

The ELWOOD Chronicles

The Rail History of Elwood, Indiana



NKP 587 in 1947

Elwood's Rail History & NKP 587

June 23, 2022

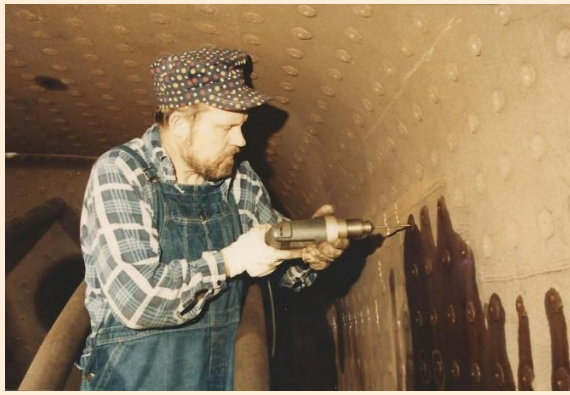
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These older women always play hard to get. The one in mind sat in Broad Ripple Park in Indianapolis from 1955 to 1983 and now resides in Kentucky.

I knew about the steam engine in Broad Ripple Park. It was NKP #587 and it had been there since 1955. But then . . . the city of Indianapolis wanted to build a new public library and needed the land. The engine was leased to the Indiana Transportation Museum in Noblesville and that's when I discovered I knew very little about that locomotive or Elwood's rail history.

The steam engine had been built in 1918 for the LE&W (Lake Erie & Western) and was numbered 5541. Over its lifetime, it undoubtedly ran through Elwood as LE&W #5541 and as NKP #587. The LE&W had been acquired around 1900 by the LS&MS (Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway), later, a component of the giant New York Central System. It's not common knowledge, but Elwood's rail history includes 14 years of the LS&MS Ry and some 8 years of the New York Central.

When the Indiana Transportation Museum acquired the locomotive in the mid '80s, repairs were needed and volunteers performed much of that work. The locomotive was placed inside a vacant plant on the east side of Indianapolis and the following photo was taken while I worked inside the firebox.



In addition to excursions over much of Indiana, #587 was often used on the Fair Train from Fishers to the Indiana State Fairgrounds and back on round trips to Indiana state fairs. In 1991, NKP #587 ran excursions from Frankfort to Muncie and then returned each day on June 29 and June 30. Video from 29 June 1991 is posted on YouTube – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_Rxt5OUQEk – as well as video of #587 on the turntable at Frankfort's roundhouse.



Unfortunately, issues surfaced between the Noblesville Museum and the city of Noblesville. Rather than chance the demise of NKP #587, a museum in Kentucky agreed to hold the locomotive until such time as the Indiana Transportation Museum, now located in Logansport, can manage the time and expenses of an aging, but graceful older lady. It's not likely in my lifetime, these older ladies play hard to get. But once upon a time, we knew each other quite well.

Marvin Crim
WLWHS 1957