

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM, LINES WEST, AT  
ROME, GA., ON MARCH 2, 1930

April 10, 1930

To the Commission:

On March 2, 1930, there was a rear-end collision between two passenger trains on the Southern Railway System, Lines West, at Rome, Ga., which resulted in the injury of 19 passengers, 4 Pullman employees, 2 mail clerks, and 8 railroad employees.

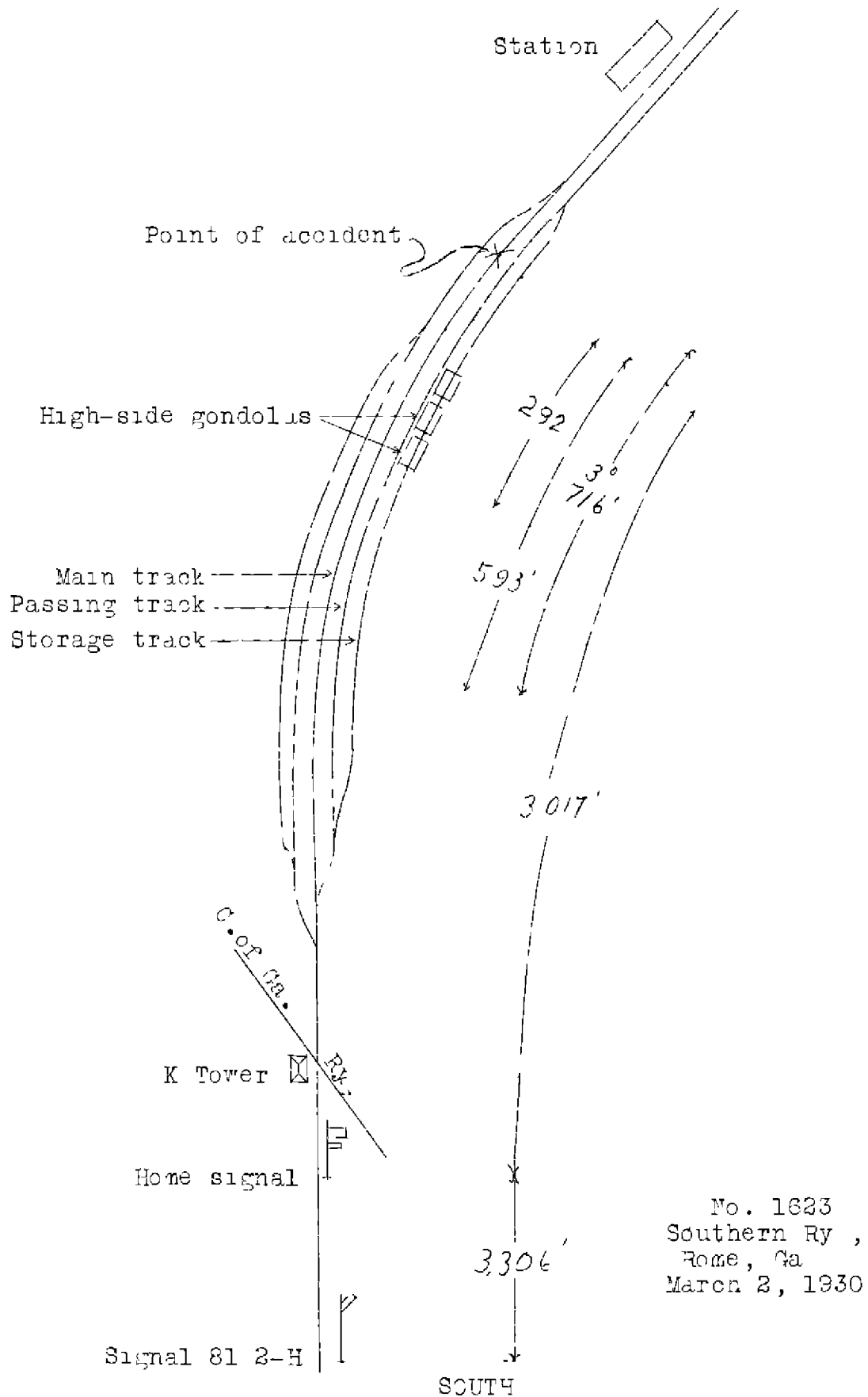
## Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Queen and Crescent District, Atlanta Division, extending between Atlanta, Ga., and Chattahoochee, Tenn., a distance of 152.7 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal and train-control system, the latter being of the intermittent inductive type. The accident occurred about 375 feet south of the station platform, approaching this point from the south, there is a tangent track for over 1 mile, followed by a 30° curve to the right, 716 feet in length, the point of accident being on this curve 593 feet from its southern end. The grade is undulating, being 0.69 per cent ascending at the point of accident.

