

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2769  
THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR GUILFORD COLLEGE, N. C , ON  
JANUARY 29, 1944

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Southern  
Date: January 29, 1944  
Location: Guilford College, N. C.  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck  
Train number: 5 :  
Engine number: 1225 :  
Consist: 2 cars :  
Estimated speed: 30-40 m. p. h. : 4 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; tangent; 0.94 percent  
descending grade westward  
Private crossing: Tangent; crosses track at right  
angles; level  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 9:35 p. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 1 injured  
Cause: Motor-truck being driven upon  
private-road grade crossing  
immediately in front of  
approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2769

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

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

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February 24, 1944.

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Accident near Guilford College, N. C., on January 29, 1944,  
caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a private-  
road grade crossing immediately in front of an approach-  
ing train.

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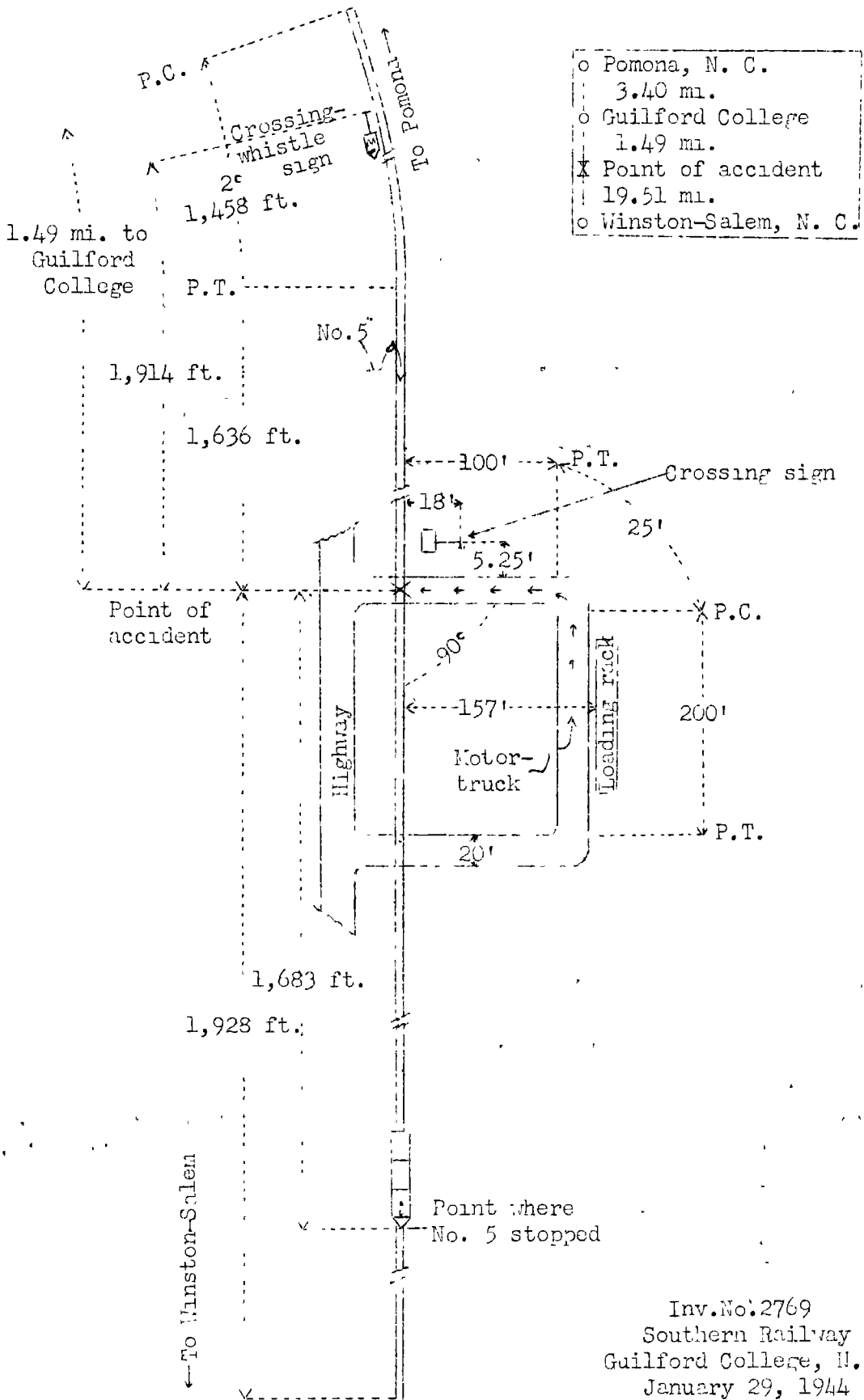
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On January 29, 1944, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Southern Railway and a motor-truck at a private-road grade crossing near Guilford College, N. C., which resulted in the death of two train-service employees, and the injury of the driver of the motor-truck.

