



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

Celebrating the Legacy of American Textiles

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Textiles have always been an important part of our founding history, and played a role in establishing our independence. I recall learning about the story of Francis Cabot Lowell in reading Rachel Slade's [book](#), "Making It In America." During the war of 1812, Lowell used his photographic memory to bring the power loom from Britain to America, jumpstarting the American Industrial Revolution. In the early days of our nation, it was understood that to be a strong, independent country, we needed to make our own goods.

This week, America celebrates its 250th birthday. It is a momentous occasion for all, and for the SEAMS Association, it felt like a great time to honor some of the amazing history of our members, whose roots have contributed to, and continue to shape, our industry today.

SEAMS has 10 members, each "born in the USA," who have celebrated their own 100+ year milestones, which is quite a feat to be proud of. I wanted to highlight those companies and share a little bit about what makes them special, how they have persevered through challenges that have spanned and evolved over many decades, and also what excites them for the future of American textiles.

Our oldest member company was founded in 1838. **Merrow Manufacturing** traces its roots to one of the longest continuously operating textile businesses in the United States. Originally established in Connecticut as a knitting mill, the company went on to pioneer the development of the overlock sewing machine, an innovation that transformed apparel manufacturing around the world.

Today, under the leadership of eighth generation brothers Owen and Charlie Merrow, the company manufactures industrial sewing equipment while also producing advanced technical soft goods and sewn products for defense, industrial and commercial applications. Now based in Fall River, MA., Merrow combines nearly two centuries of textile expertise with modern manufacturing technologies to support customers requiring precision-engineered sewn solutions. ([LINK](#))

Fechheimer, established in 1842, is a manufacturer of premium uniforms and gear for professionals and civilians alike. The Blue Ash, Ohio company has several brands under their umbrella, and they take great pride in the innovative design, high-performance fabric development, and handcrafted details that go into their garments. ([LINK](#))



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President Denny Bogard answers:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

“For 184 years, we’ve stayed focused on one thing: serving people whose jobs matter. Whether it’s a soldier, police officer, firefighter, postal worker or federal agent, our customers depend on us to show up and deliver. We’ve been able to endure because we’ve built long-term relationships, adapted to change, and never stopped investing in quality, innovation, and the people behind the product. We are proud of our heritage, but we’ve never relied on it.”

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

“Integrity, craftsmanship, and service. Those principles were important when Samuel Fechheimer opened a small dry goods business in Cincinnati in 1842, and they’re just as important today. We believe in doing what we say we’re going to do, treating people fairly, and building products that earn trust over time. Those values have carried the company through nearly two centuries of change.”

Draper Knitting, founded in 1856, celebrated their 170th anniversary this June, with an event co-hosted by the regional AATCC group at their mill in Canton, MA. A sixth-generation family-run business, Draper specializes in knitted fabrics including high pile, double knits, napped fleece, terry, as well as nonwoven fabrics for fashion, performance, industrial and safety applications. ([LINK](#))([VIDEO](#))

Bethany Pollack, Vice President, describes their recent event:

“Draper Knitting was thrilled that the NE Section of AATCC elected to host their first event of 2026 at our facility. Around 30 people joined us for mill tours, followed by a networking reception. Attendees saw equipment still in use from the turn of the last century, along with more advanced equipment from the last couple of decades. Everyone had the chance to enjoy some snacks and beverages, along with a display of end items that showcased where the variety of fabrics Draper can produce ended up.”

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

“You will often hear us say we are just too stubborn to give up. Luckily that stubbornness translates into finding new markets for products we can make on our existing equipment. Draper also looks for equipment that not only adds capacity but offers a new capability at the same time.

“Draper’s business is well diversified across the industrial, military/tactical, safety and protective, therapeutic and outdoor/fashion markets. COVID was a great example of our ability to survive based on market upticks in one area, when others slumped off. And we

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can't forget our team, it seems cliché, however it's true Draper would not have made it this far without our employees. Some of them have been with the company for [more than] 40 years; that level of knowledge is incredible, and we are fortunate they are sharing it with the next generation to help us keep going. Cheers to the next 170 years!"

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

"Trust, quality, respect, timeliness, attention to detail, curiosity and treating others the way you want to be treated."

