

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3836

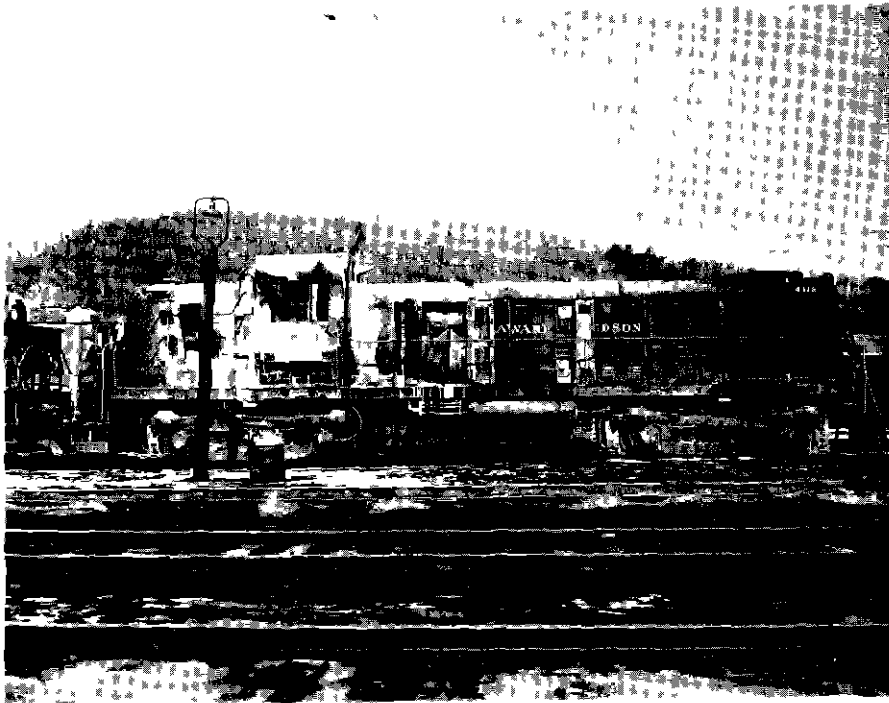
THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON RAILROAD CORPORATION

COLLIERS, N Y

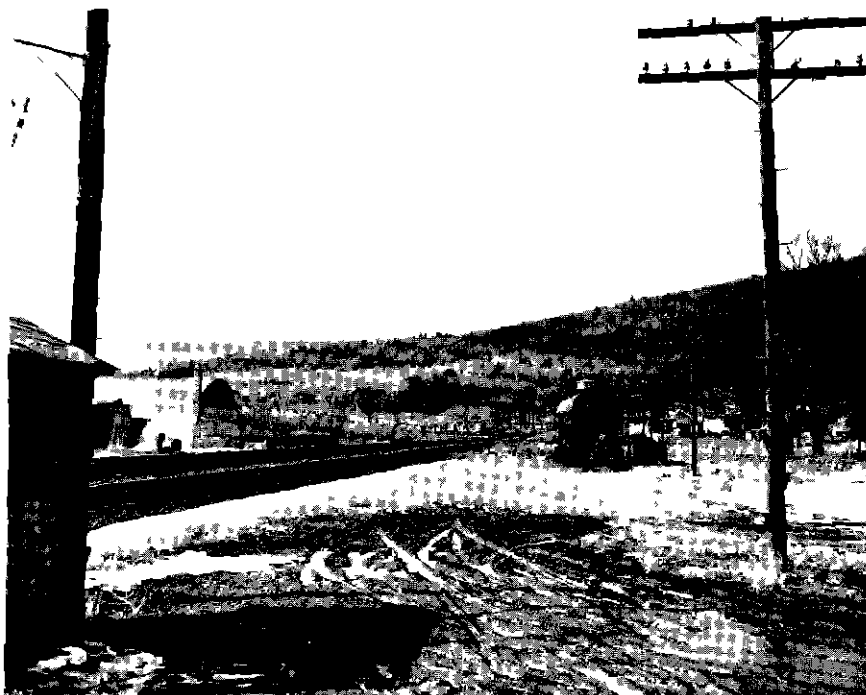
FEBRUARY 27, 1959

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington



Diesel-electric unit 4116, leading unit of Extra 4118 North Control compartment was at south end of this unit at time of accident



