

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

---

INVESTIGATION NO. 2623  
THE CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT ROCHELLE, ILL., ON  
AUGUST 28, 1942

---

- 2 -

## SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago, Burlington & Quincy

Date: August 28, 1942

Location: Rochelle, Ill.

Kind of accident: Collision at highway grade crossing

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor truck

Train number: 23

Engine number: Diesel-electric 9905

Consist: 8 cars

Speed: 35-45 m. p. h. : 13-20 m. p. h.

Operation: Centralized-traffic-control system

Track: Double; tangent; 0.413 percent ascending grade westward

Highway: Tangent; crosses tracks at angle of 90°; practically level

Weather: Clear

Time: About 4:51 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Accident caused by motor truck being driven upon highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

---

INVESTIGATION NO. 2623

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS  
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD COMPANY

---

October 26, 1942.

---

Accident at Rochelle, Ill., on August 28, 1942, caused by  
motor truck being driven upon highway grade crossing  
immediately in front of approaching train.

---

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

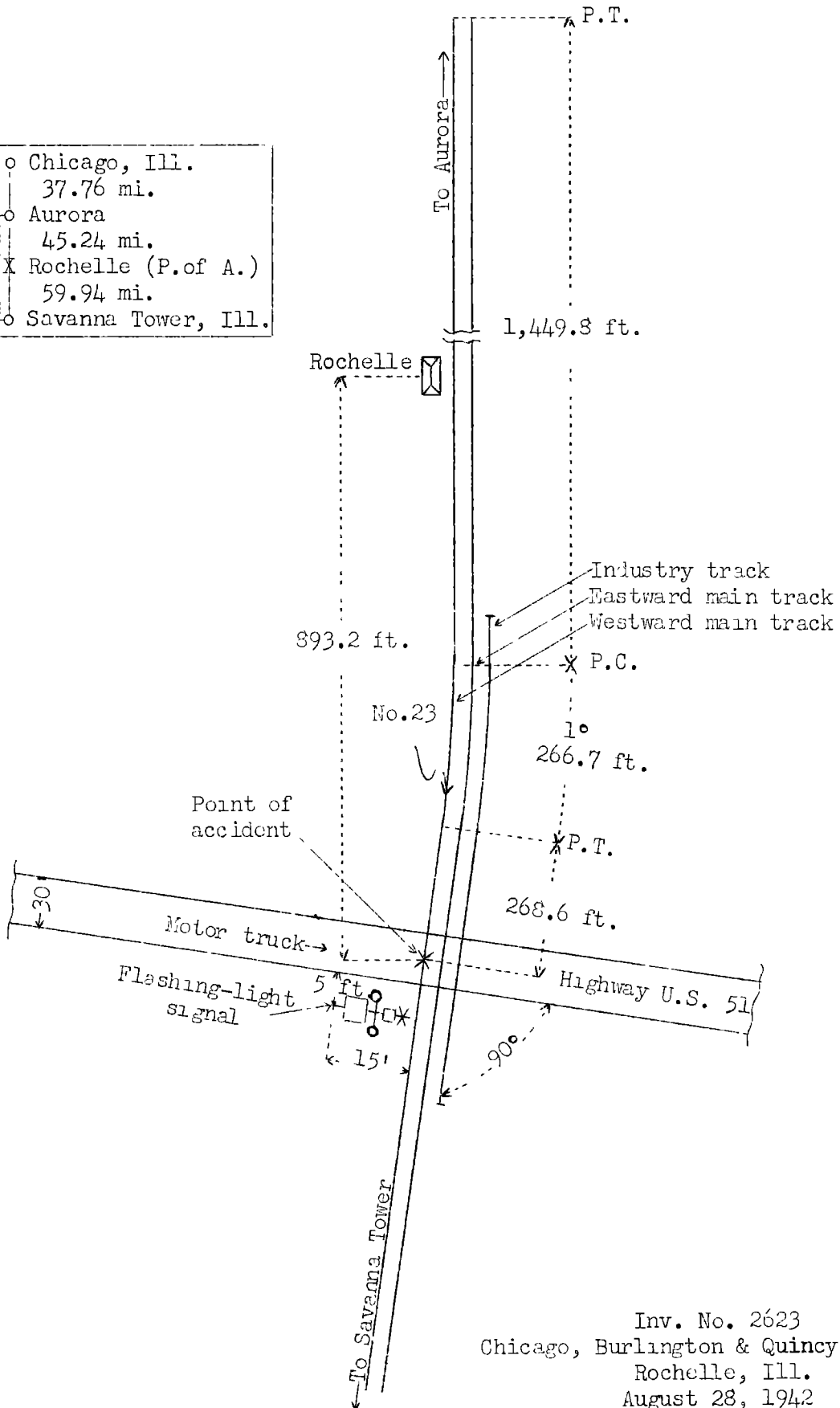
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 28, 1942, there was a collision between a  
passenger train and a motor truck on the Chicago, Burlington  
& Quincy Railroad at a highway grade crossing at Rochelle,  
Ill., which resulted in the death of one employee and the  
injury of two passengers and one employee.