From humble beginnings in 1865 as a general store in Maine to a highly respected global manufacturing leader today, **Milliken & Company**, now headquartered in Spartanburg, SC, brings their materials science expertise into a portfolio of products that create solutions across 15 industries, including specialty chemicals, high-performance protective fabrics, and healthcare applications. ([LINK](#))

Marisa Bazemore, Senior Manager of Brand and Communications, answers:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

"Milliken's success and longevity come from our ability to evolve while staying true to who we are. Over the past 160 years, we've adapted to changing customer needs, embraced new technologies and expanded into new markets, but we've remained grounded in the values that define our company. We've never been satisfied with standing still, and our curiosity, commitment to innovation and focus on creating value for customers have helped us continue growing and reinventing ourselves across generations."

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

"The same principles that guided Milliken generations ago continue to guide us today: integrity, excellence, innovation, sustainability and people. These values influence how we make decisions, how we serve our customers and how we invest in our associates and communities. While our business has evolved significantly since 1865, our commitment to doing business the right way, pursuing continuous improvement and thinking for the long term has remained constant. We believe those principles have helped us earn trust and build lasting business relationships over time."

Shuford Yarns, originally established in 1880 as Shuford Mills (renamed in 2005), produces a broad product line of single, plied, and multi-ply spun yarns, spun with natural and synthetic



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fibers, for industries including apparel, hosiery and filtration systems. They are headquartered in Hickory, NC, and operate out of three plant locations across North Carolina. ([LINK](#))

Grant Smith, VP Sales, shares:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

“Above all, our longevity depends on customer trust. Trust is a timeless value, and since our founding, we have been committed to doing the right thing — even when it's not the easiest path. We work tirelessly to earn our customers' confidence, and once that trust is earned, we treat it as one of our most valuable responsibilities. Some of our customers have been with us since the very beginning, and their loyalty is a testament to the relationships we've built. As we look to the future, our commitment remains unchanged: we will continue to do the right thing, every time.”

What establishing principals are still important to your business and brand today?

“Our core values are: Exceptional customer service, unmatched quality, employee development and trust.”

American & Efird was established in 1891 as Nims Manufacturing Company in Mount Holly, NC, later merging to become American Yarn & Processing Company and joining forces with Efird Manufacturing Company. Today A&E is one of the world's largest manufacturers and distributors of industrial sewing thread, embroidery thread and technical textiles. Their products are used globally by major industries ranging from apparel and footwear to automotive and medical supplies. ([LINK](#))

Marty Moran, Director of Sales, shares:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

“A&E has continued to invest to allow us to be able to deliver the highest-quality products, along with the best support, while our business ethics and customer commitment have made us a preferred supplier and earned us recognition in many industries. We believe in the importance of making it easy to do business with A&E.”

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

“An overarching commitment to doing things the right way — for our associates, for our customers, for our stakeholders and for the communities we operate in. Innovative and evolving production capabilities and a comprehensive product offering to serve the unique needs of our valued customers. Maintaining a leadership role for A&E in the key areas of Environment, Health, and Safety around the world.”

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Entering the next century on our list, **Hamrick Mills** was founded in 1900 in Gaffney, SC, by Dr. Wylie C. Hamrick as Limestone Mills to manufacture window shade cloth. Later renamed, the venture thrived and later sons and grandsons would continue the business, and continues to take great pride in producing high quality woven fabrics for apparel, home furnishings and industrial uses. ([LINK](#))

Jim Hopkins, Director of Sales and Marketing, answers:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

"There are many things, but a few important ones are:

- 1. Relationships — building strong ties to our customer base and creating a shared loyalty to one another*
- 2. Flexibility — being able to adjust/modify according to customer needs/requirements*
- 3. Diversification — similar to flexibility, but being willing and able produce different products that are not just commodities*
- 4. Fairness — treating our customers fairly and equitably always, no exceptions*
- 5. Dependability — delivering what we say, and when we say it will happen"*

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

"Our goal is and has always been to be the preferred source for woven fabrics for our customers. When woven fabrics are mentioned, we want their first thought to be Hamrick Mills. We will strive to be that supplier who really does want their customer to be successful, and will do whatever is needed/required to support that success. Because if they win, we all win!"

Established in 1905, **Dunn Trimming & Binding Company** of Monroe, NC, has spent more than a century supplying high-quality narrow fabrics, bindings, webbings and custom textile components to manufacturers across a wide range of industries. Throughout its history, the company has built its reputation on dependable quality, responsive customer service and the ability to manufacture specialized products tailored to customer requirements.

