

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION:

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3022

COLUMBUS AND GREENVILLE RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT HENDRIX, MISS., ON

SEPTEMBER 14, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Columbus and Greenville
Date: September 14, 1946
Location: Hendrix, Miss.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Mixed
Train numbers: 11 : 110
Engine numbers: 211 : 403
Consists: 3 cars : 25 cars
Estimated speeds: 20 m. p. h. : 10 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; 3^o30' curve; 0.10 percent
ascending grade westward
Weather: Cloudy
Time: 5:18 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 34 injured
Cause: Inferior train occupying main
track on time of opposing
superior train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3022

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

COLUMBUS AND GREENVILLE RAILWAY COMPANY

October 24, 1946

Accident at Hendrix, Miss., on September 14, 1946, caused
by an inferior train occupying the main track on the
time of an opposing superior train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

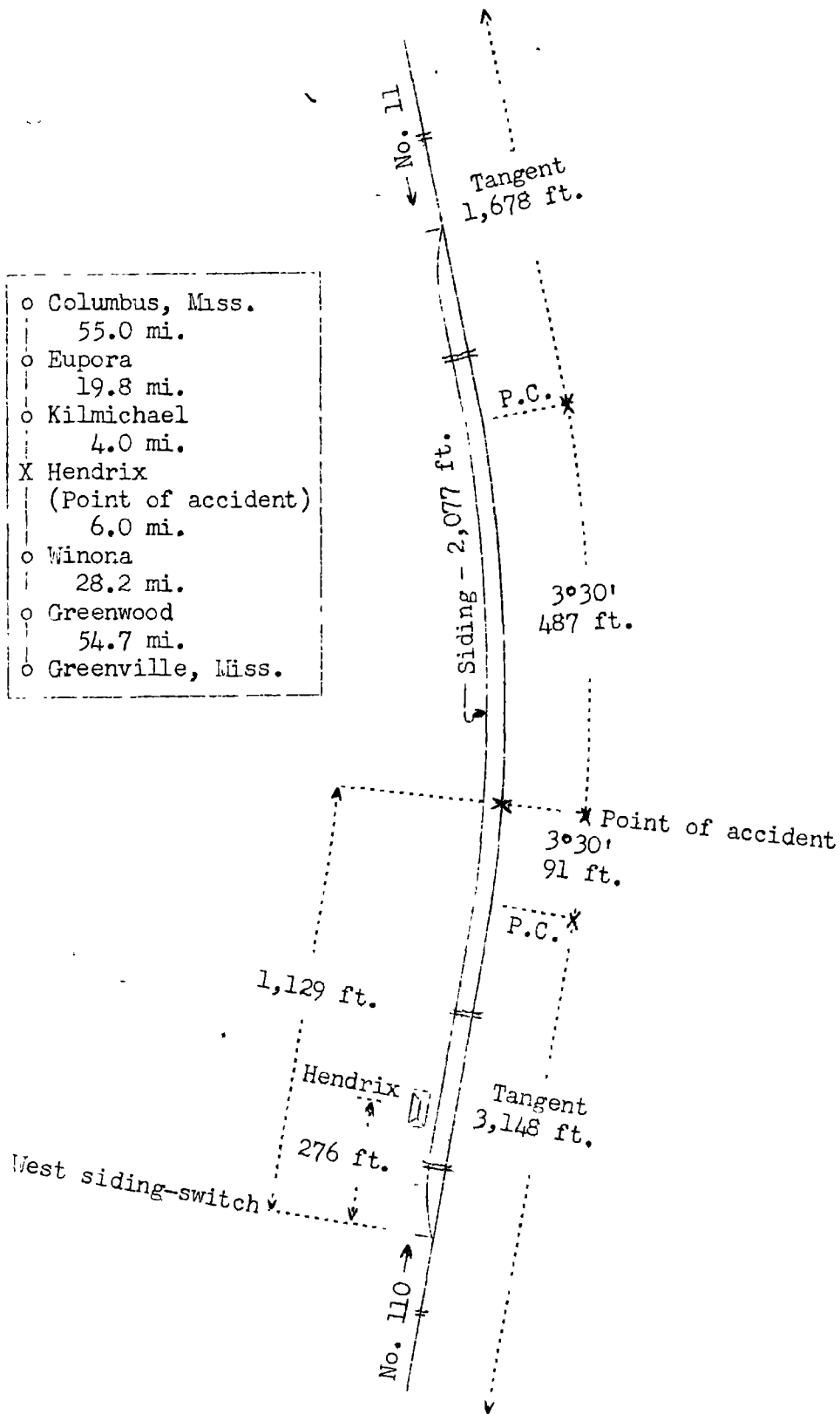
On September 14, 1946, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a mixed train on the Columbus and Greenville Railway at Hendrix, Miss., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 29 passengers, 2 railway mail clerks, 1 express messenger, 1 train porter and 1 train-service employee.

