

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2614  
THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR VILLA RICA, GA., ON  
AUGUST 13, 1942

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## SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern

Date: August 13, 1942

Location: Villa Rica, Ga.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 66 : Second 54

Engine numbers: 649 : 6262

Consist: 16 cars, cabooses : 28 cars, cabooses

Speed: Standing : 6 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and  
automatic block-signal and  
automatic train-stop system

Track: Single; 5°52.3' curve to right;  
1.19 percent ascending grade  
eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 1:04 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Accident caused by failure to provide  
flag protection for preceding train,  
and by failure properly to control  
speed of following train in accord-  
ance with signal indication

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2614

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

THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

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September 25, 1942.

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Accident near Villa Rica, Ga., on August 13, 1942, caused by failure to provide flag protection for preceding train, and by failure properly to control speed of following train in accordance with signal indication.

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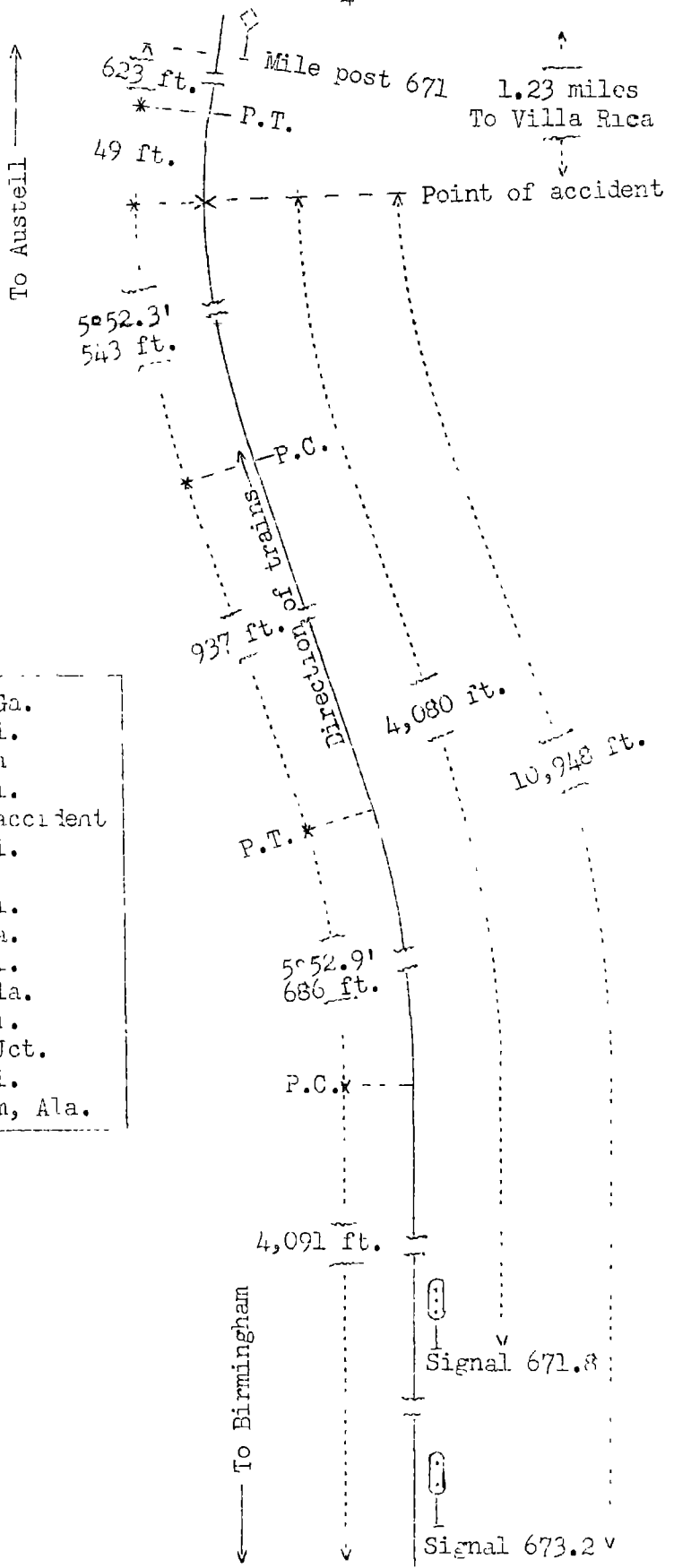
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 13, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Southern Railway near Villa Rica, Ga., which resulted in the death of one employee.

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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.



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|---|-------------------|-----------|
| o | Austell, Ga.      | 19.40 mi. |
| o | Villa Rica        | 1.23 mi.  |
| X | Point of accident | 6.07 mi.  |
| o | Temple            | 7.80 mi.  |
| o | Bremen, Ga.       | 31.50 mi. |
| o | Heflin, Ala.      | 79.80 mi. |
| o | Woodlawn Jct.     | 2.60 mi.  |
| o | Birmingham, Ala.  |           |

Inv-2614  
 Southern Railway  
 Villa Rica, Ga.  
 August 13, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Birmingham Division which extends between Birmingham, Ala., and Austell, Ga., a distance of 148.4 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 on the main track at a point 1.23 miles west of the station at Villa Rica. As the point of accident is approached from the west there are, in succession, a tangent 4,091 feet in length, a 5°52.9' curve to the left 686 feet, a tangent 937 feet, and a 5°52.3' curve to the right 543 feet to the point of accident and 49 feet beyond. The grade for east-bound trains is, successively, 0.22 percent descending 900 feet, 0.79 percent descending 1,650 feet, level 1,600 feet and 1.19 percent ascending 600 feet to the point of accident.

