

Something Old, Something New

RTA Members Borrow & Share Knowledge During 2011 Field Trip

During the annual Railway Tie Association (RTA) Field Trip in June to the Ark-La-Tex, members were inundated with new information about old and new treating plant operations in the region.

Members, it was learned later, also provided several new insights to business

owners along the way. These insights included showing one owner a neat trick to increase drill speed for one of his operations (to which that owner offered a resounding ‘thank you’ to staff in follow-up for this article).

The following chronicles the trip from a 30-year-old, non-automated, treating plant to the newest and most technologically advanced hardwood crossties pressure treating plant in the world. Along the way, another treating plant’s saga of transformation from its roots in 1927 to the pres-

ent surprised even the most knowledgeable tie users and producers.

So if you’re “blue” about missing this fantastic trip, do two things. First, make plans now to attend next year’s event, which is scheduled for June 10-13, in Portland, Oregon. The 2012 agenda and lodging link are online at www.rta.org. RTA will visit four West Coast treating plants doing many innovative things of their own, including new ACZA treatments for ties. Second, read on to see what you can learn from the pictorial of this year’s event! ■

Day 1: Vivian and Plain Dealing, La.; Hope, Ark.; and Texarkana, Texas



Our journey begins before day one, with a wonderful evening reception where Buck Vandersteen of the Louisiana Forestry Association gave attendees the lay of the land on timber issues in Louisiana. On day one, Scoot Sowell and Phillip Humphrey of Superior Tie and Timber (a Kansas City Southern subsidiary) in Vivian, La., start the first tour of the three-day trip.



It all starts with grading the ties and incising them as they head toward the air-drying yard.



At the next stop in Plain Dealing, La., our busload was able to view one of Anthony Timberland’s chip mills.



700,000 ties are treated annually in one of two 8’x118’ cylinders.



Track panel construction is also part of the on-site manufacturing operations.



Perry Russian, plant manager, explains...



...that the 15-ton crane can fully unload a logging truck in three “bites” as it feeds the chipper...



...which generates 5,500 tons of hardwood/softwood chips in a 55 percent/45 percent ratio on a weekly basis for local paper mills.



Then, it's off to the newest treating plant in the tie industry, Amerities' operation in Hope, Ark. We were met by President & COO John McGinley (r), shown here with Ken Peirson (l) and Manufacturing Committee Chairman and tour organizer David Whitted (c) of Stella-Jones. Dwight Mitchell of Boatright Railroad Products is in the background.



This plant, serving Union Pacific Railroad, employs the newest technology throughout, and it starts with TriDelta Systems Automation software in the grading area.



The Amerities treating plant was built from the ground up using TankFab 8'x156' cylinders and components and employing an automated transfer table system.



After this, the gang is treated to lunch by Darren Paul, the proprietor of the finest Harley-Davidson store in the South. Whiskey River Harley-Davidson in Texarkana, Texas, grills a mean burger...see all the smiles!



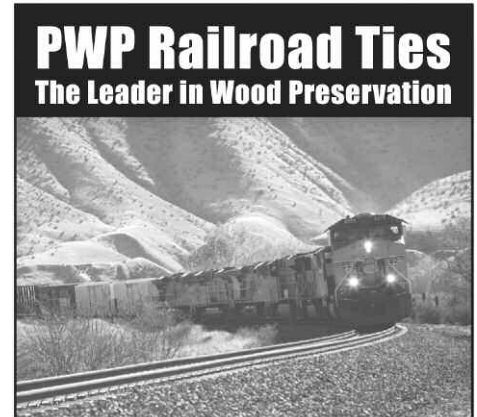
After a safety briefing, the tour started in possibly the most spacious and comfortable tie grading booth in the industry which, for many reasons—not the least of which is safety—offers the grader a panoramic view of the entire grading, incising and end-planting operation.



On the other end of the building, P&G Manufacturing's newest end-plater readies the ties for the air-drying yard.



This system allows one man to take a loaded transfer table and charge...



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...and un-charge the treating cylinders without ever leaving the control booth or requiring a fork-lift to enter the area.



The treating plant, built to have a 1.8 million tie annual capacity on an air-dry basis, is also fully automated and truly state of the art.

Day 2: Winnfield, Alexandria & Chopin, La.



Day two starts with a visit to a tie sawing and mat timber manufacturing operation in Winnfield La. Here, Rick Hanna of Hanna Manufacturing explains...



...how they produce 100+ 8'x14'-16' pipeline and oilfield multi-ply mats per day. They do custom mats, too.



They also cut ties and 4/4 and 5/4 lumber for the flooring market along with crossies and rough 2x8 mat timber lumber.



Originally incorporated as the National Lumber and Creosoting Company, the Alexandria, La., treating plant has been owned by Koppers, Roy O. Martin, Tangent Rail and others throughout its history.



Today, this plant, with the infusion of significant investment of its owner Stella-Jones, has been transformed into one of the largest capacity plants in the United States.