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.

↑ To Columbus

↓ To Greenville

- Columbus, Miss. 55.0 mi.
- Eupora 19.8 mi.
- Kilmichael 4.0 mi.
- X Hendrix (Point of accident) 6.0 mi.
- Winona 28.2 mi.
- Greenwood 54.7 mi.
- Greenville, Miss.



Inv. No. 3022
 Columbus and Greenville Railway
 Hendrix, Miss.
 September 14, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

The Columbus and Greenville Railway is a single-track line extending between Columbus and Greenville, Miss., 167.7 miles, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Hendrix, 78.8 miles west of Columbus, a siding 2,077 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The west switch of this siding is 276 feet west of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 1,129 feet east of the west siding-switch. From the east there is a tangent 1,678 feet in length, which is followed by a 3°30' curve to the right 487 feet to the point of accident and 91 feet westward. From the west there is a tangent 3,148 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.10 percent ascending westward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

5. * * *

The time applies to the switch where an inferior train enters the siding; * * *

* * *

72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; * * *

* * *

87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

* * *

89. At meeting points between trains of different classes the inferior train must take the siding and clear the superior train at least five minutes, and must pull into the siding when practicable. * * *

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, one rail length apart, on the rail on engineman's side of track, and when necessary, in addition, display a lighted fusee, red flag or red light.

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in accordance with the first paragraph, when necessary, by the front brakeman if available, otherwise the fireman.

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

E.

Time Orders.

* * *

- (2.) No 1 eng 1860 run 50 fifty mins late A to G and 20 twenty mins late G to K, etc.

This makes the schedule time of the train named, between the stations mentioned, as much later as stated in the order, and any other train receiving the order is required to run with respect to this later time, as before required to run with respect to the regular schedule time. * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train was 60 miles per hour and for the mixed train, 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Eupora, 23.8 miles east of Hendrix, the crew of No. 11, a west-bound first-class passenger train, received copies of train order No. 10 reading in part as follows:

No 11 Eng 211 Run 15 fifteen mins late Kilmichael to Greenwood * * *

Kilmichael and Greenwood are, respectively, 4 miles east and 34.2 miles west of Hendrix. No. 11 consisted of engine 211, 1 mail-baggage car and 2 coaches, in the order named. All cars were of steel-underframe construction. This train departed from Kilmichael, the last open office, at 5:12 p. m.,

16 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with No. 110 at a point 1,129 feet east of the west siding-switch at Hendrix.

At Winona, 6 miles west of Hendrix, the crew of No. 110, an east-bound second-class mixed train, received copies of train order No. 10. This train, consisting of engine 403, 23 freight cars, 1 mail-baggage car and 1 coach, in the order named, departed from Winona, the last open office, at 5 p. m., 2 hours 10 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it collided with No. 11.

The rear truck of the tender of No. 11 was derailed. The engines of both trains were badly damaged. The cars of No. 11, and the first and the twenty-second cars and the rear two cars of No. 110 were more or less damaged.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 5:18 p. m.

The engineer of No. 11 was killed, and the fireman was injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 6.2 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that an inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains, and inferior trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than 5 minutes. If an inferior train fails to clear the time of an opposing superior train, flag protection must be provided.