---

<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and  
disposition.

|   |                     |           |
|---|---------------------|-----------|
| o | Chicago, Ill.       | 37.76 mi. |
| o | Aurora              | 45.24 mi. |
| X | Rochelle (P. of A.) | 59.94 mi. |
| o | Savanna Tower, Ill. |           |



Inv. No. 2623  
 Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad  
 Rochelle, Ill.  
 August 28, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Aurora Division designated as the Aurora and Savanna Sub-division and extending between Aurora and Savanna Tower, Ill., a distance of 105.18 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by a centralized-traffic-control system. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 893.2 feet west of the station at Rochelle where the railroad is crossed at grade by Highway U. S. 51. At the point of accident an industry track parallels the main tracks on the south. As the point of accident is approached from the east on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 1,449.8 feet in length, a 1° curve to the right 266.7 feet and a tangent 268.6 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. At the point of accident the grade for west-bound trains is 0.413 percent ascending. Highway U. S. 51 crosses the three tracks at right angles. As the point of accident is approached from the north on the highway there is a tangent more than 1 mile to the crossing and several miles beyond. At the point of accident the grade is level. The highway and the crossing are 30 feet wide and are surfaced with concrete. The crossing is well maintained.

The crossing is protected on each side of the tracks by two-way hooded flashing-light signals. The signal governing south-bound traffic is located in the northwest angle of the intersection at a point 15 feet north of the center-line of the westward main track and 5 feet west of the highway. On the mast of this signal a cross-buck sign is mounted 11 feet 8 inches above the level of the pavement, and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING." Immediately below the cross-buck sign the words "3 TRACKS" are displayed in reflector buttons. A horizontal bar, to which a hooded red light is attached at each end, is mounted on the mast 8 feet 6 inches above the level of the pavement. Beneath the red lights a rectangular plate 25-1/2 inches by 22-1/2 inches displays in reflector buttons the words "STOP ON RED SIGNAL." The flashing-light signals are actuated when a west-bound train reaches a point 2,516 feet east of the crossing. While the grade-crossing signal is being actuated a bell on the signal mast rings.

A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located 6,016 feet east of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for snort sounds; "\_\_\_" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

SOUND

INDICATION

\* \* \*

(1) — — o —

Approaching public crossings at grade, last blast prolonged until crossing is reached.

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

Article XII, of the 1941 Revised Motor Vehicle Laws of Illinois, reads in part as follows:

83. Obedience to Signal Indicating Approach of Train.--(a) Whenever any person driving a vehicle approaches a railroad grade crossing and a clearly visible electric or mechanical signal device gives warning of the immediate approach of a train, the driver of such vehicle shall stop within fifty feet but not less than ten feet from the nearest track of such railroad and shall not proceed until he can do so safely.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the train involved is 70 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 23, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric engine 9905, one coach, one auxiliary-power-baggage-cocktail car, three coaches, one dining car, one coach and one parlor car, in the order named. All cars were of lightweight stainless steel construction. At Chicago, 83 miles east of Rochelle, a terminal air-brake test was made. This train departed from Aurora, 45.24 miles east of Rochelle, at 4:15 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 13 minutes late, passed Rochelle at 4:50 p. m., 10 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 to 45 miles per hour it collided with a motor truck on a highway grade crossing at a point 893.2 feet west of the station at Rochelle. The brakes of No. 23 functioned properly en route.

