



Each month, we recognize one of the region's top manufacturers with the aid of NEPIRC, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center. Since 1988, NEPIRC has been working with manufacturers to improve their productivity, profitability, competitiveness and long-term viability through consultative services.



Pipe fittings used around the world manufactured in Tioga County

For nearly a century, hot, molten iron has flowed inside Ward Manufacturing's foundries in the Tioga County borough of Blossburg, Pennsylvania.

A leading manufacturer of piping components, Ward Manufacturing's fittings have been used in thousands of installations around the globe including those in homes, commercial developments, public buildings and even the new Freedom Tower in New York City.

Founded in 1924 by Joseph Patrick Ward, Ward Manufacturing quickly became and remains one of the largest employers in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier.

More than 500 people are employed by Ward Manufacturing at the company's plants in Blossburg and throughout the United States. The company has 17 distribution centers across the country and in Canada.

Ward Manufacturing has gone through several expansions in Blossburg, including ones in 1928, 1938 and 1955. They've added many new products over the years, some of them with the help of automation and new processes.

In 1990, the company was acquired by Hitachi Metals America and a new manufacturing facility was built in Tioga County for its newest product, WARDFLEX, a flexible corrugated stainless steel tubing used in the natural gas industry.

Since the acquisition, Hitachi has tasked Ward Manufacturing's Blossburg headquarters with spearheading the company's expansion in the pipe valve and fitting industry. "This is part of the evolution of our company... support Hitachi's overall initiative of investing in our industry. We have been tasked to lead the global plan for this industry out of Blossburg for Hitachi," said Tony Favilla, Ward Manufacturing's vice president of sales and marketing.



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For the past two years, Favilla has been developing and implementing a new brand identity for Ward Manufacturing with everything from new logos, advertising and a modern online presence.

"We have a tremendous responsibility here for the people who work in our plants. We're really committed to Made in America. We feel it's part of our responsibility to make sure that we keep the jobs here in Pennsylvania and we're doing this in part by driving awareness of American-made products," Favilla said.

"Hitachi has made great investments in the foundry business. They also make parts for the automotive industry and built a new foundry in Lawrenceville, Tioga County, that makes metal parts for the automotive industry. Hitachi is very eager to invest in this side of the world," he said.

In addition to a focus on its stainless steel gas piping, Ward Manufacturing has also expanded its focus to include the fire prevention and heating and ventilation industries.

Remaining competitive in the fittings industry has required ongoing changes in how the plants are operated. Ward Manufacturing consults the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center for its lean and continuous improvement initiatives. Most recently, Ward Manufacturing employees completed 6S Training and Lean Certification Training through NEPIRC. Employees also attended Northern Tier Growth Network seminars, a no-cost networking venue to share best practices, discuss common challenges and experience new learning.

"Our plants are running very lean while maintaining our rigorous quality standards," Favilla said.



Large pots of molten iron are being prepared for pouring into the molds that will make the company's many fittings

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