

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2719

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT VALENTINE, S. C., ON

AUGUST 11, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern
Date: August 11, 1943
Location: Valentine, S. C.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger
Train numbers: First 56 : 23
Engine numbers: 4754 : 1270
Consist: 39 cars, caboose : 9 cars
Estimated speed: 7 m. p. h. : 30 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; practically level
Weather: Clear
Time: About 1:20 a. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 24 injured
Cause: Failure to obey meet order
Recommendation: That the Southern Railway System
establish an adequate block
system on the line on which
this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2719

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

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

September 7, 1943.

Accident at Valentine, S. C., on August 11, 1943, caused
by failure to obey a meet order.

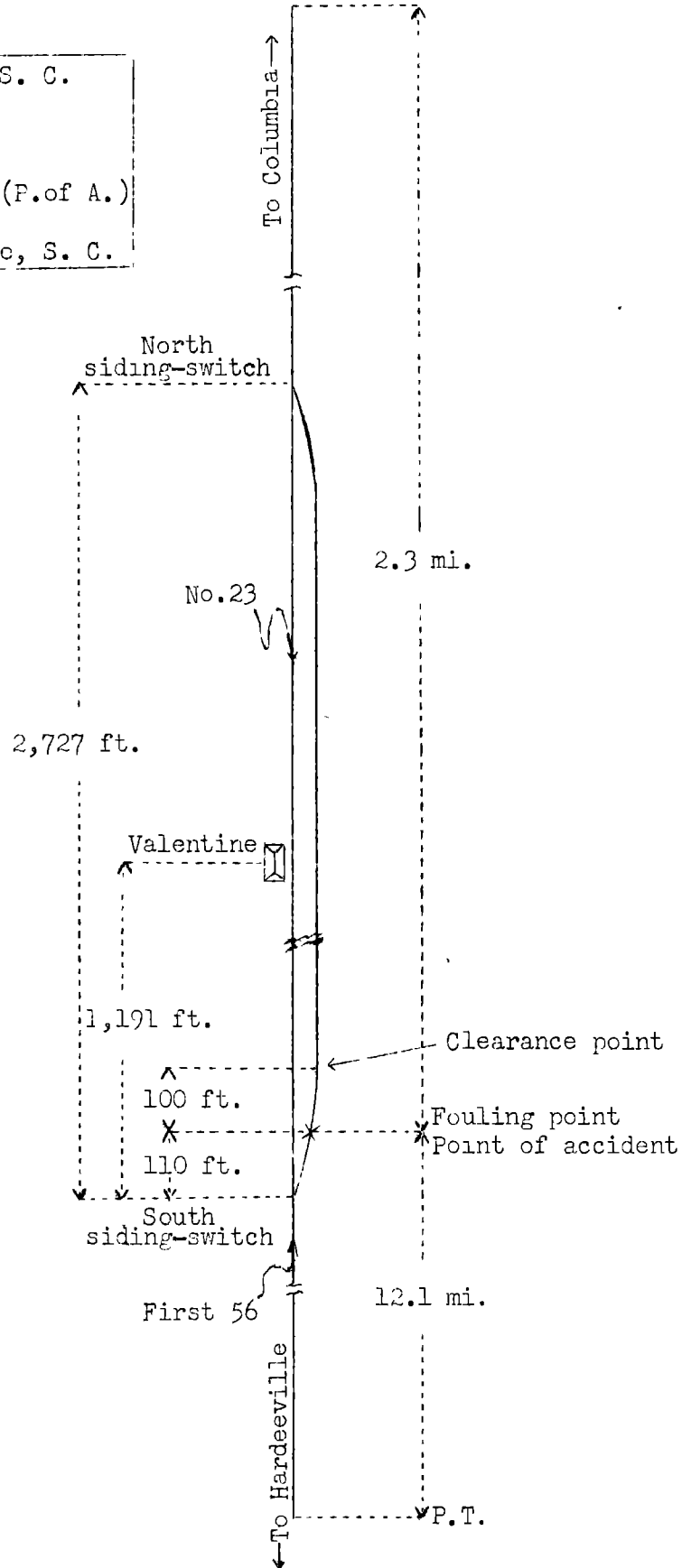
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 11, 1943, there was a side collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the line of the Southern Railway System at Valentine, S. C., which resulted in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 20 passengers, 1 person carried under contract and 3 employees.

¹Under 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.

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| ○ | Columbia, S. C. | 78.5 mi. |
| ○ | Allendale | 13.4 mi. |
| X | Valentine (P. of A.) | 38.7 mi. |
| ○ | Hardeeville, S. C. | |



Inv. No. 2719
 Southern Railway System
 Valentine, S. C.
 August 11, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Columbia Division extending between Columbia and Hardeeville, S. C., 130.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. At Valentine a siding 2,727 feet in length paralleled the main track on the east. The south switch of this siding was 1,191 feet south of the station. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the turnout 110 feet north of the south siding-switch. From the south the track was tangent 12.1 miles to the point of accident and 2.3 miles beyond. At the point of accident the grade was practically level.

