

**RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION**

**Report No 3826**

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THE NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN AND HARTFORD RAILROAD COMPANY

DEVON, CONN

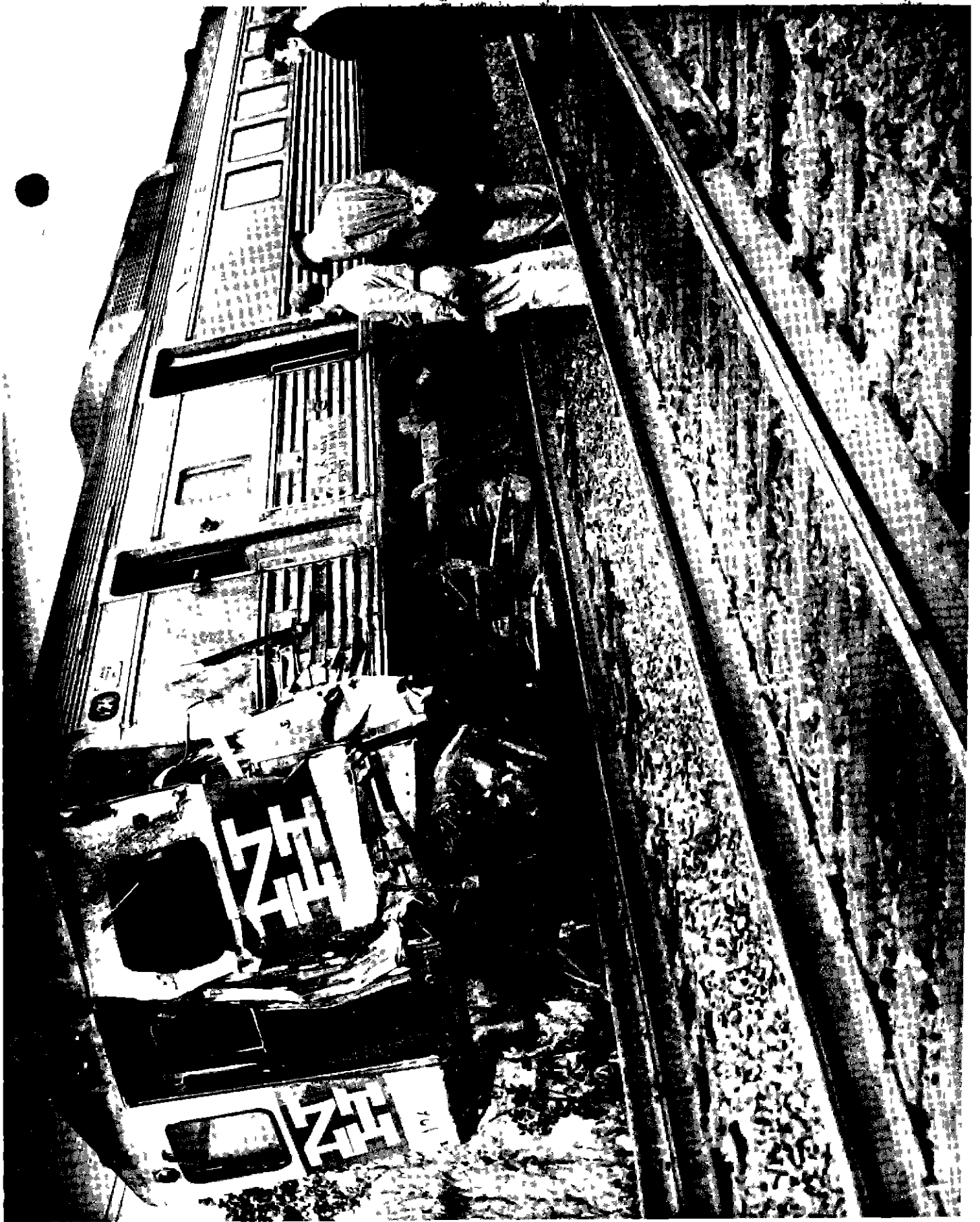
OCTOBER 31, 1958

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**INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION**

**Washington**



## SUMMARY

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DATE	October 31, 1958	
RAILROAD	New York, New Haven and Hartford	
LOCATION	Devon, Conn	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Passenger train	Motortruck
TRAIN NUMBER	451	
CONSIST	Diesel-powered passenger units 126 and 46	
ESTIMATED SPEEDS	45 m p h	Undetermined
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders and automatic block signal system	
TRACK	Double, tangent, 0.43 percent descending grade westward	
ROAD	Tangent crosses track at angle of 80°, 0.6 percent descending grade westward	
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	8:37 a m	
CASUALTIES	2 killed, 25 injured	
CAUSE	Motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3826

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

THE NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN AND HARTFORD RAILROAD COMPANY

March 16, 1959

Accident near Devon, Conn , on October 31, 1958, caused by a motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train

