

INV. 308.  
NOVEMBER 24, 1916.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE NASHVILLE, CHATTANOOGA AND ST. LOUIS RAILWAY,  
NEAR DALTON, GEORGIA, OCTOBER 30, 1915.

On October 30, 1915, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway near Dalton, Ga., which resulted in the death of one employee. After investigation the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Southbound train No. 13 consisted of 35 loaded cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 396, and was in charge of Conductor Keel and Engineman Bohler. This was a third-class train and left Chattanooga, Tenn., at 1:10 a.m., arriving at Graysville, Ga., the last open telegraph station before reaching Dalton, at 2:40 a.m., where the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 404, reading as follows:

"Passing track at Dalton blocked at north switch with car derailed. Southbound trains can not head in passing track."

Train No. 13 left Graysville at 2:45 a.m. and arrived at Dalton about 3:45 a.m., coming to a stop with the locomotive at the standpipe, about 250 feet south of the train order board, which was in the stop position. The conductor immediately went to the telegraph office and signed the following orders addressed to his train:

"Order No. 307.                      October 30, 1915.

Extra 381 north will meet second No. 13 eng 408 at Easts and has right over No. 13, No. 19 and No. 7 Rogers to Dalton. Eng 396 on second No. 55."

"Order No. 511.      October 30, 1915.

No. 50 eng 395 will wait at Reasaca until five one 501 a.m. for No. 13 eng 394."

At 3:52 a.m., train No. 13 pulled down for the purpose of backing in the passing track and at 3:54 a.m., while running at a speed of about 10 miles an hour, collided with northbound extra 281, at a point 435 feet south of the south switch, 400 feet north of the yard limit board and approximately 3,400 feet south of the station at Dalton.

Northbound extra 281 consisted of locomotive 281, 5 loaded cars, 12 empty cars and a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Hill and Enginemen Winn. This train left Atlanta, Ga., October 29th, at 9:15 p.m., arriving at Rogers, Ga., October 30th, at about 1:30 a.m., at which place the crew in charge received train order No. 507. Extra 281 passed Reasaca, the last telegraph station, at 3:50 a.m., and collided with train No. 13 while running at a speed of 4 or 5 miles an hour.

This part of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway is a single-track line. Train movements are governed by time-table and train orders, there being no block signal system in use. The main line of the Southern Railway parallels the tracks of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, beginning where they cross each other, 400 feet south of the station at Dalton, and extending southward for more than two miles. The distance between the two main tracks varies from 40 to 100 feet.

Approaching the point of accident from the north, beginning at Dalton station, the track is tangent for 350 feet, followed by a 2-degree curve to the right 925 feet in length.

It is then tangent for about 1,000 feet to the beginning of a 2-degree curve to the left one-half mile in length, near the northern end of which this accident occurred. The grade at the point of accident is slightly descending for southbound trains, the track being on a fill of about five feet. The physical conditions surrounding the point of collision were such as to afford an unobstructed view for a distance of 1,000 feet in both directions. The weather at the time of the accident was clear.

The force of the collision caused the derailment of both engines, three cars in extra 281 and five cars in train No. 13, the engines remaining in an upright position after derailment. Extra 281 was forced backward about 10 feet and the locomotives of both trains were badly damaged, the engineer of train No. 13 being killed in the collision.

Conductor Keel, of train No. 13, stated that when his train reached Dalton the train order board was in the stop position and he hastened to the telegraph office, where he signed two train orders, one of which was order No. 307 giving extra 281 rights over his train to Dalton. While he was waiting for the dispatcher to complete the orders, the head brakeman approached and he instructed him to tell the engineer to pull down and back in on the passing track for southbound passenger train No. 3, due at Dalton at 4:01 a.m., and that an extra was to meet them there. Conductor Keel further stated that his train started away from the standpipe, for the purpose of backing in on the passing track, at about 3:50 a.m. Conductor Keel stated that this movement was made without protection and that he did

not instruct the head brakeman to go ahead with a flag, in order to protect his train, because under the rules he was not required to do so within yard limits. He further stated that although he would have had time to personally deliver the order to the engineman, instead of instructing the brakeman to do so, it was not customary for conductors to do this. He received the completed orders as the caboose was passing the station and then started to walk toward his train, and when about 30 or 40 yards from the telegraph office he heard the crash of the collision. He immediately went to the engine to ascertain the trouble and then returned to the telegraph office, accompanied by Conductor Vandivera, of train No. 3, which had come to a stop behind his train. He requested the operator, who had heard the instructions he had given the head brakeman, to repeat them, whereupon the operator said that he had directed the head brakeman to tell the engineman to pull down and back in as they were to meet an extra there. Conductor Keel thought the speed of his train was not more than 7 or 8 miles an hour when his caboose passed the station.

