

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3090  
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT ALBION, PA., ON  
MARCH 31, 1947

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Pennsylvania  
Date: March 31, 1947  
Location: Albion, Pa.  
Kind of accident: Side collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Freight  
Train numbers: Extra 9724 East : Extra 9709 West  
Engine numbers: 9724 : 9709  
Consists: 47 cars, cabooses : 17 cars, cabooses  
Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 10 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable, train orders and  
manual-block system  
Track: Single; tangent; 0.6 percent  
descending grade westward  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 4:30 a. m.  
Casualties: 4 injured  
Cause: Failure properly to control  
speed of train in accordance  
with manual-block authority  
and approaching meeting point

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3090

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

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY

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May 1, 1947

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Accident at Albion, Pa., on March 31, 1947, caused by  
failure properly to control speed of train in  
accordance with manual-block authority and  
approaching a meeting point.

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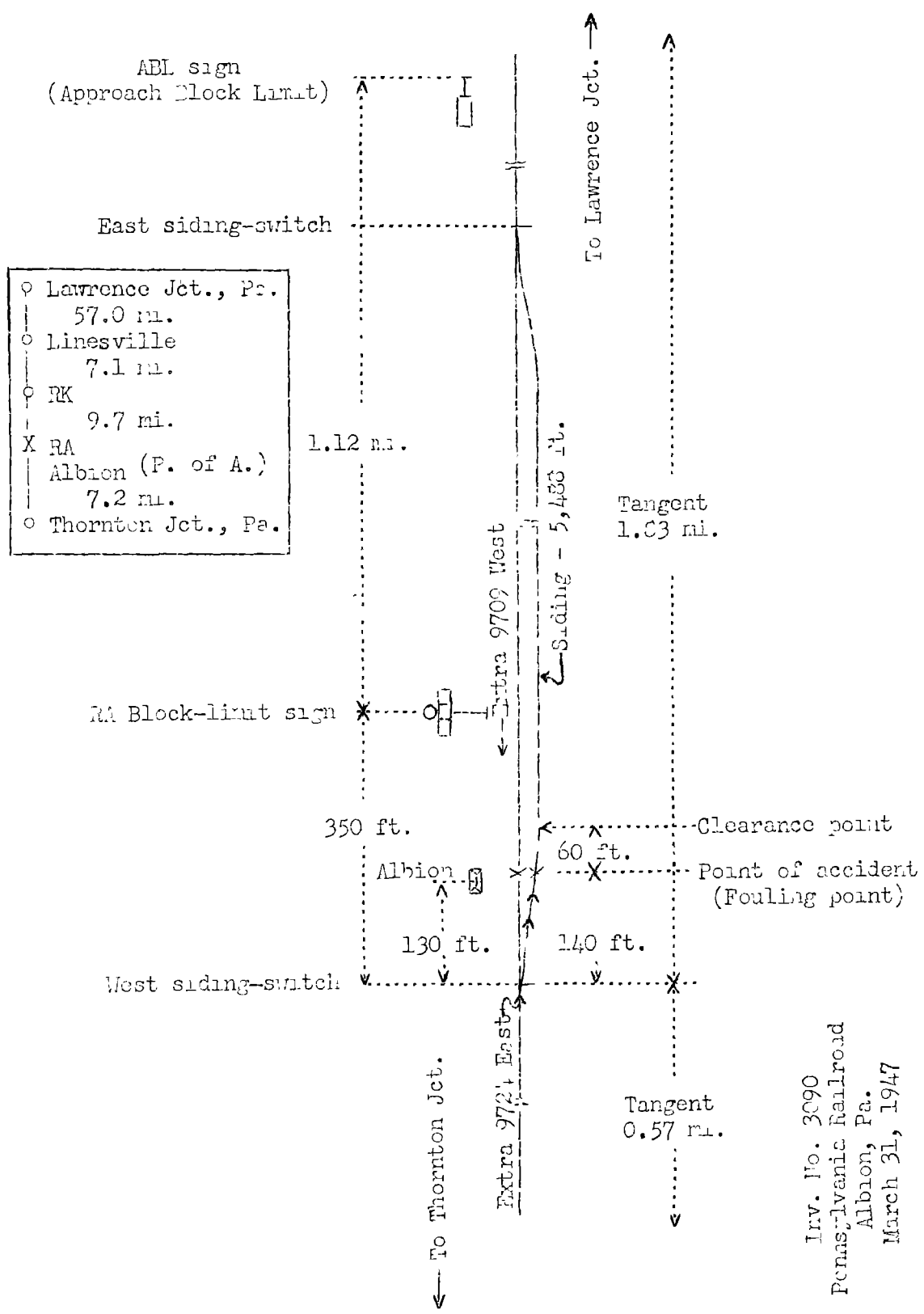
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 31, 1947, there was a side collision between  
two freight trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad at Albion,  
Pa., which resulted in the injury of four employees.

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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.



Inv. No. 3090  
 Pennsylvanic Railroad  
 Albion, Pa.  
 March 31, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Erie & Ashtabula Division extending between Thornton Jct. and Lawrence Jct., Pa., 81 miles, a single-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system. At Albion, 7.2 miles east of Thornton Jct., a siding 5,488 feet long parallels the main track on the south. The west switch of this siding is 130 feet west of the station. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the west siding-switch, at a point 60 feet west of the clearance point and 140 feet east of the switch. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 0.57 mile immediately west of the west siding-switch and 1.83 miles eastward. At the point of accident the grade is 0.6 percent descending westward.

