

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2915  
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT PAINESVILLE, OHIO, ON  
AUGUST 2, 1945

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: New York Central  
Date: August 2, 1945  
Location: Painesville, Ohio  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck  
Train number: 41 :  
Engine number: 5452 :  
Consist: 13 cars :  
Speed: 74 m. p. h. : Standing  
Operation: Signal indications and automatic  
train-stop system  
Tracks: Four; tangent; level  
Street: Tangent; crosses track at angle  
of  $70^{\circ}34'$ ; 0.5 percent descend-  
ing grade over track No. 1  
Weather: Foggy  
Time: 1:52 a. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed  
Cause: Motor-truck becoming stalled  
upon highway grade crossing

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2915

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

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September 20, 1945.

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Accident at Painesville, Ohio, on August 2, 1945, caused  
by a motor-truck becoming stalled upon a highway  
grade crossing.

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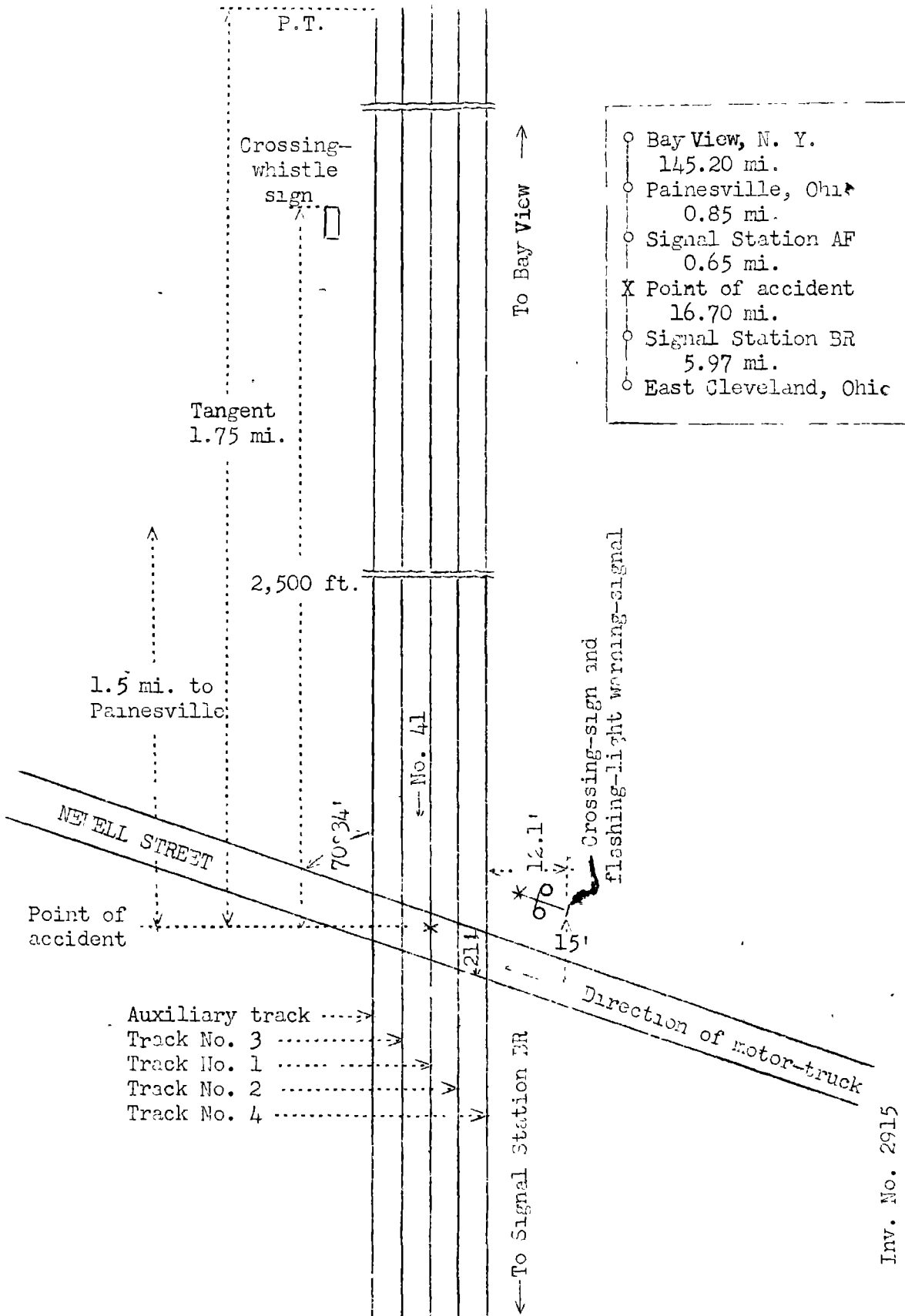
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 2, 1945, there was a collision between a passenger train on the New York Central Railroad and a motor-truck at a highway grade crossing at Painesville, Ohio, which resulted in the death of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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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.



