

June 6, 1914.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE ATLANTIC COAST
LINE RAILROAD NEAR PALMER, GA., ON
MAY 14, 1914.

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On May 14, 1914, there was a rear-end collision on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Palmer, Ga., between a Southern Railway passenger train and an Atlantic Coast Line Railroad freight train, which resulted in the death of the engineman and fireman of the passenger train. After investigation of this accident, the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

Southbound freight train 1st No. 209 consisted of 12 loaded cars, 39 empty cars, a coach and a caboose, hauled by locomotive No. 388 and was in charge of Conductor Siler and Engineman Hulbert. It left Savannah at 12:01 p.m., passed McIntosh, the last open office north of the point of collision, and about 4 miles distant therefrom, at 1:35 p.m., and at about 1:46 p.m. was brought to a stop about one-half mile south of Palmer by the bursting of an air hose on the rear end of the second car from the engine, resulting in an emergency application of the air brakes and the consequent pulling out of the draw bar on the rear end of the car. Conductor Siler then decided to back his train into the passing track at Palmer in order to allow Southern Railway passenger train No. 31 to pass. As the flagman had gone back to protect the rear of the train, he sent back the head brakeman to open the south passing track switch. While the brakeman was on his way to the switch

the rear of train 1st No. 209 was struck by train No. 31.

Southern Railway southbound passenger train No. 31, known as the "Southeastern Limited" consisted of one express car, one combination baggage and coach, one coach, and one Pullman sleeping car, all of steel construction, hauled by locomotive No. 1109 and was in charge of Conductor Price and Engineman Winn. It left Savannah at 1:13 p.m., passed McIntosh at 2:00 p.m., and at 2:06 p.m. collided with the rear end of train 1st No. 209, while traveling at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour.

The caboose of the freight train was destroyed and a coach immediately ahead of it telescoped about 25 feet from the rear, as well as being otherwise badly damaged. The steel flat car immediately ahead of the coach was practically uninjured, while two wooden flat cars ahead of it were destroyed. Locomotive No. 1109 was derailed on the right side and when it came to a stop was clear of the track, resting on its left side. The tender was torn from its trucks and landed upright on the right side of the track, the body being but slightly damaged. The forward wheels of the express car were derailed and slight damage sustained by that car. None of the other cars was damaged in any way.

This part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad is a single track line, trains being operated by train orders and timecard rights, and are required by rules to keep 10 minutes apart except when closing up at stations. The

accident occurred on a tangent 48 miles in length, on a fill of about 5 feet, with a slightly descending grade for south-bound train, and there was nothing whatever to obscure the vision of an approaching train. At the time of the accident, it was raining hard and the atmosphere was rather hazy.

Flagman Terrell, of train 1st No. 209, stated that as soon as his train stopped, he started back with a red lantern, red flag, fuses and torpedoes. When a few feet north of the telephone booth, which is the station at Palmer and which is located about 3,000 feet north of where the rear end of his train was standing, he placed one torpedo on the rail and continued back a short distance. When he was about 600 or 700 feet north of the torpedo, he saw train No. 31 approaching and began to wave his red flag and a fuse, continuing to do so until he had to jump from the track to avoid being struck. When the locomotive was opposite him, he called to the crew but the cab was closed and he was unable to see any one in it. He further stated that he did not hear the torpedo explode.

Head Brakeman Brown stated that after his train had stopped he was bleeding the air brakes, and after having bled the brakes on about 12 cars Conductor Siler told him to go back and open the south passing switch so that they could back in and clear train No. 31. On his way back to the switch he took two fuses from the caboose, lighting one of them at the time. He then continued back toward the

south passing switch, located about 1500 feet north of the telephone booth. When within a short distance of the switch he saw train No. 31 approaching, and when no attention was paid to the stop signals given by Flagman Terrell he began to wave his lighted fusee and continued waving it until the train passed him. Head Brakeman Brown also stated that he did not hear the explosion of any torpedo.

Conductor Siler stated that he was standing about 15 car lengths behind his caboose ready to signal the engineman when the passing track switch had been opened. He saw train No. 31 when it was more than one mile away and also saw it pass both Flagman Terrell and Head Brakeman Brown both of whom were attempting to flag it. He then took off his hat and began waving it. When the locomotive passed him the engineman was on his seat box looking ahead. The locomotive was working steam and continued to do so until it collided with his train. He thought that the air brakes were applied just before the collision, as he saw fire flying from the wheels.

The baggage master and flagman of train No. 31, and a train master who was riding upon that train, stated that as soon as they got out on the ground they looked back and saw a burning fusee, as well as Flagman Terrell and Head Brakeman Brown. Their statements differed slightly as to where they thought the two men were located, the train master saying that he thought they were near the south passing track switch while the flagman thought they were between the passing track switch and the telephone booth. These employees

also stated that if the brakes were applied at all they were applied at about the time of the collision.

Just after he had been placed in a car to be carried to Savannah to a hospital, where he afterwards died, Engineman Winn stated that he had not been flagged. Notwithstanding this ante-mortem statement, the statements of all the employees of train 1st No. 209, as well as the statements of the trainmen on train No. 31, clearly establish the fact that every precaution was taken for the protection of train 1st No. 209 and that had the stop signals given by the members of that crew been observed, this accident would not have occurred.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Winn of train No. 31 to observe and be governed by stop signals given by the members of the crew of train 1st No. 209. The statements of Conductor Siler, as well as of the trainmen on train No. 31, show that no apparent effort was made to stop train No. 31, although there is a possibility that the air brakes might have been applied at about the time of the collision. The cab of locomotive No. 1109 was of the steel type and was closed on account of the weather conditions prevailing. What the engineman and the fireman were doing when they passed the flagman and head brakeman is not known. Conductor Siler stated, however, that when the locomotive passed him the engineman was on the seat looking ahead, while Engineman Winn's statement seems to preclude the possibility that he had become suddenly incapacitated

through illness or some other cause. It is possible that something inside of the cab might have been engaging Engineman Winn's attention and that he had just got on his seat box at about the time the locomotive passed Conductor Siler. Had this been the case, then he had just seen train No. 31 and on account of the speed at which the train was traveling it would have covered the short distance intervening between Conductor Siler and the rear of train 1st No. 209 in such a short interval of time that the engineman would have had just about time enough in which to apply the air brakes before the collision occurred. This would also account for the fire beginning to fly from the wheels just as the collision occurred.

Engineman Winn was employed in December, 1888, and in July, 1902, was made an engineman in passenger service. Since that time he had been disciplined on several occasions for minor offenses, while in April, 1913, he was suspended for 30 days on account of meeting a train on the main line. At the time of the accident he had been on duty less than two hours after having been off duty about 24 hours.