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

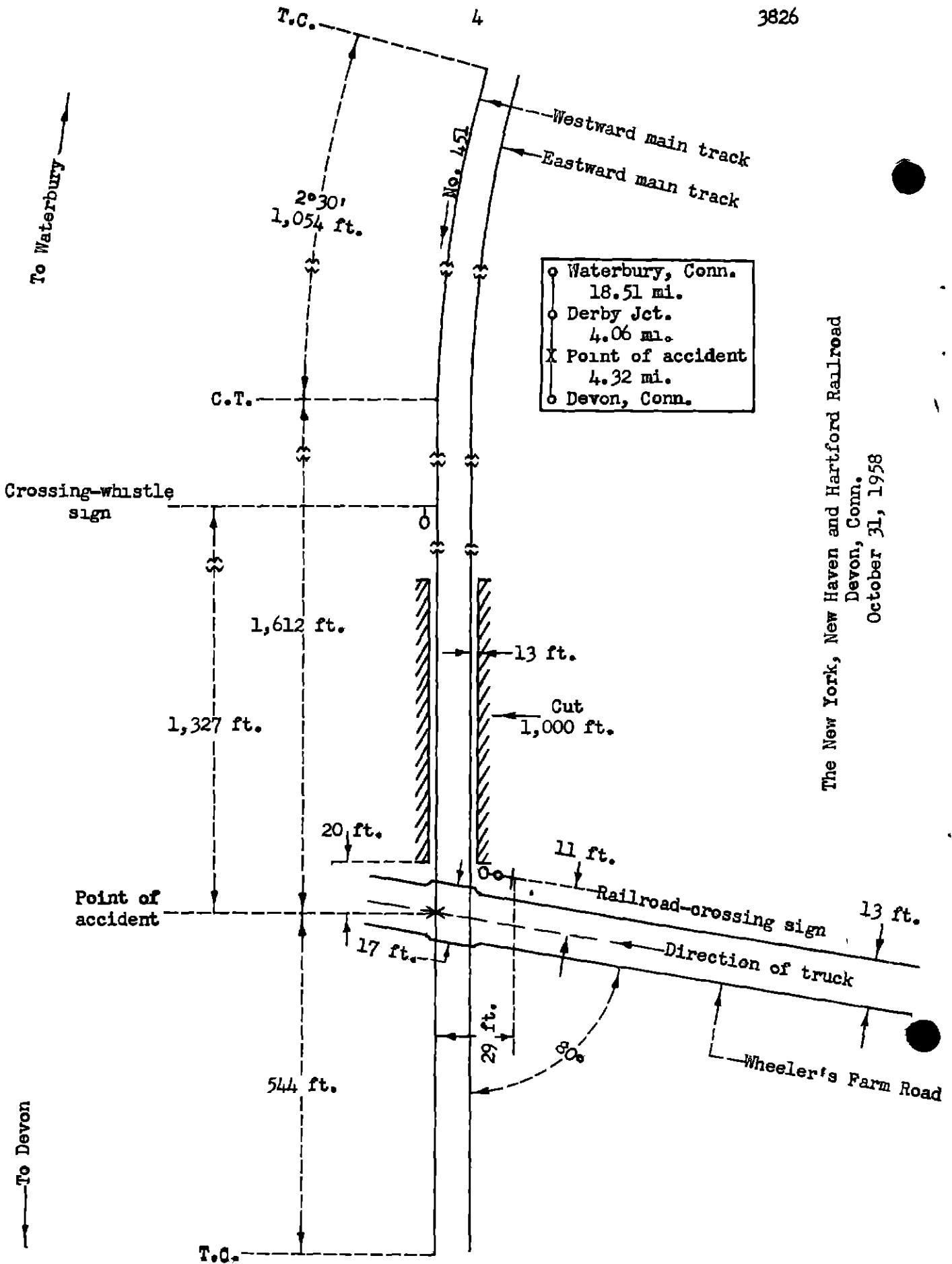
*FREAS, Commissioner*

On October 31, 1958, there was a collision between a passenger train on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad and a motortruck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Devon, Conn , which resulted in the death of the driver of the motortruck and 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 23 passengers and 2 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 Freas for consideration and disposition



o	Waterbury, Conn.	18.51 mi.
o	Derby Jct.	4.06 mi.
X	Point of accident	4.32 mi.
o	Devon, Conn.	

The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad  
 Devon, Conn.  
 October 31, 1958

### Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the New Haven Division extending between Waterbury and Devon, Conn., 26.9 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block signal system. The established directions on the railroad are east and west, and these directions are used in this report. The accident occurred on the westward main track, 22.6 miles west of Waterbury and 4.32 miles east of Devon, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Wheeler's Farm Road. From the east there are, in succession, a 2°30' curve to the left 1,054 feet in length, a tangent 1,612 feet to the point of accident and 544 feet westward. The grade for westbound trains is 0.43 percent descending at the point of accident.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the tracks are laid in a cut extending about 1,000 feet eastward from a point about 20 feet east of the centerline of the crossing. The south bank of the cut is about 13 feet south of the centerline of the eastward main track and rises to a height of about 8 feet.

