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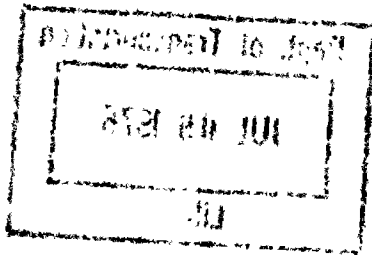
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INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION,  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2901  
SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT McGRUFF, GA., ON  
JUNE 17, 1945

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Inv-2901

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern

Date: June 17, 1945

Location: McGriff, Ga.

Kind of accident: Side collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: 52 : 7

Engine numbers: 792 : 1327

Consist: 42 cars, cabooses : 12 cars

Estimated speed: Standing : 35 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.31 percent ascending grade southward

Weather: Cloudy

Time: 2:55 a. m.

Casualties: 28 injured

Cause: Inferior train occupying main track on time of opposing superior train

Recommendation: That the Southern Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2901

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

SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

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July 30, 1945.

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Accident at McGriff, Ga., on June 17, 1945, caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

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

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 17, 1945, there was a side collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Southern Railway at McGriff, Ga., which resulted in the injury of 25 passengers, 1 person carried under contract and 2 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.

To Macon ↑

Tangent  
1.62 mi.

o	Macon, Ga.	32.7 mi.
X	McGriff (P. of A.)	43.7 mi.
o	Helena	110.6 mi.
o	Brunswick, Ga.	

No. 7  
No. 52  
Siding -  
2,701 ft. long

McGriff

1,248 ft.

Point of accident  
(Fouling point)  
124 ft.

South siding-switch

Tangent  
3,708 ft.

↓ To Brunswick

Inv. No. 2901  
Southern Railway  
McGriff, Ga.  
June 17, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Atlanta Division extending southward from Macon to Brunswick, Ga., 187 miles, a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At McGriff, 32.7 miles south of Macon, a siding 2,701 feet in length parallels the main track on the east. The south switch of this siding is 1,248 feet south of the station. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the south siding-switch, at a point 124 feet north of the switch. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 1.62 miles north of this point and 3,832 feet southward. The grade is 0.31 percent ascending southward.

The switch-stand at the south siding-switch is located on the east side of the main track. It is provided with a circular white target 15 inches in diameter, and a rectangular red target 12 by 30 inches. The centers of the targets are 6 feet 4 inches above the tops of the ties. A reflector lens 5-3/8 inches in diameter is located 20 inches above the centers of the targets. When the south switch is lined for entry to the siding, the red target is at right angles to the track and the reflector lens displays red when the rays of the headlight of an engine are directed upon it.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

5. \* \* \*

The time applies at the switch where an opposing train enters the siding; \* \* \*

\* \* \*

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night. It must be concealed or extinguished when a train turns out to meet another and has stopped clear of main track, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

19. The following signals will be displayed to the rear of every train, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train: \* \* \* By night, yellow lights to the front and side and red lights to the rear, except when a train is clear of the main track, when yellow lights must be displayed to the front, side and rear, \* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

\* \* \*

88(a). At meeting points, the inferior train must take the siding and clear the time of the superior train not less than five minutes, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees. When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return. When conditions require, he will leave the torpedoes and a lighted fusee.

The front of the train must be protected immediately in the same way when necessary by the forward trainman, fireman, or other competent employe.

\* \* \*

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

\* \* \*

E

Time Orders

\* \* \*

- (3.) No 1 one eng 1860 and No 3 three eng 1858 wait at N until 959 nine fifty nine a m
- P until 1030 ten thirty a m
- R until 1055 ten fifty five a m, etc.

The train, or trains, named must not pass the designated points before the times given. Other trains receiving the order are required to run with respect to the time specified at the designated points, or any intermediate station where schedule time is earlier than the time specified in the order, as before required to run with respect to the schedule time of the train, or trains, named.

\* \* \*

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

According to the timetable, the siding at McGriff has a capacity for 51 freight cars.

Description of Accident

No. 52, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 792, 42 cars and a caboose. At Helena, 43.7 miles south of McGriff and the last open office, the crew received copies of train order No. 1 reading in part as follows:

No 7 Seven Eng 1327 wait at  
\* \* \* until \* \* \*  
McGriff 250 two fifty a m  
run 1 one Hour and 30 tairty mins  
late McGriff to Helena

No. 52 departed from Helena at 12:49 a. m., 2 hours 39 minutes late, and stopped at the south siding-switch at McGriff about 2:30 a. m. Soon afterward this train proceeded northward on the siding and stopped about 2:35 a. m., with the engine on the siding about 900 feet south of the clearance point of the north siding-switch, the thirty-third to the thirty-seventh cars, inclusive, on the turnout of the south siding-switch, and the rear five cars and the caboose on the main track south of the switch. About 20 minutes later, at which time this train was in the same location, the thirty-fifth car was struck by No. 7.

