

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3081  
LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT CALERA, ALA., ON  
MARCH 2, 1947

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SUMMARY

Railroad: Louisville and Nashville

Date: March 2, 1947

Location: Calera, Ala.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Fourth 19 : First 17

Engine numbers: 1788 : 1803

Consists: 40 cars, caboose : 46 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and  
automatic block-signal system;  
yard limits

Track: Double tangent; 0.64 percent  
descending grade southward

Weather: Clear and dark

Time: 5:12 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 4 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed  
of following train moving within  
yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3081

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

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

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May 26, 1947

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Accident at Calera, Ala., on March 2, 1947, caused by  
failure properly to control the speed of the  
following train moving within yard limits.

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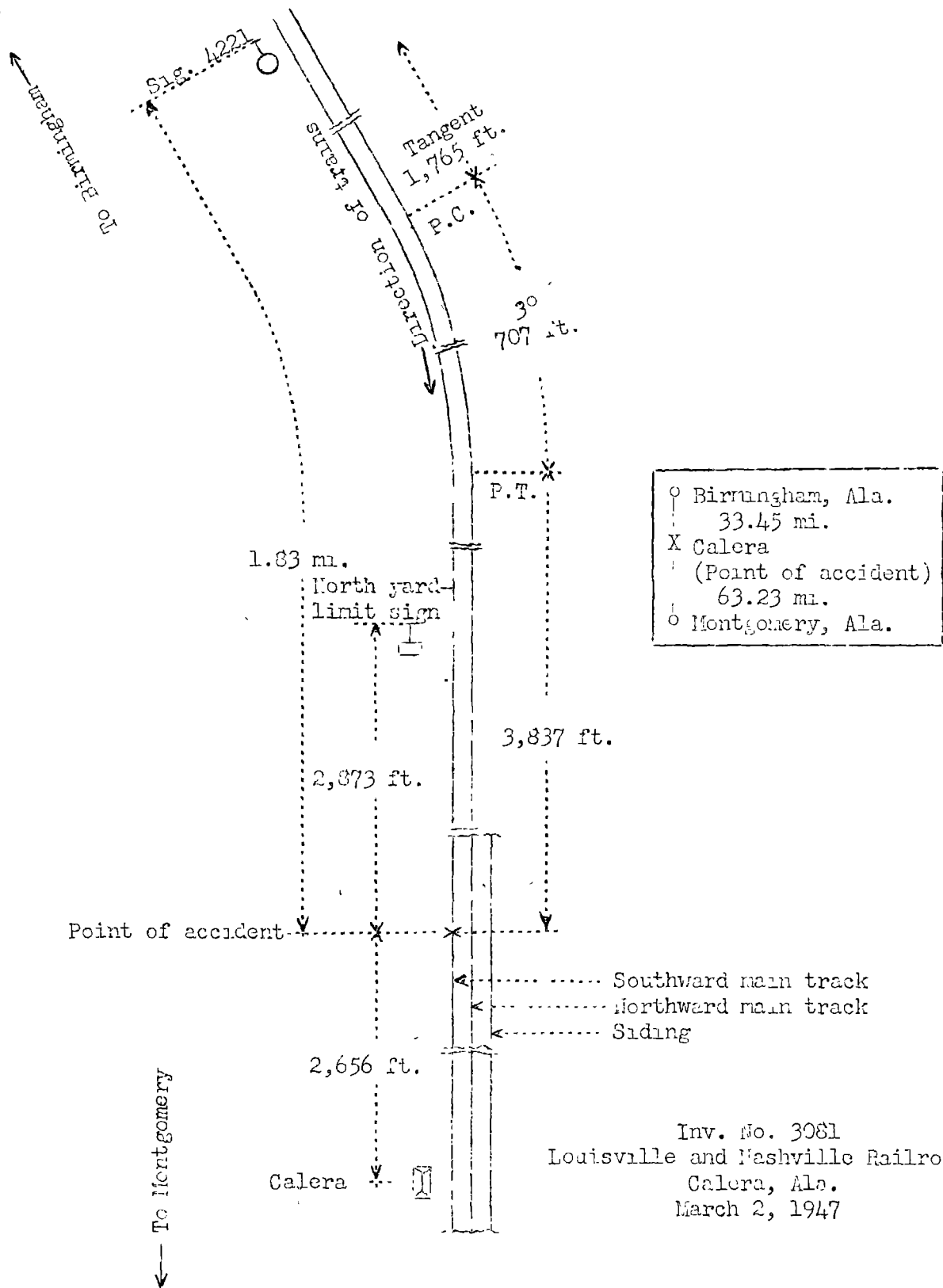
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 2, 1947, there was a rear-end collision  
between two freight trains on the Louisville and Nashville  
Railroad at Calera, Ala., which resulted in the death of  
one employce, and the injury of four employees.