The manual block involved extends between Albion and Block-limit station RK, 9.7 miles east of Albion. At Albion the block limit is indicated by a sign located 350 feet east of the west siding-switch. This sign consists of the letters RA in white on a black signboard 7 inches wide and 24 inches long, mounted vertically approximately 7 feet above the level of the tops of the rails on a mast 10 feet north of the north rail of the main track. The night indication consists of a red and a yellow lens 5-3/8 inches in diameter, mounted horizontally on a mast 8 feet 5 inches above the level of the tops of the rails. It is lighted continuously, and the yellow lens is next to the main track. Both the sign and the night indication are visible from either direction. An approach block-limit sign governing west-bound movements is located 1.12 miles east of the block-limit sign. The approach block-limit sign consists of the letters ABL in black letters and in colorless reflector buttons on a yellow signboard. It is 8 inches wide and 29 inches long, and is mounted vertically approximately 6 feet 5 inches above the level of the tops of the rails and 10 feet north of the north rail of the main track. The indications and names of these signals are as follows:

	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
Approach sign	Proceed prepared to stop at next Block-limit signal. Train exceeding Medium speed must at once reduce to that speed.	Approach block-limit.

\* \* \*

Block-limit sign                      Limit of the block.                      Block-limit.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

\* \* \*

Block-Limit Signal--A fixed signal indicating the limit of a block the use of which by trains is prescribed by manual block system rules.

\* \* \*

Fixed Signal--A signal of fixed location indicating a condition affecting the movement of a train or engine.

\* \* \*

Medium Speed--Not exceeding one-half the speed authorized for passenger trains but not exceeding 30 miles per hour.

\* \* \*

Block-Limit Station--A place at which a block-limit signal is displayed.

\* \* \*

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night \* \* \* It must be dimmed:

\* \* \*

(c) Approaching \* \* \* meeting points \* \* \*

\* \* \*

S-87. \* \* \*

Extra trains \* \* \* will be governed by train orders with respect to opposing extra trains.

204. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Enginemen must show train orders to firemen and when practicable to forward trainmen. Conductors must show train orders when practicable to trainmen.

### FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

#### S-A

#### Fixing Meeting Points For Opposing Trains

(1) No 1 Eng 981 meet No 2 Eng 982 at B.

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

561b. Unless otherwise provided, trains must stop at block-limit stations and the conductor or engineman must communicate with the signalman in charge as to the condition of the next block. \* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

At Thornton Jct., 7.2 miles west of Albion, the crew of Extra 9724 East, an east-bound freight train, received manual-block authority to proceed to Albion, and copies of train order No. 6 reading in part as follows:

\* \* \*

Extra 9724 East take siding and meet Extra 9709 West at west switch Albion.

Extra 9724 East, consisting of engine 9724, 47 cars and a caboose, departed from Thornton Jct., the last open office, at 3:49 a. m. and when it was entering the siding at Albion at the west switch and moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour the twentieth car was struck by Extra 9709 West.

At Linesville, 16.8 miles east of Albion, the crew of Extra 9709 West, a west-bound freight train, received manual-block authority to proceed to Albion and copies of train order No. 6. This train, consisting of engine 9709, 17 cars

and a caboose, departed from Linesville, the last open office, at 3:45 a. m., passed the approach block-limit sign east of Albion, passed the block-limit sign at Albion, where it was required to wait until Extra 9724 East had been met and until manual-block authority to proceed was received, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck Extra 9724 East at the fouling point of the main track and the west siding-switch and 210 feet west of the block-limit sign.

The rear truck of the twentieth car and the twenty-first to twenty-third cars, inclusive, of Extra 9724 East, and the engine and the first and second cars and the front truck of the third car of Extra 9709 West were derailed. The derailed equipment was considerably damaged.

The engineer, the fireman and the flagman of Extra 9709 West, and the flagman of Extra 9724 East were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:30 a. m.

#### Discussion

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 6, which established Albion as the meeting point between Extra 9724 East and Extra 9709 West, and the order included the instruction for Extra 9724 East to take siding at the meeting point. Under the rules, Extra 9709 West was required to stop clear of the block-limit sign, located 350 feet east of the west siding-switch, until Extra 9724 East had been met and manual-block authority to proceed was received. As Extra 9724 East was entering the siding at the west switch, Extra 9709 West passed the block-limit sign and struck the twentieth car of Extra 9724 East at the fouling point of the turnout.

As Extra 9724 East was entering the siding the headlight was lighted brightly until the engineer saw the reflection of the headlight of Extra 9709 West, then he placed the headlight switch in dim position. The first that any member of the crew of Extra 9724 East knew of anything being wrong was when the collision occurred.

As Extra 9709 West was approaching the east siding-switch at Albion the speed was about 25 miles per hour, and the headlight was lighted dimly. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The front brakeman was in the



brakoman's booth on the engine tender, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboosc. Each member of the crew, except the fireman, had read train order No. 6. These employees, except the fireman, understood that under the rules their train was required to stop short of the block-limit sign at Albion and to wait at that point until Extra 9724 East had been met and manual-block authority to proceed was received. The engineer said he had read the order to the fireman, but the fireman said he did not hear the order read to him. Until the engine reached the immediate vicinity of the block-limit sign the members of the crew thought the speed of their train was being controlled so that it could be stopped short of the sign. Then the fireman observed that Extra 9724 East was not into clear on the siding, and he called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. The engineer said the headlight of the opposing train blinded him and he was lost as to his location until the headlight was dimmed, then it was too late to avert the accident. There was no condition of engine 9709 that distracted the attention of the enginemen of that engine or obscured their vision. The brakes of Extra 9709 West had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control speed of train in accordance with manual-block authority and approaching a meeting point:

Dated at Washington, D. C., this first day of May, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.