

**IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
ERIC RAILROAD NEAR WEST SALAM, OHIO, ON AUGUST 22, 1918.**

October 4, 1918.

On August 22, 1918, there was a rear-end collision between two eastbound freight trains on the Kent Division of the Erie Railroad, near West Salem, Ohio, which resulted in the death of two employees and injury to one employee. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Kent Division of the Erie Railroad is a double-track line extending between Kent and Marion, Ohio, a distance of 113.5 miles. It is equipped with automatic block signals of the one arm, three-position, upper quadrant type.

The trains involved were extras East 4035 and 4001; the former consisted of locomotive 4035, 50 loaded freight cars and a caboose; the latter consisted of locomotive 4001, 17 cars loaded freight, one empty freight car and a caboose. Extra 4035, in charge of Conductor Albrit and Engineer Feltz, left Marion, Ohio at 10.25 p.m. en route for Kent, Ohio. It passed R. & O. Tower, the last train order station at 4.22 a.m. and stopped at West Salem for coal at about 4.43 a. m.

Extra 4001 in charge of Conductor Lane and Engineer Whitney left Marion, Ohio at 11.08 p.m. en route for Kent, Ohio. It stopped behind Extra 4035 at Ashland, took water and left there 15 minutes behind that train, passed R. & O. Tower at 4.43 a.m., and at 4.55 a.m. while running at a speed of about 25 miles an hour struck extra 4035 within the water station limits of West Salem. There was a light ground fog, but the moon was shining.

The caboose of extra 4035 and the three cars immediately preceding it were destroyed. The 29th car ahead of the caboose was also destroyed. Five other cars in this train were damaged.

Engine 4001 turned over on its right side to the south and into the eastward passing track just clearing the eastward main track. The tender was broken loose from its engine, derailed, loosened from its frame and partly turned over to the north with the head end between the eastbound main and passing tracks and the rear end over the passing track. The first four cars of train 4001 were derailed and considerably damaged. The twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth cars were destroyed and the wreckage and their contents scattered over both main tracks and the passing track. Five other cars in this train were slightly damaged. About 70 feet of the eastbound main track near where the engine and tender rested was torn up.

A approaching the scene of accident from the west there is about 3900 feet of 1 degree curve to the right, about 11,390 feet of tangent and about 1800 feet of 1 degree curve to the left. It was about 275 feet from the east end of the tangent track that the accident occurred. Automatic block signal 653.2 is located about 3200 feet west of the point of accident, and automatic block signal 651.2 with a dispatcher's train order signal on the same mast is located 1460 feet west of the point of accident. There is also a Water Station Limits sign board located about 2190 feet west, and the entering switch to the eastward passing track about 1190 feet west of the point of collision. For a distance of approximately 1.9 miles the grade averages slightly in excess of .7% descending, but in that distance there is one grade 5800 feet long that is 1% descending and three short distances which are slightly ascending.

Conductor Albert of extra 1035, stated that he left Marion first at 10.15 p.m., had slight engine trouble, hooked down to Benton Ave., and finally got away about 10.40 p.m. When his train came to a stop within the water station limits at West Salem about 15 car lengths east of block signal 651.2 for the purpose of taking coal, he stated that he and his rear brakeman got up to go and look their train over and had gotten as far as the doorway going out when he saw the headlight of extra 1001 about twenty car lengths away. Seeing that extra 1001 was not going to stop at the block, he jumped in one direction and the brakeman in another. They had barely gotten out of the way when the collision occurred. He says no effort was made to have the train protected by a flag for the reasons that it was protected by automatic block signal, was on a straight track and because under the rules flag protection was not expected within water station limits.

Rear Brakeman Hudson on extra 1035 stated that his train had been standing at West Salem water station 4 or 5 minutes, that he and the conductor were on the rear platform when he saw the approaching headlight of 1001 about 2000 feet away; that he had made no effort to go out flagging because his train was within Water Station Limits and was on a straight track in plain view and that he would have plenty of time to flag after the approaching train stopped at the automatic block signal, which was set against them. The fog, he states, was only about four feet high and the headlight of 1001 could be seen long before it reached the block. He stated that the dock light two markers and a red light on his schooner were lighted and in good condition.

