

The National Match (NM) Operating Rod Assembly – Well worth the Price?

By Eric A. Nicolaus

I always believed that there must be something rather “special” about the National Match (NM) Operating Rod Assembly (Op Rod), Part No. 7790722. As a result, I’ve looked & paid extra for a “NM” stamped operating rod over the “standard” Op Rod, Part No. 6535382, & used them on the basic M1s that I have acquired. This article will explain the many similarities & very few differences between them.

I have obtained the last known changes to both the NM & standard (Std) Op Rod Assembly drawings. The Std Op Rod (Figure 1) has gone through at least six major revisions from 1938 through 1961. Drawing 6535382 states that the Op Rod Assembly can be used on M1, M1C & M1D rifles. Similarly, the NM Op Rod (Figure 2) went through two major revisions from 1960 through 1967. Both operating rod assemblies were originally drawn at Springfield Armory. The NM Drawing 7790722 indicates that the NM Op Rod can also be used on the M1, M1C, M1D & NM rifles. All blueprint revisions to the Std Op Rod were performed at Springfield Armory, while the 1967 revision to the NM Op Rod was drawn at Rock Island Arsenal.

The Std Op Rod 6535382 is made up of three components with the following part designations & numbers:

- Handle – 6535384
- Tube – 6147193
- Piston – 5152682

The NM Assembly 7790722 is made up of the Handle & Tube Assembly, Part No. 6535383, & the Piston. The Handle & Tube Assembly (Figure 3) consists of: (1) Handle 6535384, & (2) Tube 6147193. Put rather simply, all components used in both the NM & Std Op Rod Assemblies are the same! Of interest is the method used to bond the Tube & Piston together on both of the Std & NM Assemblies (Figures 1 & 2). The Tube is mild steel, while the Piston is a corrosion resisting steel. To bond these two dissimilar metals, resistance welding was used to obtain adequate strength

between the metals while providing improved Piston rust resistance.

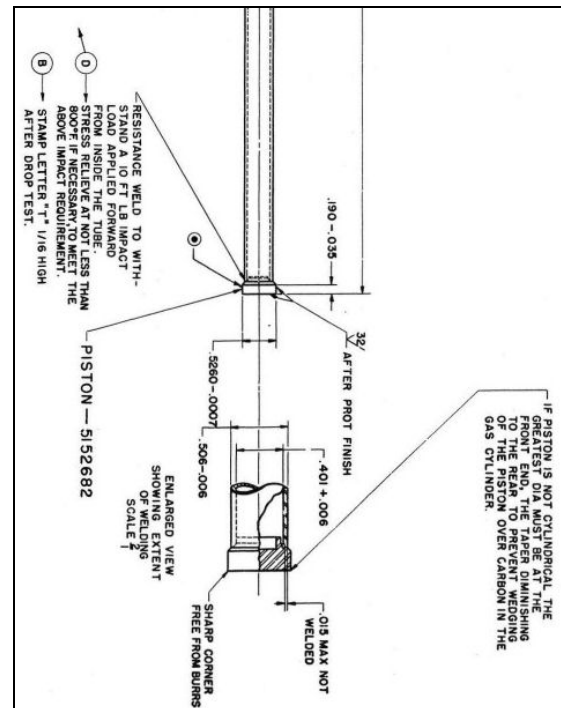


Figure 1 – Partial View, Rod Assembly – 6535382

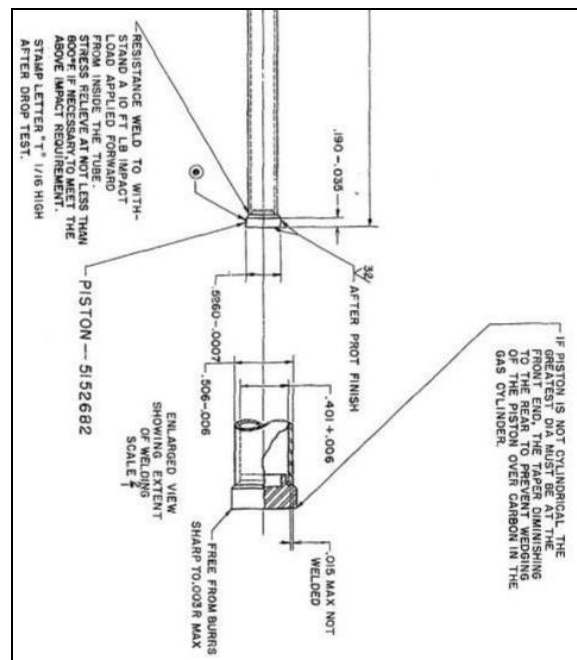
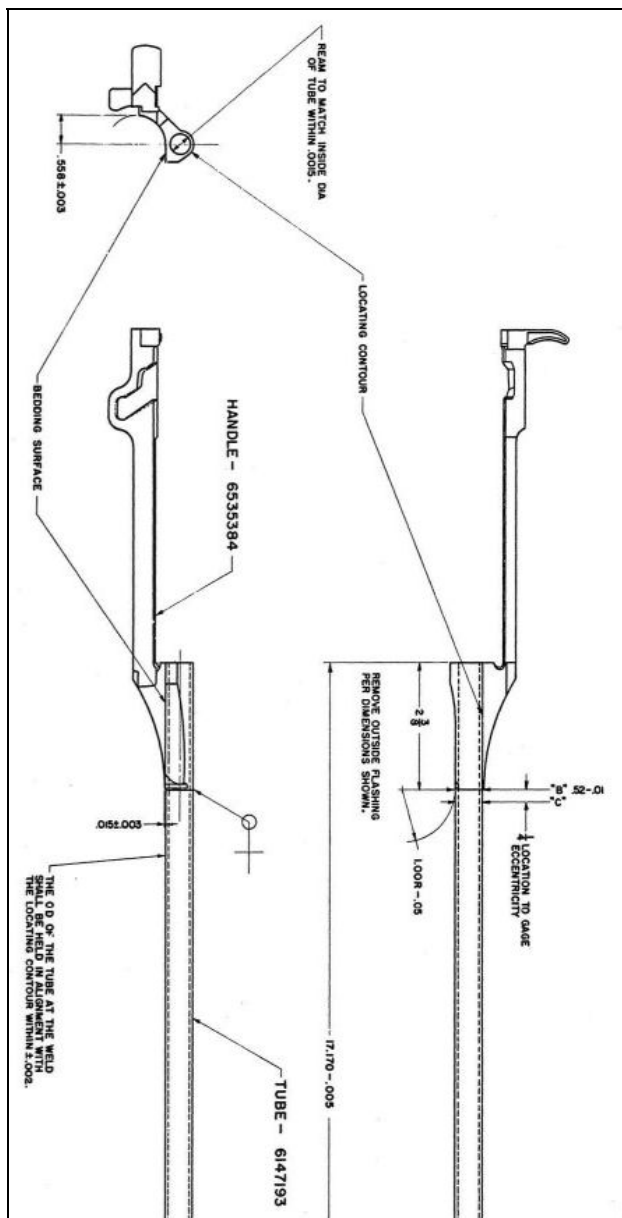