Fireman Pratt, of train No. 13, stated that because the north end of the passing track at Dalton was blocked by derailed cars, his train proceeded down the main track at Dalton and came to a stop at the standpipe just south of the train order board, expecting to leave there ahead of train No. 3. However, the train order signal was in the stop position as they passed the station and while they were taking water the head brakeman came to the engine and instructed Engineman Bohler to

pull down and back in for No. 3. He did not mention anything about extra 281 meeting them there. Fireman Pratt further stated that as his train passed the south switch he saw extra 281 approaching around the curve. At first he thought it was a train on the Southern Railway, but as it drew nearer he saw that it was on their track, called to the engineer, "Extra," and leaped through the cab window. He estimated the speed of his train to have been about 12 miles an hour at the time of collision.

Head Brakeman Black, of train No. 13 stated that at Dalton he followed Conductor Keel to the telegraph office and while outside the window Conductor Keel instructed him to tell Engineman Bohler to pull down and back in at the south switch of the passing track, for train No. 3. He stated that he was positive that Conductor Keel mentioned nothing to him regarding an extra; he did not know what the orders were, and was unaware of the fact that an extra was to meet them there. He delivered his instructions, as he understood them, to Engineman Bohler, telling him to pull down and back in for train No. 3. As the train left the standpipe he climbed to the top of the fifteenth car in the train in order to be in a position to transfer signals to the engineer. When the engine of his train was about 12 or 15 car lengths south of the south switch of the passing track he saw the electric headlight on his train shining on the front end of the engine of extra 281. The headlight on that train was not burning. He felt the brakes being applied just before the collision. He further stated that he would have protected his train by flag, had he known that in making this movement it would have

been necessary to go beyond the yard limit board. He thought that his train could not get beyond the yard limit board in order to backin at the south switch. He thought the speed of his train at the time of collision was about 5 miles an hour.

Engineman Winn, of extra 381, stated that approaching Dalton his train was traveling at the rate of 20 or 25 miles an hour when he shut off steam and began to apply the brakes. As he passed the yard limit board he had reduced the speed of his train to 6 or 8 miles an hour and had his train well under control as it entered the straight track a short distance south of the point of accident. He could then plainly see the electric headlight of train No. 13, although it appeared to him as if that train were either at or coming down to the south switch for the purpose of leaving a car. He kept his brakes applied and, when within a distance of 7 or 8 car lengths from train No. 13, he realized that it was approaching at a speed of about 15 miles an hour. He immediately applied the brakes in emergency, got down in the gangway, and stepped off just before the collision occurred. He thought the speed of his train at the time was 4 or 5 miles an hour. He stated that the electric headlight on his engine had failed about two miles south of Dalton and that he did not have sufficient time to stop, put in a new carbon, and reach Dalton for train No. 3.

Rule 93, of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, reads as follows:

"Certain yards will be indicated by yard or station limit signs. Within such limits the main track may be used, protecting against first and second class trains. Third class and extra trains must move on the main track under such control that they can stop within the range of their vision."

Rule No. 99 provides in part as follows:

"When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be struck, the flagman must go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, \* \* \*.

"The front of a train must be protected in the same way by the front brakeman. If the front brakeman is unable to go, the fireman must go."

On account of the passing track at Dalton being blocked at its northern end, it was necessary for train No. 13 to proceed southward on the main track and back in, in order to clear train No. 3. The main track between the south switch and the yard limit board could only hold 21 cars and, as train No. 13 consisted of a locomotive, 25 cars and a caboose, it would have been necessary, therefore, for that train to go some distance beyond the yard limit board in order to back in at the south switch of the passing track.

Conductor Keel was aware of this necessity and in view of the fact that he was the only member of the crew of train No. 13 who knew that extra 301 had rights over his train to Dalton, he should have had his train protected. Proper regard for the safety of his train should have prompted him to personally explain to Engineer Noble the movement it was necessary for them to make under existing conditions, instead of intrusting this duty to the head brakeman, particularly in view of the fact that he did not ascertain whether or not the latter thoroughly understood his instructions. Conductor Keel is positive in his statement that he instructed his head brakeman properly about meeting extra 301 at Dalton, while the head brakeman is just as positive in his statement that he received no such instructions; so that

this matter resolves itself into a question of veracity between these two employees.

This accident was caused by the failure of train No. 13 to move within yard limits under such control that it could have been brought to a stop within the range of vision, for which Engineman Bohler and Conductor Keel are responsible.

Each locomotive involved in this accident was equipped with a high-power electric headlight. The carbon in the one on locomotive 261 had burned out after leaving the last station, and the engineman did not have time to stop and repair it and make Dalton for train No. 37. The headlight on train No. 13, however, was in good condition and it is believed that had the engine crew on this train been on the alert or had the headlight on extra 261 been burning, they could have seen the engine of the approaching extra in time to have brought their train to a stop in time to prevent this accident.

Engineman Bohler had been employed as an engineman on this railway since 1903. Conductor Keel had been in the employ of this company as conductor since 1903. Head Brakeman Black entered the service of this railway December 14, 1909.

At the time of the accident, the employees on train No. 13 had only been on duty 3 hours and 34 minutes; and the employees on extra 261, 7 hours and 9 minutes.