

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2686  
THE NASHVILLE, CHATTANOOGA & ST. LOUIS  
RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT GORMAN, TENN., ON  
MARCH 17, 1945

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis  
Date: March 17, 1943  
Location: Gorman, Tenn.  
Kind of accident: Side collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger  
Train numbers: Third 50 : Extra 654 South  
Engine numbers: 535-614 : 654  
Consist: 56 cars, 2 cabooses : 16 cars  
Speed: Standing : 25-30 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; 1° curve; 0.39 percent  
descending grade northward  
Weather: Dense fog  
Time: About 3:19 a. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 5 injured  
Cause: Accident caused by train fouling  
main track immediately in front  
of an opposing superior train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2686

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

THE NASHVILLE, CHATTANOOGA & ST. LOUIS  
RAILWAY COMPANY

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May 1, 1943.

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Accident at Gorman, Tenn., on March 17, 1943, caused by  
train fouling the main track immediately in front of  
an opposing superior train.

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

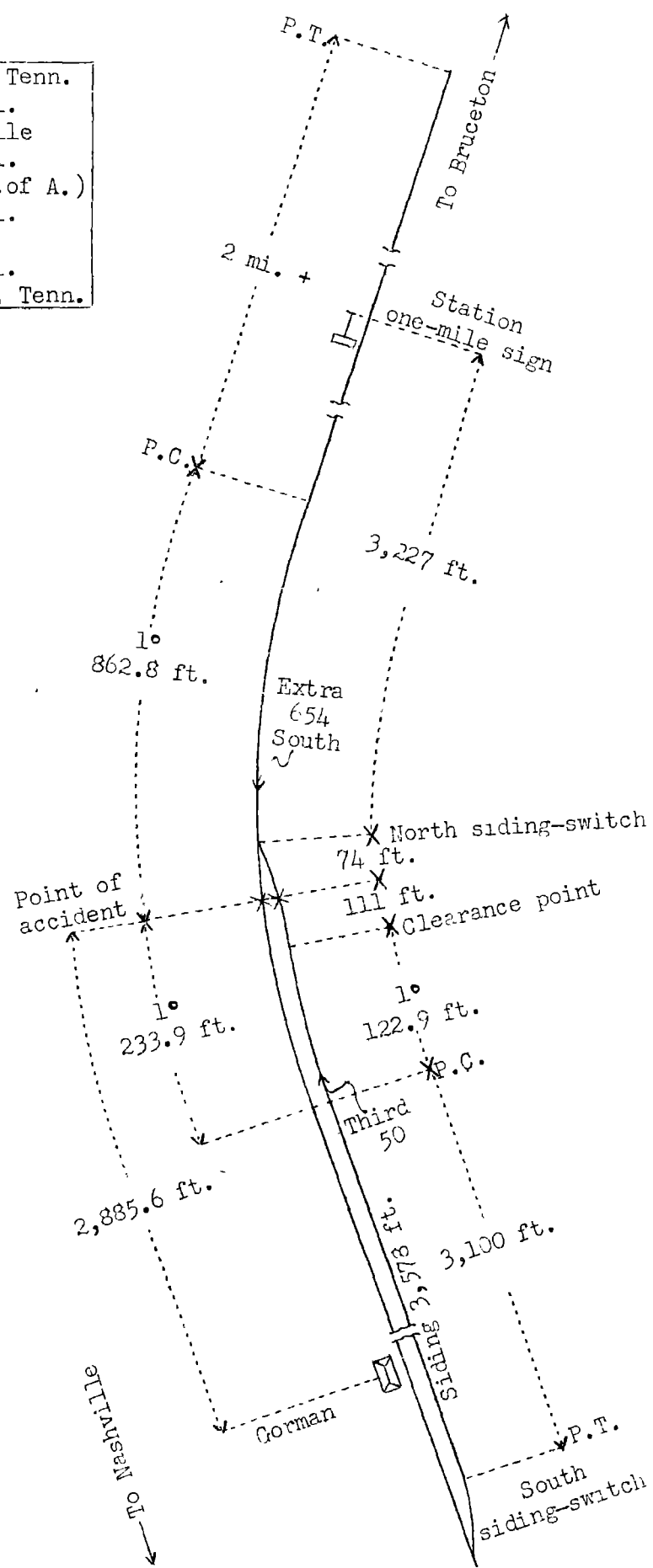
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 17, 1943, there was a side collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway at Gorman, Tenn., which resulted in the death of two train-service employees and the injury of one passenger, one Pullman employee and three train-service employees.

