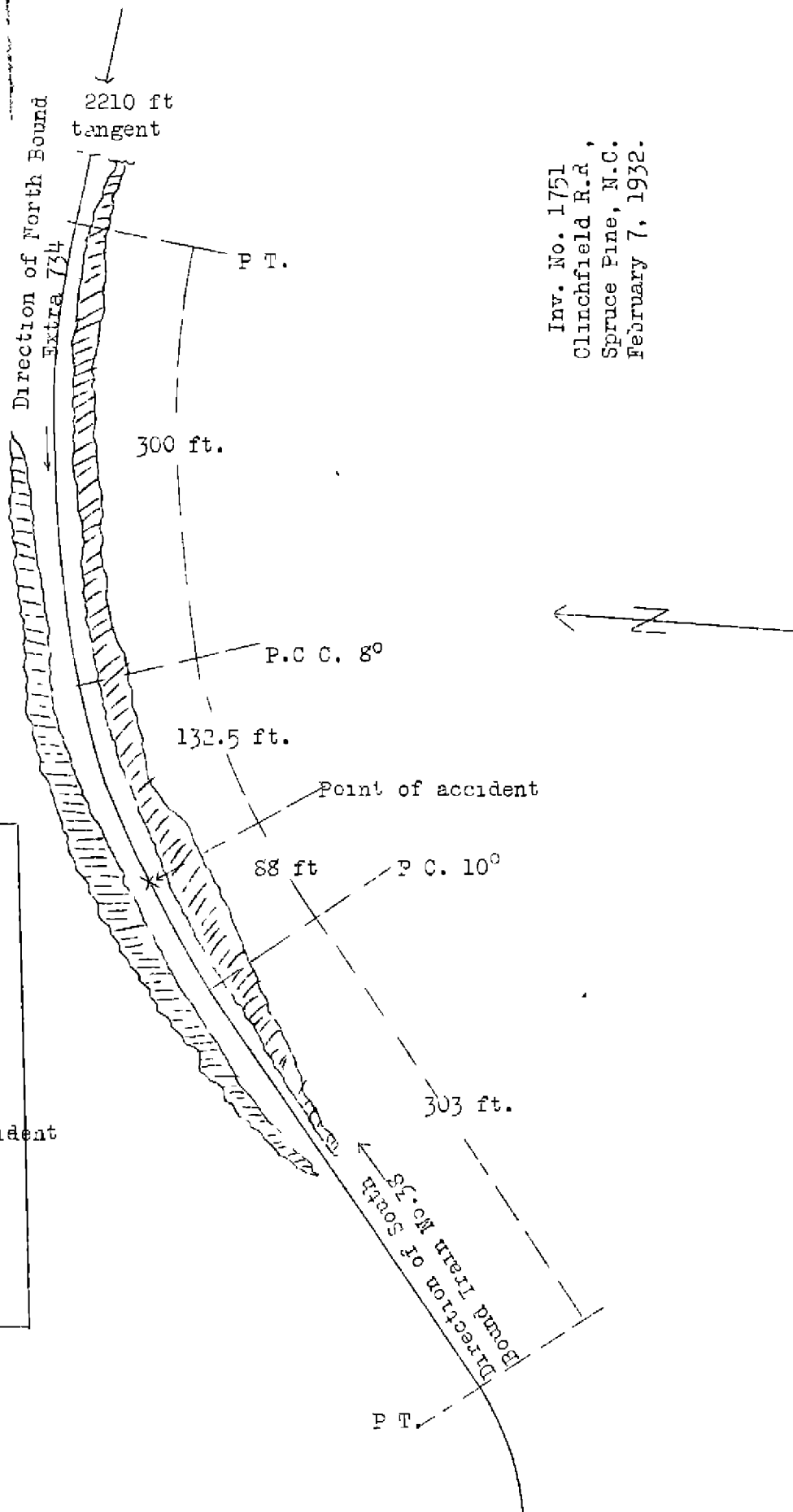
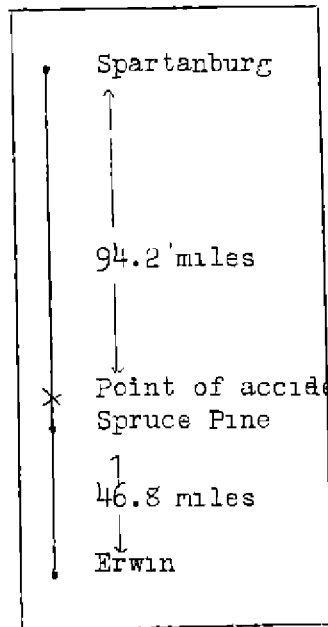


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INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Southbound passenger train No. 33 consisted of one combination mail, baggage and express car and two coaches, hauled by engine 103, of the 4-6-0 type, and was in charge

Inv. No. 1751  
Clinchfield R.R.,  
Spruce Pine, N.C.  
February 7, 1932.



of Conductor Spencer and Engineman Sublett. This train left Spruce Pine at 1.53 p. m., 12 minutes late, and shortly afterwards it collided with northbound extra 734 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 25 and 30 miles per hour.

Northbound extra 734 was a light engine, of the 2-8-8-2 type, in charge of Engineman Smith and Fireman Carpenter. This engine left Erwin at 10 a. m., assisting southbound train No. 25 to Altapass, 3.9 miles south of Spruce Pine, and upon the arrival of that train at Spruce Pine the crew received train order No. 19, Form 19, which in part authorized engine 734 to run extra from Altapass to Erwin. Upon arriving at Altapass engine 734 was cut off, turned on the wye, took water, and departed northbound at 1.53 p. m., according to the train sheet, and it was while this latter movement was being made, with the engine traveling at a speed estimated at 25 miles per hour, that it collided with train No. 38.

