

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2926
SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT SOUTH ABERDEEN, N. C., ON
AUGUST 25, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad: Seaboard Air Line

Date: August 25, 1945

Location: South Aberdeen, N. C.

Kind of accident: Side collision

Trains involved: Passenger : Freight

Train numbers: First 5 : Third 72

Engine numbers: 264 : 2509

Consist: 11 cars : 45 cars, caboose

Estimated speed: 25 m. p. h. : 3 m. p. h.

Operation: Signal indications on double track, and timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system on single track

Track: Double and single; tangent; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:20 a. m.

Casualties: 78 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed of Third 72 approaching end of double track and in accordance with signal indications

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2926

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

SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY

October 9, 1945

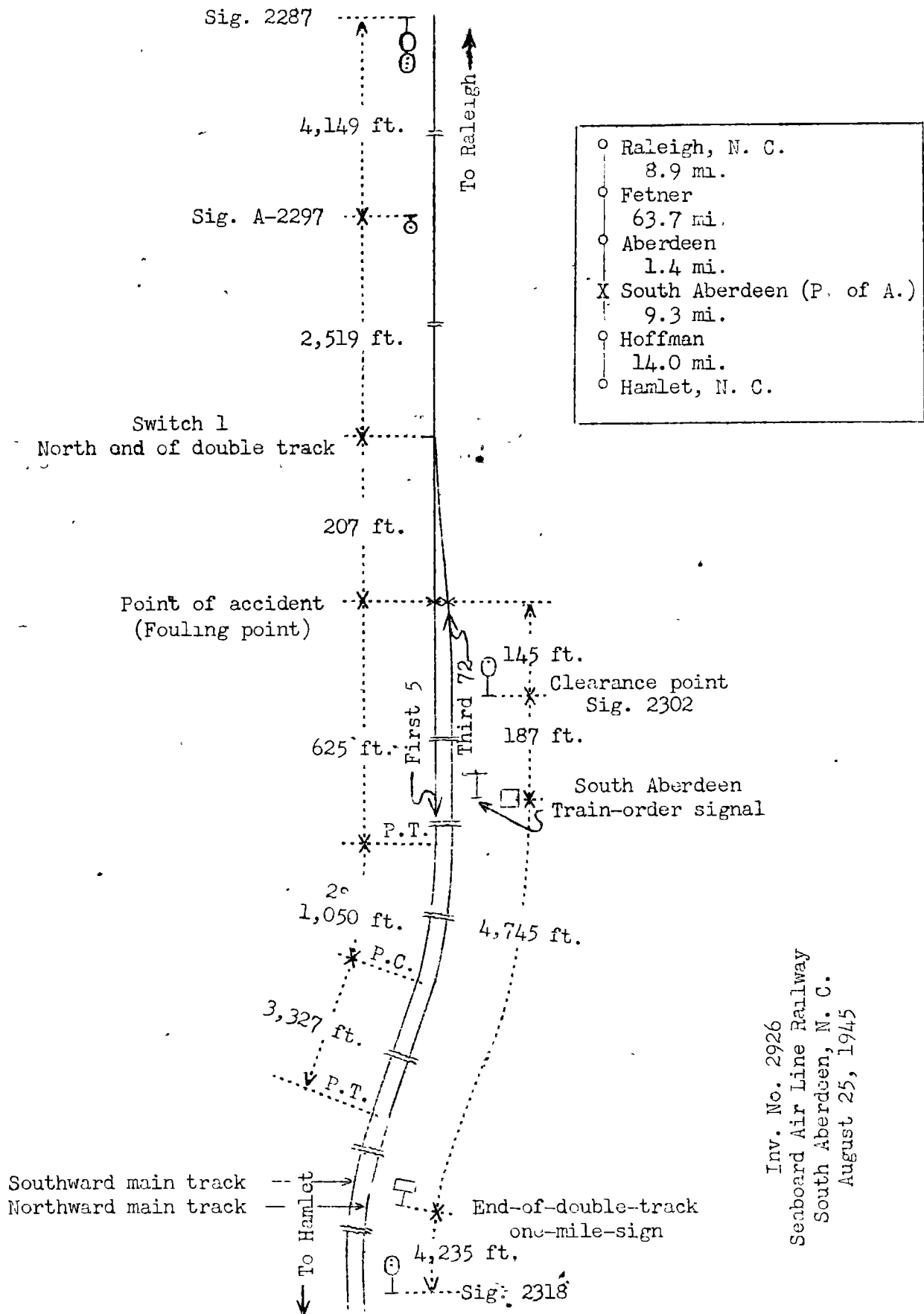
Accident at South Aberdeen, N. C., on August 25, 1945,
caused by failure properly to control the speed
of Third 72 approaching the end of double track
and in accordance with signal indications.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 25, 1945, there was a side collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Seaboard Air Line Railway at South Aberdeen, N. C., which resulted in the injury of 67 passengers, 1 Pullman employee and 10 dining-car employees.

¹Under 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.



Inv. No. 2926
 Seaboard Air Line Railway
 South Aberdeen, N. C.
 August 25, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Raleigh Sub-Division which extends between Raleigh and Hamlet, N. C., 97.3 miles. Between Fetner, 8.9 miles south of Raleigh, and South Aberdeen, 65.1 miles, this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system, and between South Aberdeen and Hamlet, 23.3 miles, a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by an automatic block-signal system, the indications of which supersede time-table superiority. The switch at the north end of the double track at South Aberdeen, hereinafter referred to as switch 1, is a spring switch and is 539 feet north of the station. The clearance point at the north end of the double track is 352 feet south of switch 1, and there is a sign indicating the end of double track on the east side of the northward main track, 4,932 feet south of the clearance point. The accident occurred 332 feet north of the station at South Aberdeen, 145 feet north of the clearance point and 207 feet south of switch 1. The main track is tangent throughout a considerable distance north of switch 1, and the southward main track is tangent 207 feet to the point of accident and 625 feet southward. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 3,327 feet in length, a 2° curve to the left 1,050 feet, a tangent 480 feet to the clearance point of switch 1 and a No. 16 turnout to the left 145 feet to the point of accident. At this point the grade is level.

