

CIRCULATED  
IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD NEAR BAINBRIDGE, GA.,  
ON DECEMBER 29, 1918.

February 6, 1919.

On December 29, 1918, there was a head-end collision on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad between a passenger train and a freight train near Bainbridge, Ga., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and 1 trespasser, and the injury of 9 passengers and 5 employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows;

The Montgomery district of the second division of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, upon which this accident occurred, is a single-track line extending between Montgomery, Ala., and Thomasville, Ga., a distance of 210 miles. Trains are operated by schedule and train orders transmitted by telegraph, no block system being in use. Eastbound trains are superior to westbound trains of the same class.

The trains involved were eastbound local passenger train No. 182, en route from Bainbridge to Jesup, Ga., and westbound freight train No. 211, en route from Thomasville to Montgomery.

Train No. 182 consisted of locomotive 1288, 1 combination mail and baggage car, and 2 coaches, all the cars being of wooden construction except the rear coach which had a steel underframe, and was in charge of Conductor Ballard and Engineman Wells. It left Bainbridge at 4.40 a.m. and had proceeded a distance of about two miles when it was struck by train No. 211 at about 4.47 a.m. shortly after it

had been brought to a stop.

Train No. 211 consisted of locomotive 820, 11 loaded and 41 empty cars and a caboose, in charge of Conductor Pierson and Engineman Leach. It left Thomasville at 3.10 a.m., passed Climax, Ga., the last open telegraph office before reaching the point of accident and 27.5 miles west of Thomasville, at 4.30 a.m., and collided head-on with train No. 182 at a point 6.5 miles west of Climax, or 2 miles east of Bainbridge, while running at a speed of about 30 miles an hour.

The engineman of train No. 182 was killed. Both locomotives were derailed but remained upright on the roadbed with their head ends badly damaged. On train 182 the tender was derailed and turned over to the south side of the track; the combination car turned over on its side to the south side of the track and broke in two about 15 feet from its front end, while the second car of the train was derailed and came to rest leaning toward the south. The first 19 cars of train 211 were piled up on both sides of the track in a space of about 150 feet, one of the cars coming to rest on its side and on top of the tender of that train.

The accident occurred on straight track and there were no obstructions along the track to obstruct the vision of enginemen. Approaching the point of accident from the east there is a descending grade of 0.83% for a distance of about 3,400 feet and then an ascending grade of 0.24% for a distance of about 1,750 feet to point of accident. The

weather at the time was clear.

Conductor Ballard of train 182 stated that he was riding about the middle of the rear coach when his train was brought to a stop and he had started to go out at the rear door when the collision occurred, his train having been standing 30 or 40 seconds when it was struck. He said he saw Conductor Pierson of train 211 shortly after the collision who said he had forgotten about train 182. Conductor Ballard said that it was clear weather and thought the headlight of train 211 could have been seen for a distance of about two miles by Engineman Wells of train 182. He said Engineman Wells told him at Bainbridge that the headlight on locomotive 1288 was not burning and it was not burning at the time of the collision. In his opinion the accident would not have occurred or would at least have been less severe had the headlight on his train been burning and the crew of train 211 been more alert.

Baggagemaster Stokes of train 182 stated that he was working in the baggage car when the brakes on his train were applied in emergency and upon looking out of the side door he saw the headlight of train 211 quite a distance away. He then went to the rear door, got off on the fireman's side, walked off to one side of the train and in a short time the collision occurred. When he first saw the headlight of train 211 he thought that train was standing still. He was of the opinion that about a minute elapsed between the time the brakes were applied and the collision.

Fireman Moore of train 182 stated that he was working on the fire when Engineman Wells applied the air brakes in emergency and upon looking ahead he saw a headlight. On account of having been looking at the bright fire in the firebox he said he could not at first see whether the light ahead was a headlight of a train or an automobile light, but upon looking at it a second time he learned that it was a locomotive headlight and got off the engine. He said Engineman Wells made no effort to get off but was sitting on the seatbox and holding on to the brake valve. He said the electric headlight on locomotive 1288 was burning when he got on the engine at Bainbridge and he turned it off but later when the engineman turned it on again it did not light and was not burning at the time of the accident.

Engineman Leach of train 211 stated that he was planning to go to Bainbridge for trains 57 and 58 and completely overlooked the schedule of train 182. As he was approaching Bainbridge at a speed of about 30 miles an hour he saw a green light in the distance which he later found to be a marker on train 182; he made a service application of the brakes and about that time the reflection from the headlight on his engine shone on the front end of the engine on train 182, and he then made an emergency application of the air brakes but the speed of his train was not materially reduced.

Conductor Pierson of train 211 stated that he was trying to reach Bainbridge for trains 57 and 58 and over-

locked train 182. He was riding on the engine at the time of accident and did not see train 182, the view ahead being obscured by escaping steam when the engineman shut off steam approaching train 182.

Fireman Taylor of train 211 stated that nothing was said about train 182 by anyone on the engine and he did not think of that train. He said the steam from the engine obscured the view and he did not see train 182 until within about 50 feet of it.

Flagman Miller of train 211 stated that he was riding in the caboose of his train and had not overlooked train 182 but thought when his train passed Climax that the conductor had perhaps received an order giving him time on that train. He said the conductor had not shown him any of the train orders.

Head Brakeman Martin of train 211 stated that he had not been shown any of the train orders on this trip, had forgotten about train 182, and heard no one mention it.

This accident was caused by train 211 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train, for which the crew of train 211 is responsible. The absence of a headlight on the engine of train 182 was a contributing cause.

Train 182 was superior to train 211 both by direction and by class, and all of the crew of train 211, except Flagman Miller, admit that they overlooked that train, and the responsibility for this accident rests with them. Flag-

man Miller claimed that he had not forgotten train 182 but assumed that Conductor Pierson had received a train order giving his train time over that train, but saw none of the orders.

The investigation disclosed that the rule requiring conductors and enginemen to show all train orders to flagmen and firemen was not complied with.

Had the headlight on train 182 been burning it is probable that that train would have been seen in time to have averted the collision or at least to have mitigated its severity. When the headlight failed to burn a lantern could have been substituted, thus affording greater protection to the head end of the train. Rule 17 of the Atlantic Coast Line book of rules requires that "the headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night."

All of the employees involved were experienced men. At the time of the accident the crew of train 211 had been on duty about 2 hours and the crew of train 182 about a half hour.

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