- Bay View, N. Y. 145.20 mi.
- Painesville, Ohio 0.85 mi.
- Signal Station AF 0.65 mi.
- X Point of accident 16.70 mi.
- Signal Station BR 5.97 mi.
- East Cleveland, Ohio

Inv. No. 2915  
 New York Central Railroad  
 Painesville, Ohio  
 August 2, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Erie Division extending westward from Bay View, N. Y., to Signal Station BR, near East Cleveland, Ohio, 163.4 miles, a four-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications and an automatic train-stop system. The main tracks from south to north are designated as No. 4, eastward freight, No. 2, eastward passenger, No. 1, westward passenger, and No. 3, westward freight. The accident occurred 146.7 miles west of Bay View on track No. 1, at a point 1.5 miles west of the station at Painesville, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Newell Street. The main tracks are tangent throughout a distance of 1.75 miles east of this point and a considerable distance westward. The grade is level.

Newell Street intersects the railroad at an angle of  $70^{\circ}34'$ . From the south the street is tangent about 1,500 feet to the crossing and a considerable distance northward. Throughout a distance of 120 feet immediately south of the crossing the grade for north-bound vehicles varies between 0.40 and 7.40 percent ascending, then it is 3.5 percent ascending 20 feet across tracks Nos. 4 and 2, and 0.5 percent descending 13 feet across track No. 1. At the crossing there is an auxiliary track north of track No. 3. South of the crossing Newell Street is surfaced with asphaltum to a width of about 18 feet. The crossing is 21 feet wide and the distance from the south rail of track No. 4 to the north rail of the auxiliary track is about 60 feet. The area between the rails of each track is surfaced with planks, and there are two 10-inch planks outside each rail. The remainder of the surface of the crossing is paved with crushed stone and asphaltum.

A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located to the right of the direction of north-bound traffic, 12.1 feet south of the center-line of track No. 4 and 15 feet east of the center-line of the street. This sign is mounted on a mast 11 feet 7 inches above the level of the crossing, and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background. A horizontal bar is mounted on the mast below the cross-buck sign, and a hooded lamp is attached to each end of this bar. The center of the lens of each lamp is 7 feet 1 inch above the level of the street. When a west-bound train is occupying any portion of track No. 1 within a distance of 2,915 feet east of the crossing, the lamps flash red lights alternately. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located about 2,500 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 short sounds; "\_\_\_" for longer sounds.  
\* \* \*

Sound.	Indication.
* * *	
(1)    ___    ___    o    ___	(1)    Approaching public crossings at grade.
	* * *

\* \* \*

Section 6307-61 of the Motor Vehicle Laws of Ohio read in part as follows:

\* \* \* The operator \* \* \* of any vehicle carrying \* \* \* inflammable liquids as a cargo, \* \* \* before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle \* \* \* and while so stopped shall listen through an open door or open window and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train, and for signals indicating the approach of a train, except as hereinafter provided, and shall proceed only upon exercising due care. After stopping, looking and listening as required herein and upon proceeding, the operator of any such vehicle shall cross only in such gear of the vehicle that there will be no necessity for changing gears while traversing such crossing and the operator shall not shift gears while crossing the track or tracks.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 80 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 41, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 5452, one baggage car, four coaches, one dining car, five Pullman sleeping cars, one coach and one passenger-dormitory car, in the order named. The eighth car was of light-weight steel construction, and the remainder were of conventional steel construction. This train passed Signal Station AF, .0.65 mile east of the point of accident and the last open office, at 1:51 a. m., and while moving on track No. 1 at a speed of 74 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a grade crossing 1.5 miles west of the station at Painesville.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer, owned and operated by the Standard Oil Company, Cleveland, Ohio. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Ohio chauffeur's license No. 30986. The tractor was a 1942 WA-26 White 6-cylinder model, and bore Ohio license No. 10G48. It weighed 10,000 pounds, and was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels and air-brakes on all wheels. It was provided with a 5-speed transmission, and the ratio of the first speed was 7. The tractor was hauling a semi-trailer which had dual tires on its wheels, and was provided with air-brakes. The semi-trailer was equipped with a steel tank, and the total weight was 10,000 pounds. It bore Ohio license No. 70B11. The over-all length of the two units was 33 feet 11-5/16 inches. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 3,765 gallons of fuel oil. This vehicle, moving northward on Newell Street, entered upon the crossing, passed over tracks Nos. 4 and 2, and was passing over track No. 1 when the motor stalled. The vehicle stopped with the semi-trailer on track No. 1. About 3 minutes later the semi-trailer was struck by No. 41.

