

Wilmer W. Salmon, President of General Railway Signal Company, Dies

WILMER WESLEY SALMON, president of General Railway Signal Company, died on January 23, at the Hotel Barclay, New York City, after an illness of about two months. He was 69 years old and had been chief executive of the G.R.S. Co. since its formation in 1904.

Mr. Salmon was born in Townsend, Del., on December 4, 1866, the son of Daniel and Anna M. Salmon. He attended Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa., and received an A.B. degree in 1886 and an A.M. degree in 1890. In 1886 he became a member of the engineering corps of the Pennsylvania, leaving there to enter the engineering department of the Philadelphia & Reading in 1887, where he remained until 1890, leaving there with the position of division engineer. From the Philadelphia & Reading he went to the Chicago & North Western as assistant engineer where his attention was first directed to signaling when that road was preparing to handle the traffic incident to the Chicago World's Fair. In 1893 he left the Chicago & North Western to become associated with the Hall Signal Company, as an engineer. He remained with the Hall Signal Company until 1901, holding successively the positions of sales manager, European representative and vice-president. While with the Hall Signal Company he was sent to Europe to interest foreign railroads in signaling systems, and during his stay abroad he designed and was responsible for the first subway signal system ever put in service, which system is today in operation on the Metropolitan (subway) Railway of Paris. He also installed the first automatic block signal system in Europe on the P.L.M. Railway of France, and also made several similar installations on the Belgian railways. In 1901 he left the employ of the Hall Signal Company to become president and general manager of the Taylor Signal Company of Buffalo, N. Y., holding this position until 1904, at which time the Taylor Signal Company was merged with the Pneumatic Signal Company of Rochester, N.Y., to form the General Railway Signal Company. He was president and gen-



W. W. Salmon

eral manager of the General Company since its formation.

Mr. Salmon combined in a remarkable degree the qualities of an engineer with those of a successful business executive. Not only was he responsible for the creation and growth of the General Railway Signal Company, but due to his efforts, electric interlocking, now so widely used throughout the country, was made available to the railroads. Furthermore, he personally conceived the idea of present-day single-track signaling, known as Absolute Permissive Block System, of which thousands of miles are in operation today, and which is practically standard throughout the world as embodying the best in single-track signaling practice. Many of the products which the General Railway Signal Company now markets are due to his knowledge of railway problems, which enabled him to visualize in advance the operating benefits which would accrue to the railroads from the use of these systems.

Mr. Salmon's skill as a business

executive was manifest by the manner in which he guided his company through the difficult years of the depression. The company entered 1929 with a volume of unfilled orders having a dollar value 23.5 per cent in excess of that at the beginning of 1928. By the end of 1932 business had fallen off to such an extent that the company entered 1933 with a dollar value of unfilled orders equal only to 30.8 per cent of the average value of unfilled orders on hand on the same date in the 10-year period ended December 31, 1932. A turn came in 1934, and the dollar value of all orders was 4.18 times that of 1933.

Mr. Salmon was one of the founders of the Railway Signaling Club which later became the Railway Signal Association and is now the Signal Section of the Association of American Railroads. Mr. Salmon was a member of the Theta Delta Chi fraternity, the Western Society of Engineers and the United States Chamber of Commerce. In addition he was a member of several clubs.