Wheeler's Farm Road is a dirt road 13 feet in width. It intersects the railroad at an angle of about 80 degrees. The crossing is approximately 17 feet in width. Planking is laid along each side of the rails throughout the width of the crossing, and the remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material to the level of the tops of the rails. The road is tangent for a short distance north and south of the point of accident. Approaching the tracks from the south, the grade is, successively, 1.4 percent descending 50 feet, 2.0 percent descending 20 feet, 0.6 percent ascending 30 feet, and it is level over the crossing.

Circular and oval railroad-crossing warning signs are located 11 feet east of the centerline of the road and 29 feet south of the main track. The oval sign is 3 feet 10 inches wide and 2 feet 2 inches high, and it is mounted on a mast with the top of the sign 9 feet 9 inches above the level of the road. It bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in white letters on a black background. The circular sign is 2 feet in diameter and it is attached to the same mast. This sign is 5 feet 4 inches above the level of the road, and it bears two diagonal lines which intersect at the center of the sign. The letter "R" in white on a black background is set above and below the intersection of the diagonal lines. Reflectorized buttons are mounted on the lines and letters. A crossing whistle sign for westbound trains is located 1,327 feet east of the crossing.

This carrier's 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 reached.

\* \* \*

17 The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and by night \* \* \*

\* \* \*

30 \* \* \* the engine bell must be rung \* \* \* while approaching and passing public crossings at grade, \* \* \*

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

### Description of Accident

No 451, a westbound first-class passenger train, consisted of diesel-powered passenger-baggage unit 126, and diesel-powered passenger unit 46, in the order named, coupled in multiple-unit control. Both units were of lightweight steel construction and were equipped with tightlock couplers. This train departed from Waterbury at 8 01 a m, 1 minute late, passed Derby Jct, the last open office, 18.5 miles west of Waterbury, at 8 31 a m, on time, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour it struck a motortruck at a point 4.32 miles east of the station at Devon, where the railroad is crossed by Wheeler's Farm Road.

The vehicle involved was a 1953, 10-wheel motortruck owned and operated by the Turner Company of Bridgeport, Conn. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Connecticut operator's license No 190674130. The motortruck bore Connecticut Registration No 80-388. It was powered by a diesel engine, and it was provided with tandem rear axles equipped with dual wheels. At the time of the accident the motortruck was not loaded. The vehicle was moving northward on Wheeler's Farm Road at an undetermined speed when it entered the crossing and was struck by No 451.

No 451 stopped with the front end 1,274 feet west of the point of accident. The front truck of the first unit was derailed, and this unit stopped upright on, and in line with, the main track structure. No separation occurred between the two diesel-powered units. The front end of the first unit was considerably damaged. The motortruck stopped on the eastward main track at a point 160 feet west of the point of accident, and its engine stopped on the westward main track about 333 feet west of the point of accident.

The fireman of No 451 and the driver of the motortruck were killed. The conductor and the engineer were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8 37 a m.

During a 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily railroad movement over the crossing was 23.1 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 8 00 a m, November 4, 1958, 18 automobiles and 52 motortrucks passed over the crossing.

### Discussion

As No 451 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in the control compartment at the front end of the first diesel-powered passenger unit. The conductor was at the rear of the second unit and the train baggageman was at the rear end of the first unit. The brakes of the train had been tested and they had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The conductor estimated that the speed of the train was about 45 miles per hour as it approached the road crossing. He and the train baggageman said that they heard the grade-crossing whistle signal being sounded, and the bell ringing, as the train approached the crossing. They were not aware of anything being wrong until the accident occurred. The conductor talked to

the engineer shortly after the accident occurred, and he said the engineer appeared to be in a dazed condition at that time as a result of the accident. He said that as a result of this conversation it was his understanding the engineer did not see the motortruck until immediately before the collision occurred. The conductor said that he examined the control compartment after the collision occurred, and that he found the throttle in the off position and the automatic brake valve in emergency position. The engineer could not be questioned during or after the investigation because of incapacitation resulting from the accident.

The driver of the motortruck had been employed in this capacity by the owner and operator of the vehicle for three weeks prior to the time of the accident. However, he was formerly employed as a truck driver by two other companies.

Trees and other vegetation growing on the top of the south bank of the cut somewhat restrict the view of a driver of a northbound vehicle on Wheeler's Farm Road. However, throughout a distance of about 500 feet in approach to the crossing, the driver of a northbound vehicle can see locomotives and cars on the tracks at any point throughout a distance of approximately 600 feet east 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 sixteenth  
day of March, 1959

By the Commission, Commissioner Freas

(Seal)

Harold D McCoy  
Secretary