A passing track and a storage track parallel the main track on the east. At the time of the accident, the view for an engineman of a northbound train was restricted to about 550 feet by three freight cars which were standing on the storage track, the south end of these cars being 292 feet south of the point of accident, but a partial view could be had at a distance of 900 feet.

The signals involved were permissive automatic signal 81.2-H and the semiautomatic interlocking home signal, operated from K tower, these signals being located 6,323 feet

NORTH



and 3,017 feet respectively, south of the point of accident. The home signal is equipped with a two-position, calling-on signal, used to advance trains to the next signal without flagging ahead, trains acting on this signal indication being required to move at slow speed prepared to stop short of train or obstruction.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10.06 a.m.

#### Description

Northbound passenger train No. 102 consisted of 12 Pullman cars, including a dining car, of all-steel construction, hauled by engine 1409, and was in charge of Conductor Ritch and Engineman Waters. This train departed from Atlanta at 8.01 a.m., according to the train sheet, 46 minutes late, and arrived at Rome, a regular stop, at 10.01 a.m. according to the train sheet, 49 minutes late. After standing there about five minutes, while engaged in station work, the rear of the train was struck by train No. 4.

Northbound passenger train No. 4 consisted of 10 cars of all-steel construction, except the second and sixth cars, which were of steel-underframe construction, hauled by engine 1405, and was in charge of Conductor Slate and Engineman Mann. This train left Atlanta at 8.20 a.m., according to the train sheet, 55 minutes late, passed Atlanta Junction, the last open office, 2.3 miles south of Rome, at 10.03 a.m., according to the train sheet, passed signal 81.2-H in caution position, passed home signal at K tower with the positive arm in stop position and the calling-on arm at caution, and collided with the rear of train No. 102 while moving at a speed estimated to have been between 3 and 8 miles per hour.

None of the equipment was derailed, the force of the impact damaged the coupler and pipes of the rear of the observation car in train No. 102, but none of the rest of the equipment was affected.

#### Summary of evidence

Engineman Mann, of train No. 4, stated that on approaching Rome and finding automatic signal 81.2-H in the caution position, he operated the forestalling feature with which the train-control device is equipped, shut off steam, and let the train drift to the home signal at K tower, finding the top arm of that signal in stop position and the calling-on arm at caution, he again operated the forestalling feature and passed the signal at a speed of 15 or 20 miles per hour, which he considered to be trawling under control. He applied

the brakes and had just released them when he saw train No. 102 ahead on the main track, about one and one-half or two car-lengths distant; he then made a heavy service application of the brakes, going into emergency about the time the collision occurred, at which time the speed was about 8 miles per hour. Engineman Mann stated that when about four or five car-lengths from the point of accident he had seen cars ahead over the freight cars which were standing on the side track, but he assumed that the former were on the passing track since he did not expect to find train No. 102 at Rome in spite of the signal indications received, and when he realized these cars were the rear of train No. 103, he at first thought the distance was sufficient to permit him to bring his train to a stop without an emergency application and thus avoid shaking up his train. He stated he did not see the flagman until within about one-half or three-quarters of a car-length of the rear of train No. 103, at which time the flagman crossed over to the righthand side of the track. It also appeared from his statements that a running test of the air brakes had been made leaving Atlanta, and that no trouble had been experienced with them en route. When questioned with regard to a conference had with the superintendent a week or two prior to the accident, relative to the importance of obeying yellow or caution signal indications, and a circular letter sent to all enginemen by the general superintendent dealing with the same matter, Engineman Mann said he could recall neither the conversation nor the letter, but that he understood the rules governing the operation of trains and signal indications. It was Engineman Mann's idea that the accident was due to his having misjudged the speed of his train as well as the distance available in which to bring it to a stop.

