

# Summer Field Trip Focuses On Safety, New Ideas & Product Improvements

Railway Tie Association (RTA) members attended the summer field trip in June, where they spent two full days visiting railroad facilities and plant operations in the Chicago area. Visits included tours of the Belt Railway of Chicago's double hump yard, Canadian National Kirk Yard, A&K Railroad Materials, Koppers-Stickney creosote facility, River City Hardwoods, and the Koppers-Galesburg tie treating facility.

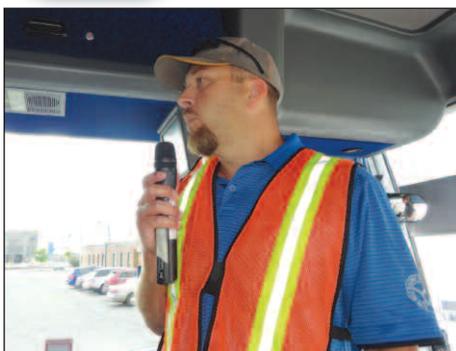
After the tours, attendees spent time in nearby Champaign, Ill., for a tour of the University of Illinois' new tie testing facility and partici-

pated in the RTA-organized wood tie session held in conjunction with the International Crosstie and Fastening System Symposium.

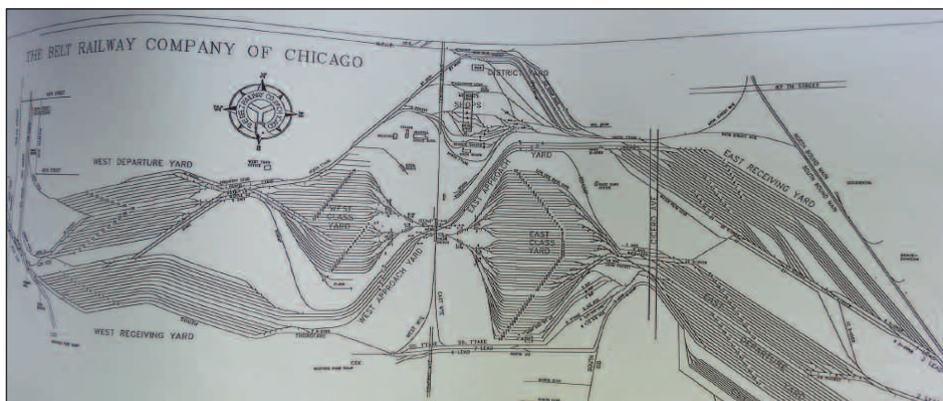
The summer field trip focuses on how RTA member companies can ensure safety of their workers and improve product quality, said RTA Executive Director Jim Gauntt. "Providing members the opportunity to tour a variety of plant operations to see first-hand how other organizations implement safety procedures and other manufacturing processes plays a pivotal role in their own companies' success story." ■

## DAY 1

### Belt Railway, Canadian National's Kirk Yard, A&K Railroad Materials & Koppers-Stickney Coal Tar Distillation Facility



Day 1 starts with a visit to the largest intermediate switching terminal railroad in the United States, The Belt Railway Company of Chicago. Here, Clint Jonas, signal supervisor, tells the trip attendees that Belt Railway employs 520.



The Belt has 28 miles of main route with more than 300 miles of switching tracks, allowing it to interchange with every railroad serving the Chicago rail hub. The Belt's Clearing Yards span a 5.5-mile distance among 786 acres, supporting more than 250 miles of track.



A double hump yard, gravity and locomotive driven cars are able to classify between 40-50 miles of trains per day, dispatching more than 8,400 cars per day.



Retarder brakes and radar speed sensors are used to slow cars down for a calculated soft-coupling during train building.



These three cars are undoubtedly headed to one of hundreds of industries served through Chicago.



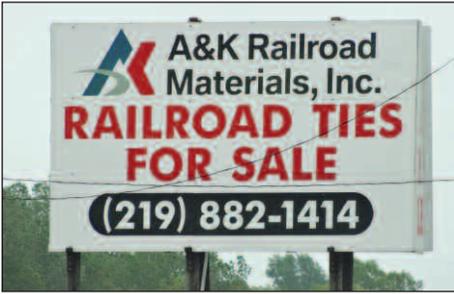
Our second stop is CN's Kirk Yard, which handles up to 2,500 cars per day.



Ray Baker (center) and Assistant Mark Hogan (left) brief the group on safety and the scope of CN's major capital investment in the yard and locomotive repair shop on property.



