

1948 "Rocket" Train Wreck & Others In & Around Kremlin OK Arrel & Myron Toews

Updated
10/24/2024

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Brothers [Arrel and Myron Toews](#) grew up on a farm about a mile west of Kremlin OK, and the "Rock Island" (CRIP; Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific) railroad tracks that pass through the town. Growing up, the Toews brothers (including older brother [Galen](#), now deceased) heard numerous stories about the tragic [1948 "Rocket Wreck"](#) that took place in Kremlin; our parents, uncles, aunts and some cousins, young adults at the time, had many first-hand memories and stories to share. When our parents died, we inherited previously unknown family photos of the Rocket wreck and other Kremlin train wrecks.

A few years ago, when Arrel and Myron decided to document these stories and photos, they learned, through interviews with family members and other sources, that there had in fact been at least six train accidents of note on the Rock Island tracks in or near Kremlin.

This document is the end-product of our shared efforts. Myron scanned all of the family photos and negatives when our parents died (at least those that survived the tornado that destroyed our family farm in May 1961). Arrel provided the impetus for documenting and compiling the stories, and Myron joined in with collecting further photos, interviews, and other sources. This final product is Arrel's excellent documentation, one of many similar documents he has prepared on various family and regional history topics, with considerable research, interviews, and other support from Myron. It is very much a shared project, which we are happy to now share with others who may be interested.

Photos designated as ["TOEWS FAMILY"](#) are from the [David A & Rosa M Toews Family archives](#), most likely taken by our Grandfathers [Jacob A Voth, Sr](#) &/or [George P Toews](#) or our Uncle [Henry G Toews](#); we have no way of knowing who may have taken which photos at this point. Other photos and stories are from panels posted on the walls of the [FW Zaloudek Kremlin Community Building \("FWZ BLDG"\)](#); original sources of those photos and documents are not presently known (but may be possible to ascertain). Key clues to additional train accidents came from Myron's interview with his cousin Johnny Voth, who spent his entire life on a farm $\frac{1}{4}$ mile W of the Rock Island tracks, with vivid memories of several of the accidents. Finally, some additional details are from formal documents obtained in digital form (CD) by Myron entitled ["Compilation of Rock Island Train Accident Reports,"](#) noted as ["CRIP Report"](#) in the text.

The stories and photos here are intended for historical and educational purposes only; any use or reproduction without the express written consent of the authors is forbidden. We welcome any further information, photos, or stories from others, and those will be included here in future versions, with proper attribution.

We hope you enjoy, appreciate, and learn from our efforts.

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Train Wrecks In and Around Kremlin OK

There were a number of [train wrecks in and near Kremlin OK](#), several of them with significant consequences for the future of the town. Selected photos and information we have been able to glean from various sources are shown below. Special thanks to my brother [Myron Toews](#) who made available the "[Compilation of Rock Island Train Accident Reports \(1911-1978\)](#)" CD he purchased - it has been most helpful, as was his 1/2019 interview with [Johnny Voth](#), who grew up and then lived less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile W of the N Kremlin grade crossing. Myron also digitized numerous images from prints & negatives. We have tried to document the sources of information as best we can. We hope you will explore [weblinks](#), shown [underlined in purple](#).

["Kremlin OK & the Rock Island Railroad"](#) is a prelude to this document, and it is also available on [this website](#).

written by [Arrel Toews](#)

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1905 Freight Train Derailment:

The first Kremlin train wreck we are aware of was in June 1905, and it occurred 1 mile N of town near Tom Madden's farm. Twelve cars, six of them carrying watermelons, of the **Rock Island Extra Freight No. 753** derailed. Perhaps it was on the Wild Horse Creek bridge. The **21 July 1905** issue of the **Kremlin New Era** newspaper (see below) describes the accident. The hobo-watermelon story makes for good reading! For orientation, a portion of the **1901 plat map** for **Kremlin Township** is also shown at R - the **TP Madden farm** is SW/4-10.

The KREMLIN NEW ERA.

No. 2. Kremlin, Garfield, County, Oklahoma, Friday July 21 1905. Price \$1.00 per year in advance. No. 7.

A Freight Wrecked.

12 Cars Derailed--Occurring Mile north of town.

The Rock Island Extra freight No. 753 was wrecked last Monday morning near Tom Madden's place 1 mile north of town on the little bridge which spans a draw. The cause of the wreck's assumed and it is believed that it was caused by a spread in the track. The same train Sunday morning threw the trucks of a car off at the same place, which nearly resulted in a wreck, and the track was merely fixed temporarily. The wonder is that some of the heavy laden passengers were not the victims instead of this empty freight. No lives were lost but two typical hobos, shambled out of a car loaded with watermelons and received no severe injuries although they were both bruised, and one received an ugly cut on the side. Relating their experience with a chuckle they said the train was going about 35 miles an hour, and all at once the cars began to jolting as an earthquake had struck them followed quickly by hearing the crash of a car load of lumber which was smashed into splinters, they picked themselves up in the other end of the car to find out that the place where they were standing had been completely demolished. As soon as

they could put themselves together they emerged from a covering of watermelons and serenely viewed the distorted conglomeration of watermelon rines etc. etc.

Just think of the loss of life that would have been inflicted had it been one of the six passengers that had previously crossed it.

Twelve cars were derailed; six were filled with watermelons, three with lumber and two with ties. Work trains and section gangs were hastily summoned, but the road being at such a disadvantageous place it necessitated fourteen hours of incessant labor before the track could be cleared sufficiently to permit the passage of trains. It will be some days before the road bed and bridge can be repaired.

Kremlin has certainly had her share of wrecks and most of them have been laid to the poor track. The loss in wrecks between Enid and Caldwell would have put in the finest kind of ballast track.



1906 Plat Map of Kremlin Town

A 1906 plat map of the town of Kremlin (Standard Atlas of Garfield County Oklahoma; Geo A Ogle & Co, Chicago, 1906) is shown below for orientation purposes. Note the CRIP tracks running SSW to NNE through the town, with the house track to the W and the passing track to the E of the central main line. The location of the depot is also indicated. Four grain elevators are shown W of the house track by the depot. Also note a hotel, bank and 2 churches in town.



1914 Freight Train Derailment

The second Kremlin train wreck we are aware of was in 1914. All we have is the photo shown below. This photo and caption "Train wreck at Kremlin, 1914" are from p 834 of Vol II of *Garfield County Oklahoma (1893-1982)*, published for the 1893 Land Run Centennial Celebration (1982; Josten's Publications, Topeka KS).



1930 Freight Train Derailment/Fire

The narrative below is mostly from the official [ICC \(Washington DC\) Investigation # 1663 of the CRIP accident at Kremlin OK on 12 September 1930 \(CRIP REPORT\)](#). The [official accident report](#) is very detailed with much train car jargon, so a hopefully simplified summary is given below. Maddeningly, the investigator had his directions incorrect, off 90° clockwise - reported E is really N, W really S, N really W, and S really E. We can supply a .pdf file of this report for interested readers.

Summary: Northbound CRIP second-class freight [train # 98](#) consisted of 76 loaded cars, mostly tank cars, and a caboose, pulled by [Engine # 5039](#), with conductor Dillon and engineman Coley in charge. Fireman Gholston and head brakeman Sadler were with the engineer in the locomotive cab, while rear brakeman Burkhalter was in the caboose with conductor Dillon. Receiving the "Proceed" signal from the car inspector in the Enid switchyard, the train left Enid at 11:10 AM, one hour late. It passed a [section crew](#) working on the railroad 3-4 mi S of Kremlin and, noting no abnormalities on the passing train, they signaled to proceed as well. The train derailed at [11:37 AM on Friday, 12 September 1930](#) in Kremlin while traveling approx. [35 mph](#) (speed limit for loaded tank cars). Four transients ("trespassers" in railroad jargon) were immolated in the subsequent explosions and fire. The actual cause of the derailment is a bit complicated, but was basically the result of [faulty maintenance](#) and [inadequate inspections](#).

The derailment occurred near the N switch of the (E) passing track, about 800' N of the Kremlin depot and fairly near the N Kremlin grade crossing. [21 cars](#) near the center of the train derailed, and 19 of them were piled up within a distance of only 230', all of them destroyed when their contents exploded and burned. The 2 following cars also derailed, but remained upright and only slightly damaged, still coupled to the rear portion of the train, about 150' S of the main portion of the wreckage.