Engine 103 was forced upward and to one side, stopping with its running gear resting on engine 734 and the front end against the wall of the cut on the inside of the curve, this engine was demolished, being picked up in four pieces without the necessity of cutting away any of the parts. The tender was derailed and the cistern torn from its frame, the cistern being wedged against the boiler of the engine. All of the cars remained on the track, although the front end of the baggage car was telescoped about 13 inches and the other cars sustained some damage. The pony truck and forward pair of driving wheels of engine 734 were derailed, and the engine was considerably damaged, the front end being crushed and the boiler driven back on the frame about 8 inches. The employee killed was the fireman of the passenger engine.

#### Summary of evidence

Conductor Spencer, of train No. 38, stated that after his train departed from Spruce Pine, at 1.53 p. m., he passed through the train to collect fares, and was in the forward end of the first coach when the collision occurred. He said that he felt no application of the brakes and did not receive any warning of danger prior to the accident, the collision occurring without any reduction in the speed of his train, which he estimated to have been 25 or 30 miles per hour. About one and one-half hours after the accident he talked with the engineman of extra 734 and aside from being excited, the engineman appeared to be in normal condition, the conductor held no conversation with the fireman of that engine.

Flagman Hammer, of train No. 38, stated that he was riding in the rear car at the time of the accident and felt no brake application nor did he receive any other warning before the collision occurred. Some time after the accident he talked to both the engineman and fireman of engine 734, and while they seemed to be considerably disturbed he noticed nothing wrong with their physical condition.

Engineman Smith, of extra 734, stated that his engine left Altapass on the northbound trip at 1.48 or 1.50 p. m., and after departing he discussed with the fireman the meet between his engine and train No. 94, and about looking out for train No. 97, but train No. 38 was not mentioned. On account of the curve where the accident occurred he did not see the opposing train prior to the collision, and as a result the engine was still working steam and the brakes were not applied, he estimated the speed of the engine at the time of the accident at between 20 and 25 miles per hour. Engineman Smith further stated that he had not consulted his time-table and that he entirely overlooked train No. 38, the engine was in good condition, he was not ill, and there had been nothing to distract his attention from his duties.

Fireman Carpenter, of extra 734, stated that before the train stopped at Altapass the caboose was cut off between the legs of the wye, and after the train stopped his engine was cut off and turned on the wye, after which it kicked the caboose against the rear of the train. Water was then taken and the return trip started. Shortly after leaving the water tank the engineman inquired whether they were to meet train No. 94 at Ervin and he replied that that was correct, adding that train No. 97 was so far behind them that they would not have to be concerned about it. The engineman then remarked there was nothing for them to look out for and he answered in the affirmative. Fireman Carpenter began eating lunch as soon as the engine left Altapass and was still eating when he happened to look ahead and saw the front of an approaching engine coming around the curve, only about 20 or 30 feet ahead of his own engine the collision occurring before he had time to say anything. Fireman Carpenter said that he completely overlooked train No. 38, and could give no reason as to why he should have done so.

Conductor Surgerow, of train No. 26, stated that when he delivered the train orders to Engineman Smith at Ervin the engineman inquired whether his engine was to assist the train to Ridge or whether it would be cut off at Altapass. The conductor replied that it would depend on train No. 38, saying that if he could have the helper engine turned on the wye at Altapass before train No. 38 was due by Spruce Pine,

then the engine would be cut off at that point, otherwise the helper engine would go on as far as Ridge. His train arrived at Altapass at about 1.35 p. m., and noting that he could relieve the helper engine at this point, have it turned and the caboose placed on the train in time for engine 734 to clear train No. 38, he cut the caboose off just north of the south leg of the wye. The engine was then turned and the caboose given a kick towards the rear of the train. While the engine was turning, he called the dispatcher and inquired about train No. 38 but did not say anything to the engineman of the helper engine concerning that train.

Dispatcher Caeek stated he had issued no orders to the crew of engine 734 and train No. 38 with respect to meeting each other, and his first knowledge of anything wrong was when the agent who happened to be at Altapass inquired as to train No. 38 and then said he had seen engine 734 depart northbound. The dispatcher at once called Spruce Pine but found that train No. 38 had departed from that point.

Tests made subsequent to the accident at the point where it occurred disclosed that the view was restricted to not over 120 feet for the fireman of extra 734 and not more than 90 feet for the engineman of train No. 38, and that the pilots of the two engines involved were only about 50 feet apart when they first came into view.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the fact that the crew of extra 734 overlooked the time-table schedule of an opposing first-class train.

The evidence indicated that engine 734 had assisted train No. 26 to Altapass, where the crew in charge turned their engine and kicked the caboose towards the rear of the train, they then departed northward without looking at their time-tables or making any attempt to ascertain the location of train No. 38, both the engineman and fireman admitting that they completely overlooked it, although it was the only first-class train which they had to clear. Neither of them was able to give any reason for the error.

During the thirty days prior to this accident there was an average of approximately 5 trains in each direction operated over this line. On this railroad there are numerous sharp curves and short tangents, and because of this accident, as well as a previous accident due to forgetfulness, the officers of this company should give careful consideration to the need for some form of block system on

this line.

The employees involved were experienced men and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director