

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3466
SAVANNAH & ATLANTA RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT HILLTONIA, GA., ON
MAY 13, 1952

SUMMARY

Date: May 13, 1952

Railroad: Savannah & Atlanta

Location: Hilltonia, Ga.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Work train : Motor-truck

Train number: Extra 750 West :

Engine number: 750 :

Consist: 8 cars, caboose :

Estimated speeds: 20 m. p. h. : Unknown

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; vertical curve

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of
51°41'; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 4:36 p. m.

Casualties: 3 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Motor-truck occupying rail-highway
grade crossing immediately in
front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3466

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

SAVANNAH & ATLANTA RAILWAY COMPANY

July 3, 1952

Accident at Hilltonia, Ga., on May 13, 1952, caused
by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade
crossing immediately in front of an approaching
train.

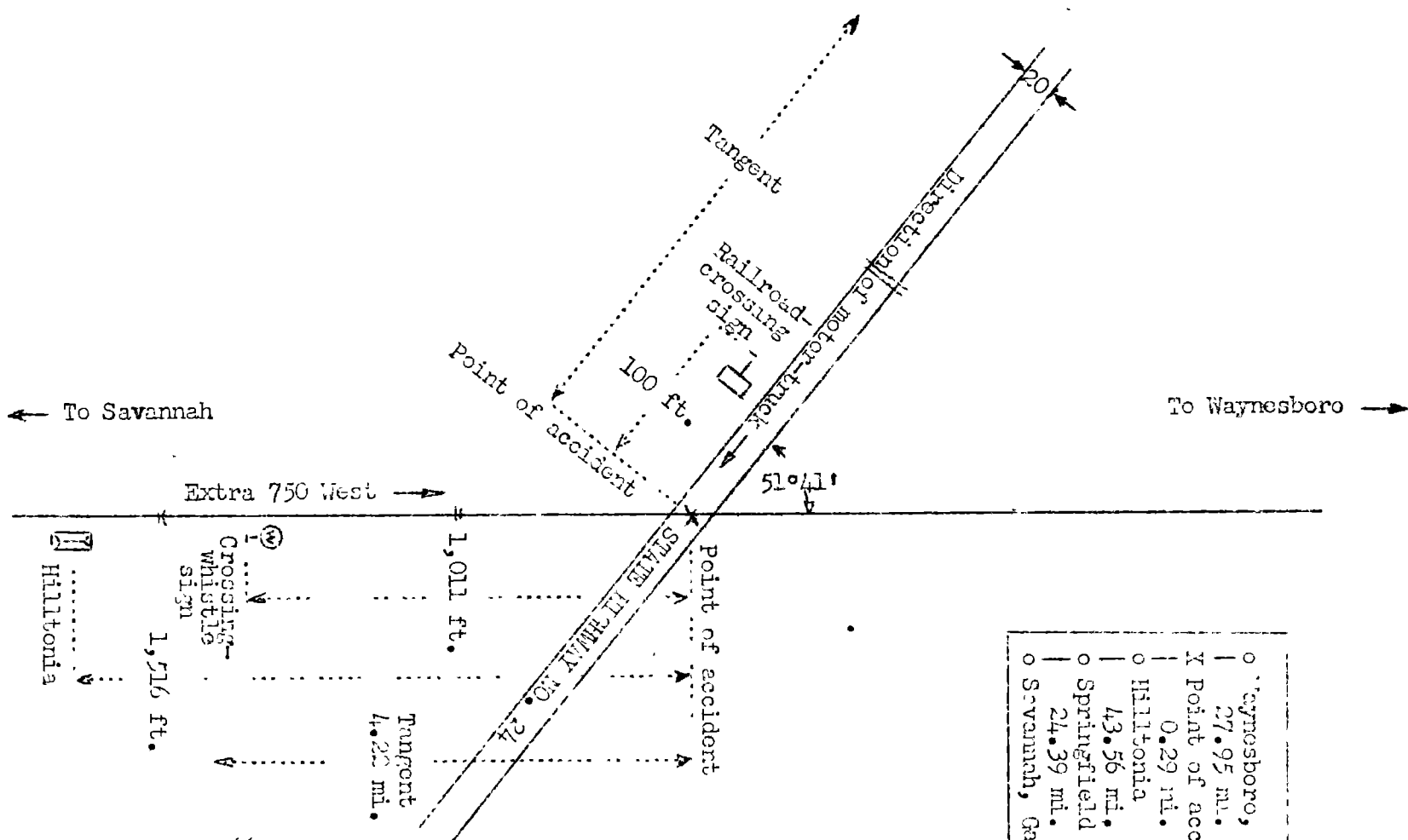
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 13, 1952, there was a collision between a
work train on the Savannah & Atlanta Railway and a motor-
truck at a rail-highway grade crossing at Hilltonia, Ga.,
which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-
truck, one person carried under contract and one
maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of one
train-service employee.

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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.



Report No. 3466
 Savannah & Atlanta Railway
 Hilltonia, Ga.
 May 13, 1952

o	Waynesboro, Ga.
	27.95 mi.
X	Point of accident
	0.29 mi.
o	Hilltonia
	43.56 mi.
o	Springfield
	24.39 mi.
o	Savannah, Ga.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Savannah and Waynesboro, Ga., 96.19 miles. This is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Timetable directions on the railroad are east and west, but the track at the point of accident extends north and south. Compass directions hereinafter are used. The accident occurred on the main track at a rail-highway grade crossing located 68.24 miles north of Savannah and 1,516 feet north of the station at Hilltonia. From the south on the railroad the track is tangent 4.22 miles to the point of accident and a considerable distance northward. The accident occurred on a vertical curve. State Highway No. 24 intersects the railroad at an angle of $51^{\circ}41'$. It is 20 feet in width and is surfaced with a bituminous mixture and crushed slag. From the west the highway is tangent throughout a considerable distance to the point of accident and about 200 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound vehicles is, successively, 2.89 percent descending a distance of 600 feet, a vertical curve 500 feet, and practically level 100 feet to the center-line of the crossing and 100 feet eastward.