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<sup>1</sup>Under 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.

o	Bruceton, Tenn.	17.15 mi.
o	Johnsonville	15.90 mi.
x	Gorman (P. of A.)	22.20 mi.
o	Colesburg	39.62 mi.
o	Nashville, Tenn.	



Inv. No. 2686  
 Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway  
 Gorman, Tenn.  
 March 27, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Nashville Division extending between Bruceton and Nashville, Tenn., 94.87 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. At Gorman a siding 3,578 feet in length parallels the main track on the east. The north switch of this siding is located 2,885.6 feet north of the station. The clearance point at the north end of the siding is 185 feet south of the switch. There is no mark or sign to indicate the location of the clearance point. The accident occurred 111 feet north of the clearance point and 74 feet south of the north siding-switch. Approaching from the south on the siding there is a tangent about 3,100 feet in length, which is followed by a 1° curve to the right 122.9 feet to the clearance point at the north end of the siding. Approaching from the north on the main track there is a tangent more than 2 miles in length, which is followed by a 1° curve to the left 362.8 feet to the point of accident and 233.9 feet beyond. Throughout a considerable distance north and south of the point of collision the grade for north-bound trains varies between 1.52 and 0.25 percent descending and at the point of accident it is 0.39 percent descending.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

87. Inferior trains must keep out of the way of superior trains in the opposite direction, clearing their time as required by rule, and in meeting them must, when practicable, pull into the siding at the nearest end. If necessary to pass this point \* \* \*, the train must first be protected, as prescribed by Rule 99, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

99. When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be struck, the flagman must go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

The front of a train must be protected in the same way by the front brakeman. If the front brakeman is unable to go, the fireman must go.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

\* \* \*

Form C. Giving Right to a Train Over Another Train.

Examples.

\* \* \*

(2) Ex 20 North has right over No 3 H to D.

\* \* \*

This form of order makes the train over which right is given inferior to the train which is given right over it, between the points named, and it must not enter the designated limits without further orders over the train thus made superior, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Form E. Time Orders.

(4) No 1 will wait at E until ten fifteen 10 15 a m.

\* \* \* Any opposing train receiving the order is required to clear the time specified, at the designated point, \* \* \*, at least five minutes.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains hauled by L2 class engines is 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Train 50, a north-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engines 535 and 614, coupled, 56 empty cars and 2 cabooses, in the order named. This train departed from Nashville, 61.82 miles south of Gorman, at 11:05 p. m., March 16, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains 2 hours 35 minutes late. At Colesburg, 22.2 miles south of Gorman, the crew received a clearance card and copies of three train orders, of which two were orders Nos. 6 and 8, reading in part as follows:

No. 6

Engs 654 623 and 533 run extra Bruceton to Nashville have right over \* \* \* Third No 50 Eng 535 Bruceton to Colesburg \* \* \*

No. 8

Three Exs 654 623 and 535 South wait at \* \* \* Gorman until three twenty 320. a m \* \* \*

Third 50 departed from Colesburg at 1:53 a. m., March 17, 3 hours 45 minutes late, entered the siding at Gorman and stopped into clear about 3:15 a. m. Soon afterward this train moved northward on the siding and stopped about 3:19 a. m., with the front end of the first engine fouling the main track 74 feet south of the north siding-switch. Immediately afterward it was struck by Extra 654 South.