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.
* * *

| SOUND | INDICATION |
|------------------------|---|
| * * * | |
| (n) ___ ___ o | Approaching meeting or waiting points. See Rule 90. |

* * *

16. COMMUNICATING SIGNALS

* * *

| SOUND | INDICATION |
|------------------------|--|
| * * * | |
| (m) ___ ___ o | Approaching meeting or waiting point. See Rule 90. |

72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; and so on.

* * *

89. At train order meeting points the train that is to hold the main track must stop clear of the switch used by the train taking siding, unless the opposing train is clear of the main track and the switch properly lined.

90. On trains equipped with communicating signal system, the conductor must give signal 16 (m) to the engineman immediately after passing the last station but not less than two miles preceding a * * * point where by train order it is to meet * * * an opposing train. The engineman will immediately reply with signal 14 (n). If the engineman fails to answer by signal 14 (n), the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

* * *

A.

Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains

(1). No 1 one eng 111 meet No 2 two eng 112 at B.

* * *

* * *

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

First 56, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 4754, 39 cars and a caboose. At Hardeeville, 38.7 miles south of Valentine, the crew received a clearance card and copies of four train orders, of which one was order No. 301 reading as follows:

No 23 Twenty Three Eng 1270 Meet First
No 56 Fifty Six Eng 4754 at Valentine

First 56 departed from Hardeeville at 12:15 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 45 minutes late, and when it was entering the south siding-switch at Valentine and moving at an estimated speed of 7 miles per hour the thirty-fifth car was struck by No. 23.

No. 23, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1270, three express cars, one passenger-baggage car, three coaches and two Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. The first, second, third and fifth cars were of steel-underframe construction and the remainder were of all-steel construction. At Allendale, 13.4 miles north of Valentine and the last open office, the crew received a clearance card and copies of three train orders, of which one was train order No. 301. This train departed from Allendale at 1:03 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 43 minutes late, passed

the clearance point of the south siding-switch at Valentine, where it was required to wait unless First 56 was into clear, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with First 56 at the fouling point of the turnout.

Engine 1270 and its tender were badly damaged and stopped on their right sides west of the track and 138 feet south of the point of collision. The thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth cars and the front truck of the thirty-seventh car of First 56 and the first two cars and the front truck of the third car of No. 23 were derailed and damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:20 a. m.

The engineer of No. 23 was killed. The conductor and the fireman of No. 23 and a road foreman of engines who was on the engine 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 8.83 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that at a meeting point the superior train must stop clear of the switch to be used by the train which is required to enter the siding. On trains equipped with a communicating signal system the conductor must sound the meeting-point signal on the train air-signal after the last station is passed but not less than two miles before the meeting point is reached. The engineer must acknowledge this signal by sounding the proper signal on the engine whistle. If the engineer fails to sound the proper signal the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 301, which established Valentine as the meeting point between No. 23, a south-bound first-class train, and First 56, a north-bound second-class train. No. 23 was superior by class and was required to stop short of the fouling point of the south siding-switch at Valentine unless First 56 was into clear on the siding. As First 56 was entering the siding at the south switch, No. 23 passed the clearance point and struck the thirty-fifth car of First 56 at the fouling point of the turnout.

There were four cars on the siding when First 56 entered it, and these cars were being moved ahead of the engine as the train was moving northward to clear for No. 23. The front brakeman was on the east side of the first car and was giving slow-proceed signals to his engineer with a lighted white lantern when No. 23 passed. The enginemen and the front brakeman were not aware of anything being wrong until the accident occurred. The conductor was on the west side of the fourth car ahead of the caboose. When No. 23 was about 300 feet distant the speed appeared to be too fast for the engine to stop before it reached the clearance point. He immediately gave stop signals with a lighted white lantern, but this action was not taken in time to prevent the accident.

About 20 minutes before the accident occurred, the crew of No. 23 received copies of train order No. 301 at Allendale, 13.4 miles north of Valentine. The conductor, the road foreman of engines and the fireman said they read the order and discussed it with the engineer. The other members of the crew read the order and discussed it with the conductor. It was understood that their train was required to stop clear of the fouling point of the south siding-switch at Valentine unless First 56 was into clear on the siding. As No. 23 was approaching Valentine, the speed was about 60 miles per hour. The enginemen and the road foreman of engines were maintaining a lookout ahead. There was no condition of the engine that obscured the view ahead or distracted their attention. When the engine reached a point about 1-1/2 miles north of Valentine, the meeting-point signal was sounded. The road foreman of engines was on the left side of the engine and he said that soon after the meeting-point signal was sounded the engineer made a service brake-pipe reduction and the speed of the train was reduced to about 30 miles per hour when the engine passed the north siding-switch. Soon afterward the engineer sounded two short blasts on the engine whistle, released the brakes and opened the throttle. The speed was increased to about 40 miles per hour when the engine passed the front end of the train on the siding. Smoke prevented the road foreman of engines and the fireman from observing conditions ahead. They thought the engineer had seen a proceed signal and that First 56 was into clear. When the engine reached a point about 900 feet north of the south siding-switch the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position, then the road foreman of engines and the fireman observed that First 56 was not into clear. The speed of No. 23 was reduced to about 30 miles per hour when 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, the crew of No. 23 would have received definite information that their train was required to stop short of the clearance point, and the accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Recommendation

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

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

By the Commission, Commissioner Petterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. EARTEL,
Secretary.