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Phoenix Wood Products Boosts
Lumber Production with New
Pacific Trail Accu-Cut™ Package Saw

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Phoenix Wood Products Grows Florida-Based Company Adds Pacific Trail Package Saw to Cut SYP Lumber

By Tim Cox



Growth Requires Automation,

The Right People: *Phoenix Wood Products added a second package saw to boost cutting capacity and chose a Pacific Trail Accu-Cut™ due to its many features. Pictured is the Phoenix Wood Products team at its Ocala, Florida facility.*

OCALA, Florida — Phoenix Wood Products just seems to keep growing. And when you keep growing, you have to build more pallets. When you build more pallets, you need more deck boards and stringers. When you need more boards and stringers, you need more sawing capacity.

The company, with pallet manufacturing plants in Ocala, Florida, and two more in Georgia, has just added a Pacific Trail package cross-cut saw to help increase production of pallet parts.

Phoenix Wood Products is owned by Steven Redrick and his brother, Stan, and John Fitzpatrick, who is the company's chief financial officer. The trio bought the business in 1999 after having some other experience in the industry.

They have been growing the company since they acquired it. Today, Phoenix Wood Products serves customers throughout Florida and has added two facilities in Georgia. One is located in Ashburn and was constructed in 2004. They are also part owners in Heart Wood Products with Josh Stephens, which runs a facility in Warrenton,

Georgia that began operating last fall. Ashburn is on the I-75 corridor in southern Georgia, about 200 miles north of

Ocala. Warrenton is situated about 45 miles west of Augusta.

The Ocala plant, where over 100 em-



Industry Expertise: *The Phoenix Wood Products team is led by a group of industry veterans. The key management team includes from left to right: Cory McGee, Steven Redrick, Phillip Schuster, Stan Redrick, David Preston, Randy Miller, John Fitzpatrick, Tom Engelhardt, Jhiron King and Gilberto Velez.*

employees work in two shifts, is located on 19 acres. It consists of 12 buildings with 125,000 square feet under roof. Most of the buildings are new, built since 2017 when the company bought more land to expand. “We tore everything down except for a couple of old storage sheds,” said, Cory McGee, chief operating officer.

The Ocala plant is also where the company has its headquarters. The facility produces 45,000 pallets per week. (Overall, the company produces about 115,000 pallets per week.) The day shift is 10.5 hours. The night shift is 13 hours, but those employees only work four days per week.

Growing Wood Demand Leads to Investment in New Pacific Trail Accu-Cut™ Package Saw

The newest major equipment investment at the company is a Pacific Trail package saw. The company’s exiting Holtec package saw is more than 25 years old although it continues to perform well, noted McGee. What prompted the decision to add a second package saw was the need to add cutting capacity as well as the desire to take advantage of the latest technology.

The company went with a Pacific Trail Accu-Cut™. “We shopped it around pretty hard,” said McGee, and talked to several manufacturers. Other companies offered various attractive features on their machines, he noted. However, Pacific Trail offered a plethora of features rolled into its Accu-Cut model. “Pacific Trail had the whole package,” said McGee, “everything everybody else of-



Fancy Digs: *The offices at Phoenix Wood Products are meant to showcase the company's focus on precision, quality and doing the job right. These offices are among the nicest our staff has seen in the industry and are sure to leave a good impression on new customers.*



Infrastructure Improves Quality: *Phoenix Wood Products constructed a 60x400 foot storage building for finished goods and also three more lumber sheds. The Pacific Trail saw was installed in the middle of the area. Covered storage improves pallet quality, especially when it comes to reducing mold risk.*



“Everybody is more sensitive to mold now than they were five years ago...All our accounts are going that way.”

– Steven Redrick, president and a co-owner of Phoenix Wood Products

effort cut after cut over the life of the machine. Infeed loading capacity is 52 inches high by 52 inches wide with a choice of lengths loaded of 16, 20, 24 or 26 feet. The saw is powered by a 20 hp TEFC energy-efficient electric motor and uses .404 pitch, .063 gauge saw chain. State-of-the-art electronic inverter drives and rack-and-spur gear digital-length measuring ensures precise positioning for every cut. The kerf collapse relief protects the saw bar and chain, and the hi-tensile alloy saw bar provides long life. Options include fully automatic and remote controls, infeed staging for pre-loading, waste conveyors, and sawdust removal system.

(For more information about Pacific Trail, visit www.ptmi.net.)

The new Pacific Trail machine has not been fully utilized yet because of a related construction project that was approaching completion. The company constructed a 60x400 foot storage building for finished goods and also three more lumber sheds. The Pacific Trail saw was installed in the middle of the area, and the company was in the process of paving a couple of acres around the new saw.

Renewed Focus on Quality and Mold Prevention

In recent years the company has moved toward ensuring its pallets are of the quality required for 'food grade' and the pharmaceutical industry. "Everybody is more sensitive to mold now than they were five years ago," commented Steven Redrick, even customers that are not in the food or pharmaceutical industries. "All our accounts are going that way."

The biggest step the company has made is to have more covered storage space for raw material and finished goods to keep wood dry. As a general rule, the company does not need to treat lumber or pallets with a mold inhibitor because it is able to keep the wood dry. "We spot treat as needed," said McGee.