An NS coal train destined for power generation or coking operations is cleared through this yard. CN's Kirk Yard also serves US Steel's largest-in-the-U.S. steel mill adjacent to the yard. This facility is more than four miles long has four blast furnaces and can manufacture 7.5 million net tons of steel and 1.3 million tons of coke annually. ►



A few miles away in Gary, Ind., A&K Railroad Materials operates a clearing house yard for used RR materials.



Carl Kurek, facility manager, tells the group about the hundreds of sections of relay rail and fasteners that move through this facility each month.



Used ties are also a big commodity for A&K.



The final stop of the day is the Koppers-Stickney plant. A detailed presentation providing an overview of the plant's capabilities is made by Plant Manager Dick Wagner (left) and Greg Traczek (far right), Koppers North American operations manager for the Carbon Materials Group.



Traczek discusses the operations with Mike Pourney of Gross and Janes and Gibson Barbee Of NS.



The Stickney Plant was engineered and constructed in 1920-1921 by the Koppers Company on a 36-acre plot in Stickney. In 1968, Koppers Company constructed a Phthalic Anhydride (PAA) fixed bed reactor plant on the Stickney site. The plant is capable of converting various crude tars into liquid pitch and other liquid products such as creosote, refined tars, chemical oils and various grades of coal tar pitch.

**DAY 2 Koppers' Galesburg Tie Treating Facility, River City Hardwoods & Corsaw Lumber**



Day 2 starts with a 200-mile trek to River City Hardwoods in Muscatine, Iowa. Here, Operations Manager Vic Boeding provides a safety briefing and talks about the variety of high grade lumber products they produce in addition to crossties and timbers.



Boeding continues to illustrate how River City is merchandising high-end walnut and cherry for customers that require dried stock that have no sticker marks, these specialized grooved stickers do the trick.



Logs are scarce right now, but Boeding indicated that the supply was beginning to improve.



Band saws require regular sharpening and embedded videos in the digital edition of *Crossties* illustrate how intensely the band saw rig is used throughout the day.



A lumber grader visually inspects and marks a board for grade and size.



Then it is hand sorted by that size and graded along with any ties and timbers that come across the chain.



These magnificent oak timbers are destined for use in docks as dock bumpers and guards on the Great Lakes (yet another competitor for hardwood timber resources).



Following this, attendees head south to Galesburg for our final stop of Day 2 where we visit yet another Koppers facility. This plant, Plant Manager Jim Evans tells us, primarily serves BNSF. There is a small amount of commercial tie business, but the vast majority of output goes west for BNSF mainline track.



The Galesburg facility operates three 8' x 134' creosote cylinders at an annual capacity of more than 2 million ties on an air-dry basis.



Here are some of the hundreds of thousands of ties air drying on the yard.



The operations boast a very efficient tie grading area. ➤

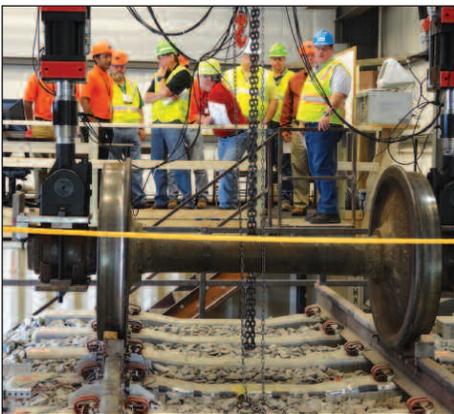


A superb incising operation and an automatic end plater that selectively end plates ties are stops along the way to the new automatic German stacker (installed in 2013) that stacks the ties for air-drying.

All ties are marked for the BNSF indicating the year and treatment type; this one will be dual treated with DOT (borate) and creosote.

**DAY 3**

**RailTEC Research & Innovation Lab & UIUC Wood Engineering Lab**



Day 3 starts with a tour of the Univ. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where all attendees get to hear about the FRA-sponsored research conducted on the "to scale" test track bed. At the time, UIUC was testing a specific concrete tie and fastener configuration using a wheel set.



RTA members got a private tour of the accelerated wood tie test facility that Conrad Ruppert hopes will be able to be restarted in the near future.



