INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2513

THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT NORTH CAMDEN, ARK., ON

JULY 31, 1941

SUMMARY

Railroad:	St. Louis Southwestern	
Date:	July 31, 1941	
Location:	North Camden, Ark.	
Kind of accident:	Rear-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	:Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 589-556 South:	First 19
Engine numbers:	589-556	:809
Consist:	41 cars, caboose	:50 cars, caboose
Speed:	Standing	:7-20 m.p.h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders; yard limits	
Track:	Single; 4° left curve; 0.70 percent ascending grade southward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	About 8:40 a.m.	
Casualties:	1 injured	
Cause:	Accident caused by failure properly to control speed of following train moving within yard limits.	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2513

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

THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

September 25, 1941

Accident at North Camden, Ark., on July 31, 1941, caused by failure properly to control speed of following train moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 31, 1941, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the St. Louis Southwestern Railway at North Camden, Ark., which resulted in the injury of one employee.

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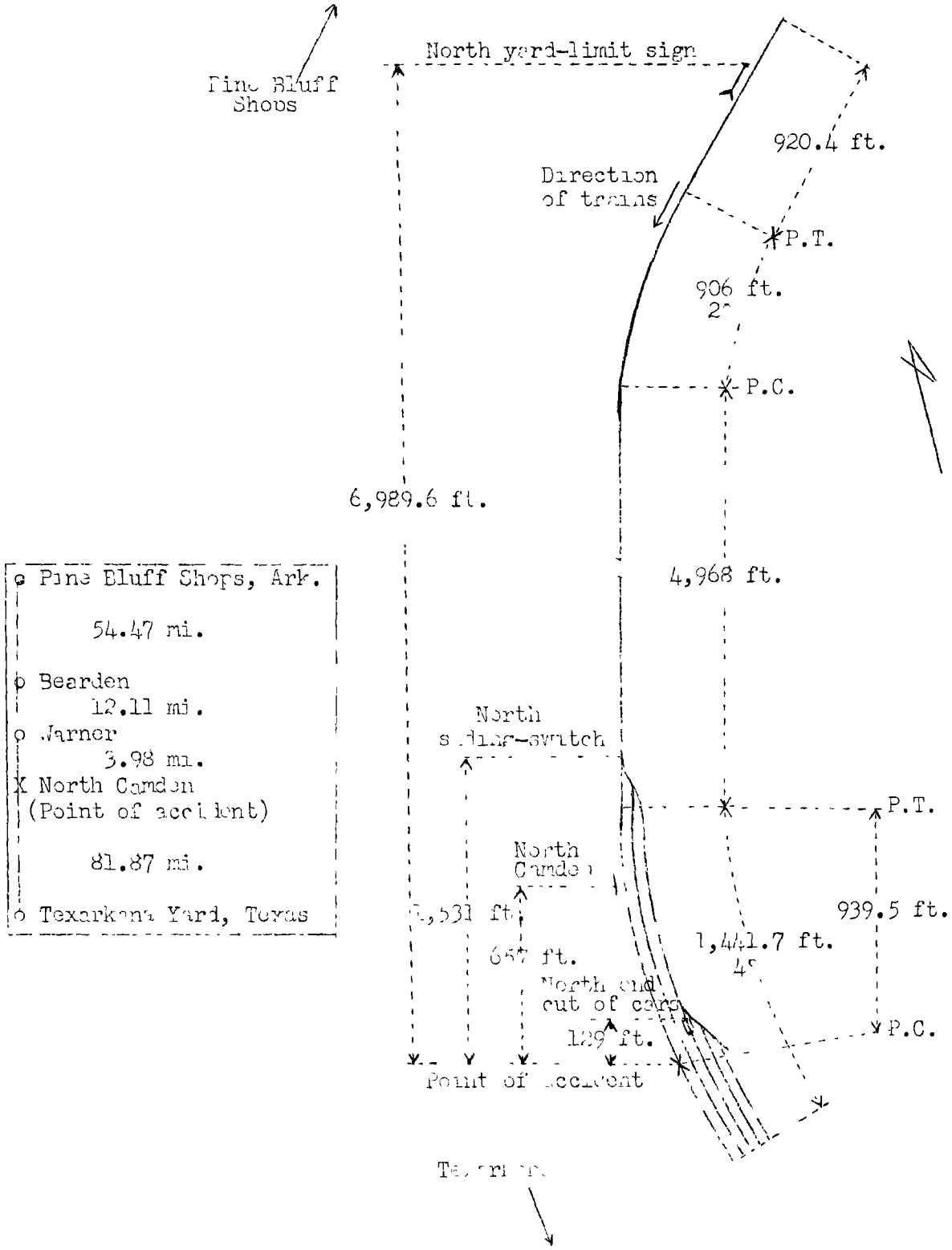
[1] Under authority of section 17(2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 2513
St. Louis Southwestern Railway
North Camden, Ark.,
July 31, 1941.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division designated as the Pine Bluff Subdivision, which extends between Pine Bluff Shops, Ark., and Texarkana Yard, Tex., a distance of 152.43 miles. In the immediate 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. The accident occurred within yard limits at a point 657 feet south of the station at North Camden and 6,989.6 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. As the point of accident is approached from the north there are, in succession, a tangent 920.4 feet in length, a 2° curve to the left 906 feet, a tangent 4,968 feet and a 4° curve to the left 939.5 feet to the point of accident and 502.2 feet beyond. The grade for south-bound trains is, successively, level 850 feet, 0.11 percent ascending 1,750 feet, and 0.70 percent ascending 823.5 feet to the point of accident.

