

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2803
THE GULF, COLORADO AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR PAULS VALLEY, OKLA., ON
JUNE 14, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe
Date: June 14, 1944
Location: Pauls Valley, Okla.
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck
Train number: 27
Engine number: 3456
Consist: 10 cars
Estimated speed: 65 m. p. h. : 15 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; level
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 83°51'; practically level
Weather: Clear
Time: 12:01 p. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 15 injured
Cause: Motor-truck being driven upon
highway grade crossing immediately
in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2803

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

July 15, 1944.

Accident near Pauls Valley, Okla., on June 14, 1944,
caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a
highway grade crossing immediately in front of
an approaching train.

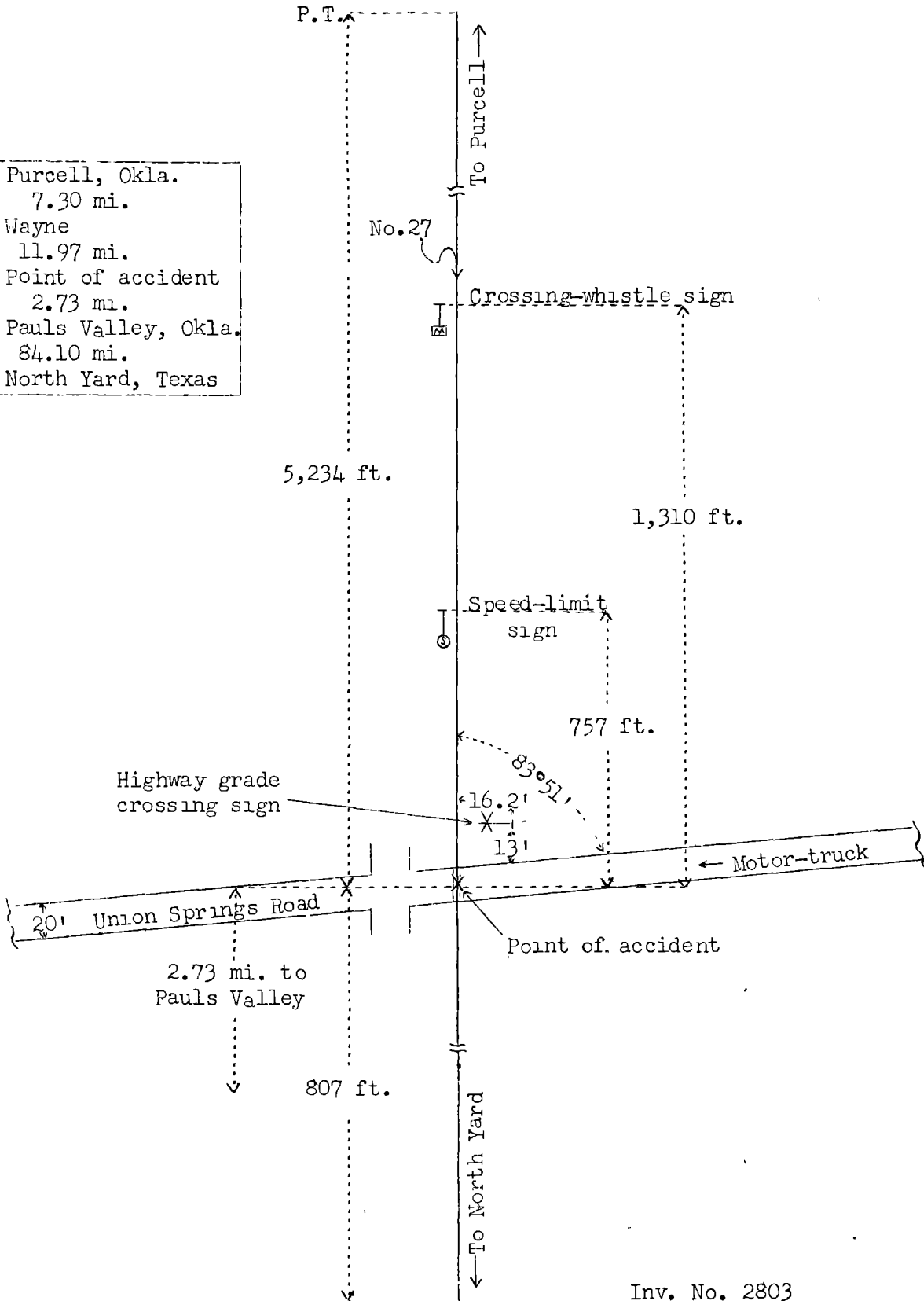
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On June 14, 1944, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway and a motor-truck at a highway grade crossing near Pauls Valley, Okla., which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck and 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 12 passengers, 2 dining-car employees 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 Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

- o Purcell, Okla. 7.30 mi.
- o Wayne 11.97 mi.
- X Point of accident 2.73 mi.
- o Pauls Valley, Okla. 84.10 mi.
- o North Yard, Texas



Inv. No. 2803
Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Ry,
Pauls Valley, Okla.
June 14, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division designated as the First District and extending southward from Purcell, Okla., to North Yard, Texas, 106.1 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred 19.27 miles south of Purcell, at a point 2.73 miles north of the station at Pauls Valley, where the railroad was crossed at grade by Union Springs Road. The track was tangent throughout a distance of about 1 mile north of this point and 807 feet southward. The grade was level.