At the lunch for more than 200 attendees, RTA received special recognition, and Executive Director Jim Gauntt made remarks to the audience before hosting a special wood tie session in the afternoon business meetings. ▶



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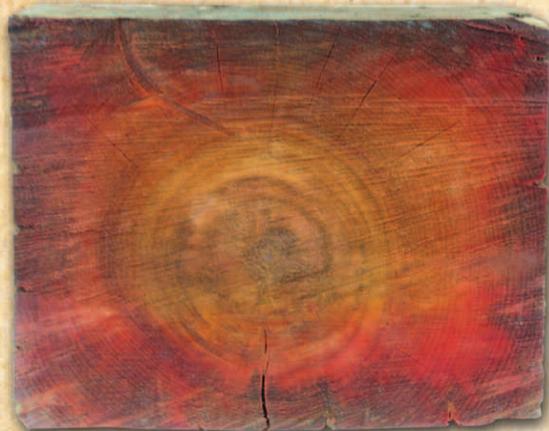


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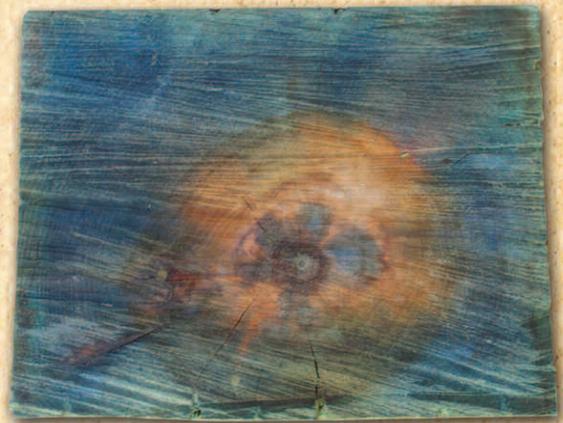
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# Sincere Thanks!

RTA could not create successful events such as this year's Field Trip without a lot of volunteer efforts and support.

This year's thank you's must include a few huge ones. First, to former RTA presidents Jeff Broadfoot and Gary Ambrose, please know that your tireless work on the behalf of the association never goes unnoticed. In fact, we can't seem to find the words to thank you as much and as often as we should. Thank you, in this case, for your above the call-of-duty organizational efforts for this year's site visits. Everyone enjoyed the facility tours and it could not have happened without you.

To those who opened their doors to us and interrupted their scheduled work to show us their fine facilities, Randy Smith of Beltway of Chicago; Ray Baker of CN-Kirk Yard; Kurt Maidl and Carl Kurek of A&K RR Materials; Greg Traczek and Dick Wagner of Koppers



Field trip attendees at the Koppers-Stickney Plant

Carbon Materials-Stickney; Vic Boeding of River City Hardwoods; Jim Evans and Ted Woerle of Koppers - Galesburg; and Riley Edwards and Angie Stanford for organizing and coordinating with us at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for the RailTec Conference and festivities. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!

If it were not for our sponsors our costs would be prohibitive to put on this event and

make it affordable for our attendees. Your help and financial support is so very much appreciated not only by staff but all of those who get to attend each year. Thank you for your dedication to this important member activity: Appalachian Timber Services; Gross & Janes Co.; JH Baxter Co.; Koppers Inc.; MiTek Industries; Osmose Inc.; Stella-Jones Corp.; and Union Pacific.

Finally, we would not even hold this event unless it had meaningful value for members, so to the attendees and all the RTA member companies who support this—one of our most important annual events—our heartfelt thanks go out to you for your time and efforts in being with us this year: Jeff Thompson of AmeriTies Holdings LLC; Grady Brafford and Tim Carey of Arch Wood Protection – A Lonza Company; Mark Huston of BNSF Railway Company; Mike Goldston of Brewco Inc.; Claus Staalner of C.S. Industries LLC; Matthew Gibbs of Chicago Transit Authority; Cal Bole of Eagle Metal Products; Mike Pourney of Gross & Janes Co.; Jerry Farley of JH Baxter & Company; Gary Ambrose and Greg Rowley of Koppers Inc.; Carlos Esmeraldino and Marcelo Malinowski of Mariana Ecoline Dormentes; Matt Seal of Missouri Tie LLC; Bill Moss of MiTek Industries Inc.; Josh Wagner of National Salvage and Service Corp.; Jeffrey Broadfoot of Natural Wood Solutions LLC; Kenneth Laughlin and Jeff Lloyd of Nisus Corporation; Gibson Barbee and Jack Hughes of Norfolk Southern Corp.; Tony Helms of North American Tie & Timber LLC – Procurement; Tom Marr of Osmose Inc; Mike Neidert, Kenneth Peirson and Justin Runyon of Stella-Jones Corporation; Michael Brown and Michael McHenry of Transportation Technology Center Inc.; Alireza Roghani of University of Alberta; and Dave Koch and Jeff Parrett of Wheeler Lumber LLC. ■

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