

CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD (BIG FOUR)

WRECK AT PAGET, OHIO

December 23, 1934



The New York Central's *Midnight Flyer*, Train No. 42, an eastbound passenger train struck the rear of the *Eastern Mail*, Train No. 28, an eastbound mail train, at Paget. Paget is located east of Delaware, Ohio, at the north convergence of the Delaware bypass and the old main line. No. 42 had two locomotives both of which can be seen in the photograph.

Three crewmen were killed, three crewmen and 29 passengers were injured two days before Christmas 1934.

Photo from the Alex Campbell Collection.



A press photo of the accident from the rear showing four derailed passenger cars and on the left between the two cars, the cylinders of one of the two steam locomotives.

The camera is looking north. The track on the left leads to the Delaware depot loop behind the photographer. The center track is a passing siding. The track on the right is the Big Four's Galion-Columbus main. Blocked by the passenger cars is a view of the Paget Tower.

An ACME News Pictures photo from the Donna Carver Collection.

Dead Engineer Is Blamed For Train Collision

Missed Signal, Causing
Wreck in Which Two Others Died, Is Claim.

34 PASSENGERS HURT

Big Four tracks Near Delaware
Are Scene of Crash in Darkness.

By John H. Colburn
(Dispatch Staff Writer)

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 24, 1934)

DELAWARE, OHIO, DEC. 24 – Blame for the wreck of two Big Four passenger trains in which three trainmen were killed and 34 persons were injured – near here, early Sunday, was placed by railroad officials today on one of the victims.

“It was a case of the engineer failing to observe a red stop signal”, declared E.F. Hayes, Springfield, division superintendent of the railroad with offices at Bellefontaine. He was in charge of an investigation of the wreck.

The engineer was James Newton, Cleveland, pilot of the first locomotive of a double header which was pulling the *Midnight Flyer*. He was instantly killed, suffering a skull fracture and broken legs.

Double Probe Opens

Besides the railroad inquiry in which Hayes was attempting to determine why the engineer failed to observe the stop signal, a probe also was opened today by O.B. Murray and Clarence Knisely for the state utilities commission.

Carrying 200 passengers, including many Ohio State University students returning to their homes for the Christmas holidays, the flyer sideswiped the *Eastern Mail*, an express train at a junction three miles northeast of here.

Roaring through the darkness at 4:30 am the two trains met where a spur line from Delaware joins the single-track main line. They barely missed telescoping; only the last two cars of the express train being partly off the main track. These bore the brunt of the collision.

Fireman Narrowly Escapes

It was one of the worst wrecks in the railroad’s history, Hayes revealed.

Other dead victims were F.E. Springer, Cleveland, and J.J. O'Malley, engineer and firemen respectively, of the second locomotive of the flyer.

Miraculously escaping with his life was H.B. Barrett, Galion, fireman on the first locomotive, who made a vain attempt to halt the speeding train, which he said was "traveling pretty fast".

Majority of the passengers in the one coach of the express train and the coaches of the flyer were sleeping in their seats and had no warning of the crash. Pullmans of the flyer did not leave the track.

Striking the second from the last car on the express train, the giant locomotives of the flyer tossed a coach and express car in different directions before burying themselves in a ditch at the side of the track. Both trains were en route to Cleveland.

Four Coaches Derailed

Four coaches of the flyer were derailed, two of them overturning. Railroad officials said cost of the wreck would approximate \$50,000.

Workmen speedily laid temporary trackage and service over the lie was resumed today. However, work of clearing away the wreckage will require another day.

Only two persons remained in the hospital here today. They were H.H. Rector, 49, of Greenwich, Ohio who suffered scalp lacerations, and Mrs. Bertha Schaffner, 54, of Avondale, a Cincinnati suburb. She suffered a fractured nose, a severed artery, and blackened eyes.

Others Injured

Others injured were:

Miss Rosalie Schaffner, 19, daughter of Mrs. Schaffner. The girl suffered severe shock and bruises.

George H. Atkinson, 34, station master for the railroad at Mt. Gilead, and his wife, bruises.

M.T. Jones, 37, Cincinnati, cuts.

Fred Trinity, 62, Cleveland, cuts.

Dan O'Brien, 69, Cleveland, conductor of the express train, bruises.

Mrs. Gertrude Newmor, 40, colored, Dayton, and son, Theodore, 3, bruises.

Mat Bramson, 36, Cleveland, cuts.

W.A. Hollman, 52, Toledo, brakeman on the flyer, loss of a finger.

Adolph Allen, 11, Jackson, Ky., cuts.