The automatic block system is of the absolute-permissive type. Automatic signals 673.2 and 671.8, which govern east-bound movements, are located, respectively, 10,948 feet and 4,080 feet west of the point of accident. These signals are of the 3-indication, color-light type, and are continuously lighted. The aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals are as follows:

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
Green	Proceed.	Clear-Signal.
Yellow	Approach next Signal prepared to Stop.	Approach-Signal.
Red	Stop; then Proceed.	Stop and Proceed-Signal.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. ENGINE AND MOTOR WHISTLE SIGNALS.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "O" for short sounds; "\_\_\_" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

(c) \_\_\_ O O O Flagman protect rear of train.

\* \* \*

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals--A red flag,  
Torpedoes and  
Fusecs.

\* \* \*

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, (not less than one-half mile and further on descending grades or when view is obscured) placing two torpedoes, one rail length apart, on the rail on engineman's side of track, and when necessary, in addition, display a lighted fussee.

\* \* \*

Conductors and enginemen are responsible for the protection of their trains.

\* \* \*

509. \* \* \*

When a train is stopped by a Stop and Proceed-signal it may proceed at once at slow speed expecting to find a train in the block, broken rail, obstruction or switch not properly set.

On the curve involved the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 66, an east-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engine 649, 16 cars and a caboose. This train departed from Heflin, 46.6 miles west of Villa Rica, at 7:10 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 10 minutes late, departed from Temple, 7.3 miles west of Villa Rica, at 11:51 a. m., 2 hours 44 minutes late, and stopped about 12:30 p. m. with the caboose standing at a point 4,080 feet east of signal 671.8. The engine hauled the first five cars eastward to unload ballast, and about 34 minutes later the rear end of this train was struck by Second 54.

Second 54, an east-bound second-class freight train, departed from Woodlawn Jct., 126.4 miles west of Villa Rica, at 6:17 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 37 minutes late. After cars were added, an air-brake test was made, and this train, consisting of engine 6262, 28 cars and a caboose, departed from Bremen, 15.1 miles west of Villa Rica and the last open office, at 12:40 p. m., 3 hours late, passed signal 673.2, which displayed approach, stopped at signal 671.3, which displayed stop-and-proceed, then proceeded and while moving at a speed of approximately 6 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of No. 66.

Because of vegetation on the inside of the curve on which the accident occurred, the view from the right side of an

east-bound engine of a caboose standing at the point of accident is restricted to a distance of 375 feet.

The caboose of No. 66 was demolished. The first car ahead of the caboose was derailed to the south and stopped, slightly damaged, with its rear end against the smokebox of engine 6262. Engine 6262 and its tender were derailed to the south and stopped on their right sides, parallel to the track, with the front end of the engine 49 feet east of the point of accident. The pilot was destroyed and the smokebox and engine truck were badly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:04 p. m.

The employee killed was the flagman of No. 66.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that 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. Under the rules governing operation in automatic block-signal territory a stop-and-proceed signal indication requires a train to stop short of the signal and then to proceed through the block expecting to find a train in the block, a broken rail, an obstruction or a switch not properly set. All the surviving employees involved understood these requirements.

No. 66 stopped about 12:30 p. m. with the caboose standing at a point 4,080 feet east of signal 671.8. The front portion of the train moved eastward to unload ballast. About 34 minutes later the rear end of this train was struck by Second 54.

Second 54 stopped at signal 671.8 in compliance with a stop-and-proceed indication which was displayed by that signal. This train then proceeded into the block, and when the engine entered the curve on which the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour. The engineer and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. There was no condition of the engine that distracted the attention of these employees or obscured their vision. The brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The engineer first saw the caboose of the preceding train when his engine was about 375 feet from it. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the distance was not sufficient to stop the train short of the rear end of No. 66. The speed of Second 54 was about 6 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Under the rules, the crew of No. 66 was required to provide rear-end protection for its train from the time the speed was first reduced for stopping to unload ballast. When No. 66

stopped, the engineer sounded the engine-whistle signal for his flagman to provide flag protection. The conductor had previously instructed the flagman to provide flag protection while their train was engaged in unloading ballast at the point where the accident occurred. The swing brakeman and the front brakeman were near the front end of their train and they did not observe the action of the flagman. The conductor was on the engine when his train stopped. When the first five cars and engine were detached from the rear portion of the train he was on the ground near the engine and saw the flagman on the rear platform of the caboose. The conductor accompanied the front portion of the train to the point where the ballast was to be unloaded and he did not further observe his flagman. No remnant of a recently burned fusee was found in the vicinity and no torpedo was exploded by the following train. The members of the crew on the engine of Second 54 did not see the flagman of the preceding train. Why the flagman failed to provide protection is not known, as he was killed in the accident. If flag protection had been provided for No. 60, this accident could have been averted.

All members of the crew of Second 54 understood that the stop-and-proceed indication displayed by signal 671.8 required the speed of their train to be so controlled that the train could be stopped short of a preceding train, a broken rail or an obstruction. The engineer said that after his engine passed signal 671.8 he observed a track motor-car adjacent to the track near the west end of the curve involved and he thought the section force was replacing a broken rail. He was expecting the crew of a preceding train to provide flag protection. If Second 54 had been operated in accordance with the restrictive indication displayed by signal 671.8, the train could have been stopped short of the preceding train, and this accident would have been prevented.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide flag protection for the preceding train, and by failure properly to control speed of the following train in accordance with signal indication.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of September, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL

Secretary.