

## Consolidated B-24E #42-7159

August 8, 1943

On the evening of August 8, 1943, Consolidated B-24E #42-7159 took off from Wendover Army Air Field, Utah, for a night-time practice bombing mission. The aircraft was with the 399th Bomb Group, 605th Bomb Squadron. It was heavily loaded with 15 practice bombs, 2000 gallons of fuel, nine crewmen, and two passengers. Shortly after it arrived over the bombing range north east of the base, number one engine failed. The propeller on the bad engine wouldn't feather, making the aircraft difficult to control and causing it to lose altitude rapidly. The pilot attempted to return to the field, but when the landing gear was lowered the aerodynamic drag made the big bomber lose altitude even faster. Seeing that he wouldn't reach the runway, the pilot attempted to land on nearby salt flats. As #42-7159 touched down, darkness obscured hazards in the terrain ahead. At 8:45 p.m. the bomber skidded across a road, slammed into a railroad embankment, knocked down a row of power lines, and broke apart on the salt flats. A few minutes after the crash, a Western Pacific freight train struck wreckage resting on the damaged tracks, causing the train to derail. Miraculously, the spilled aviation fuel did not ignite, and ten men survived with major injuries. Co-pilot 2nd Lt. Richard L. Blue died from his injuries at a Wendover hospital the next day. Most of the wreckage was removed in 1943, but today a few pieces can still be found on either side of the railroad. Site visited on 3/23/22.

### Crew:

Pilot	F/O Herbert Williams, Jr.
Co-Pilot	2nd Lt. Richard L. Blue
Navigator	2nd Lt. Albert E. Shelley
Bombardier	2nd Lt. Henry R. Randall
Engineer	Sgt. Robert K. Snyder
Radio Operator	Sgt. Jean W. Schimmell
Gunner	Sgt. Francis A. McCusker
Gunner	Sgt. Harry R. Kippley
Gunner	Sgt. Clarence W. Tubbs
Passenger	Pvt. Erwin Landau
Passenger	Cpl. Robert D. Shearel



Accident report photo of the #42-7159 crash site (Courtesy of Craig Fuller/AAIR)



Accident report photo showing a few of the 29 railcars that derailed  
(Courtesy of Craig Fuller/AAIR)



Aircraft debris located on the north side of the railroad



Part of a cylinder head from a Pratt & Whitney R-1830 engine



This aluminum piece shows how the salty soil in the area has damaged metal parts



More parts full of holes from corrosion



This oxidized piece of aluminum was found south of the railroad



Most of the crash site is now underwater due to salt mining in the area



A couple of aircraft rivets are visible on this small piece



A broken glass insulator from the power lines



One of the broken power poles



This oxidized structural piece turned blue after being buried in salt for nearly 80 years



A Consolidated B-24E similar to #42-7159 (USAAF photo)



Co-pilot 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Richard L. Blue died from his injuries a day after the accident.

He was from Rantoul, Illinois. (Courtesy of Ancestry.com)