

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2539  
THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT BRINKLEY, ARK., ON  
OCTOBER 23, 1941

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SUMMARY

Railroad: St. Louis Southwestern

Date: October 23, 1941

Location: Brinkley, Ark.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: Extra 583 North : 2

Engine numbers: 583 : 653

Consist: 52 cars, caboose : 6 cars

Estimated speed: Standing : 15-25 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 1° left curve; 0.19 percent ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: About 5 a. m.

Casualties: 5 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure of preceding train to clear the time of following superior train and then by failure to furnish adequate flag protection

Recommendation: That the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line involved in this accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2539

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

THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

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December 29, 1941.

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Accident at Brinkley, Ark., on October 23, 1941, caused  
by failure of preceding train to clear the time of  
following superior train and then by failure to fur-  
nish adequate flag protection.

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

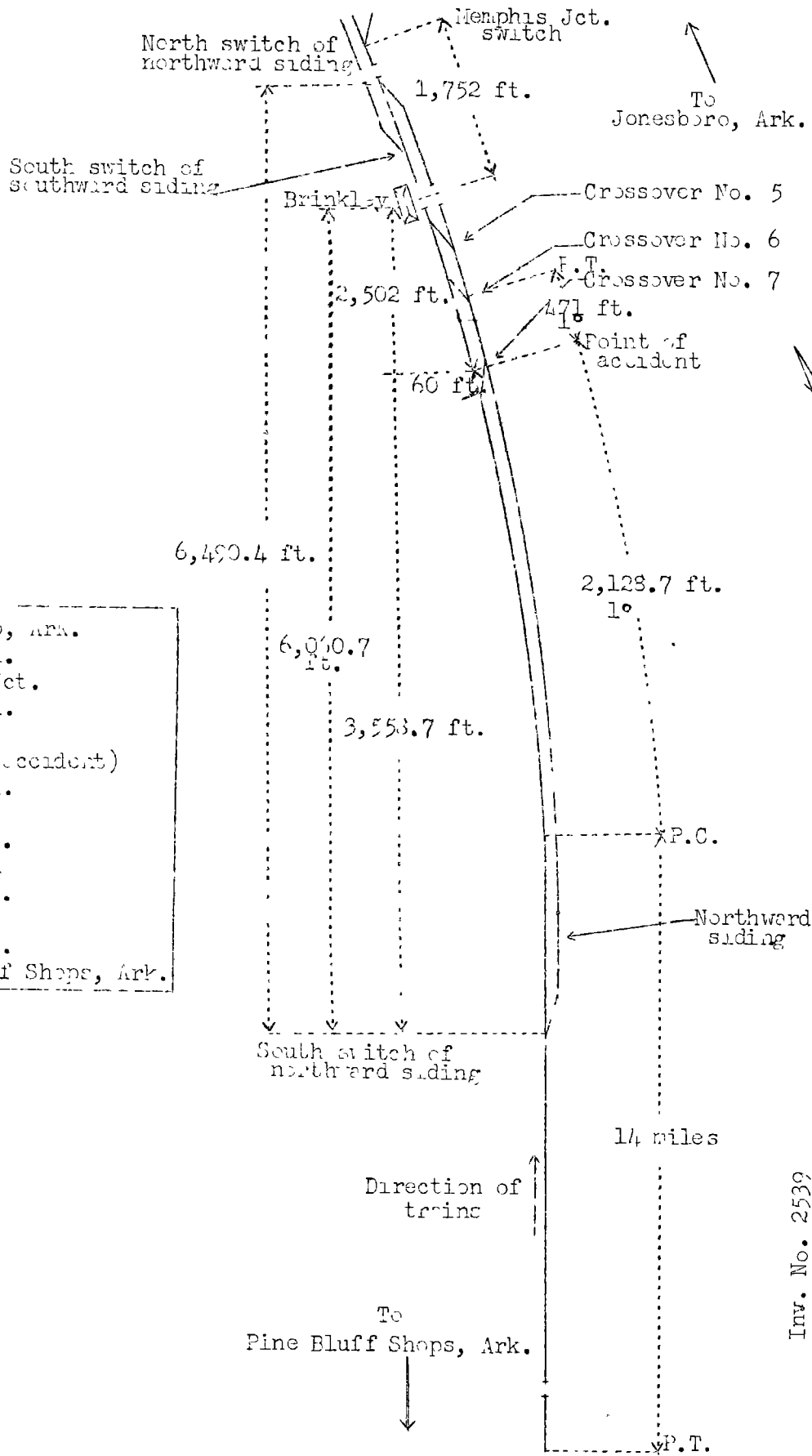
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 23, 1941, there was a rear-end collision  
between a freight train and a passenger train on the St.  
Louis Southwestern Railway at Brinkley, Ark., which result-  
ed in the injury of two passengers, two railway-mail clerks  
and one employee.

