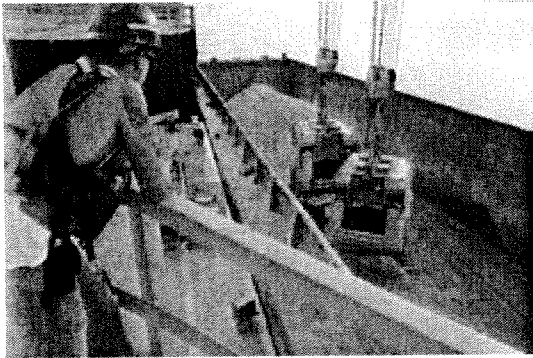


## Barges Bring Paychecks to Intermodal Facility



Thursday, August 14, 2014

WELLSVILLE, Ohio -- Nick Amato stands at the entrance to the Wellsville Intermodal Facility, one-time site of "The Brickyard," and recalls the many times in his boyhood when he rode his bicycle on the dirt roads around the brick factory that closed in 1973.

He points to an empty grass field and recalls, "I ran football laps over there."

Amato, today an attorney in Wellsville and the newest director on the Columbiana County Port Authority, is working to market the industrial park the authority has built and continuously improves. It is one of the first brownfield sites in the country to be cleaned up, says the CEO of the port authority, Tracy Drake, who came to the port authority in 1993 to redevelop the brownfields left by the potteries and refractories in the county.

"The [port authority] board had set a series of goals," he relates, one of which was to develop the northern bank of the Ohio River at Wellsville. The brownfields, in both the northern and southern parts of the county required environmental remediation and Drake set to work to secure funding.

Today the Wellsville Intermodal Facility is attracting the companies that pay taxes and are bringing new jobs, jobs that allow residents to remain in the county and raise their families. The industrial park is home to Pier 48 Stevedoring LLC and hosts operations by Cimbar Performance Minerals, Anchor Drilling Fluids USA Inc., Quality Liquid Feeds Inc. and Harvest Pipeline, a subsidiary of Hilcorp. And before the end of the year, Intermodal could host a processing project of Marathon Oil Corp. on the seven to 10 acres remaining just off the Ohio River, says Drake.

Just west of the entrance of the Intermodal Facility is the Cimbar plant. It occupies the one-time headquarters building of the owner of The Brickyard. A sign still affixed to the west side of the building identifies it as "The McLain Fire Brick Co." And just to the left of that sign in large letters is PM, for Polar Minerals, the company that preceded Cimbar.

That side of the Cimbar building is 10 yards from Anchor Drilling Fluids. The warehouse

manager of Anchor, Harold Willett, explains, “We located here because of Cimbar. We use their barite.”

Cimbar, based in Cartersville, Ga., was founded 100 years ago as the Pennsylvania-Georgia Mining Co. and remains privately held.

At five sites in the United States, its 250 employees process a range of minerals used in industry. These include talc, barium sulfite (barite is used in oil and gas drilling and refined in Wellsville), magnesium hydroxide, sodium bentonite and calcium carbonate and polymer grade limestone. Fifty-two employees work in Wellsville.

The barite from overseas arrives in barges, each holding 1,800 tons, that take three weeks to travel up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers to Wellsville where Pier 48 employees unload them and transfer the mineral to the Cimbar plant.

At the dock, the owner and president of Pier 48, Larry Heck, points to a barge and says, “We can unload a barge in five hours. This is the first of 27 coming here this month.”

Unloading the barite is a 60-ton crane with a huge clamshell bucket – it holds 10 cubic yards – that lifts the mineral and deposits its contents into a Volvo 40-ton Euc (short for Euclid) dump truck. It takes the crane operator two passes to fill a Euc.

At the pier, laborer Nunzio Lombarduzzi of Wellsville operates a forklift capable of lifting 62,000 pounds, shifts the barite inside the barges so the crane operator has better access, and cleans up the inside.

A 50-hour workweek is the norm, he says, and “I’ve worked 60 hours in a week,” once working eight days straight.

“It’s busy, busy, busy,” he says. “I’ll work 12 hours today. ... I love my job. It’s one of the best jobs I’ve ever had.” His wages allow him to support his fiancée and their two children.

Loader-operator Timothy Minor, also from Wellsville, drives one of the Eucs to the Cimbar yard, adding to the high piles already there. A round trip takes only 15 minutes, he says, which includes accepting and depositing a load.

Minor went to work for Cimbar last October and sees “potential for advancement.” He doesn’t mind the 60 hours per week he works, he says, and notes, “You get to ride in an air-conditioned cab.”

Inside the Cimbar plant, mill operator Nicholas Hull determines “how fast they go and where the materials are sent,” much of the barite going just next door to Anchor. But there are eight silos where he sends the processed barite as well.

Here, too, 50-hour weeks are the norm but, “This week I’ll work 60,” he says.

Hull is certified to operate the equipment he mans to ensure “the mesh is done right and that the specific gravity is done right.”