Approach signal 2287 and home signal A-2297, governing south-bound movements, are, respectively, 6,875 feet and 2,726 feet north of the point of accident. Approach signal 2318 and home signal 2302, governing north-bound movements on the northward main track, are, respectively, 9,312 feet and 145 feet south of the point of accident. These signals are of the color-light type, and are continuously lighted. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals are as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
2287	Green-over-red	Proceed	Proceed Signal
A-2297	Green	Proceed	Proceed Signal
2318	Yellow	Approach next signal prepared to stop	Approach Signal
2302	Red	Stop	Stop Signal

The train-order signal at South Aberdeen is of the lower-quadrant, semaphore type, and is mounted on a mast located on

the east side of the northward main track and opposite the station. The involved day aspects and corresponding indications and names of this signal are as follows:

	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
For south-bound trains:	Vertical	Proceed	Clear-Signal
For north-bound trains:	Horizontal	Stop	Stop-Signal

Operating rules read in part as follows:

72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; * * *

* * *

83. A train must not * * * pass from double to single track, until it has been ascertained whether all trains due, which are superior, or of the same class, have arrived or left.

98. Trains must approach the end of double track, * * * prepared to stop, unless the switches are properly lined, signals indicate proceed, and track is clear.

221-A. A fixed signal must be used at each train order office, which shall indicate "Stop", when there is an operator on duty, except when changed to "Proceed" to allow a train to pass for which there are no orders. Except as otherwise provided a train must not pass the signal while "Stop" is indicated. * * *

* * *

509. * * *:

A. On single track when a train is stopped by a Stop-Signal it must stay until it is authorized to proceed, * * *

* * *

F. A train passing an Approach Signal must proceed at reduced speed prepared to stop before passing the next signal.

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 65 miles per hour, for freight trains, 50 miles per hour, and for all trains over switch 1, 25 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

First 5, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 264, two baggage-express cars, one mail car, one baggage-express car, one passenger-baggage car, four coaches, one dining car and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Aberdeen, 1.4 miles north of South Aberdeen, at 7:17 a. m., 32 minutes late, passed signals 2287 and A-2297, which displayed proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it entered the southward main track at switch 1, and the seventh car was struck by Third 72 at the fouling point of the southward main track and the turnout of switch 1.

Third 72, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 2509, a 2-6-6-4 type, 45 cars and a caboose, passed Hoffman, 9.3 miles south of South Aberdeen, at 7:12 a. m., 6 hours 46 minutes late, passed signal 2318, which displayed approach, passed the train-order signal at South Aberdeen and signal 2302, which displayed stop, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 3 miles per hour the engine entered the turnout of switch 1 and struck First 5.

The force of the impact separated the seventh car of First 5 from the eighth, the ninth car from the tenth and the tenth car from the eleventh. The rear truck of the seventh car and the eighth to the eleventh cars, inclusive, of First 5 and the engine of Third 72 were derailed. The eighth, ninth and tenth cars of First 5 stopped on their right sides on the west side of the southward main track, and were badly damaged. The remainder of the derailed equipment stopped practically upright and in line with the track, and this equipment was considerably damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:20 a. m.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that a train receiving an approach indication must proceed prepared to stop short of the next signal. A train must stop short of a signal displaying stop, and must not pass the signal until it has received proper authority to do so. All trains must approach the end of double track prepared to stop, unless the signals indicate proceed, the switches are properly lined and track is clear. A train must not proceed from one of two or more tracks to single track until it has received information by train order concerning overdue superior trains. All the employees concerned so understood.

Signal 2318 displayed approach and signal 2302 and the train-order signal at South Aberdeen displayed stop for Third

72, a north-bound second-class train, and signals 2287 and A-2297 and the train-order signal displayed proceed for First 5, a south-bound first-class train.

First 5 was proceeding from the single track to the southward main track over switch 1 when the seventh car was struck by Third 72. The members of the crew of First 5 were not aware of anything being wrong until the collision occurred.

As Third 72 was approaching signal 2318, located 1.74 miles south of signal 2302, the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The air brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. There was no condition of the engine that distracted the attention of these employees or obstructed their view of the track ahead. The employees on the engine called the approach indication displayed by signal 2318. When the engine was in the immediate vicinity of this signal the engineer moved the throttle lever to drifting position. The engineer said that when the engine was about 3,000 feet north of signal 2318, the speed was about 45 miles per hour, and he made a 15-pound brake-pipe reduction. When the engine was about 3,400 feet south of signal 2302, the speed was about 35 miles per hour, and the engineer made an additional brake-pipe reduction of about 5 pounds. Soon afterward the employees on the engine observed the train-order signal and signal 2302 displaying stop, and they called the indications. The engineer thought he had the train under proper control, but when the engine was about 300 feet south of the train-order signal he realized that the speed was excessive, and he moved the brake valve to emergency position in an attempt to stop the train short of the signal. He said that no release was made between any of the three brake-pipe reductions. However, the train was not stopped and the speed was about 3 miles per hour when the engine entered the turnout of switch 1 and struck First 5.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of Third 72 approaching the end of double track and in accordance with signal indications.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this ninth day of October, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.