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<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and  
disposition.

o	Jonesboro, Ark.
	73.85 mi.
o	Memphis Jct.
	0.32 mi.
x	Brinkley
	(Point of accident)
	8.10 mi.
o	Keovil
	6.93 mi.
o	Clarendon
	19.23 mi.
o	Stuttgart
	33.41 mi.
o	Pine Bluff Shops, Ark.



Inv. No. 2539  
 St. Louis Southern Railway,  
 Brinkley, Ark.,  
 October 23, 1941.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division designated as the Jonesboro Subdivision, which extends between Pine Bluff Shops and Jonesboro, Ark., a distance of 141.89 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders; there is no block system in use. At Brinkley the northward siding, which is 6,490.4 feet in length, parallels the main track on the east. The south switch of this siding is 6,060.7 feet south of the station. Three crossover switches, connecting the main track and the siding and designated as Nos. 5, 6, and 7, are located, respectively, 590 feet, 1,660 feet, and 2,562 feet south of the station. Memphis Jct. switch is located 1,752 feet north of the station. North-bound trains en route to Memphis, Tenn., leave the line of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway at this switch. The south switch of the southward siding is located 410 feet north of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at the frog of crossover No. 7, at a point 2,502 feet south of the station and 3,558.7 feet north of the south switch of the northward siding. As the point of accident is approached from the south the track is tangent a distance of 14 miles and then there is a 1° curve to the left 2,128.7 feet to the point of accident and 471 feet beyond. The grade for north-bound trains varies between 0.05 percent and 0.45 percent ascending a distance of 5,655 feet to the point of accident and is 0.19 percent at the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

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 fuses.

\* \* \*

Time-table general instructions read in part as follows:

11. Rule 86, \* \* \* is revised as follows:

Outside of Automatic block signal territory, unless otherwise provided, an inferior train must be in the clear at the time a first class train or train of superior right in the same direction is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown; except that if the time between stations is less than ten minutes the inferior train must be in the clear at least ten minutes in advance of time shown for superior train at station where an inferior train clears the main track. \* \* \*

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 55 miles per hour on curves and 60 miles per hour on tangents. The maximum authorized speed for the freight train involved was 45 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Extra 583 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 583, 48 loaded and 4 empty cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was completed this train departed from Pine Bluff Shops, 67.72 miles south of Brinkley, at 2:09 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains. At Stuttgart, 34.31 miles south of Brinkley, the crew received copies of train order No. 13, Form 19, which read in part as follows:

No 2 Eng 653 wait at

\* \* \*

Clarendon 442 am

Keevil 450 am

This train departed from Stuttgart at 3:25 a. m., departed from Keevil, 8.1 miles south of Brinkley, about 4:30 a. m., according to the statement of the conductor, and stopped at Brinkley about 4:45 a. m., with the rear end of the caboose standing 3,558.7 feet north of the south switch of the northward siding. The train brakes were applied, the engine was detached, several cars were added to the train and about 5 a. m. the rear end was struck by No. 2.

No. 2, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 653, one mail-express car, two baggage cars, one coach and two Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. All the cars were of steel construction except the second car, which was of steel-underframe construction. At Pine Bluff Shops the crew received copies of train order No. 13, Form 19, previously quoted. After a terminal air-brake test was completed this train departed from Pine Bluff Shops at 3:37 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 35 minutes late, departed from Clarendon, 15.03 miles south of Brinkley and the last open office, at 4:46 a. m., 22 minutes late, passed Keevil at 4:52 a. m., according to the statement of the engineer, 18 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 to 25 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of Extra 583 North.

Because of track curvature and trees adjacent to the track, the view from the left side of a north-bound engine of the point where the accident occurred was restricted to 1,311 feet. From the right side of a north-bound engine the view was restricted to a few feet.

The caboose of Extra 583 was overturned to the right of the track and badly damaged. The rear car was demolished. The rear truck of the second car from the rear was forced forward about 20 feet and the car was slightly damaged. The pilot of engine 653 was demolished and the front deck-casting was broken. The second car of No. 2 was slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5 a. m.

The employee injured was the engineer of No. 2.

#### Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the territory involved was 19.8 trains.