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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 Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv.No:2769  
 Southern Railway  
 Guilford College, N. C.  
 January 29, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Winston-Salem Division extending between Pomona and Winston-Salem, N. C., 24.4 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 1.49 miles west of Guilford College, where the railroad was crossed at grade by a private road. From the east on the railroad there was a 2° curve to the right 1,458 feet in length, which was followed by a tangent 1,636 feet to the crossing and 1,928 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains was 0.94 percent descending.

Near the point of accident, loading racks of the Snell Oil Company were located 157 feet south of the main track and parallel to it. The private road extended from the loading racks to a highway paralleling the railroad on the north, and crossed the track at right angles. From the loading racks on the road there were, in succession, a tangent 200 feet in length, a 90° curve to the left about 25 feet and a tangent 100 feet to the crossing and 50 feet beyond. The grade was practically level. The road and the crossing were 20 feet wide. The road was surfaced with concrete, and the crossing with macadam.

A crossing sign, 4.2 feet above the level of the road, was located on a mast to the right of the direction of north-bound traffic, 18 feet south of the track and 5.25 feet east of the road. This sign was 3 feet wide and 1.7 feet high, and bore the words "R. R. CROSSING" in black letters and "STOP" in red letters on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains was located 1,914 feet east of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS

Note--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "\_\_\_" for longer sounds.  
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SOUND	INDICATION
* * *	
(1)    ___ o ___	Approaching public crossings at grade. The signal must be repeated or the last sound prolonged until crossing is reached.
* * *	

Bulletin No. 85-42, issued June 12, 1942, read in part as follows:

ALL ENGINEERS: .  
FIREMEN:  
CONDUCTORS:  
TRAINMEN:

You are familiar with the conditions and road crossings in connection with the Standard Oil Company and the Shell Oil Company at Milepost K-5.

We have had some near collisions with trucks at these crossings.

You will approach these crossings carefully, blowing the whistle and ringing the bell and be prepared to stop when necessary.

The engineer and fireman must be constantly on the lookout and crews switching these plants must protect these crossings with some member of their crew while switching over same.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 55 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 5, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1225, one baggage car, of steel-underframe construction, and one coach, of all-steel construction, in the order named. This train passed Pomona, 3.4 miles east of Guilford College and the last open office, at 9:24 p. m., 10 minutes late, passed Guilford College, and while moving at a speed of 30 to 40 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck at a private-road grade crossing 1.49 miles west of Guilford College.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned and operated by the Sinclair Refining Company. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held North Carolina chauffeur's license No. 9859. The tractor was a 1942, cab-over-engine, 6-cylinder, Autocar W-40T-96 model, and bore North Carolina license No. 193-662. It weighed 8,800 pounds, and was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels, air-brakes, and an enclosed steel cab. It was hauling a semi-trailer which had dual tires on its wheels, and was provided with air-brakes. The trailer was equipped with a steel tank, and the total weight

was 7,540 pounds. It bore North Carolina license No. 90-390. The over-all length of the two units was about 38 feet. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 4,075 gallons of gasoline. This vehicle departed from the loading racks, moved northward on the private road, proceeded upon the crossing and was struck by No. 5.

A west-bound train approaching on the railroad could be seen by the driver of a north-bound vehicle throughout a distance of 2,450 feet. There was no unusual condition about the enclosed cab of the motor-truck that restricted the vision.

The trailer was torn loose from the tractor, and both were demolished. The trailer and the tractor were carried in front of the train to points, respectively, 80 feet and 224 feet westward. The tank was punctured, and escaping gasoline became ignited. No. 5 was not derailed, and it stopped with the front end of the engine 1,683 feet west of the crossing. The front end of the engine was damaged. Fire destroyed the first car and damaged the second car.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:35 p. m.

The engineer and the fireman were killed.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains over the crossing was 13.46. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., January 31, 1944, 97 trucks passed over the crossing, 43 of which were loaded with gasoline.

#### Discussion

No. 5 was approaching the crossing at a speed of 30 or 40 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly. The air brakes had functioned properly en route. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. A service brake-pipe reduction was made a short distance east of the crossing, and when the collision occurred the brakes became applied in emergency. It could not be determined when the enginemen first became aware that the motor-truck had entered upon the crossing, as they were killed in the accident.

The crossing was protected by a warning sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver, and prior to the accident he had made several trips over the crossing. The weather was clear and the driver could have seen the headlight of the approaching train throughout a distance of nearly 1/2 mile immediately east of the crossing. The tractor had recently

been reconditioned, and it was found to be in good mechanical condition when last inspected on the day previous to the occurrence of the accident. It could not be determined why the motor-truck entered upon the crossing immediately in front of the approaching train, as the driver was critically injured, and a coherent statement was not obtainable at the time this investigation was completed.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a private-road grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of February, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL).

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.