Union Springs Road intersected the railroad at an angle of 83°51'. The road was tangent throughout a distance of about 1 mile east of the crossing and a considerable distance westward. The grade was practically level throughout a distance of about 600 feet east of the crossing, then it was 2.5 percent ascending 100 feet to the crossing and level over the crossing. The road was surfaced with gravel to a width of 20 feet. The crossing was 14 feet wide, and was surfaced with gravel.

A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign was located to the right of the direction of west-bound traffic, 16.2 feet east of the track and 13 feet north of the road. The sign was mounted on a mast and bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING-LOCK OUT FOR THE CARS" in black letters on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for south-bound trains was located 1,310 feet north of the crossing.

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; and "_____" for extra long sounds. * * *

SOUND.	INDICATION.
* * *	
(1) _____ o o	Approaching public crossings at grade, * * *; to be prolonged or repeated until passed.
* * *	

Rule 20 of the rules and regulations of the Corporation Commission of the State of Oklahoma governing motor carriers read in part as follows:

* * *

(a) Except when within the limits of an incorporated city or town, each vehicle, before passing over any steam or electric railroad track at grade, shall be brought to a complete stop at such point within 50 feet of the steam or electric railroad track as will leave ample margin of safety for steam or electric engines or cars to pass and allow the driver to obtain a view of the track in both directions before proceeding to cross; and before proceeding, the driver shall look in both directions and ascertain if the way is clear.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 75 miles per hour. A speed-limit sign bearing the numerals "50-35" was located 757 feet north of the crossing. This sign pertained to speed restrictions on a curve south of the crossing

Description of Accident

No. 27, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 3456, 1 baggage car, 4 coaches, 3 chair cars, 1 cafe-lounge car and 1 Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. The first to fifth cars, inclusive, and the eighth car were of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Wayne, 14.7 miles north of Pauls Valley and the last open office, at 11:46 a. m., 2 hours 35 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a highway grade crossing 2.73 miles north of Pauls Valley.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer in intrastate service, and was owned by J. G. Wright, Allen, Okla. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Oklahoma chauffeur's license No. C161804. The tractor was a 1938, 6-cylinder, International Model D-40 vehicle, and bore Oklahoma license No. 245-295. It weighed 6,580 pounds, and was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels, hydraulic brakes, and an enclosed steel cab. It was hauling a semi-trailer, which bore Oklahoma license No. 34-891. The semi-trailer had dual tires on its wheels, was provided with vacuum brakes operated by a lever in the cab, and was equipped with a steel tank.

Its total weight was 7,480 pounds. The over-all length of the two units was 33 feet. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 2,400 gallons of gasoline. This vehicle departed from loading racks located about 2,300 feet east of the crossing, moved westward on Union Springs Road, proceeded upon the crossing and was struck by No. 27.

A south-bound train approaching on the railroad could be seen by the driver of a west-bound vehicle throughout a distance of more than 1 mile. There was no condition about the enclosed cab of the motor-truck that restricted the vision.

The trailer was torn loose from the tractor, and both were demolished. The trailer and the tractor were carried in front of the train to points, respectively, 129 feet and 138 feet southward. The tank was punctured, and escaping gasoline became ignited. The front engine-truck wheels were derailed. The train stopped with the front end of the engine 2,348 feet south of the crossing. The front end of the engine was damaged in the collision, and the cab and tender were damaged by fire. Fire destroyed the first three cars and damaged the other cars.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 12:01 p. m.

The engineer was killed and the fireman was injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains over the crossing was 16.06. During the 24-hour period beginning at 2 p. m., June 16, 1944, 109 automobiles and 63 trucks passed over the crossing. Two of the trucks were loaded with gasoline.

Discussion

No. 27 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 65 miles per hour. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. The fireman saw the approaching motor-truck on the road a considerable distance east of the crossing. A service brake-pipe reduction was made in the vicinity of the speed-limit sign to control the speed of No. 27 on the curve south of the crossing. When the engine was about 100 feet north of the crossing the motor-truck entered upon the crossing. The fireman immediately called a warning to the engineer, but the collision occurred before effective action could be taken to stop the train. The engineer was killed in the accident.

The crossing was protected by a cross-buck sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver, and prior

to the accident he had made several trips over the crossing. The weather was clear and the driver could have seen the approaching train throughout a distance of nearly 1 mile immediately north of the crossing. Several witnesses stated that the motor-truck was moving at a speed of about 15 miles per hour when it proceeded upon the crossing immediately in front of the approaching train. The rules and regulations of the state of Oklahoma governing the operation of motor carriers require that before a motor vehicle is moved over a railroad crossing at grade the vehicle must be stopped within 50 feet of the railroad track, and the vehicle must remain clear of the track until the driver has ascertained that it is safe for the vehicle to be moved over the crossing. It could not be determined why the driver failed to take action to stop the motor-truck short of the crossing in accordance with this provision of the regulations, as he was killed in the accident.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of July, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.