INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3216

ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY OF TEXAS

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT CORLEY, TEX., ON

NOVEMBER 18, 1948

SUMMARY

Railroad:	St. Louis Southwestern of Texas	
Date:	November 18, 1948	
Location:	Corley, Tex.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	27	: 124
Engine numbers:	571	: 807
Consists:	19 cars, caboose	: 57 cars, caboose
Estimated speeds:	5 m. p. h., backward motion	: 10 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; 0.65 percent ascending grade southward	
Weather:	Cloudy	
Time:	1:35 p. m.	
Casualties:	1 injured	
Cause:	Inferior train occupying main track on time of opposing superior train without flag protection	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3216

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

ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY OF TEXAS

February 9, 1949

Accident at Corley, Tex., on November 18, 1948, caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train without flag protection.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 18, 1948, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the line of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company of Texas at Corley, Tex., which resulted in the injury of one employee.

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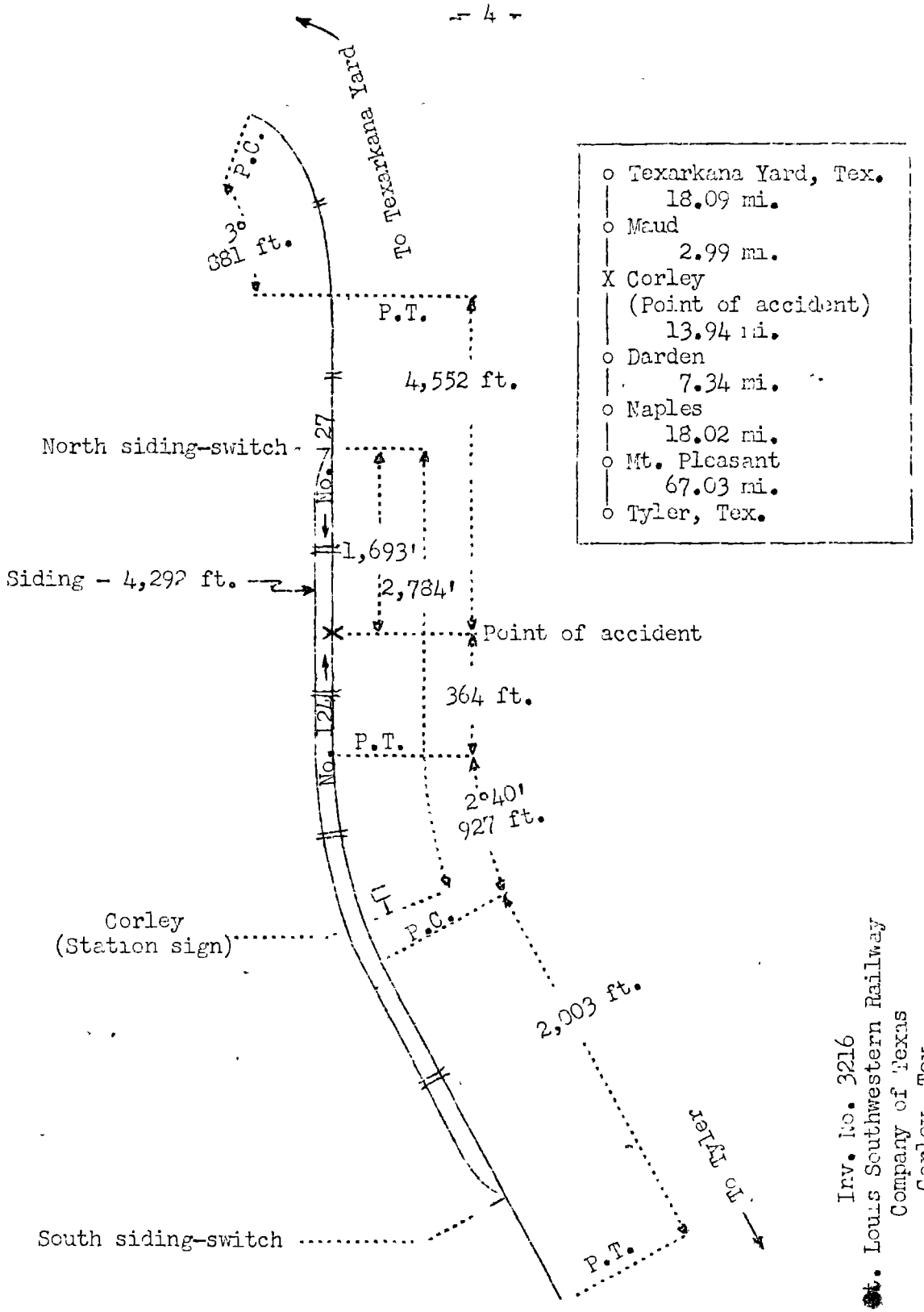
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 3216
St. Louis Southwestern Railway
Company of Texas
Corley, Tex.
November 13, 1948