The motor truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned by the Ross Transit Company, Kokomo, Ind. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Indiana operator's license No. 16372 for 1942. The tractor was a 1941, 6-cylinder, White, Model W.A.14, and bore Indiana license No. 7037 for 1942. Its weight was 6,100 pounds. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels, hydraulic brakes with a vacuum booster and an enclosed steel cab. It was hauling a Fruehauf semi-trailer equipped with a vacuum booster brake and an open-top van-type body. The weight of the trailer when empty was 7,200 pounds.

The tractor and semi-trailer had an over-all length of 32 feet. At the time of the accident the semi-trailer was loaded with steel bars which weighed 21,870 pounds. The vehicle, moving southward on Highway U. S. 51, en route from Rockford, Ill., to Kokomo, Ind., proceeded upon the crossing involved at an estimated speed of 15 to 18 miles per hour where the semi-trailer was struck by No. 23.

There was no unusual condition about the enclosed cab that obscured the vision of the truck driver. Because of buildings, a pole line and vegetation on the east side of the highway, a west-bound train approaching on the railroad cannot be seen by the driver of a south-bound vehicle until the vehicle is within 10 feet of the north rail of the crossing, then an unobstructed view can be had a distance of about 540 feet.

No. 23 was not derailed and it stopped with the front end of the engine 1,884 feet west of the point of accident. The front end of the Diesel-electric engine was crushed inward about 6-1/2 feet. The engine control compartment and the engine controls were demolished. On the north side of the train windows were broken and the side sheathing was damaged the entire length of the train. The semi-trailer and the rear-axle assembly of the tractor were demolished.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:51 p. m.

The employee killed was the engineer, and the employee injured was the fireman.

#### Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains over the crossing was 28.5. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., September 1, 1,966 automobiles, 474 trucks, 8 busses, and 28 trains passed over the crossing.

#### Discussion

No. 23 was approaching the crossing at an estimated speed of 35 to 45 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 70 miles per hour. The whistle signal was sounded for the crossing in compliance with the rules. It is not known when the engineer first saw the approaching motor truck, as he was killed in the accident. The motor truck approached from the right. Because of buildings and vegetation on the north side of the tracks, a vehicle approaching from the north cannot be seen from the engine of a west-bound train until the vehicle is practically on the crossing. The evidence indicates that the train brakes were not applied until after the collision occurred. The train struck the trailer about

midway and the wreckage was strewn along the right-of-way a distance of about 600 feet. The tractor overturned to the west of the highway near the crossing.

The driver of the motor truck involved was an experienced driver, but he had made only one trip over this crossing prior to the accident. He said that as his truck was approaching the crossing the speed was 15 to 18 miles per hour, and that a person who was standing near the crossing signalled a warning, but the flashing-light signals were not operating and he drove his truck upon the crossing, then observed the approaching train. He increased the speed but was not able to clear the crossing in time to avert the collision. On the other hand, three witnesses stated that the flashing-light signals and the warning bell were operating when the truck was approaching the crossing. The signals were visible a considerable distance, and the weather was clear. The driver had been off duty 5 hours 30 minutes prior to the time he started the trip involved, and at the time of the accident had been on duty 2 hours 30 minutes. The windows of the cab were open. The laws of the state of Illinois require that when a visible electrical or mechanical device gives warning of the approach of a train, vehicles must stop within 50 feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest railroad track and must not proceed until it is safe to do so. If the driver involved had stopped in compliance with the provision of law, undoubtedly this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-sixth day of October, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.