

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2941  
THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC  
RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT SCREETON, ARK., ON  
OCTOBER 21, 1945

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific  
Date: October 21, 1945  
Location: Screeton, Ark.  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck  
Train number: 112 :  
Engine number: 956 :  
Consist: 10 cars :  
Estimated speed: 65 m. p. h. : Unknown  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; tangent; 0.053 percent  
descending grade eastward  
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at prac-  
tically right angles; level  
over crossing  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 10:35 a. m.  
Casualties: 8 killed; 10 injured  
Cause: Motor-truck being driven upon  
highway grade crossing imme-  
diately in front of approaching  
train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2941

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

THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

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November 16, 1945.

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Accident at Sreeton, Ark., on October 21, 1945, caused by  
a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade cross-  
ing immediately in front of an approaching train.

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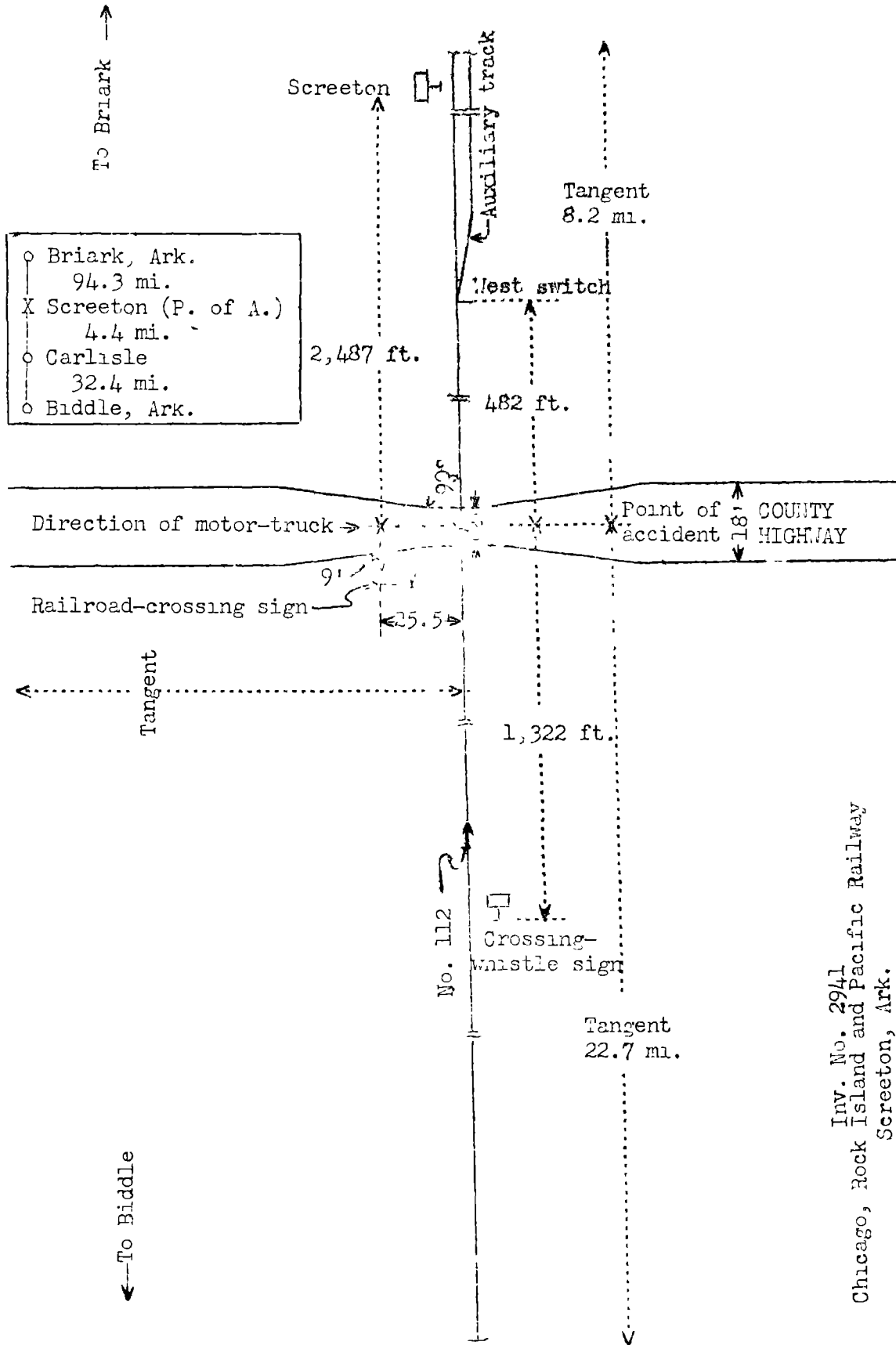
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 21, 1945, there was a collision between a  
passenger train on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific  
Railway and a motor-truck at a highway grade crossing at  
Sreeton, Ark., which resulted in the death of six occupants  
of the motor-truck and two train-service employees, and the  
injury of nine passengers and one train-service employee.

