

Unalam Tour

Southern Tier Chapter Event

October 17, 2017

During a recent tour of the Unalam manufacturing facility in Sidney, NY members of NYFOA, and the Catskill Forest Association were given a first hand view of a unique structural fabrication process that produces wood beams, & trusses for construction, produced primarily from Southern Yellow Pine and Douglas Fir. There is also a growing interest in the possible use of local Black Locust for use in the manufacture of these wood components. Currently nearly 85% of the wood used in the manufacturing process comes from Southern Yellow Pine.

Our hosts for the tour included 6th generation members of the Van Cott family, who explained their long history, and how it developed over the years to its current path. Our tour guide, Zoë Vandermeulen, Executive Vice President, explained how her grandfather first started with the construction of local Unadilla silos, and proceeded to grow the business to its current state that employs 35 manufacturing jobs, and 10 office jobs, in the small Delaware County village of Sidney.

Adrian Glidden, Safety Supervisor, was on hand to make sure everyone had safety glasses, hearing protection and look out for our general safety. The tour included stops at the various steps in the production process including the air drying of the boards, and the project inception area in the template loft were the first to be visited in the tour. In the template loft, full size templates are made. Since each project is custom, templates are made specifically for each order.



The tour in the template loft offered an assortment of fastening techniques. This provides the client with a better idea of how the project will look upon completion.



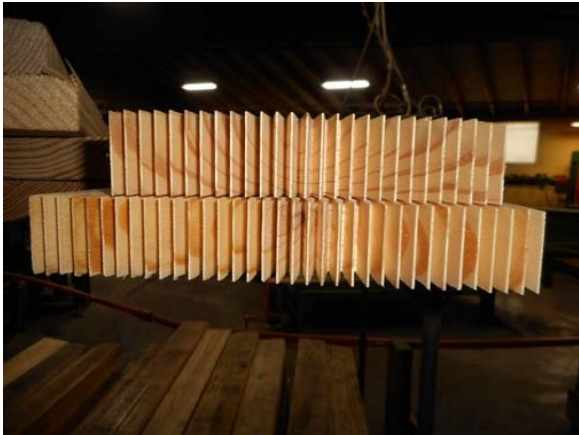
Lumber is first delivered by flatbed, and sorted by grade for use in manufacturing of the beams and components. Rik Vandermeulen - VP Engineering, explained how higher grade lumber designated as "0" is used for exterior beam surfaces for reasons of aesthetics and is generally free of knots. Lumber not visually relevant, or containing minor imperfections are laminated to the exterior pieces using phenol-resorcinol glue which is waterproof, and meet many environmental concerns. All structural members are ANSI certified, and meet the requirements of the "American Institute of Timber Construction."



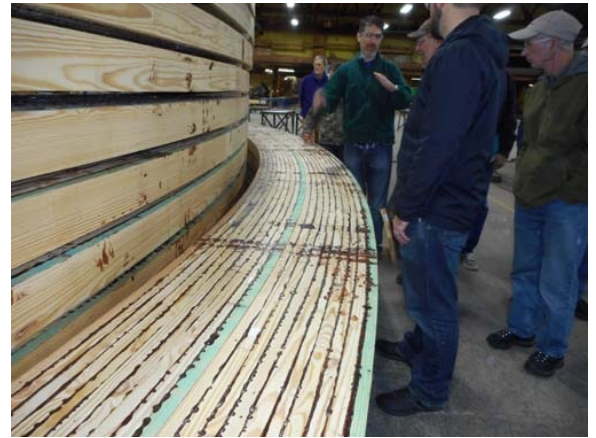


After the lumber is graded, it is stacked in the warehouse for natural air drying. No heat is used in drying the lumber.

The joining area, where lengths of timbers were glued together to arrive at the necessary lengths to produce pieces some over 125' in length, offered a unique view of the dimension of some of these projects. The planing process, as well as the bending process, which was devoid of steam, was also explained.



To make the curve, glue laminated boards are mechanically formed.



Other staff members along with us on the tour available to answer our questions were Liz Connor, Sales Professional and Leif Van Cott - Vice President Operations (also 6th generation.)

Waste wood from the process is used to heat the facility.



The plant has produced not only jobs for the local area, but some very unique and beautiful sites such as the Downsville Bridge, and will host some of its products at the soon to open water park in Monticello, NY. Typical construction using this type of construction adds little over similar typical post and beam construction, and is as structural sound as steel in many cases in addition to being much more appealing.

Many thanks to our hosts and the employees of Unalam for bringing us yet another area for "Alternative Wood Products". For more information on Unalam, visit their website at www.unalam.com.