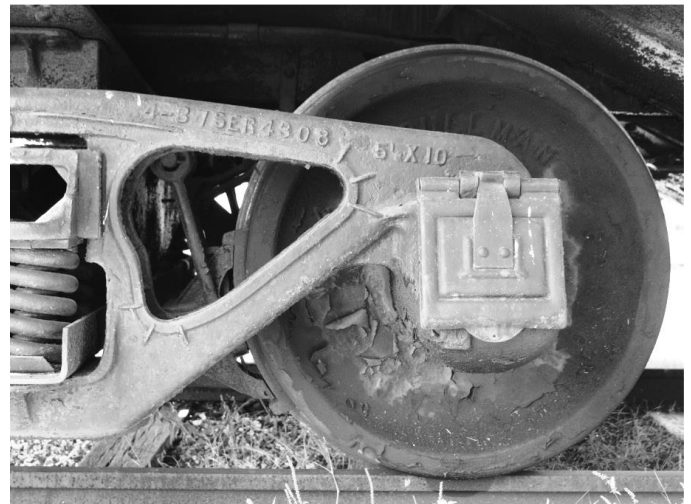
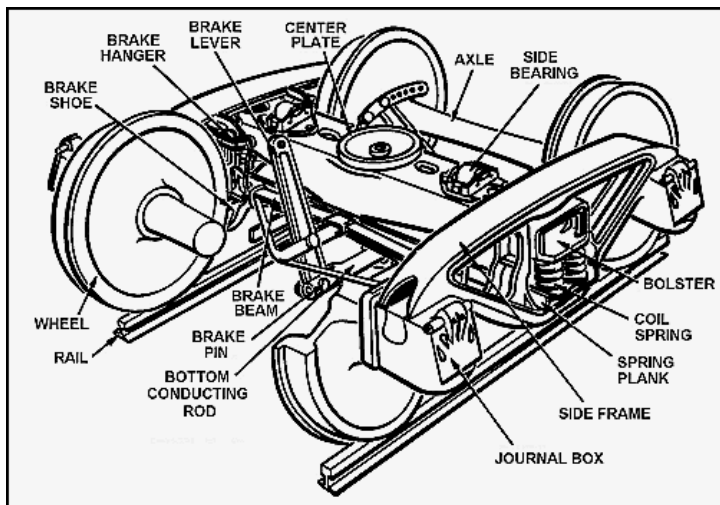
As the train was moving N through Kremlin, engineman Coley felt a slight jerk in the train. Looking back, he saw nothing unusual from his R-side of the train (E) view but "both the fireman and brakeman were looking back on the left (W) side of the train and said to stop the train, as it appeared to them that the station was being torn down." Engineman Coley looked back on the L (W) side of the train and saw fire break out, so he quickly returned to his seat, released the brakes completely and opened the throttle in an attempt to pull the forward part of the train as far away as possible.

Conductor Dillon was riding on the L side of the cupola of the caboose, and when near the S switch of the passing-track, he noted a big cloud of dust around the middle of the train, which

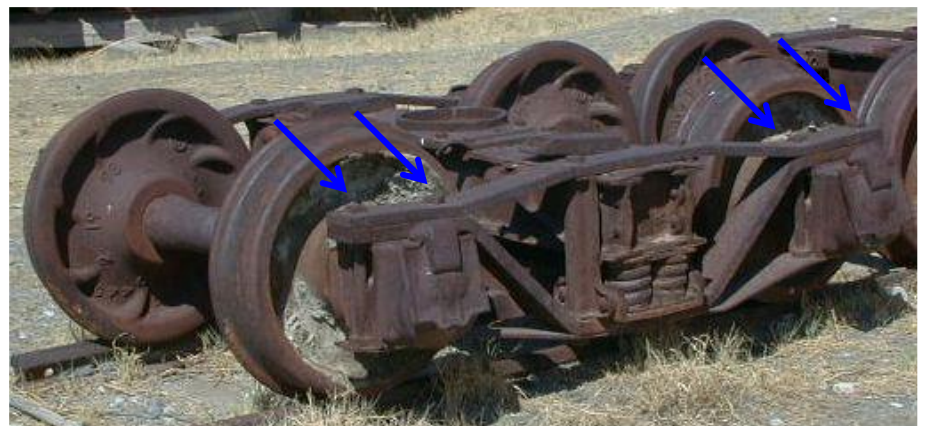
was approximately at the depot. He immediately pulled the air-brakes, and the rear part of the train came to a stop with the caboose at the Kremlin depot. Rear brakeman Burkhalter was on the rear platform of the caboose as it entered Kremlin, and he noticed wheel marks on the ties as they passed the S house-track switch (W of main track). He called to the conductor that a car was on the ground, but the conductor had already applied the brakes. Making an inspection of the track after stopping, Conductor Dillon found a **journal box** S of the station, a broken box bolt lying on the tracks, and a short piece of the bottom of a tie-strap.

A number of buildings on each side of the track were destroyed by the fire, including at least 3 homes and **Omer Fowler's woodworking/carpentry shop** (near the Zaloudek's elevator office site, W side of tracks). In fact, the damage was more extensive than this and the town barely escaped almost complete destruction; a significant portion was destroyed by the fire.

A diagram of a typical **railcar truck**, including **journal boxes** and **flanged-wheel/axle pairs**, is shown below, along with a close-up photo of a typical journal box on a freight car truck.

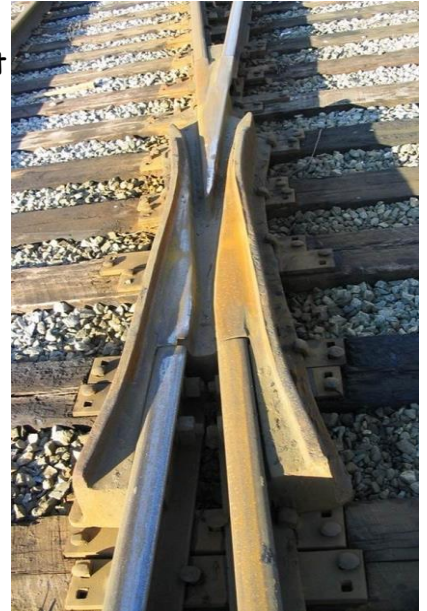


The photo below shows an **"arch-bar" truck** similar to those on the cars of the derailed freight train. Note the **two bolts holding the journal boxes to the arch-bars** - they basically hold the railcar trucks together, including the wheel/axle pairs and center plate, which anchors the truck to the rail car. One of these bolts was likely missing and the other fatigued and worn on a **left-side journal box of the rear truck of car # 38**.



When that bolt sheared off, this journal box fell off, setting in motion a series of events that resulted in the derailment. [Several "inspectors" failed to notice these deficiencies.](#)

After the accident, head brakeman Sadler walked towards the back of the train and found that the 38th car had only one set of wheels beneath it and that the rear truck was missing. He found the journal box of the broken truck 6-7 car-lengths S of the station, along with a journal box bolt cut off with a fresh-looking cut (conductor Dillon noticed these as well). Failure of that arch-beam truck caused a tie-bar to come into contact with some part of the S switch of the (W) house track, pulling the left wheels of that truck off the rail and onto the ties. The car was following the main rails, but on the railroad ties - eventually it encountered the "frog" (aka "common crossing;" pieces of track-work that allow 1 rail to cross another with an opening for the wheel flange; see photo at R) at the N end of the (W) house track, damaging the track and resulting in the derailment. The [derailment and fire occurred N of the depot and S of the N Kremlin grade crossing.](#)



Below is a brief [newspaper article from the Sweetwater Daily Reporter](#) (Sweetwater TX), Vol 10, #192, Ed 1, Friday, 12 September 1930 (day of the derailment and fire):

"5 CARLOADS OF GASOLINE BURN"

Four Persons Believed To Have Died in Flames As Cars Derailed

KREMLIN, Okla., Sept. 12, (U.P.) - At least four persons were believed to have burned to death today when 15 gasoline tank cars on Rock Island freight train No. 98 were derailed and burned here. Kremlin is near Enid.

The four were believed to have been transients riding on the freight.

Fire was raging and threatened the entire town of Kremlin. Three residences and a carpenter shop had already burned.

A broken brake beam on one of the cars was believed to have caused the wreck.

Several persons said they saw about four men on the cars shortly before the gasoline burst into flames."

