

# RTA Field Trip Attendees Visit Operations In Tennessee & Kentucky

The 2017 Railway Tie Association picked Clarksville, Tenn., as its central hub for its Annual Field Trip.

This year's Field Trip turned out to be a fantastic trek throughout West Central Tennessee and Southwest Kentucky.

The event kicked off with a reception sponsored by Stella-Jones and featured presentations from the vice president of the Middle Tennessee chapter of the Tennessee Forestry Association (TFA),

Larry Pitts, and Phil Averitt of JV Averitt Lumber Co. Erin, Tenn., (not shown).

We thank TFA Executive Director Candace Dinwiddie for making these arrangements and providing talking points for this important enhancement to our reception.

The following photos help describe some of the great locations and operations we visited. A lot of folks deserve appreciation for such a great trip. We will

conclude this article with thanks to the sponsors, organizers and attendees. If you missed this year's Field Trip, stay tuned to **RTA.org** and *Crossties* magazine for updates on the 2018 trip. ■

**RTA wishes to thank the attendees and all those who played a role in organizing the trip. Our generous sponsors are recognized on page 12.**

## DAY 1 Middleton Lumber, Stella-Jones, Progress Rail & Goodman Lumber



Day 1 starts with an early morning drive to Middleton Lumber Company in Puryear, Tenn., where the group is treated to breakfast by our hosts.



Surrounded by high grade lumber and cabinets made at MLC, Traci Middleton and Max and Rick Middleton (far right) tell attendees about their operation, which ranges from grade lumber and ties to residuals. Traci is also the youngest and only female president of the International Brangus Breeders Association, so she has quite a full plate with running sawmill operations and her farm.



Traci and her dad, Rick, discuss dry kiln operations and how they have been able to keep some of the older mill equipment running using their internal expertise to minimize overhead.



Then it's off to Stella-Jones in Fulton, Ky. The attendees break into to several groups and head out into the plant.



When market conditions dictate and certain lumber types are out of favor you see a few cherry ties sawn for the railroad market.



The operations are finely tuned as evidenced by their attention to their air stacking protocols



A view from the tie grading booth.



The plant has three operational cylinders with a capacity churn out over 1,000,000 ties annually.



Trams loaded and lined up for treating.



Genesee & Wyoming's Kristine Storm flanked by Field Trip Committee Chair Dave Whitted of Stella-Jones (left) and RTA President Tim Ries of Koppers (right).



Stella-Jones also thoughtfully prepared cooler packed lunches for everyone. Thanks to all in Fulton!



Then it's off to Progress Rail's facility in Mayfield, Ky., where they overhaul locomotives and locomotive engines.



Jason Bell of Progress Rail explains to us how the overhaul process occurs and that they have several important customers including BNSF that count on their cost efficient expertise.



Following our visit to Progress Rail, we head to C.B. Goodman Lumber Company in Hickory Ky., where we are greeted by the owner, Clint Goodman.



Clint shows us the operations...



...paying attention to specially designed and manufactured lumber stickers they use to minimize shadow lines on grade lumber.

## DAY 2

## Associated Pallets, Brewco, Koppers Inc.



Day 2 starts with another jaunt into Kentucky where we visit Associated Pallets. Here, we see sawn cants rolling toward a gang rip saw that will turn them into pallet blocking and slats.



We also get to see an automated band saw sharpening system grinding away.



In addition to the vast styles and quantities of pallets made here they also make and keep a nice selection of crane mats inventoried.



Brewco is focused on four markets: grade lumber, ties, pallets and barrel staves. Brewco's fabricators, each with 12-20 years of experience, are some of the longest tenured in the business.



Goldston also shows off a vertical incisor destined for Koppers - Florence, S.C., that features a new replaceable ninja-star-like tooth that doesn't require removing the entire incisor head AND a new optical smart cylinder designed to pre-position the incisor heads to assure maximum incising of the tie.



Brewco is a sponsor of Lynn Ellison, the Top Fuel drag racing star who just won his ninth race in St. Louis. Lynn brought out his (and his daughter's) Top Fuel dragsters and spent time with all of us. Bill Moss of Mitek and Kristine Storm got close-ups!



Behind Brewco Inc.'s shop is Brewco Mobile Marketing (BMM - not affiliated with Brewco, Inc.). BMM builds and wraps trailers and other vehicles for some of the biggest names in the business to take their show on the road. Kohler, McDonalds and Kroger were some of the examples we saw.