The tractor was slightly damaged and stopped on track No. 3 about 4 feet west of the crossing. The semi-trailer was torn loose from the tractor and demolished, and stopped across track No. 3 about 100 feet west of the crossing. The tank was punctured and escaping fuel oil became ignited. No. 41 was not derailed, but the train was separated between the fourth and the fifth cars. The front portion of the train stopped with the engine 6,527 feet west of the crossing, and the nine rear cars stopped with the front end of the fifth car 2,020 feet west of the crossing. The brake-cylinder pipes of the engine were broken, and the engine was badly damaged in the collision and by fire.

It was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:52 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman were killed.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 103.1 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 9 a. m., August 17, 1945, 639 automobiles, 81 trucks and 91 trains passed over the crossing.

#### Discussion

The investigation disclosed that the motor-truck had stopped on the crossing, with the semi-trailer on track No. 1, about 3 minutes prior to the approach of No. 41. The driver said that a stop was made before the motor-truck entered upon the crossing, then, as no approaching train was seen or heard

and the flashing-light warning-signal was not illuminated, he placed the gear-shift lever in position for first speed, and the motor-truck was driven upon the crossing. However, when the motor-truck was moving over track No. 1, the motor stalled. The driver made several unsuccessful attempts to start the motor. Then he saw the reflection of the headlight of the approaching train and gave stop signals with a flash-light from a point about 5 feet east of the crossing, but these signals apparently were not seen by the enginemen of No. 41. Considering the speed of No. 41 and the length of the controlling circuit of the flashing-light signal, the signal would not be actuated more than about 25 seconds before the accident occurred. Therefore, the motor vehicle was occupying the crossing about 2-1/2 minutes before the signal was first actuated by the approach of No. 41. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver, but he had made only one trip previously over this crossing. He had operated the motor-truck involved throughout one trip prior to the day of the accident. The motor had functioned properly prior to its failure immediately before the accident occurred.

No. 41 was approaching the crossing at a speed of 74 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 80 miles per hour. The members of the train crew were stationed in various cars throughout the train. These employees said that no application of the brakes was made until immediately prior to the collision. The brakes of this train had functioned properly en route. The enginemen were fatally burned in the accident, therefore, it could not be determined when they first became aware that track No. 1 was obstructed. Apparently, a lookout was being maintained as members of the crew of a yard engine, which was occupying the auxiliary track at a point about 400 feet east of the crossing, heard the whistle signal sounded for the crossing as the engine of No. 41 passed their engine. The members of the crew of the yard engine said that visibility in this vicinity was materially restricted by fog. Examination after the accident disclosed that the automatic brake valve of the engine was in emergency position, the bell-ringer valve was open, the headlight switch was in position for bright illumination, and the throttle lever was fully open. Apparently the enginemen of No. 41 were unable to close the throttle before flames of the burning oil enveloped the engine. The front portion of the train stopped with the engine about 1.23 miles west of the crossing. Officials of the railroad said that oil from the ruptured tank of the motor vehicle covered the wheels and the brake shoes of the front portion of the train, and that this condition combined with the inoperative brake system on the engine, because of broken air pipes, and the open throttle resulted in an exceptionally long stopping distance of the front portion of the train.



The laws of the state of Ohio governing the operation of motor vehicles require that a vehicle transporting explosives or inflammable liquids must stop before it proceeds upon a railroad track at grade, and must not proceed if a signal device gives warning of the immediate approach of a train. In addition, after it proceeds upon a railroad track at grade, the driver of such vehicle must continue over the crossing in the same gear in which the vehicle entered upon the crossing. The evidence indicates that the driver complied with these requirements. However, the motor stalled before the motor-truck cleared the tracks.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck becoming stalled upon a highway grade crossing.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twentieth day of September, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.