

Meridian Industries Grows U.S. Textile Operations

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By [Arthur Friedman](#) on October 7, 2016

Aurora president Dan LaTurno tours the new factory.



Sara Fontanez

The opening of Aurora Specialty Textiles Group's new manufacturing plant this week was the culmination of a decision to years ago invest millions of dollars in a state-of-the-art North American [textile manufacturing](#) operation.

The plant is in a new location, but in the same area in Illinois where Aurora has operated for over 133 years. Aurora is a subsidiary of Milwaukee-based [Meridian](#) Industries Inc.

ADVERTISING

Aurora's products include digitally printable textiles through its Northern Lights Printable Textiles line, specialty home products, industrial products and tape products for a wide variety of industries.

The event also marked the commitment to investing in technology while moving into new global markets for wide-width coating and finishing, including print media, such as retail display and signage.

"Today is a tremendous day for Aurora Specialty Textile Group," said Dan LaTurno, president of Aurora. "It marks the symbolic end of our transition from the Aurora plant to our new Yorkville operation, and the beginning of a new, exciting era. We've been committed to becoming a global leader in wide-width coating and finishing."

LaTurno said the "new Aurora" reflects the company's commitment to staying ahead of the industries it serves.

LaTurno introduced the new corporate tag line, "Innovative Textile Solutions."

"With the word 'Innovative,' we are telling customers that we are pioneering, inventive and modern with a strong focus on R&D," he said. "The word 'Textile' reflects our core market, which involves processing the various styles of textiles, and the word 'Solutions' reflects our capabilities as an industry partner and problem solver, because solving problems is how we distinguish ourselves from just being a transaction-based supplier."

Meridian owner Bruce Pindyck said from his first involvement in Meridian in 1968, he believed in investing back in the business and in being on the forefront from a technological, manufacturing and innovation standpoint.

Founded in 1883 on the west side of the Fox River in Aurora, the company operated solely as a bleaching operation before adding finishing, dyeing and coating capabilities. Pindyck purchased Aurora in 1977.

Recently, as the global [textile industry](#) changed, company leadership saw the opportunity to move into ultrawide-width coating of textiles. That move, however, required finding a larger manufacturing facility and investing in new equipment. After reviewing the options at hand, the company decided to move forward with the new plant and equipment and began adding new employees, while also training existing employees to operate a new generation of equipment.

The plant features the new EHWHA ultrawide-width coating and finishing line, which works easily with a broad range of woven and non-woven materials.

Pindyck explained in a phone interview that a main product for Aurora has been finished gray goods for the pressure-sensitive tape industry. He said the company also has calendering and sheeting capabilities, and will be going back after the shirting market.

“We’re also going to look for new markets,” he said. “We’re investing very heavily in state-of-the-art equipment under the theory that we can give something to the market that isn’t present in this part of the world. The same goes for the Meridian Yarn Group. There’s risk to it, but hopefully it will work.”

Pindyck said he’s a strong advocate of [Made in America](#) and “in having a manufacturing presence in the U.S. Providing jobs to people is a worthwhile endeavor. Overall, we employ about 2,000 people.”

He said, “Repatriation is going to continue, but the supply chain has to be rejuvenated. The investment is being made, but it’s going to take awhile for the supply chain to revitalize as well.”

Meridian Specialty Yarn Group has also begun production of wool and wool and polyester blend carpet yarns at the company’s newly expanded Ranlo, N.C., plant.

This is a new product line for MSYG and will serve the high-end, tufted and woven carpet and rug. The new wool carpet yarn operation expands the Ranlo plant’s production capacity by about 25 percent.

Tim Manson, president of MSYG, said the new carpet yarn business unit is a natural extension of the company’s experience and technology at the Ranlo plant, where MSYG already supplies yarns for other markets.

MSYG has been spinning and twisting coarse count, long staple yarns in wool and other fibers for many years at its Ranlo plant, serving apparel, hosiery, upholstery and craft markets.