The crews of No. 11, a west-bound first-class train, and No. 110, an east-bound second-class train, held copies of train order No. 10, which required No. 11 to run 15 minutes late on its schedule from Kilmichael to Greenwood, respectively, 4 miles east and 34.2 miles west of Hendrix. Under the rules, the time of No. 11 at Kilmichael and at Hendrix applied at the west switch of the siding at each of these stations. Under the provisions of train order No. 10, No. 11 was due to leave Kilmichael at 5:11 p. m. and Hendrix at 5:18 p. m., and No. 110, which was inferior to No. 11 by class, was required to be into clear at Hendrix not later than 5:13 p. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 11. No. 11 departed from Kilmichael at 5:12 p. m., 16 minutes late, and No. 110 departed from Winona, 6 miles west of Hendrix, at

5 p. m. There is no siding between Winona and Hendrix. No. 11 and No. 110 collided at 5:18 p. m., at a point 1,129 feet east of the west siding-switch at Hendrix,

As No. 11 was approaching Hendrix the speed was about 30 miles per hour. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead. The fireman was in the gangway tending the fire. The first the fireman knew of anything being wrong was when he heard the exhaust of the air valve as a result of the application of the brakes in emergency. Then he looked forward from the left side of the gangway, saw the approaching train about 100 feet distant, and jumped from the engine. The engineer was killed. The speed of No. 11 was about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The crew of No. 110 received copies of train order No. 10 at Winona about 25 minutes before the collision occurred. At that time each member of the crew, except the front brakeman, read the order, and they understood that if their train proceeded to Hendrix to meet No. 11 it was required to be into clear not less than 5 minutes prior to the time No. 11 was due to leave that station under the provisions of the train order, and that flag protection was required to be furnished against No. 11 east of the west siding-switch if their train was not clear of the main track at the required time. The engineer said that about 4:55 p. m., 5 minutes before his train departed from Winona, he consulted his timetable, looked at his watch and read train order No. 10 to determine the time No. 11 was due to leave Kilmichael and Hendrix under the provisions of the order. He made an erroneous calculation which caused him to think that No. 11 was due to leave Kilmichael, under the provisions of the order, at 5:18 p. m. He intended to stop his train on the main track immediately west of the east siding-switch at Hendrix, then provide flag protection, if necessary, and line the switch for No. 11 to enter the siding. No. 110 was approaching the east siding-switch at Hendrix at a speed of about 15 miles per hour when the front brakeman, who was on the engine, and the enginemen saw No. 11 approaching about 500 feet distant. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of No. 110 was about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The front brakeman said that he was engaged in coupling air hose and other duties until just before his train departed from Winona, and he did not read train order No. 10. Neither the front brakeman nor the fireman questioned the engineer as to the authority of their train to proceed. The members of the crew had compared time with a standard clock prior to the accident.

The engineer had compared time with the conductor at Winona, and there was only a few seconds variation in their watches. When the accident occurred the conductor and the flagman were in the coach at the rear of their train. They understood that the engineer intended to stop the train on the main track at the east siding-switch at Hendrix and to line the switch for No. 11 to enter the siding. They said that when their train was in the vicinity of the west siding-switch they were aware that there was not sufficient time remaining for the train to proceed on the main track east of the west siding-switch, but they took no action to stop the train.

Because of vegetation on the inside of the curve on which the accident occurred, the view of the point where the accident occurred from an engine moving in either direction is restricted to a distance of about 500 feet.

Trains are operated on this line by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously, and the accident would not have occurred.

No recommendation is made here concerning additional protection for the operation of trains at the maximum authorized speeds disclosed in this investigation, because there is now pending before the Commission docket No. 29543, which is an investigation instituted May 20, 1946, on its own motion, to determine whether it is necessary, in the public interest, to require any common carrier by railroad to install block signal system, interlocking, automatic train stop, train control and/or cab signal devices, and/or other similar appliances, methods and systems intended to promote the safety of railroad operation, upon the whole or any part of its railroad on which any train is operated at a speed of 50 or more miles per hour.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of October, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.