motor truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing directly in front of an approaching train.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.