

Big Elevator Gets Bigger

OHIO COOPERATIVE ADDS STORAGE, HANDLING CAPACITY OVER TWO YEARS



**Blanchard Valley Farmers
Cooperative**
Findlay, OH • 419-423-2611

Founded: 1989
Storage capacity: 14.8 million bushels at eight locations
Annual volume: 25 million bushels
Annual revenues: \$200 million
Number of members: 1,717
Number of employees: 132
Crops handled: Corn, soybeans, soft red winter wheat
Services: Grain handling and merchandising, feed, agronomy, liquid fuels, retail farm store

Key personnel at Fostoria:

- Thomas “Joel” Althouse, plant manager
- Mitch Welty, grain division manager
- Dawn Bowling, office manager
- Jason Bower, grain originations
- Megan Fredritz, grain originations

Supplier List

Aeration fans.....Rolfes@Boone
Bucket elevator ..Hawthorne-Seving Inc.
Catwalks ... LeMar Industries Corp., Hawthorne-Seving Inc.
ContractorElevator Services & Storage, Inc.
ConveyorsHi Roller Conveyors
Distributor..... Hayes & Stolz Ind. Mfg. Co. Inc.
Dust collection system ..Hawthorne Systems
Elevator bucketsMaxi-Lift Inc.
Grain temp. system ...Rolfes@Boone
Level indicators..... BinMaster Level Controls
Millwright.....Elevator Services & Storage, Inc.
Steel storage.....The GSI Group
Tower support system.. Lemar Industries Corp., Hawthorne-Seving Inc.
Truck probe..... Intersystems



Aerial view of Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative's 9-million-bushel-plus grain elevator on the southwest side of Fostoria, OH. The facility's newest corrugated steel tank is visible bottom left. Aerial photo by Focal-Plane Photography, Cleveland, OH.

Weighing in at 8.77 million bushels of storage capacity, Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative's terminal elevator at Fostoria, OH (419-435-4763), is one of the very largest grain facilities in the State of Ohio. And it's getting bigger...and faster.

Over a two-year period in 2010-11, Blanchard Valley added two new receiving pits, a 30,000-bph leg, several similarly-sized enclosed belt conveyors, a new 730,245-bushel steel tank, and new scalehouse and probe. That last item will allow the facility to reroute



Grain Division Manager Mitch Welty (left) and Plant Manager Thomas “Joel” Althouse. Photo by Ed Zdrojewski.

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-Joel Althouse, Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative

truck traffic, speeding up the lines and moving most of the grain trucks waiting to dump off of Fourth Street, which runs along the south side of the elevator.

“This business is about customer service,” says Plant Manager Thomas “Joel” Althouse, a 10-year veteran employee of the cooperative,



Newest 730,000-bushel GSI corrugated steel tank in foreground, with new truck drive that removes some traffic from Fourth Street. Photo courtesy of Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative.

“and that translates into speed and space. That means getting the farmer through the facility faster and being able to store grain until the markets are the most favorable for our members.”

For the entire two years, Elevator Services & Storage, Inc., Beaverdam, OH (419-643-5111), served as general contractor and millwright on the \$6 million project.

“Blanchard Valley has a 40-year relationship with ESSI, and they probably do 99.9% of all our construction projects,” says Mitch Welty, grain division manager.

The other major contractor on the project was Bromack Electric Services Inc., New Riegel, OH (419-595-2074), which designed and installed the control systems for the new construction.

