

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3119
SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ROVER, GA., ON
AUGUST 2, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern

Date: August 2, 1947

Location: Rover, Ga.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 153 : Extra 614 North

Engine numbers: 847 : 614

Consists: 30 cars, caboose : 14 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 20 m. p. h. : 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 2° curve; 1.26 percent
'descending grade southward

Weather: Clear

Time: 6:25 a. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 2 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 accident
occurred.

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3119

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

SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

September 22, 1947

Accident near Rover, Ga., on August 2, 1947, caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

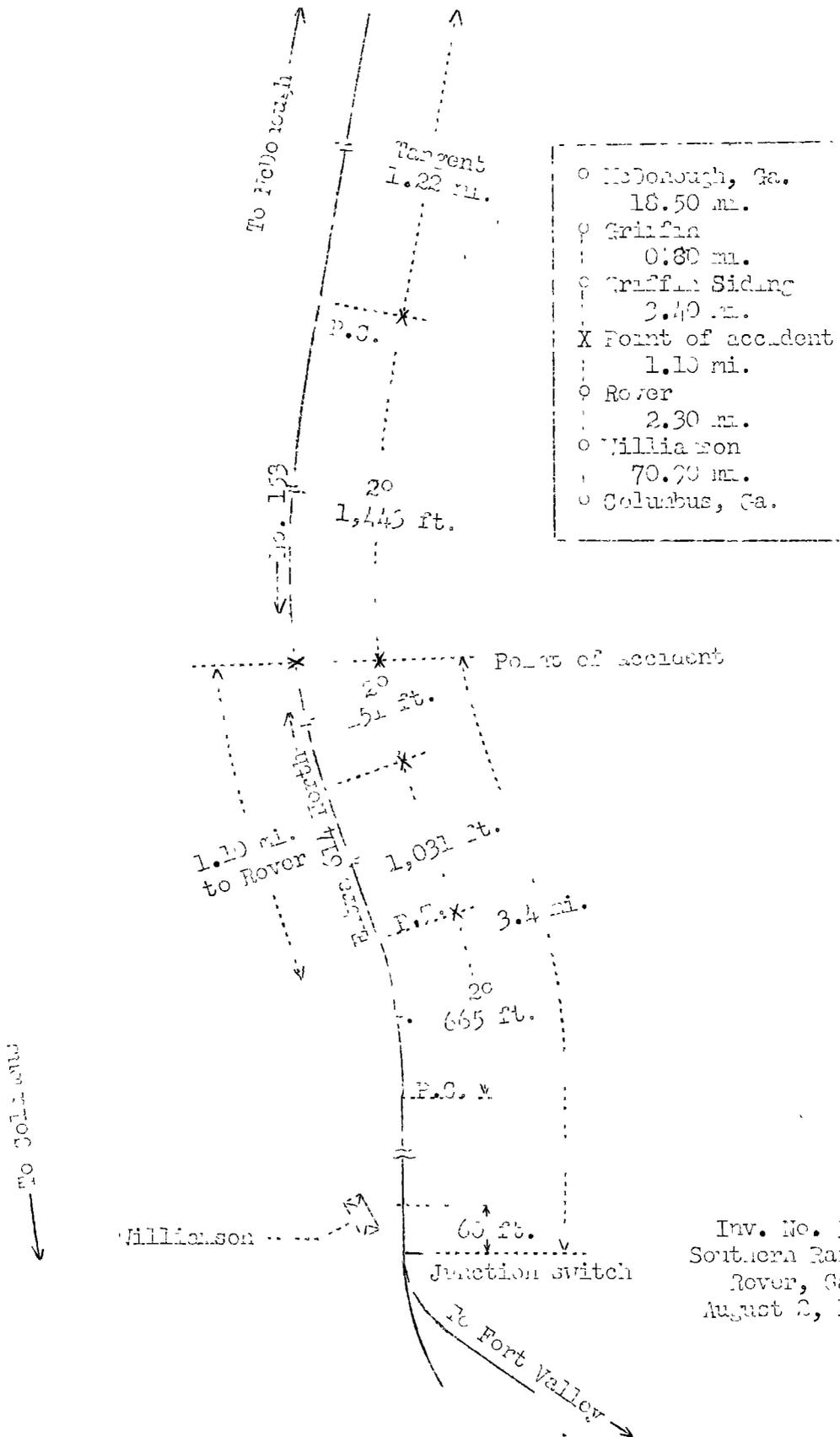
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 2, 1947, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Southern Railway near Rover, Ga., which resulted in the death of two employees, and the injury of two employees.