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<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 Briark, Ark. 94.3 mi.
- X Screeton (P. of A.) 4.4 mi.
- o Carlisle 32.4 mi.
- o Biddle, Ark. 32.4 mi.

Inv. No. 2941  
 Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway  
 Screeton, Ark.  
 October 21, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Arkansas Division extending between Biddle and Briark, Ark., 131.1 miles, a single-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred 36.8 miles east of Biddle, at a point 2,487 feet west of the station at Screeton, where the railroad is crossed at grade by a county highway. The west switch of an auxiliary track, located to the south of the main track, is 482 feet east of the center-line of the crossing. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 22.7 miles west of the crossing and 8.2 miles eastward. The grade is 0.053 percent descending eastward.

The highway intersects the railroad at right angles, and is an unimproved road about 18 feet wide. The highway is tangent throughout a considerable distance north of the crossing and 150 feet southward. The grade for south-bound vehicles is 3.2 percent ascending throughout a distance of 125 feet immediately north of the crossing, then it is level over the crossing. The crossing is 12 feet wide and is surfaced with crushed rock. The level of the crossing is about 1/2 inch below the tops of the rails.

A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located to the right of the direction of south-bound traffic, 25.5 feet north of the center-line of the railroad and 9 feet west of the center-line of the highway. This sign is mounted on a mast 7 feet 2 inches above the level of the crossing, and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for east-bound trains is located 1,322 feet west of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

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

| Sound.                        | Indication.   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| * * *                         |   |
| (1)    ___    ___    o    ___ | Approaching public crossings at grade. To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car. * * * |
| * * *                         |   |

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 70 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

No. 112, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 956, a 4-6-2 type, one express car, three baggage cars, one baggage-mail car, four coaches and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. The first and second cars were of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder were of all-steel construction. This train passed Carlisle, the last open office, 4.4 miles west of Sreeton, at 10:31 a. m., 6 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a grade crossing 2,487 feet west of the station at Sreeton. Part of the wreckage lodged under the engine-truck wheels, which were derailed to the right about 23 feet east of the crossing. These wheels continued in line with the track 459 feet to the west switch of the auxiliary track, where the general derailment occurred.

The motor-truck involved was a Ford, 1-1/2 ton, 1941 V-8 model, owned by B. E. Hamilton, Carlisle, Ark. The occupants of the motor-truck were the driver, who held Arkansas driver's license No. 356085, two adults and three children. The motor-truck was equipped with an enclosed steel cab, dual tires on the rear wheels, a wooden stake-type body, and bore 1945 Arkansas license No. 487-622. At the time of the accident the cargo with which the truck was loaded weighed about 3,500 pounds. This vehicle was moving southward on the highway at an unknown speed when it proceeded upon the crossing and was struck by No. 112.

The motor-truck was demolished. The engine stopped on its left side, headed westward, about 40 feet south of the main track and practically parallel to it, with the rear of the engine about 360 feet east of the west auxiliary-track switch. The first six cars were derailed and stopped in various positions. The engine and the first five cars were badly damaged, and the sixth car was slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:35 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman were killed. The baggageman was injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 14.4 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 p. m., October 25, 1945, 24 automobiles, 44 trucks, 2 tractors and 1 horse-drawn vehicle passed over the crossing.

Discussion

No. 112 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 65 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 70 miles per hour. The members of the train crew were in various locations throughout the cars of the train. The first these employees were aware of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency immediately prior to the collision. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. It could not be determined when the enginemen first became aware that the motor-truck had entered upon the crossing, as they were killed in the accident. Evidently, a lookout was being maintained as the members of the train crew heard the whistle signal sounded for the crossing. Apparently, the motor-truck proceeded upon the crossing immediately in front of the train, as the brakes were applied in emergency when the engine was near the crossing. Examination after the accident disclosed that the throttle was in closed position and the automatic brake valve was in emergency position.

The crossing was protected by a standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver and had made many trips over the crossing prior to the accident. The weather was clear and the driver could have seen the approaching train throughout a considerable distance immediately west of the crossing. It could not be determined why the motor-truck entered upon the crossing immediately in front of the approaching train, as the driver and the other occupants of the vehicle were killed in the accident.

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 sixteenth day of November, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.