Figure 2 – Partial View, NM Rod Assembly – 7790722

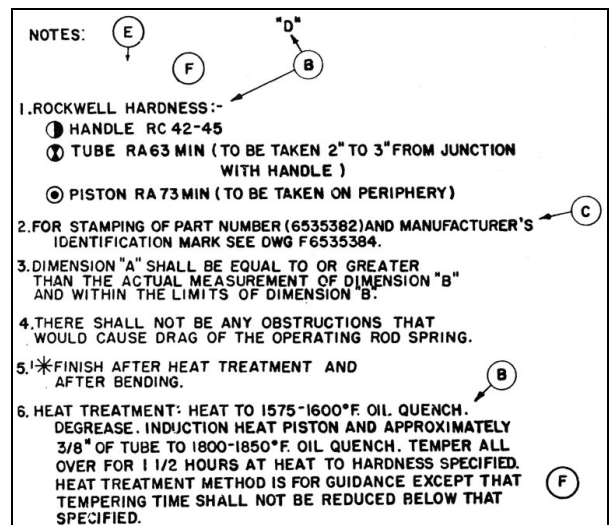
Several notes in Fig. 4 apply to the Std Assembly 6535382, & address materials, assembly dimensions, required material hardness, proper stamping of the Op Rod, proper finish & heat treatment. In Figure 5, the same notes apply to the NM Assembly 7790722.



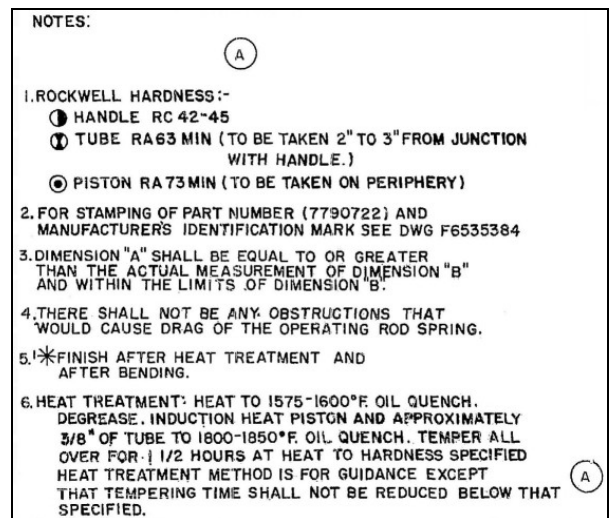
[Figure 3 – Partial View, Handle & Tube – 6535383]

Close examination of Figures 4 & 5 shows that the only difference in the notes is that of the stamped Part No. & the respective (circled) blueprint revision.

If you now examine the remainder of the comments, you can see that the dimensions, heat treatment, resistance welding & tube flare are identical, except for two items: (1) the stamping of “NM”, 3/32nds of an inch high on the Handle for the NM Op Rod, & (2) the requirement for the NM Rod Piston transition, from face to piston cylinder diameter, to be “free from burrs sharp to .003R max”, versus the Std Op Rod’s “sharp corner free from burrs”.



[Figure 4 – Notes – Rod Assembly, Operating – 6535382]



[Figure 5 – Notes – Rod Assembly, Operating – 7790722]

There do not appear to be any other differences between the NM Op Rod & Std Op Rod. In actuality, the Op Rods are interchangeable & functional (not necessarily collectible) on all M1 rifle types.

There is one interesting nuance that often comes up in online Garand forums - the sometimes missing “NM” on the 7790722 Op Rod. My suspicion is that the original or first revision of the NM drawing did not provide for the “NM” stamp on the handle. For all of you collectors of the NM Op Rod, the “missing” NM might be an even rarer NM Op Rod than those with the NM stamp! I’ll do my best to obtain the various blueprint revisions & report back.