

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2855  
THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT SIBLEY, MICH., ON  
DECEMBER 28, 1944

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Michigan Central  
Date: December 28, 1944  
Location: Sibley, Mich.  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Automobile  
Train number: 228 :  
Engine number: 4691 :  
Consist: 6 cars :  
Estimated speed: 65 m. p. h. : Standing  
Operation: Automatic block and train-stop systems  
Track: Double; tangent; practically level  
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at right angles; level  
Weather: Foggy  
Time: About 11:37 p. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 25 injured  
Cause: Automobile becoming stalled on highway grade crossing

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2855

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

THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

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February 15, 1945.

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Accident at Sibley, Mich., on December 28, 1944, caused  
by an automobile becoming stalled on a highway  
grade crossing.

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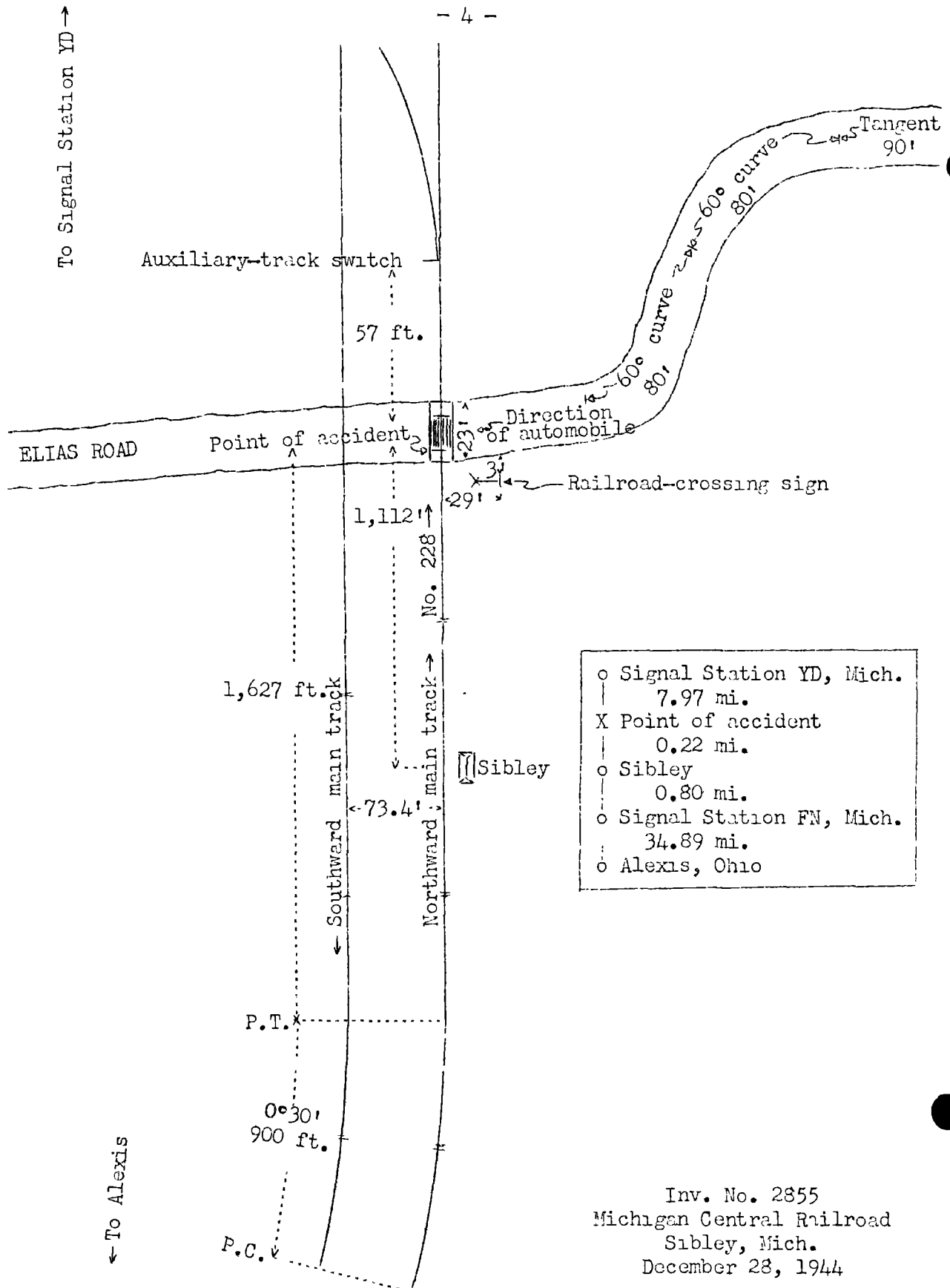
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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On December 28, 1944, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Michigan Central Railroad and an automobile at a highway grade crossing at Sibley, Mich., which resulted in the death of 2 train-service employees, and the injury of 21 passengers, 1 railway-express messenger and 3 train-service employees.