Barrett, the fireman, was severely bruised.

One of the passengers on the flyer was Newton D. Baker, noted Cleveland attorney and war time secretary of war. Baker, with his secretary, Stephen C. Thayer, and Howard J. Burns, a member of Baker's law firm, were returning from Louisville, Ky., to Cleveland. They were unhurt.

Score Given First Aid

Dr. Dorrance James physician for the railroad, said at least a score other passengers were given first aid at the scene by members of the train crews and physicians who were called to aid.

Only witness to the devastating smash-up was Paul Bazzie, Ashley, Ohio, switchman at the junction.

“I put up the block (the stop signal) for the flyer,” he related, following the crash, in which he narrowly escaped death as the locomotive of the flyer crashed into his shanty after leaving the rails.

“I saw it wasn’t going to stop. I grabbed a lantern and ran outside. It was too late for me to try and stop them. I saw they were going to crash. Then I took it on the lam.”

Runs to Escape Crash

Bazzie was so close to where the locomotives overturned that he was struck by a piece of coal as he climbed a fence to gain safety in an adjoining field.

Barrett was clinging to the top of the tender as the locomotives ploughed to a stop, related Barrett. He said he was stoking the engine when the crash occurred.

Both trains were running behind schedule. The express train, due in Cleveland at 6:30 am left here more than an hour late. The flyer was due in Cleveland at 7:30 am.

Going “Pretty Fast”

“We were behind time and going pretty fast, “ related Barrett.

More than 25 persons boarded the flyer at Columbus, ticket agents there said. Many of them were students.

Pullmans which remained on the track were turned into temporary first aid hospitals. Those requiring hospital treatment were taken to Delaware in ambulances from there and Ashley.

Steel coaches were credited with saving the lives of many passengers and preventing fire. Flames ruined the structure occupied by Bazzie, but did not ignite the coaches.

Only the two cars of the express train were affected by the crash and the rest of the train was able to proceed. The Pullmans and other cars remained upright were rerouted to Columbus, then to Cleveland over the C.&O. railroad via Marion.

Coach Riders 'Scrambled' By Sudden Crash

Co-Ed Says People, Seats, and Baggage In Mixup.

By Dorothy Todd Foster
(Dispatch Staff Writer)

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, December 24, 1934)

DELAWARE, OHIO, DEC. 24 – “Twas two days before Christmas,” and all through the train, weary passengers, bound for home and friends to spend the holidays, were sleeping as best they could in the day coaches. Their dreams, a bit fitful, perhaps, were of the joyous welcome which awaited them at the end of the journey.

Suddenly the train swerved. A terrific crash rent the early morning stillness. Then passengers, baggage and green plush seats were hurtled crazily and heavily on top of each other in the inky blackness.

That is the way 19-year-old Rosalie Schaffner, University of Cincinnati co-ed, described the New York Central train crash, north of here, early Sunday, which claimed the lives of two engineers and a fireman and injured more than a score other railroad employees and passengers.

Although Miss Schaffner escaped injury, her mother, Mrs. Bertha Schaffner, also of Cincinnati, suffered face lacerations and bruises which blackened both her eyes.

INTERVIEWED at Jane Case hospital here, Miss Schaffner told the story.

“I was sleeping in a double seat on the left side of the coach and mother was sleeping the same way just across the aisle. It all happened so quickly that I don’t know what I thought was the matter.

“I felt the train swerve, then I heard an awful crash. The next thing I knew, mother had been thrown on top of me. She almost went through the window. After she fell in my lap I called out for help.

“It was pitch dark. The only light was from a fire at the side of the tracks, or something. I pulled up the shade and that helped a little bit. I had some matches in my purse and I lit them to see if mother was hurt.

“Blood was pouring from a cut above her nose. I fumbled in my bag and got out some cleansing tissues and tried to stop it a little.

“**BAGGAGE** was all over everywhere and all the passengers were groping around in the dark, trying to find each other and their belongings. The coach was pretty quiet, though, I guess everyone was so stunned that they didn’t scream or cry out.

“It was about five minutes before anyone came to help us, and then they had to break the window where I had been sleeping to get us out. They lifted mother out first and then they pulled me through a window.

“A passenger came up and said that mother could lie down in his berth so we carried her to another coach and a young doctor who was on the train gave her first aid. An ambulance came right away and we were brought to the hospital.”

Broken electric light bulbs and shades were strewn the entire length of the coaches. Shattered windows told how the passengers escaped from the topsy-turvy plight into which they had been plunged from slumber.