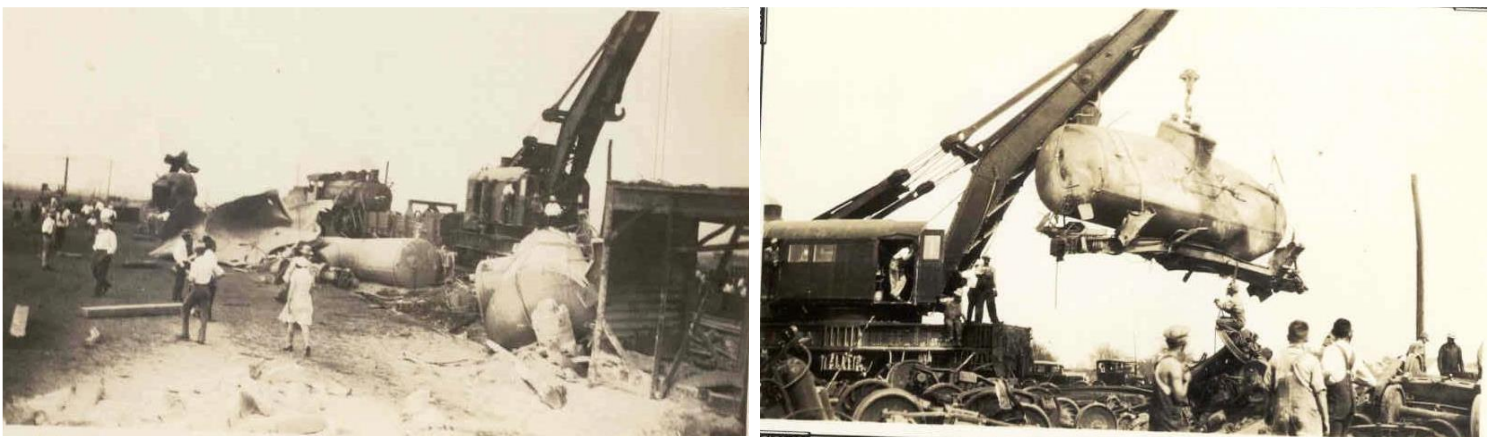
Some [photos of this train wreck](#) are shown below:



Above, L, Kremlin locals viewing the fire; R, close-up of same view from the road shown at left (inverted from original print) White patches in left photo above may be flames.



Above: Two additional views of the derailment and fire. Photo at L, looking NNW, shows final two derailed cars (they did not burn) and the rear of the freight train at extreme left. 150' separated them. Photo at R (**FWZ BLDG**) is looking NNE towards tracks and Farmers Grain elevator from W of the depot. Note the fire is N of the depot.



Above, L & R: Railroad crane removing debris, including tank cars, from the wreck site. Note the steam engine of the salvage train in the L photo, and autos below tank car in R photo; both probably looking S.

Another photo showing a railroad crane removing destroyed tank cars from the 1930 Kremlin train wreck. Note the exploded tank suspended by the crane.



The seven photos above appear to be all from the same roll of film - they all have the same ornate printed border. [TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES](#), except for one photo as indicated.

Several additional photos from this train wreck are shown below - from the [OK Historical Society's Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection](#), specifically "[Kremlin.](#)" This latter site contains other vintage photos of Kremlin as well.

Below: "Rock Island wreck at Kremlin, where 4 men were killed, 18 oil cars destroyed and houses burned." (Earl's Photo Shop; 28 November 1930; OHS Photo Collection)



Photos below are from the same [OHS collection](#) as previous page, taken on [14 September 1930](#). Captions for all three read simply "[R.I. near Kremlin.](#)"



[Mary Francis and Paul Hoover](#) remember railroad workers shooting holes in the burning tank cars to help drain them, so they did not explode (1994 Kremlin Centennial Bronc yearbook). [John Richey](#) also recalls one of his uncles using his WW-I Army rifle and armor-piercing ammunition to puncture and help drain burning tank cars as well (personal interview with Myron Toews, 10/2022).

Perhaps the photo below is also from the 1930 wreck (or the June 1950 wreck N of Kremlin, p 33). It appears to show fuel being pumped from a derailed Conoco tank car into another Conoco tank car on the tracks. Note steam locomotive at extreme L and cars and buildings in background. Image from [Toews Family](#) negative digitized by Myron Toews. Probably looking E.



October 1945 Richey-Rocket collision:

On 2 October 1945, [Richard F](#) (75) and [Rosie V "Violet" Pennock Richey](#) (67), grandparents of [Donna and Bill Richey](#), were heading to Enid with a crate of chickens on the back of their pickup truck, presumably to sell them. They collided with the [Rock Island Rocket](#) at the N Kremlin grade crossing. Perhaps some of the chickens survived, but the Richeys did not. They both rest in the Kremlin Cemetery.

After the bodies had been removed to Enid, [Johnny Voth](#) remembers undertaker [Jerry Allen](#) (Henninger-Allen Funeral Home) coming back to Kremlin and searching along the tracks for the back of Mr. Richey's head. (from memories of Johnny Voth, 1/2019 interview by Myron Toews)

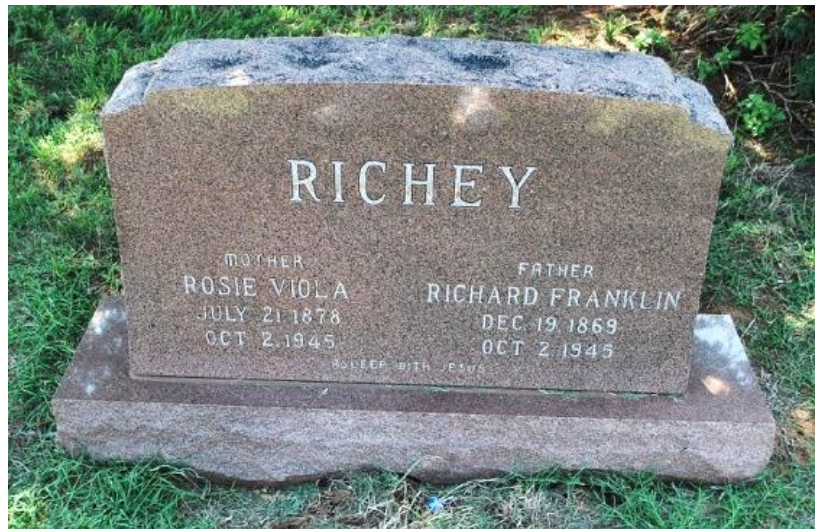
Wednesday Evening, October 3, 1945

Aged Couple Killed When Hit By Train

KREMLIN, Okla., Oct. 3.—(AP)—An aged couple who came to this northern Oklahoma country 56 years ago on a Rock Island train were killed yesterday by a streamlined Rock Island Rocket when it struck their light pickup truck at a grade crossing.

The victims were Richard Richey, 76, and his wife, Violet, 68. Two daughters, Mrs. H. E. Stouffer and Mrs. J. M. Payne, both of Washington, D. C., survive them. The couple was en route to Enid with a load of produce when the accident occurred.

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April 1948 "Rocket" Wreck

The narrative below is taken mostly from the official ICC (Washington DC) [Investigation # 3178 of the CRIP accident at Kremlin OK on 14 April 1948 \(CRIP REPORTS\)](#). The [official accident report](#) has very detailed descriptions of the event and its causes, with a drawing of the accident site; it is worth reading. We can supply a .pdf file for interested readers. A brief summary follows. Myron's 1/2019 interview with [Johnny Voth](#) was also helpful.

On 14 April 1948, the 5-car southbound "[Texas Rocket](#)" first-class passenger train of the CRIP Railroad ([Train # 509](#)) was crossing the N grade crossing at Kremlin OK, located about a quarter-mile N of the depot, when a large [1944 K-8 International dump truck](#), loaded with 31,600 lbs of wet sand and *en route* to just E of the crossing, failed to stop. Despite last-seconds evasive action by the driver, it struck the 3rd Rocket car at its rear "truck" (set of wheels), causing the last 3 cars of the Rocket to derail and strike cars at the rear of a freight train ([Extra 5035 South](#)) sitting on the adjacent E siding (passing track). The 3rd, 4th and 5th passenger cars were raked and damaged by the collision with the freight train in the siding. After the accident, the 3rd-5th Rocket cars leaned against cars 80-84 of the freight. The 5-car Rocket passenger train consisted of an E3A diesel-electric locomotive (# 626), a baggage-mail car, a dining car, 2 coaches, and a coach/observation/parlor car, in that order.

There were [3 fatalities](#), and 31 passengers, plus the truck driver and a railroad employee (flagman in fourth car), were injured. Among the injured was [Frank Dvorak](#), UWISC band director, on his way to judge the [Tri-State Music Festival](#) in [Enid OK](#). Most of the derailment occurred at the [N siding switch of the \(E\) passing track](#), and the collision between the Rocket passenger cars and the caboose and last 15 cars of the 94-car freight train standing on the siding ended only 110 feet N of the depot. All 5 Rocket cars remained attached to the locomotive.