He’s ensuring the gravity mix of this batch of barite is 4.1 because that’s the grade needed “for

[oil and gas] drilling purposes.”

The grades range from 3.8 to 4.4 and barite is used in materials that include paints and coatings, rubber, highly engineered thermoplastics used in automotive applications, automotive brakes, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, adhesives and sealants, and ceramics.

Inside the Cimbar plant are three mills to grind and crush the barite, an impact mill, a 66-inch roller mill and much larger 73-inch roller mill.

Wellsville “was initially targeted as a production site for our talc and limestone product lines,” says Cimbar President and CEO Albert Wilson, “but the advent of drilling for oil and natural in the Marcellus and Utica shale plays changed that.

“We ship out 250,000 tons of minerals a year [from Wellsville],” Wilson says, and the plant at the Intermodal Facility brings in revenues of \$40 million to \$50 million annually.

“The Columbiana County Port Authority has played a key role in helping Cimbar prosper,” Wilson says. “Over the last five years of our relationship, we have felt [the port authority] welcomed us and supported our growth plans.”

On the second floor of the Anchor warehouse is a laboratory where lead bagger Brandon Cayton tests the consistency of the processed barite. At the other end of the lab sits mill operator Robert Frank who monitors four computer screens that direct the flow of the mineral and how finely it’s ground.

Barite is a component of the fluid or “mud” used in drilling for oil and gas. “We have nothing to do with fracking [hydraulic fracturing],” warehouse manager Willett stresses.

The drilling fluid, he explains, cools the drill bit that brings solids deep in the ground to the surface. He elaborates, “Anchor has their own engineers at every [well] location and they call the warehouse to place orders for the number of barrels [needed to continue]. It takes 1,200 to 1,800 barrels for a full system and you mix 500 at a time.”

Anchor does not sell the fluid. The company rents it. “We reclaim it and recondition it,” Willett says. “We recycle it. We’re not a disposal site.”

He agreed that “environmentally friendly” is a fair description of Anchor practices. “ODNR [Ohio Department of Natural Resources] was just here to look at what we do,” he adds.

Four years ago, Anchor engineers were at four wells being drilled, Willett says. “We’re at 19 sites today and 17 wells are being drilled. ... We’re very busy and will be picking up more companies in the next couple of weeks.”

While Anchor makes the drilling fluid – it has a 500-barrel mixing pit – it has only five of its own trucks and drivers. It hires trucking companies to transport the fluid the five can’t deliver to all the well sites. The drivers collectively are running 12 to 16 loads a day.

At present, Anchor has 7,000 barrels of fluid stored in Wellsville.

To keep up with demand, Anchor is running two 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, Willett

reports.

On the first floor of the warehouse, Douglas Douglas is putting protective plastic wrap on the many bags of processed barite that sit on wooden pallets and weigh anywhere from 50 to 4,000 pounds. After Douglas has placed the wrap over the bags and pallets, Allen Dean seals the plastic with a flamethrower as Douglas holds it.

What makes the Wellsville Intermodal Facility such a desirable site is the 60-ton crane that can load and unload barges, trucks and railcars.

Heck, the owner of Pier 48 – so named because the industrial park sits at mile 48 of the Ohio River – is looking to handle more higher-value goods such as steel coils in addition to the huge quantity of bulk minerals he now unloads and transfers to rail and truck.

The crane works “two shifts, six or seven days a week,” Heck says, “and we could add a third [shift].” The increasing volume of business has resulted a workforce of six from the initial two and a third shift would require him to hire more.

Each operator undergoes two months of training.

Drake points out that the crane runs on electricity, not diesel fuel, and the buckets “run hydraulically. It’s environmentally friendly.

Besides the clam shell buckets to transfer bulk materials, the crane has magnets to lift and set down steel coils with a capacity to handle 800 tons an hour.

“I have two barges of steel coil on their way [this week],” Heck says, “and another three barges next week.”

He’s pleased to relate, “I’ve had more inquiries to put more steel coils through here.”

Busy as the crane is, he says, “There’s considerable potential for more business.”

The steel coils that arrive at Wellsville “can be offloaded directly to a truck or train,” he says. And he has a forklift that can move up to 62,000 pounds per load. “The heaviest coils run 58,000 pounds,” he says, so he’s confident he and his employees can handle anything sent to the industrial park.

He also points to the rail siding, noting the tracks have been moved closer to the crane to expedite transfers. The port authority “took 600 feet of rail and moved it 30 feet inland to open up for the rail business,” he notes, so the crane goes over the rail siding, from barge to rail or barge to truck.

The crane itself is the equal of any other at any port. “I meant for the crane to mimic the cranes I worked with on the East Coast,” Drake says.

Heck relates how he improved the crane and its safety. “I added four cameras in the cab [so the operator could] watch everything, including directly below” where he couldn’t otherwise see what is happening. At night, the crane has a motion detector.

*Pictured: Pier 48 worker Nunzio Lombarduzzi watches as a barge capable of carrying up to 1,800 tons of barite is unloaded at the Wellsville Intermodal Facility along the Ohio River.*

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