No. 7, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1327, one box-express car, one mail car, one baggage car, five coaches and four Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. The first car was of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder were of all-steel construction. At Macon, 32.7 miles north of McGriff and the last open office, the crew received copies of train order No. 1. This train departed from Macon at 2:04 a. m., 1 hour 44 minutes late, passed the station at McGriff about 2:54:40 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour it struck No. 52.

The thirty-fifth to thirty-eighth cars, inclusive, of No. 52, were overturned to the east. Three of these cars were destroyed. Engine 1327, of No. 7, was derailed and stopped on its right side, across the main track, 280 feet south of the point of collision, and was badly damaged. The first car stopped upright at the rear of the engine, across the main track and at right angles to it. The second and third cars were derailed to the east but remained practically upright. The fourth car was derailed but remained upright and in line with the main track. These cars were considerably damaged.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 2:55 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman of No. 7 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 8.4 trains.

### Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 1, which required No. 7, a south-bound first-class train, to wait at McGriff until 2:50 a. m., and to run 1 hour 30 minutes late from McGriff to Helena. No. 52 was inferior by class, and, under the rules, was required to be into clear at McGriff not later than 2:45 a. m., if it proceeded to that station for No. 7, or to provide flag protection. No. 52 entered the siding at the south siding-switch at McGriff, and stopped about 2:35 a. m., with the rear five cars and the caboose standing on the main track south of the switch. After the train stopped, the engineer extinguished the headlight. About 20 minutes later the thirty-fifth car was struck by No. 7.

As No. 7 was approaching McGriff the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The members of the train crew were stationed in various cars throughout the train. The first that the members of the train crew were aware of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency about 800 feet north of the south siding-switch. The speed of No. 7 was reduced to about 35 miles per hour at the time of the accident. The brakes of this train had been tested and functioned properly en route. The engineer and the fireman were so seriously injured that they could not be questioned during this investigation, and it could not be determined when they first became aware that the main track was obstructed. Apparently a proper lookout was being maintained on the engine, as the conductor heard the engine whistle sound in the vicinity of the station one-mile sign, located about 1 mile north of the station. The switch-stand of the south siding-switch was located on the east side of the track, and therefore the indication displayed by it was obscured from the view of the enginemen of No. 7 by the cars which occupied the turnout.

The investigation disclosed that the engineer, the fireman, the conductor and the front brakeman of No. 52 were on the engine when it entered the siding. The flagman was on the caboose. These employees understood that their train was required to be into clear for No. 7 not later than 2:45 a. m., and that flag protection must be furnished against No. 7 north of the south siding-switch if their train was not clear of the main track at the required time. As this train was moving on the siding the fireman maintained a lookout to the rear to ascertain when the caboose was into clear. When the engine was about 1,500 feet north of the south siding-switch, the fireman thought he saw the lighted marker lamps on the caboose in the vicinity of the south siding-switch, and he informed the engineer



accordingly. The engineer understood the fireman to say that the rear end of the train was clear of the main track and made a brake-pipe reduction, which stopped the train with the engine standing about 900 feet south of the clearance point of the north siding-switch. The conductor and the front brakeman alighted and crossed to the west side of the main track, but remained in the vicinity of the engine. Immediately after the train stopped, the fireman started to clean the fire, and was so engaged when No. 7 passed. None of the employees who were in the vicinity of the front end of No. 52 took action to determine whether the train was into clear. The flagman said that when the train stopped he gave proceed signals with a lighted white lantern from a point near the south switch. Then, because the train was not moved forward in response to his signals, he thought some condition prevented such further forward movement of the train, and proceeded southward about 1 mile to provide flag protection against following trains. No member of the crew in the vicinity of the engine observed these signals, and, because they thought their train was into clear, no action was taken to provide flag protection against opposing trains. The thirty-fourth car of this train was a gondola-type car, and evidently the fireman saw the marker lamp on the east side of the caboose over the top of this car as it was moving on the turnout.

In the territory involved, trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, No. 7 would have received definite information that the main track was occupied, and this accident could have been prevented.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Southern Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of July, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.