There was a circular yellow railroad crossing sign 500' W of the grade crossing and another white sign 25' W, similar to those shown at R (the second sign nearest the crossing read "1 Track," not "2" as in the photo).



The Rocket was 29 minutes late out of Pond Creek and traveling S at [79 mph](#) ([speed limit was 80 mph](#)) when the accident occurred at [2:46 PM](#). Dump truck speed was estimated at 14 mph. The engineer properly sounded the early "station signal" on his locomotive horn ~1 mile N, then the "crossing signal" beginning $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the crossing (there was a "crossing whistle" sign along the railroad at this point) and continuing until

after the engine had cleared the crossing; the warning bell in the locomotive was also ringing, all as per protocol.

The "Kremlin Road" (now [Keowee Road](#)), sand/gravel at the time, was being hard-surfaced and several large [Mullinex Construction Company \(OKC\)](#) dump trucks were making 10 or more daily trips back and forth across this grade crossing. OK state law did not require their stopping at the crossing. The dump truck in question was about 50' W of the crossing when the Rocket engine entered the crossing. The enginemen in the locomotive had noticed the approaching truck about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the crossing and assumed it would stop; it was moving rather slowly. The dump truck side doors were equipped with canvas "side-curtains" above the doors that each had 2 small celluloid windows. Readers should appreciate this direct quote: "[Examination after the accident disclosed that the small celluloid windows in the canvas curtains were streaked with red-colored mud, and that this condition impaired visibility to a significant extent.](#)" The driver of the dump truck said he looked but did not see the train until the engine entered the crossing - he then took evasive action, turning right (S) off the roadbed itself to try to avoid a collision, but to no avail. The collision turned the truck onto its right side S of the crossing. Perhaps his evasive action lessened the severity of the aftermath of the collision.

The [air-conditioning system of the 4th car](#) was powered by an internal-combustion engine mounted beneath the car, powered by industrial [propane gas](#) stored in 2 cabinets (four 24-gallon tanks each) mounted midway on each side under the car. As a result of the collision, propane escaped a propane tank through an $1\frac{1}{32}$ " aperture (it is not clear if this was a puncture or a severed fitting) - the propane gas ignited and the flame projected against a tank car of the freight train, then was directed back against the 4th car. The interior and undercarriage of this car, then that of the 5th car as well, were immediately ignited by the intense heat and all of the interior "finish and fittings" were completely destroyed. The heat was intense enough to warp the car bodies. There was no vestibule nor side door exit at the front, nor any rear or side egress from the back, of the coach/parlor/observation (5th) car - it had a rounded rear end for passenger viewing. All three fatalities and most all injuries were in these last 2 cars.

The caboose of the freight train sitting in the siding was overturned to the L, and the right sides of the rear 15 cars of the 94-car freight train considerably damaged. Freight cars 80-83 were heavily damaged by the fire. This was just N, only about 100', of the Kremlin depot.

The photos on following pages show various views of this train collision.

[Below](#): photos of the dump truck that hit the Rocket on 14 April 1948. L: Note the mangled RR-crossing sign amid the sand pile from the truck and the N Kremlin grade crossing past the

wrecked truck. Looking N towards Pond Creek (elevators barely visible). (Al McLaughlin, OHS Photo Collection; also on cover) R: "Dump Truck That Hit The Train" (FWZ BLDG).



Below: View of coach/parlor/observation car (last car on the train) against tank cars of the freight train in the siding, looking S. Photo taken soon after the accident; note OK Highway Patrol car at extreme R. (TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES)





Above: Spectators and OK Highway Patrol car in front of coach/parlor/observation car (last car on the train) against tank cars of the freight train sitting in the siding. Looking E. Photo taken soon after the accident, 14 April 1948. [\(TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES\)](#)

Next page top: Rear of the coach/parlor/observation car (last car on the train) that burned showing damage from being raked against the freight train parked in the siding and subsequent fire. Note the badly mangled and burned interior, seat at foreground, and Zaloudek's wooden elevator at R background. Looking WNW. Cars of the freight train in E siding have already been removed. [\(TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES\)](#)

Next page bottom: ["Fire in the Hot Springs rail car in Kremlin Oklahoma"](#) looking NNE from near depot ([from online photo search](#)). Note Farmers Grain Company elevators, including small tin elevator building and the overturned freight caboose in front of the elevators at far L. The front car is the "Hot Springs" coach car (car 4; name visible on side) and the back car is the coach/parlor/observation car (car 5). The open side flaps on both cars may indicate the position of the propane gas cabinets under the cars. Perhaps a propane tank is visible above the seat. The engine and first 3 cars have been uncoupled and removed S along the main track.



Right: Another view of the [Hot Springs coach car](#), looking S - from the Daily Oklahoman.

Caption reads "A side view of the wrecked and burned coach of the [Rock Island Rocket](#)." Note front cars of the Rocket at extreme R. Al McLaughlin, 14 April 1948
OHS Photo Collection



Below: Damaged and burned passenger coach, perhaps car 4, after removal of damaged freight train cars. Note severely damaged left side and vestibule at end of car, and front cars of Rocket on main track. Also note "Zaloudek's" tin/wooden elevator at far L. Looking SW.
([TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES](#))





Above: Overtaken caboose and derailed tank car displaced rails of siding track very near Kremlin depot, looking S, after removal of Rocket passenger cars. Note "Zaloudek's" tin/wooden grain elevator behind depot and automobiles at far L. **(TOEWS FAMILY ARCHIVES)**; also on cover

Below: "Kremlin Citizens Providing Care" (FWZ BLDG). Zaloudek's grain elevator at back center, depot and Zaloudek's tin/wooden elevator office are at R. Note stretchers at lower R, and occupied stretcher at center. Looking NNE.

Note wooden slab in foreground and another behind it on which an injured person rests - these are the "sliding wood doors" mentioned by Mickey Zaloudek on p 29, although he is incorrect in his exact description. They are used to seal boxcar doors.



KREMLIN CITIZENS PROVIDING CARE

Below, upper & lower: Damaged cars of the freight train in the siding with Texas Rocket debris and ashes beside them, after removal of the Rocket passenger cars. Both looking E.



Right: from an Oklahoma Publishing Company newspaper article; caption reads: "**Siding ripped from passenger train hanging on sidetracked freight.**" (Al McLaughlin, 14 April 1948, OHS Photo Collection).

Note the OK Highway Patrol officer examining the debris.



Right: A salvage crane lifts car #3 back onto the main track.
from an Oklahoma Publishing Company newspaper article; caption reads:
"**This was car truck hit. Did not burn.**"
Al McLaughlin, 14 April 1948
OHS Photo Collection

Unless otherwise noted, all photos above are from the **TOEWS FAMILY PHOTO ARCHIVES**, all with September 1948 embossed below the prints (or from digitized negatives originally used for these prints).



[Aerial photo taken soon after the wreck](#), looking NE (purchased from [HistoricImages.com](#) by Arrel). I believe it was taken from Zaloudek's concrete grain elevator headhouse (looking E) Note airplane and firehoses E of wreck, damaged oil tank cars E of the two Rocket cars (rear parlor car and Hot Springs car), fire truck at lower R with hoses, fire ladder going into last (parlor) car, and ambulances (one among crowd by last car, another in L foreground). The OK Highway Patrol car just W of end of back car is also visible in photos on pages 16 & 17. Extensive fire damage is evident on both Rocket cars; note ladder into burned last car. The stack of railroad ties citizens are standing on W of the R car is also visible in the lower photo



3-4/15-KREMLIN, OKLA: Fire hoses snake their way from fire truck (lower rt) to 2 cars of Rock Island Texas Rocket after streamliner was hit by a truck & ear cars left rails & skidded along parked oil cars on siding at Kremlin, a. Note paint scorched from cars, fire ladder in window at left & ambulance foreground. At least 2 were killed, 20 injured in wreck. (ACME TELEPHOTO)

Two additional images of the Rocket wreck, also purchased by Arrel from [Historic Images](#), are shown below and on the following page. Below: photo is taken looking N from atop a tank car in the siding. Last two Rocket cars, Kremlin depot, and grain elevators are visible.



Caption reads: KC95-4/15 - KREMLIN OKLA: Smashed against oil cars, 2 rear cars of fast Rock Island Texas Rocket burned after streamliner was struck by a truck at Kremlin, Okla. At least 2 persons were killed, 20 others injured in the wreck. (ACME TELEPHOTO)

Photo below looking NNE shows last 2 Rocket cars with spectators, Farmers Grain elevators, and tank car in the siding. Purchased from [HistoricImages.com](https://www.historicimages.com). Caption from back is below.



