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The Altoona Freight Wreck

The Altoona Freight Wreck
(Fred Tait-Douglas, Carson Robison)

They had just left the point at Kittanning
Freight number Twelve Sixty Two
She traveled right on down the mountain
And brave were the men in her crew.

The engineer pulled at the whistle
For the brakes wouldn't work when applied
And the brakeman climbed out on the car tops
For he knew what the whistle had cried.

With all of the strength that God gave him
He tightened the brakes with a prayer,
But the train kept right on down the mountain
And her whistle was piercing the air.

And on down the grade she went racing
She sped like a demon from Hell
With the engineer blowing the whistle
And the fireman was ringing the bell.

She traveled at sixty an hour
Gaining speed every foot of the way,
And then with a crash it was over,
And there on the track the freight lay.

The engine was broken to pieces,
The freight cars were thrown far and near
And a mile up the track lay the wreckage
The worst wreck in many a year.

It's not the amount of the damage,
Or the value of what it all cost,
It's the sad tale that came from the cabin

Where the lives of two brave men were lost.

They were found at their posts in the wreckage,
They died when the engine had fell;
The engineer still held the whistle,
And the fireman still hung to the bell.

THis story is told of a freight train,
And it should be a warning to all--
You should be prepared every minute,
For you cannot tell when He'll call

From Scalded to Death by the Steam, Lyle
Recorded by Vernon Dalhart, 1926

note: The wreck occurred in Pennsylvania in November, 1925
Apr98