A railroad-crossing sign 40 inches in length and 50 inches in width is located 100 feet west of the intersection and 17 feet south of the center-line of the highway. This sign is mounted on a mast 12 feet above the level of the highway and bears the words "R.R. CROSSING SLOW DOWN TO 6 MILES - GA. LAW" in red on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for trains approaching the crossing from the south is located 1,011 feet south of the crossing.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

AUDIBLE SIGNALS.

13. * * *

NOTE.--The Signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds. * * *

* * *

14. ENGINE * * * WHISTLE SIGNALS.

NOTE.--The sounds of the whistle should be distinct, with intensity and duration proportionate to the distance signal is to be conveyed.

SOUND

INDICATION

* * *

(1) — — o o

Approaching public crossings at grade. (See Rule 729.)

* * *

30. The engine bell must be rung when an engine is about to move and while approaching and passing public crossings at grade * * *

This carrier's timetable special instructions read in part as follows:

7. HIGHWAY AND STREET CROSSINGS:

Rule 729. Revised: Enginemen operating locomotives and motor cars, when reaching standard whistle posts * * * will sound crossing whistle * * * signal (two long, one short and one long blast) at intervals of five seconds between each blast, blasts of whistle * * * to be loud and distinct, beginning at whistle posts and continuing until engine passes over the public crossing. In addition thereto, after reaching whistle post and while approaching crossing, enginemen and trainmen will keep and maintain a constant and vigilant lookout along the track ahead and shall otherwise exercise due care in approaching said crossing.

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 750 West, a west-bound work train according to timetable directions but north-bound according to compass directions, consisted of one flat car upon which was mounted weed-spraying equipment, one tank car, engine 750, one water car, one car containing coal, three tank cars, one coach and one caboose, in the order named. This train departed from Springfield, 24.39 miles north of Savannah, at 7:20 a. m., passed Hilltonia, the last open office, at 4:35 p. m., and while moving at a speed of about 20 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a rail-highway grade crossing 1,516 feet north of the station at Hilltonia.

The vehicle involved was a tractor and a semi-trailer owned by the Ross Trucking Co., Augusta, Ga. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Georgia driver's license No. 1285514. The tractor was a 1949 International KB-8-1-L, and bore Georgia license No. DD-1317. It was equipped with dual wheels on the rear axles and was provided with a metal cab. The semi-trailer was equipped with tandem axles at the rear and dual wheels on each axle. Both the tractor and the semi-trailer were equipped with air-operated brakes. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 36,000 pounds of dairy feed. The cargo was loaded at Augusta, Ga., 58 miles west of Hilltonia, and was destined to Sylvania, Ga. The total weight of the tractor, the semi-trailer and cargo was 51,285 pounds. The total length of the tractor and semi-trailer, coupled, was 42 feet. This vehicle was moving eastward on State Highway No. 24 at an unknown speed when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by Extra 750 West.

Separations occurred between the first and second cars, and the second car and the engine of Extra 750 West. The trucks were torn from the first car. This car stopped upright, with the north end about 3 feet east of the track and 89 feet north of the point of accident. The south end of this car was 34 feet east of the track. The second car was derailed and stopped in line with the track, with the north end 192 feet north of the point of accident. The first and the second cars were badly damaged. The engine was somewhat damaged.

The tractor and part of the semi-trailer stopped against the south side of the first car of Extra 750 West. The rear portion of the semi-trailer stopped north of the crossing and west of the track. The tractor and the semi-trailer were demolished, and part of the cargo was destroyed by fire.

The conductor was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:36 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 3.9 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning May 21, 1952, 620 automobiles, 252 trucks, 17 buses and 22 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As Extra 750 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 20 miles per hour. The enginemen were in their respective positions in the cab of the engine, the conductor was on the north end of the first car, and the flagman was in the caboose. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded and the bell was ringing as Extra 750 West approached the crossing. The approaching motor-truck could not be seen from the engineer's position in the cab of the engine. The fireman's view of the highway was obstructed by vegetation and a building adjacent to the highway. The building is located about 610 feet west of the crossing and about 35 feet south of the highway. The fireman said that he first saw the motor-truck when the engine was about 370 feet south of the crossing and informed the engineer that a motor-truck was approaching the crossing. The engineer immediately made a service application of the brakes. The engineer said that he then observed the conductor giving slow signals from his position on the north end of the flat car. The fireman observed that the speed of the motor-truck was not decreasing and he called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately placed the automatic brake valve in emergency position.

When the motor-truck reached a point approximately 1,060 feet west of the crossing, the driver could have obtained a view of the track throughout a distance of approximately 370 feet immediately south of the crossing. The crossing sign 100 feet west of the crossing required the motor-truck to slow down to 6 miles per hour. The driver of the motor-truck was killed and it could not be determined why he failed to take action to stop the motor-truck short of the crossing.

The investigation disclosed that a circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign 24 inches in diameter had been located to the right of the direction of east-bound highway traffic, 15 feet south of the center-line of the highway and 528 feet west of the center-line of the main track. This sign had been mounted on a mast 5 feet above the level of the highway. It bore a vertical and a horizontal line, which intersected at the center of the sign, and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. The wooden mast upon which this sign was mounted had decayed at the ground line and prior to the accident the sign had fallen to the ground south of the highway. At the time of the accident the crossing was protected only by the railroad-crossing sign 100 feet west of the crossing.

Cause

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

Dated at Washington, D. C., this third day of July, 1952.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.