INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2653

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR MINEOLA, GA., ON

NOVEMBER 22, 1942

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SUMMARY

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| Railroad: | Southern |
| Date: | November 22, 1942 |
| Location: | Mineola, Ga. |
| Kind of accident: | Derailment |
| Train involved: | Passenger |
| Train number: | 3 |
| Engine numbers: | 1347-1332 |
| Consist: | 12 cars |
| Speed: | 55-60 m. p. h. |
| Operation: | Timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal and automatic train-stop system |
| Track: | Single; tangent; level |
| Weather: | Dense fog |
| Time: | About 5 a. m. |
| Casualties: | 3 killed; 81 injured |
| Cause: | Accident caused by collapse of a bridge which had been weakened by fire |

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2653

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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January 7, 1943.

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Accident near Mineola, Ga., on November 22, 1942, caused by collapse of a bridge which had been weakened by fire.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 22, 1942, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the line of the Southern Railway System near Mineola, Ga., which resulted in the death of 2 passengers and 1 railway-mail clerk, and the injury of 76 passengers, 1 railway-mail clerk, 2 employees off duty and 2 train-service employees.

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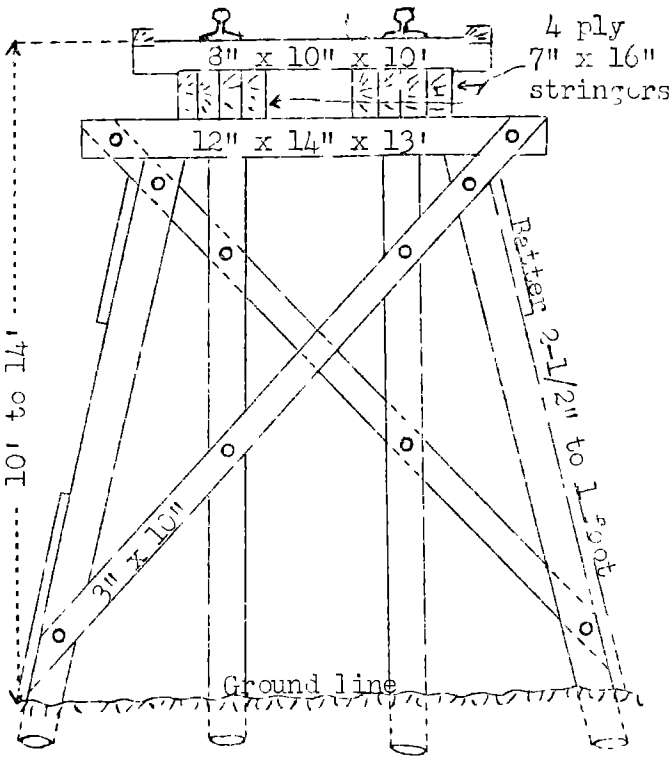
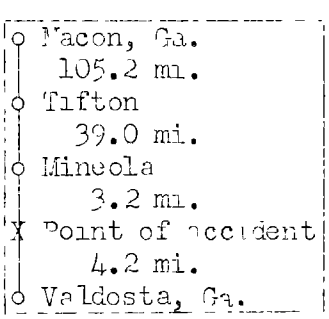
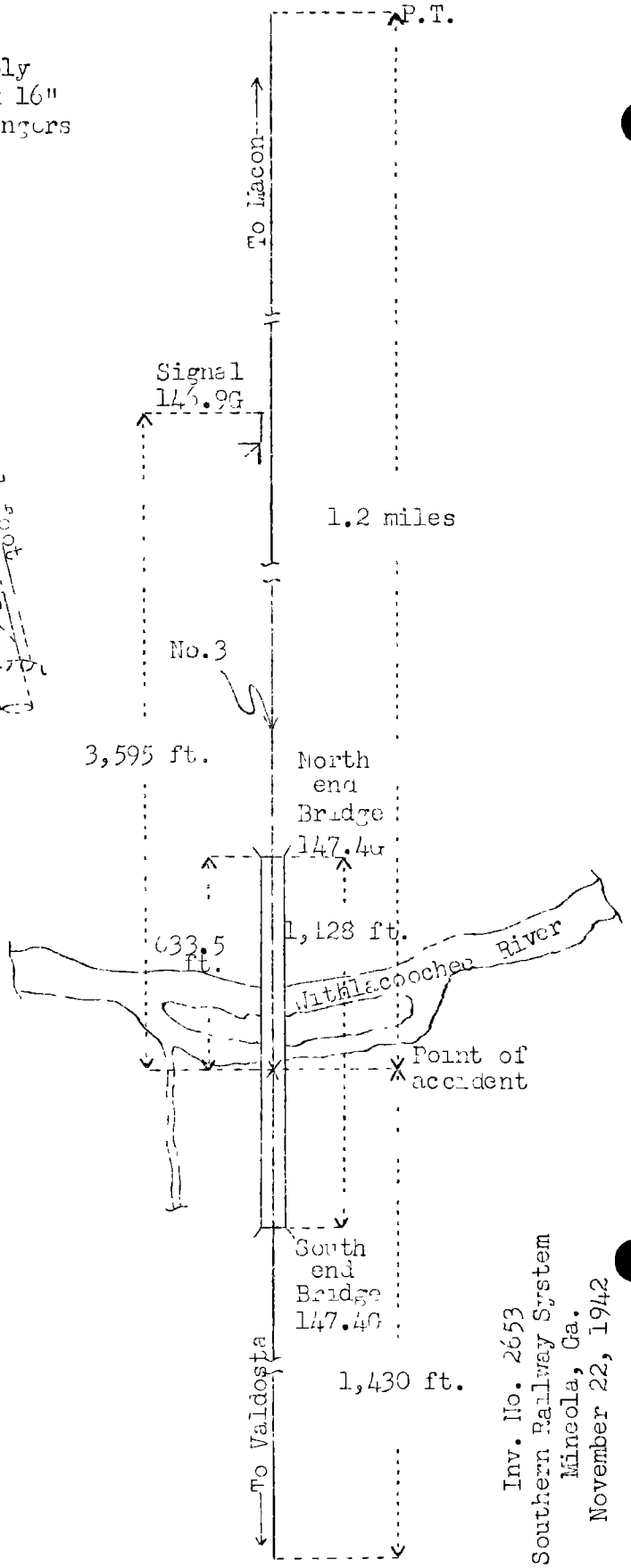
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.