View of tracks south of rail-highway crossing. Photo taken from a point on the highway 50 feet west of the centerline of the northward main track

SUMMARY

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DATE	February 27, 1959	
RAILROAD	The Delaware and Hudson	
LOCATION	Colliers, N Y	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Freight train	Motortruck
TRAIN NUMBER	Extra 4118 North	
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER	Diesel-electric units 4118, 4040 and 4037	
CONSIST	100 cars, caboose	
SPEEDS	25 30 m p h	5 m p h
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders, and automatic block-signal system	
TRACK	Double, tangent, 0 12 percent descending grade northward	
HIGHWAY	Tangent, crosses track at an angle of 86°04', level	
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	12 10 p m	
CASUALTIES	2 killed, 1 injured	
CAUSE	Motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3836

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

THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON RAILROAD CORPORATION

June 4, 1959

Accident at Colliers, N. Y., on February 27, 1959, caused by a motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train

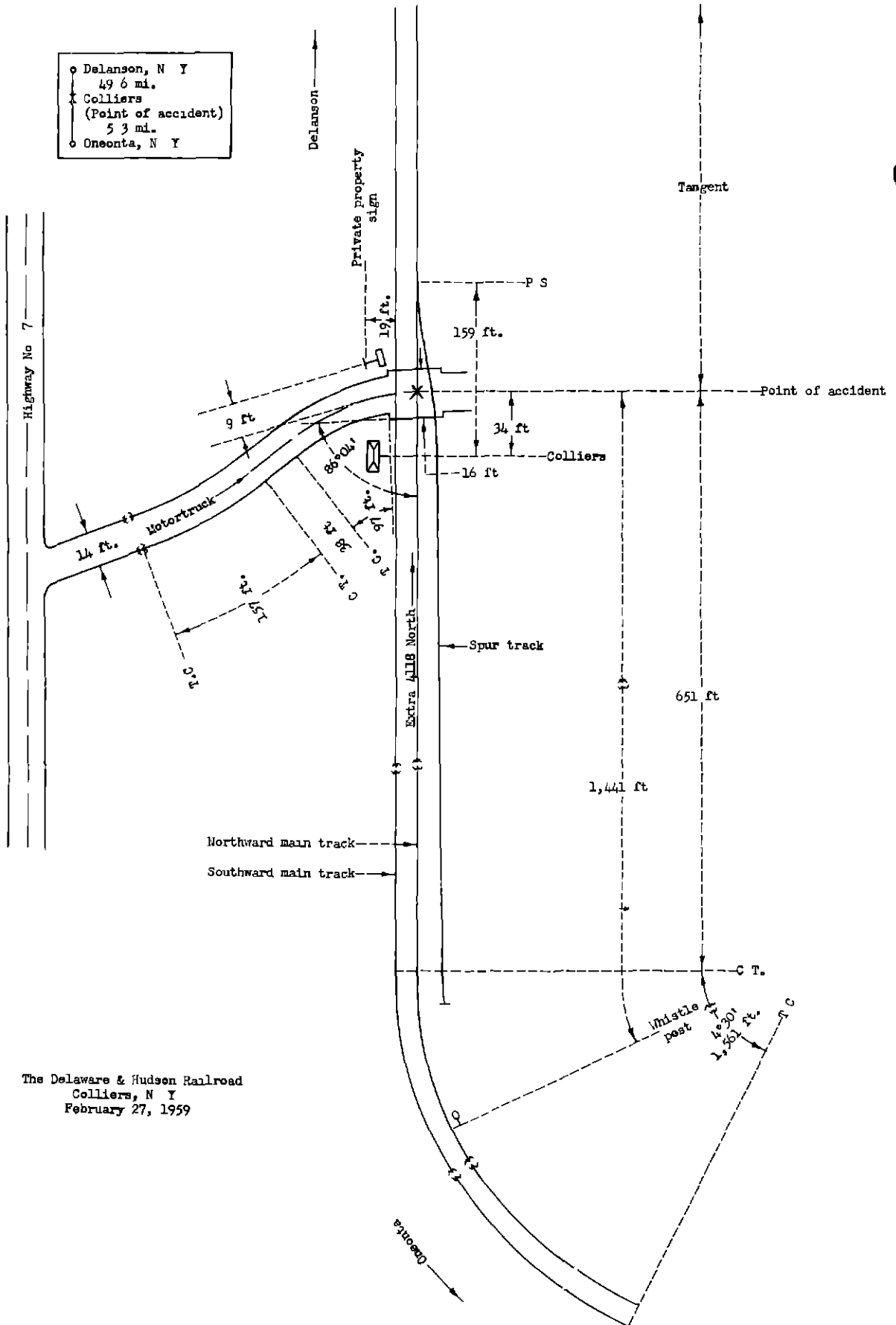
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

