

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2640
THE GULF, COLORADO AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT BOBVILLE, TEXAS, ON
OCTOBER 24, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad: Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe
Date: October 24, 1942
Location: Bobville, Texas
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: 239 : Extra 3024 North
Engine numbers: 1906-1609 : 3024
Consist: 40 cars, caboose : 52 cars, caboose
Speed: 8 m. p. h. : Standing
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
accident occurred within
yard limits
Track: Single; 2° curve; vertical curve
Weather: Partly cloudy
Time: About 12:05 a. m.
Casualties: 2 killed
Cause: Accident caused by failure
properly to control speed of
No. 239 within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2640

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

THE GULF, COLORADO AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

December 11, 1942.

Accident at Bobville, Texas, on October 24, 1942, caused
by failure properly to control speed of No. 239
within yard limits.

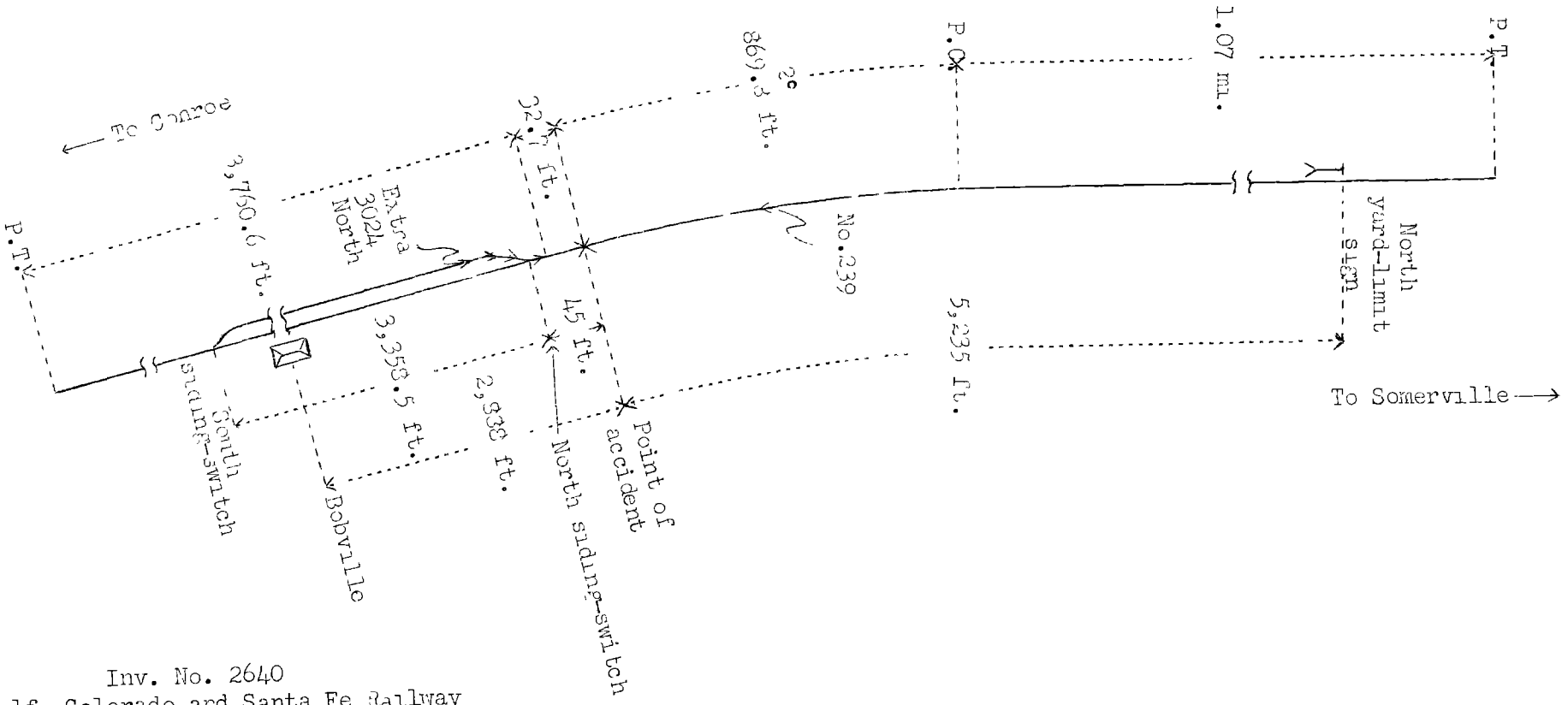
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 24, 1942, there was a head-end collision
between two freight trains on the Gulf, Colorado and Santa
Fe Railway at Bobville, Texas, which resulted in the death
of two employees.