A siding 3,296 feet in length parallels the main track on the east and its north switch is 1,531 feet north of the point of accident. At the point of accident yard tracks Nos. 1, 2 and 3 parallel the siding on the east. The north switch of a lead track, which connects the siding and the yard tracks, is located at a point about 1,280 feet north of the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

> 93. * * *
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> Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.
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> Second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at restricted speed.
>
> DEFINITIONS
>
> Restricted Speed. - Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train or engine to be reduced.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 589-556 South, a south-bound freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engines 589 and 556, coupled, 1 auxiliary water car, 40 cars loaded with gravel, and a caboose. This train entered the main track at Warner, 3.98 miles north of North Camden, about 8:15 a.m., according to the statement of the conductor, and stopped on the main track at North Camden at 8:30 a.m., with the caboose standing 6,989.6 feet south of the north yard-limit sign. The train air-brakes were applied, both engines were detached, two cars were set out and one added, and the engines proceeded to take a supply of water at a water column located about 2,200 feet south of the point where the accident occurred. About 10 minutes later the rear end of this train was struck by First 19.

First 19, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 809, 50 loaded cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was completed this train departed from Pine Bluff Shops, 70.56 miles north of North Camden, at 6:45 a.m., according to the train sheet, 1 hour 45 minutes late, passed Bearden, 16.09 miles north of North Camden and the last open office, at 8:21 a.m., 1 hour 42 minutes late, and passed the north yard-limit sign at North Camden at a speed of 32 miles per hour, as indicated by the speed-recorder tape with which engine 809 was equipped. While this train was moving at a speed estimated by the crew as from 7 to 20 miles per hour, but indicated by the speed-recorder tape as 22 miles per hour, it collided with the rear end of Extra 589-556. The brakes of First 19 had functioned properly and a brake-pipe pressure of 70 pounds had been maintained en route.

There was no condition of the engine of this train that distracted the attention of the crew or obscured their vision. At the time of the accident a north-bound freight train, consisting of an engine, 11 cars and a caboose, was standing on the lead track, and the most northerly car of a draft of 27 box cars was standing on track No. 1 about 129 feet north of the point where the accident occurred. Because of the track curvature and the cars standing on track No. 1, the view from the left side of the cab of a south-bound engine of the point of accident was restricted to a distance of 731 feet. The full width of the rear end of a caboose could be seen 579 feet. From the right side of the cab the view of the point where the accident occurred was completely obscured by the boiler.

The caboose and the rear car of Extra 589-556 were demolished. Both ends of the second car ahead of the caboose were demolished and the car was otherwise badly damaged. Engine 809 was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, on its right side, parallel to the main track and about 150 feet south of the

point of collision. The pilot, the engine-truck frame and the smoke-box were broken. The right side of the cab was crushed. The tender, remaining coupled to the engine, stopped upright and at a 45-degree angle to the engine. The tender was crosswise of the main track and on top of the rear car of the preceding train; both trucks were broken and the cistern was damaged. The first car, slightly damaged, was derailed to the left but remained upright.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8:40 a.m.

The employee injured was the engineman of First 19.

Discussion

The rules governing operation within yard limits provide that trains may use the main track, protecting against first-class trains, and that second-class and inferior-class trains, extra trains and engines must move under control and be prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train or engine to be reduced. Extra 589-556 was not required to provide flag protection as there was no first-class train due for several hours. First 19 was required to move in such manner that it could stop short of a train or obstruction. All members of both crews involved understood these requirements.

According to the statement of the engineman of First 19, as his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the throttle was in drifting position, the speed was about 30 miles per hour, and he was maintaining a lookout ahead from his usual position. The fireman and the front brakeman were on the left side of the cab. As was customary at North Camden, the engineman was depending upon the fireman for information concerning track conditions and was controlling the speed of his train accordingly. At a point about 3,400 feet north of the point where the accident occurred, the engineman made a 10-pound brake-pipe reduction, which was not released and which gradually reduced the speed to about 15 miles per hour. At a point about 1,500 feet north of the point where the accident occurred and about 565 feet north of the north end of a 4° curve to the left, the engineman inquired of the fireman as to track conditions ahead, and the engineman understood from replies of both the fireman and the front brakeman that the main track was unoccupied to a point about 1,900 feet beyond the point where the accident later occurred. The fireman informed the engineman that the main track was clear, but, because he thought the engineman could observe conditions ahead at that time, the fireman did not warn him that cars standing on adjacent tracks inside the curve materially restricted

his view. The engineman said First 19 was moving prepared to stop within half the distance he thought the track clear. The front brakeman said that when First 19 was at a point about 1,500 feet north of the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 20 miles per hour and he warned the engineman concerning the speed, and the engineman made a brake-pipe reduction which reduced the speed to about 15 miles per hour. The fireman observed the preceding train at a distance of 270 to 360 feet and the front brakeman observed it at a distance of 220 to 270 feet. Both then warned the engineman, who moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the distance was not sufficient for stopping short of the preceding train. The engineman said that because of the 10-pound brake-pipe reduction, the full effect of the emergency application was not obtained.

The rules required the following train to move throughout yard limits under control and to be prepared to stop short of a train or obstruction, but the investigation disclosed that First 19 entered the yard limits at a speed in excess of 30 miles per hour and maintained that speed throughout a distance of about 3,000 feet, then speed was reduced to about 20 miles per hour throughout a distance of another 3,000 feet. The speed was estimated as between 7 and 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident. Although the information given the engineman by other members of the crew on the engine was misleading, had the engineman controlled the speed of his train so as to be able to stop short of a train at any point within the yard limits, this accident could have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D.C., this twenty-fifth day of September, 1941.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.