FREAS, Commissioner

On February 27, 1959, at Colliers, N. Y., there was a collision between a freight train on the Delaware and Hudson Railroad and a motortruck at a rail-highway grade crossing, which resulted in the death of 2 train-service employees, and the injury of the driver of the truck

¹ Under authority of section 17 (2) of the *Interstate Commerce Act* the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Freas for consideration and disposition

o Delanson, N Y
 49 6 mi.
 x Colliers
 (Point of accident)
 5 3 mi.
 o Oneonta, N Y



The Delaware & Hudson Railroad
 Colliers, N Y
 February 27, 1959

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Susquehanna Subdivision extending between Oneonta and Delanson, N Y , 54.9 miles, a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident a northbound train by timetable direction moves toward the east by geographic direction. Timetable directions are used in this report. At Colliers, 5.3 miles north of Oneonta, a spur track parallels the main tracks on the east. The switch of the spur track is trailing point for northbound movements on the northward main track and is about 159 feet north of the station.

The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point about 34 feet north of the station where the railroad is crossed at grade by a private road. From the south there are, in succession, a 4°30' curve to the right 1,561 feet in length, a tangent 651 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance northward. The grade is 0.12 percent descending northward.

The private road extends eastward from New York State Highway No. 7 and intersects the tracks at an angle of 86°04'. It is surfaced with dirt and is approximately 14 feet in width. The crossing is surfaced with 16-foot planking laid on the outside of each rail and between the rails of each track. The remaining area is surfaced with dirt. From the west on this road there are, in succession, a curve to the left approximately 157 feet in length, a tangent about 38 feet, and a curve to the right approximately 97 feet to the crossing. From the west the grade is slightly ascending in the immediate vicinity of the crossing and level over the crossing.

A sign 3 feet wide and 1 foot 9 1/4 inches high is mounted on a post located about 9 feet north of the center of the road and 19 feet west of the centerline of the southward main track. This sign is about 5 feet above the level of the road and bears the words, "Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corp. Notice. This is not a public crossing. All persons are forbidden to trespass upon or cross the railroad lands at this place under penalty of the law."

A whistle post for northbound trains is located 1,441 feet south of the crossing.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

31. The whistle must be sounded at all whistling posts and where required by rule, by law or an emergency.

Timetable special instructions read in part as follows:

3

TRAIN SIGNALS

General

The headlight to the front of the leading diesel-electric locomotive in road, * * * or transfer service * * * will be kept lighted during daylight hours.

* * *

Vehicle and traffic laws of the State of New York read in part as follows:

SECTION 1171. CERTAIN VEHICLES MUST STOP AT ALL RAILROAD GRADE CROSSINGS.

