

1943 GE Locomotive

What was built in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1943, weighs 25 tons, and is Tired Iron's newest exhibit? It is a General Electric locomotive donated to our club by the Southwestern Power Electric Company plant at Gentry, Arkansas. The locomotive's main use was to move heavy components in the plant area as refurbishment, cleaning, and replacement work was being done. SWEPCO, as a part of its major rebuilding effort, plans to upgrade their locomotive, so the plant manager offered the engine to Tired Iron. Fortunately, SWEPCO also offered to move the engine to the Tired Iron show grounds, set it on crossties, and eventually, place it on rails when they are available. On Thursday, January 30, 2014, a 101-ton crane was used to load it on a many-axle trailer for transport and then to place the locomotive at Tired Iron. Craig Goodlet, a SWEPCO employee, remembered that the last time the locomotive was operated was in 2008, but workers who brought it to Tired Iron said that it most certainly would run if the three, deep-cycle batteries were replaced.

Much of the history of the locomotive is presented in papers included with it. In 1975, the engine belonged to the Kilgore, Texas, Beeman Railway Equipment Company, which was a seller of railroad equipment. A note on the document states, "A grain company purchased subject locomotive and overhauled it -- only to find it too small to handle the number of grain cars they need to handle -- so they traded it in on a larger unit." The main work done in 1974 and 1975 includes the following: installation of a completely rebuilt Detroit Diesel 671 engine by Hatton Machine of Beaumont, Texas; the rebuild of the electric system by International Electric Company of Beaumont, Texas; the rebuild of the air compressor. The bill for the total work was \$18,434.45. The paper shows that, while the locomotive was still owned by Beeman, it could be leased for a minimum of six months @ \$50 per day or purchased for \$25,000. SWEPCO purchased the unit in the mid-1970s.

The locomotive is identified as a General Electric Diesel - Electric, Class B, 50/50, with a 17782 serial number. It is 12' high, 18' long, and 8' 6" inches wide. Electrical power is from a GE 733 traction motor (150 hp). Diesel power is from the Detroit Diesel 671 mentioned above. Some Internet resources show that these units had Cummins Diesels originally. From 1941 to 1974 there were 510 B-class GE locomotives sold.

Our thanks go out for this great addition to Tired Iron to plant maintenance director Jake Davis, to plant facilitator David Goodman, and to Tired Iron member Russell Leeman, who worked with these gentlemen to see this project accomplished. We also appreciate reporter Randy Moll's excellent coverage given to Tired Iron's acquisition of the locomotive in the Siloam Springs Herald Leader and in the Westside Eagle Observer newspapers.