The terminal station of the schedule of No. 2 is the station at Brinkley.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that an inferior train must be clear at the time a following first-class train is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown. If the inferior train fails to be into clear when a following first-class train is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown it must furnish flag protection. In addition, 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. All members of both crews involved understood these requirements.

The crews of both trains involved held copies of a train order which directed No. 2 to wait at Keevil, 8.1 miles south of Brinkley, until 4:50 a. m. All members of the crew of Extra 583 understood that their train was required either to be clear of the main track at Brinkley at 4:50 a. m. or to be north of the station at Brinkley, which was the terminal station of the schedule of No. 2. The crew of No. 2 understood that their train was required not to pass Keevil prior to 4:50 a. m. No. 2 passed Keevil about 4:52 a. m. Because a preceding train entered the main track at the north switch of the northward siding at Brinkley, Extra 583 stopped at 4:45 a. m. on the main track with its engine south of the station and its rear end standing 3,558 feet north of the south switch of the northward siding. At this time the train was separated and the engine, coupled to several cars, proceeded northward beyond the south switch of the southward siding so that cars to be added to the

train could be placed on the main track by another engine. At this time the fireman of Extra 583 remarked that No. 2 was due to leave Keevil and that flag protection should be provided; however, the engineer did not sound the engine whistle signal for the flagman to protect the rear of the train. After the train was assembled it was discovered that No. 2 had collided with the rear end. The engineer said that it is customary to proceed north of Memphis Jct. before cars are added to the train, but, in this instance, the conductor of another train signaled for Extra 583 to stop south of the station and the engineer then was instructed to perform the usual switching at that point. Since the schedule of No. 2 terminated at the station at Brinkley, that train was required to be operated between the station and Memphis Jct. prepared to stop short of a train or obstruction. Had Extra 583 proceeded northward at Brinkley until the rear end was north of the station, undoubtedly this accident would have been averted. The investigation disclosed that on account of conflicting movements it is not unusual for north-bound freight trains to be stopped south of the station. When Extra 583 was closely approaching Brinkley only about 5 minutes remained until No. 2 was due to leave Keevil. If Extra 583 had entered the northward siding and cleared for No. 2 at that point, this accident would have been averted.

As No. 2 was approaching Brinkley the speed was about 60 miles per hour and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. At the south switch of the northward siding the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction, which reduced the speed to about 45 miles per hour, then he released the brakes. When the engine was about 1,200 feet south of crossover No. 7 and was moving on a 1° curve to the left, the fireman observed the flagman of Extra 583 giving stop signals with a lighted red fusee at a point about 1,000 feet to the rear of Extra 583, and at the same time he observed the lighted marker lamps on the caboose, which was about 1,200 feet distant. The fireman warned the engineer, who immediately placed the brake valve in emergency position, but the distance was insufficient to stop short of the train ahead. No. 2 was moving at an estimated speed of 15 to 25 miles per hour when it collided with Extra 583.

The flagman of Extra 583 said that when his train was approaching Brinkley he threw off a lighted red fusee south of the south switch of the northward siding and, when the speed of his train was reduced near the switch, he alighted from the caboose and placed two torpedoes on the rail. According to the statement of the conductor, he was on the rear platform and expected his train to enter the siding at Brinkley. He observed the flagman drop a lighted red fusee but he did not observe whether the flagman placed torpedoes while the train was



moving. After Extra 583 stopped, the conductor instructed the flagman to proceed to the rear and to provide flag protection against No. 2. The flagman proceeded toward the rear and was about 350 feet distant when the conductor started toward the front of his train. The conductor had reached the seventh car to the rear of the engine when the collision occurred. The flagman said that he had reached a point about 600 feet to the rear of his train when No. 2 passed him at a speed of about 45 miles per hour. The engineer of No. 2 said that torpedoes were exploded about 150 feet to the rear of Extra 583 but the fireman said that the torpedoes were about 600 feet to the rear. The conductor of Extra 583 said that a flagman should be at least  $3/4$  mile to the rear to stop a passenger train from a speed of 60 miles per hour, and, in the case involved, the flagman had sufficient time to proceed 1 mile to the rear of his train. Had the flagman proceeded to the rear as far as possible in the time at his disposal, undoubtedly he would have been able to station himself far enough to the rear to provide adequate flag protection.

Trains are operated on the line involved by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use on this line, this accident would not have occurred.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure of preceding train to clear the time of a following superior train and then by failure to provide adequate flag protection.

#### Recommendation

That the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-ninth day of December, 1941.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.