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



- o Signal Station YD, Mich. 7.97 mi.
- X Point of accident 0.22 mi.
- o Sibley 0.80 mi.
- o Signal Station FN, Mich. 34.89 mi.
- o Alexis, Ohio

Inv. No. 2855  
 Michigan Central Railroad  
 Sibley, Mich.  
 December 28, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Detroit Division designated as the Toledo Branch and extending northward from Alexis, Ohio, to Signal Station YD, near Detroit, Mich., 43.88 miles. This was a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by automatic block and train-stop systems. The accident occurred on the northward main track 35.91 miles north of Alexis, at a point 1,112 feet north of the station at Sibley, where the railroad was crossed at grade by Elias Road. In this vicinity the southward main track was 73.4 feet west of the northward main track. A facing-point switch which connected the south end of an auxiliary track and the northward main track was 57 feet north of the crossing. From the south on the northward main track there was a 0°30' curve to the left 900 feet in length, which was followed by a tangent 1,627 feet to the crossing and a considerable distance northward. The grade was practically level.

Elias Road intersected the northward main track at practically right angles. From the east on Elias Road there were, in succession, a tangent 90 feet in length, a 60° curve to the left about 80 feet, a 60° curve to the right about 80 feet and a tangent 80 feet to the crossing and some distance westward. The grade for west-bound vehicles was slightly ascending to the crossing, then it was level over the crossing. The crossing was 23 feet wide and was surfaced with planks 16 feet in length and 3-1/2 feet of asphaltum at each end of the planks. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign was located to the left of the direction of west-bound traffic, 29 feet east of the northward main track, and 3 feet south of the road. This sign was mounted on a mast and bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background.

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 ___	(1) Approaching public crossings at grade.

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The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 70 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

The automobile involved was a 1941 Pontiac four-door sedan which bore Michigan license No. AZ 8215, and was being driven by a person who held operator's license No. 351984. The driver was accompanied by one other person. This automobile, moving westward on Elias Road, entered upon the crossing and was passing over the northward main track when the left wheels slipped off the south edge of the crossing and the automobile stalled. Several minutes later the automobile was struck by No. 228, and was demolished.

No. 228, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 4691, one express-refrigerator car, one passenger-baggage car, two coaches, one dining car and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. The first car was of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder were of all-steel construction. This train passed Signal Station FN, 0.8 mile south of Sibley and the last open office, at 11:33 p. m., 2 hours 11 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour it struck the stalled automobile. Part of the wreckage lodged under the engine-truck wheels, which were derailed at the frog of the auxiliary-track switch. Then the following wheels of the engine, the first five cars and the front truck of the sixth car were derailed. The engine stopped, upside down, across the auxiliary track and 500 feet north of the crossing. The engine and the first four cars were badly damaged.

It was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:37 p. m.

The engineer and the fireman were killed. The conductor, the baggageman and the brakeman were injured.

During the 31-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains over the crossing was 34.32 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 p. m., January 8, 1945, 42 automobiles passed over the crossing.

### Discussion

The driver of the automobile said that, because of snow and ice on the surface of the crossing, the left wheels of the automobile slipped off the south edge of the crossing and stalled. An unsuccessful attempt was made by the occupants of the automobile to move it from the crossing. When the driver

saw the reflection of the headlight of the approaching train about 1,000 feet distant he gave hand signals from a point about 8 feet south of the crossing, but apparently the signals were not seen by the enginemen of No. 228.

As No. 228 was approaching the crossing the speed was about 65 miles per hour. The brakes had been tested and had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The first knowledge the members of the train crew had of anything being wrong was when the brakes became applied in emergency, then the derailment occurred almost immediately. Since the enginemen were killed in the accident, it could not be determined when they first became aware that the crossing was obstructed by the stalled automobile.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an automobile becoming stalled on a highway grade crossing.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of February, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.