2010 Work

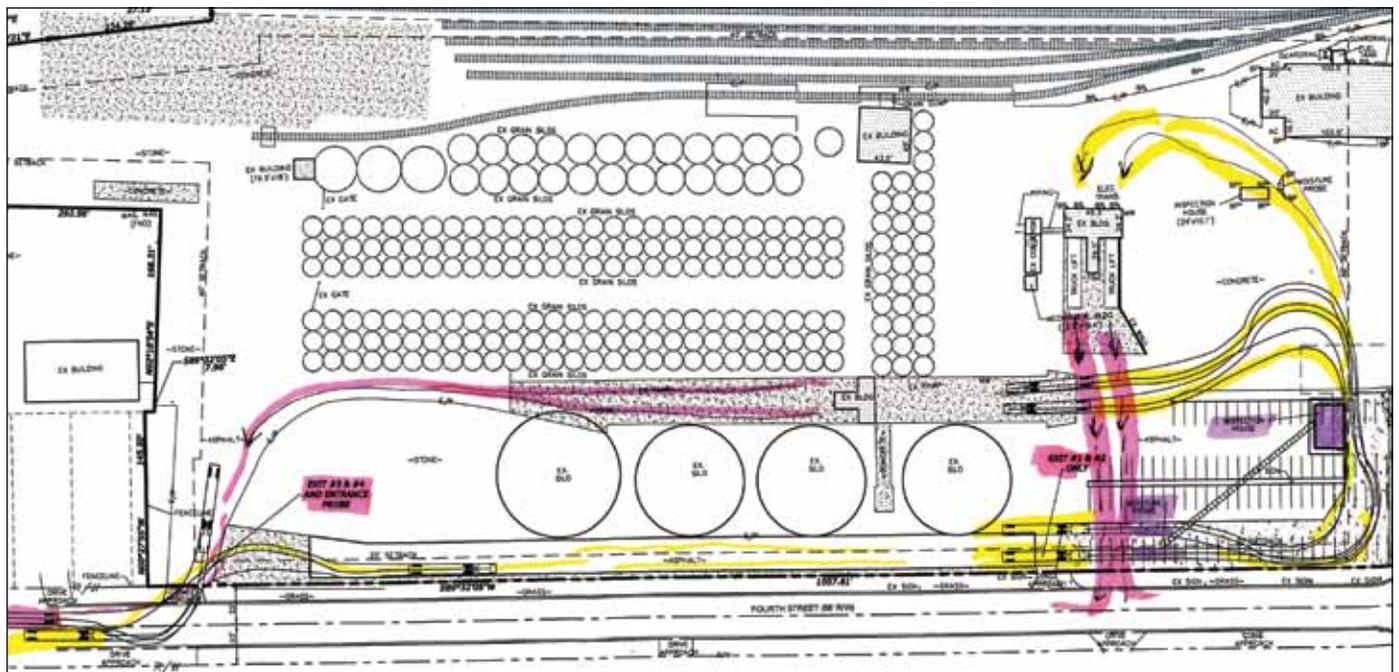
In order to make room for the new installations, Blanchard Valley swapped parking lots with Seneca Mill Works, a neighboring manufacturing operation, and purchased and demolished seven

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-Mitch Welty, Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative

houses.

Work got underway in the spring of 2010 with the installation of two new 500-bushel mechanical receiving pits feeding a single 30,000-bph Hawthorne-Seving leg in the space between the elevator’s huge concrete house and a newer row of large corrugated steel tanks along Fourth Street. (Hawthorne-Seving is ESSI’s manufacturing division.) Since the facility is located inside of an urban area, the cooperative also installed a Donaldson baghouse filter system to control dust from the new pits.



Schematic of the Blanchard Valley grain complex in Fostoria. The yellow lines show the route of trucks through the facility prior to the start of the newest construction in 2010, while the purple lines show the rerouting that removed a lot of truck traffic that used to stand along Fourth Street waiting to dump. Illustration courtesy of Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative.



Twin receiving pits and 30,000-bph Hawthorne-Seving receiving leg, which feeds into a six-hole Hayes & Stolz distributor. Photo by Ed Zdrojewski.

The new leg is outfitted with two rows of 16x8 Maxi-Lift Tiger-Tuff buckets mounted on a 36-inch Goodyear belt. This leg feeds into a six-hole Hayes & Stolz rotary distributor.

The distributor deposits grain onto two 30,000-bph Hi Roller enclosed belt conveyors, one running out to the large steel tanks and the other running to the concrete “D” and “E” houses.

2011 Work

The following year, ESSI constructed



New Intersystems truck probe takes a sample and sends it to the new scalehouse at right via pneumatic tube. Photo courtesy of Blanchard Valley Farmers Cooperative.

a new 730,245-bushel GSI steel tank at the west end of the row of steel tanks, the fourth steel tank along the southern side of the property.

The new tank stands 105 feet in diameter, 91 feet tall at the eaves, and 119 feet tall at the peak. It includes outside stiffeners, flat concrete floor, a Bobcat door, 24-cable Rolfes@Boone grain temperature monitoring system, and BinMaster level indicators. A set of four Rolfes@Boone 30-hp centrifugal fans and nine 2-hp roof exhausters move 1/10 cfm per bushel of air through the grain mass.

The new tank is filled and emptied at 20,000-bph by Hi Roller enclosed belt conveyors overhead and in an above-ground tunnel.

As part of its traffic-rerouting effort, Blanchard Valley replaced an old two-story scalehouse with a new single-story building to the southeast. Employees still will be able to peer inside grain trucks using closed-circuit video cameras mounted on lampposts.

The existing inbound and outbound truck scales will continue to be used, but a new Intersystems truck probe purchased and installed by Authorized

Grain Service, Dayton, OH will deliver the samples to the inspection building via pneumatic tube.

Althouse notes that the new construction is expected to virtually eliminate trucks stopped on Fourth Street during the busy harvest season. This has gained the strong support of the elevator’s neighbors, which include the Mennel Milling Co.’s flagship flour mill, Seneca Mill

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Works, and a ProMedica medical center.

“The City of Fostoria has been a big help to us on getting the project completed,” Welty comments.

Ed Zdrojewski, editor



Scale operators in the new single-story scalehouse rely on closed-circuit TV cameras to peer inside trucks and operate the truck probe. Photo by Ed Zdrojewski.