CLEVELAND BUREAU

KREMLIN, OKIA: General view of the wreckage of the Rock Island Rocket bound from Kansas City to Dallas, Texas. The train was derailed near Kremlin after it hit a truck. Four persons were killed and 14 injured when two coaches overturned and burst into flames.
CREDIT (ACME TELEPHOTO) 4/14/48 jpd



Above (L) "Steam Engine Fighting Fire"; (R) "Burning Passenger Rail Car" (both **FWZ BLDG**). The burning car at upper R is named "Hot Springs" (see also photos on previous pages) but tank cars on siding behind it are not visible, presumably because of the smoke and fire. The front portion of the Rocket has been uncoupled and moved S along the main track. Perhaps a bit of a railcar on the siding is visible at extreme R. This photo is looking ESE from W and just N of the depot. Stacks of railroad ties in front of the car are also visible in lower photo on page 14.

The steam engine at upper L must be on the (W) house track (note direction of tilt of the Hot Springs Rocket passenger car at L). Perhaps it is the locomotive and tender from the freight train involved in the accident. It could have uncoupled from the freight cars, then pulled onto the main line, then backed onto the house track on the other side (W) of the depot as shown.

The [block of four photos](#) below are also from that 1948 Kremlin Rocket wreck - they are all from the **FWZ BLDG**. They must be photos of the left sides of the 4th and 5th cars after the freight train and associated debris had been removed and the cars placed back on the tracks. The right sides of cars 4 and 5 were not damaged by scraping in the collision (see photos on previous pages), but the left sides were heavily damaged.



The photos below show close-up damage of the badly mangled and burned last 2 cars of the Rocket. Views are of the left (E) side of the cars. Photos are from a [Fred and Marjorie Randolph](#) family photo album kindly provided by [Betty Randolph Strickland](#). Betty was a classmate of mine for all 12 years at Kremlin Schools and is still a dear friend. Her father Fred was a community leader, including stints on the Kremlin School Board.



Upper photo shows derailed tank cars after the Rocket cars have been cleared. Perhaps the derailed and overturned caboose of the freight train (see p 20) is at L behind the tank cars.



I believe the poorly focused photo below shows the derailed and overturned caboose of the freight train (again, see p 20), now loaded onto a freight train for salvage. Looking N. Zaloudek's tin/wooden elevator and concrete silo elevator are visible at extreme R.



Both photos are from the same [Randolph Family album](#) as the two photos on the previous page. This film roll was developed in May 1950 and includes both the 1948 and 1950 Kremlin train wrecks. Betty says it is likely her mother [Marjorie](#) took the photos.

We have no photos of the intact Rocket train that wrecked, nor even views of the engine in any of the many wreck photos, so additional photos and information are shown below. The [photo below](#) is not the exact Rocket that wrecked in Kremlin in 1948, but it is the [same # 626 locomotive](#) and virtually identical configuration of the train that wrecked. So this is what the Texas Rocket train looked like just prior to the collision. Note the 5 cars behind the locomotive - baggage/mail car, dining car, 2 coach passenger cars, final coach/observation/parlor car. This photo was taken on 23 November 1939 near Denver CO (Rocky Mountain Rocket; Train 7).



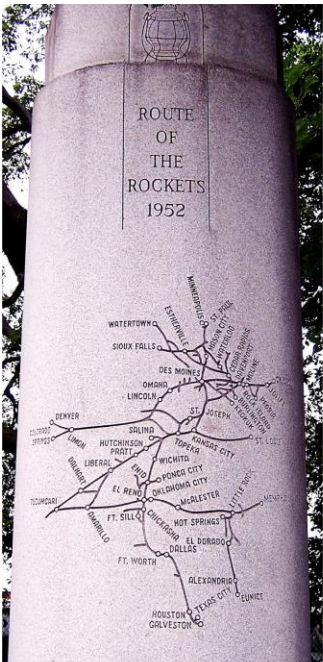
The locomotive pulling the Rocket train that wrecked in Kremlin was an [E3A diesel-electric locomotive \(# 626\)](#). Along with its twin (#625), it was built by [Electro-Motive Corporation](#) (EMC) of La Grange IL in July 1939. Locomotive 626 is shown at R at a maintenance facility in Memphis TN in February 1966.

[Locomotives 625 and 626](#) were the only E3A locomotives built for the Rock Island Railroad. They had two V-12 (12-cylinder), 6,804 cu in displacement (567 cu in displacement/cylinder) diesel engines that each produced 1,000 hp (750kW), with each engine attached to a direct-current generator that supplied power to two electric motors each - on the front and rear trucks (sets of wheels) of the locomotive.

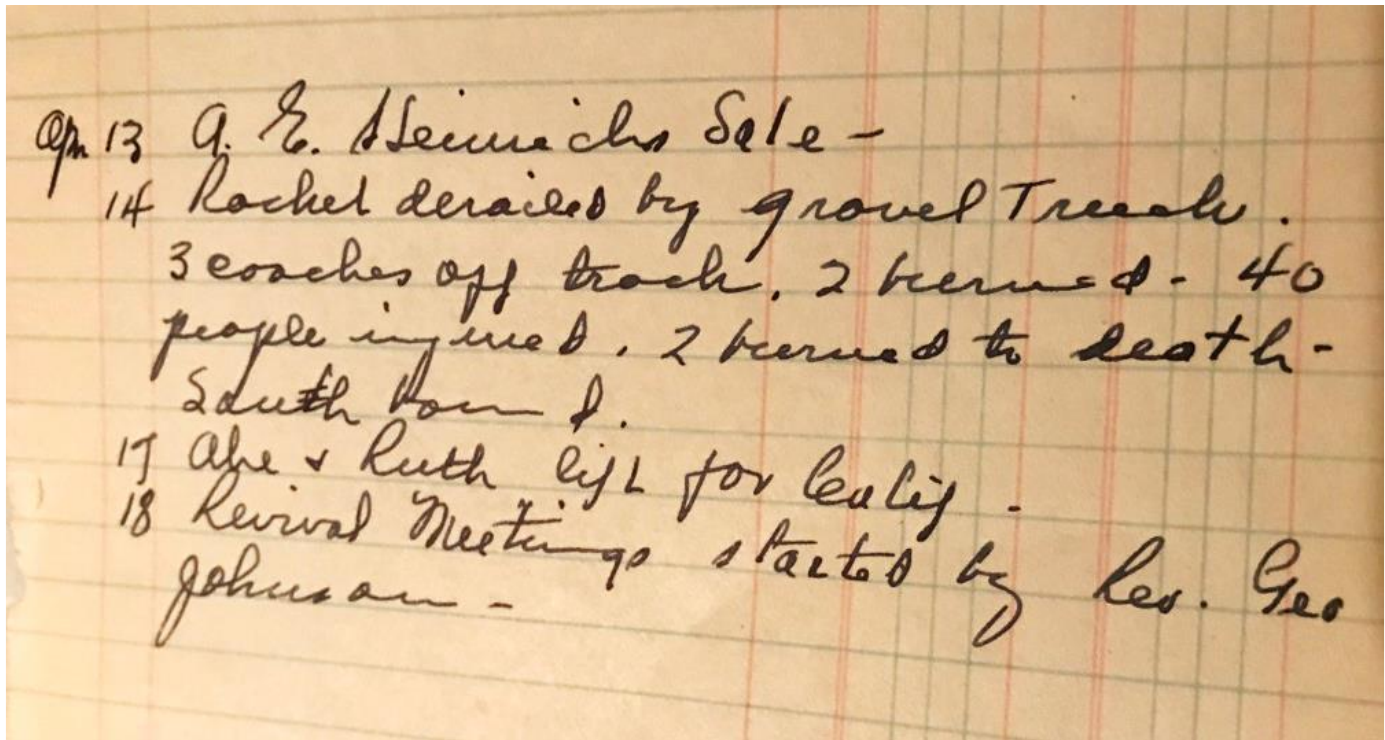


Photos below show (clockwise from L): "Route of the Rockets 1952," a monument to Rock Island Rocket routes in 1952 located at the former Rock Island Lines Passenger Station in Rock Island IL; a Texas Rocket arriving in Dallas TX in 1949; and a Texas Rocket ca 1937.

On the "Route of the Rockets 1952" monolith, note the presence of Kansas City, Wichita, Enid and El Reno on the major N/S trunk line. The configuration of the two trains shown below differs slightly from the 1948 Texas Rocket that wrecked in Kremlin in that the trains shown below have a combination parlor/dinette/mail and baggage car directly behind the locomotive instead of separate dining and mail/baggage cars.