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.



Inv. No. 3119
 Southern Railway
 Rover, Ga.
 August 2, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Atlanta Division extending between McDonough and Columbus, Ga., 97 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 22.70 miles south of McDonough and 1.10 miles north of the station at Rover. From the north there is a tangent 1.22 miles in length, and then a 2° curve to the left 1,443 feet to the point of accident and 151 feet southward. From the south there is a 2° curve to the left 665 feet in length, a tangent 1,031 feet, and then the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 1.26 percent descending southward.

At Williamson, 2.3 miles south of Rover, a single-track line extending southeastwardly to Fort Valley, Ga., 60.3 miles, converges with the line on which the accident occurred. The junction switch is 60 feet south of the station.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Train Register--A book or form which may be used at designated stations for registering signals displayed, the time of arrival and departure of trains * * *

* * *

5. * * *

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

* * *

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

83. A train must not leave its initial station on any division, or subdivision, or a junction, * * * until it has been ascertained whether all trains due, which are superior, have arrived or left.

Stations at which train registers are located will be designated by time-table.

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.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than five minutes unless otherwise provided, * * *

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 fuseses.

* * *

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

* * *

Time-table special instructions designate Williamson as a train-register station for all trains passing that point.

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 40 miles per hour for passenger trains and 30 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

No. 153, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 847, 30 cars and a caboose, departed from Griffin, the last open office, 5.3 miles north of Rover, at 6:15 a. m., 5 hours 10 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with Extra 614 North at a point 1.1 miles north of Rover.

Extra 614 North, a north-bound freight train en route from Fort Valley to McDonough via Williamson and consisting of engine 614, 14 cars and a caboose, departed from Fort Valley, the last open office, at 2:00 a. m., and arrived at Williamson at 5:45 a. m. This train entered the line on which the accident occurred at the junction switch at Williamson and departed at 6:10 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it collided with No. 153 at a point 3.4 miles north of the junction switch.

The front ends of both engines were badly damaged. The first seven cars of No. 153 were considerably damaged. The second, third and fourth cars were derailed. The first car of Extra 614 North was slightly damaged.

The conductor and the fireman of No. 153 were killed. The engineer of No. 153, and the fireman of Extra 614 North were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:25 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 9.5 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that a train must not depart from a junction point until it has been ascertained whether all trains due, which are superior, have arrived or left. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains, and extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than 5 minutes.

No. 153, a south-bound second-class train, was due to leave Griffin Siding, 6.9 miles north of Williamson, at 1:09 a. m., and Williamson at 1:35 a. m. There is no siding at Rover, which is the only station between Griffin Siding and Williamson. No train order restricting the authority of No. 153 to proceed with respect to Extra 614 North had been issued. Extra 614 North was inferior to No. 153, and under the rules Extra 614 North was required to be into clear at Griffin Siding not later than 1:04 a. m., if it proceeded to that station for No. 153. No. 153 passed Griffin Siding about 6:17 a. m., 5 hours 8 minutes late, and Extra 614 North departed from Williamson at 6:10 a. m., and these trains collided at a point 1.10 miles north of Rover.

As No. 153 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 20 miles per hour. The conductor and the enginemen were on the engine, the front brakeman was in the brakeman's booth on the tender, and the flagman was in the caboose. The conductor and the fireman were killed in the accident. The engineer was so seriously injured that he could not be questioned during the investigation, and it could not be determined when he first became aware that Extra 614 North was approaching. The front brakeman and the flagman were not aware of anything being wrong until the collision occurred.

The conductor of Extra 614 North said that at Williamson he entered the arriving and departing times of his train on the train register, and examined the register to ascertain whether all overdue scheduled trains had arrived and departed. No. 153 was scheduled to operate daily except Sunday, and, because the conductor of Extra 614 North was confused with reference to the day of the week and thought it was Sunday instead of Saturday, he informed the other members of the crew that all superior trains had arrived at and departed from Williamson. As Extra 614 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 25 miles per hour. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead, and the fireman was on the deck of the engine. Because of an embankment and vegetation on the inside of the curve, the view had by the engineer of the track ahead was materially restricted. The first the engineer knew of anything being wrong was when he saw the approaching train about 1,000 feet distant, then he moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of Extra 614 North was about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The other members of the crew were in the caboose, and these employes were not aware that their train was proceeding without authority with respect to No. 153 until the collision occurred.

The book of operating rules of this carrier contains manual-block rules which provide for blocking of opposing movements, but these rules were not in effect in the territory involved. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously.

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 twenty-second day of September, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.