And the transformation continues as evidenced by these before-and-after pictures where the decades-old treating building is replaced by this modern, steel-framed enclosure. Four treating cylinders, ranging from 7.5'-8' in diameter and up to 140' long, should be capable of treating nearly 3 million ties annually on an air-dry basis. Current production in the next 12 months is expected to be around 2 million pressure-treated crossies.



Two unique pieces of equipment are pictured here. The Shuttlewagon (left), which can maneuver up to 15 fully loaded gondola cars around the facility, and this Fuchs piece (right), capable of loading a full bundle of treated ties into a railcar in one bite, were the talk of the stop.



Inbound and outbound ties were visible everywhere one turned.



And the pièce de résistance was the best meal ever experienced by RTA Field Trip attendees.



Thanks to Stella-Jones' Jeff Crawford and John Falcone, how about Rock Cornish Game Hen grilled to perfection, fresh caught boiled shrimp shown above with Tracy Cook of Kop-Coat Inc., and our very own decorated RTA cake? Too much good stuff!



At the next stop, Roy O. Martin's Colfax Treating Company operations, Hollis Ervin, vice president, is seen here talking to TASKpro's Shane Kitchens, who took the group through the plant.



At the framing operation, branding and drilling occurs on 120,000 poles this plant treats each year.



Colfax has four cylinders that process all four pole treatments: Penta, Creosote, CCA, and CCA ET.



The last stop of the day was Chopin, La., where RTA members were treated to a tour of the Roy O. Martin SYP plywood plant there. For safety and other reasons, no pictures were allowed in the plant, but this is a view of the log yard. Employing 700+, the plant manufactures SYP plywood in a variety of grades and thicknesses, while maintaining an annual production volume of nearly 500 MMSF (3/8" basis).

Day 3: Carthage, Texas & Shreveport, La.



Day three starts with a tour of Gross and Janes's Carthage, Texas, operation, which has been in continual operation for more than 50 years, as Mike Pourney (center) explains.



Serving BNSF, KCS (through Superior Tie), CP and Comapo of Mexico, this facility has been enlarged to increase capacity to 750,000 ties per year with space to air-dry nearly half a million ties for their customers.



Their investment in new incising equipment from P&G turns out some beautiful deeply and uniformly incised ties. Gross and Janes is projected to procure and handle nearly 3 million ties in the next 12 months due to ramped-up demand from their railroad customers.

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Our final stop on the trip took us to the KCS Shreveport locomotive service shop where Earl Hampton gave us a fantastic look at the multiple functions and capabilities of this major KCS locomotive rehab, repair, and renovation operation.

SPECIAL THANKS FROM RTA

The RTA field trip would not have been possible without the support of sponsors: Stella-Jones for the Sunday night welcome reception and lunch at its plant on Tuesday; Koppers Inc. for helping to provide bus transportation; MiTek Industries for sodas and snacks on the bus; Appalachian Timber Services for a grab-and-go breakfast; Boartright Railroad Products for serving as a special event sponsor; Quality Borate for providing a grab-and-go breakfast; and Gross & Janes for providing breakfast at their plant in Carthage, Texas. Our many thanks also go out to Committee Chairman and tour organizer David Whitted and his on-the-ground talent David Roberts; Buck Vandersteen; all the plant owners and operations people who made this trip so worthwhile; and, of course, to the RTA members who attended. See you next year in Portland!

ATTENDEES

Richard Gibson and Roy Henderson, Appalachian Timber Services LLC; Rick McCullough, Allen Bowman and Alan Jackson, Arizona Pacific Wood Preserving; Ryan Lake, Ashcroft Treating; Kenneth Dailey, Dwight Mitchell, Rusty Nix and Alan Brown, Boartright Railroad Products; David Piper, Brewco Inc.; Jeffrey Nelson and Randall Corner, Burlington Northern Santa Fe; Marcelo Malinowski, Chico Moreira; Bill Taylor, DTE Energy Services; Baird Quisenberry and Carl Schoening, Eagle Metal Products; Mike Pournay, Gross & James Co.; Kyle Nowatzke, JH Baxter & Company; Tracy Cook, Kop-Coat Inc.; Philip McDonald and Tim Ries, Koppers Inc.; Bill Moss, MiTek Industries Inc.; Curtis Schopp; National Salvage & Service Corp.; Jack Hughes, Norfolk Southern Corp.; Will Cumberland, North American Tie & Timber LLC; Roland Mueller, Pacific Wood Preserving; Vince Opaskar and Tim Harmon, Quality Borate Company; Jim Gauntt, Railway Tie Association; Matt Yost, Rocky Mountain Tie & Timber Inc.; Buddy Downey, David Whitted, Joseph Bodnar, Ken Miller, Kenneth Peirson and Wayne Kusmierczyk, Stella-Jones Corp.; Shane Kitchens, TASKpro; Jimmy Watt, The Crosstie Connection; Jeffrey Broadfoot, Tony Helms, Kenny Renfro, Harry Scott, Mike Poor, Mike Bryson and John Flippo, Thompson Industries Inc.; Baine Smith and Lamar Smith, Tucker Lumber Company; Chad Sorrells, W.L.S. Lumber LIC; and Dave Koch, Wheeler Lumber LLC.