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<sup>1</sup> Under 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.



Inv. No. 3081  
 Louisville and Nashville Railroad  
 Calera, Ala.  
 March 2, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Birmingham Division extending between Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala., 96.68 miles, a double-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred within yard limits on the southward main track at Calera, 33.45 miles south of Birmingham, at a point 2,873 feet south of the north yard-limit sign and 2,656 feet north of the station. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 1,765 feet in length, a 3° curve to the right 707 feet and a tangent 3,837 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance southward. The grade for south-bound trains varies between 0.64 percent and 0.98 percent descending throughout a distance of 1.5 miles immediately north of the point of accident, where it is 0.64 percent descending.

Automatic signal 4221, governing south-bound movements on the southward main track, is 1.83 miles north of the point of accident. This signal is of the color-light type, and is continuously lighted. The involved aspect and corresponding indication and name of this signal are as follows:

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
Red	STOP; THEN PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 509 (B).	STOP AND PROCEED.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

**DEFINITIONS.**

\* \* \*

Fixed Signal.--A signal of fixed location indicating a condition affecting the movement of a train.

Note.--The definition of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as \* \* \* yard limit boards \* \* \*

\* \* \*

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

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night. It must be dimmed when a train \* \* \* has stopped clear of main track, \* \* \*

It must be dimmed while passing through yards \* \* \* and on two or more tracks when approaching trains in the opposite direction.

\* \* \*

D-19. The following signals will be displayed to the rear of every train, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train: \* \* \* By night, \* \* \* red lights to the rear \* \* \*

\* \* \*

93. \* \* \*

Second-class and inferior trains and engines must move within yard limits prepared to stop, unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. \* \* \*

509 (B). When a train is stopped by a Stop and Proceed signal it may proceed at once at restricted speed.

#### Description of Accident

Fourth 19, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 1788, 49 cars and a caboose, stopped on the southward main track at Calera about 4:35 a. m., with the rear end standing 2,873 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. About 37 minutes later, the rear end of this train was struck by First 17.

First 17, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 1803, 46 cars and a caboose, stopped at signal 4221, which displayed stop-then-proceed-at-restricted-speed, passed the north yard-limit sign, and while moving on the southward main track at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck Fourth 19.

The caboose and the rear two cars of Fourth 19, and the engine and the first car of First 17 were derailed and damaged.

The flagman of Fourth 19 was killed. The conductor of Fourth 19, and the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of First 17 were injured.

The weather was clear and it was dark at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:12 a. m.

### Discussion

About 37 minutes after Fourth 19, a south-bound second-class train, stopped at Calera the rear end was struck by First 17, a south-bound second-class train, at a point 2,873 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. When the collision occurred the conductor and the flagman of Fourth 19 were in the caboose. The marker lamps on the caboose of this train were lighted and displayed red to the rear.

First 17 stopped at signal 4221, located 1.83 miles north of the point where the accident occurred, in compliance with the stop-then-proceed-at-restricted-speed indication displayed by this signal, then proceeded, and this train was moving at a speed of about 15 miles per hour as it passed the north yard-limit sign. The headlight was lighted dimly. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. These employees said they thought the speed of their train was being properly controlled until they saw the lighted red marker lamps of the preceding train about 400 feet distant. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of First 17 was about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The employees on the engine said that as they were approaching the point where the accident occurred, a north-bound train was moving on the northward main track and another north-bound train was standing on the siding immediately east of the northward main track, and the reflection of the headlights of these locomotives and trailing smoke prevented them from seeing the preceding train soon enough to take action to avert the collision. The enginemen of the north-bound trains said that the headlights of their engines were lighted dimly at the time First 17 was approaching.

The accident occurred within yard limits, and, under the rules, First 17 was required to be operated in such manner that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-sixth day of May, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.