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

- o Somerville, Texas
23.3 mi.
- o Nivisota
20.7 mi.
- x Bobville (P. of A.)
1.0 mi.
- o Dobbin
22.3 mi.
- o Conroe, Texas



Inv. No. 2640
 Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway
 Bobville, Texas
 October 24, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Gulf Division designated as the Somerville District and extending between Somerville and Conroe, Texas, a distance of 72.3 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. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point 2,888 feet north of the station at Bobville and 5,235 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. A siding 3,358.5 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The accident occurred at a point 45 feet north of the north siding-switch. Approaching from the north there is a tangent 1.07 miles in length, which is followed by a 2° curve to the left 369.8 feet to the point of accident and 32.7 feet beyond. Approaching from the south there is a tangent 3,760.6 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for south-bound trains is 0.91 percent descending 1,700 feet, then there are, in succession, a vertical curve 1,700 feet, a 1.26 percent ascending grade 500 feet and a vertical curve 273 feet to the point of accident and 127 feet beyond.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

93. Stations having yard limits will be designated by special rule in time-table.

Within yard limits all trains and engines may use the main track, not protecting against second or third class trains or extra trains, but will give way as soon as possible upon their approach. All except first class trains will move within yard limits at restricted speed; the responsibility for accident with respect to second or third class or extra trains rests with the approaching train.

873. When more than one engine is used in a train, brakes must be operated from the leading engine, automatic brake valves on all except the engine from which brakes are operated must be cut out, * * *.

Time-table special rules and regulations provide as follows:

12. The following stations have yard limits (see General Rule No. 93): * * * Dobbin (Yard limits extends from yard limit board South of Dobbin to yard limit board north of Bobville), * * *.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 239, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engines 1906 and 1609, coupled, 16 loaded and 3 empty freight cars, 21 deadhead passenger-equipment cars and a caboose. At Navasota, 20.7 miles north of Bobville and the last open office, the crew received a clearance card and copies of two train orders, of which one was train order No. 139 reading in part as follows:

No 239 engs 1906 and 1609 coupled
wait at Bobville until twelve fifteen
1215 am * * * for Extra 3024 North

No. 239 departed from Navasota at 11 p. m., October 23, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 3 hours late, passed the north yard-limit sign at Bobville and while moving at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour it collided with Extra 3024 North at a point 5,235 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. The brakes of No. 239 had been tested previously and they functioned properly at all points where used en route.

Extra 3024 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 3024, 45 loaded and 7 empty cars and a caboose. At Conroe, 23.3 miles south of Bobville, the crew received a clearance card and copies of two train orders, of which one was train order No. 139, previously quoted. Extra 3024 departed from Conroe at 10:55 p. m., October 23, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed Dobbin, 1 mile south of Bobville and the last open office, at 11:52 p. m., entered the siding at Bobville, and stopped with the front end of the engine on the main track 45 feet north of the north siding-switch. Soon afterward it was struck by No. 239.

Because of vegetation on the east side of the track and track curvature, the view from the left side of a south-bound engine of an engine standing at the point where the accident

occurred is restricted to a distance of about 740 feet.

The engines of both trains remained upright at the point of impact. The engine truck, the pilot and pilot-beam of engine 1906, the first engine of No. 239, were detached and driven under the axle of the first pair of driving wheels. The tender of engine 1906 stopped against the boiler head. The front coupler of engine 1609, the second engine of No. 239, and the couplers between the first and second cars were damaged. The rear truck of the eleventh car was derailed to the west and the car was slightly damaged. The twelfth car buckled and stopped, badly damaged, across the track. The thirteenth car was derailed and destroyed. The fourteenth car was derailed and considerably damaged. The engine truck and the Nos. 1 and 2 pairs of driving wheels of engine 3024, of Extra 3024 North, were derailed and the front end was considerably damaged.

It was partly cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:05 a. m.

The employees killed were the engineer and the fireman of the first engine of No. 239.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that within yard limits trains and engines may use the main track without protecting against second-class, inferior-class and extra trains. All except first-class trains must be operated prepared to stop short of train, obstruction or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced. The surviving employees understood these requirements.

As No. 239 was approaching the north yard-limit sign at Bobville, the speed was 18 or 20 miles per hour. The train air-brake system was in the charge of the engineer of the first engine. When the engines reached a point about 500 feet north of the north siding-switch, the fireman of the second engine observed that the engine of Extra 3024 North was standing on the main track in the vicinity of the switch, and he called a warning to his engineer. The engineer of the second engine attempted to open the double-heading cock of his engine to enable him to make a brake application, but the brakes were applied before he completed his action. The speed of No. 239 was about 8 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The engineer and the fireman of the first engine of No. 239 were killed in the accident.

As Extra 3024 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 4 miles per hour. The

front brakeman, who was in the vicinity of the north siding-switch, saw No. 239 approaching and gave stop signals. The engineer of Extra 3024 stopped his train by an application of the engine and tender brakes just before the collision occurred.

Under the rules the speed of each train was required to be so controlled that each could be stopped short of a train, obstruction or switch not properly lined. Since Extra 3024 stopped before the collision occurred, this train was being operated in accordance with the yard-limit rule. If the speed of No. 239 had been controlled in accordance with the yard-limit rule, this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of No. 239 moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eleventh day of December, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.