

# Field Trip 2019: Keeping America's Railroads Strong

This year's RTA Field Trip was three non-stop days of learning and visits to some of the factories that work to make sure U.S. railroads remain strong and viable, including to those of three past RTA award winners.

The base of operations was Texarkana, Texas, with stops throughout Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

Monday's welcome reception was sponsored by RailWorks. After Tuesday's stops in Arkansas, attendees were treated to another reception sponsored by Brewco. Wednesday saw an early departure for more tours in Arkansas.

Hardwood Manufacturing Association members joined with RTA for a special

dinner and networking event that saw HMA members participate in numerous field trip events. The following photos help tell the story of the whirlwind trip through the Ark-La-Tex region. We at RTA express appreciation for the many organizers, sponsors and attendees who made this field trip one for the books! ■

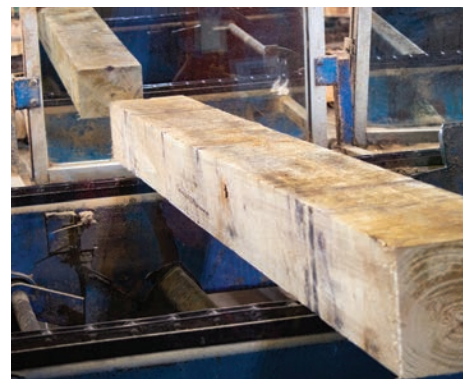
## DAY 1 AmeriTies, Nevada Rail Materials, Koppers Inc.



John McGinley, 2018 Broad Axe award winner, stands with David Whitted and Will Cumberland as they listen to AmeriTies plant manager Mark Diles instruct attendees.



Diles shares details about AmeriTies' Hope operation with Dave Koch, Curtis Schopp, Shea Zeiser, Mark Manning and Canon McDonald.



A tie goes through the exceptional, well-lighted tie grading station to be sorted for drying and treating.



The treating cylinders at the fully automated plant are put to good use to preserve the ties Union Pacific and a few commercial customers require.



Tim Francis of Nevada Railroad Materials + Services (right) and RTA Executive Director Jim Gauntt discuss the company's plans for tie disposition services during the lunch NRMS graciously provided.



Francis points out some of the work NRMS does at their North Little Rock operation. ➤



A stop at the Koppers North Little Rock plant rounded out the day's activities. The plant management team poses for a photo after providing a safety briefing.

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**DAY 2** **Douthit Lumber Co., Gross & Janes Co. (Camden, Ark.),  
Wilson Lumber Co., Brazeale Lumber**



Back on the road for day two. The first stop was Douthit Lumber, owned by David and Derek Douthit, 2018 Silver Saw winners. One of the workers is a budding artist and obviously loves working there.



Careful craftsmanship makes a great tie.



This log yard should be full. The Douthits have enough to run for a while, but the rain has been relentless.



Douthit proudly supplies ties to Gross & Janes.



Douthit's ties ready for shipping look like a work of art. And as wet as it has been, they are probably just as valuable to the lucky buyer.



Jeanne Olson, Dr. Matt Pelkki and Shea Zeiser inspect a newly cut and incised tie.



Next stop was the Gross & Janes Camden plant where the borate dip tanks are getting good use.



2013 Silver Saw winner Frank Wilson welcomes Tim Ries and Bob Bradley to Wilson Brothers brand new mill while Rob Underwood and Brad Martin look on.



Up close and personal with the sawblade. Wilson Lumber changes the blade daily. Sharpening the blade is an art.



New ties coming off the line ready to ship to waiting plants.



The next stop is Brazeale Lumber, where David Brazeale gives the group an overview of the mill and its operations.



The sawer at Brazeale Lumber is hard at work cutting lumber and ties.



A welcome surprise was an unscheduled drive through of the Stella-Jones Rison pole treating plant with plant manager Archie Johnson.



Hardwood Manufacturers Association (HMA) President Bob Miller addresses the dinner group consisting of RTA and HMA members.



Thanks to the HMA and their sponsors for the invitation and the great food! ➤

**DAY 3**

**Ward Timber, Gross & Janes Co. (Carthage, Texas),  
Stella-Jones Inc.**



First stop was Ward Timber, the largest hardwood sawmill in the state of Texas, where stacks of ties are ready to go out with the next shipment.



Yolanda Calley and Paula Rogers wear their best smiles as they tour the sawmill.



The group pauses on a catwalk to look at the operation from above.



Ward's Jerry Hendrix shows William Griffin the software that helps the saws at Ward cut the lumber to the optimal size.



McFarland Cascade, a Stella-Jones Company provided lunch prior to the tour. Tim Ries, Buddy Downey and Tanner Fee dig in.



The treating cylinder is put to good use with utility poles inside.



While outside the poles await the next phase of their journey.



Plant manager Josh Lewis explains how the preservatives work on utility poles to prevent decay and to make them easier for workers to climb.



RTA President Bill Behan explains the marking system to Mike Stacey.



The group pauses for a photo at the Camden Gross & Janes facility prior to lunch.

## RTA wishes to thank all the volunteers and sponsors for their efforts in making the 2019 edition of the RTA Field Trip a great success. A special thank you to all those who attended as well!

### Sponsors

Appalachian Timber Services: half day of bus transportation; Brewco: reception; Cahaba Pressure Treated Forest Products: full day of bus transportation; Gross & Janes Co.: box lunch on bus; Koppers Inc.: full day of bus transportation; MiTek Industries: general sponsorship; Nevada Railroad Materials: lunch and presentation; Nisus Corp.: general sponsorship; Pandrol: general sponsorship; RailWorks: welcome reception; Stella-Jones Corp.: lunch and bus snacks and beverages; and Wheeler Lumber: general sponsorship.

### Attendees

Lance Bliss of AmeriTies West LLC;

Yolanda Calley of Anthony Timberlands Inc.; Hunter Smith of Arkansas Steel Associates; Tony Chambers of Associated Rail Products; David Brazeale of Brazeale Lumber Co.; Mike Goldston of Brewco Inc.; William Griffin of Mississippi State University Department of Sustainable Bioproducts; Gary Ginther of Eagle Metal Products LLC; Bill Behan, Ronald Holland, Scott McBride, Jeff Peterson and Paula Rogers of Gross & Janes Co.; Todd Hendricks of Industrial Power Inc.; Jeanne Olson of JH Baxter & Company; Bob Bradley, Travis Gross, Melissa Hadley and Tim Ries of Koppers Inc.; Justin Harmon and George Morris of Missouri Tie LLC; Shea Zeiser of MiTek; Mark Bear of

National Hardwood Lumber Association; Curtis Schopp and Rob Underwood of National Salvage & Service; Cole Benefield of Natural Wood Solutions; Tanner Fee, Mark Manning, Canon McDonald and Linde Mills of Nisus Corporation; Will Cumberland and Tilley Oliver of North American Tie & Timber; Luke Reardon of Pandrol; Jim Gauntt, Barbara Stacey and Mike Stacey of RTA; Chad Sorrells of Sorrells Sawmill Inc.; Buddy Downey, Brad Martin, David Roberts, and David Whitted of Stella-Jones Corp.; Melinda Schmiegel and Lisa Tuningley of T-Rail Products Inc.; Nate Irby of Union Pacific Railroad; and Dave Koch of Wheeler Lumber LLC. ■