



Milton S. Hershey

September 13, 1857 - October 13, 1945

Hershey, Pennsylvania

Milton Snavely Hershey, the candy maker who turned milk chocolate from a luxury into an everyday treat and built a Pennsylvania town around his factory, died of pneumonia at Hershey Hospital in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on October 13, 1945. He was eighty-eight.

He was born on September 13, 1857, to Henry and Veronica "Fanny" Snavely Hershey, members of Pennsylvania's Mennonite community, and he grew up speaking Pennsylvania Dutch. His schooling ended after the fourth grade. In 1871 he was apprenticed to a printer who published a German-English newspaper, but he soon lost that job, and at fourteen his mother arranged for him to apprentice with Joseph Royer, a confectioner in Lancaster. He studied the trade for four years.

His first candy business, opened in Philadelphia in 1876, failed, and a later venture in New York closed after three years. In Denver he had learned to make caramels with fresh milk, and that method became the foundation of the Lancaster Caramel Company, which by the early 1890s employed more than 1,300 workers in two factories. A trip to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago turned his interest to chocolate, and in 1900 he sold the caramel business for \$1 million.

He bought farmland near his birthplace in Derry Township and worked out his own milk chocolate formula. The first Hershey bar was produced in 1900, Hershey's Kisses in 1907. Houses, businesses, churches and transit lines grew up around the factory until the area became the company town of Hershey. He was an inventive promoter: in 1900 he bought what is thought to have been Lancaster's first automobile, an electric delivery wagon, and painted "Hershey's Cocoa" on its sides.

He married Catherine "Kitty" Sweeney on May 25, 1898, and in 1909 the couple founded the Hershey Industrial School, originally for local orphans. In 1918, three years after Kitty's death, he transferred most of his fortune, including control of the company, to the trust that supports the school, now the Milton Hershey School. In 1912 the Hersheys had booked a first-class stateroom on the Titanic's maiden voyage but canceled because of business; a copy of his deposit check is kept in the archives of The Hershey Story museum. During World War II his company made the Ration D bar for American troops, designed not to melt in the heat.

He is buried beside Kitty in Hershey Cemetery, on land he had transferred for one dollar. A bronze statue at the school shows him with an orphan boy in his arms, above the words "His deeds are his monument. His life is our inspiration."

Services

Died in Hershey, PA, October 13, 1945, aged 88. Portrait: Photograph c. 1905, Hershey Community Archives (public domain), hosted by Notice Nearby.

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