

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD NEAR ROCHELLE, FLA.,  
ON NOVEMBER 5, 1925.

January 23, 1926.

To the Commission.

On November 5, 1925, there was a collision on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad between an engine hauling the head portion of a train which was being doubled into Rochelle, and a light engine which was returning to the train after having been sent ahead to Rochelle to provide flag protection against an opposing superior train, resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Gainesville district of the Third Division, extending between High Springs and Croom, Fla., a distance of 127.7 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. This accident occurred at a point about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  miles north of Rochelle; approaching this point from the north the track is tangent for a distance of 2,079 feet followed by a  $6^{\circ}$  curve to the left 1,016 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point about 146 feet from its southern end; approaching from the south there are 3,481 feet of tangent followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is undulating and within a distance of about 2,000 feet of the point of accident varies from 1.85 per cent descending to 0.75 per cent ascending for southbound trains, being 0.75 per cent ascending southward at the point of accident.

Trees bordering the right-of-way on the inside of the curve on which the accident occurred restricted the range of vision across the inside of the curve to a distance of less than 500 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8.10 a.m.

### Description

Southbound freight train extra 715-913 consisted of 44 cars and a caboose, hauled by engines 715 and 913, and was in charge of Conductor Skipper and Enginemen Cameron and Beardon. It left Gainesville, the last station, about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of the point of accident, at 7.20 a.m., according to the train sheet; at a point about 4,000 feet north of the point of accident the train parted and not having sufficient time in which to recouple, pump off the air brakes and then to arrive at Rochelle in time to clear northbound passenger train No. 10, engine 715 was cut off and sent to Rochelle with instructions to flag train No. 10 and then to remain at that point. About 20 minutes later engine 913, with 21 cars, started toward Rochelle and was moving at a speed estimated to have been from 15 to 25 miles an hour when it collided with engine 715 which was returning from Rochelle.

Engine 715, according to the operator's record, arrived at Rochelle at 7.45 a.m., pulled by the station and took water, and was then backed to the station where the engineman made arrangements with the operator about holding train No. 10. The engine then left Rochelle, backing northward, at 7.55 a.m., and collided with engine 913 while traveling at a speed variously estimated at from 10 to 25 or 30 miles an hour.

Engine 913 and the first two cars were derailed and badly damaged, the engine remained upright on the roadbed but its tender was thrown to the west of the track. The tender of engine 715 was thrown to the west of the track badly damaged. Engine 715, having been reversed and given steam just prior to the collision, started back toward Rochelle and ran about 3 miles in that direction, stopping when the steam became exhausted. The employee killed was the engineman of engine 715.

### Summary of evidence

who

Conductor Skipper, who was riding on the lead engine when his train parted, said he told Engineman Cameron, of engine 715, to go to Rochelle and to stay there, holding train No. 10 until he arrived with the train, and that he would bring all of the train as far as possible and would then double back for the balance. He stated that when these instructions were given he was standing on the ground directly under the cab window on the engineman's side of the engine and that Engineman Cameron was leaning out of his window while Fireman Jackson was standing in the gangway. Conductor Skipper said the instructions could be heard plainly by all and

that Engineman Cameron appeared to understand, answering with the words "all right". He said his reason for not sending a brakeman with engine 715 to do the flagging at Rochelle, which would permit that engine to return and assist in moving the train, was that both brakemen went back along the train in an effort to locate the trouble as soon as the train slowed down after breaking in two and were at that time towards the rear of the train, and also that as one of them was inexperienced he did not think it advisable to send him to flag a passenger train while if he sent his experienced brakeman the other would not be of much assistance in case the nature of the break-in-two required chaining up. After the trouble was located, corrected, and the train coupled together, an attempt was made to start the train with the one engine, being unable to do so a cut was made between the 25th and 26th cars from the engine but the attempt to start with the first 35 cars was also unsuccessful, and he then cut off 4 additional cars and was able to start toward Rochelle with 21 cars, at which time he was riding on top of the 12th car from the engine. Conductor Skipper said the break-in-two occurred at 7.40 a.m., and that it was about 20 minutes later when the engine and 21 cars started and had proceeded about 1/2 mile, moving at a speed of about 15 miles an hour, when there was a brake application followed shortly by the jar of the collision. At the time of the collision Brakeman Couver was riding with the conductor on top of the 12th car and Brakeman Worley was riding on top of the 6th car, each of them estimated the speed of their train to have been about 15 miles an hour.

