

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2742
THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT CORDOVA, ALA., ON
NOVEMBER 15, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern
Date: November 15, 1943
Location: Cordova, Ala.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Extra 4543 West : First 53
Engine numbers: 4543 : 2421
Consist: 14 cars, cabooses : 18 cars, cabooses
Estimated speed: Standing : 8 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Single; 7°15' curve; 1.20 percent
ascending grade westward
Weather: Clear
Time: 11:05 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed
Cause: Failure properly to control
speed of following train
moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2742

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

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

December 7, 1943.

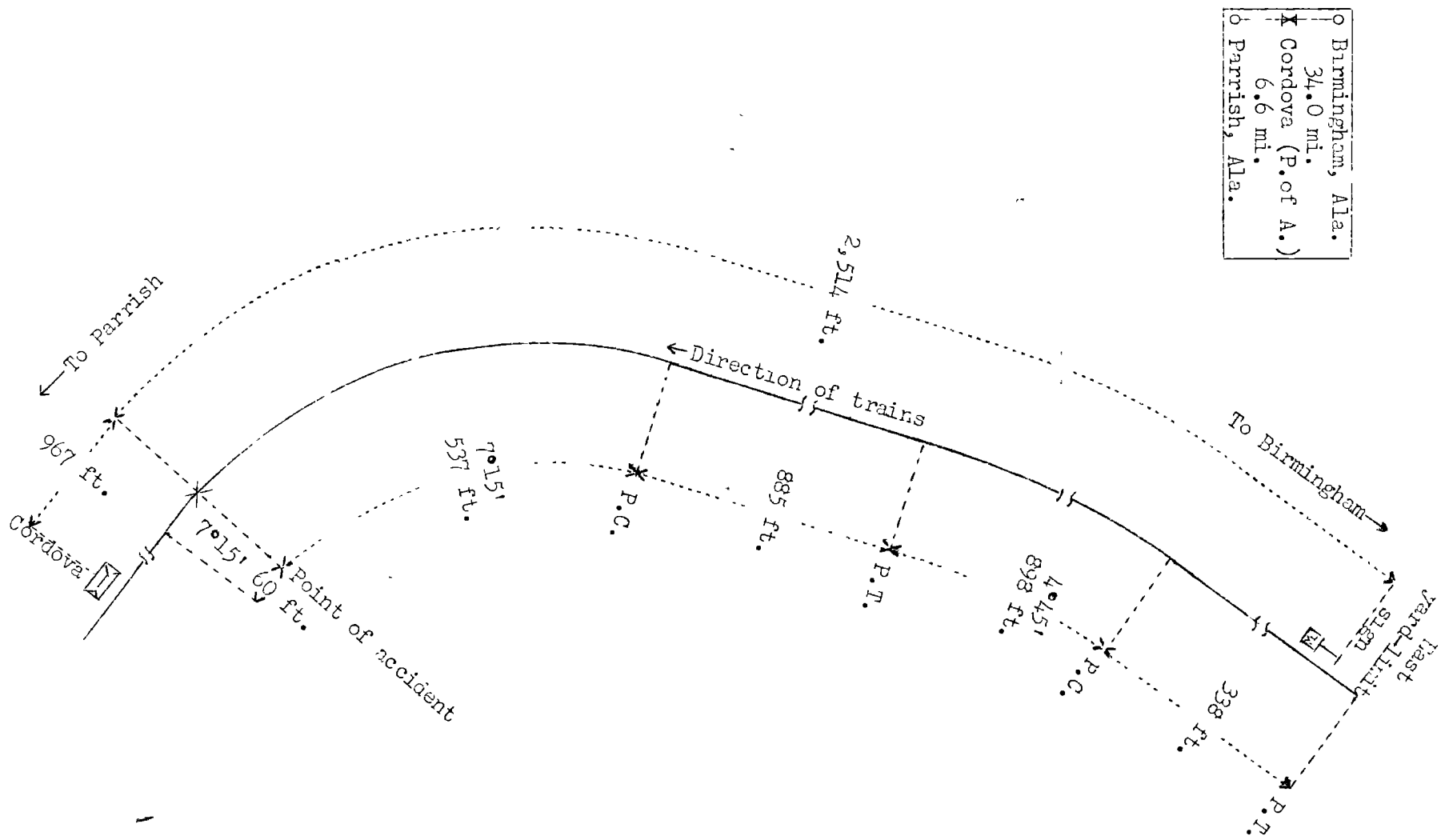
Accident at Cordova, Ala., on November 15, 1943, caused
by failure properly to control the speed of the fol-
lowing train moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 15, 1943, there was a rear-end collision
between two freight trains on the line of the Southern
Railway System at Cordova, Ala., which resulted in the
death of one employee.

¹Under 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. 2742
 Southern Railway System
 Cordova, Ala.
 November 15, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Birmingham Division extending between Birmingham and Parrish, Ala., 40.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line, within yard limits, over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred 967 feet east of the station at Cordova and 2,514 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. From the east there were, in succession, a tangent 538 feet in length, a 4°45' curve to the left 898 feet, a tangent 885 feet and a 7°15' curve to the left 537 feet to the point of accident and 60 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains was 1.35 percent descending 900 feet, then there were, in succession, a vertical curve 1,100 feet, level track 250 feet, a vertical curve 1,000 feet and a 1.20-percent ascending grade 260 feet to the point of accident and 90 feet beyond.

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Yard Speed--A speed that will permit stopping within one-half the range of vision.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.

Second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at yard speed.

* * *

Description of Accident

Extra 4543 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 4543, 14 cars and a caboose, stopped on the main track at Cordova at 10:55 p. m., with the rear end standing 2,514 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. About 10 minutes later the rear end was struck by First 53.

First 53, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 2421, 18 cars and a caboose, passed the east yard-limit sign at Cordova, and while moving at a speed of about 8 miles per hour it struck Extra 4543 West.

The caboose and the rear two cars of Extra 4543 were derailed and badly damaged. The front end of engine 2421 was considerably damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:05 p. m.

The conductor of Extra 4543 West was killed.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier governing operation within yard limits provide that all trains except first-class trains must be operated prepared to stop within one-half the range of vision

About 10 minutes after Extra 4543 West stopped, the rear end was struck by First 53, about 2,500 feet west of the east yard-limit sign.

As First 53 was approaching the east yard-limit sign, the speed was about 15 miles per hour. The air brakes had been tested and they functioned properly. There was no condition of the engine which obscured the vision or distracted the attention of the enginemen, and they were maintaining a lookout ahead. The front brakeman was in the booth on the tender. When the engine reached the vicinity of the east yard-limit sign, the engineer made a service brake-pipe reduction. When the engine reached a point about 1,100 feet west of the east yard-limit sign the speed of the train was reduced to about 8 miles per hour, and the engineer moved the brake valve to release position. From this point westward the view of the track ahead was restricted because of buildings adjacent to the track and track curvature. The fireman saw the lighted red marker-lamps on the rear end of Extra 4543 and stop signals being given with a lighted white lantern in the vicinity of the caboose, about 500 feet distant. He called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

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 seventh day of December, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.