The Ocala plant buys kiln-dried No. 4 Southern Yellow Pine (SYP) lumber, from 1-inch SFS to 2x12 in random lengths ranging from 4-20 feet. The company also buys some rough green SYP. The company buys SYP from mills across the Southeast, including Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Most 2x material is cut to length on the new Pacific Trail cross-cut package saw or an older Holtec cross-cut package saw. The rough green lumber normally is cut to length on a Baker six-head multi-trim saw.

The company has four Baker resaws for cutting the material into deck boards and stringers. "And a fifth on the way," said McGee. With the new resaw, the company will have one triple-head bandsaw line, three double-head systems, and one single-head resaw. "Everything cut to length goes to one of these," said McGee.

Most pallets are assembled by ma-

chine. The Ocala plant is equipped with five Viking Champion nailing machines and two Ray Pro nailing machines. The plants in Georgia are similarly equipped.

For notching stringers and skids, the company has two Baker double-head notchers that use cutter heads from Profile Technology. One notching machine, which can take 72-inch-long material, is automated with a Pendu infeed system and behind it a Pallet Machinery Group M2L stacker; those notching operations require only one employee. The company also has a Pallet Machinery Group TS300 high-speed stacker behind the Baker multi-trimmer.

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Key Features and Options: *The Pacific Trail Accu-Cut has kerf collapse relief that protects the saw bar and chain, and the hi-tensile alloy saw bar provides long life. Options include fully automatic and remote controls, infeed staging for pre-loading, waste conveyors, and sawdust removal system.*

Key Suppliers Support Business Growth

The Ocala plant has accounts with manufacturers of building construction materials, the food and beverage industries, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and other industries. It serves customers

throughout Florida and into southern Georgia. The plant builds about 275 different pallets. Most of them are custom sizes although the company does produce some GMA and 'standard' pallets.

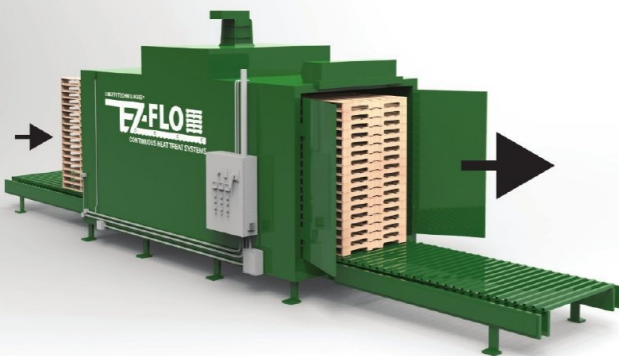
Besides assembling pallets with the Viking and Rayco machines, eight em-

ployees build pallets by hand on the day shift, and six on the night shift; they work in pairs.

The company also has a small shop dedicated to building crates where two employees work full-time, assembling them by hand. Sales of crates account

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for about 5-6% of the revenues generated by the Ocala operations.

Everwin pneumatic nailing tools are used for assembling pallets and containers by hand.

For bulk nails for the Viking Champion machines and for collated fasteners used in the Rayco machines and pneumatic nailing tools, the company relies on several vendors, including Viking, Crane Point Industrial, Mid Continent and Legacy Fasteners.

The company has a steady market for residual materials. Trim ends are fed via conveyor into an open-top moving floor trailer. Some trim ends are processed in a Cresswood hopper-fed grinder, and the grindings loaded into the same trailers. The vendor that buys the material processes it into colored mulch.

Phoenix Wood Products has always tried to grow the right way. Redrick explained, "The pallet industry, like the overall economy, has ups and downs. We have built our business responsibly so that we can weather whatever comes. We are debt adverse and always try to grow without taking on significant financial debt. This hopefully allows our customers to sleep well at night knowing we will be here when they need us."

Employee Training and Benefits Improve Workplace Experience

As Phoenix has grown, its employees are more important than ever. You can see this is not a normal pallet plant by the décor in its offices and the cleanliness of its plant facility.

A priority for Phoenix is having "top-notch facilities," said Redrick, and also abundant covered storage space for raw material and finished goods. Customer service, with a focus on fast turnaround times, also is an important focus. In recent years the company set up its own trucking affiliate, and it now has 17 trucks to pick up raw material and deliver pallets. "We're not waiting on trucks," emphasized McGee.

In recent years the company has put more emphasis on more formal employee orientation and training. "We completely revamped the training program," explained McGee. Orientation and training includes significant time in a classroom setting learning safety protocols, and procedures and policies.

Phoenix is active in the Florida

"Pacific Trail had the whole package... everything everybody else offered all combined into one."

– Cory McGee, chief operating officer for Phoenix Wood Products

Builder Material Association, the Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, the Georgia Association of Manufacturers, and the National Wooden Pallet and Container Association.

Employee benefits include a 401(k) retirement plan with a 4% company match,

health insurance (the company pays part of the premium), six paid holidays, and vacation time after one year of employment. The company is always looking to hire to meet growing demand. You can learn more by calling (888) 304-1131 or visiting www.phoenixwood.com. **P**



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