Then we head to Koppers Inc.'s Guthrie facility where plant manager Josh Knoch (foreground) had the red carpet laid out for us (see group photo, pg. 12) and took a few of us on a behind-the-scenes tour of their proprietary borate-creosote dual treating process.



Inside the treating plant control room Knoch explains how everything that can be automated...



...has been.



Out in the plant we see how cars are unloaded and ties placed in line for processing.



That processing, of course, includes incising, grading and end-planting.



We also get to see the terrific plant layout.

## DAY 3

## Hood Industries, Middle Tennessee Lumber, CSX Radnor Yard



No, it's not The Borg (from Star Trek - Next Generation), but rather a fantastic Hood Industries brown paper making machine running at 30 feet per second. Our host was asked if they should think about producing the best corrugated box paper in the world and he said, "Make it so!"



The paper piles onto a two-plus-ton roll and then gets cut into manageable lengths for distribution to corrugated box manufacturers.



After Hood Industries, we travel to Middle Tennessee Lumber in Dickson, Tenn., where we see yet another fine high-grade lumber mill. Bill Joyce talks about...



...the two different kinds of air stickers they use to minimize shadow lines on the lumber, and these very unique fabric-based covers for...



...use with stacks of walnut and white oak that Dr. Terry Conners of the University of Kentucky inspects in this photo.



Our final stop is the CSX Radnor Yard in Nashville, Tenn., where we are met by a familiar face, longtime RTA friend Larry Fenwick of CSX.



This facility welds these shorter pieces of rail into sections of Continuous Welded Rail (CWR) up to 1600' long...



...as facility manager Terie King explains while we are standing ...



...next to a same length rail train that's being loaded as the CWR rail sections are completed.

*RTA wishes to thank all the volunteers and sponsors for their efforts and support in making this year's RTA Field Trip a great success.*



#### FACILITATORS

Mike Goldston, Brewco; Chuck Black and Tim Ries, Koppers Inc.; and Kenny Dailey and Dave Whitted, Stella-Jones Corp.

#### SPONSORS

Appalachian Timber, full day of bus transportation; Brewco, Tuesday night reception; Gross & Janes, full day of bus transportation; JH Baxter, bus transportation; Koppers Inc., bus transportation; MiTek, bus snacks; Stella-Jones, Monday night opening reception and lunch at plant; Wheeler Lumber, bus transportation.

*A special thank you to all those who attended as well!*

#### ATTENDEES

Rick Gibson and Roy Henderson, Appalachian Timber Services; Paul Cabrol, Beasley Forest Products; Rick Embry, Embry Enterprises; Kristine Storm and Matt Seinfeld, Genesee & Wyoming; Bill Behan and Paula Rogers, Gross & Janes Co.; Jeanne Olson, JH Baxter & Co.; Chuck Shaw, Joshua Knoch, Tom Baron, Tim Ries, Adam Mitchell and Charles Black, Koppers Inc.; Tim Carey, Lonza Wood Protection; Bill Moss and

Shea Zeiser, MiTek Industries Inc.; Jeff Broadfoot, Natural Wood Solutions; Ken Laughlin and Cannon McDonald, Nisus Corp.; Kevin Conn, Norfolk Southern Cop.; Will Cumberland and Tony Nichols, North American Tie & Timber; Jose Mediavilla, Progress Rail; Daryl Mesch, RJ Corman Material Sales; Kenny Dailey, Jason Dallas, Wayne Kusmierczyk, David Whitted and Buddy Downey, Stella Jones Corp.; Patrick Collins, Sumitomo Corp. of Americas; Nate Irby, Union Pacific Railroad; Terry Conners, University of Kentucky; and Wes Piatt, Wheeler Lumber. ■

## Weak Residuals Markets A Concern For Field Trip Attendees

RTA recently contacted the Hardwood Market Report (HMR) to determine the current state of the residuals problems at hardwood mills. David Caldwell, HMR partner, said that HMR was conducting a survey on this very issue.

"Our survey found that sawmills have been affected more than yards or secondary manufacturers by weak residual mar-

kets," he said. "Sawmills have been affected in three ways. First, mills have been unable to increase production because there are not enough outlets for bark, dust, and chips. Second, prices for residuals, especially chips have declined over time, which has reduced revenue. Third, log purchases are impacted. If landowners cannot receive what they consider a fair price for all timber,

including pulpwood, they will hold off timber sales. The result is less available timber at, potentially, higher costs."

Caldwell mentioned he would have more data on this and a greater perspective on the overall state of hardwood markets to provide RTA members in his presentation at the 99th Annual Conference in San Diego later this year. ■