Shown below is a page from the [diary](#) of my uncle, [Henry G Toews](#) (Kremlin banker), for 13-18 April 1948. Note it is written with a fountain pen, as I well remember Uncle Henry using routinely.



Entry for [14 April 1948](#) reads "Rocket derailed by gravel Truck. 3 coaches off track, 2 burned - 40 people injured, 2 burned to death - South bound."

(Diary page provided by Gerry Toews Reimer, daughter of Henry G Toews)

[Johnny Voth](#) remembers Uncle Henry (his uncle too!) giving aid to a passenger who had crawled underneath the train and was stumbling/wandering around in the field E of the tracks. This field is just S of Farmers Grain Company and was for many years farmed by Jacob V "Mose" Thesman. The field and wrecked trains were only 1-2 blocks SW of the Bank of Kremlin where Henry worked.

Memories from [Mick Zaloudek](#) (son of [Lou](#) & [Ethyl](#) and older brother to [Danny](#)):

"I was at baseball practice when it happened. I remember my dad went to the wreck & helped get the wounded out of the wrecked cars. They used sliding wood doors from the elevator on the ground to put the wounded on. [actually they are wooden slats used to seal boxcar doors from the inside; see p 20]

I remember that the Rocket slid along a freight train on the siding that had a lot of tank cars. The people that could remember were afraid the tank cars would explode like the 1930 wreck, burning a large part of the town.

I remember my dad praised the Salvation Army people that went into the wrecked cars with the local townspeople to remove the wounded, not knowing if the tank cars would explode. I also remember someone saying the car that the truck hit was full of nuns, none of whom were injured."

Photo of "Raymond Dvorak, University of Wisconsin band director arriving in Madison after a train accident in Kremlin, Oklahoma. He is on a gurney with attendants, and a train is in the background." Wisconsin State Journal, 17 May 1948.

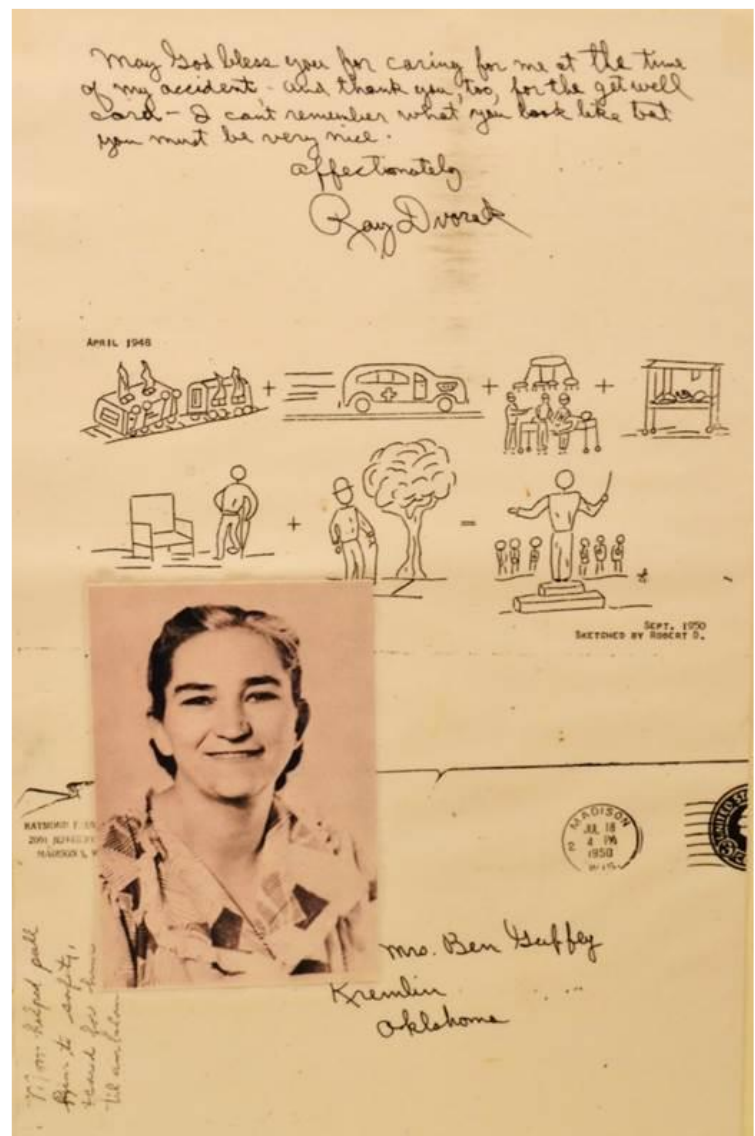


Raymond Dvorak was on his way to Enid to judge the [Tri-State Music Festival](#) when the 14 April 1948 Kremlin Rocket wreck left him 12 miles shy of his destination and in the [Enid General Hospital](#) for over a month with a fractured left tibia. He lost his right arm in the accident, but incredibly, he managed to eventually return and direct the UWISC band with one arm!

Ray Dvorak wrote a nice thank-you letter in July 1950 with some cartoon drawings to [Mrs. Ben \(Willie\) Guffey](#), who "helped pull him to safety and cared for him til ambulance came" (from notation on the envelope) - it is on the wall of the [FWZ BLDG](#), and well worth viewing.

Tragically, Mrs Guffey was killed in a head-on collision 6 miles N of Enid on US-81 on 14 October 1950, just 2 years after the Rocket wreck. Her twin sons, [Dan](#) and [Don](#), suffered a broken arm and a broken leg, respectively. One person in the other auto was killed as well.

A newspaper article, text transcribed by Arrel Toews due to poor quality of image, and a thank-you letter from Professor Dvorak are on the next two pages.



Newspaper article from [Milwaukee Sentinel](#) about [Professor Raymond Dvorak](#) and the [1948 Rocket wreck](#) is below.

'I'm Lucky To Be Alive', Says Prof. Raymond Dvorak, As He Rests After Train Crash

Near the end of the hall in the south wing of Enid's General hospital, Prof. Raymond Dvorak, head of the University of Wisconsin Music Department, lies in a room of solitude.

Visitors are not encouraged. The scant few who are permitted to enter the room have been extremely close friends of the outstanding director. Only break in the silence about the room, door of which is kept closed throughout the day, is when the nurse emerges quietly and returns.

Within room 230 is a very weak and fortunate musician. In the darkness of the ward, about his immaculate white bed, are countless pots and bouquets of flowers sent the professor by sincere friends. On the dresser is a huge stack of telegrams from equally thoughtful and concerned admirers.

Because of the large number of flower vases, there is little space in the room for both Mrs. Dvorak, who arrived here Thursday, and the vase.

Somewhat Improved

Although he has improved somewhat since his operation Wednesday evening following the tragic crash of the Rock Island Rocket at Kremlin, Okla., he is still in critical condition. He has lost his right arm; he suffered a compound fracture of his left leg, which is in great danger of infection.

Professor Dvorak was one of the few passengers, other than the two dead, who suffered burns, having survived minor burns on the ears, nose and mouth. A particle of flying glass inflicted a gash on his right cheek.

Talking tires him considerably, therefore, he has been urged to rest quietly. What little he has revealed concerning the wreck has been to his wife - and this at sporadic intervals, apparently as an outlet for the great pain he is suffering. His voice is hoarse, feebly weary, due to the large volume of smoke which he evidently inhaled during his harrowing experience in the burning Rocket car.

'Seats Seemed to Buckle'

"I remember the seats seemed to buckle," Professor Dvorak told his wife, "and that the next thing I realized I was trying to get out of one of the windows. I couldn't break it so I found a crack in the floor - I guess it was caused by the cars jamming into each other - and I crawled out of it."

He was found under one of the tank cars to the east of the Rocket. Still conscious, Professor Dvorak informed his rescuer of his wife's address and begged him to notify her "I'm all right and don't worry."

If I'd been a little quicker," the Wisconsin conductor declared, "I could have gotten out and saved my arm."

He recalled that the car was filled with smoke and everything he touched was scorching hot. "That," Mrs. Dvorak said, "was when he realized his only hope was to try to go through a window. But he couldn't budge them with his arm dangling and a leg practically crushed."

Several times Saturday, Professor Dvorak, whose face was relieved of bandages in the afternoon, looked up at the ceiling and remarked, "I'm lucky to be alive."

Working on Records

A diligent, indefatigable laborer, Professor Dvorak, president of the College Band Directors' National Association, wastes little time during train rides. Since he planned to go directly to Detroit, Mich., from Enid for the Music educators national conference, Professor Dvorak had his brief case spread in this lap and was working over the records of the association at the time of the Kremlin crash.