7 bents destroyed by fire,
11 bents demolished and 10
damaged in accident




Typical Cross Section
of Trestle




Inv. No. 2653
Southern Railway System
Mineola, Ga.
November 22, 1942

## Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Georgia Southern & Florida Railway, Southern Railway System, which extends between Macon and Valdosta, Ga., a distance of 151.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal and automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred at Bridge 147.4G, which spans Withlacoochee River at a point 3.2 miles south of Mineola. Approaching from the north there is a tangent 1.2 miles to the point of accident and 1,430 feet beyond. At the point of accident the grade is level.

Immediately north of Bridge 147.4G the track structure consists of 85-pound rail, 33 feet in length; it is single-spiked on tangents and double-spiked on curves, fully tieplated and is laid on cinder ballast.

Bridge 147.4G is an open-deck 88-bent pile-and-timber trestle 1,128 feet in length, and was rebuilt during 1940. The bents were spaced 13 feet apart. Each bent consisted of 4 piles 8 to 10 inches in diameter at the bottom and 10 to 14 inches in diameter at the top, 30 to 39 feet in length and driven to a penetration of 20 to 25 feet. The outer piles of each bent were placed in a batter of 2-1/2 inches to 1 foot, and the bents were sway braced. The top of each pile was covered by a metal plate. The cap at each bent was 12 inches by 14 inches by 13 feet. Two 4-ply chords of 7-inch by 16-inch stringers were provided. The ties were 8 inches by 10 inches by 10 feet and were spaced about 8 inches apart. Outside each running rail a 5-inch by 8-inch guard rail was provided. All material in the bridge was either cypress or treated pine. Six water barrels spaced approximately 200 feet apart were provided. Normally water in Withlacoochee River covers a considerable portion of the ground under the bridge but at the time of the accident the river was only about 25 feet wide and about 1 foot deep.

Automatic signal 146.9G, governing south-bound movements, is located 3,595 feet north of the point of accident.

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved is 70 miles per hour.

## Description of Accident

No. 3, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engines 1347 and 1332, coupled, 1 mail car, 1 baggage-express car, 7 coaches and 3 Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. The fifth to ninth cars, inclusive, were of steel-underframe

construction and the remainder were of all-steel construction. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Macon, 144.2 miles north of Mineola, at 1:05 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 6 minutes late, departed from Tifton, 39 miles north of Mineola and the last open office, at 4:02 a. m., 1 hour 7 minutes late, passed signal 146.9G, which displayed proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 55 to 60 miles per hour it was derailed on Bridge 147.4G at a point 633.5 feet south of the north end of the bridge.

The engines, remaining coupled, became detached from the first car and stopped, slightly damaged, with the front end of the first engine 2,393.5 feet south of the point of derailment. The rear wheels of the rear truck of the tender of engine 1347 and the trailer truck and the rear truck of the tender of engine 1332 were derailed to the west. The first to eighth cars, inclusive, were derailed and stopped, badly damaged, in various positions in the stream bed. The seventh car was practically destroyed by fire. The front end of the ninth car was slightly damaged.

A dense fog restricted visibility to a distance of about 100 feet at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5 a. m.

The train-service employees injured were the baggagemaster and the flagman.

## Discussion

No. 3 was moving on tangent track at a speed of 55 to 60 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 70 miles per hour when the train became derailed. According to the statements of the members of the crew, as their train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the train was riding smoothly. The enginemen of both engines were maintaining a lookout ahead. Dense fog restricted visibility to a distance of about 100 feet. When the first engine reached a point about 530 feet south of the north end of Bridge 147.4G the enginemen of that engine saw flames extending from 4 to 6 inches above the surface of the bridge and throughout the width of the bridge. The engineer of the first engine immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the distance was not sufficient for the train to stop short of the flames, and the train was derailed on the bridge. The track immediately north of Bridge 147.4G was in good condition.

The investigation disclosed that prior to the time of the accident fire had weakened part of the bridge structure sufficiently to cause it to fail under the weight of the engines. Because of the intensity of the fire, which burned a considerable time after the accident occurred, it was not possible to determine the extent of the damage that existed at the time No. 3 entered upon the bridge. After the fire was extinguished it was found that of the 88 bents in the bridge, 7 were destroyed by fire, 11 were demolished and 10 were damaged as a result of the derailment.

The section foreman said that on November 17 his force cleaned grass and debris from under Bridge 147.4G and about 4 feet on each side. The last time he inspected this bridge was about 4 p. m., November 21. At that time there was no fire hazard or defective condition of the bridge. The last two trains that passed over Bridge 147.4G were a north-bound passenger train about 1:25 a. m., and a south-bound freight train about 1:45 a. m. According to the statements of the crews of these trains, there was no indication of the bridge being afire. The enginemen of these trains said that no burning coals were dropping through the dampers. After the accident an examination was made of the engines of these trains and no defective condition was found that would have contributed to the cause of the fire. Several persons who checked conditions in the immediate vicinity of the bridge were of the opinion that the fire was of incendiary origin, but no definite evidence in support of this opinion was developed during this investigation.

## Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by collapse of a bridge which had been weakened by fire.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of January, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.