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Texas Division designated as the Tyler Sub-division and extending between Texarkana Yard and Tyler, Tex., 127.41 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Corley, 106.35 miles north of Tyler, a siding 4,292 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The north switch of this siding is 3,784 feet north of the station sign. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 1,693 feet south of the north siding-switch at Corley. From the north there are, in succession, a 3° curve to the right 881 feet in length and a tangent 4,552 feet to the point of accident. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 2,003 feet in length, a 2°40' curve to the right 927 feet and a tangent 364 feet to the point of accident. The grade is 0.6 percent ascending southward.

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

5. * * *

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

* * *

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 S-90.
* * *	

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

Right is superior to class or direction.

* * *

S-72. * * * trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; * * *

* * *

S-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.

* * *

S-89. At meeting points, the inferior train must take the siding and clear the time of the superior train not less than five minutes, * * *

* * *

S-90. * * *

* * * the engineman will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point.

Should engineman fail to give this signal or fail to prepare to stop short of fouling point, when required, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

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, * * *

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by the forward trainman or fireman.

* * *

204. * * *

* * *

Enginemen and firemen and, when practicable, forward trainman must read train orders, check with each other and have a definite and proper understanding of their requirements. Conductors and, when practicable, trainmen, must read train orders, check with each other and have a definite and proper understanding of their requirements.

FORMS OF
TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

E.

Time Orders.

(1) No 1 Eng 39 and No 3 Eng 47 wait at
N until 9 59 a m
P 10 30 a m
R 10 55 a m, etc.

The train, or trains, named, must not pass the designated points, before the times given. Other trains receiving the order are required to run with respect to the time specified at the designated points, or any intermediate station where schedule time is earlier than the time specified in the order, as before required to run with respect to the schedule time of the train, or trains, named.

806. * * *

* * *

Trainmen, firemen * * * must remind their conductors * * *, and enginemen of the contents of train orders, or the time of superior trains which must be cleared, should there be occasion to do so.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 49 miles per hour. On the curve immediately south of the point of accident the maximum speed is restricted to 40 miles per hour. The speed of engine 571, on No. 27, was restricted to 38 miles per hour in timetable special instructions.

Description of Accident

At Texarkana Yard, 21.08 miles north of Corley, the crew of No. 27, a south-bound third-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 45 reading in part as follows:

No 124 Eng 807 wait at
* * * until * * *
Corley 1 35 p m
Maud 1 40 p m
* * *

This train, consisting of engine 571, 19 cars and a caboose, departed from Maud, the last open office, at 1:28 p. m., 18 minutes late, passed the north siding-switch at Corley and stopped about 1:33 p. m. on the main track 1,828 feet south of the north siding-switch. About two minutes later and while moving in backward motion at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour, it was struck by No. 124.

At Mt. Pleasant, 39.3 miles south of Corley, the crew of No. 124, a north-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 45. This train, consisting of engine 807, 57 cars and a caboose, departed from Mt. Pleasant at 12:35 p. m., 5 hours 15 minutes late, passed Naples, the last open office, 21.38 miles south of Corley, at 1:02 p. m., 5 hours 6 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck No. 27 at a point 1,693 feet south of the north siding-switch at Corley.