Extra 654 South, a south-bound passenger train, consisted of engine 654, of the L2 class, 3 baggage cars, 4 Pullman tourist cars, 1 baggage car, 4 Pullman tourist cars, 1 baggage car, 2 Pullman tourist cars and 1 Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. The first, second, eighth and thirteenth cars were of steel underframe construction and the remainder were of all-steel construction. At Bruceton, 33.05 miles north of Gorman, the crew received a clearance card and copies of train orders Nos. 6 and 8. This train departed from Bruceton at 2:10 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, departed from Johnsonville, 15.9 miles north of Gorman and the last open office, at 2:50 a. m., and while moving at a speed of 25 or 30 miles per hour it collided with Third 50.

Engine 535 and its tender were derailed and badly damaged. The engine stopped bottom up east of the siding and at an angle of about 20 degrees to it. The tender stopped on its right side east of the siding. Engine 654 and its tender were derailed and stopped, headed northward, badly damaged, about 180 feet south of the point of accident, on their left sides and west of the main track. The first four cars of Extra 654 were derailed and stopped in various positions west of the main track. Of these cars, the first was demolished and the remainder were considerably damaged. The front truck of the fifth car was derailed.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:19 a. m.

The train-service employees killed were the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 654. The train-service employees injured were the engineer of Extra 654 and the engineer and the front brakeman of Third 50.

### Data

The capacity of the siding at Gorman is 71 cars. The north siding-switch is provided with a stand about 7 feet high, located 6 feet 6 inches east of the east rail of the main track. When the switch is lined for the main track an oblong target, painted green, about 2 feet long and 12 inches wide, is displayed at right angles to the track and, in addition, a switch lamp, equipped with reflex lenses, displays a green aspect.

### Discussion

The rules governing operation in this territory provide that at meeting points the inferior train must, when practicable, enter the siding at the nearest switch and must not pass the clearance point of the leaving switch without authority or flag protection.

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 6, which gave Extra 654 South right over Third 50 Bruceton to Colesburg, and train order No. 8, which required Extra 654 to wait at Gorman, 22.2 miles north of Colesburg, until 3:20 a. m. The capacity of the siding at Gorman is 71 cars. Third 50, consisting of 2 engines, 56 cars and 2 cabooses, entered the siding at Gorman and stopped into clear about 3:15 a. m. About 4 minutes later, after this train had moved northward on the siding and stopped, the front end of the first engine fouled the main track at a point 74 feet south of the north siding-switch and was struck by Extra 654.

As Extra 654 was approaching Gorman the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The headlight was lighted and there was no condition of the engine which obscured the view or distracted their attention. Because of dense fog, visibility at many places was restricted to a distance of about 25 or 30 feet. When the engine was approaching the station-one-mile sign, located 3,227 feet north of the north siding-switch, the engineer closed the throttle to drifting position to control the speed of his train in such manner that it would not pass the clearance point at the south siding-switch prior to 3:20 a. m. in compliance with train order No. 8. When the engine



passed the station-one-mile sign the engineer sounded the engine whistle and observed the time as being 5:19:10 a. m. He momentarily saw the reflection of a light in the vicinity of the north siding-switch, but he thought it was the reflection of the headlights of an automobile moving on a highway which parallels the track on the west in that vicinity. His first knowledge of anything being wrong was when the collision occurred. No warning was given by the front brakeman or the fireman. It could not be determined when they first became aware that Third 50 had fouled the main track, as they were killed in the accident.

The enginemen of the first engine of Third 50 said they first became aware that their engine had fouled the main track about 2 seconds prior to the collision. The engineer of the first engine said that when his train first stopped into clear on the siding his engine was some distance south of the north siding-switch. Because it was customary for trains using a siding to proceed to the clearance point at the leaving switch, his train proceeded northward on the siding. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead and the headlight was lighted, but because of the dense fog they were unable to determine the location of their engine with respect to the clearance point at the north end of the siding until their train had fouled the main track. There was no sign or mark to indicate the clearance point. The front brakeman, who was on the second engine, and the enginemen of the second engine were not aware that the first engine had fouled the main track until the collision occurred.

If the clearance point at the north end of the siding had been provided with a distinctive sign to indicate the fouling point, the engineer of the first engine of Third 50 would have been aware of his location with respect to the clearance point, and this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a train fouling the main track immediately in front of an opposing superior train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this first day of May, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.