Today, Dunn serves the apparel, industrial, military, medical and specialty markets from its U.S. manufacturing operations. More than 120 years after its founding, the company remains committed to domestic manufacturing, innovation and the craftsmanship that has defined its business for generations. ([LINK](#))

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Based in Philadelphia, **Wayne Mills** has been weaving twill tapes, bindings, and light webbings at its factory since 1910. The company has evolved alongside changing markets while maintaining a commitment to quality manufacturing and customer partnerships. Over the decades, Wayne Mills has adapted its capabilities to meet the needs of a continually changing textile marketplace.

From its warping and weaving machines to its continuous bleaching and dyeing ranges, Wayne Mills blends older skills and technologies with the latest high-speed equipment. The company has successfully reinvented itself several times over the years as fashions changed and markets shifted overseas. Its longevity reflects the resilience and adaptability that have characterized many of America's enduring textile companies. ([LINK](#))

Airtex Group was established in 1918 as the Sam Miller Bag Company (renamed in 2015), producing and mending cotton agricultural bags in Minneapolis, MN. Today they boast multi-faceted manufacturing capabilities for home decor to bags and cases, and more, partnering with leading consumer brands and manufacturers to offer product development, sourcing and manufacturing solutions across a variety of industries. ([LINK](#))([VIDEO](#))

Mike Miller, CEO, shares:

What specifically do you attribute as most important to your business's success and longevity?

"When you choose to work with Airtex, you're not only receiving the benefits of a 100+ year legacy of in-house design, manufacturing and quality control, but you're also working with industry leaders who create products that both support and elevate your brand."

What establishing principles are still important to your business and brand today?

"We value our people and our clients and always do our best to have long-term partnerships with all."

I enjoyed so much learning about each company through this process, and appreciate the tremendous work that goes into building and maintaining a business that survives through economic ups and downs, wars, changing technologies and innovations, consumer demands and more. I had to ask each to look forward, and share their thoughts for what lies ahead.

What excites these legacy companies about the future?

"What excites me most is that, after 184 years, we're still evolving. New materials, new designs, new manufacturing technologies, and new ways to connect with customers are creating opportunities that didn't exist a decade ago. At the same time, the mission



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hasn't changed. We're still serving the people who serve our country and communities. That's a purpose-driven business, and I believe it gives us a strong foundation for the next 100 years." — **Denny Bogard, Fechheimer**

"Helping to strengthen the U.S. textile industrial base, we are very hopeful that more and more companies will nearshore. We are excited by the number of new materials that are becoming available. Sustainability is a huge concern for Draper Knitting and we can't wait to get some of the latest developments on our machines. The business has evolved so much in the past 170 years, and we look forward to seeing what that means in the coming years." — **Bethany Pollack, Draper Knitting**

"Milliken is excited by the opportunities that lie ahead. Advances in materials science are opening new possibilities across industries, and we see tremendous potential to help customers solve increasingly complex challenges. Whether it's improving performance, advancing sustainability, enhancing safety or developing entirely new solutions, we're energized by the role innovation can play in creating meaningful impact. Our culture has always been driven by curiosity and a willingness to tackle difficult problems, and we believe that mindset will continue to create opportunities for growth and innovation in the years to come." — **Marisa Bazeman, Milliken**

"What excites me about the future is seeing innovation, sustainability and human ingenuity come together in ways that make manufacturing smarter, more responsible, and more impactful. I'm excited about using new technologies to empower people, improve quality and solve meaningful challenges, while staying true to our core values of integrity and trust." — **Grant Smith, Shuford Yarns**

"How both our business and the business of customers continue to evolve. How new challenges spur innovation, and how rapidly this is happening. Each day brings an opportunity [to] make us better, a better company to work for, a better company to do business with, and a better company to strategically align with to win together." — **Marty Moran, American & Efird**

"What excites us(me) every day is the constantly changing landscape of the industry at large. The new product developments, the advancing technologies and the expanding possibilities of the textiles of the future. And figuring out how we might be able to play a part in that expansion. There will always be a need for textiles, and we want to be a part of that future." — **Jim Hopkins, Hamrick Mills**

"We have customers all around the world, and we manufacture a significant amount of our products at our Minneapolis facility. We are excited to see more brands and their customers value products Made in the USA." — **Mike Miller, Airtex Group**

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I hope everyone enjoyed reading along this journey as much as I enjoyed working on it. I would also like to thank Devin Steele for his supportive efforts in gathering quotes and assisting me with research for this month's blog.

Wishing all of my SEAMS family a very happy Independence Day this year! Cheers to every company, old and new, for everything you do for your communities and our country. We are each integral to our future success, and can be inspired both by the legacy companies who are still here doing amazing things, as well as the younger organizations who see opportunities to build upon.

Cheers,
Xochil