(A) The driver of any * * * vehicle carrying * * * flammable liquids as a cargo or part of a cargo * * * before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle within fifty feet but not less than fifteen feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and while so stopped, shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train, * * * and shall not proceed until he can do so safely * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 50 miles per hour

Description of Accident

Extra 4118 North, a northbound freight train, consisting of road-switcher type diesel-electric units 4118, 4040 and 4037, coupled in multiple-unit control, 100 cars and a caboose, departed from Oneonta at 11 54 a m About 16 minutes later, while moving at an estimated speed of 25 - 30 miles per hour, it struck a motortruck at a point about 34 feet north of the station at Colliers, where the railroad is crossed at grade by a private road

The vehicle involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned by J A Carman Trucking Company, Inc , Prattsville, N Y The driver, who was the sole occupant, held New York State Chauffeur license No 6820478 The tractor was a 1955 Brockway, powered by a diesel engine, and bore New York State license No 497-395 It was equipped with a conventional cab and a single rear axle with dual wheels The semi-trailer was a 1955 Fruehauf of the tank type and bore New York State license No 103-678 It was equipped with tandem axles having dual wheels Both the tractor and semi-trailer were equipped with air brakes The total length of the vehicle was 46 feet 5 inches and the gross weight was 69,250 pounds At the time of the accident the semi-trailer was loaded with 6,450 gallons of gasoline This vehicle entered the crossing and was moving eastward at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour when it was struck by Extra 4118 North

The tractor stopped upright about 81 feet north of the point of accident and about 10 feet east of the centerline of the northward main track The semi-trailer was separated from the tractor and stopped on the southward main track structure about 76 feet north of the point of accident The tank of the semi-trailer was ruptured Gasoline became ignited and flames enveloped the control compartment of the leading diesel-electric unit The train stopped with the front end 775 feet north of the point of accident and immediately thereafter an explosion occurred in the leading diesel-electric unit No equipment of the train was derailed The leading diesel-electric unit was heavily damaged by the collision and fire The tractor and the semi-trailer were heavily damaged

The engineer and the fireman died as a result of injuries sustained in the accident

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12 10 p m

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily railroad movement over the crossing was 20 4 trains During the 16-hour period beginning at 8 00 a m , March 3 1959, 77 motor vehicles passed over the crossing

The control compartments of the locomotive were located at the south end of the 1st and 2nd diesel-electric units and at the north end of the 3rd unit The 1st diesel-electric unit was equipped with a speed-recording device, however, the tape was destroyed in the accident

Discussion

As Extra 4118 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit, the front brakeman was in the control compartment of the second diesel-electric unit, and the conductor, the flagman and the rear brakeman were in the caboose. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly. The headlight was lighted.

The front brakeman said that the locomotive horn was sounded as the train passed the whistle post, 1,441 feet south of the crossing and that the warning signal was prolonged until the collision occurred. Several witnesses stated that they also heard the locomotive horn being sounded as the train approached the crossing. The front brakeman said that an emergency application of the brakes was made about 250 - 300 feet south of the crossing while the train was moving at an estimated speed of 25 - 30 miles per hour. He said that immediately after the emergency application of the brakes was initiated he crossed from the west side to the east side of the control compartment and observed the tractor of the vehicle on the crossing, and that the collision occurred immediately thereafter. Before the train stopped, the front brakeman saw fire envelope the control compartment of the leading diesel-electric unit. As the train stopped, he observed the enginemen leaving the control compartment through the rear doorway. While they were proceeding to alight from the locomotive an explosion occurred in the leading diesel-electric unit.

The driver of the vehicle involved operated motortrucks over this crossing several times weekly for a period of 4 - 5 years prior to the day of the accident. When questioned, the driver stated that he had no recollection of turning left from New York State Highway No. 7 on the day of the accident and could not remember the speed at which he operated the vehicle over the private road. He said, however, that after stopping short of the crossing he moved the motortruck onto the crossing at a speed of about 5 miles per hour, and that he was not aware of the train approaching until immediately before the collision occurred.

Throughout a distance of 88 feet in approach to the crossing the driver of an eastbound vehicle on the private road can see a northbound train on the northward main track throughout a distance of approximately 1,000 feet south of the crossing.

Cause

This accident was caused by a motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourth
day of June, 1959

By the Commission, Commissioner Freas

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary

Interstate Commerce Commission

Washington 25, D C

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

RETURN AFTER FIVE DAYS

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION