

Northwestern Oklahoma 44 Tonner #1: The Acquisition

By Kent Stephens

The Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad (NOKL), a short-line at Woodward in the northwestern corner of Oklahoma near the panhandle, came into existence in February 1973 after abandonment by MKT of their branch from Altus to Keyes. The Katy and Santa Fe had an interchange at Woodward -- NOKL took over approximately 3 miles of Katy track at Woodward plus sidings and spurs. NOKL interchange is with Santa Fe.

NOKL bought two Sacramento Northern 44-ton units from Chrome Crankshaft, Nos. 145 and 146, numbering them in inverse order #1 and #2. This numbering sequence resulted from buying #146 first during 1973, then 145 about a year later.

In 1990, the author of this article started to check on the status of SN's seven 44-ton mini fleet for what was intended to be a historical article for the FRRS. I contacted NOKL to check on #1 and #2. Mark Clemence, NOKL's general manager, and I had a pleasant conversation in which he advised me on the status of both locomotives. #2 had been sold to Westmac, Inc., a grain elevator at Newago, Michigan, and was still painted and lettered for NOKL. Mr. Clemence said that #1 was very dependable and worked several hours a day, five days a week, on the railroad. He didn't have a spare unit, but said that he was looking for a second 44-ton unit.

I told him that the FRRS might be interested in acquiring #1 if NOKL ever wanted to dispose of it; I followed this up with a letter. I then stayed in contact with him on a yearly basis. By late 1993, one of the two Caterpillar D17000 engines on #1 had failed and could not be repaired. They hadn't found another 44-ton unit, but had found another Cat D17000 engine. They hired a contract mechanic to combine the parts of the failed engine, the new engine, and one partial engine they had on hand, into one usable engine, thus repairing #1.

During this period, Vic Neves visited Woodward, and was alarmed to find one end of #1 missing down to the enginebed of the frame. He was afraid that NOKL was scrapping the unit, and there was no one around there for him to ask. I assured him later that all was well with #1; because the hood, etc. had come off with the bad prime mover.

In the spring of 1994, Mr. Clemence told me that he was looking into the possibility of purchasing two GE 65-ton units from Tulsa Port Authority. NOKL's advantage in acquiring 65-tonners was that most parts are readily available for GE 65 tonners. Parts for GE 44-tonners are a real problem. NOKL had struggled with this parts shortage for years and

had built up a respectable parts supply for #1. Mr. Clemence decided that he had to keep the contract mechanic working on the 44 tonner's Cat D17000 engine while he waited for the final decision from Tulsa as to whether the 65 tonners would be available. About a month later, he had the affirmative decision, and the NOKL was the successful bidder.

In early May, I received a letter from him offering the sale of #1 to the FRRS plus NOKL's entire parts supply for an additional price. The board, after much pro and con discussion, authorized buying the unit, but at a lower price than NOKL was offering. NOKL refused our lower offer, then they attempted to sell the unit on the open market. Two of the offers they received wanted to strip it for parts. By this time another FRRS board meeting rolled around at which I participated in the discussion of the acquisition of #1. The board agreed to meet NOKL's price IF it included the parts supply. Mr. Clemence then agreed to include the parts in the price, and we had a deal.

Norm Holmes worked out the transportation details and got a routing via the Santa Fe from Oklahoma to Denver, then the Union Pacific to Portola. #1 was loaded on a flat car at Woodward, with the large parts going in a gondola. Arrival in Portola was late October -- the car sat in the Portola yard for some time before being moved into the museum. #1 was unloaded on December 5, 1994

Sacramento Northern 146 (NOKL 1) Specifications:

Builder: General Electric	Fuel: diesel oil 250 gallons.
Power Plants: 2 - 190 hp	Engine lube oil: 100 gallons.
Caterpillar Diesel Engines	Engine cooling water: 80 gallons.
Type D-17000 8 - 5 3/4" x 8" cylinders, "V" type, 4 cycle.	Sand: 800 lbs.
Generators: 2 - GE Direct current type GT-555.	Tractive power: 26,400 lbs.
2 - GE exciter type G.M.G.-140.	Maximum permissible speed: 35 mph.
Traction motors: 4 - GE direct current type GE-733, gear ratio 11.25 to 1.	Maximum track curve: 50 ft. radius.
Air compressor: 2 Gardner-Denver type ADS.	Height: 13' 2 1/8" above the rail.
Brake equipment: WABCO straight and automatic, schedule 14-EL.	Width: 10' 1"
	Length: 33' 5"
	Weights in working order:
	Total on drivers: 88,000 lbs.
	Total dry weight: 84,900 lbs.
	Axle load: 22,000 lbs.
	Built: November 1946.