Mrs. Dvorak disclosed that these, along with all of his luggage, had been destroyed by the fire.

On a number of occasions, the Wisconsin university bandmaster would arouse from dozing, realistically reliving the crash. "When you think of how that steel was closing in on you, it makes you wonder how you came out alive," he would mutter.

Will Direct with Left hand

At present, Professor Raymond Dvorak is existing on blood transfusions, glucose, and what little liquids he is permitted to have. Reluctant to become despondent over her husband's music future, Mrs. Dvorak asserted, "He's a natural southpaw, you know. Oh, he held the baton with his right hand but he did considerable conducting with his left. I think he'll still be able to direct the band again."

Professor Dvorak insisted upon making the journey to Enid because of his great fondness and admiration for Professor Milburn E. Carey, director of the Phillips University band, sponsors of the 16th Annual Tri-State Band Festival. Carey was a student at the University of Illinois when Professor Dvorak was a member of the music staff there. (from the [Milwaukee Sentinel](#))

Thank-you letter from Professor Raymond Dvorak to his supporters following his accident.

2001 Jefferson Street
Madison 5, Wisconsin
July 1950

Dear Friend,

After more than two years of patient waiting the DRP (Dvorak Recovery Program) is almost complete. It is a pleasure to let you know that I am definitely returning to my work at the University of Wisconsin next September. I am taking the liberty of duplicating this letter because I'd like you to share the good news with my other friends.

To be the recipient of encouraging telegrams and letters and beautiful flowers and gifts makes one's heart beat faster. I am deeply grateful for these, the friendly visits and most of all the prayers for my recovery.

You may recall that I was on my way to judge the Tri-State Music Festival at Enid, Oklahoma on April 14, 1948 when a train wreck at Kremlin, Oklahoma, twelve miles from my destination changed the course of events for me. After a stay of more than a month in the Enid General Hospital I was moved to the University of Wisconsin General Hospital here in Madison. Needless to say there were a number of orthopedic procedures the details of which are overshadowed by the healing of the tibia in my left leg. Though I still hobble around with the aid of a crutch I should be learning to walk soon.

During these many months I found time to pray; prayer is not only a great comfort but a source of strength. I also managed to listen to the radio, mostly to the University of Wisconsin station, WHA-FM, I did some reading, a bit of study and a little writing. Last year two of my songs for mixed chorus were published. I have just finished editing a new University of Wisconsin song book and have several more songs for chorus brewing. In anticipation of next fall I arranged two fanfares for the U. W. Football Band.

To date I have had an opportunity to read only a few of the many books given me but I have listened to the many recordings received, one of which was a "get well message" made by my own band. That a convalescent is not without honor in his own infirmity is evidenced by the following: an honorary membership in the American Federation of Musicians, Local 196; an honorary membership in the Rotary Club of Madison; a Life membership in the Wisconsin School Music Association and in April of this year president-elect of the Wisconsin Bandmasters' Association. On June 5th, Florence and I took our first trip away from home in two years. Robert Gresch, a former U. W. Band Librarian, drove us to Bloomington, Illinois where Illinois Wesleyan University conferred upon me an honorary degree of Doctor of Music at its Centennial Commencement Exercises. I was very proud of a former student of mine, Dr. Kenneth Cuthbert who is Dean of the School of Music there; he read the citation at the investiture ceremony. On our return home we stopped at St. John's Cemetery near Algonquin, Illinois to pay a visit, my first, to my mother's grave; she died July 24, 1948.

I have many things for which to be thankful; I enjoy general good health (except for pains when it rains); Florence has not only been a patient loving wife, but a nurse and choirleader as well; our three children, Robert 11, Katharine 8, and Theresa 7, and my friends who gave me encouragement. But above all I am thankful for Faith, Faith in God, for without Faith there is no hope and without hope no courage. Deo Gratias!

There are some who may wonder how it is possible to conduct a band with only one arm. Well, how do you suppose this letter is being typed? With my good and dependable "Southpaw"!

Yours sincerely,

Raymond J. Dvorak

This page contains a collage of [present-day photos of the N Kremlin grade crossing](#) for orientation. Top (L): looking ESE, warning lights and crossing arms were not present in 1948, Zaloudek's stores were at rear center; (R): looking N towards Pond Creek. Bottom (L): looking S towards Enid, Farmers Grain Company elevators on L, former Zaloudek's Grain Company elevators on R; (R): looking SSE from crossing; siding (passing track) switch/junction is where most derailment took place. The freight train was in this E siding. Farmers Grain Company elevators at L, their siding no longer present. Depot was past KREMLIN sign on R.



June 1950 Freight Train Wreck N of Kremlin

The narrative below is taken mostly from the official ICC (Washington DC) **Investigation # 3328** of the CRIP accident 4.73 miles N of the Kremlin OK depot on **9 May 1950 (CRIP REPORTS)**. The **official accident report** is very detailed, so a hopefully simplified summary is given below. We can supply a .pdf file of the actual report to interested readers.

The CRIP railroad crossed **Wild Horse Creek** on **Bridge 3263**, a 50' **steel through-plate-girder open-span bridge set on two concrete abutments** (illustrative similar example in photo below), about 1600' S of where the derailment occurred.

Drainage from an area of approx. 61 sq. miles flows underneath this bridge, and to avoid 2 crossings of Wild Horse Creek during construction of the railroad bed fill in 1889, a ditch was dug to divert the stream E of the rail-bed fill. Wild Horse Creek then paralleled the railroad closely on the E for ~1600' northward. There was a second bridge (**#3260**) approx. 1800' N of Bridge 3263.

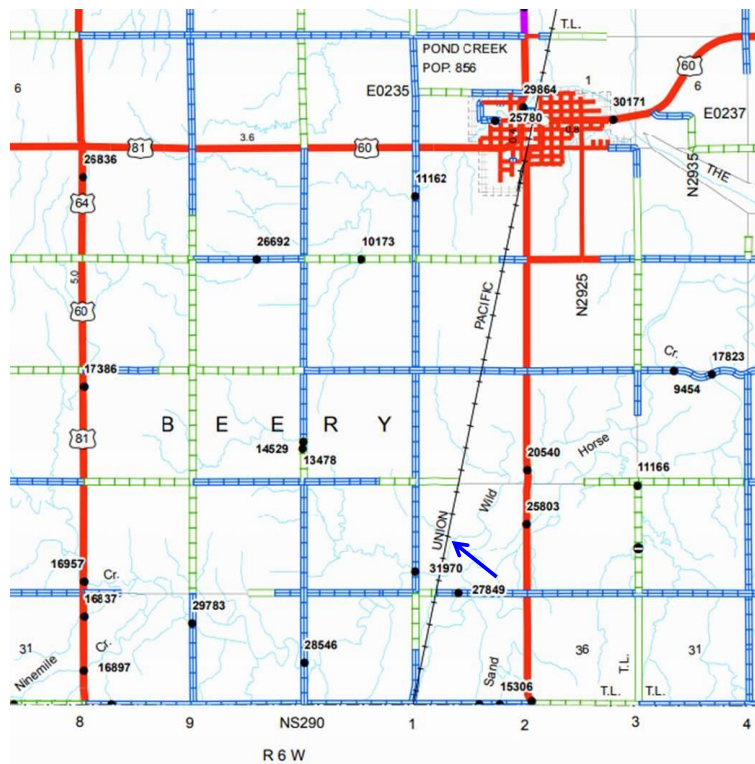
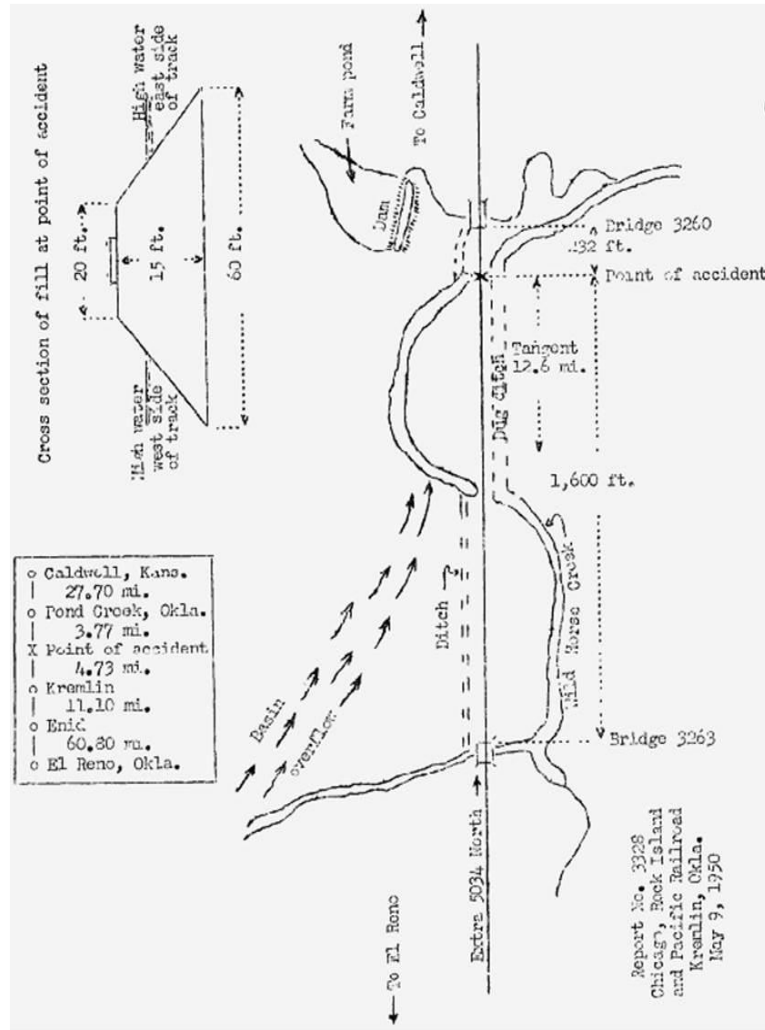