Engineman Reardon, of engine 913, said he was sitting on his seat box when Conductor Skipper cut off engine 715 and instructed Engineman Cameron to go on to Rochelle and that he plainly heard the instructions, the words used being "Clarence, go to Rochelle, hold No. 10 and stay there". He said the conductor then came back and told him that engine 715 would go to Rochelle and stay there, later he said he asked the conductor if he were positive that Engineman Cameron had understood his instructions and would stay at Rochelle, the conductor replying that he was positive that Engineman Cameron had understood. Engineman Reardon said his train was moving at a speed of about 15 miles an hour just before the collision and that his range of vision, on account of being on the outside of the curve, was restricted to a distance of less than 20 feet ahead of his engine, resulting in his inability to know of the approach of engine 715 until a few seconds before the accident occurred.

Fireman Lewis, of engine 913 stated that he did not hear the instructions given to the engineman of engine 715. He had been working on the fire and did not notice the approach of engine 715 until it was about 50 yards distant, moving at a speed he estimated to have been 25 or 30 miles an hour; he at once called to the engineman and jumped.

Colored Fireman Jackson, of engine 715, stated that he heard Conductor Skipper tell Engineman Cameron to go to Rochelle and stay there, holding train No. 10 until they arrived with the train and that he remembered the instructions as he was paying particular attention to what was being said. Upon the arrival of engine 715 at Rochelle water was taken and the engine then came back to the station, where Engineman Cameron had some conversation with the operator which he, Jackson, did not hear, after which they started back toward their train. He asked the engineman if he intended going back, the engineman replying that he did, as they might need some help in handling the train. Fireman Jackson said he asked the question in an attempt to call the engineman's attention to the conductor's instructions and feeling that the engineman understood his meaning he did not again mention the subject. He said he expected to meet their train at any point and kept a close watch of the track ahead, at the same time noticing that Engineman Cameron was standing up looking ahead over the tender all of the time after leaving Rochelle. Fireman Jackson finally saw engine 913, called a warning, got down on the gangway steps, and jumped when the two engines were about two car-lengths apart. He estimated that the speed of his engine was about 20 miles an hour when he first saw the smoke of engine 913, and thought this had been reduced to about 10 miles an hour when the accident occurred.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Cameron, of engine 715, to obey instructions given him by the conductor of his train to remain at Rochelle until the balance of the train arrived.

Engineman Cameron was instantly killed in the collision and the reason for his failure to remain at Rochelle could not be determined, although his statement to his fireman would indicate that he was returning for the purpose of helping to move the train to Rochelle. The evidence was clear that he was told to remain at Rochelle, and these instructions were heard and understood by the fireman of engine 715 and also by the

engineman of engine 913. Colored Fireman Jackson made a rather faint attempt to remind Engineman Cameron of the conductor's instructions at the time their engine started to return from Rochelle, and said he felt that the engineman understood his meaning and therefore said no more about it.

Conductor Skipper knew that one engine could not handle the entire train into Rochelle, he had two brakemen and a flagman in his crew and his judgment is open to criticism in that he did not send a brakeman to Rochelle with engine 715 to do the flagging at that point and permit the engine to return and assist with the train. Had this been done the collision would not have occurred.

Had an adequate block-signal system been in use on this line this accident probably would not have occurred; an adequate automatic train stop or train control device would have prevented it.

Conductor Skipper had been employed as a conductor since July, 1925, previous to which he had had about 5 years' experience as a brakeman; Engineman Cameron had been employed as an engineman for about 1 year, previous to which he had had about 5 years' experience as a fireman, Brakeman Worley had been in service about 40 days, with no previous experience, Engineman Reardon, Brakeman Couver and Flagman Haddock were experienced men. At the time of the accident these employees had been on duty 6 hours and 45 minutes, previous to which they had all been off duty 12 hours or more.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.