Fireman Rogers, of train No. 4 corroborated the testimony of Engineman Mann relative to the operation of the train approaching K Tower. The fireman stated the speed was about 20 miles per hour when they rounded the curve, where the engineman made an application of the brakes and then released them, bringing the speed down to about 10 or 15 miles per hour. The fireman said he then observed the engineman suddenly place the brake valve about halfway between service application and full emergency, and on going over to the engineman's side of the cab, he saw train No. 102 about three or four car-lengths distant, and just before the accident saw the flagman about a car-length from the rear of train No. 103. Fireman Rogers estimated the speed at the time of the collision at from 4 to 6 miles per hour.

Conductor Slate and Baggage-master Saunders, of train No. 4, estimated the speed of their train at the time of the collision at 3 or 4 miles per hour, while Flagman Keen, of

train No. 4, estimated it at 5 miles per hour; their statements brought out no additional facts of importance.

Flagman Arnold, of train No. 102, stated that he got off the observation car with his flag when his train stopped at Rome, and on hearing train No. 4 coming to Atlanta Junction, he took a position about two-car-lengths from the rear of his train on the west side of the track, or on the outside of the curve, from which point he could see train No. 4 as it was passing K Tower. He flagged the approaching train and as it came nearer, he walked over on the east or engine-man's side so that the latter might observe him more readily. The flagman stated that train No. 4 passed him at a speed of about 8 or 10 miles per hour, and although his signals were not answered, he thought train No. 4 would stop short of train No. 102. The testimony of the other members of the crew of train No. 102 brought out no further facts of importance.

General Yardmaster O'Rear stated in a letter that he was an eye-witness to the accident and the events leading up to it. Tests made by him immediately after the occurrence of the accident indicated that a car placed where the rear of train No. 102 had been standing could be seen from a switch engine for a distance of 550 feet, and that although the view was obstructed, the side of train No. 102 could have been seen at a distance of 900 feet, the flagman, who had been standing at a point 245 feet from the rear of his train could have been seen by the engineman for a distance of 800 feet.

In connection with this collision, Superintendent Clements, of the Atlanta Division, made a statement to the effect that division officers are continually impressing on their employees the importance of strictly complying with the rules and are making tests to insure such compliance and that Engineman Mann had been one of the group with whom he had taken up, a few days previous to the accident, the importance of caution signal indications. He further stated that a few weeks before the accident, a circular letter had been addressed to all engineman by General Superintendent Austin, calling attention to the same matter. Superintendent Clements also stated that what is known as "A Rule a Day" plan has been put in effect. This provides that the superintendent shall have the rule of the day placed on the bulletin boards at midnight and in the hands of all operators and dispatchers, thereby arranging to have all employees informed, and able to answer any questions which may be put to them during the day by the division officers with regard to the rule or its application. He stated this plan had brought about good results.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman

Mann, of train No. 4, properly to obey signal indications.

The evidence indicated that a caution signal indication was received at the automatic signal south of K Tower, and that a calling-on indication was displayed at the tower, both of these indications being acknowledged by the engineman through his action in operating the forestalling feature of the train control device. It also appeared that he could have obtained a partial view of the cars in train No. 102 when 900 feet distant, but thought they were on a siding, and could have seen the rear of the train when 550 feet distant, while, according to the yardmaster, the flagman was back 245 feet and could have been seen an additional distance of 800 feet. Notwithstanding all of the warnings, however, Engineman Mann failed to recognize the train, or see the flagman, until only a very few car-lengths distant, and then, misjudging either his speed or the distance, he made only a heavy service application of the brakes, instead of the emergency application required to avert the accident.

All of the employees involved were experienced men, and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.