The engine of No. 27 stopped 285 feet north of the point of collision. The engine truck and the Nos. 1 and 2 pairs of driving wheels were derailed. The engine of No. 124 was derailed and stopped upright and parallel to the track, with the front end of the engine 150 feet north of the point of accident. Both engines were considerably damaged. The first three cars of No. 124 were derailed and slightly damaged.

The engineer of No. 124 was injured.

It was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:35 p. 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 22.7 trains.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 45, which required No. 124 to wait at Corley, a non-train-order station, until 1:35 p. m. Under the rules, the time specified at Corley applied at the north switch of the siding. No. 124 was superior to No. 27, and No. 27 was required to be into clear at Corley not later than 1:30 p. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 124, or to provide flag protection. These trains collided on the main track at 1:35 p. m. at a point 1,693 feet south of the north siding-switch at Corley.

The crew of No. 27 received copies of train order No. 45 at Texarkana Yard about one hour before the accident occurred. Each member of the crew said that he had read the order and understood that No. 27 was required to be into clear at Corley not later than 1:30 p. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 124, and that flag protection was required at Corley, if No. 27 was not into clear at that time. The crew also received a message containing the instruction to add one car to the train at Maud, an open station, 2.99 miles north of Corley. Each member of the crew had compared time and there was a variation of only a few seconds in their watches. No. 27 departed from Texarkana Yard at 12:47 p. m. and entered the siding at Maud at the north siding-switch about 1:20 p. m. At Maud, the crew received copies of train order No. 57, which prescribed waiting times at points south of Corley for another opposing train. The crew also received a message cancelling the instruction to add a car to the train at Maud. The operator boarded the caboose at the station and alighted in the vicinity of the south siding-switch, which he restored to position for main track movements after the train had proceeded to the main track. No. 27 departed from Maud at 1:28 p. m.

As No. 27 approached Corley the speed was about 55 miles per hour. The enginemen, the front brakeman, and the swing brakeman were in the cab of the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. At 1:30 p. m., when the train was about 2 miles north of Corley, the flagman reminded the conductor of the contents of the order, but no action was taken by either the conductor or the flagman to stop the train. The engineer did not sound the meeting-point signal and did not make a brake application. When the engine was in the vicinity of the north siding-switch, it became apparent to the conductor that the train would not stop short of the switch. He then fully opened the conductor's valve, which action caused the brakes to be applied in emergency, and the engine stopped 1,828 feet south of the north siding-switch.

After the brakes were released, this train moved northward a distance of 135 feet before it was struck by No. 124. The engineer said that between Maud and Corley the employees on the engine had discussed the matter of clearing the main track at Bassetts, 10.38 miles south of Corley, to permit a superior train in the same direction to pass their train. However, until their train was stopped at Corley each of them had overlooked the fact that their train was occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train. Between the time No. 27 stopped at Corley and the time it started the back-up movement no member of the crew provided protection against No. 124.

As No. 124 was approaching Corley the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were in the cab of the engine and were maintaining a lookout ahead. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The members of the crew had compared time and there was a variation of only a few seconds in their watches. They understood that their train was required to remain clear of the north siding-switch until 1:35 p. m. When the engine was in the vicinity of the south siding-switch at Corley, the enginemen observed that the time was 1:34:50 p. m. and the speed of the train was not reduced at that time. Immediately before the engine entered the tangent on which the accident occurred, the engineer observed that No. 27 was occupying the main track. He then closed the throttle and placed the brake valve in the emergency position. The speed of the train had been reduced to about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. Immediately after the collision occurred, the conductor consulted his watch and observed that it was a few seconds after 1:35 p. m. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly where used en route.

On the line on which this accident occurred, trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, 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 without flag protection.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this ninth day of February, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.