CRIP Extra 5034 North, consisted of **Engine 5034**, 52 cars, and a caboose. Engine 5034 was a **4-8-4-type steam locomotive**, and the combined weight of engine and tender was 776,700 lbs. The engineman, fireman, and front brakeman were in the locomotive and the conductor and flagman were in the cupola of the caboose. The freight train passed Enid OK at 7:35 PM and at **8:07 PM**, while moving at an estimated 50 mph **4.73 miles N of the Kremlin depot**, the **first 29 cars and cars 38-43 derailed**. The engine ended up on its L side on the L (W) side of the rail-bed fill. The tender was separated from the engine and was stopped upright and off its trucks, about 18' S of the locomotive. Both were badly damaged. The first 29 cars stopped in various positions near the point of the accident while the 38th-43rd cars buckled and overturned at various positions on the fill. **The flammable contents of the cars at the front of the train ignited and 27 cars were destroyed in the fire**. The other cars were badly damaged.

The **fireman and front brakeman were killed**, and the **engineman, conductor and flagman were injured**. The engineman was the only survivor aboard the locomotive.

The engineman said when the accident occurred the speed of the train was suddenly reduced, as though it had hit an obstruction. A run-in of slack then occurred, and the front of the engine was momentarily elevated. Then the engine overturned before he could take any action to stop the train.

A map of the accident site is included below. A map of the relevant portion of Grant County is also shown below the accident map. An arrow denotes the approximate location of the accident in the lower map. The bottom of the lower map is the Garfield/Grant County line.



Examination after the accident indicated that a **50' section of fill had sunk about 10'** throughout its whole width, but there was no displaced material at the base of the fill and no indications that fill material had washed away. The fill on which the accident occurred was constructed in 1889, and boring samples after the accident indicated a **5-7'-thick bed of quicksand** underlaid the fill at a depth of about 17'. Apparently, the quicksand underlying the fill was displaced by fill material as the train passed, resulting in the sinking of the track when the engine passed over it. Thus the **accident was officially caused by the sinking of this fill.**

Interestingly, a S-bound freight had passed over this fill only 2 hrs and 40 min before without incident. The road-master in charge of track maintenance had followed this freight train in his track motor-car over this fill at 5:45 PM and, traveling at only 5 mph, noticed no indication of high water or defects to the fill or bridges. The section foreman had also inspected the bridges and fill just 6 hours before the accident. The division engineer noted that previous to the "instant case," there had been no incidents reported regarding this fill.

The photo below (**TOEWS FAMILY**) shows the N end of this train wreck; the photo is taken from bridge # 3260 looking S. The locomotive is overturned on its L side on the L side of the fill, and the tender, although slightly displaced to the viewer's R, is still upright. You can barely make out the engine number **5034** underneath the locomotive's headlamp. The diverted Wild Horse Creek would be at far L. This view fits both maps quite well.



We believe these two photos are also of this train wreck - the general setting and topography agree with what is known.



The three photos below seem to also be from this accident. The photos match the scene above quite well. Note positions of crane, salvage train, and railcar debris below and at lower R. They are all from a single page of an old [Toews Family photo album](#).



The photo below shows the **damaged steam locomotive #5034** in the siding by Zaloudek's **elevator**. This color photo seems to pair with the color photo on page 25. The two color photos are a set provided by **Gerry Toews Reimer**, so originally from her father, Kremlin banker (& our Uncle) **Henry G Toews**.

All other photos above from this accident are from the **David A & Rosa M Toews Family Photo Archives**.



Additional photos of **Locomotive #5034** adjacent to Zaloudek's Elevator in Kremlin shown below are from **Fred Randolph Family** photo album generously provided by **Betty Randolph Strickland**. They clearly show the same severely damaged locomotive from this single-train derailment/fire.



Additional Kremlin Train Wrecks:

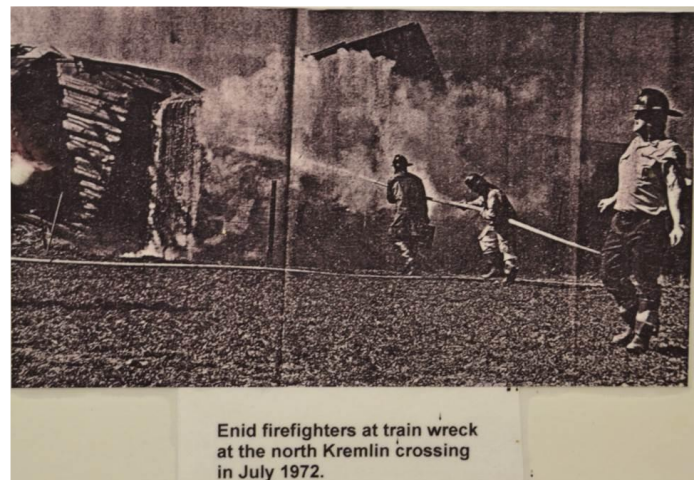
[Johnny Voth](#) remembers a [Banfield Packing Co](#) (N Enid slaughterhouse/packing plant) truck hitting a train (maybe Rocket/maybe not) when he was in 1st/2nd grade. He was born 1932, so probably ~1940. "Sausage everywhere!" Johnny says.

Several of us remember when a [N-bound freight train struck a VW Beetle at the N Kremlin blacktop crossing](#), dragging it maybe a quarter mile before stopping (it is a downhill grade from Enid to Pond Creek). This was in 1962, my early high school years. The dark green VW Bug was severely mangled and when my Dad and I walked down to look over things after school (the train, VW Beetle and bodies were already gone), I innocently lifted up a nice gray felt Stetson dress hat, only to find a chunk of human brain underneath (cerebellum/pons, although this future neuroscientist did not know that then!). I am sure the hat was placed over this after the rescue squad folks had departed out of respect for the dead. The deceased were [George W Joyner](#) (71) and his son [Lomon H Joyner](#) (41), from the [Helena/Carrier area](#).

[JoAnn Toews Rice](#) remembers a horrible train wreck just N of Kremlin, in the middle of the night (early 50s?). Perhaps this was the 1950 wreck? - although the derailment was ~ 8 PM, the resulting fire would have raged for some time afterwards.

[Dennis Toews](#) remembers a freight train derailment N of that crossing not involving a collision, he thinks possible due to speeding downhill by the engineer (but perhaps also the 1950 derailment and fire? - or perhaps the July 1972 wreck noted below). We have all heard about the difficult uphill grade going S from Pond Creek to Enid during steam locomotive days, and this last derailment may have been due to taking overenthusiastic advantage of that reverse downhill grade. Sometimes an additional steam locomotive had to be added to make the uphill Pond Creek to Enid grade in earlier times.

Finally, in [July 1972](#), there was a [freight train derailment and fire](#) at the N Kremlin crossing. The news photo below ([FWZ BLDG](#)) shows Enid firefighters battling blaze. We have not found additional information on this train wreck.



We will always appreciate any comments, additions (particularly photos), and suggestions for improvements from any interested readers. Thanks in advance for any help.

Compiled and written by [Arrel Toews](#)
many photos/negatives collected & scanned by [Myron Toews](#)
updated 24 October 2024