Engineer Felts of extra 1035, stated that he stopped his engine for coal at West Salem and that his train stood there twelve or fifteen minutes. He said that there was a light fog about four feet deep, which did not prevent him from seeing the signals, and that he could see from one signal to the next.

Head Brakeman Woolley of extra 1035, stated that this train stopped at West Salem for coal and water, had been there about five

or six minutes and he had walked back nearly half the length of the train when the collision occurred. There was no warning whistle. The fog was low, the moon shining and there was no trouble distinguishing the signals.

Fireman Fraley of engine 1835, stated that he saw the blocks plainly as his train came into West Salem and that the fog was low and did not interfere with seeing the signals.

Night Water Pumper Elick stated that the collision occurred about 30 car lengths from his shanty, that he heard train 4001 coming and could tell from the humming sound of the engine that it was coming quite fast, that he heard no whistle and that the fog was a ground fog about four feet high.

Conductor Lane of extra 4001 stated that on leaving Marion, he looked at the air gauge and found his train had 70 pounds of air; that his train stopped at a number of points and had no trouble. The automatic signals were working. Just as the train started down the hill at West Salem, Conductor Lane said he again looked at his air gauge and found 70 pounds pressure. A short time later he noticed no other application of air or attempt to stop the train until an instant before the crash came when there was an emergency application of air or attempt to stop the train until an instant before the crash came when there was an emergency application of the brakes. There was no call for brakes and no warning whistle. The fog was low and did not interfere with the visibility of the signals.

Deer Brakeman Halfrich of extra 4001, stated that he looked at the air gauge on leaving Ashland and found 70 pounds pressure. There was an application of air just as they went over the hill before reaching West Salem. A little later the conductor told him they had 70 pounds of air. He stated that he believes no further application of air was made until it was used in emergency just before the collision. The air was working well and there had been no trouble with it on the trip. Brakeman Halfrich says it was foggy and that he could not very well see the signals.

Engineer Maloney of extra 4001 stated that he used his automatic air brakes to make several stops after leaving Marion, that they were working, but that his train was a hard one to hold. He had some trouble with his fire on account of poor coal and a new fireman. He says that after starting down the hill toward West Salem, he used his brakes near signal 653.2, which was set in the caution position, slowed his train down to 20 or 25 miles an hour, then released the brakes, and, seeing that the train was not going to stop, made an emergency application just about the time he passed the red signal 651.2. Engineer Maloney insists that he was awake, that he used all the air he had and can give no explanation as to why the train did not stop. He admits that he forgot to whistle a warning and to reverse his engine.

Rule 112 reads:

Regular water and coaling stations will be designated in the time table. It will not be necessary to protect the rear of any train while taking water or coal at such designated places, except in the time of a first-class train, or when the view of an approaching train is obscure, or in foggy or stormy weather. It is required that all trains, except first-class trains approach and pass designated water and coaling stations under control, prepared to stop, and proceed only as the way is seen or known to be clear.

Automatic Block Signal Rules 8, 9, 10 and 11 read:

8. It is required that all trains approach a signal indicating stop, under control, prepared to stop before entering the block.

9. A train passing a signal indicating caution must be prepared to stop before passing the next block signal.

10. When from any cause a signal cannot be plainly seen, it must be approached cautiously so that it can be correctly interpreted,--always bearing in mind that safety is of greater importance than making time. Engineers are not expected to make time at a sacrifice of proper caution.

11. Block signals do not relieve engineers and trainmen from the duty and responsibility of prompt and proper flagging.

Train extra 4035 was not protected by flag, it being within water station limits, and on straight track. In this connection it is to be noted that Engineer Maloney of train 4001 stated that he expected to stop at automatic block signal 551.2, and Conductor Albait was not required or expected to send out a flag under the rules.

This collision was caused by Engineer Maloney's failure to have his train under control in approaching water station limits as required by rule 112, in passing an automatic signal which was set against him in violation of block signal rules 8, 9, 10 and 11. He emphatically denied the allegation that he was asleep, but his failure to keep his train under control was due either to inattention on his part or to very poor judgment in handling his train.

Engineer Maloney was employed as a fireman on this railroad November 12, 1907, and was promoted to engineer September 11, 1910. At the time of the accident the crew of extra 4001 had been on duty 7 hours and 10 minutes and the crew of extra 4035 had been on duty 6 hours and 25 minutes.