

Milton Hershey and His Chocolate Factory



Milton Hershey didn't build just a chocolate factory, he built a city and a legacy as well. Milton was born in 1857 in Derry Township, Pennsylvania, home to a small community of dairy farms. When he was 10, his parents separated and his father moved away. When he was 14, Milton began to work as an apprentice to a confectioner in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. A confectioner makes candy and an apprentice works for a master craftsman in order to learn a trade.

Milton had the heart of an entrepreneur, someone who starts his or her own business. Milton didn't want to work for someone else, he wanted to start his own business.

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When Milton was 19, he set up his own candy shop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, his store was never a great success. Despite all his hard work, Milton closed the shop after five years and moved to Denver, Colorado to live with his father.

While in Colorado, Milton worked in a candy shop where he learned the art of making caramel. He learned how to combine milk into the caramel to make it irresistibly tasty. With caramel on his mind, Milton struck out again on his own, failing in two more business attempts before he finally struck caramel-colored gold.

In 1883, Milton returned to Lancaster, Pennsylvania and started the Lancaster Caramel Company. He worked hard, became successful, and was soon shipping his caramels all over the country.

In 1893, Milton attended the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and fell in love with the art of chocolate making. At the exposition, he saw chocolate-making demonstrations and knew that chocolate was in his future. Making good milk chocolate was easier said than done, however, and Milton had to work for years to formulate his recipe.

In 1898, Milton married Kitty Sweeny. She later supported Milton in the many charities he created.

In 1900, Milton finally had his chocolate recipe. He sold his Lancaster Caramel Company for \$1 million (more than \$27 million in today's terms) and began to build a gigantic, modern candy factory in Derry Church, Pennsylvania. He



chose this location because it was close to the dairy farms from which his factory would get the milk to create its chocolate. His company quickly grew and prospered with new ideas and innovations such as the Hershey Kiss, which he invented in 1907.



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As his business grew, Milton wanted to give back and help others, starting with his employees. Milton built a town near his home and factory for his employees that he intended to be a model community with nice houses, schools, parks, and so on. He even built a trolley system to help his workers get to and from work.

Milton and Kitty were unable to have children of their own, which prompted them to build the Hershey Industrial School for orphaned boys. They felt like these boys were their children. The school still exists today and is now called the Milton Hershey School. Today, the school is for children from struggling families and it now accepts both girls and boys. Before he died, Milton created a fund that would support the school for as long as his company was around.

Milton constantly made improvements to his town, now called Hershey, Pennsylvania. He added more amusements to the park, including rides, a zoo, and more. As time passed, the park grew and today it is known as Hershey Park. The famous amusement park now features more than 70 rides and rollercoasters.

Milton Hershey worked hard all his life and dedicated a lot of his time and money to charity. He put a lot of effort into building a nice place for his employees to live. Milton worked well into his eighties and died in 1945 at the age of 88.

